

Life at Risk: Hazardous child labour within agriculture in Sialkot, Pakistan



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Hazardous child labour within
agriculture in Sialkot, Pakistan

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Abstract

The issue of child labor and hazardous work is a reality in many developing countries including Pakistan. With its high population density, mostly in the rural areas, a majority of the households engage in activities that are geared towards survival without considering the negative implications. Children who are usually of school going age and on whose shoulders the future depend are forced to work, often in hazardous conditions.

The reasons for child labor are many; the most salient factors are poverty, lack of education and the lack of implementation of the laws of Pakistan. This study was conducted in the Union Council Dhilum Ballagun, Sialkot district in the Punjab Province of Pakistan; where many forms of child labour on farms is widespread. Child labor in agriculture demonstrates a high recruitment rate of young people; the conditions are often dangerous to many hazards that really harm their health. This study primarily discusses the agriculture child labor in district Sialkot with a particular focus on their working and health condition.

Key words: child labor, health and working conditions, child labor laws of Pakistan

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Acronyms

APFUTU	All Pakistan Federation of United Trades Unions
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CLS	Child Labour Survey
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HRW	Human Right Watch
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPEC	International Program on The Elimination of The Child Labour
IUF	International Union of Food
ISPCAN	International Society for the Presentation of Child Abuse and Neglect
KPK	Khyber Pakhtoon Khwa
NCLS	National Child Labour Survey
TV	Television
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
Union Council	Smallest unit of Administration
US	United States
USD	United States Dollar

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1. Introduction:

Child labour has been the focus of major discussions by institutions, politicians, scholars, etc. and there are many diverging views on how to tackle its negative effects. Over the years the International Labour Organization (ILO) has launched both conventions and activities to stop this practice; but the results have been modest in many parts of the world, especially in developing countries (Shah, 2007).

Child labour exists in many employment sectors, such as agriculture, sports goods, surgical manufacturing, construction, mining, carpet weaving, food processing industry, etc. The reason for its continuance are many folds and includes poverty, lack of functioning institutions and laws, lack of education facilities and traditions(Samuel,1998).

According to Devi (1998) child labour is economically (according to ILO) not acceptable and it also affects the psychological and physical well being of the child. Most importantly it risks depriving the child of formal education. The latter is very common in Pakistan and especially in rural areas. These areas are characterized by high population density, low earning opportunities, large family size, high dependency rate, patriarchal family structure poor standard of education and so forth. Usually children find few opportunities to work outside the agriculture sector. In order to reproduce the household, child labour often constitutes a key factor.

2. Purpose of study and research questions

The aim of this study is to investigate child labour within the agriculture sector in Pakistan and to explore the role of child labour within agriculture in the Sialkot district and specifically analyze the social, cultural and economic context of this form of labor. Furthermore, there is a specific focus on hazardous child labor and its effects on the work force of children and adolescents. More specifically, the study primarily intends to analyze and understand the situation on the basis of the following questions:

- Why are children and adolescents used as workers in the agricultural sector in Pakistan?
- What type of activities do the children perform?

- What are the potential negative effects of child labour?

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

3.1 Research Approach:

The main purpose of this study was to investigate working and health condition of children involved in agriculture related activities in rural area of Sialkot district, Pakistan. This research is based on an in-depth qualitative analysis of selected case studies and generating conclusion from them.

3.2 Study Area

I have conducted my field work in Union Council¹ Dhilum Ballagan in Sialkot District², Pakistan. Sialkot is situated in the north-east of the Punjab province, only a few kilometers away from Indian-controlled Jammu and 130 Km northwest of the provincial capital, Lahore, with an estimated population of about 600 thousand (Mohison,2003). The city of Sialkot is a hub of export oriented industry such as sports goods and garments, leather garments, surgical manufacturing and musical instruments industry and many other things, on the other hand due to its fertile land area most of the inhabitants of this area rely on agriculture and livestock for their livelihood. Wheat, rice, potato, maize and fodder are major crops of this area (Jawad, 1996, *ibid*).

3.3 Selection of Study Households

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample. Purposive sampling targets a particular group of people. Purposive sampling is useful in selecting information rich-cases for in-depth analysis related to central issues being studies. Therefore, it was an appropriate technique to select those children working of farms as child labor. Six households were selected on different farms in three different villages

¹ Union councils are the fifth tier of government in Pakistan and are often known as "village councils" in rural areas, the territory represented by a village council usually comprises a large village and surrounding areas, often including nearby small villages. Headed by a union Nazim, each union council has 13 elected members or councilors.

² A division of an area, as for administrative purposes

3.4 Secondary Data

Literature and secondary data relevant to the study objectives were collected from different sources. Books and journals and other literature including reports of ILO were used. Research papers of different scholars were also used to extract relevant secondary data. Secondary data were also extracted from newspaper, government departments, NGOs reports and internet.

3.5 Primary Data:

Field data were collected from March 20 to April 15, 2011. Ethnographic methods, such as participant observation and semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data.

3.5.1 Household Interviews

Six interviews were conducted with six case households working on different farms. A detailed semi-structured questionnaire was prepared in English but the respondents were asked in the local language. All these interviews were conducted with the children working on the farms.

3.5.2 Participant Observation

Participant observation is an important qualitative research method with roots in traditional ethnographic research whose objective is to help researchers learn the perspectives held by study populations (Family Health International, 2005). I spent more than three weeks in the field area and it provided me an opportunity to observe their working conditions, working hours, the employers' behaviour and their feelings about their job and impacts on their health.

3.6 Method of Analysis

This research is based on qualitative research approach. I took detailed notes during the field. Later on, these notes were restructured and critically discussed and analyzed to generate conclusion from it.

4 Background

4.1 *The Distinction between child work and labor*

Many researchers, such as Anker (1995), Fallen and Tzannatos (1998) and institutions such as UNICEF (1997), distinguish between child work and child labor. Child work is not perceived as harmful for children; rather it contributes to informal education, trainings to develop a sense of responsibilities within a stable and nurturing environment under the protection of parents or other family members. The fore mentioned scholars and institutions rather regard it as potentially beneficial for children's development. Children usually start to work in their early age alongside with parents and other family members with various light work activities like household chores, tending livestock, harvesting crops, fetching water and other kinds of activities regarding their family requirements.

According to ILO and Schrupf (2004) child labour is defined as work that has the potential to deprive children of their childhood, their dignity as well as harmful for their physical, moral and mental development, long working hours, low wage rates and where child faces usually intolerable forms of abusive, exploitative and dangerous working conditions. It also interferes with the children's education either by not allowing them to attend school, leaving school prematurely without accomplishing compulsory education or forcing them to combine school attendance with heavy work. So according to the ILO and UNICEF the distinction between child labour and child work depends on the child's age, working conditions, interference with education, type of work and number of hours performed by children.

According to the ILO convention no 138³, child labour refers to “children prematurely leading adult lives, normally working long hours for low wages under conditions damaging to their health and to their physical and mental development. Sometimes separated from their families, frequently deprived of meaningful educational training opportunities that could open up for them a better future”

³ C 138 minimum Age Convention, 1973. <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C138>

According to the ILO Convention no 182⁴ the term “child” shall apply for all of those persons who are under the age of 18, even if they have reached the minimum legal age for admission to employment or work in their country and are legally authorized to work under specified conditions.

According to the labour law of Pakistan (National Labor Law Profile of Pakistan) articles 11(3) of Pakistan’s Constitution particularly prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 years in any factory, mine or other hazardous working conditions. According to this Act a “child” is defined as a person below the age of 14 years and an “adolescent” as a person 14-18 years. Pakistan has also ratified ILO conventions no 138, in July 2007 and 182, in November 2001.

4.2 Child labour distribution in the world

Child labour is still frequent in many parts of the world, it is found in fisheries, agriculture, mining, restaurants, factories, vendor shops, assisting parents businesses, involved in small businesses like selling various products on trolley, prostitution, and so on many children work as tourist guides and some children guides functions bring in potential clients to their employer business points (UNICEF, 2007). Many children are also forced to perform jobs like polishing shoes and cleaning responsibilities. However, rather than working in factories and sweetshops, a majority of the children are working in informal sectors such as vendors in the streets, working in hidden away houses (vendor shops in remote areas) and agriculture. That is far away from media and official inspection authorities. They are working the entire year in all weathers on minimal pay without respect for their legal rights (ibid, BBC News, 2007).

4.3 Age Limits for Work in Various Countries

The main ILO conventions targeting child labor are 138 and 182. So far 144 countries have ratified convention no 138 and 160 countries have ratified convention no 182. According to these

⁴ C182 Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999. <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C182>

conventions employers are not allowed to recruit children below a specific minimum age of 15 years for light work and 18 years for work that can jeopardize their health and safety of young person. An age limit of 15 years is the most widely used yardstick when establishing how many children are currently working around the world (Kordi, 2010).

All over the world laws formally regulate age limit for children's activities. It determines when they can leave school, vote, marry, be treated as adults by the criminal justice system of the country, join the armed force and at what age they may start working. But the minimum age varies from country to country and also depends on the nature of work. For example, the legal minimum age for all kind of work in the Philippines is 14. Peru adopts a variety of standards, for agriculture the minimum age is 14, in industry 15, in deep sea fishing 16 and work in ports and seafaring 18, In Pakistan the age limit for light work is 14 years and to join construction work, armed force is 18 years. All of these countries have ratified both conventions of ILO i.e. no 138 and no 182 (Kordi, 2010).

4.4 The spread of child labor

According to a report⁵ by Johnson and Crowley (2004) about hazardous child labour and International Labor Organization (ILO) data, child labor is most common in the developing regions of the world. More than 60% of all child laborers between the ages of 5-17 are found in Asia-Pacific region, Sub-Saharan Africa 23%, Latin America and Caribbean 8% and the Middle East and North Africa 6%. The rest of child labour can be found in both transition⁶ and developed economies. Asia has the highest total number of child laborers, but Sub Saharan Africa has the highest proportion of child labour relative to its population. Child labour also prevails in industrialized countries of Western Europe and North America, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy and Portugal. For instance reports indicates that about 300,000-500,000 migrated children under the age of 14 are involved in child labour in Italy. Furthermore this dilemma is increasing in many countries of Eastern Europe that are situated in a

⁵ Hazardous Child Labour by Lois Crowley and Marlene Johonson, 2004. Hazardous child labour is a betrayal of every child's right as a human being and is as offence against civilization. UNICEF

⁶ The period of time during which something changes from one state or stage to another. It typically refers to a country with a relatively high level of economic growth and security

transitional stage of market economy (ibid).

According to the National Child Labor survey of Bangladesh 2002-2003, carried out by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, out of 42.4 million children between the age group of 5-17 years, 7.4 million children have been classified as child workers and 3.1 million have been estimated to contributing child labour. 22.9% of these children are working as vendors\sellers, 16.1% in factories, 5.7% as brick\stone breakers, 4.8% as agriculture workers, 2.3% in crafts, 0.7% are economically active in fish processing and the rest of children in many other professions (ILO-IPEC, 1996)⁷.

According to ILO report (1997)⁸ children's responsibilities vary from area to area: in Brazil they work on sisal, tea, sugarcane and tobacco plantation farms. In Malaysia children are working in rubber plantation, mark rubber trees, collect latex cups, spray pesticides and many other rubber field supporting tasks. Even in developed countries like in the US working children perform economic activities in large scale commercial farming, such as harvesting plantation and pesticides spraying on fruits and vegetables under dangerous and grueling conditions (Human Right Watch, 2001).

4.5 The age span of child labor

ILO-IPEC Report (2003)⁹ estimates that there were 352 million children between the age group of 5-17 actively engaged in labour activities in the whole world in 2000, and 211 million children between 5-14 years. Furthermore 73 million of these working children are less than 10 years old. Nearly 171 million of these children worked in hazardous situations (ibid).

4.6 Child labor in Agriculture

In agriculture, children are generally involved in various kinds of farming activities like crop

⁷ Rapid Assessment of Child Labour Situation in Bangladesh, 1996).

⁸ Bitter Harvest, Child Labour in Agriculture By, Alec Fyte, 2002

⁹ IPEC ACTION AGAINST CHILD LABOUR: HIGHLIGHTS 2002, January, 2003.

production, fruit production, food preparation for live stock, forestry activities for fuel wood, sericulture (honey bee keeping), fish farming, crop storage, carrying of food, fetching water, etc. Furthermore they are engaged in technical activities in agriculture such as operation and maintenance of machinery, equipment, appliances tools and agriculture installations (ILO, 2005)¹⁰.

The children who are engaged in agriculture all over the world have been a special focus of social researchers, NGO's, human rights organizations, etc. due to a variety of risk: injuries, from various types of machines, biological, chemical and bacterial infections owing to lack of access to clean drinking water, and also infections from pesticides and poison. Physical fatigue and injuries due to long working hours, carrying heavy loads, arduous tasks and use of sharp cutting tools, poor hygienic conditions and psychosocial hazards, long term effects also include cancer, brain damage, sterility or decreased fertility, and birth defects (ILO-IPEC, 2003)¹¹ and HRW Report, 2002). Working hours and poor living conditions, the tolls of heavy labor on young bodies, contact with fertilizers, pesticides, chemicals, water, soil, animal borne infection, heavy lifting and poor posture, as well as heatstroke and sheer exhaustion, furthermore in the long term, may all impact negatively on their health (IPEC, 1997). During my field research in Pakistan I observed that usually children are responsible for performing all kinds of agriculture related activities from taking care of farmer's livestock to pesticides spraying in the fields.

4.7 The effects of child labour

Global impacts of hazardous work

In the ILO report "Facts on Child Labour" (2004)¹² it is argued that the effects of hazardous working conditions on children health and development is caused by physically strenuous work such as carrying heavy loads which is injurious to the human body. There is evidence that children are more vulnerable to chemical hazards and radiation than adults. Again they have less resistance to diseases, children are also much more vulnerable than adults to physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and often suffer more devastating psychologically damage from living and

¹⁰ Training Resource pack on the elimination of hazardous child labour in agriculture, book 1 A Trainer's Guide , International Labour Organization-International programme on the Elimination of Child Labour , September 2005.

¹¹ IPEC-ILO Action Against Child Labour Highlights from, 2002, January, 2003.

¹² ILO Report "Facts on Child Labour" 2004.

working in an environment in which they are denigrated or oppressed (ibid).

Researchers have shown that working conditions in agriculture related activities are harmful for both children as well as for adult workers and it is considered the most dangerous economic sector after construction and mining. The fatality rate in agriculture related activities is the third highest after construction and mining. Child labor may also have long run effects on children's physical condition or health problems in adult life. The agricultural industry at large has a very poor record regarding health and safety compared to other economic sections, especially in export oriented manufacturing of goods industries, carpet weaving, brick kilns and many other industries (ILO-IPEC, 2007)¹³.

An ILO (2005)¹⁴ report shows that children who are working in agriculture suffer from the same kind of accidents, ill health and fatalities as young adult workers. Due to lack of experience, and education on hazards and risk management and most importantly, more exposure to activities which are dangerous to their health. They are more prone to accumulating a lot these hazardous materials through injuries and inhalation. These higher rates of intakes results for example in greater exposure to diseases and toxic subsistence/pollutants. Frequent awkward and heavy lifting and repetitive strains can permanently injure growing spines or limbs, especially due to the use of poorly designed tools. Skin, eye, respiratory or nervous problems often occur in children exposed to pesticides owing to thinner skin hence toxic substances are more easily absorbed, and children are vulnerable to much lower levels of exposure than adults. They may well be chronic long term health effects from exposure to pesticide that will not show up until the child has become an adult (ibid).

As everybody knows, most of the agriculture labour in all over the world is carried out in open air and the agriculture laborers are dependent on changes in weather. This weather changes probably influences working conditions and make them hazardous and dangerous, including long

¹³ ILO-IPEC, Child Labour in Agriculture, 2007

¹⁴ Training Resource pack on the elimination of hazardous child labour in agriculture, book 1 A Trainer's Guide, International Labour Organization-International programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, September 2005

working hours in scorching heat, carrying heavy loads, frequently exposure to pesticides and fatal injurious from sharp and dangerous cutting tools (Human Right Watch, 2002)¹⁵.

4.8 Global examples of the consequences of child labour

4.8.1 Working conditions of agriculture child labour and its effects:

According to the report “Farm Operations” (2007)¹⁶ children who work on farms usually use knives, ladders, hoes and other tools, as well as heavy machinery like tractor, thresher, fodder cut machine and operating tube well for irrigation purposes. In 2004, about 27,600 or 3.1% of all physical injuries has occurred to youth who lived on, worked on or visited US farms. The most common injuries were injuries on hands, arms, feet and ankles, broken bones, cuts, sprains. Finger injuries are very common among farm workers. According to the US Commission Report, these child workers belong to the Mexican migrant families, Hispanic, African American, Asian Haitian, West Indian and Native American families (US Commission on immigration Reform, 1995). Human Rights Watch (2001) reports that in the US more than 300,000 migrant children are engaged as hired laborers on commercial farms to work with plantation and harvesting fruit and vegetables. 12 year old children work twelve hours a day in ordinary working days and these working hours usually exceeds more than 14 hours in seasonal work in dangerous and exhausting conditions.

The Human Rights Watch (2002)¹⁷ reports on “Children’s rights” that many children work in freshly sprayed pesticides fields in the US. Children interviewed reported symptoms of exposure including headaches, fever, dizziness, nausea, rashes and diarrhea. In severe cases, pesticides exposure can lead to convulsions, coma and death. A long term effect also includes cancer, brain damage, sterility or decreased fertility and birth defects (ibid).

In Turkey more than 40% of child labour is involved in agriculture. The main danger to these children is working with inadequate and unsafe tools and machines for long hours in all weathers, excessive heat and dangerous chemicals, working without personal protective

¹⁵ Human Right Watches Report Child Labour in Agriculture, 2002

¹⁶ The report on Injuries to Youth on U.S. Farm Operations, 2004 (2007).

¹⁷ Human Right Watch Report on Children’s Rights “Child Labor in Agriculture” 2002.

equipments, carrying heavy loads, dangerous animals, exposure to poisonous insects and snakes among others (Gulcbuk, 2010)

According to findings by Human Right Watch Report (2001)¹⁸ in Egypt, each year cotton farmers hire more than one million children between the ages of 7 - 12 years, from May to July to control cotton leaf worm infections. They have to work regularly eleven hours every day in the week. Children are responsible to inspect cotton plants for leaf worm eggs and manually remove infected portion of leaves. Children resume work on cotton plants either immediately after pesticides spraying or after 24 to 48 hours according to the recommendation of pesticides companies.

4.9 *The life of children on farms*

Almost all over the world, children who stay on the farm during their seasonal work, face miserable and dangerous conditions, like the exposure to pesticide from spray drift, as well as pesticide contaminated water and food. These children frequently work in open fields without any shelter where temperatures may reach above 40 degree Celsius. On the other hand, often the farm and plantation accommodation in which they live is very basic and lodging facilities built by pieces of plastic, cardboard or other unheated dwelling, lack of facilities of clean drinking water; moreover due to the lack of cleaning facilities their dresses often became very dirty and can cause many chronic disease (Human Right Watch Report 2000)¹⁹.

Furthermore, when children seasonally work in the field they have to stay in very poor living and working conditions due to the lack of lodging and transportation facilities. According to the study of Human Rights Watch Report (2000)²⁰ many young farm workers are forced to work without access to toilet and hand washing facilities and adequate drinking water. One consequence of the lack of hand washing facilities is pesticide poisoning and bacterial infections, while the lack of drinking water facility can cause dehydration and heat illness.

¹⁸ Human Right Watch Report,2001 mentioned in, ILO's "Bitter Harvest, Child Labour in Agriculture "By, Alec Fyte, 2002.

¹⁹ Human Right Watch Report "Fingers to the Bone, 2000".

²⁰ *ibid*

4.10 Legislation

According to an ILO Report (2007)²¹ agriculture is historically and traditionally an under-regulated sector in many countries. This means that child labour laws if they exist are often less stringent in agricultural industries than in other industries. In some countries, adult and child workers in agriculture are not covered by or are exempted from safety and health laws covering other categories of adult workers. Children, for example, are generally allowed to operate machinery and drive tractors at a younger age in agriculture than in other sectors.

4.11 The outreach and authorities of international bodies

Similarly UNICEF and the world summit have also set goals to reduce child labour in the world. A number of countries (see page 11 for details), including Pakistan, have ratified the ILO conventions regarding child rights. Many developed countries such as the United States, are putting pressure on the developing countries to eliminate child labor from their countries. One way to do this is to initiate trade restrictions on imports, sectors which are believed to be child labour infested. An example of this is the boycott of the Pakistani soccer ball production, surgical instruments and carpet industry products by US and other western nations. This action has had some positive impact on Pakistan Soccer ball and surgical tools manufacturing industry to control child labour. In 1997, the US Congress passed the “Bonded Child Labour Elimination Act.” Introduced by Representative Bernard Sanders. The law amends Section 307 of the US Tariff Act of 1930 (19 USC 1307). After its passage, imports of articles produced or manufactured with bonded child labour that are under the age of 15, are prohibited”. “The Child Labour Deference Act” was initiated in 1992 by Senator Tom Harkins and Congressman Brown and passed in the form of an amendment to congress in 1997, thus prohibiting the import of commodities produced by the labor of children. However, in the presence of all legislation to control child labor, there are some facts and figures has been observed concerning to the child labor which are discussed on Page 16. Which shows the child labor is occurring in their own states but US government imposing the International child labor laws and trade restrictions on different developing countries without considering their own status. Therefore, they should not

²¹ ILO-IPEC Report Action Against Child Labor 2007

maintain the double standard regarding child labor. There must be same standard and policies for the entire world. The European common market has proposed similar restrictions against the countries violating the child labour rules.²²

5 Pakistan

Pakistan is an agriculture country with a population of 160 million people. The agricultural sector is a key factor to achieve rural economic growth. Almost three-fourths of the total population is engaged in subsistence agricultural activities. Historically young girls and boys under the age of eighteen have been and continue to be part of Pakistan's agricultural workforce. They play an important role in livestock and crop production. Much of the drink, food, fibers and other raw materials that are utilized to make other products are produced by child labor in agriculture. Agriculture remains the primary source of employment for adults as well as children in rural areas of Pakistan (ILO -IPEC, 2007)²³ among these people, the incidence of poverty is greatest (Islam, 1996). In Pakistan the roots of poverty are strongly correlated with landless rural people. Owing to the unequal distribution of land, poor families try to survive on very small land areas on a subsistence level (Kardar, 1987). According to the World Bank (2009), only 2% of Pakistani population controls more than 45% of the total land area, severely constraining agricultural competitiveness and livelihood opportunities. Anwar (2002) concludes that poverty is highest 54% among the landless; merely 0.08% of Pakistani households own more than 2 hector of land. This unequal land distribution is a major reason of poverty in Pakistan.

5.1. *Child Labour Data of Pakistan*

The National child labour survey of Pakistan, which was conducted in 1996 by the Pakistan Federal Bureau of Statistics, found that 3.3 million children out of 40 million (between 5-14 years of age group) are economically active as full time workers. Of these 3.3 million working children, 73% (2.4 million) were boys and 27% (0.9) girls. In rural areas, children's participation rate in work is almost eight times higher than urban areas. Among the former group, children

²² I get this information from main page of " All Pakistan Federation of United Trade Unions"

²³ Report by ILO-IPEC, 2007 "An Overview of Child Labour in Agriculture"

aged 10-14 are more than four times economically active than children between 5-9 years (Jafri and Rashid, 1997, ILO-IPEC, 2009)²⁴.

Table 1. Child Labour participation rates in Pakistan by age and sex (%)

Age group	Both sexes	Male	Female
5-9	2.62	2.98	2.30
10-14	14.86	22.17	7.15
5-14	8.72	11.78	4.5

Source: Child Labour Survey, 1996

5.2. Land-tenure systems

The political, economic and social structures define the land tenure system of a society. This has a major impact on the economic development and the distribution of income and wealth. At present, three variants of private or individual tenure exist in Pakistan (Naqvi et al., 1989). The simplest variant is peasant proprietorship, where individually owned small parcels of land are cultivated by family members. Under the second variant, the landlord-tenant system, land is cultivated by sharecropping tenants. The third variant of the capitalist tenure takes two basic forms. The first is the fixed-rent tenancy, while in its more advanced form the landowner operates land with the help of wage-laborers (Khan, 1981; Hussain, 1988; Naqvi et al. 1989).

Pakistan comprises four provinces: Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtoon Khwa and Balochistan. Each of these four provinces have different cultural values and land tenure system. In Punjab the Southern part of the province is controlled by feudal lords. In the rest of Punjab province most of the villagers have their own lands that comprises large, medium and small sized farms. In Khyber Pakhtoon Khwa most of the people live in tribes and have equal status for their rights on land. In the other part of Khyber Pakhtoon Khwa province, the condition is similar to central Punjab farming style i.e. large, medium and small sized independent farms. On the other hand land tenure situation in Sindh and Balochistan is very different from the central Punjab and Khyber Pakhtoon Khwa provinces. In Sindh, land is controlled by feudal lords and they have

²⁴ A report by ILO – IPEC from UNICEF “The State of the World Children, 2009”

adopted two styles of farming where permanent labour is hired through the payment of cash and as share croppers. In Balochistan there are three major ethnic groups: the Baloch, the Pakhtoon and the Brahui, as well as many smaller ethnic groups, all of which are divided into tribes. These tribes are further subdivided into clans. Arable land is privately owned and is generally traded only within clans (Hussain and Razzaq, 2004).

5.3. Distribution of child labour within Pakistan

In Pakistan child labour exists in all sectors of the economy. Informal sectors and home based industries are the main hub of child labour. Furthermore, child labour in Pakistan exists in sectors like leather tanneries, power looms, brick kiln industry, cottage industry, agriculture, footwear industry, sports industry, mining, surgical manufacturing industry, food processing, tools, chemical industry, hotels and canteens, building and road construction, carpet weaving etc. In the agriculture sector children are working in the dairy sector, fisheries and poultry farming. They also work in the service sector as assistants of painters, barbers, cobblers, tailors, domestic servants etc. (Ijaz, 2006, Sarwar et.al, 2011)

According to the data of the Child Labour Survey (1996), the distribution of working children in Pakistan is as follows: 72% are economically active in agriculture, in the countryside 11% of the children are performing different responsibilities in the various manufacturing sectors, 9% are engaged in different trades and 8% work in the service sector. In both areas the percentage of child male workers in manufacturing and services sectors is higher than female.

According to the report “State of Pakistan’s Children” (2003) child labour is illegal due to the fact that it is exploitative in many forms and places the child’s health and development in jeopardy. Child labor survives in Pakistan in innumerable occupation and patterns. Child laborers are rarely found in Pakistan’s large and medium sized industries. They work primarily in the informal sector such as in small workshops, in restaurants as waiter or dishwasher, home-based operations, and small-scale mining, various vendor shops, auto mobile workshops, housekeeping, selling newspapers or cigarettes in the streets, vendor shops of surgical tools manufacturing industry, various kinds of agriculture labour and production activities (Jafri & Rashid, 1997).

5.4. The economic, social and cultural reasons of child labour in Pakistan

Pakistan has one of the highest population growth rates 2.77% per year in the world. The main causes of child labor seem to be traditions, customs, lack of land, insufficient financial resources, and poor distribution of income and weak implementation of law. About 32.6% of the country's population lives below the poverty line (PPAF, 2005 and Himayatullah, 2007)

There are many religious, social and cultural reasons for the widespread endorsement of child labour in Pakistan. I would like to discuss the most important of these here below.

5.4.1 Dowry

Dowry plays an important role in pushing female and male towards child labour in Pakistan. A survey made by Ali and Hamid in the Multan District (2001), demonstrates that female child domestic workers in urban areas account for 23% of all house maids, with the promise that their employer will bear their dowry's expenditures at the time of their marriage.

During my field study I found that more or less everyone was worried about the dowry for their daughters. In the district Sialkot region before marriage, a boy's family usually prefers to marry their son to those families who will give them the highest level of dowry and they have created an environment of competition for dowry due to various reasons. Taking or giving more dowries is considered a matter of pride and respect; they try to give and take more dowry than others and in majority cases the bridal families borrow money from their relatives or sell assets to cover the dowry expenses. Due to this tradition household have to strive to be able to paying as high level dowry as possible. Even though most people agree that it is not good tradition but everyone follows it to safeguard the reproduction of the family and reproduce the household.

5.4.2 Religious factors

The economist Ray (1999: 7)²⁵ argues that strict Islamic laws and traditional restrictions which keep a female inside the house is a major explanation of the low levels of female enrolment in both education and work in Pakistan. If she want to go outside the house for any purpose even for school, it is compulsory for her to go with family member for her personal safety.

It is not just a religious matter but social as well. Because in Pakistani society people consider that the families constitute a symbol of respect for their social status, which distinguishes their financial and social status in society. They believe that it can negatively affect their respect if any bad thing happens with the family's females. Such as due to these reasons they prefer to keep them inside the house as much as possible after they finish school or a family person take responsibility by picking her up after work or school. Since girls are not allowed to go outside religiously and culturally to help provide financial contributions to their families, boys take up the responsibility at the very early age. Most of the boys who come from rural families, who lack land become victims of child labour to earn livelihood for the families. This is one of the reasons for the persistence child labor in agriculture sector of Pakistan.

5.4.3 Khana Badosh (nomadic) children

In Pakistan there is an ethnic nomadic group which is called "Khana Badosh" whose members traditionally move from one area to another in search of work. Usually they are self-employed and women are more salient in economic activities. Most of the child laborers, rag pickers, beggars, and street children belong to this group. These people are very poor and their nomadic life-style makes it hard for them to accumulate capital or achieve an education. We can find these people everywhere in Pakistan. Their children seldom go to school on a regular basis (Ijaz, 2003).

5.5 *The recruitment process of children*

²⁵ "How Child Labour and Child Schooling Impacts with Adult Labour" working paper series # 2179. Development Research Group. The World Bank Washington, D.C.

According to an Anti Slavery International Report (1980), as well as research by the scholars Silvers and Jonathan (1996: 87)²⁶ some children in Pakistan live in slavery and their employers consider them as an asset that can be exchanged with any other master any time for money. Slavery is prohibited but millions of children are actually slaves in Pakistan. These slaves are working in agriculture, sex industry, carpet weaving industry, brick kilns industry and as domestic employees (ibid). Child slavery predominates in the areas where social systems are based on exploitation of poor people and affluent people feel better to keep labor as debt bondage instead of employing them and paying salaries. Because if a farmer want to hire people for work, the worker will be able to independently choose a farm and the farmer has to pay him a regular salary, but in debt bondages he works wholly according to the terms and conditions of farmers. As a slave (forced labour) the individual has to work according to the strict terms and conditions of his master\employers. The laborers usually borrow money from landowners for various purposes, such marriages, sickness, death or any other emergency and their income is not enough to repay their loan in short time and therefore they have work for years to pay back money to the landowners.

The work that children undertake in agriculture and domestic work is often invisible and unacknowledged because they assist their parents or relatives on their family farm or in “piece work” or a “quota system” on larger farms or plantation, often as part of migrant family workers. In this situation it is assumed that children work, though they are not formally hired. They are often classed as “helpers” though they do similar strenuous works as the adults. Equally, they may be hired through contractors, sub contractors or team leaders, thus enabling farm and plantation owners to deny responsibilities for knowing the ages of the children or the terms under which they were hired. In other instances, children are hired directly by the farm or plantation owner (ILO Guide, 2005)²⁷

According to Arif (2004) in Pakistan there are three types of agriculture laborers. Those laborers who permanently labor on a farm, secondly, laborers who like to labor on seasonal basis and

²⁶ “Child Labour in Pakistan” The Atlantic Monthly Feb.1996, 87

²⁷ Training Resource pack on the elimination of hazardous child labour in agriculture, book 1 A Trainer’s Guide , International Labour Organization-International programme on the Elimination of Child Labour , September 2005.

thirdly, those laborers whose situation force them to seek work on day to day basis according to the need of the farmer. The main characteristics of permanent farm laborers are that they cannot move from one farmer to another farmer. They are bound to stay at the same employer's farm until the contract expires. Generally large scale land lords and medium sized farmers' recruit employees, who are capable to perform all farm activities, take care of livestock owned by the farmer and many times perform domestic works. They are paid either on monthly, seasonal or yearly basis.

Theoretically, permanent laborers have the right to change farm after the time period specified in the contract has expired. But owing to severe condition of job scarcity and high unemployment rate they seldom take the risk. Although the most important point is that it is very difficult for them to repay their loans because many people become permanent laborers and have inherited their relationship with farmers through their parents. They will have to pay off loans that their parents have taken for various social reasons such as marriage, religious activities, feast, child birth, sickness, death of any family member or you can say for any kind of activity.

Arif (2004: 16) has conducted interviews with many young, educated and affluent farmers. The farmers admitted that they are involved in exploitation of labour in the sense that "we hire a worker for Rs. 2000 or (approximately) US\$ 25 per month usually, whereas, an adequate salary would be Rs. 3500/ or (approximately) US \$ 45. Because we know that they do not have any other opportunity and ability to perform any other job". All of them admitted that child labour is common on their farms. In effect due to poor financial conditions the parents of the child laborers are unable to provide them education. So their parents want to utilize the kids to increase the income of the household and thus reduce their misery somewhat (ibid).

There are two kinds of permanent farm laborers, first local people who work in their own village or nearest village and secondly "migrated" people. In most cases farmers prefer to recruit local people who are easier to manage and control. Moreover they are not allowed to leave the village and also make sure their services are always available (Arif, 2004). Many farmers claim that they did not like to give them heavy work because they tend to run away. Normally farmers do not hire workers directly. They ask their present workers to bring new workers from their family or

relatives. The present worker thus functions as a guarantor. This makes the worker less prone to run away. If a worker runs away who was recruited by a guarantor they will have to pay the loans that the runaway have taken. Secondly farmers have the option to recruit migrant workers in case of unavailability from local area. But it is very rare to hire migrated people due to the lack of grunter and trust on these people.

5.6 *Why employers recruit children*

There are a lot of factors around the world which drive employers to recruit children for work instead of adults. First of all the low remuneration paid to children, which is helpful for the employer to reduce their cost compared to their competitors (Weiner and Noman, 1995). Secondly, the children do not complain as much as adults due to the lack of awareness about their basic rights at their working place; the complaints about the poor children's working conditions are very few (Levison, 1998). Thirdly, children are believed to be less troublesome, and more honest, obedient, trustworthy, easy to control, more willing to take orders and to do monotonous job without complaining and, due to their illegal employment status, easy to dismiss from job if needed (Barra, 1995, Anker, 1998). One last important factor is that they are unable to mobilize their companions as a group to advocate their rights and complain of abuses (UNICEF & ISPCAN, 1998).

5.7 *Accommodation and life on the farm*

In my field research I found out that working children tend to live on the farms and take care of livestock and crops. They are responsible to work from dawn to sun set during the whole year. Farmers' families provide the children average quality meal like chapatti (handmade bread), yoghurt, lassi²⁸, vegetables or beans two times a day. On the farm children have very poor lodging facilities. I found out that all farms had only two rooms, they utilized one room for cattle in winter season and another room was used as storage for pesticide, fodder and agriculture related equipments. I was able to observe that the working children only had option to use this smelly store room for sleeping after the tough work of the whole day. In these rooms children

²⁸ Mixture of yoghurt, milk and water for drink

spent their winter season without any heating system; the smells of pesticides and fodder was almost unbearable to them. In the rest of the year they spend their twenty four hours from work to sleep in the open, pesticides and rain easily affect them directly as well as dirty mosquitoes disturb them the whole night. In these circumstances due to mosquitoes, inability to sleep and effects of pesticides usually make them become sick. These children do not have electricity, any toilet and bathroom facilities, even they had to wash their clothes on the farm with hands. They also use open fields as a toilet.

In Pakistan they spend their whole day with animals and crops without any leisure. Their employers strictly prohibit them to sit with any other person who does not belong to their family so they cannot socialize or discuss matters. Because many farmers have the perception that their employees may gossip about their family secrets or agree to run away from their farm when they interact with others.

5.8 The parents' perception

In an interview, which was filmed and placed on YouTube, a mother responded that lack of education and traditional restriction system particularly for girls in Pakistan, compelled them to keep girls inside the house for household activities. Furthermore she replied that:

“I and my other family members don't like to send our children to work. But owing to insufficient education facilities and poor financial conditions we don't have any other alternative. We dream that they will receive education but we are incapable to make it a reality”²⁹

During my own field study I discovered that parents dislike sending their children to work. They would like to receive education and thus have a better future. But due to lack of financial and education facilities they cannot fulfill their desires. The parents are thus obliged to force their children to seek work in the agricultural sector.

5.9 How ordinary people perceived child labor

²⁹(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uiXnfmCPcU>)

At child Labour Day, Punjab TV arranged various programs regarding children. People from various cities presented their views regarding child labour arguing that “These children are the future of our nation. We don’t feel satisfaction when we see these children in this condition. It is their school going age and they ought to participate in sports activities. It is the responsibility of the government to provide free education to every citizen”³⁰.

During my field work I found out that people in general do not like to see the children work as laborers but rather they prefer them to attend school. Many people informed me that “it is our desire to financially support the children’s education. These children are the future of our society, however, their educational expenditures are not real issue; the real issue is who will financially support their families to meet the required domestic expenditure”. These people also perceive that there should not be child labor before the age of 16; however, child can help them in domestic activities/ work for learning perspective.

In the 2011-2012 budgets the Federal Government of Pakistan allocated 1.4% of GDP for education (Mehwish, 2011). Private educational providers increased the charges on their tuition fees which is unbearable for an average citizen. In these circumstances poor people prefer to engage their children in earning activities rather than educate them.

5.10 How the children perceive their own situation

There are many programs on Punjab TV which often shows interviews of child laborers who are engaged in many professions, like auto workshops, brick kilns, hotel industry, agriculture etc. In one of these programs, a child who labored on farms responded in the following way: “Our parents forced us to start working when we were young, due to insufficient financial resources, because our parents are unable to pay all utility bills themselves (electric, gas, water etc), high food prices, and high educational fees”.

³⁰ (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMIq0aKSHqE>)

All of the children in the program argued that “they wanted to get education, go to better schools and play with their friends. They stated that this would be possible to achieve if the Government would take responsibility to create quality, free education for every citizen”³¹

5.10.1 Child labour Laws and their Implementation

Pakistan has ratified the “Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention no 182” in November 2001, and “The Minimum Age Convention (No 138)”, in July 2007. In December 2005, the Government of Pakistan modified the law “Employment of Children Act 1991” by prohibiting four occupations, and 34 work processes like carpet weaving, manufacturing process using toxic metals and substances such as lead, mercury, mercury, manganese, chromium, cadmium, benzene, pesticides and asbestos, etc..

“The Employment of Children Act of Pakistan (1991)” prohibits the employment of children in specified occupations and processes considered hazardous to their health. This Act prohibits a child to work between 7 pm - 8 am. The duration of work shall not exceed more than seven hours in a day, including one hour break and one holiday each week. Furthermore, it is not permitted for an employer to allow a child to work over-time. Every employer is also responsible to maintain a register regarding working children. According to the Employment of Children’s Rules Act (1995) “an employer is required to maintain minimum standards of health and safety in a child’s working environment. Violation of these laws can result in a fine of Rs. 20,000(approximately USD 235) and one year prison term and it is possible to apply both of these punishments at the same time”.³²

The Government of Pakistan is implementing a National Policy and Action Plan to combat Child Labour that calls for immediate eradication of the worst forms of child labour and progressive elimination of child labour from all sectors of employment. It further seeks to prevent children from entering the work force by offering education as an alternative (UNHCR, 2005).

The National Commission formed by Government of Pakistan for Child Welfare and Development is coordinating the National Project on the Rehabilitation of Child Labour to

³¹ (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SMIq0aKSHqE>)

³² employment children act 1991

withdraw children successfully from hazardous employment and promote education in many districts gradually. Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, a government welfare agency, operates 87 non-formal education centers, providing education to working children in various districts of all four provinces. Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal a government welfare agency which coordinates the activities of about 87 non-formal educational centers, has been very supportive in educating children as part of their duties they provide free text books, meals, school uniforms and other monetary packages to about 500,000 girls in 26 of the most deprived districts in Pakistan. Another responsibility of this organization is a removal of children from harmful working conditions and providing them with non-formal vocational education, medical care and stipend currently above 120 children are enrolled in each center.³³

There are evidence that education laws and actions as well as child labor laws have success in boosting education and lowering the frequent of child labor in Pakistan (Samuel, 1998). There are two aspects of weak implementation of legislations in Pakistan; first of all lack of available financial resources and lack of implementation of legislation due to bribery. Heywood (1988) states that labor laws have been found wanting in Pakistan as they are unenforceable precisely in those occupations and sectors in which child labor are most likely to be concentrated. Currently law enforcement agencies are performing very poor in Pakistan owing to corruption or bribery almost at each level (Kemal & Mehmood, 1993. Jahengir, 1989).

The lack of enforcement of child labor legislation sustains child labor (MHSESW 1998, UNICEF; ISPCAN, 1998 Weiners & Noman, 1995). The implementation of child labor laws is very poor in Pakistan (NCCR, UNICEF, 1998). Labor laws are easily circumvented by small and medium size farms and enterprise. The labor department has not enough resources in term of staff and finance to effectively monitor the working places. In these circumstances labor inspection has the difficult task of enforcing legislation in the informal sector (Weiner & Noman, 1995).

³³ United States Department of Labor, 2005

6. Empirical Data

6.1 Case Study 1

Irfan is 15 years old and comes from the southern part of the Punjab. He got education till 7th class from a government school. His family is comprised of nine members; four sisters, three brothers and parents. He is the third among his brothers and sisters. Irfan's father is a daily wages mason who is unable to fulfill his large sized family food expenditures. In these circumstances, Irfan's father compelled him to leave school and take up work on any agriculture farm to supplement household income. Irfan did not like this decision, but ultimately he decided to sacrifice his education to secure his other brothers and sisters future.

Now Irfan is employed on Chaudhary Abdul Ghani's farm, who is a medium sized farmer and the owner of 20 acres land and livestock .It consists of 15 cattle, 9 of them are milk buffalos. He has to get up at 4 - 5 am, especially for the fodder of milk buffalos and has to collect milk from these 9 buffalos manually which is a very arduous job. He carries this milk to the farmer's house in the village, which is approximately 3 km away from the farm. There the farmer's family serves him breakfast and he tries to finish his breakfast quickly so as to come back to the farm as fast as possible, because if any accident happens in Irfan's absence on the farm, the farmer will abuse and physically punish him. When he reaches the farm he serves water to all animals and change their locations; he cuts fodder in the morning to avoid the work in summer heat. Now he has an average 2-3 hours to rest; after that he starts to chop fodder on an electric fodder chopping machine and he also performs various short period activities such as instruments cleaning, visit to crops etc. As well as again serve water and fodder. He does all these activities including collecting the milk before sunset. Furthermore, he carries this milk to the farmer's house, eats and returns, as soon as possible. Once again, he changes the places of the animals for the night. Now he will have to sleep alone here under harsh conditions. When I arrived to his worksite, it was a really shocking condition for me, particularly when I observed the surroundings I found out that it is the only single residence farm in that area. If any accident happens to this child there will not be anybody who can help him.

During my visit to the farm I asked him, why he does not sleep in the farmer's house?

I am responsible to stay here all day and night. My employer and their other family members just come here a few times every day to monitor my work|.| You can personally observe everything here; I have just a room for sleeping without electricity and heating system and an open air hand pump that I use to give the animals water as well for personal purposes, to drink water, to take bath, for laundry etc|.| I am responsible to take care of livestock, crops, drive tractor for plough, irrigation of fields, pesticides spraying and many other things, but with the grace of Allah I am not responsible to assist them in seasonal work like sowing and harvesting of crops. For this purpose they use mechanized system (zero tillage machines, combine harvester) and hired human labour to secure time|.| I am a single person that has to take care of everything. For that I have to work more than 12-14 hours regularly from pre dawn to late sunset. It is very difficult for me to take a complete rest when I feel fatigued during the day|.| The worst health aspect for me is pesticides spray which I have to use without proper training and knowledge. Whenever I spray pesticides my eyes become sore, I become sick (fever) for two or three days. The worst period is before plantation in the rice fields. When I spray pesticide in water bare footed, it affects my skin. I suffer headache, fever, diarrhea, skin problems and cannot walk easily for a few days”.

Report of Human Right Watch (2002)³⁴ states that many children in the whole world do not get any training and awareness about how to spray and are ignorant of its harmful effects. Spraying or working in spraying fields lead to severe exposure of children, including headaches, dizziness, nausea, fever and diarrhea. In severe cases, pesticide exposure leads to convulsions, coma and death. Long term effects also include cancer, brain damage, sterility or decreased fertility and birth defects.

“I have never applied any protection garment when I spray, when last year pesticides exposure harmed me I asked for gloves, mask, and long shoes of plastic. However, so far the farmer has not provided me with these equipments.”

I asked him how he recovers or copes with his diseases and problems. He responded. “My

³⁴ Child Labour in Agriculture. HWR World Report 2002

employer knows how I am suffering here but he does not care about it. Whenever he sees that I am sick he just gives me insufficient treatment. In these circumstances, I just try to adjust and compromise with these conditions for the sake of my family.”

6.2 Case Study 2

Sharyar Ahmad is 15 years old. He is a student in 9th grade and a son of a small-scale farmer Muhammad Ali, who is cultivating 10 acres of land; including 4 acres lease land and 12 cattle including 7 milk buffalos. His family comprises seven members, three sisters and two brothers plus his parents. He is the fourth in the line of brothers and sisters. Sharyar’s father is forty five years old and unable to manage all farms activities by himself. He needs assistance of his family members every time. Both sons and his wife have to run this farm. But since last year all the burden has shifted to Sharyar’s shoulders due to the migration of his elder brother to the maternal grandparents’ home for college education. His brother receives financial and educational support from the grandparents, which was impossible in his home. It’s the dream of Sharyar’s parents to educate their children for a better future within their limited resources.

“Sharyar has to attend school regularly which is located in the next village and assist his father according to his physical capacity. He wakes up at 5.30 a.m. regularly to bring milk from his farm on a bicycle that is located 2.5 km away from home and then goes to school. Usually he comes back at 2 p.m. from school, takes a rest for two hours and then goes to the farm to assist his father in cutting, chopping, serving fodder and many other agriculture related activities. When evening arrives, he goes back to his home with father and after dinner he has to complete his home work.|.....|I am responsible to work full time with the other family members to save money by reducing the expenditures on harvesting, sowing, plantation and carrying harvested products from field to home, watering, fertilizing and other farm related activities. When it is intensive I do not have time for proper rest.|.....|

It is a very difficult job to assist in all farm activities when I also have to go to school but I do not have another option. I have to help my father, because we are financially very poor and unable to recruit a person for work. This farm is our source of income. The surplus from this farm is used to feed and educate all of us. My parent’s first priority is to educate

my sisters until they graduate and will be able to marry into educated families and it will be very difficult for my parents if I do not work here. |.....|During normal work days, I have just two or three hours at night to do my home work from school. Moreover in seasonal days, even I cannot attend school due to the pressure of work. Owing to this I cannot compete with my other classmate's grades. Now I have just passed my courses with passing marks rather than high grades. My education profile was very well compared to my class mates initially and even when my elder brother was here due to my focus on study.”

“I have many problems such as; tiredness due to lack of rest, fertilizer effects on my skin, but the most important among them is that I have to work here regularly with livestock.|.....| I also have to handle cattle's waste because we can't afford to hire a lady for this specific job. In these circumstances it is my responsibility to clean all area with my bare hands; especially in winter season, when we take all cattle inside the room for their protection from cold. In morning that room presents a scene of muddy ground and I have to clean that room with my bare hands. Due to cold weather and bare hands my skin is severely affected. Our two buffalos are also very harsh due to the difficulty for me to control them especially in the absence of my father. Many times I have tried to change their place but they attacked me and I was hurt.”

6.3 Case Study 3

Asif is 16 years old and employed in his village. He went to school until 5th grade. His father died four years ago. Meanwhile Asif's family comprises' three brothers and three sisters and his mother. He is number four in the birth order and the first of his brothers. Asif has been working on Muhammad Younas' farm during the last three years. He is a medium-scale farmer holding 18 acres of land and only 14 milk buffalos. Asif is responsible for taking care of all farms activities and the cattle.

“I wake up at 5 a.m. during all seasons for milk collection. My employer comes regularly after 7 a.m. with my breakfast. He stays here for a short time and then goes back to his

home with milk and vegetables. I am responsible for all farm activities, including tending the cattle. In normal working days, I try to cut fodder as soon as possible to avoid the scorching heat because it is a very intensive and time consuming job. Furthermore, I have to change the places of animals and chop fodder with a mechanized machine. After that I have a few hours for rest and whenever my employer will come, we will start work in the fields; cleaning crops from weeds. Before the sunset, he will collect milk with me; during this time his only son comes on bike with my dinner and both of them will go back to their house with milk.|.....|My employer is a very strict person in many ways but he and his family are very generous to me. For instance, he gives me weekly pocket money for my personal use because my mother has already received my six months' salary in advance. Again, he provides me with surplus wheat and rice on seasonal basis since he considers me to be a poor orphan.”

“I live on the farm all days and night and I am responsible to sleep here even though my house is not far away from this farm. Moreover, I do not have any special facility for sleeping like other workers in the area. During the winter season I sleep in a small smelly room and use various rough cloths to cover and protect me from the cold. On the other hand during the summer season I have to sleep in the open fields. The mosquitoes do not allow me to sleep in open air because if I want to cover me with cloth it is very difficult for me to breathe because of the heat. Meanwhile when I remove the cloth from my mouth and body, the nasty mosquitoes disturb me the whole night and risk being infected by malaria.|.....|Many times I have become sick due to excessive workloads and poor working conditions especially during the winter season when they irrigate the fields. The farmer gets water from Nala Aik (small canal) through pipeline. The canal comes from India but when it enters Pakistan, all the sewerage, drain water and many times garbage of Sialkot city and other areas pour out into it. The water becomes polluted and it is very difficult for anyone to stay near this smelly water. All of us have seen snakes and various other kinds of water creatures such as frog, turtles, crab, fish etc. The most difficult job for me is to clean and clear tube well's pipe line to allow a continuous flow of water from garbage and plastic bags after a specific time. Garbage risks blocking the water, so they force me to enter into this 5-6 feet deep water many times during irrigation time period. That is very

difficult for me, many times I have tried to refuse but they don't listen and ultimately I follow their order to maintain my job. This practice is common during all seasons and you can imagine its negative impacts on my health especially in winter season. During season when no one else will dip his finger in the cold water on the other hand I have to enter many times in 5-6 feet deep water. When I have done this several times I become sick (fever, cough) for two to three days and my skin hurts. They personally bring medicine for my health recovery, because due to my sickness the work is affected.”

6.4 Case Study 4

Aamir is a 15 years old son of a 42 year old football stitcher. He completed 8th grade and left school last year due to poor financial conditions and started to work on a medium sized farm of 17 acres of land of Arif Ali who lives in adjacent village. Aamir's family comprises seven members: three sisters and two brothers including parents. He is responsible to take care of all farms activities such as livestock, crops, and picking and tending vegetables on large scales.

“I wake up early in the morning to collect milk and to cut fodder. I eat breakfast during these three - fourth hours long task. While at the same time I was performing tasks. After this I and my employer start working on activities in vegetables fields; secure them from pest and weeds, fertilizing, spraying, pesticides and picking, that is: very slow and lengthy process. Usually we finish work before 12 a.m. We start again after a short rest and serve fodder to animals. Now many other workers partake in the picking of vegetables. I work with them and pack all vegetables for market. When the sun sets I mostly start collecting milk and change the places of cattle.|.....|When I finish my work I cannot sit for long time and often cannot even fall to sleep. Many times I feel pain in my body, especially my legs and arms. The worst of all activities is irrigating potatoes fields bare footed in winter season for long hours, without any safety measures, such as boots and milk or tea during working hours in cold weather to keep us warm. I become sick every time and my foot skin are seriously affected by the cold water. |.....|My village is just 5-6 km away from this village but I cannot go there due to my agreement, even on weekly basis due to pressure of work. I can just go there in case of any special event in my family. As well as on special

days like both Eids³⁵ and other religious days, I am strictly prohibited to leave this farm. If I go who will handle everything in my absence? They asked me would you like to visit your family. You have just few hours try and come back as soon as possible. If I am late surely they will abuse me harshly. |.....|My employer is bound to pay my salary approximately US\$ 60 per month, after each three months period, but he has not paid me quarterly so far, many times he paid me after four months work and many times after six months. So I don't know when he will pay me.”

6.5 Case Study 5

I went to some wheat fields at 9.30 am for the collection of observation data. I observed that there were some groups comprised of family members who were busy harvesting wheat. I decided to randomly choose one group that comprised 5 members. One was a mother; three were sons and one daughter. The age ranges of these children are between 12-19 years and they had a water cooler in the corner of the field under the shadow of wheat plants. I entered into their farm and introduced myself as a son of a farmer from their nearby village. They welcomed me to the farm; I tried to talk informally with them about different life issues. I observed that all of them were trying to harvest wheat very quickly, according to their capacity with especially designed sharp cutting tools in more than 45 Celsius degree temperature, with covered heads. Their mother was praising them again and again for their strength so as to encourage them in spite of the heat. I observed that after 20-30 minutes, they were taking short breaks of 5 minutes to drink and sat down on the partition line of the field for rest and then again started to work. There was a boy at age 15 who had wrapped a dirty cloth around his body; the working rate of this boy was slow compared to the other family members. But he was also busy in harvesting wheat. I tried to observe the surroundings of this field for any kind of shelter roof, a room for livestock or trees but I could not find anything there.

After the observation I performed semi-structured interviews. I started with the mother.

Is it your own field?

³⁵ most sacred religious days in Islam like Christmas and Easter

“No we are working here as laborers. She informed me that, my husband died through a road accident a few years ago. Now we do not have any permanent source of income to pay for food. The only option available to us is to earn and store wheat for the following months. It is very difficult decision for me to involve them in this work but I don’t have any option. Otherwise it will be very difficult for us to buy wheat from market. In these circumstances we prefer to work hard for few days and secure wheat for the whole year. |.....|I know the weather is very hot and affect us badly but we don’t have any other option. In fact, harvesting season comprises only one month because most large and medium sized farmers prefer to combine machines and humans for harvesting. In these circumstances, many needy people like me, find very limited fields for harvesting. Everyone struggles to cover more and more area within a few days. I said to them, I just came here to stay for a short while and I am not even working. Yet I can hardly endure the harsh weather condition. At this all of them replied “we only finish it as soon as early because it is very difficult for anyone to do work in this harsh weather. We usually start working in early morning at 5.00 am. Then we take a break during the peak warm hours and start working again, when the sun has lost its power. During working hours we take short breaks but unluckily there is not any shelter. Although we have a water cooler but after a few hours even that water becomes hot and undrinkable but we do not have any other person who can deliver fresh cold water.”

Do you have any negative impacts on your health due to these working conditions?

“Of course, due to the long working hours, lack of drinking water, harsh weather, work without shadow and children are forced to apply sharp cutting tools. The heat makes my children sick, and they suffer headaches, heat illness and dehydration. The use of sharp cutting tools has injured all my children.”

6.6 Case Study 6

This case study I conducted in village Ballagan where most of the people are engaged in dairy farming. When I visited this village I found out that many children belonging to various age works here. Those workers belong to the farmer’s families or recruited from outside. From all of these farms I decided to choose Muhammad Aslam’s farm. It comprised of more than 30 cattle. I spent the three days with them. At my final day of observation I decided to observe livestock

farm activities for the whole day. I reached there at 6.am early in the morning and found two children Mudisar and Waseem, whose age's ranges from 15-17 years. They were involved in milk collection process and they had started at 4 a.m and completed their tasks within 2 - 3 hours. After completion of this responsibility, their employer went to his home for breakfast and these children had started to measure this milk for sale. Their employer had come back within 30 minutes and wanted to go for delivery of milk in nearby town and gave them instruction for further jobs. At 7.30 a.m the children had started to eat their breakfast with butter, yoghurt and bread. When they had finished their breakfast at first they shifted all cattle under the trees. After that they were ready to move towards the field to cut fodder with especially locally designed sharp cutting tools for large scale work along with a donkey for transportation of fodder from field to livestock farm. A child had immediately started to cut and another was assisting to collect and transport it, now the sun was turning into scorching heat. It was very difficult for them to work in this hot weather. But they were trying to cope with it by taking short breaks under the tree and drinking cold water.

After finishing the cutting process, they took a short break of less than 30 minutes and had warmed up for fodder chopping to clean surroundings of machine and filed its cutters for better result. I observed that both of them were working very slowly now and carefully during fodder chopping process. I asked why they did not work with the machine's required speed. They quickly replied that, at the moment they didn't have time to lose their concentration. When they had finished their strenuous job after more than five hours, I observed a feeling of pleasure and satisfaction on their faces and they were celebrating by lying on beds in a shed and listening to folk music.

The sun had started to lose its major force when the employer's son appeared with lunch for all of us. After lunch they took almost two hours bed rest. Before they awoke, the employer had reached here but he did not disturb them and started to change cattle's places to serve fodder. When they woke up the sun had started to set and farmer had completed all tasks prior to milk collection. Now the boys had started to milk the cattle and their employer was serving fodder. All of them had finished their job within two hours and they immediately started to freeze it for the morning, because they marketed their milk just once a time in morning when they observed

that their cattle had eaten. They then started to change their places and now they went to the water pump to take a bath at the end of their day. The clock had reached 7 p.m.

It was very difficult for me to ask them questions because I know they were very tired.

How is your employer?

“He is a very kind and polite person and treats us like his children. He gives us good quality food three times in spring and two times in winter season, allows us to visit our homes one person at a time. He gives us one kilogram milk regularly for our family members free of cost, no doubt we have a pressure of work and very difficult for us to cover everything but luckily we are just responsible to take care of livestock rather than all farm activities”.

Has the job had any negative consequence for you?

“Our whole day consists of activities like tending cattle, collection of milk and fodder cutting and chopping process for more than 30 buffalos. Fodders’ chopping is very difficult job for us because it is very difficult for us to work according to the required speed of machine. In our surroundings, many people have lost their fingers, hands, many times arms and people may even die of their injuries. Due to these accidents we fear to work here and try to work carefully to avoid any destructive outcome and cope with this problem. Secondly our poorly designed fodder cut instrument is very dangerous due to its more than two feet large sized sharp blade and more than five feet lengthy handle. A little mistake can lead towards serious injury of foot and leg. Thirdly, during interaction with cattle we are afraid, because anyone can hit on us and it has happened many times and because of the milk collection exertion of more than twenty buffalos we feel pain in arms regularly. We massage each other regularly to recover.”

7. *Research findings*

My research confirms that child labour is very frequent in field areas. A lot of the children who are engaged in the activities like taking care of livestock, crops, irrigation of fields, pesticides spraying, tractor for plough and harvesting of crops and many other activities have not attained and reach the working age according to the ILO convention. Most of the children who work on the farms say that they do not want to work there but have no other alternatives. They would rather go to school.

Children are cynically exploited by the people who hire them. They offer very good source of cheap labour. Usually, they are abused physically and mentally because they cannot complain or protest against those they work for. Children's role in agriculture has become more prominent for a very long time because of the high poverty levels in rural areas of Pakistan. As a result of this the education and future of these young children are compromised.

Another important finding during the field study was related to the health implication of working children in agriculture. Due to the difficult tasks performed by children, usually most of them fall sick regularly but are unable to obtain the necessary medical treatment. I observed that some children are forced to work under extreme temperatures and they live under very dire circumstances, lacking basic facilities like drinking water, toilet, heating and cooling facilities. Moreover all the children I interviewed complained about the lack of protective clothes, garments and boots for their work. For instance during heavy rains those who work in rice fields often are bitten by snakes, frogs and other water living animals.

7.1 Concluding discussion

Both desktop research as well as my field study demonstrates that child labor in Pakistan is very frequent and has negative impact on the lives of most children and adolescents. Most of these children suffer from the worst forms of child labor, as specified by ILO convention 182, which state that “work which by its nature or circumstances in which it is carried out is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of the children”.

My case studies also indicate that, a majority of the children belong to poor rural families. They are of school going age and are either engaged in task within agriculture or other forms of work like carpet weaving, construction, mining industry, vendor shops and many more. My study in the Union Council Dhilum Ballagan in the Sialkot District has given me the idea that if authorities want to successfully deal with child labor and its related problems like school dropout at early ages, low wage rates, poor working and health conditions, harsh behavior of employer which affect negatively the psychological capacity of the children, lack of safety trainings on the farms and basic safety equipments, then the following issues should be carefully considered: poverty, education, sanctions, punishment and legislation.

7.2 Poverty

In Pakistan, a lot of families in the rural areas are poor due to lack of land and large family size. Most of the rural households in Southern Punjab and Sindh consist of poor peasant farmers. Punjab Province, my study area is no exception. The region is dominated by families with large sizes and barely enough to eat. Due to the high level of poverty, most of the families always remain indebted to the few rich in the society. To pay back the debt, the young children of the rural families are given to these affluent families to serve as laborers and through the tedious work they engage themselves in, their parents' debt get paid with the passage of time. These children's education is sacrificed for the debt owed by their parents. Thus the cycle of poverty continues and it becomes very difficult to eradicate.

Majority of the parents who were interviewed understood the reasons why they should send their children to school but were also quick to add that they did not have the means to do so. They were also aware of the hazardous conditions which their children were exposed to and its health implications. I believe that if Pakistan and other developing countries want to reduce the burden of child labor, a lot must be done to create job opportunities for poor peasant farmers and distribute natural resources more equally among the people, which is not in use so as to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor in the society. The government should divide thousands of acres arable land to landless, which is controlled by government of Pakistan in all provinces. The

land must be made available to them based on specific terms and condition which are attainable. Idle land can be put to good use and create employment to reduce the unemployment situation in the country.

7.3 Education

The Punjab province is characterized by a high illiteracy rate although the adults have a good understanding on the importance of education. Most of the parents I interviewed demonstrated their interest in educating their children but lack the means and resources to do it. If the inhabitants are educated, they have greater opportunities to understand the dangers which their children are exposed to because they will be informed about the negative impacts of child labor on the physical wellbeing of the children. Most importantly, children of school going age should be supported financially so that they can attend school. To what extent must people be educated about the dangers of child labor and who should be allowed to engage in this practice?

I argue that children in Punjab and other parts of the country must be provided with good and free education, books and those poor children must be able to receive scholarships. In doing this, families must also be supported financially by the state to improve their living standard in the whole country. Moreover, families must be informed about the dangers associated with engaging their children in child labor.

Education must not only be formal but also build on the traditions and customs of the society. Another important area that needs to be looked at more carefully is to stop the competition for the dowry. Educate the entire society to discourage taking huge sums of dowry but rather something which is acceptable by all. It is this tradition and other related forms of competition that drives the majority of young females into engaging in all forms of labor. If the entire society is well educated about their traditions and customs, they will grow to understand that there is no need to compete on the ground of providing bigger dowries during marriage ceremonies. Education is very important if child labor is to be reduced in our societies.

Again, parents must be educated that is important to have few children, a fact which reduces the burden on their financial resources, especially the poor, and enable them to meet the needs of

their children. Poor Larger families contribute to poverty, which in turn risk contributing to add to child labor.

7.4 *Legislation against child labour*

Laws on child labor are poorly implemented. Some of these laws clearly state the level of punishment that a person will receive if found guilty of engaging in child labor. However, most of these laws are not enforced and if enforced, are not strong enough to prevent others from practicing the same act. The ILO and other important stakeholders have spoken against the practice of the children, but little has been done in Sialkot, especially in export oriented industries, factory owners have signed an agreement with ILO at the Sialkot chamber of commerce to prohibit children from working in these factories, especially at football stitching centers in remote areas. According to the agreement, the ILO has the authority to close down the place if any child is found to be employed in any factory or the stitching centre in the remote areas.

Farmers must be made to understand that they will be severely punished if they are employing child labour. But if the issue of child labor will be considered more seriously on the rural farms of Pakistan, then the politicians and other important power holders must create and implement policies that will make it possible to visit the farms of farmers who are employing children and adolescent on their farms. The visits must be unannounced. Those who recruit child laborers must be made to understand that they risk being sentenced to long time in prison.

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