

World Day Against Child Labour 2011

Warning: Children in Hazardous work – End Child Labour

World Day Against Child Labour was observed with the active participation of government officials, representative from UN agencies, civil society, academia, trade unions, lawyers, media personnel both print and electronic, children involved in hazardous works and their parents in district Muzaffargarh.

The speakers of World Day Against Child Labour 2011 emphasized to contribute further actions for elimination of child labour in the country. Speaking at a seminar organized by ILO in Mazaffargarh the speakers highlighted the issue of child labour and its impact on economy both at household and national level. The speakers urged for the provision of education and vocational training opportunities for working children that are the key of social and economic success for Pakistan.

On this occasion Shahbaz Bokhari Project Manager ILO shared that every year on June 12th International Labour Organization observes the World Day Against Child Labour to highlight the issue of child labour. This year also the WDACL has been marked around the world to raise awareness under the theme: “***Warning: Children in Hazardous work – End Child Labour***”. He shared that ILO’s most recent global estimate is that 115



million children are involved in hazardous work. That is work that by its nature or the circumstances, in which it is carried out, is likely to harm children health, safety or morals. Children working in many different industries and occupation can be exposed to such risks and the problem is global, effecting industrialized as well as developing countries.

ILO representative reminded that a large numbers of children are still in hazardous works and thus risk to their health is overwhelming and as such efforts should be accelerated both by the government and civil society organization for a sustainable solution to menace of child labour.

He concluded that multi-pronged approaches and plan of action are necessary to eliminate child labour. Only joint efforts of Governments, Employers, Trade Unions and

Civil society can save the any society from menace of child labour. More focus must be given to educate children and provide more opportunities to make the country and ultimately the world a child labour free universe.

Mr. Ghulam Abbas Soomro, District Labour Officer shared that there are 252 industrial units in the district and children are involved in various type of work in these industries. He informed that there are 2500 children working in 22 textile unit in the district. He shared that involvement of children both in formal and informal sector is higher in Muzaffargarh as compared to other districts. The main reasons of children involvement are non availability of schools in different area of the districts, extreme poverty, large household size and lack of working opportunities. He informed that child labour has increased significantly after flood that deprived families from their houses, livelihood and access to education and health facilities. He added that there are number of organization working in the district on different issues for rehabilitation of flood affected areas but there is no even a single intervention to address the issue of child labour. He requested UN agencies especially, ILO to come forward with innovative projects to eliminate child labour in the district. He offered all the possible support from labour department to eliminate child labour in the district. In his speech he appreciated the efforts of ILO to organizing the event to raise awareness on child labour issue in district Muzaffargarh.



Mr. Saleem Akhtar, Director Social Welfare Department thanked ILO for organizing seminar in district Muzaffargarh. He said the event is the ever first occasion to raise awareness on child labour issues in the district. He shared that social welfare department is providing skill trainings especially, to youth but scale and outreach of these programmes is limited. The need for comprehensive and marketable skill has increased after flood that badly damaged the economy of the district. He said that keeping in view the scale



of huge calamity, more efforts needed to address the child labour issues in flood affected areas. The government, United Nations and civil society organization should bring more resource for eradication of child labour in disaster areas regardless to its nature whether it is natural calamity or manmade disaster. He said that government trying hard to provide social protection to vulnerable families by providing different skills. He extended all the possible cooperation from social welfare department addressing the issue of child labour in the district.

Mr. Khari Mohammad Budh, General Manager, National Commission on Human



Development (NCHD) applauded ILO for organizing the event and carrying out a research study on Mapping of Child Labour situation in flood affected areas of district Muzaffargarh. He said that hopefully the findings of the research will contribute in designing of policies and bringing resources to curb child labour. He shared that according to recent survey conducted by NCHD and district education department reveals that 214,000 children in the age group of 5-9 years are out of school. He warned government

departments, UN agencies and civil society organization to take measure to bring these children into schools. Otherwise these vulnerable children will leave with no option except to enter into child labour. He stressed that this alarming figure is justified enough to start a comprehensive and well planned programme immediately in district Muzaffargarh.

Talking about literacy level, Mr. Budh said that unfortunately overall literacy level of district Muzaffargarh is only 40 percent that is on extremely low as compare to other areas of the country. He shared that poverty is not the only reason of child labour. It is a mindset of society that they send their children for work instead of schools. Government has ensured free education including books, uniforms and even food for children in schools. It is responsibility to government and NGOs to change this mindset through awareness raising and advocacy.

He added that unfortunately there is no authentic data available on child labour after child labour survey of 1996. But, some sources reveal that at present 8 million children (73 percent boys and 23 percent girls) are working in formal and informal sector. That is why much attention needed to address the issue of child labour in a holistic way.

Ms. Naseem Akhtar, District Education Officer addressed the seminar by mentioning that flood affected almost 75 percent schools in the district and education department is rehabilitating these schools on priority basis. She thanked all the organizations working in flood affected areas for their efforts in re-building of schools and bringing children back to schools by providing different incentives to students. She shared the district

education department is making speedy efforts for reconstruction of schools in flood areas of district Muzaffargarh. For instance, the devastating flood in which a large number of school going children have been left without schools, teachers and teaching supplies. This destruction of the educational facilities and resources means that children are exposed to serious risks from lack of safe shelter and protection against various forms of abuse and exploitation, including child labour. She added that education department has scaled up its effort to re-construct schools and the department is giving priority to girl's education. She stressed that girl education is very important for economic growth of any country. Only educated mothers are the guarantee of a prosperous society and country.



Ms. Umm-e-Kalsoom, representing Children Resource Network (CRN) shared that unfortunately, the people at grass roots level are still unaware the causes and consequences of child labour. Government and civil society should organize more programmes to sensitize community on child labour. She said that child labour has increased after flood in district Muzaffargarh. She shared that the district was already among the least developed district of Pakistan prior to flood and the recent flood has made it more backward district. She expressed her gratitude to organizers of the event for allocating first row to children involved in hazardous work mostly in saw work and brick kiln sectors.



Highlighting the importance of girl education she said that women empowerment has always been overlooked. She reminded the universal commitment of millennium development goals that all the children including girls will receive education. She said that it is ironic that apparently it seems that we are far behind the commitment. If half of the population will not enter to main stream of labour force then no one can guarantee to develop. She reminded that as a

signatory of ILO Convention 182, Pakistan must ensure to eliminate worst forms of child labour in the country. She emphasized that well planned both short and long term interventions are needed to overcome child labour. The time has reached to take measure against child labour. Further delay may mar the social and economic fabric of the world. At the end, she extended the support from civil society organizations to contribute in elimination of child labour.

Mr. Azhar Munir, Coordinator Hayat Foundation the prevalence of child labour has increased after devastating flood and it is the responsibility of government, civil society organizations and international community to allocate more resource to make child labour free zone.

At the end he thanked all the participants and speakers for joining hands to eliminate child labour in district Muzaffargarh. He specially thanked children involved in hazardous work and their parents for their participation in the seminar.



Highlights of Rally on WDACL 2011 in District Muzaffargarh



Participants of Seminar

