Post-Flood Impact on the Worst Forms of Child Labour and the Role of the Media

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According to the Government of Pakistan and UN estimates, around 20 million people have been directly affected by the floods in Pakistan. The International Labour Organization has estimated 5.3 million people have lost their jobs. Ironically the worst hit districts of Pakistan were already the most impoverished in terms of being food insecure. This situation has left people literally on the roads, homeless and without shelter. Many children have been orphaned and others have lost their homes and it is feared that the recent floods might have further exacerbated the situation with regard to child labour as many millions of families have lost livelihood opportunities.

The menace of child labour in Pakistan is a dark reality that prevails despite international laws and various measures that have been taken by stakeholders and donors to try and curb it. There are many reasons for the persistence of child labor in the country, amongst them extreme poverty which compels parents to send their children to work. Nationally available statistics in the country from 1996 indicate 3.3 million child labourers in Pakistan. These include children working in factories, chemical industries and workshops under dangerous conditions. Children often work in unacceptable conditions including working long hours and in certain jobs they are required to carry heavy loads, which consistently places them at physical risk. They are also frequently exposed to dangerous fumes and chemicals and their mental and physical well-being is constantly compromised because they are seen as cheap labour that is easy to manipulate.

Although, various disaster response programmes and media campaigns try to address the overall issue, they have not, as yet, directly address the issue of worst forms of child labour as a direct consequence of the flood disaster.

Through this panel the presenters will endeavour to shed light on the impact of the floods on child labour and how one of the most powerful tools in the world--the media--can assist in further exposing the issue and bringing it to the attention of the policy makers and the population at large.

This panel will therefore discuss:

a) the effects of the floods to compel affected families to send their child into hazardous forms of labour.
b) how the media can help highlight the issue of the most hazardous forms of child labour as a consequence of the flood disaster.