Invisible Exclusion to Visible Inclusion

A research study on the prevalence of Child Labor in Tannery Sector, District Kasur
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Abbreviations and Acronyms

BL Baseline Survey
CL Child Labor
CLS Child Labor Survey
CRC Convention on the Rights of Child
FBS Federal Bureau of Statistics
FGD Focus Group Discussion
ILO International Labor Organization
IPBC International Program on Elimination of Child Labor
KII Key Informant Interviews
LFS Labor Force Survey
NFE Non Formal Education
NFS Non Formal School
NGO Non-Governmental Organization
OHS Occupational Health and Safety
PBS Pakistan Bureau of Statistics
RS Rapid Assessment
UN United Nations
UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund
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Executive Summary

Pakistan is ranked sixth among top 10 worst countries out of 197 in terms of prevalence of child labor, shows 2014 global child labor index, produced by Maplecroft. The report further highlights that children and women living in developing countries fall prey to the needs of cheap labor especially in unregulated informal market setups. In Pakistan, informal business sector estimates 80 to 90 per cent of the formal economy. This unmonitored as well as unregulated sector mainly uptakes children in employment as part of the cheap labor.

Labor Force Survey 2012-13 conducted by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) shows 4.4 per cent children between the ages of 10-15 the part of active labor force overlooking a huge population of younger children aging between 5-10 who are employed in unregulated informal sector. Owing to the lack of authentic data after only child labor survey conducted in 1996, different organizations present varied claims. ILO, in 2012, reported that the number of child laborers in Pakistan exceeded 12 million, while UNICEF estimates were around 10 million. There is no viable solution to understand and assess the magnitude of the problem without an authentic national child labor survey.

This study aims to find out the prevalence of child labor, knowledge, perception and practice of stakeholders across Tannery Industry of Kasur district. The survey covered 400 respondents, including child laborers and their parents, community members, teachers, tannery owners, and government officials. Information was collected on the basic socio-economic conditions of the households asking a range of questions about the prevalence of child labor, its impact on the children as well as families. Research was conducted by using livelihood framework instead of conventional child labor context to understand the children’s role and contribution in family income, its linkages with their socio-psychological situation and its relationship with the larger society.

This study shows that the young boys, who work in the sector, are engaged by the families that are indirectly linked to the tannery owners. Study also exposes the invisible engagement of girl children in the home based labor. Although they supplement in the household income, they have never accounted for.

Key Findings

Respondents of this study were selected from diverse ethnic backgrounds, predominantly Christians, who were engaged in most of the processes in tanneries in the making of wet blue, a term for specific raw leather used in skin products. Almost half of the respondents live in pukka houses while more than one third in semi pukka. Only 14
per cent live in thatched mud houses.

The primary source of livelihood for the majority of respondents was wage labor predominantly in the tannery sector especially in the making of wet blue type of raw leather, which is used in the making of refined products. Interestingly, majority of the respondents (i.e., males and females) fall into the category of skilled workers whereas women and girls are mostly home-based workers engaged in a variety of economic activities such as stitching of shoe uppers, chilgha at (pine nuts) peeling, paranatada making, sewing, embroidery and weaving apart from those who either work in factories as stitchers or in quality control sections and as housemaids.

An overwhelming majority of the respondents had difficulty in fulfilling the basic needs of their households such as health care and medicines, school fees, educational materials and school uniforms due to meager earning and seasonality of work availability. For majority of such households, child education was not a highly prioritized area.

Main expenditure of the household is on food and clothing. Rest of the household income goes in payment of debts, weddings and bereavements, in paying rent, in some cases buying or in the construction of house. Study identifies a contradiction in responses about child education. When asked should children be sent to schools and why education is good, majority expressed the need for education referring to better job opportunities and improvement in behavior but instead of child education, income generation was portrayed as priority of survival strategy.

Schooling a Determinant

About 63 per cent of children did not go to school. Out of those who did not go to school, 67 per cent had dropped out, whereas the rest, i.e., 33 per cent had never attended school. The dropout rates were found high among the children of illiterate parents, wage laborers, those experiencing difficulty in supporting their families financially. Major finding of the study is that child education is considered important by the parents, but despite their positive attitude, the number of out-of-school children or dropout children was alarmingly high. In addition to structural factors, intervening factors such as alternative schooling, children's disliking for going to school, children's need to work for living and parents' inability or consideration to spend on education were the other crucial determinants for child education in the area.

The major reason for drop-out was blamed on poverty, followed by the unwillingness of children to go to school and no one to drop off mostly in case of girls. This was followed by reasons such as not enough money for uniforms and books, lack of awareness, illiteracy, inappropriate age of child (under- or over-age) and child's lack of interest to go to school, apart from the thoughts that even after studying he would have to engage in menial jobs so why not now.

Findings show that majority of the respondents were willing to send their children to school provided they don't have to pay for educational materials, school uniforms and fees. Another suggestion that came up again and again was that flexible or alternative school timing with convenience of location will motivate parents to send their children to schools.

To sum up, structural factors such as poverty, social status, literacy, inability to support family and disposable income for schooling influence parents to engage their children to work. In other words, the study found that majority of the parents' knowledge and perceptions about child education was positive provided structural factors are favorable and vice versa.

Studying child labor in tannery sector of Kasur shares interesting yet shocking information about the perpetuation of child labor among females. Girls work along with their mothers as home-base workers engaged in numerous contractual jobs from third party. All the income goes into meeting financial needs of the household as supplementary income especially during low season in tannery sector. These girls grow up working alongside their mothers until their wedding. After their marriages they continue their work as wives in respective husband's households, hence falling into perpetual work as an alternative income due to poverty.

Data shows that due to seasonal nature of work in raw leather processing sector, majority of households are engaged in contractual labor and often face fluctuations in work availability. That's why females of the households are pushed to work to supplement the family survival. Apparently, young girl's contribution in livelihood of the household is not only invisible rather unacknowledged as compared to livelihood of children involved in child work across tannery and shoe making industry.

Another interesting finding of the study is that child labor in tannery sector and home based work of households has a visible disconnect between employer or owner and child, because apparently
parents take on the contractual work and involve children as handy aides. It means that tannery owners or contractor don’t employ children directly, but within the process contractors either being parents or someone related to children engage them for labor.

Another finding of the study is that usually children are only engaged in selected processes within the tannery industry, which are neither physical labor nor skill intensive. On the other hand, home-based work of females in upper stitching, chilgoza (pine nuts) peeling and embroidery work is skill and physical labor intensive with long extended hours.

Child labor is still an issue of concern because of the very high number of children engaged in it (a small number is visible while a big majority is invisible), resulting in repercussions on the development of individuals, who start work at an early age due to the household’s financial conditions.

**Recommendations**

Based on the analysis of findings, the study makes the following major recommendations:

- Government schools should initiate double shifts at flexible times and convenient locations so that majority of the working children can attend schools.
- District/Local Governments should take lead in hygiene and solid waste management to reduce garbage related epidemic and spread of diseases.
- Government institutions can establish skills development programmes focused on poorer population to add value to the available raw labor for better livelihood opportunities.
- The possibility of providing some assistance, such as skill development training for income generation to deprived parents, should be explored, in coordination with other governmental or non-governmental agencies.
- Education is one of the important child rights. Although the level of knowledge and perception among the respondents is high, it is a challenge to use their knowledge and attitude in practice by advocating parents through role models, highly educated persons, teachers, social workers and opinion makers.
- The government should facilitate poor households with diverse income generation opportunities.

- More public investment is needed to facilitate children education in socio-economically marginalized areas especially focusing on poorer households.
- City district governments should focus its efforts on health and education provisions in socio-economically marginalized areas as top priority.
- Media should highlight the plight of working children and their families to influence public policy.
- Schoolteachers are particularly idealized by children. Since teachers are considered by majority of the respondents as inspiring persons, they can play a significant role to convince parents to send their children to schools.
- Countermeasures to the fact that a large number of children need to work or do not like to study should be explored by various stakeholders, including parents, resource persons, teachers, facilitators, community people and NGO/community-based organizations (CBOs) taken on board.
- The practice of birth registration should be encouraged so that children can easily join government schools.
- The community home schools could be introduced as feeder schools to ensure that out-of-school children get the opportunity of education.
- Child Labor is a socio-economic manifestation of poverty, unequal distribution stemming from structural problems so a mix of poverty eradication and awareness raising campaigns can help to improve peoples perception and situation.

**Historical Context of Child Labor**

Child labor refers to the children’s engagement in any work or economic activity that deprives them of their childhood, interferes with their education, which is mentally, physically, socially or morally harmful. Though legislations across the world prohibit child labor yet all the laws do not consider all forms of work by children as child labor.

Child work was prevalent across the globe with varying extents through most of the known human history. As early as 1940, numerous children aged 5-14 worked in agriculture, home-based assembly
operations, factories, mining and in services across Europe, United States and various colonies in Africa and Asia. With the rise of household income, availability of schools and passage of child labor laws, the incidence rates of child labor fell in wealthy west while children from developing and underdeveloped societies are still bearing the brunt.

In developing countries, with high poverty and poor schooling opportunities, unfortunately child labor is still prevalent. In 2010, sub-Saharan Africa had the highest incidence rates of child labor; with several countries witnessing over 50 per cent of children aged 5-14 among workforce. Vast majority of child labor is found in rural areas and informal urban economy; where children are predominantly employed by their parents, rather than factory owners.

The incidence of child labor in the world decreased from 25% to 10% between 1960 and 2003, according to the World Bank. Nevertheless, the total number of child laborers remains high, with UNICEF and ILO acknowledging an estimated 168 million children aged 5-17, were involved in child labor worldwide in 2013.

Child labor is still common in many parts of the world with varying estimates ranging between 250 to 304 million. In 2008, ILO estimated 155 million child laborers (between 5-14) with an exclusion of light occasional work. 60 per cent of the child laborers were involved in agricultural activities ranging from farming, livestock, dairy, fisheries and forestry while 25 per cent of children were in services sector such as retail, street hawking goods, small restaurants, load and transfer of goods, storage, picking and recycling trash, polishing shoes, domestic help, and other similar categories.

Approximately 15 percent work in production lines and manufacturing in informal economy, home-based enterprises, factories, mines, etc.

Majority of children are engaged in some sort of economic activity along with their parents in unpaid family work situations. In the past, child labor was predominantly a rural phenomenon, which is now on the increase in informal urban sector due to internal migration and expansion of peri-urban localities and slums.

Contrary to popular beliefs, most of the child laborers work for their parents rather than directly employed by manufacturing or formal sector. Children who work for pay or in-kind compensation are usually more in rural settings while in urban centers work patterns are different. Less than three per cent of children with ages ranging 5-14 across the world work outside their households, or away from their parents. Estimated figures of child labor account for 22% of the workforce in Asia, 32% in Africa, 17% in Latin America while only 1% across US, Canada, Europe and other wealthy nations.

The proportion of child laborers varies greatly among countries and even regions. Africa has the highest percentage of children over 65 million aged 5-17 employed as child labor while Asia being densely populated has the largest number, i.e. 114 million children employed as child laborers. On the other hand, Latin America and Caribbean region has overall lower population density, yet with 14 million high incidence rates of child laborers.

Accurate present day child labor information is difficult to obtain because of disagreements between data sources as to what constitutes child labor.

Maplecroft Child Labor Index 2012 survey reports that 76 countries pose extreme child labor complicity risks for companies operating worldwide highlighting 10 highest risk countries in 2012, ranked in decreasing order, were: Myanmar, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, DR Congo, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Burundi, Pakistan, and Ethiopia.

Of the major growing economies, Maplecroft ranked Philippines 25th riskiest, India 27th, China 36th, Vietnam 37th, Indonesia 46th, and Brazil 54th - all of them rated to involve extreme risks of child labor uncertainties.

Child labor is becoming a structural part of many economies in both the formal and informal sectors. Children are employed in numerous sectors ranging from agriculture, domestic, home-based work, factories, assistance in shops, street sales, mining and quarrying, construction, sex industry, and a wide range of other activities (UNICEF 2006).

According to ILO report 2009, 218 million children were involved in child labor showing a decline from the 2004 reported figures of 246 million. The report also enumerates that one can witness a decrease of 179 to 126 million children involved in the worst forms of child labor, which include hazardous work, such as debt bondage, soldiering, prostitution and pornography, and illicit activities. It also discloses that about 122 million children in the age group of 5-14 are engaged in labor around the globe.
Pakistan is undergoing extreme tender socio-economic and political upheavals. Increase in child labor across the country can be attributed to poverty, large family sizes, social attitudes and low literacy, deteriorating economic situation, symmetry of natural disasters, devastation of infrastructure due to calamities and huge increase in unemployment because of power shortages and security issues resulting from extremism.

It is very difficult to make a precise estimate of the magnitude of child labor in Pakistan on account of numerous limitations on the availability of data. The last child labor survey was conducted in 1996, according to which 3.3 million children were engaged in some sort of work, out of which 73 per cent were boys and 27 per cent were girls. According to the findings of the survey, children comprised about 7 per cent of the total work force in the country.

The provincial distribution indicated that only in the Punjab, the volume of child labor was about 1.9 million; three-fifths (60 per cent) of total child labor in the country followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where about one million children were laboring. Sindh had a population of 298,000 children involved in labor while for Baluchistan, the figure is mere 14,000.

According to the survey, out of all the child laborers in Pakistan, majority is employed in occupations related to agriculture, livestock herding, firewood collection, water fetching, fertilizers' spread, catering and caring for the siblings, and rest of the mental jobs. The 1996 survey findings enumerates that eight times more children work in rural areas as compared to the urban ones. As compared to rural, children in urban settings are mostly employed in more diversified occupations such as industrial value chain, loading and unloading of goods, serving at tea stalls and low cost restaurants, fisheries sector, apprentices in workshops, rag picking, shoe-shining, begging and a long list of informal production sector.

A Rapid Assessment on child domestic labor in selected localities across Islamabad and four provincial capitals revealed that almost every fourth household in affluent communities employ children for domestic tasks. Among children employed in domestic labor, around 62 per cent were girls. However, in Peshawar and Quetta, the proportion of girls was comparatively lower than Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad due to relatively conservative mindset discouraging female mobility as well as employment.
Street children are another category yet very different from the rest of the child laborers as majority of these souls have to live in streets, dependent on their employers without any regular shelter, family or guardian and at times are exposed to criminals and crimes. They work as rag pickers, shoe-shiners, article sellers and beggars while staying around crowded areas in markets, roadside hotels and bus stands.

An estimated number of 1.2 million children may be found on the streets of Pakistan’s major cities and urban centers constituting ‘runaway children’, who work and live in streets apart from a minority that return to their families by the end of the day with meager earnings. According to a United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) survey, 72 per cent of working children are not in contact with their families and 10 per cent are not even aware of their family whereabouts.

The determinants of child labor point out the multitude of socio-economic factors rooted deep into lack of opportunities, high rate of population growth, unemployment, uneven distribution of wealth and resources, outdated social customs, extremism and security situation translating into increasing poverty. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the daily income of 65.5% people in Pakistan is below US $ two a day, while Asian Development Bank (ADB) reports that 47 million people in Pakistan are living below the poverty line.

Majority of children from the poorer families are forced to engage in some economic activity to support their households financially. Primarily their earning contributes towards the survival of the household considering deprivation for basic life necessities such as food, clothing, shelter, and medication as 30% of country’s total population lives below the poverty line. In Pakistan, like many developing countries, state is not doing enough for social security of the poor households to supplement their income disparity. Class based education system adds to the misery of the poor families as public schooling doesn’t cater for the needs of modern job market, which discourages families with marginal income to send their children to schools considering it useless in job market competitiveness.

Children in Pakistan would traditionally work with their families until the 1960s when the country made a dramatic effort to expand its manufacturing base which led to a remarkable and disproportionate increase in the number of children working outside the home, outside the village, in small manufacturing units and workshops where owners sought to maximize profits by keeping down labor costs. The children working in these places were beyond the direct reach or supervision of their families and were increasingly the victims of industrial accidents, exploitation, mistreatment and abuse.

The labor market characteristics and socio-economic dimensions of children involved in economic activity across Pakistan remain unexplored mainly due to cultural acceptance of child work instead of an overarching child labor category. Unfortunately, state institutions don’t track child labor and its trends in different sectors. On the other hand, labor force surveys do not classify the child labor category. Even data from National Survey on Child Labor lacks a lot of information about children’s work in different industrial and social supply chains.

To improve the quality and regularity of information gathering to evolve a data base suitable for researching trends and informed policy making, there is a need for:

- Adapting official household questionnaires and survey methodologies to assess the socio-economic and labor market conditions of child laborers
- Incorporating household surveys’ explicit questions on child workers, their remuneration, work conditions and socio-economic profile of both the demand and supply side.

Without such information on child labor market, its mechanism and operational process can’t be understood for informed policy making to reduce child labor across sectors at local, sub-national and national level.

National & International Instruments regarding Child Labor

Many years after the ratification of the UN and ILO conventions, the government has shown the will to tackle the issue of child labor in terms of its seriousness but paradoxically one doesn’t see any effective implementation of laws and acts prohibiting child labor across different sectors where it is prevalent. Omission can be referred primarily to the country’s economy as it can’t sustain such drastic measures and culturally embedded notion of child work as multiple facets of learning, skill development and contribution to household income.
International Instruments

- **ILO Minimum Age Convention 138 (C138), 1973:** The Convention concerning minimum age for employment was adopted in 1973 by the ILO which requires ratifying states to pursue a national policy designed to ensure the effective abolition of child labor and to raise progressively the minimum age for work replaced several similar ILO conventions in specific fields of labor. However, the minimum age for entry into work should not be less than 15 years and not less than the age of completing compulsory schooling under Article 2 (3) of the Convention or 14 under Article 2(4) for countries "whose economic and educational facilities are insufficiently developed".

- **By Article 7(4) of the Convention "light work" is allowed for children from the age of 12 in developing countries. The minimum age for hazardous work that is likely to jeopardize the health, safety or morals of young person shall not be less than 18 years under Article 3 (I) of the Convention. Pakistan ratified this Convention in 2006 with the reservation that it shall set 14 years as minimum age limit as in Employment of Children.

- **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), September 1990:** According to this convention, child below the age of 18 years is called child. The convention calls states to respect and ensure the given rights to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind. By this convention, a child is to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child's education, or to be harmful to the child's health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development under Article 32. To achieve a child's right to education, states are to make in accordance with Article 28 primary education compulsory and free for all. Every child also has a right to play, rest and leisure under Article 31.

- **ILO Worst Forms Convention 182 (C182), 1999:** Under this Convention the term child applies to all persons under the age of 18. The convention calls for immediate and effective measures to prohibit and eliminate the worst forms of child labor:

1. All forms of slavery and slavery-like practices, such as child trafficking, debt bondage, and forced labor, including forced recruitment of children into armed conflict;

2. using a child for prostitution or the production of pornography;

3. using a child for illicit activities, in particular drug production and trafficking; and

4. hazardous work

National Laws

Article 25 (3) of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan recognizes special right of protection for children due to their vulnerability further ratifying United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), made it obligatory on the states to take all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the rights enshrined in the convention. Article 25A enshrines the right of free and compulsory education to all children of the age from five to 16 years and its assurance is obligatory for state.

In Pakistan, the issue of child labor has been addressed in a number of pieces of national legislation ensuring children's wellbeing and rights be protected;

- Mines Act, 1923 (prohibits employment of persons less than 14 years near mines, and lesser than 18 in underground mines.)

- The Children (Pledging of Labor) Act, 1933 prohibits the making of an agreement to pledge the labor of children in return of consideration and if the conditions under which the agreement is made are such as to be detrimental to the child, the Act makes the agreement void. Act is ambiguous with regard to children who are employed without such agreements. In fact, this Act forbids parents or any person from compelling children to work.

- Factories Act 1934 (prohibits employment of children under 14 in factories)

- Shops & Establishments Ordinance 1969 (prohibits employment of children under 14 in shops and commercial enterprises; a punishable offence).

- Employment of Children Act, 1991 prohibits employment of children in certain occupations/processes, and regulates children's employment in other sectors (This act prohibits the use of child labor in hazardous occupations)
and environments. It governs the conditions for employment of children in safer types of work where a number of occupations and processes are prohibited, ensuring their rights, which include working hours and rest breaks.

- Road Transport Workers Ordinance (prohibits employment of under 18 years person in any transport related work and under 21 as drivers)
- Constitution of Pakistan (Article 11 prohibits work by children below 14 in factories, mines or hazardous work)

In June 2013, the Federal government recommended the minimum wage Rs 10,000. Owing to devolution setting of wages became provincial subject and would be set by the Provincial Wage Board under the Minimum Wage Ordinance 1961. The Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governments have notified the minimum rates of wages for adult, unskilled and juvenile workers employed in any industry equals to Rs. 10,000. Unfortunately, the minimum wage labor rule only applies to the formal sector, marginalizing further labor of informal sector into cycle of exploitation especially child laborers.

Under Article 25A of the Constitution, the state is obliged to provide free and compulsory education to all the children between ages of 5-16. Pakistan has failed to uphold its commitments of minimum age of employment 16 years in federal as well as provincial legislations, and is not fulfilling its obligation of ratification even with reservations in line with ILO convention on Minimum Age of Employment and Worst Forms of Labor: The country still lacks appropriate legislation on child domestic workers and the Bonded Labor System Abolition Act 1992 which doesn't contain any special provision for working children.

After the devolution by 18th Constitutional Amendment, child labor has become a provincial subject. There are legislations tabled in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa yet long way to go for developing instruments of its implementation.

Constitution of Pakistan in Article 3 guarantees the elimination of all forms of exploitation while Article 11(3) states that no child below 14 years of age shall be engaged in any factory or mine or any other hazardous employment while Article 37(e) requires state to make provisions for securing just and humane conditions of work, ensuring that women and children are not employed in vacations unsuited to their age or sex.

The employment of a child in the banned occupations and processes mentioned in the schedule listed and amended in 2005 is punishable with imprisonment which may extend to one year or with a fine of up to Rs 20,000 or both. The Act
obligates the government to appoint special inspectors for ensuring the compliance. The government has failed to date to appoint compliance inspectors instead have directed labor inspectors appointed under Factory Act 1934 to conduct child labor inspections under Employment of Children Act 1991.

**Scope of the Study**

Situational analysis of child labor with a deep understanding of its nature, volume and prevalence of child labor in Kasur has been conducted with specific focus on Tannery Industry. The study aims to identify gaps in the present monitoring and policy practices and give recommendations to improve the situation, bound with international laws and governmental obligations.

**Methodology**

With the help of Alpha Foundation, a preliminary conceptual mapping was carried out to develop qualitative as well as quantitative instruments for data collection. Questionnaire was designed to capture perceptions, knowledge of stakeholders along with directly affected people, i.e. children and household members covering thematic areas of work, education and health. In addition, questions on living conditions, use of energy sources, access to toilets and mapping of household work breaking down individual share were also asked.

400 KAP questionnaires were administered at household level along with four focus group discussions conducted with parents, tannery owners, working children along with staff and teachers of non-formal classes run by Alpha Foundation using an outline focusing on stakeholders’ experience, observations, perception and attitude towards child work and its implication for the children and households. Twenty semi-structured in-depth interviews with child laborers and their parents, community members, tannery owners and other stakeholders from the government line departments provided an insight about the perceived impact of labor on children and families.

Furthermore, sensitivity to the children issues, communication with them in their first language was ensured throughout the data gathering process where enumerators used native language during interviews. Combination of different research tools (interviews with children in work, former child workers, parents, key informants and FGDs) helped to capture the complexity of workers’ lives and conditions that propel them into this work and help devise an effective and workable intervention reinforced with an effective advocacy strategy catering for the needs of all stakeholders.

Overall, the livelihood framework was used to understand the causal relationship of labor, childhood, household and monetary contribution into household income. Livelihood framework provides an opportunity to decipher complex issues in broader context.

**Target groups of Survey Sites**

A comprehensive survey was conducted in the targeted localities such as Union Council 5 and 6 in Kasur district where small and medium tanneries and communities engaged in tannery work were concentrated. Major groups in focus were households entrenched in child labor working mostly in leather industry which also includes women and girls involved in stitching and sewing of upper of shoes, a major economic activity linked with home-based contractual work.
Socio-Economic Characteristics

Residential Status

Respondents of this study were from diverse ethnic backgrounds, predominantly Christians who were engaged in most of the processes in tanneries in the making of wet blue, a term for specific raw leather skin products. Almost half the respondents live in pakka houses while more than one third in semi pakka and 14 per cent in thatched mud houses.

Almost 67 per cent households have separate toilets while others have a washroom cum toilet. There is a less than one per cent, who doesn't have a separate toilet at all.

Main Source of Energy for Cooking

More than half the households use Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders for cooking while one third use firewood. Though, one quarter have regular access to natural gas, a substantial number of households use dung cake as the source of energy.

Household Size:

Household or family size is an important demographic variable. The average household size for the working children covered in this study was rather high. Accordingly, the average household size is bigger for these households of working children than the average household in Kasur. According to 1998 population census, the average household size in urban areas of Kasur was 7.2 while this study estimates approximately 7.8. Relatively higher family size of children surveyed may be related to the poverty of the household as families tend to have larger family to cope with financial needs through multiple earning strategy.
**Household Income:**

The average weekly household income of a family with children in tannery industry ranges from Rs 500-1500, i.e. 23% reportedly earn up to Rs 500, 27% - Rs1000, 22% - Rs 1500 and 28% earn Rs 1500 and above, which clearly shows that with a household size of 7.8 members have an average monthly income per person figure lower than Rs 714. This level of income puts these families extremely below the poverty line. Different interventions would be suitable for families with considerably different incomes. The main question from intervention’s point of view would be whether families at poverty levels would be able to survive without the working child's income.

**Work Environment**

Responding to a question regarding work environment, majority of the respondents including parents and children didn't found any good for children. Goodness was linked to physical environment which means chemical, hazardous as well as social conditions because a lot of respondents mentioned that due to interaction with older colleagues, children develop peevishness, get into bad habits such as gambling, drugs, etc. and become more stubborn.

**Decision about Child’s Work**

Research shows that almost 50 per cent decisions to send children for work in tannery sector of Kasur was taken by fathers followed by 31 percent by mothers and 17 percent decisions were taken by the children themselves. Interestingly, during data collection, the team encountered young children who instead going for tuition go for casual work of layering or drying and make a little money on daily basis. It means there is always temptation for children to work even when they are attending schools for cash which they are free to spend on their choice of stuff from local shops. In case of girls majority start working alongside their mothers without decision making process seeming their very early start.

**Treatment of Contractors/owners**

Responses show that people in authority may it be contractor or owner of the tannery misbehave verbally most of the time while some are polite and others are abusive and harsh even when work is done according to the terms.

**Violence at Workplace**

Approximately 70 per cent respondents complained of violence at workplace, and one fourth experienced physical violence. Apparently women who are in contractual work in stitching of uppers of shoes, peeling nuts and other works face more verbal and financial violence. There are a couple of
cases of sexual violence which need further probe, as due to taboo or public stigma, respondents usually avoid mentioning it. Generally, both the verbal and physical abuses are not regarded as an unusual feature within the cottage tannery industry among the employer and employee in Kasur.

Why not Study

Majority of the respondents of the study mentioned poverty the basic cause of child labor, as parents are unable to afford educational expenses. Another big segment thinks that parents prefer to send their children to work rather than school because of unavailability of free textbooks, uniforms, stationery and transport. Almost 10 per cent of the respondents were of the opinion that they have no choice but to send their children to work while almost 10 per cent replied that children were not interested in education, as they earn and take whatever cash share they want for themselves to spend.

Why Girls don't go to School?

Poverty and cultural norms further marginalize the girls in terms of their schooling. The study shows that insecurity and societal restrictions on women mobility hamper girls' education. Apparently, Kasur is a liberal place where there is no issue of female mobility yet young girls' free movement is somehow a taboo. Poverty plays a significant role to stop sending girls to school, but culturally investment in girl's education is considered useless, as she has to move on after her marriage alongside the fear of being an independent person. In a household, majority of elder women, especially mothers, work, so there is no choice for girls but to carry out household chores. One per cent household in the study said that girls work to buy their dowry.

Sources of Family Income (Type of work)

Approximately, 55 per cent households in the study claimed that the work they do is skill based may it be working in tanneries, sewing and making of shoes, or any other work. Upper sewing, nut peeling and similar tasks within home-based contractual work also falls into skilled category though level of skill may vary. Findings show that work at site or off-site at home that falls into skilled category has more than 95% share while any other source merely contributes less than 5% in household income.

Household Income Contribution

Primary focus of the study was on children working in tanneries. Findings of the study show that in poorer households, dependent directly or indirectly
on tannery sector, the overall contribution in family income of male members equals to females. Considering children's contribution, girls surpass boy's income contribution. Looking at rest of the family members' contribution shows that majority of the households linked to tannery industry are nuclear families with few exceptions of extended or joint setups.

Benefits of Education

Findings show that most of the respondents believe that education helps find the better employment opportunities. Combining with better future prospects means that majority regardless of age or gender believes that education helps in socioeconomic mobility. Another advantage of education was portrayed as it helps reduce dependency on others in reading and writing while one fourth think that education helps people civilize and learn manners.

How Children can Study

Majority of the respondents think that free education, including books, stationery, and uniforms will help households to send their children to schools. Approximately 20 per cent respondents showed their inclination towards their children's education provided alternative or flexible schooling is introduced, which adjusts with working hours. Accessibility translating as in the vicinity could be an incentive especially for girl's education as parents have reservation about girls' wellbeing and security in terms of mobility. Financial assistance in terms of scholarship complementarity from employers to spare children for alternative schooling could be contributor for child education, say some of the respondents.

Borrowing of Households

The study shows that households borrow from different sources including relatives, neighbors, friends, employer, local shops and money lenders, who charge interests on borrowing. Respondents also reported borrowing from microfinance institutions such as Kashef, Tameer bank, Assasa, and Khalish bank. Only women can borrow from these institutions.

Majority of the households borrowings are used in buying or construction of the house followed by emergencies and payment of utilities and in some cases children's school fees. People also borrow for the treatment of diseases and in case of
unemployment or low work availability. Around 7 per cent re-borrowing were attributed to the payment of old loans.

Spending on Health

Unfortunately, the study reveals that spending of average household on health per month is a substantial amount ranging from less than Rs. 150 per month to more than 2000 per month. This cost on health is obviously linked with lifestyle, food, living conditions, and external environment which include working conditions, sanitation in the area, waste management, clean drinking water and access to health care services.

FOCUS GROUPS:

The understanding of the problems being faced by working children, their parents, and owners/manufacturers/contractors relating to the industry has also been obtained through Focus Group Discussions. The strategy of FDG research design was built around the process of interactive discussion of selected participants to express their views on child labor, its forms and related issues.

FINDINGS

The significant findings drawn from the synthesis of focus group discussions with parents both mothers and fathers, working children, community members and owners/contractors in Kasur are as under:

The FDG participants attributed financial needs of the family, low socio-economic stature, a few assets and in some cases unsmooth income of father the major factors behind child labor. The main source of income for these families was work opportunities in leather-related businesses primarily tanneries or shoe making while a big majority of women and girls supplement household income through stitching shoe uppers or peeling and preparing pine nuts.

Tanneries have mushroomed across Kasur as cottage industry, which is the primary sector and source of employment in the city. More than half the tanneries are of small size with inadequate space, poorly ventilated and mostly hazardous working conditions. In tanneries, work availability fluctuates. A couple of months after Eid-ul-Adha (Muslims sacrificial celebrations) is usually the peak season in terms of excessive availability of animal skins in the market otherwise it remains low during rest of the year. During peak season, majority of skilled tannery workers earn around 40-50 thousand rupees per month, which is utilized for debt payments and some savings.

Majority of parents especially mothers don’t want to send their children to work but they are left with no option due to financial constraints. Parents as part of multiple earning livelihood strategies send their children to work, which supplements household income to make both ends meet. At times, parents send their children to work so that the latter may not involve in unhealthy activities or bad company as being idle. In some cases, children refused to go to school due to ill and harsh treatment of teachers and once they start going to work and start earning money, they feel empowered. Some parents felt that working children affect bad influence on their school going peers because of access to money and junk food. Whereas the school going peers have to undergo punishments. Many school going children instead of going for tuition, in the evening go to tanneries where their friends or neighbors work and earn reasonable money.

Some parents expressed their inability to afford daily educational expenses in terms of pocket money, uniform and stationery. They wanted to send their children to school but finances are a big hindrance and ultimately their children end up working along their fathers or siblings. Similar views were expressed by the owners as what they
said due to poor socio-economic conditions parents prefer to send their children to a tannery, from where they fetch some money and acquire a skill.

On the other hand, the parents’ investment in education may go useless due to joblessness in the country. Almost all the participants value education as a vehicle which brings better employment opportunities and modify personal manners.

Almost all the participants from parents and employers’ group were well aware about the child labor, its prohibition and implication. Parents were of the opinion that they don’t want to send their children to work but financial situation is a major hurdle. Tannery owners and contractors were of the opinion that majority of parents are usually uneducated, hence they do not value education. Younger children usually accompany their fathers or elder siblings just to help them in their work instead of going to school or in some cases roaming idly in streets. Once they start going to work and are regularly given money even in small amounts to spend on their choices makes them empowered and allured by work instead of going to school.

According to employers and contractor’s group no tannery employees any under age children; it’s displayed in writing outside every tannery small, medium or large. The children one sees on the premises are usually they one who accompany their family members mostly fathers or elder brothers and don’t work for the owner or contractor. Owner’s group said that, parents send or take them along to learn trade skills at very early age which pays off later instead of sending them to school.

Tannery is a hazardous industry, workers exposed to the polluted atmosphere in the form of toxic chemicals, bad smell and working conditions. No one uses any safety equipment, gloves, working dresses or other occupational safety gadgets during work. Employees buy their own helping gadgets from their own wages rather supplied by the owner. Majority of the children work in spray section, liming, spreading wet leather on steel sheets for drying in the open. Almost all these sections are linked with the use of some chemicals, that’s why workers regularly get exposed to these chemicals.

Tannery business is a seasonal business with high and low fluctuations during extreme summers and usually slows in winters as drying takes place under the sunlight, which exposes workers to harsh weather extremes.

Discussion in women’s group disclosed an interesting finding that women and girls from almost every household are involved in home based work may it be peeling pine nuts or upper sewing or any other type of work to supplement the household income. Owing to seasonal fluctuations and availability of work womenfolk is always engaged in home based work to supplement household income.

Upper sewing and pine nut peeling both can be categorized as skilled labor. In upper stitching fingers get pierced with needles and sitting for long hours effect back bone in the long run. While peeling pine nuts is hazardous due to long sitting and then drying on fire with bare hands, Women’s group also pointed towards prevalent practices of gambling and drugs among the males which further makes them bound to work for household livelihood.

Parents and children were of the opinion that there should be some provision of vocational training along with flexible schooling for working children which can help to raise their situation. Improvement in schools, teacher’s behavior and free availability of uniform and stationery will help to reduce inhibition among parents for education.

All the groups agree that there is a dire need of advocacy and sensitization at mass level about the hazards of child labor for children, family and society as a whole. Behavioral change is needed across all segments of the society to curb child labor. Majority praised the role of civic society groups for running non-formal schools and efforts of field staff and teachers in mobilizing parents and community to send their children for education in parallel to work.

Causes of Child Labor

A fundamental factor in the issue of Pakistan child labor rests in structural issues coupled with inefficiency of protective legislation for working children. Although, the government has made attempts to eradicate child labor, these provisions are greatly ignored and the industry continues to employ in its production process. Ironically, the legislation does not completely define the term child labor. Another complication lies within the country’s vast population as their ignorance of the law and illiteracy prevent the enforcement of such proposals. This ignorance could be prevented through the establishment of universal Pakistan dialect and a higher standard of education throughout the country.
Pakistan is suffering from extremely tender socio-economic and political chaos. There are many reasons as to why share of child labor is increasing due to poverty, large family sizes, social attitudes and low literacy rate, worst economic crisis, and continuity of natural disasters. Poverty seems to be the principal factor behind child labor for many parents, as it forces their children to work the only way to survive. Majority of children work due to financial hardships, either to contribute labor for wages, to supplement household incomes or to work at home so that adults can work outside. Parents want their children to get education as they consider it helps find better job opportunities, mend civil behavior, enable children to read and write, and get better matches for girls.

Another factor which compels parents to send their children to work instead of schools seems to be the lack of opportunities even for educated children across the job sector. A very interesting correlation between child laborers of one generation to its succeeding generation is that by the time children grow parents especially fathers have completed the labor cycle of 30-40 years and exhausted to work further, so they engage their children in work to run their household.

Lack of awareness and illiteracy is another factor which contributes towards child labor and parents ignore the importance of education. For girls, it’s more of a taboo and stereotype thinking that it is a useless investment, as ultimately they have to get married and go to their husband’s place.

There is a prevalent misconception about girls’ education that they become stubborn and don’t obey the elders once they get education. It causes social insecurity among parents. Interestingly, almost all the girl’s income out of home based work feeds into household livelihood expenditure as contractual arrangements are between parents and employers, as compared to boys who take loan’s share from their own income to spend on their choices.

Child labor is a very complex problem with its roots in the socio-economic system of the country. It stems from poverty, lack of education & health facilities, and better avenues of employment. Eradication of child labor is indeed a formidable task. While legislations do help to a considerable extent, mitigation of child labor problem is not possible unless its fundamental raison d’etre is attacked. Substantial allocation of funds in education, human development and health sector focusing on poverty prone communities supported by creation of a conscience nation will help parents decide to send their children to schools for better education and possibilities of better life prospects in terms of job opportunities and personal grooming. Mass media campaign will create awareness about the menace of child labor.

With widening socio-economic gap, children of poorer families tend to be more vulnerable for being sucked into expanding informal sector or child domestic workers market. According to the Institute of Social Justice more than quarter of a million children mostly girls are working as domestic laborer, and are frequently exposed to verbal as well as physical abuse and at times sexual violence. On top of this there is no provision of any formal contract which means dismissal any point of time, staying at master’s place and to give into long, tiresome working hours and conditions.

Unfortunately, monitoring of child labor is very difficult as majority is employed by informal sector, making it difficult to map and monitor due to its nature and spread and lack of monitoring mechanism spares this harmful practice continue unabatedly. Non-availability of provincially disaggregated data is especially problematic after 18th Amendment which makes provinces responsible for child labor legislation. Though there are numerous progressive laws which deal with Child Labor but unfortunately the government has failed to provide for their implementation and enforcement.

Recommendations

As the menace of child labor is deep-rooted, only the legislation and its implementation will further marginalize the households already living below the poverty-line. Owing to its structural nature, it should be dealt with at multiple levels.

- Alternative education institutions should be set up in easy access with flexible hours suitable to working children.

- A skill development program should be introduced which can help working children change their trades.

- Working conditions should be improved by jointly mobilizing children, adult workers and tannery owners to introduce occupational health and safety measures.

- Home-based work should be institutionalized to save women and girls from exploitation.

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- Mass campaign is needed for a change in mindset about education particularly girls education through behavioral change communication.

- Government line departments should mediate between child workers and tannery owners to improve working conditions and create a space for education.

- By introducing better hygiene and cleanliness practices and efficient water and sanitation system, cost of reoccuring illness can be reduced which, in turn, will increase the availability of funds for other productive needs of the household.

- Rapid policies to adapt and enhance macroeconomic rehabilitation are needed at provincial and district level.

- Fast action is required for the enforcement of labor and occupational health and safety laws.

- An up-to-date child labor survey should be conducted to map and measure the current situation across the country.

Experience has shown that withdrawing children from the worst forms is possible, but cannot be successful without a strong political will. This 'will' must be embedded in a
REFERENCES


Reducing Child Labor through Non-formal Basic Education

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