

# **Rapid Assessment**

**Of**

**Scavengers (Rag-pickers)  
Lahore, Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar and  
Islamabad**

**Pakistan**

*For*

**Time-bound Programme Preparatory  
Phase Worst forms of child labour**

*Submitted by*

**Sustainable Development Policy Institute  
(SDPI)**

*to*

**International Labour Organization (ILO)  
Pakistan Office**

January 2004

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## Acronyms

ILO	International Labor Organization
TBP	Time Bound Program
CLRF	Child Labour Research Forum
SDPI	Sustainable Development Policy Institute
UN	United Nations
NGO	Non-governmental organization
INGO	International Non-governmental organization
CRC	Convention on the Right of the Child
WFCL	Worst Form of Child Labor
NCCWD	National Commission for Child Welfare and Development
RA	Rapid Assessment
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
KDA	Karachi Development Authority
NWFP	North-West Frontier Province
TB	Tuberculosis
DHA	Defense Housing Authority
PEPA	Pakistan Environmental Protection Act
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency (at the Federal level)
EPDs	Environmental Protection Departments (at the provincial levels)

## Glossary

Ganda nala	Drain with dirty water
Hamam	Public bath
Jhounpri	Make shift hut
Kachi	An indigenous tribe of interior Sindh
Kachra Karobar	Ragpicking/trash business
Kachra kundi	Iron rod with a magnet tied at one end
Kandawala	Junk yard owner
Pacca	Made of cement
Seth	Junk yard contractor
Thakedar	Contractor
Walwar	Bride price (A culture in some of the areas of the country)

**Time-bound Programme Preparatory Phase**

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**Worst Forms of Child Labour  
Report on Rag pickers/Scavengers**

## **1. Introduction**

This report has been produced at the request of the ILO. It is based on a rapid assessment carried out in 2003 in five major cities of Pakistan. The report is divided into several sections. After introducing the larger policy context that underlies the rationale for undertaking the rapid assessment, we provide the legal context and outline the dearth of studies and initiatives undertaken in this area. In explaining the methodology of the rapid assessment we discuss the research instruments, the fieldwork sites and sample as well as the pre-requisites for the field training and survey. A separate section on the scavenging sector describes the different work arrangements of scavengers, work sites and stages of scavenging/ragpicking<sup>1</sup>. The section on main findings about scavengers is largely based upon first-hand knowledge of ragpickers through questionnaires, interviews, case studies and focus group discussions. This section covers both the economic as well as social causes and consequences of ragpicking and attempts to map briefly the different risks and vulnerabilities that children encounter as ragpickers. The final section, based on our findings, contains recommendations for the elimination of ragpicking.

## **2. Background**

This section is divided into three subsections: the first pertains to the time bound program which sets the policy context for the need to eliminate child labour. The second subsection introduces the issue of child labour in Pakistan; the third subsection provides information on international and national laws that can apply to child labour in Pakistan and underscores the fact that few laws cover child labour outside the factory context. The fourth subsection examines the literature and initiatives undertaken by civil society to combat ragpicking.

### **2.1. *About the Time Bound Program***

In 2001 Pakistan ratified the ILO Convention 182 [on Worst Forms of Child Labour] and subsequently ILO sought to assist the government through the initiation of the Time Bound Program [TBP] for the elimination of child labour. ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of child Labour (IPEC) came up with a new project of support for the Government of Pakistan's Time-Bound Programme to eliminate the Worst Form of Child Labour (WFCL). This new project of support is being launched for the duration of four years 2003-2007, and has financial support from the US Department of Labour. The project of support will also provide technical assistance to the Government of Pakistan to implement ILO Convention 182 on WFCL, as it has both upstream (policy level) and downstream (community level direct action) interventions.

The Time-Bound Programme is essentially a set of tightly integrated and co-ordinated development policies and programmes to prevent and eliminate a country's worst forms of child labour within a defined period of time. In a nutshell, it has clear goals, specific targets and a defined time frame. A Child Labour Research Forum (CLRF) was constituted, headed by Ministry of Labour and representation from other public and private agencies. This rapid assessment was carried out on the advise of CLRF.

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1 We use the two terms, scavenging and ragpicking, interchangeably.

This rapid assessment on rag pickers constitutes a part of the preparatory phase of the TBP and is aimed at generating basic information on the rag-picking sector. The rapid assessment objectives were:

- To assess the magnitude and nature of scavenging/rag-picking and the working conditions of children in these sectors.
- To identify the socio-economic, family and cultural background of the target group
- To examine the root causes of the involvement of children in scavenging/rag-picking as well as the mechanisms and networks through which hazardous forms of child labour take place
- To examine the impact of children's involvement in scavenging/rag-picking.
- To identify and critically assess Government, INGO and NGO interventions aimed at preventing and controlling children's involvement in scavenging/rag-picking, with special attention to the situation of girls.

## **2.2. Child Labour in Pakistan**

Child labour constitutes a grave violation of human rights as it negates the principles of human dignity. Its existence in any society poses a serious challenge not just to the persons or families directly involved in child labour but to all individuals and institutions. Child labour deprives children of their inalienable right to education, health and a carefree childhood. Moreover child labour also affects the level of human resource development that a country aims to achieve in future.

The latest estimated population of Pakistan is 149 million, 7<sup>th</sup> in the World's population size. The annual population growth rate is 2.1 percent. According to the Economic Survey (1997-98), the under-18 age group of Pakistan's population was 66.9 million, more than half of the total population. A considerable number of children (29%)<sup>2</sup> of primary school going age group do not attend school due to lack of resources; instead, they engage in different income generation activities. Poverty is the main cause of children's absence from schools and their involvement in different labour activities. Almost 41.1 percent population of Pakistan still live below poverty line.

Low incomes and large family size (6.8 %) exacerbate the poverty cycle which in turn results in greater dependence upon child labour, whereby children, both male and female, enter the mainstream labour force to bring forth supplementary incomes to maintain the economic balance of their families.

There is a greater incidence of poverty in rural areas compared to urban areas. Pakistan Poverty Assessment (1995) found that there is a high incidence of poverty in rural areas as compared to urban areas. Earlier research conducted by the Human Resources Management and Development Centre shows that poverty is the main factor in 94 % cases of child labour<sup>3</sup>.

Pakistan's rural areas contain 38.65 percent of its poor<sup>4</sup>. Growing poverty is also a major cause of migration to urban areas. Internal and external migration has added

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2 Pakistan National Human Development Report 2003, UNDP Pakistan

3 Fading hopes, Human Resources Management & Development Centre, Peshawar 2002

4 Economic Survey of Pakistan 2002-03

to child labour. Pakistan has hosted more than three million afghan refugees who have engaged themselves in low or unskilled work. The involvement of child labour among refugees is significantly high. The poorest families prefer to engage children in income generating activities for family survival.

Working children have become an integral part of Pakistan's society. A child worker is considered another source of low paid work. While a few individuals may benefit from child labour, the long-term effects are negative for the national economy. Child labor is found in a wide range of economic activities, including agriculture, non-traded services, the flesh trade, small scale and micro enterprises. Furthermore, a notable majority of children work under exploitative and hazardous conditions<sup>5</sup>.

Child labour in Pakistan includes at least 30 percent children who usually leave home to work in big cities as rag pickers, domestic servants, beggars or factory workers. Girls are more vulnerable than boys due to exposure to the risk of sexual harassment. This does not imply that small boys escape such risks. In the ragpicking sector, girls usually stop working once they reach puberty due to cultural norms that require minimal access and exposure to the public sphere. Patriarchal protection acts to their advantage in this particular context.

### **2.3. The legal context**

Labor laws, forming a part of industrial law with its origins in the industrial revolution, have developed in conjunction with conceptions of social justice, democracy and citizens' rights. The international labor movement has also promoted labour laws worldwide. In the Pakistani context, three major issues emerge in relation to labor legislation: first, the bulk of labor laws are inherited from Pakistan's colonial past with some modifications. This means that many of them are unable to address the numerous labor issues arising from changing patterns in relations of production. Second, these laws have an inbuilt bias in that their assumed subject is a man rather than a child or a woman. This bias springs from the conception of man as the main bread earner who performs productive work in the public sphere. This is not to imply that protective legislation is completely absent for children and women but to assert that the main body of law assumes its subject to be male and therefore, it caters to a certain social construction of the world that reinforces the sexual division of labor. Third, and related to the above two, is the absence of labor laws that apply to the non-factory workplace in Pakistan. As such, the home and open streets and bazaars seldom come under any kind of legislation as workplaces.

Keeping the issues outlined above, how can one safeguard children? One important source of protection for children is improvement in economic conditions and increased economic opportunities, which strengthen their families and therefore will prevent children from having to go to work. However, this is neither a necessary or sufficient condition and there are examples of sweatshops with exploitative conditions even in economies that are booming and have a high per capita income. Thus, legal protection is very important. This subsection reviews the progress Pakistan has made in this legal context by reviewing the various sources of possible

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

legal protection for child workers. Below, we discuss key international conventions ratified by Pakistan that address child labor directly, and the national constitution that addresses child labor in an indirect manner.

### 2.3.1 C-182 Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention (1999)

This convention adds to the existing body of laws for the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labor including ILO conventions C-138 on Minimum Age for Admission to Employment (1973), and C-29 Forced Labor Convention (1930), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the UN Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (1956).

According to this convention, ratified by Pakistan in July 2001, the term child shall apply to all persons under the age of 18. A majority of the articles cover some of the subjects mentioned above as well as child prostitution and the use of children for drug trafficking. However, article 3 (d) prohibits work that “by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.” The convention further elaborates that the types of work that is considered harmful shall be determined by national laws or regulations and should take into consideration relevant international standards. It also makes it incumbent upon the signatories to consult with employers’ and workers’ organizations to establish appropriate mechanisms to monitor the implementations of the provisions giving effect to the convention and to provide the necessary and appropriate direct assistance for the removal of children from the worst forms of child labor and for their rehabilitation and social integration. Furthermore, the signatories should provide access to free basic educations, and where possible, appropriate vocational training. It notes that child labor is caused to a great extent by “poverty and that the long-term solution lies in sustained economic growth leading to social progress, in particular poverty alleviation and universal education.” The Convention under Article 6 states that each member shall design and implement programmes of action to eliminate as a priority the worst forms of child labor. Therefore, after ratifying Convention 182 Pakistan requested the ILO to help it eradicate worst forms of child labor. In response, the ILO-IPEC Time-Bound Programme (TBP) was initiated. Details have already been discussed in the introductory section. Article 7 states that each member shall, taking into account the importance of education in eliminating child labor, take effective and time-bound measures to prevent the engagement of children in worst forms of child labor, provide direct assistance for the removal of children from the worst forms of child labor and for their rehabilitation and social integration; identify children at special risk; and take account of the special situation of girls.

### 2.3.2 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989):

The main instrument for child rights at the international level is the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), 1990. This convention has been preceded by a number of other international instruments, starting with the League of Nations’ Committee on Child Welfare in 1919 and followed by a number of international initiatives, including the Geneva Declaration on the Rights of the Child, 1923 endorsed by the League of Nations in 1924. In 1959, the UN adopted an expanded version of the same document as the Declaration of the Rights of the

Child. Other initiatives include the declaration of 1979 as the Year of the Child and the CRC.

Pakistan, as one of the first signatories of the CRC, submitted its national report to the CRC and recognized that the state needs to take more responsibility in a number of areas related to the rights of the child. This was a deviation from the norm whereby Pakistan is generally reluctant to accede to international human rights treaties for fear of scrutiny by the international community [Ali and Jamil (1994, 20-21)]. Article 32 of the CRC states that “States parties recognize the right of the child 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 be harmful to the child’s health, or physical mental, spiritual, moral or social development”. Although there is some degree of protection for child workers (discussed above), yet, as Ali and Jamil (1994, pp. 119-20) point out, “...these laws do not cover all working children in Pakistan. For instance, firstly, children working in the informal sector, in domestic service, in the fields and other such areas are excluded. Secondly, there is no uniform age for defining a child, which results in immense confusion for all concerned. Most important is the fact that the penalties provided under the existing Pakistan laws regarding child labor are so insignificant that they fail to make an impact”.

Article 31 of the CRC addresses the right of the child to rest and leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child. According to Ali and Jamil (1994, p. 117), no Pakistani laws address such rights. The Constitution only addresses it in the context of workers, but children are not addressed at all. A government report entitled, “Government of Pakistan Response to Queries Raised by the Committee on the Rights of the Child” authored by the National Commission for Child Welfare and Development [Government of Pakistan, NCCWD, (1994, p. 29)] acknowledges the limitations of national laws with regard to child labor.<sup>6</sup> It states: “These laws, however, fail to cover child labor employed in areas such as domestic labor and agriculture; seventy percent of Pakistan’s population lives in rural areas. There is also no minimum age where a child is carrying an occupation ‘with the help of the family or in a school established, assisted or recognized by Government”.

The NCCWD (ibid p.29) has proposed to all the relevant Ministries to improve upon these legislations and also to raise the minimum age from 14 to 16 years. Necessary drafts containing amendments have already been given to the relevant ministries”. The same report (ibid p.30), in response to a query seeking specific information on the way child labor in agriculture and in the informal sector is inspected, acknowledges that “Presently no law in Pakistan governs employment of children in [the] agricultural sector; and the informal sector which employs less than ten employees”. The discussion above underscores the need for policy reform, legislation and most important, its enforcement.

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6 The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Government of Pakistan set up this Committee in 1980 following the International Year of the Child.

### 2.3.3 The Constitution of Pakistan, 1973

The Constitution of Pakistan [Government of Pakistan (1973)] guarantees certain rights across the board. According to Article 3, “The state shall ensure the elimination of all forms of exploitation and the gradual fulfillment of the fundamental principle, from each according to his ability to each according to his work”. According to Article 38 (a), the state shall “secure the well-being of the people, irrespective of sex, caste, creed or race, by raising their standard of living, by preventing the concentration of wealth and means of production and distribution in the hands of a few to the detriment of general interest and by ensuring equitable adjustment of rights between employers and employees, and landlords and tenants”. Furthermore, subsections (d) and (e) of the same article indicates that the state shall “...provide for all persons employed in the service of Pakistan or otherwise, social security by compulsory social insurance or other means; provide basic necessities of life, such as food, clothing, housing, education and medical relief, for all such citizens, irrespective of sex, caste, creed or race, as are permanently or temporarily unable to earn their livelihood on account of infirmity, sickness or unemployment; reduce disparity in the income and earnings of individuals...” Article 17 explicitly states, “every citizen shall have the right to form associations or unions, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of sovereignty or integrity of Pakistan, public order or morality”.

Certain provisions of the constitution specifically protect the rights of women and children. Article 25, after stating that all citizens are equal and that there shall be no discrimination on the basis of sex, adds that the state may undertake protective provisions in favor of women and children, thereby recognizing, according to Ahmad, Qaisrani and Tahir (n.d., p. 42), the need for special provisions to provide protection to the more vulnerable groups of the population. Article 11(3) states that “No child below the age of fourteen years shall be engaged in any factory or mine or any other hazardous employment”. According to Article 37(e), “The state shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work, ensuring that children and women are not employed in vocations unsuited to their age or sex, and for maternity benefits for women in employment”.

While it is obvious that legal protection is inadequate, yet, there is a beginning under the ILO-IPEC Program toward implementation of some of the international conventions that Pakistan has signed.

## **2.4 Review of NGO literature & initiatives for elimination of ragpicking/scavenging**

A number of NGOs all over Pakistan are working on child rights but few focus on children involved in rag-picking/scavenging, indicating the need for concerted efforts directed towards this issue by people in general and the government and non-government organizations in particular. We visited/contacted some organizations in connection to their activities related to child rights through research, advocacy, welfare work or different types of service delivery. Such initiatives draw peoples' attention towards addressing these problems. Resulting in a direct or indirect impact on working children, the intervention or role played by these organizations impacts child rag pickers as well. Most importantly research studies/field surveys undertaken by these organizations provide the necessary information to be used by policy

makers and the concerned and responsible quarters to help bring about positive social change by addressing problems that require immediate attention. Below, we discuss NGO initiatives.

An NGO, SPARC, with the same aims as the UN Convention on the rights of the child, is trying to improve the lot of children in Pakistan by highlighting their plight; writing and disseminating publications on various subjects relating to them; and pressing relevant governmental quarters to do something to improve the state of Pakistan's children. SPARC apart from publishing a quarterly newsletter in English, Urdu and Sindhi and a biannual magazine titled, *Discourse*, has also published the following: *Cries Unheard: Juvenile Justice in Pakistan; Child Rights in Pakistan; Child Labour-The Legal Aspects; Child Labour in Islamabad; The State of Child Labour in South Asia; Lengthening Shadows-Poverty Affected Children; Yokohama World Congress Report Against Child Sexual Abuse; Child Labour-The Conspiracy of Child Labour.*

In 1997, SPARC began its activities on a broader scale with its first State of Pakistan's Children Report appearing in early 1998. The State of Pakistan's Children, year after year reviews the condition of children in this country, progress made, targets realized and undertakings initiated. It also points out shortcomings, failings and neglect committed by federal and provincial governments, by agencies responsible for the well being of children and by society at large.

*Child labour in Islamabad* – is an optimistic publication by SPARC, which after presenting its findings and recommendations, ends on a very positive note with many hopes. This report presents findings on the issue of child labour specifically in the context of Islamabad and suggests that the problem of child labour in this city is at a stage where it can be easily controlled. The report also points out that the number of child workers in Islamabad is not too large and is easier to access. Therefore, any scheme introduced for the eradication of child labour in Islamabad will have a better chance of success and will serve as a model for other Pakistani cities. The report suggests that efforts through active involvement of NGOs, human rights organizations and influential people can effectively bring attention to and address the problem of child labour.

The Water, Environment and Sanitation Society (WESS), is working to bring lasting improvements in the quality of life of the poorest communities in Balochistan. WESS core work areas are water, environment, sanitation, street and working children and emergency relief. WESS has implemented successful projects in different parts of Balochistan including Quetta, Loralai, Musakhial, Killa Saifulah, Kila Abdullah, Ziarat, Kalat, Kharan, Khuzdar and Chaghi districts. WESS has a Programme on working children and basic child rights.

The NGOs Coalition on Child Rights-NWFP (Supported by UNICEF) conducted a study entitled *Child Abuse & Crimes Against Children in North West Frontier Province (Pakistan)* presents the patterns of abuse/crimes against children based on data obtained from newspapers of three months of year 1997 and then discusses each crime separately. The list indicating patterns of abuse/crimes against children include: murders; attempt to murder/seriously wounded; missing children (kidnapped for ransom, trafficked or runaway); sexual abuse; physical abuse; severe forms of

child neglect; suicide; killed in roadside accidents; wounded in roadside accidents; drowned; killed by landmines; seriously wounded in landmines; children used for crimes, and children abused/exploited in other ways. This report also indicates that: there is a high prevalence of male child sexual abuse including commercial sexual exploitation of children in North West Frontier Province. Children are being sexually abused and exploited at workplace, in markets, hotels, bus stations, video shops, snooker clubs, schools and other community places. Keeping young boys for sexual services by adults is by and large tolerated and accepted by the society. The report suggests that: addressing child sexual abuse should be a national priority. It highlights the need to seriously review and address societal values and moral standards, which allow, perpetuate or promote social crimes like the sexual exploitation of children and to put in place stringent laws on child sexual abuse and ensure their strict implementation at all levels. It also underscores the need to raise awareness about child rights and educate people, especially parents and teachers about the illegality and the harmful impact of sexual exploitation upon children and suggests that such groups be mobilized to form networks to protect children.

The Human Resources Management & Development Centre (HRMDC) is a learning organization and through the process of learning it has evolved creative approaches to addressing critical issues related to the development of women and children at the field level. Recognizing the child labour issue as a multifaceted problem and a serious constraint to any development in the country, this organization has undertaken two detailed research-based projects on the status of working children and impacts of their work environment on their social behaviour.

The research report "*Fading Hopes*" by HRMDC, focuses on aspects of the working children's social behaviour, specifically, how it may be adversely affected due to their work as child labourers. The study highlights the difficulties working children face particular social situations they experience, which may lead to delinquent behavior. The findings suggest that the break-up of the traditional family structure, poverty and the need to supplement family income due to parents' unemployment, under-employment or disability; lack of employment opportunities, education and other resources for adults, the influx of refugees and rural to urban migration are some of the factors responsible for bringing children into the work force. The report categorizes the nature of work/occupation children are involved in with the hours of work they put in each day and the wages they receive against their services. The findings of this study reveal that working children join the labour force as early as six years of age and they are not part of a formal education system. Working children work long hours and are economically exploited, with many paid at a rate of Rs.1 per hour. In addition to all this, working children are verbally abused and physically beaten as punishment, both at home and at work. The report also touches upon employers' behaviour; interaction between employer and the family, and the impact of work on children's social and psychological behaviour and development including types of delinquencies, reasons for misbehaving or committing delinquencies, common delinquent traits, misbehaviour at home and, children's reaction to punishment. The report recommends that in order to curtail child labour, the government should work with technical specialists in different sectors to simultaneously focus on issues that include legislation and implementation of policies and practices of governments and International laws, education, social security and poverty alleviation for the rehabilitation of working children.

A study, *Their Name is Tomorrow*, conducted by HRMDC focuses on the working children of Peshawar. This study attempts to shed light on child labour issues by focusing on the child as an individual caught up in a vicious cycle of poverty, indifference and inappropriate policies. The report presents the profile of a working child in Peshawar along with some aspects of his social life. It also presents a sector wise occupational breakdown of working children, which includes: rag picking, automobile repair, denting/painting, welding, number plate making, working as conductors, hotel boys, cycle workers, factory workers and vendors. The findings of the study indicate that children are mostly working due to the dire economic need of their families, therefore, they cannot simply be told to stop. The report points out that the process for ending child labour in Pakistan, as with the rest of Asia, will be slow but it can start now. It suggests that such a process can begin with non-judgmental awareness-raising that can lead to improving the conditions under which children work. It recommends the creation of flexible learning centres as an alternative to traditional schools, giving working children access to recreation and appropriate education without harming their ability to earn an income.

A Karachi based NGO Azad Foundation conducted a study in 2001 entitled *Street Children in Karachi-A Situation Analysis*. This study emphasizes the social factors that bring children to the streets, and the economic situation that compels them to live in distress. The study was conducted with the objective of creating awareness and then launching various programmes to address the problem. The study defines street children as those who for any reason, whether economic or social, have left their homes and are dwelling in parks or doorways, under bridges, in abandoned buildings or on pavements. These children normally undertake occupations like collecting and selling waste paper, plastic and scrap metal among others. Other occupations they take up include car cleaning, working as shoe shiners or in small hotels, selling newspapers or other petty money items. Street children can also be seen begging or pick-pocketing and many are drug addicts often using inhalants such as glue. It also gives the occupational breakdown of these children: the highest occupation reported was car polishing (70%), followed by begging (46%), cleaners (16%) and rag-pickers/scavengers (8%). The study highlights the threats, dangers and problems street children face in everyday life, for example, violence and brutality- physical and sexual abuse, the risk of STDs and other health hazards, exposure to harsh weather conditions and getting trapped by criminal mafias. Based on its research findings the report recommends an institution that offers physical shelter and food to street children. This institution should offer functional literacy so that street children are able to develop some basic learning tools. In addition, a vocational school as part of the institution would help in providing long-term rehabilitation to these children; the institution should also offer counseling to children and their families and design awareness and advocacy campaigns on the issue of street children is critical, suggests the report.

### **3. Methodology**

This report on ragpickers results from a rapid assessment. Rapid assessments constitute a first step to identify critical issues in a particular area where no base-line information exists. The present rapid assessment relied upon quantitative and qualitative data gathering techniques. In addition, a review of available secondary literature has been used to guide as well as indicate the severity of the problems

related to ragpickers' lives as well as the difficulties encountered in designing effective policy that is sensitive and responsive to the issues on the ground, informed by rigorous research.

The quantitative part of the rapid assessment depended upon semi-structured questionnaires (attached as an annex). These were administered in the four provincial capitals as well as the federal capital to capture regional variation if any. In addition, the questionnaires were distributed evenly among the different age groups of children involved in rag picking to ensure that no age group is ignored at the expense of another. Gender was also a key element, and despite the knowledge that fewer girls in the older age group are involved in rag picking due to cultural mores, the rapid assessment was designed to include a gender balance. The questionnaires, divided into different sections relate to their ethnic and family background, education, daily routine, hours, conditions, nature and remuneration for work, hazards, risks and threats as well as societal attitudes, ragpickers' hopes and plans for the future. The questionnaire was pre-coded and the information gathered was used to generate city-wise as well as overall information related to the different aspects of ragpickers' lives and activities involved in rag picking.

Qualitative data was gathered through case studies and in-depth interviews with rag pickers and key informants, focus group discussions with rag pickers, their family members as well as community leaders, and team observation and journals (translated interviews and selected case studies attached as annexes). All names were changed to keep the respondents identities anonymous. The qualitative interviews with rag pickers were translated and analysed to identify different themes. The purpose was to allow for issues to emerge from the interviews with rag pickers in order to circumvent the imposition of preconceived notions about what should be their issues. This could only be achieved through intensive training of the team to be sensitive to rag pickers words and encourage them to speak openly and with confidence.<sup>7</sup> The training included sensitivity to the children issues as well as the techniques for communication with children. The use of the children's first language was ensured throughout the data gathering process. The language spoken by respondents was different across the sites and as such we ensured that the field team members were native speakers or fluent in the respective languages. The key informant interviews were also conducted with sensitivity and the assurance of anonymity if the respondent so desired. Focus group discussions were also designed to cull out information about the issues pertaining to rag pickers' lives not only in their immediate family contexts but also in their community contexts. Case studies were conducted not only to capture the details of rag pickers' lives but also to provide pointers to the structural conditions that propel rag pickers out of rag picking or the impediments that keep rag pickers tied to this work. This information has been buttressed by quantitative information gathered from questionnaire data. All the names of respondents mentioned in text and case studies are fictitious to ensure privacy.

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7 An experienced team of field workers conducted field research that was deputed according to linguistic demand of the area. A Masters degree in a social sciences subject, prior field work experience, familiarity with research techniques and clarity of perception was the general criteria for the field researchers. A four-member team with equal gender ratio conducted the fieldwork. Members of the SDPI's core team led them.

### 3.1 *Research Instruments*

The research instruments were designed by SDPI team in consultation with ILO and were refined five times after a process of intensive discussions. The protocols were sensitive to gender issues as well as work specific contexts. The field tools used for the rapid assessment were:

**Mapping:** For this purpose visits to the maximum number of localities/dump places especially the places with hospitals waste and other wastes (junkyards, markets and residential areas) in all the identified sites such as residential areas, market places and municipality junkyards, were made. The sites were carefully selected from the mapping exercise for the research. (See annex 1 for details of the selected sites)

**Structured Questionnaires:** A total of 200 children (40 per city) were interviewed keeping in view their ethnicity, gender and age group.

**Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** FGDs with small groups of 12-15 people, including groups of children, adults, teachers, and community leaders, were conducted. In all nine Focus Group Discussions were conducted. These discussions were held separately for males and females after experimenting and realizing that the participants of both genders were not comfortable in a mixed composition of the group. Out of these nine Focus Group Discussions, five were of girls/mothers/community women and four were of boys/junkyard owners/fathers/community men.

**Key informant interviews:** Field researchers identified knowledgeable individuals in each community who could provide an overview of the kind of people engaged in rag picking activity. These covered individuals from municipalities, hospital administrative and owners that purchase collected waste material from scavengers.

**Individual interviews/case studies:** At least 3-4 case studies were conducted from amongst the 40 children to whom questionnaires were administered in each city.

**Observations:** Field researchers spent sufficient time observing rag-pickers working at dump places and they documented their observation in their field journals.

**Photographs:** Snapshots of working children and dumping places were taken to reinforce observations.

### 3.2 *Breakdown of Fieldwork by Site*

#### **Lahore**

- Mapping/identification of sites- Rag-pickers' work places, residential areas, garbage containment areas and hospital waste disposal sites.
- 40 interviews/questionnaires - 36 males and 4 females
- 3 key informant interviews

- 2 Focus group discussions (One with male and one with female group)
- 2 Case Studies (Rag pickers)

#### **Karachi**

- Mapping/identification of sites- Rag-pickers' work places, residential areas, garbage containment areas, industrial area and hospital waste disposal sites.
- 40 interviews/questionnaires - 25 males and 15 females
- 4 key informant interviews (one with a community leader; one with the head of rag pickers' tribe; one with a municipality official and, one with a junk yard owner)
- 2 Focus group discussions (one with female rag-pickers, age group 15-18 years and one with fathers of rag-pickers)
- 3 Case Studies (Rag pickers)

#### **Quetta**

- Mapping/identification of sites- Rag-pickers' work places, residential areas, garbage containment areas, industrial area and hospital waste disposal sites.
- 40 interviews/questionnaires- 37 males and 3 females
- 4 key informant interviews (doctor, kandawala, municipality personnel and civil society representative)
- 4 Focus Groups Discussion (Parents, community elders, Women, Children)
- 4 Case Studies (Rag pickers)

#### **Peshawar**

- Mapping/identification of sites- Rag pickers' work places, major shopping centers, junkyards, residential areas, garbage containment areas, industrial area and hospital waste disposal sites.
- 40 interviews/questionnaires - 28 males and 12 females
- 2 key informant interviews (one with the Director of Human Resources Management & Development, who has worked on scavengers and opened schools for them; One with a doctor working at Lady Reading Hospital, a major hospital at Peshawar.
- 2 focus group discussions (one with female rag-pickers and their mothers, and one with male rag-pickers and junk owner)
- 3 Case Studies (Rag pickers)

#### **Islamabad**

- 40 interviews/questionnaires with rag pickers

### **3.3. A Note on Field-team Training and the Survey**

Special emphasis was placed on sound training and understanding of the proposed issues. The training of all the field researchers was conducted in Islamabad from May 12-15, 2003. The Program Manager from ILO also participated in a training session to explain the larger context of the rapid assessment as well as the importance of the findings for policy-making. During the training, intensive sessions on administering the questionnaire, conducting

focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews were held. In addition, the language of the questions in the questionnaire was further fine-tuned and clarified to avoid misunderstandings over meanings. We also discussed the issue of communication with the children, not only in the context of their first language (that was different across the sites) and the related question of translation but also with regard to sensitive topics like sexual abuse and/or molestation. Mock sessions were also organized to maximize the team members' familiarity with the questionnaire as well as focus groups discussions.

A pre-test was conducted at the end of the field team training. The purpose was two fold: First, to ensure that the instruments we had developed before the training, and improved upon during the training, be comprehensive, precise and faultless. Second, and equally importantly, was to familiarize field researchers with practical experience of the field in advance. The pre-test brought out the need to make changes in the questionnaire after input from the field team.

Fieldwork commenced simultaneously in all the provincial headquarters, and was carried out over a period of eight days.

According to its contractual obligation with ILO, SDPI was responsible for conducting the rapid assessment in provincial headquarters only. However, after the pretest, the SDPI team considered it important to include the federal capital in the study. Therefore, SDPI used its own resources for this added work. Fieldwork in Islamabad was conducted during the second week of June 2003.

### **3.4. Selection of Sites**

To ensure consistency, we employed the same strategy and methods for mapping, identification and selection of sites for the five cities earmarked for the rapid assessment. The exact fieldwork sites within each city were selected after visiting the maximum number of potential places in each city where rag pickers could be found; for example, rag pickers' residential areas and possible work places such as main garbage containment areas of the city, hospital waste disposal sites, market-places, shops where material for recycling is sold, and, waste trash dumps. During the process of conducting the mapping in every city, we found squatter settlements next to the main waste dump site where people's main occupation is rag picking. These sites were specially selected and proved very helpful, as they were suitable for focus group discussions and other survey activities.

### **3.5. About the Sample**

A total of 200 children were interviewed in all the five sites (40 per site). Two categories, "Hospital waste" and "all waste" were identified as the priority areas for the study. An equal number of respondents (100 each) were to be interviewed for both categories of work. To capture variation and thus children's experience and vulnerabilities, they were divided into different categories by gender and age. Three age groups were devised: 6-10, 11-14, 15-18 years. Each age group was further divided into boys and girls.

**Table 1:**

Age group	All waste		Hospital Waste	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
5-9	14	14	14	13
10-14	13	13	13	14
15-18	13	13	13	13

Note: In all 200 questionnaires were filled for the rapid assessment (40 in each province and 40 in the federal capital)

#### **4 Main Findings about the Scavenging Sector**

This section provides an educated guess about the magnitude of the scavenging in the federal and provincial capitals of Pakistan. It described the types of material collected, the different types of ragpickers, the stages of scavenging activities carried out, the different sites for ragpicking and the different types of payment arrangements prevalent across this sector.

##### **4.1 Magnitude**

In the absence of means to accurately assess the magnitude and number of children involved in rag picking we devised a crude formula to provide an educated guess. This formula basis its estimate on the average number of children found at the selected sites in each city (garbage containment areas, junk yards, residential areas of rag pickers, market places and hospital sites) multiplied by twenty (This formula is applied considering the fact that in each city only a few places could be selected due to time constraints). A rough idea based on crude estimate indicates that there are 89500-106500 child ragpickers in the five cities. According to this estimate, the city wise breakup for Karachi indicates that approximately 33000-40500 children are involved in rag picking, followed by Lahore at 35000-40000 children, Peshawar at 10000-12000 children, Quetta at 8000-10000 children and Islamabad at 3500-4000 children respectively.

**Table 2:**

City	Estimated No. of ragpickers
Karachi	33000-40500
Lahore	35000-40000
Peshawar	10000-12000
Quetta	8000-10000
Islamabad	3500-4000
Total	89500-106500

To assess the magnitude of ragpicking, our formula for calculations in Karachi is based on first, estimated number of contractors/*heeders* (400) and number of children living under one contractor/*thekedar* (30-35); second, the number of KDA dump sites (02) and population of site-based ragpickers' clans (6000-7000); third, the number of waste containers installed by KDA (500) and estimated number of ragpickers visit containers daily (20-25) and finally, size of industrial area and estimated population of rag pickers reported (5000-7000) by industrial area based *Kundawalas*. While this formula for calculation appears to be a close depiction of the numbers in Karachi based upon information from KDA's solid waste management department, yet we fear that this figure might be underestimating

the number of rag pickers since the city's municipal garbage disposal system cannot possibly address the garbage generated by a city of over 12 million people through installing 500 waste containers.

#### 4.2. *Types of material collected*

Rag pickers collect all kinds of papers, empty sacks of cement, plastics, shoe soles, empty glass bottles, bones, and iron. Rates of the waste vary by the type of items. Nylon is the most expensive item in waste followed by plastic and notebooks and books. Glass and bones are the cheapest among all the items collected in rag picking. The least expensive items are also the most dangerous. Frequent cases of injuries from these two items were reported at all fieldwork sites.

#### 4.3. *Types of scavengers/ragpickers*

Scavenging is a complex informal sector where the nature of work, type of workers, and the mode of payment varies from site to site. The following may be termed to constitute a broad categorization of scavengers:

**Migratory scavengers:** Findings of the study showed inter- and intra-provincial migration of scavengers especially across Karachi and Lahore (see Annex III-A). The other cities had more cases of inter-country forced migration in that Afghan refugees were a majority. In Lahore, there are mainly three ethnic groups that are involved in rag picking: Punjabis of Kasur, Pathans and Afghans. The living arrangements of rag pickers in Lahore, can also be categorised into three: rag pickers living with their families, rag pickers living with the “*Seth*” (junk contractor) and, rag pickers without any permanent shelter, who usually sleep in a park and sometimes in a godown or any other shelter in the market depending on the weather conditions (see Annex III-A). The second category, of migrant rag pickers who are living with the contractor includes young boys falling in the age group of 7-18 years. Approximately 15-17 boys live in a godown or a single room. The arrangement is such that the contractor or *Seth* deducts a monthly amount from their earnings for their food and accommodation. These boys visit their families for a couple of days after two or three months. We found majority of scavengers in Lahore from NWFP and they lived with the *Seth*. Migratory rag pickers in Karachi were from Punjab and Balochistan and their living arrangements were different. Scavengers from Baluchistan were living with a *Seth* or living with the father or elder brother who are also involved in scavenging. Rag pickers from Punjab were living in a joint family and had a nomadic life. These scavengers were found in Lahore and Karachi.



Just few weeks ago this child was accompanying his rag picker mother but now works independently

**Roaming scavengers:** The work area of

such scavengers is undefined as the sites they visit keep changing. They can pick waste from everywhere and anywhere. They are not bound to any particular area and have no particular hours of work. Usually, they avoid visiting dump places that are far away from cities as this involves travel time and paying public transport. Afghan ragpickers avoid going far off due to security concerns, i.e., that they might be picked up by the police as illegal aliens and thrown into a jail. Roaming rag pickers might be independent, working under the control of a “Seth”, or working for/with family mostly headed by the father or an elder brother. This type of scavenging was found at all sites.

**Site-based ragpickers:** These scavengers concentrate on dump places and construct their “*jhounpries*” (makeshift huts) near the main dump places. This type of scavenging was found in Lahore and Karachi. Site-based rag picking involves high participation of men, women and children. All family members irrespective of age and gender are involved in this work. Children accompany their mothers during work and eventually enter the main stream of rag picking.

**Temporary ragpickers:** This type of scavenging is carried out for household needs; it does not involve any monetary transaction as it contributes to fuel needs of the households. A majority of female children in Quetta, Peshawar and Islamabad collect paper and wood waste from dump areas or streets to meet household fuel consumption. These children usually do this work in the morning. In the long term they are less likely to stay on in rag picking; this is particularly true of girls in this category who leave this type of ragpicking by the time they are 10 or 12 years old.

#### **4.4. Stages of Ragpicking**

Children perform a variety of tasks such as collection, sorting and selling and sometimes purchasing. They earn between 1-1.5 \$ per day. Their nature of work varies by site as discussed below:

**First,** collection of waste in streets and bazaars carried out by all the scavengers except site-based scavengers.

**Second,** at waste corners/containers, mostly carried out by Afghan and *Pashun* rag pickers.

**Third,** at the time of loading of waste, usually done by a Municipal Corporation’s Christian employees only.

**Fourth,** at dump places done by Afghan, *Pashtun* and site-based rag pickers

**Fifth,** carried out by site-based rag pickers only (in Lahore and Karachi)

#### 4.5. Stages of site-based rag picking

- First,** Municipality truck unloads waste at a specific dumpsite where it stays for a few days to dry; during this time only paper and wood waste are taken out.
- Second,** waste is put on fire and is given ample time (1-2 days) to cool down and convert into ash.
- Third,** iron and tin are collected with the help of a magnet attached to a one-foot long stick. This is called the *Kachra Kundi* (waste magnet) stage.
- Fourth,** collected waste (paper, wood, iron, tin, glass etc) is sorted at *jhoupries* and collected iron is cleaned
- Fifth,** sold at site based *kanda*, or taken to the city if money is urgently required as the site based *kanda* pays after 3-4 days.

#### 4.6. Sites for scavenging

There are many dumping places in and around the cities but scavengers commonly collect waste from the residential areas, main roads, markets, waste containers and authorized and unauthorized dumping points scattered everywhere. The open drainage areas are also a source of all sorts of waste, especially hospital waste.

While scavengers collect all kinds of waste from the above-mentioned areas and points, we observed that hospitals produce a greater quantity of “all waste” than other areas. Field teams visited different places near the residential areas and on the outskirts of cities to locate dumps of hospital waste as reported by the people. We found that the dumping places on the outskirts have been abandoned by hospitals. According to our key informants this was due to the resistance and protests from the local population.

Junkyards play a central role in this business. These are not only the places where the scavengers sell their collected waste but also serve as sites for gossip and socialization. Junkyards could be found scattered all over the cities, even in the posh localities. Contractors at junkyards purchase all kinds of items and then sell these onward to other people in the business. According to the owners, businessmen from Punjab, mostly from Gujranwala and Lahore buy most of the waste for recycling.

#### 4.7. Payment Arrangements

Payment arrangements vary according to various types of rag picking. There are three types of payment arrangements.

First, rag pickers working under *Seth* do not receive their payments directly or on daily basis. Mostly, the *Seth* pays to their parents after 2-3 months. These rag pickers are bound to bring their collection to *Seth's kanda*.

Second, those not working under any *Seth* are free to sell their collection to anyone who gives them good rates. Such rag pickers receive their payment on daily basis.

Third, site-based rag pickers sell what they collect to a site-based *kandawala* (junkyard owner or contractor) who pays them on weekly basis. If the site-based rag pickers need instant payment then they are free to take their material to the city that is usually at a distance of 10-12 km from the dump place. The rates in the city are higher than those offered by the site-based *kandawala* but rag pickers prefer to sell their stuff at site to avoid investing in travel time, associated transportation costs and the hassle of transporting a sizeable weight to a city-based contractor's shop.

## 5. Main Findings about Scavengers/Rag Pickers

This section focuses on ragpickers' lives and provides information culled out from the questionnaires. This is then supplemented by information from focus group discussions and case studies. Starting with household and family related information, the section provides an analysis of ragpickers' access to education and health. It provides detailed information on their work environment, hours, terms, conditions and remuneration for work, and looks at the particular vulnerabilities that such children face. It also discusses people's attitude and ragpickers wishes and future plans.

**Table 3: Percentage distribution of respondents by city and site**

Site	Lahore	Karachi	Peshawar	Quetta	Islamabad	Total
All Waste	100.0	64.0	100.0	85.0	95.0	89.0
Hospital		36.0		15.0	5.0	11.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

### 5.1. Migration and Displacement

Here, we discuss interstate and intra and inter-provincial migration as we find all three arrangements dominate ragpicking. Scavenging involves a high rate of migration, that is, 88 percent. This includes migration from abroad (57%) and interprovincial migration (31%). Intraprovincial migration accounts for 12% ragpickers. Migration rate was highest in Quetta at 100 percent, 90 percent in Lahore and Islamabad, and 80 and 78 percent in Peshawar and Karachi respectively (See table 1.5).

The 57 percent respondents who migrated from abroad confirm the high level of Afghan people's involvement in scavenging. Case studies demonstrate that Afghan children are usually part of this business because their fathers are either unable to work due to the loss of a limb or are dead as a result of the 23 years of war and strife in Afghanistan. Their mothers and siblings are unable to support the family; hence these children join rag picking. When we look at the total sample of this study, the presence of Afghans in this sector accounts for 43 percent, followed by Pashtuns from the frontier province at 31 percent, Punjabis 8 percent and another 8 percent for Sindhis.

### 5.2. Prevalence of Boys/gendered breakdown

We aimed to interview an equal number of female scavengers, although we knew that it might be difficult to find an equal number of male and female scavengers. The field team managed to interview a few girls for the "all waste" category. We could manage to interview only eighteen percent girls. The figure for girl

scavengers is high in Karachi at 38 % followed by Peshawar at 28 percent. (See *table 1.2*). The study confirmed our initial hypothesis about the presence of fewer women scavengers. It was especially difficult to find girls in age group of 15-18 years at all the sites as they are usually married off or withdrawn from the profession when they reach puberty. In particular the hospital sites did not have the presence of any girls because dealers generally contract out these sites, as they are considered lucrative.

Boys dominate ragpicking. The level of girls' involvement decreases gradually as the age group increases. Overall, only thirty five percent instead of 50% female respondents were from the 5-9 years age group. This decreased to 15 percent girls in the grown-up age of 10-15 years and decreasing trend continued for the age group of 15-18 years where it was only 11 percent compared to 89% boys. (See *table 1.3*)

### **5.3. Family Background of Scavengers/Ragpickers**

Ragpickers usually belong to large families. Their average household size is 7.5 persons, which is slightly higher than the national average of 6.8 persons per household<sup>8</sup>. Across the cities it is highest in Peshawar at 8 persons per household followed by Quetta at 7.8 persons. It is 7.6 persons and 7.3 persons in Karachi and Lahore respectively. It is lowest at 7 persons per household in Islamabad. (See *table 5.1* in annex)

16% respondents reported that their father is not alive (16%) compared to 6% who reported that their mother is not alive. (See *table 5.4*). The father is reported in 44 percent cases as a primary provider of the family. Twenty five percent children claimed themselves to be the primary providers of the family. 8 percent reported that their mother is the primary provider. (See *table 5.5*)<sup>9</sup>. It is understandable that 35 percent respondents reported scavenging as a family profession. Unemployment was reported by 11 percent followed by casual labor and domestic work (3% each). There is a long list of low profile professions that are mentioned by another 20 percent respondents. For the category "others," the percentage is high (30%) but the detailed list encompassed by "others" indicates that not a single profession on this list constitutes more than 1 percent of the total. (See *table 5.3*)

Family members are generally illiterate as indicated by the literacy levels of families. Overall, the average literate members in a family are 1.4. There is no major difference in literacy level in Quetta (1.8 persons) and Peshawar (1.7 persons). The number of literate persons in Karachi and Lahore was reported to be 1.4 and 1.3 respectively. The lowest number of literate persons was reported in Islamabad at .9 persons per household. (See *table 5.2*)

### **5.4. Household Wealth Ranking**

We assessed household wealth by using household possessions of consumer durables as proxies. The questionnaire included questions on whether the households possessed bicycle, motorcycle, car, tractor, tractor trolley,

8 Government of Pakistan, Pakistan Economic Survey 2002-2003

9 Perhaps this question was misunderstood and confused with being the main provider of food and other necessities.

watch/clock, radio, TV, fridge, freezer livestock and jewelry. We omitted jewelry possession from our ranking for two reasons: first, there was a fear of under or overstatement, and second, we felt that the amount of jewelry in case anyone possessed it, would be negligible.

Following are the possessions and ranks of the households

Very Poor: None  
 Poor: Bicycle, Fan, Watch/clock, and Radio  
 Middle: Motorcycle, TV and Livestock  
 Well to do: Fridge, Freezer, Car, Tractor and Trolley

**Table 4: Results are shown in the table below**

Ranks	Percentages
Very Poor	14.5
Poor	38.5
Middle	38.0
Well to do	9.0
N = 200	100

According to household data on assets 14.5 percent of total households are ranked as very poor. Majority of household 38.5 percent fall in the category of poor followed by middle 38 percent households. Only 9 percent households appeared to be well to do.

### 5.5. Rag pickers' Dwellings

We find that there are several different types of living arrangements among ragpickers due to the migratory nature of their work and due to extreme poverty. Overall, across sites a high of percentage (38.9%) live in a mud house while 24% live in a *jhounpri* (makeshift huts), 16.7% in *Pukka* (brick) house and 4% have other arrangements. A majority in Peshawar (89 percent), Quetta (52 percent) and in Islamabad (30%) live in mud houses (See Annex III-C), while a majority in Karachi and Lahore (35% and 45% respectively) live in *jhounpries*. (See table 5.6). The latter might also be connected with more site-based ragpickers as well as migratory ragpickers who can be found in Lahore and Karachi.

Within the context of mud dwellings, makeshift huts and pukka houses, 62.9% reported that they rent their dwelling while 13.7% own these and the subcontractor provides 12.7% ragpickers with a place. The city wise breakup displays variation: the highest ownership is in Lahore (30%) and Karachi (17.9%) compared to 12.8%, 5% and 2.6% in Quetta, Peshawar and Islamabad respectively. Rented dwellings account for a proportion attaining higher percentage in Rawalpindi, Islamabad (92.3%) Peshawar (80%) and Quetta (66%). (See table 5.7)

Overall 50% respondents have electricity supply in their homes. The city wise breakdown shows that 92.5% in Peshawar, 65% in Lahore and 50% in Islamabad have electricity supply. In Quetta and Karachi the figures are 15% and 27.5%

respectively. We do not know the reason for such variation across cities. Overall, indoor latrine is available to 60% respondents and unavailable to 40%. Having the facility of indoor latrines, across cities, Peshawar ranks highest at 85 percent followed by Quetta at 80 percent, Islamabad 52 percent, Karachi 42 percent and Lahore at 40 percent. It appears that housing facilities to respondents in Peshawar and Quetta are comparatively better even if they do not own these. (See table 5.8)

### 5.6. Present Living situation

This subsection provides an overview of ragpickers living arrangements as well as a snapshot of their personal hygiene, food habits and rest time. A majority of children (84%) in our survey in all the cities live with their families. The city-wise breakdown indicates that a high percentage of children live with their families in Quetta (97.5%), Peshawar (95%) and Islamabad (92.5%), compared to Lahore (67.5%) and Karachi (70%). Presumably this is due to the ethnic concentration of Pathan and Afghan families in the business. (See table 5.9)

Perhaps because a majority of children live with their parents, their personal cleanliness is looked after. Overall 35.5% respondents claim to take a bath daily, 12.5% every second day, 14.5% twice a week, and 35.5% once a week. Trends across cities indicate that in Quetta 10% take a daily bath, 60% once a week, whereas in Lahore and Karachi over 40% take a daily bath and 22% and 12% respectively take it once a week (See table 5.11). Overall 61.5% respondents take a bath at home, 9% use a public hand pump, 8.5% a *hamam* (public bath) and 7.5% use a canal. Between 62% and 70% in Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta and Islamabad take their bath at home compared to 42.5% in Lahore. Most respondents display similar patterns across cities except Lahore where 27.5% use other facilities for a bath. (See table 5.12)

Most children take a break during work to rest for a while. This break varies between an hour and a half and two and a half hours. This is probably essential as many reported physical fatigue due to walking long distances or cycling. Overall, the mean hours of breaks during work amounted to 1.53 hours. Across the sites it was lowest in Islamabad at 1.05 hours, followed by Karachi at 1.35 hours. This duration was reportedly 1.57 and 1.53 hours in Quetta and Peshawar respectively. The interval time during work was highest at 2.27 hours in Lahore. (See table 5.10)

As children are not home during the day, many reported that they eat leftovers. According to our data, overall 25 percent children reported that they eat leftover food found in garbage. This percentage was high in Peshawar at 33 percent followed by Islamabad at 27 percent. In Lahore 25 percent children eat from garbage whereas in Karachi and Quetta this stood at 20%. (See table 5.13)



Scavengers eating left over cake found in waste

## 5.7 Education: Issues and Status

Access to education appears to be an impediment for most poor families who need to survive by putting as many children as possible to work. This does not preclude that parents do not realize the importance of education or that children do not wish to be at school. On the contrary, our findings indicate that many children would like to join or re-join schools if the possibility exists. Below we discuss some of the issues in detail.

Scavenging has a concentration of illiterate children. A majority (65 percent) of scavengers reported that they have never attended school (See Annex III-A). Many children said that being illiterate they joined ragpicking because it does not require any formal or non-formal education or any special skills. More specifically, one boy explained that he needed to supplement the family income and entered this field willingly because he was/is illiterate and this work does not require any education or skills (see Annex III, case study A). Case study E demonstrates little children's desire to be at school; Tore Mohammad asked the interviewer if there are garbage dumps at schools so they can do ragpicking on the school grounds and study in the schools. Soon after he remembered that his parents do not have money to buy him a school uniform.

There is no major difference across the sites with regard to access to education except in Islamabad where 50 percent respondents said that they had never been in schools. (See table 5.14)

Among those who had ever attended school, a majority of respondents (59 percent) indicated that they had dropped out from government schools, followed by private schools (23 percent) and (15 percent) from NGO/Donor run schools. (See table 5.15)

81 percent of respondents reported that currently they were not attending school. (See table 5.16)

The major reasons respondents cited for not being in school are to provide financial support to their family (36%) and the inability to pay for schooling (22%) (See Annex III- case studies A, B & C). Poverty appears to be the root cause for keeping children out of school as they have to earn for their family's survival from their early childhood. The level of poverty can be gauged from the fact that many of the families and community members interviewed said that their families could only afford a single meal in a day and since they live in squatter settlements they have no provision for water which they have to buy. A canister of water costs them Rs.5 (See Annex IV-B). It was established through focus group discussions that parents are aware of the importance of education but their circumstances (springing from poverty) leave them very little options to plan their children's future (See Annex IV-A, B & C). Previous research<sup>10</sup> confirms that poverty is the main reason of low literacy levels in Pakistan. (See table 5.17)

Data reveals that seventy percent respondents want to join/rejoin school (See Annex III-A). A slightly different figure (67%) was reported by another research

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10 Khan, Shahrukh et,all (1998) A comparative institutional analysis of NGO, private and government rural primary education SDPI. Islamabad.

study<sup>11</sup> conducted in 2000. There is no significant difference among different age groups. (See table 5.18)

The main reason for not joining a school has to do with the absence of an earning member in the family (22 percent). (See table 5.19)

Our data reveals that 26% respondents believe that education increases knowledge and 25 percent reported that education helps in accessing employment. People's respect and good living standards were reported by 13 percent each. (See table 5.20)

In response to the disadvantages of education, 62 percent of respondent said that there are no disadvantages of education. 11 percent of respondents expressed their concern that education is an economic burden. (See table 5.21)

Interestingly, a majority of Afghan rag pickers expressed awareness about the importance of education and all of them wanted to enroll themselves in schools in Afghanistan and not in Pakistan. Perhaps, this was due to negative societal attitude towards them whereby they are viewed as a burden on Pakistan. Hence, they were interested in going back to their country to get an education.

During fieldwork in Karachi we found a school established by an NGO. All the children of this locality attend school regularly as it was mandatory for them. The school reported high enrolment. Currently, three hundred students are attending the school in a site-based rag picking locality. The NGO succeeded in motivating the parents not to take children with them to the dump site for rag picking. The NGO provides food, books and uniform to its' students. Local people are happy about this intervention. There is another example in Peshawar, where an NGO established its schools initially for scavengers, but later working children from other sectors also benefited from those schools.

### **5.8 Health: Issues and Status**

Two major but different themes emerge from the questionnaire findings and the focus discussions and case studies. The latter two indicate the dangerous situations and work related injuries ragpickers face with regard to their work. In addition, participants of focus group discussions raise the question of spending on medicines and access to doctors in view of the dearth of money at their disposal. On the other hand, our questionnaire findings indicate a high incidence of sickness coupled with an almost equally high incidence of access to doctors. Few children indicate serious work related injuries; however, they do provide information of a high incidence of such sickness and injuries among fellow child workers.

Rag pickers are exposed to work related injuries and to contagious diseases. Scars of wounds were visible on their hands and feet. They usually take minor diseases and injuries in their stride as a routine matter and avoid visiting a doctor for treatment. For example, they often face injuries from pieces of glass in dump areas but do not visit a doctor unless the wound gets worse. During a focus group discussion at Lahore, a young boy took off his shirt to show a big wound on his back.

<sup>11</sup> Human Resources Management & Development Center: Fading Hopes 2000

It was an injury due to the prick of an infectious needle that he was carrying in a sack on his back. Although it was an old injury but due to negligence and financial constraints it was not treated at the right time and it got worse. Another person during the same discussion linked low income with health care and said: *“When a person cannot even afford the basic necessities of life, how can he pay for health care? The only option we are left with is to take loan from the “thekedar” (contractor) when someone falls ill in our family but this arrangement has its own problems as we get caught in a more vicious circle of debt”* (See Annex IV-F). Scabies is the most common disease that they contract during rag picking. In fact, scabies, malaria and dysentery are common diseases among all the scavengers. The site-based rag pickers also reported respiratory diseases because they have to inhale smoke and dust while leftover food from waste corners adds to health risks. One ragpicker (Annex III, case study E) said that his elder brother suffered stomach cramps and died after he ate an apple that he found in a dump. His mother, he said, still cries after her son. In another case study (F) Allauddin aged 7 suffered head injuries after he got picked and dumped with trash by a trolley/pick-up. In case study K, Ibrahim, aged 10, narrates that he and his friend were hit by a garbage truck while they were collecting waste from a dump. His friend died on the spot while he was hospitalized for a month and a half. His father scolded him for being careless and not seeing the truck.

The frequency of falling sick is quite high as reported by ragpickers. Overall, only 6.6% respondents said they not been sick at all during the last year. Of the remaining 94.4% respondents, slightly more than one quarter of the respondents (27%) have been ill once, and slightly less than one quarter (23%) report it twice, and the remaining 44% have been sick more than twice. The breakdown is as follows: 16% report being sick thrice, 6.6% say they were sick 4 times, 5.1% report it 5 times whereas another 5.1% report that they have been sick 6 times during last year. However, there are also respondents who report that they have been ill more than 6 times during last year. Among these, 1.5% report that they have been ill 7 times during last year, 2% report it 8 times, .5% report it 9 times, 4.6% report it 10 times whereas 5% report it 12 times during last year. Although a very small percentage but still very important to be mentioned is of respondents who are .5% and reveal the incidence of illness 30 times during last year. *(For city wise breakdown of this part, please see the table 5.22)*

Overall data shows that fever figures most prominently with the highest percentage (59%), when it comes to the nature of illness. Looking at the city wise breakdown, it is reported highest in Islamabad by 73%, followed by Peshawar 65.8%, Lahore 58.8%, Karachi 51.4% and Quetta 47.2%. Other natures of illnesses reported/explained by the respondents fall in the category of eye infection with an overall percentage of 3.3%, ear infection .5%, skin problem 3.8%, breathing problem 2.2%, stiff neck .5%, backache 2.7%, anemia .5%, cold 4.4%, cough 1.6%, muscular pains esp. leg pains 3.3%, infections 2.2% and headache 2.2%, respectively. However, other illnesses are reported at 13.2%. *(See table 5.23)*

With regard to the seriousness of the sickness, findings pertaining to treatment show that overall 6% did not consider their illness serious enough to be medically treated, 64.3% were medically treated and released immediately, 15.9% were hospitalized, 3.3% were advised to permanently leave their work, 4.4% stopped working for a few

days, 1.6% applied self treatment whereas, 3.8% refer to other types of treatment. The city wise breakdown of the medically treated and immediately released category, shows the highest percentage in Islamabad at 88.9% followed by Karachi 73%, Peshawar 64.9%, Lahore 54.3% and Quetta 40.5%. (See table 5.24)

Responding to whether or not they visit a doctor for treatment in case of illness or injury, overall, 82.2% said that they do, whereas, the rest said they do not. The city wise breakdown also indicates a similar trend. (See table 5.26)

Figuring most prominently in the categories of “paying for medical care” is that of *Self* with an overall percentage of 84.1%. A city-wise breakdown indicates the highest percentage in Islamabad at 100%, followed by Peshawar 94.3%, Lahore 79.5%, Karachi 77.4% and Quetta 65.6%. Overall 5.7% report that the employer/supervisor popularly known as “*Seth*”, pays for the medical care, 1.1% avail the facility of free dispensaries, whereas, 9.1% pay for their medical care through other sources. (See table 5.27)

Overall 80.3% reported various illnesses of other child workers during the past year. City wise breakdown of percentages is as follows: Karachi at 95% followed by Quetta 94.3, Lahore 77.5%, Islamabad 75% and Peshawar 60.5%. 19.7% did not report any illness of any child worker during past year. (See table 5.25)

We conclude that ragpickers are susceptible to work related injuries including ones that may be termed dangerous; they suffer from physical ailments quite frequently but are able to access doctors in a majority of cases.

### **5.9 Background information on work**

This section delves into the reasons and manner through which children are incorporated into ragpicking. Poverty comes across as the main reason. Related to this might be the fact that in many cases the entire family is involved in ragpicking. In fact, many children report that their parents or other family members arranged for them to start this work. The *Seth* was responsible for such arrangements in few instances.

Our overall data reveals that a sizeable number of scavengers (32%) had spent more than five years in this sector (See Annex III (A, B & C). One fifth of the scavengers joined this profession during the last one year. (See table 5.28)

Across the sites, a vast majority (68 percent) of scavengers joined this profession to support their families financially. Case studies and focus group discussions reinforce these findings. An earlier research report<sup>12</sup>, *Their name is tomorrow*, produced by the Human Resources Management & Development Center presented this figure as 67 percent. There is no major difference across the cities. Financial self-reliance attracted children and the desire to earn money accounted for 11 percent children in this sector. A small number (7 percent) informed us that their parents pressurized them to start this work. While most claim to have entered this profession willingly on the advice of relatives or father or an elder brother (See table 5.29), case studies indicate that few had choices.

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A majority of scavengers (49 percent) reported that their family arranged for their work, followed by they themselves (28.0 percent). Seth/contractor arranged for work for 10 percent of respondents (See *table 5.30*). Case studies also reinforce this.

Data shows that 37 percent rag pickers were unwilling to join this profession. Across the cities this percentage is high in Quetta 61 percent. There is no major difference in responses in other cities. (See *table 5.31*)

Data indicates that in 51 percent cases parents due to unfavorable circumstances decided that a child should work as a rag picker followed by the decision of relatives (13 percent).

A majority of scavengers (49 percent) reported that their family arranged for their work, followed by 28 percent who said that they themselves arranged for their work. Whereas, work for 10 percent of the respondents, was arranged by the Seth/Contractor. (See *table 5.30*). Case studies also reinforce this.

Data shows that 37 percent rag pickers were unwilling to join this profession. Across the cities this percentage is high in Quetta 61 percent. There is no major difference in responses in other cities. (See *table 5.31*)

Overall, 34 percent scavengers informed us that their parents are also rag pickers. Across the cities this percentage was high in Karachi (50 percent) followed by Lahore (45 percent). It was lowest in Peshawar (20 percent) (See *table 5.33*). As mentioned earlier on in the description of the types of scavengers, it is understandable that Karachi and Lahore exhibit a larger number of ragpickers whose entire families are involved in ragpicking because of the presence of entire tribes that are involved in this work, mostly in the context of site-based ragpicking.

### **5.10 Timings**

Ragpickers usually work from dawn to dusk. They get up early in the morning before sunrise and finish their work at sunset. They take one to one and a half hour of rest after lunch and then resume their work. They do not have any proper place for rest. They spend their rest time under the shadow of a tree or under bridges. Even five-year old children follow this regimen. This routine is maintained all year round with a slight change in rest time during the summers and winters.

There are some children aged 15 and above who also work at night during the summer. They start in the evening and finish work at 12 or 12:30 in the night. They focus upon market places, areas near hospitals and hotels rather than residential areas at night. Some among them also work at daytime as casual laborers. The children who work at night also collect leftover food from small hotels. They take the food home for other family members also. Nighttime work, however, is very risky as sometimes ragpickers may be hauled up by the police and jailed overnight.

### **5.11 The Work Environment**

This section is divided into two subsections, each dealing with a different aspect of work.

#### 5.11.1 Natural Environment at the workplace:

There is no major difference in the harshness and severity of environment across the types of scavenging. All of the work is done under the open sky during summer and winter. Ragpickers are exposed to extreme weather conditions, noise and sometimes take polluted and contaminated water and food. Site based scavenging is dusty, smoky and contains extremely noxious odors.

All site-based rag pickers regardless of age and gender are vulnerable to cuts and foot/skin burns from working in a hot place and even sometimes in an environment where fire has not completely burnt out. The environment in these places is harmful for all the rag pickers but especially for children. High temperatures and heavy smoke in the workplace was highly hazardous for children and has been linked to vulnerability to respiratory diseases such as asthma and TB.



*Dump place full of smoke the only source of income of site-based scavengers*

According to team members' observation, ragpickers' work environment was reported to be peaceful by 62 percent team members, though 30 percent said that there is traffic noise and 7 percent felt that crowded areas suffer from the noise. The team also reported that there is smoke and dust in the air (47 percent) while 4 percent also observed traffic smoke; 46 percent said that there is no dust or smoke and 3 percent said that the environment is smelly. Team members also reported that ragpickers' work environment was hot (67 percent) while 30 percent said that it is normal. These answers are understandable in the heat of late May and early June in Pakistan.

#### 5.11.2 The Work Environment: The Human Element

Ragpickers have to sit amid waste in order to collect it; their physical position is either bent or they are sitting. Both are not conducive for healthy living.

Overall 63.5% work alongside their immediate family while 36.5% do not do so. The city wise breakdown indicates that higher percentage in Karachi (72.5%), Islamabad (67.5%), and Lahore (65%) work alongside their family than those in Peshawar (55%) and Quetta (57.5%). A high percentage 76.3% report that a relative works with them. This is highest in Quetta at 85% followed by Islamabad 80%, Karachi 77.5%, Lahore 76.9% and Peshawar at 61.5%. This indicates that the extended family is widely involved in rag picking, providing perhaps an indirect source of security. Predictably, a high percentage states that they have freedom of movement. Over all 85.4% state this; the same pattern is reflected in the different cities. (See table 5.34)

While approx. 23.1% respondents point to independence, the non-requirement of start-up capital (7.7%) and skills 30.3% to start this work, an equal percentage point to other advantages. (See table 5.35)

### **5.12 Terms and Conditions of Work**

Overall data reveals that 93 percent scavengers work for their family. Only 4 percent work for a *Seth* or third party followed by 2 percent who are self employed. (See table 5.36)

In response to a question about type of agreement they have entered into with regard to work, 82 percent scavengers said that no agreement was made between the parties. 13 percent said that they have verbal agreement and only 5 percent had a written agreement. (See table 5.37)

Overall results show that 26 percent respondents have received a loan that they have to pay back while 70 percent have the freedom to leave this profession. (See table 5.38)

### **5.13. Payment arrangements**

Payment arrangements again vary by type of scavenging. Independent scavengers are free to sell their collected waste at any place and receive their money on the spot. Usually, an independent scavenger earns US \$ 1.4 to 1.7 daily. The income of scavengers from *Karkhano bazaar* (main market of foreign goods) in Peshawar was higher than the income of scavengers of any area of our research sites. Daily income was reported to be between US \$ 3.5 to 4.4.

The scavengers working under a “*Seth*” have no right to sell their collected waste to anyone else. They are bound to bring all the material to the *Seth's Kanda* where the rates are extremely low compared to what the market pays. If the *seth* has given some advance to the family of a scavenger, the amount is deducted from his income and even if when the advance has been paid, the *seth* does not pay the scavenger but instead pays the parents directly. Mostly such scavengers do not know the exact amount of their remuneration. There is the possibility of further exploitation as the scavengers usually are illiterate and they cannot keep a record of their income. Furthermore, such arrangements can be linked with the concept of bonded labour in that the rag pickers’ families are indebted to the contractor. The ragpickers, therefore, cannot leave the contractor and his work unless the contractor tells him/her that the amount payable has been repaid. According to our data, the prevalence of such cases is low; however, the possibilities of exploitation exist.

If a *Seth* has not paid advance to scavengers’ parents, scavengers may receive their payment directly. Usually these scavengers visit their homes after 3-4 months and receive their money at that time.

Site-based scavenging has different payment arrangements. There is a *kanda* at the dump place and the *Kanda* owner pays after three days. But, the *kanda* inside a city pays instantly and rates there are higher than the site-based *kanda*, but such *kandas* are at the distance of 10-15 km from dumpsites. Transportation costs both in terms

of money and time compel scavengers to sell their items to the local *kanda* owner at lower rates.

#### **5.14 Rates of Remuneration**

A clear correlation exists between the daily hours spent on ragpicking, the amount of weight collected and the remuneration received. There is gradual increase in daily time spent in rag picking, daily wages and the weight collected and carried according to age groups. Our overall data illustrates that the younger age group (5-9 years) spends lesser time (8.1 hours) than the age group of 10-15 years who spend 8.6 hours daily in rag picking. The age group of 15-18 years puts in longer hours (9.3 hours per day) in scavenging. The overall average indicates that the average daily time spent by all the age groups is 8.7 hours per day.

Perhaps scavengers earn more money than children working in other sectors. As stated earlier, the main reason is that it does not require any formal skills and provides instant remuneration. The more one can collect, the more one is paid. The average daily income of a scavenger is slightly more than one dollar. This amount varies across age groups. The age group of 15-18 years earns \$1.2 per day followed by the 10-15 years age group with a daily income of one dollar. The youngest age group (5-9 years) earns \$ 0.8. The oldest age group earns half dollar more as compared to youngest group. The main reasons for earning more pertain to the longer hours of work and weight carried per trip by the older age group. The age group of 15-18 years carries 20 kilograms more weight per trip than the age group of 5-9 years. (See table 5.39)

Our data confirms instant payment in this sector with 77 percent of responses confirming that scavengers receive their payment on daily basis. (See table 5.40)

73 percent of scavengers receive their income directly and 19 percent reported that their parents receive their income. (See table 5.41)

Respondent's involvement in other income generation activities was high in Lahore and Karachi (20%), followed by Islamabad at 18 percent. (See table 5.42)

The amount reported by a scavenger spent on him/herself is a quarter dollar. Scavengers from Lahore spend a higher amount on themselves (0.4 \$) followed by scavengers in Karachi (0.3\$).

All the scavengers reported that they support their families. On average scavengers give 0.8\$ to their parents. Savings are high in Peshawar at 0.4\$ per day while savings are lowest in Quetta at one cent only. (See table 5.43)

#### **5.15. Work Hazards**

Rag picking constitutes hazardous work with no safety measures for the children. As discussed earlier, rag pickers are exposed to multiple health risks due to the presence of hazardous substances in garbage. In addition, they have to face dangerous animals, insects and objects during their work. Approximately 77 percent said that they have to face dangerous animals and stingy insects during rag picking. (See table 5.44)

Children working in dump sites with hospital waste are vulnerable to health risks. Hospital sites are the most hazardous because during collection, sometimes, scavengers find disposable syringes; most are aware that the used syringes can cause severe infections and even AIDS. A scavenger narrated the incidence of a fellow worker whose finger was infected and swollen after he was hurt by a used syringe. A doctor has recommended that he be operated upon, however, he is unable to afford the costs, estimated at \$175 and thus he remains without treatment. Scavengers stated that if a syringe hurts them, they usually burn the affected spot with a matchstick as a remedy for avoiding infection.

As mentioned earlier, all the rag pickers regardless of age and gender are vulnerable to cuts and foot/skin burns from working in still-smoldering places and sometimes amid fire. High degree temperatures and heavy smoke in the workplace is hazardous for children and has been linked to vulnerability to respiratory diseases such as asthma and TB. A majority of the ragpickers is unaware of the specific risks involved. On the other hand, many ragpickers do not have a choice. For example, fifteen years old Saeed faces pain in his backbone because he has to collect waste with a hunched back. A doctor has advised him to stop scavenging for a few months, but Saeed cannot do so because he has no alternative source of income.

#### **5.16. Vulnerability**

This section is based on ragpickers own perceptions about their vulnerability. Overall, 24 percent respondents are afraid of injury from glass. During rag picking they collect different types of broken bottles of glass (See Annex III-A). 12 and 11 percent reported the danger of snake/scorpion and dog bites respectively. 10 percent scavengers reported that they are more likely to be injured by used syringes. In addition to fearing snakes, scorpions, dogs, broken glass and syringes, 5% spoke of their fear of policeman and of people in general who might harm them. (See table 5.45)

Children probably suffer negative psychological consequences of finding amputated human body parts (reported by 2%) at dumpsites. For example, a girl from Quetta reported finding a dead body in a sack. Similarly, in case study J, Dawood Khan describes finding the dead body of a young man who had been tortured to death, in a sack. He said after this incident when he saw a dead cat he got very scared. Such instances are also common at a particular dumping site of Lahore, called Malipura. The psychological repercussions can be of a serious nature, especially because many boys and girls with ages ranging from 8 to 18 do ragpicking. Many have reported nightmares and fears.

While most ragpickers' parents provide them proper care and attention, overall 13 percent respondents complained that their parents do not give them proper time and care. Complaints were high in Karachi (23 percent) followed by 12 percent in Islamabad. It was lowest in Quetta at 7 percent. However, the parents expect them to share the economic burden of the family. In addition, scavengers are vulnerable to verbal, physical and sexual abuse. (See table 5.46)

Ragpickers are also the victims of clean-up operations implemented by municipal authorities, off and on. In such cases, their dwellings are demolished and bulldozed.

For example, the families of rag pickers living in China Scheme, Lahore shifted their *Jhounpries* at least ten times during the last five years. Without providing them with an alternative space, their *Jhounpries* were bulldozed by the municipal authority. Serious casualties were reported where new born babies and infants were killed during the bulldozing operation. These families of rag pickers, who have been living in Lahore for the last four generations, still do not possess identity cards due to their inability to provide the concerned authorities with a permanent home address. Hence they cannot prove their identity/citizenship, which leads to many problems and often may land them into uneasy situations without easy solutions. Their nature of work requires that they go out in the streets, roads and other places at odd hours like late at night or early in the morning, before the sun rises, for that is the best time to find items that they look for, as all waste of the day gets piled up in the trash cans/garbage containers. When they go out at such odd hours with a big sack on their back, policemen interrogate and sometimes take them into custody when they are unable to produce an identity card. Young boys and men taken into police custody may end up spending many days there unless they reach a settlement/bribe with the police.

Ragpickers lifestyle leaves them exposed to the vulnerabilities of environment with no shelter from heat or cold. Their daily nourishment usually comes from low quality hotel food, or waste dumps (witnessed and captured on camera by one of the field team members). They have no access to schooling. Hence they have no opportunity to draw themselves out of ragpicking.

## 5.17 Abuse

### 5.17.1 Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse reported by 27 percent scavengers appears to be a matter of serious concern, especially if one assumes some degree of underreporting. This compares with the 31 percent reported by another study<sup>7</sup>. Of those who experienced sexual abuse, 36 percent reported that they faced sexual abuse from fellow workers, 19 percent said that they faced sexual abuse from shopkeepers and 6 percent from police (See table 5.47).



*Researchers among female scavengers age rang 05-50 years where sexual harassment does not exist*

The vulnerability to and experience of sexual harassment varies according to the type of scavenging. For example, the scavengers who move alone are more vulnerable to sexual harassment. We found a number of cases of sexual harassment and physical abuse among this type of scavengers in Peshawar. These scavengers

are also at risk from their older co-workers. Authorities that are responsible for security such as police and watchmen may also victimize them. Scavengers are insecure even in the public sphere where older men solicit them for sexual engagement (See Annex III-C). Interviews indicate that child rag pickers are approached by people for sexual gratification in direct or indirect ways. One interview, conducted in Lahore revealed that older women also approach teen-aged male rag pickers for sexual purposes.

Site-based scavenging is highly secure because there is no room for any type of sexual harassment as all the family members or tribe works at the same place. The level of insecurity is also low in cases where scavengers move in groups.

#### 5.17.2 Physical and Verbal abuse

Physical abuse cannot be separated from scavenging. It has been reported in all types of scavenging. In a family set-up, the father or elder brother often beat children if they showed any disinclination towards work.

Pressures for quality and quantity were underscored. In this regard, ragpicking is comparable to any other target-oriented sector. Overall data reveals that respondents face pressures to collect a certain quality (44%) and quantity (45%) of material in a day. Scavengers said in 25 percent cases that they have to face punishment for faulty work. More than half of the respondents expressed that they are physically beaten for faulty work. One fifth said that they have to face verbal abuse for faulty work. (See table 5.48)

Scavengers working under the control of *Seth* are at the worse off as physical abuse by *Seth* was reported frequently.

**Gulzaman, a scavenger narrated,** “My *Seth* pressurizes me to collect quality material” otherwise he is taunted and sometimes beaten. **Another 10 years old ragpicker said,** “My *seth* expects four sacks of quality papers from me. I have to do it and some times I work till midnight. If I am unable to collect the required material, then he punishes me and this happens at least twice a month”.

Scavengers were asked about possible verbal and sexual abuse they face during work. Their responses indicate that 67 percent face verbal abuse during work (See Annex III-A&C) Among those that reported that they have to face verbal abuse 39 percent faced verbal abuse from their fellow workers and 21 percent from shopkeepers while 10 percent faced it from policeman. Verbal abuse from parents and *Seth*/contractor was reported by 8 percent respondents for each category. (See table 5.47)

### 5.18. Psychological impacts

#### 5.18.1 Restlessness

Scavengers reported nightmares as they see dangerous animals or beasts, someone cutting their throats with sharp knives, extremely smelly things, dead bodies and other such frightening things and people. As a repercussion they have restless sleep and fears in their hearts.

It was also observed that they don't trust anyone, even the most polite persons due to the fear of sexual harassment and the fear of ending up in jails. Some among them reported speculations about criminal mafias who kidnap scavengers, amputate their body parts to sell them at the hospitals. However no one was witness to such a case or reported anything like that in the neighborhood.

#### 5.18.2 Split family

Split family dilemma has probably takes a toll on rag pickers. Many rag-pickers who live away from home with a *seth* or a relative reported that they missed their mothers. The best time for these rag pickers is when they visit home and spend time with their mothers, sisters and younger family members. These rag-pickers visit their homes quarterly.

### 5.19 Coercion/Bondedness

Research confirmed our prior hypothesis that ragpicking involves coercion in some cases and bondedness in others. The latter is especially visible among migratory scavengers living with *seths* and involved in site-based rag picking.

#### Box 1 Rent seeking in waste disposal

One of the main dump places is owned by a person who approached the Municipal authorities and offered them to use his space as a dump place. The catch here is that this person gets multiple benefits out of this arrangement. The dumpsite is surrounded by at least 500 households who reside in thatched huts (*Jhaunparis*) that are situated on the land owned by this person. He charges each *Jhaunpari* (hut) tenant one dollar, and also charges the site-based scavengers 0.3\$ per truck unloaded there; normally 100-150 trucks are unloaded daily. The division of this amount is such that he pays 0.1\$ to the driver of the truck, 0.1\$ per truck goes to the municipal authorities as bribes and retains 0.1\$ per truck himself. He is running a tea stall, one vegetable and a poultry shop and a billiard and video club. The *Jhaunparis* do not have access to drinking water, so this person supplies them water through his water tankers and charges a set amount from each household.

### 5.20 Seth/Kandawala's role

Our fieldwork brought out uncovered some cases of extreme bondedness in this sector, especially in Lahore and Karachi. The Seth/Kandawala's role confirmed that ragpicking is an informal but organized activity. Usually, a person called *Seth* brings children from his native areas. He keeps an eye out for children who might have dropped out of school or children who do not attend school. He approaches the parents of such children and offers work opportunity to children by giving hopes of a bright future. Usually, these children belong to extremely poor families and thus the parents are easily persuaded. In rare cases, the *Seth* pays some advance as token money to parents, which is paid back by the children. Usually, this amount ranges from \$ 35-70. These rag pickers live with *Seth* who provides them a roof to live under. All the children are bound to bring their collected waste to the *Seth's kanda* where waste is purchased at comparatively cheaper rates than the open market.

These children were unhappy about their living conditions because they have to sleep on the floor using large cardboard sheets as their bedding. Families of these children were aware about their living conditions but are unable to address these issues due to their need for money.

On average, there are 30-35 children living with a *seth* and none of them receive their payment directly; instead, their families receive payment from the *seth*. It was difficult to guess the number of such places within the short time of the project. All of the *seths* operating in Lahore and Karachi belong to NWFP. These *seths* have a strong network with close connections with municipality officers. One *seth* from Lahore quoted that he pays ten thousand per month to officers to bring waste from Defence Housing Society (DHA) because this is a posh area and its' waste contains valuable items. He also gives monetary incentives to truck drivers to bring waste to his dumps.

Children are used to the verbal and physical abuse meted out to them by the *seth*. This abuse is naturalized and justified in their worldview. For example, in response to a question one of the rag pickers said, *"My seth does not offend me and never tries to beat me. Only if and when I collect less waste, he just slaps me"*. Rag pickers do not consider such beatings to constitute abuse but view them as justified punishment for faulty or inadequate work.

Data reveals that the children who are in this profession have no security. The *Seth* has developed a net in which these children are trapped. The element of bondedness can also be observed from the fact that the *Seth* provides on-site accommodation to them and maintains accounts of the children on his own. The *Seth* sets the rate for different items of ragpicking. It is worth noting that the *seth* makes deductions on ragpickers' balances under various expenditures. In spite of all these facts, the children feel a sense of security due to their association with the *Seth*. Sometime these children have to pay a large amount of unforeseen family expenses; on such occasions the *Seth* provides the money with the result that the children continue to live in bonded situations. Unforeseen expenses can also be related to the ragpicker himself. For example, 18-year old Gulzaman, a migratory scavenger, narrated an incident from his life: one day he was on his way for rag picking. Unknowingly, he went to a Kunda (KMC dumpster) in a residential area. The security guard held him and beat him. Eventually, he handed him over to the police for no reason. The *Seth* arranged his release from police custody and told Gulzaman that he paid \$175 to the police. Thus, Gulzaman became indebted. He repaid this debt with his relentless work for three months. He said this was an unprecedented disaster for him.

### **5.21. Leisure time**

Ragpickers spend a lot of time in rag picking. But whenever they have time during the day, they play



*Scavengers watching movie at a hotel in Karachi*

games. They were very interested and punctual about watching films on a street side restaurant TV where they take their food. One of the *seths* in Lahore reported that he arranges for a video show for rag pickers every weekend.

Children were asked about their leisure activities. Rag pickers work in intervals and during these intervals 29 percent reported that they play with their friends (mostly other rag pickers), followed by games 24 percent). Data shows that 18 percent of respondents have no time to take part in any type of leisure activity. Only 6 percent reported that they watch TV (perhaps in street side hotel or mini cinemas) while not working. (See table 5.49)

## **5.22. Conflict between scavengers (Afghan Vs. Non-Afghan)**

Rifts between Afghan and Non-Afghan and Muslim and Christian rag pickers were reported in Karachi and Lahore . Afghan rag-pickers were able to collect comparatively more valuable items from dump places and the industrial area and therefore earned a reasonable amount of money. They usually reach the dump places early in the morning and collect such items from large waste containers placed outside the factories. By the time the non-Afghan ragpickers reached the scene, most of the “valuable items” would already have been collected. This was unacceptable to them and they threatened the Afghans and told them to stay away. In case of Lahore this rift was reported between Afghans and Punjabis and between Christians and Muslims. A group of Afghan rag pickers complained that Punjabis dislike them and liken them to the community of sweepers. They also complained that Punjabis tell them to leave this country. *“Punjabis verbally abuse us and blame Afghans for making their country dirty. We are cleaning their country and they, in return, call us names and consider our profession derogatory”*, commented a member of this group. According to the Afghans, the Punjabis even go to the extent of registering fake complaints against them with the police, which results in harassment and demands for huge amounts of bribes (See Annex IV-E). In Karachi this was evident from the fact that no Afghan rag pickers were found in the main dump location of the industrial area. It was revealed in another focus group discussion of Lahore that the Christian community has the authority to collect and sell hospital waste. Only the material they consider useless is thrown in the garbage containers, which narrows the margin of profit for others, that is, Muslim Punjabis who then collect the discarded material. *“Hospitals give monthly contracts to the Christian community to collect waste, meaning it is the Government that is involved in contracting out waste disposal to different parties, therefore we are not allowed to collect hospital waste and if we do, the Police arrests us”*, explained an Afghan from the focus group discussion (See Annex IV-F). The situation is not different even at site-based rag picking. Afghan rag pickers reported that they were beaten severely by site-based rag pickers.

## **5.23 Dilution of scavenging into other professions**

Scavenging cannot be isolated from the professions that have accommodated a vast majority of the poorest of the poor in Pakistan. This rapid assessment confirmed a strong interlink with some other professions like begging and domestic work. Sometimes scavengers beg for alms or food. One of the field teams observed that whenever younger rag pickers see well to do women they beg for alms and a little later after succeeding or otherwise, they resume rag picking.

The largest rag pickers' tribe (*Kachi*) in Karachi took up ragpicking after abandoning manual labor and later the begging profession. With a slight difference, a tribe in Lahore worked in brick kilns but later the male members adopted rag-picking and the females began begging. In another case, the men of a Punjabi clan are involved in rag picking while all the women are domestic workers. These women also scavenge when they do not have any job as domestic workers. In this context, scavenging by these women is considered as secondary work.

#### **5.24. Social attitudes towards scavengers**

Scavengers believe that people don't like them, as they are unclean and live unhealthy lives. They also believe that people do not like to socialize with them and everyone wants to keep a distance. They expressed various fears and a sense of alienation. Some among them expressed the desire to punish those who have physically beaten or abused them.

##### 5.24.1 People's attitude

Scavengers complained about societal attitudes; 35 percent said that people's attitude towards them is negative, while 8 percent said that people have sympathies for scavengers. (See table 5.47)

Ragpickers' major complaints are about public perceptions and officials from all the departments especially, police and municipality officials. They said that they face the worst attitudes in residential areas. Rag-pickers in Karachi quoted a few incidents when they were beaten up by people and banned to enter some residential colonies. Police also confined their mobility and frightened these rag pickers. There were repeated complaints at all the sites including Islamabad that policemen can take them at anytime to a police station and force them to wash and clean the police-station and residences of the policemen. Usually, they are taken in the night, which is their time for rest after the exhaustion of long hours of tedious rag picking. Not only do they have to obey all the orders of the policemen but they have to bribe their way home. While talking about their background, members of a ragpicker community in a focus group discussion at China Scheme, Lahore, said that after migrating from Kasur to Lahore in the same province, they are unable to obtain identity cards. They explained that despite living in Lahore for years they have no proof of their Pakistani identity due to their temporary living arrangements - their squatter settlements keep shifting from one place to another, as and when directed by the authorities. They had serious complaints on the issue of their identity/citizenship, which is exploited by petty officials in the Police department. As rag pickers, they often work at odd hours-before sunrise and after sunset because there are good chances of finding dumpers and trash-cans that are full of waste material. With the intention making some money, policemen often stop them at night and ask them to prove their identity. When they are unable to do so, they take them to the police station and demand hefty bribes to release them (See Annex IV-F).

The attitude of other departments is also problematic. Scavengers are not allowed to enter hospitals even in the case of their illness.

The father of a scavenger commenting on societal attitudes said, “People in this community do not allow their children to play with my children because they think that scavengers are dirty and perform filthy work. According to the people this work is of low-esteem”.

### **5.25. Worries/fears**

Scavengers are exposed to harassment, coercion and outright danger in their work. The fear of kidnapping is widely prevalent among scavengers i.e., (as mentioned earlier) that they will be kidnapped and kidnappers will kill them to sell their body parts especially kidneys.

Some scavengers in Islamabad expressed fears about their safety during unloading of waste from trucks. A scavenger was over-run by a truck and broke his legs.

According to a majority of scavengers their work is unpleasant but they have no other options. They also believe that there are few chances of progress and therefore they have no future. The “push” factor has forced them to join this profession although there are a few scavengers who claim to have opted for this profession on their own.

Injury from waste (6 percent), fear from animals and insects (8 and 7 percent) respectively were the main worries of scavengers. Fear from police (7 percent) and fear of unfriendly threatening people (5 percent) were also their concerns. This open-ended section contains a long list of responses of fears and worries. Only 6 percent reported that they have no fear or worry about their work and personal life.

Scavengers mentioned numerous problems. Financial issues rank at the top of their problems with 20 percent, followed by non-availability and access to basic facilities at 15 percent i.e. water and electricity. 8 percent respondents also mention the non-availability of shelter. Only 4 percent scavengers were satisfied with their present life. Worries about repaying debts and buying clothes/shoes were mentioned by 4 percent for each category. (See table 5.51)

### **5.26. Future Plans**

In response to a question about future preferences 33 percent of respondents expressed their wish to go to school, followed by work for more income (16 percent). Some respondents have suggested innovative ways of mixing their access to education with other options i.e. part time education and work (12%), education and play (7%). Overall, education remained their priority.

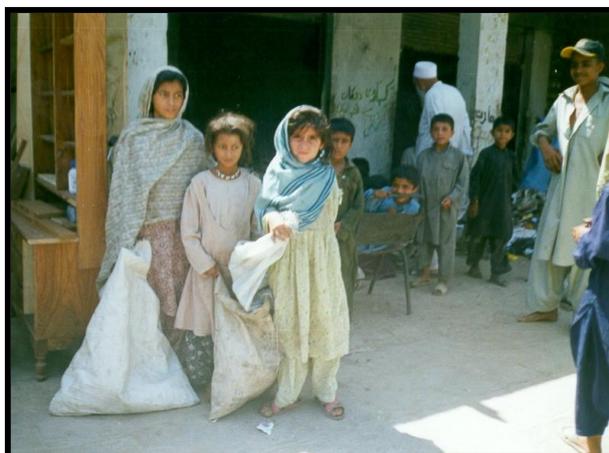
Hopes for a better future were few. Ragpickers wish to obtain an education, but they believe that they will live and die as scavengers as they appear to have accepted this profession as their fate. This is especially the case for site-based scavengers. Afghan scavengers had some wishes to go back to their own homeland and to get education or to start their own small-scale business. The desire to go back was reinforced in case studies/individual interviews, informal discussions and focus group discussions (See Annex III & IV).

For 32% respondents a change in profession is a priority for their future plans. The importance of education is well addressed by scavengers and 23 percent stated it to be part of their future plans, while 17% said they wanted to have their own business (See Annex III-C). Migrant scavengers (Afghans) wanted to start their own business (3%) but in their own homeland. Among Afghan scavengers 1 percent said they want to go back to their country and the same Afghan ragpickers said that they wish to get an education in Afghanistan.

Overall 19% ragpickers mentioned clothes/shoes as their major need followed by money at 17%, food 14% and education and accommodation 12% for each category. Getting married was mentioned by 1% of the older age group. Innocent needs for toys and jewelry were mentioned by 1% for both the categories. (For this section see table 5.50)

### 5.27. Female rag pickers

As compared to Karachi and the capital city, Islamabad, very few female rag pickers were found in Lahore. Little girls and women are usually found at garbage containment sites such as Malipura and Mehmood boti in Lahore where they can be seen scavenging along with their families. Females found particularly at “Mehmood boti” can only speak Pushto, which confirms their Afghan and Pashtun origin, however girls working at Malipura (near River Ravi) are of Punjabi origin. Common to all sites is the fact that girls were very apprehensive to talk even to female researchers. It was discovered later that their apprehension was based on their unpleasant past experiences that can possibly be linked to sexual abuse or attempts at it. This holds them back from interacting with strangers, let alone trusting them. They were so cautious that they outrightly refused even to walk a few steps away from their group.



Soon to leave the profession due to in-built cultural strategy

Cultural taboos are always criticized in Pakistan and elsewhere and are considered a major barrier to development especially for females. As mentioned earlier that female rag pickers leave this profession at the age of twelve years due to cultural norms. Socially it is not accepted for unmarried young women to step out for any purpose. In the scavenging context, we found this social taboo to be playing a positive role.

A 17-years old male scavenger, *Anzoor*, talking about one of his fellow female workers said that she left this profession at the age of eleven years and stayed at home. This boy approached her parents to marry her but her father demanded for one hundred and ten thousands as “*walwar*” (brideprice). It was impossible to arrange such huge amount for him. He said that sometimes he thinks that girls are lucky as they “leave this filthy profession” when they reach the age of puberty and live in their house, neat and clean.

Site-based and nomad female scavengers are involved in this profession since childhood. They could not even imagine themselves to be doing anything else. They learned this job from their parents and were not forced by anyone into ragpicking. Their vision for a brighter future was limited. They saw their parents doing this job and now they and their coming generations will do the same.

### 5.28. Hospital waste

*Pakistan Environmental Protection Act 1997 (PEPA 97) declared hospital waste as hazardous waste. According to the act, the producer is responsible for proper disposal of waste.*



*Hospital waste in a Gand Nala*

This rapid assessment on Rag pickers was designed to have an equal number of respondents from hospital sites and other sites for all waste such as junkyards, markets, and residential areas. However, as mentioned earlier we found that no girls and younger boys were involved in collecting hospital waste. Further it is impossible for child scavengers to rely on hospital waste only. They have to visit other places to collect waste. We found that recycling<sup>13</sup> hospital waste is an organized activity for which contracts are given out to different people/contractors. This is re-confirmed by the fact that only adult scavengers are involved in picking hospital waste. Overall 11% respondents were involved in hospital waste collection. This figure was high in Karachi at 36% followed by Quetta and Islamabad 15 and 5% respectively.

The table of percentage distribution of respondents by city and site shows that in Lahore no respondents were found at the hospital sites (*See section about the sample*). The possible reasons for this can be: the increased vigilance of the hospital authorities, who have now strictly prohibited rag pickers' admission in the hospital premises; the fact that usually adults are involved in collecting the hospital waste and; parents discourage their children to visit hospital sites due to awareness about aids and other diseases, as mentioned by the participants of focus group discussions (*See Annex IV*). A large number of respondents also complained that they are denied access to hospital waste because the hospital authorities prefer Christian community of rag pickers for this work and give them monthly contracts for it.

Information about hospital waste proved difficult to collect in every city. A small number of scavengers (only males) collecting hospital waste were found and interviewed. All the hospitals claimed to have efficient waste disposal systems, including the proper disposal of infectious items like syringes, drips and urine bags, and equipment used at operation theaters and used bandages. There are a few reports on re-cycling of these infectious items but work involves adults only and

13 Recycled syringes: Facts or fictions. DAWN May 8-14, 2003

cannot be accessed by the children. It is also difficult for the children to rely on hospital waste only. They collect waste from different localities and make one or two trips to hospitals to collect waste that usually contains bottles of syrup, packets and papers.

A respondent from solid waste management department informed us that a large number of hospitals do not have proper waste disposal systems. They were sure that these hospitals sell used items like syringes and blood bags. They asserted the involvement of mafias in dangerous activities that recycle hospital waste. None of the municipality representatives we accessed knew where the waste of hospitals/clinics is disposed off.

In Peshawar and Karachi the field teams observed that small clinics/hospitals throw their waste in “*Ganda Nalas*” (open drains with dirty water). The collection of hospital waste from such drains appeared very dangerous as the scavengers dive in the water to collect syringes and drip bags, exposing themselves to all kind of water borne infections and skin diseases.

Children, however, collect hospital waste from in and outside the hospitals whenever they get a chance. Sometimes they bribe the hospital’s low paid employees to buy hospital waste in bulk, a very easy way of getting the waste without making great efforts and spending tiring long hours to collect the waste. They also steal waste from wards at the hospitals as reported by hospital staff.

### **5.29 *Desire/wishes and needs***

During one focus group discussion in response to question about the wishes, children expressed the following wishes:

1. We need good clothes
2. I like clothes.
3. I wish for a better house.
4. I like good food.
5. I will purchase a good house.
6. We wish for rest and good health as we get sick so often.
7. All of us want to get rich.
8. I like to have a car.
9. We need a house.
10. People hurt us. We need security.

Clothes/shoes were a prime need for 19 percent respondents, followed by money (17 percent). 14 percent responses expressed the wish to eat better and ample food. Education and shelter was reported in 12 percent for each category. To get married was mentioned by different scavengers in different questions. (*see table 5.50*)

Another focus group discussion with adults threw up the issue of their expectations from the state. Hoping for state intervention to facilitate housing, health, education and an alternate livelihood for them, are these people who can rightly be called the poorest of poor. They have serious and genuine complaints from the Government, welfare organizations and the people in general for being insensitive and indifferent towards them. Focus group discussions and case studies are reflective of people’s

grievances about identity/citizenship, livelihood, security and basic necessities of life. The problems people face living in squatter settlements bring a lot of misery with them as one man narrated his past experience when he was living in a *kachi aabadi* (squatter settlement) called “Jani Pura” in Lahore. Since squatter settlements are illegal, the Lahore Development Authority ordered the people to leave the place on a very short notice. Five new-born babies were sleeping unattended in different huts whose mothers had gone out for work. While people were packing up in panic, LDA started bulldozing the huts in which five babies were killed (See Annex IV-F). Having experienced such horrible incidents due to the abject poverty that they are living in, these people urge the Government to address their problems and insecurities. They have serious complaints from the State on the issue of their identity/citizenship, which certainly is their right by birth but not having any legal authority to endorse it.

## 6. Recommendations

The following interventions are being made in accordance to a three-pronged approach that we propose. These are listed along priority lines in terms of immediate band aid measures, followed by reforms in the system in terms of short and medium term measures, and finally structural changes. In this regard, we have also made recommendations in terms of community-based initiatives, government (local government, provincial and federal government) policy measures as well as civil society interventions. The government initiatives can also be taken in their sectoral contexts, i.e., related to legal measures, education reforms, legal measures, police responsibilities and so on.

### 6.1 Band-aid Measures

These relate to the immediate almost welfarist response that is required to set things right on an immediate basis. Such responses may include the following:

1. **A System of Social Security:** The Pakistan government needs to devise a comprehensive system of social security whereby food aid/community kitchens may be started. Similarly, medical aid (facilities and aid are being privatized and thus less accessible to the poor) need to be provided to the poor to shield them from becoming totally destitute.
2. **Improved Access to State-sponsored Zakat Committees:** Such committees exist at the local government level, however, their functioning is often suspect. Ragpickers will often not be able to access these committees due to the migratory nature of their work and the fact that they usually do not have permanent abode and are usually not registered voters—categories that can informally disqualify them from accessing such funds.
3. **Private Philanthropy:** While our study did not include questions about how much ragpickers and their families might depend upon private philanthropy, this might be an angle well worth pursuing as usually mosques act as community centers where the needy sometimes are able to access help with regard to food security and health issues.
4. **Civil Society Responses:** Some civil society organizations, especially welfare societies and foundations like the Edhi Foundation are able to help in multiple ways by providing refuge, food and even rehabilitation programs (the latter to be discussed in the next section). Such societies, embedded in indigenous

values, may be relied upon to come forward and help in the context of band-aid responses and perhaps can be sensitized to the issues ragpickers face.

## **6.2 Short and Medium Term Reform Measures:**

### **6.2.1 Government Responses:**

1. Government Interventions: Initiatives such as the TBP of the government under the ILO-IPEC program need to be taken to scale by the government itself.
2. Government Policies: Government policies and investments, especially in the areas of education, health, labor and environment need to connect with one another and need far greater investments than are presently being made available to these sectors. Furthermore, some of these changes can also be connected with the NEQS (National Environmental Quality Standards) through the EPA and EPDs.
3. More Efficient Government Policy Measures for Garbage Collection and Garbage Disposal with Greater Outreach: Such policies need to be devised by all municipal committees in collaboration with local government. Funds for these activities will need to be enhanced. Such measures will ensure proper collection and disposal of garbage and will need to be couple with measures for providing alternative livelihood options to the ragpickers and their families (discussed later).
4. Provision of Water, Electricity and Gas: These amenities are a must in the present day. Such provisions to the poorest communities, where ragpickers live, will help to improve their living standards as well as decrease the incidence of ragpicking for “own use.”
5. The Pakistan Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP): The safety nets proposed in the PRSP need to be strengthened with regard to ragpickers lives, conditions and future options. More importantly, if the overall objective of poverty elimination rather than reduction could be achieved through important changes in Pakistan’s macro economic policies, we could potentially witness a reduction in poverty. This would automatically mean a far smaller proportion of the population who would have to turn to ragpicking, which has poverty as a root cause.

### **6.2.2. Government and Civil Society Responses:**

1. Skill Enhancement: Skill enhancement for ragpickers, whose work is considered to be unskilled, would mean training in a vocational institute or learning skills that have better remuneration as well as symbolic value in terms of prestige. This would have a direct impact on ragpickers self-perception with regard to how people regard them.
2. Rehabilitation Centers: Such centers can be run and managed jointly by NGOs as well as government. They can also be run independently. It is imperative that such centers cater to the needs of ragpickers and have professional counseling available for children suffering from trauma, sexual and physical abuse or dysfunctional families. Funding can come from business associations such as the chambers of commerce and industry.
3. Schools: Schools with flexible timings are critical to access ragpickers. If the school is open for different shifts in the day, it will give the option of attending school to children who otherwise might not be able to access schooling at all.

A successful initiative has taken place in Quetta where the school is open from 8 am till 6 pm and ragpickers can join in during any session. The government can emulate a similar pattern on a much larger scale.

4. **Increased Livelihood Opportunities for Families Including Employment Opportunities:** If there are greater investments in pro-poor policies and pro-people policies, as well as investments in the natural environment, there is no reason why there cannot be increased livelihood opportunities. While examining this aspect, policy makers must be aware that while it is important to increase jobs, it is equally important to generate other venues for business generation. This would contribute to both public and private sector jobs as well as self-employment. All this implies a revival of local economies.
6. **Health:** Health related spending is quite steep, especially due to the hazardous nature of this work. Therefore, the government as well as NGOs can take initiatives for reducing the health risks not only through increased coverage through hospitals but also sensitizing campaigns about the hazardous nature of this work.
7. **Mass Advocacy Campaigns:** These can be initiated by different government and civil society organizations, including media associations, NGOs in service delivery and community development as well as research and advocacy, political parties that have outreach into the rural and urban areas as well as business and professional associations such as Bar councils and the chambers of commerce and industry.

### **6.3 Structural Changes**

**Systemic Changes:** Legal protection cover needs to be extended to children in hazardous professions as well as implementation must be improved.

**Economic Policy Change:** As poverty has increased in Pakistan as a result of the policies that the government has been following, only a complete change in direction can ensure that the present poverty producing phenomenon can be arrested. This would require structural changes in the fundamental political and economic decision making set up as well the negotiation processes with international lending institutions.