

Pakistan ranks third in countries with highest prevalence of child labour

Participants at a seminar on Wednesday said that Pakistan ranks third in the countries with the highest prevalence of child labour and forced labour despite the fact that a significant decline in the number of child labourers has been recorded globally.

The Child Rights Movement (CRM) Sindh, in collaboration with DevCon Karachi and the Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP), organised a seminar in connection with World Day Against Child Labour.

Citing the Global Slavery Index 2013, the speakers said that Pakistan ranked third, after Mauritania and Haiti, in the prevalence of child labour, while according to the International Labour Organisation, the overall number of child labourers declined from 200 million in 2000 to 168 million in 2014.

MPA Mangla Sharma said the Sindh government lagged far behind the Punjab administration, which was actively working on issues relating to child labour and education in the province. CSSP Executive Director Noor Bajeer said Pakistan was experiencing the worst form of child labour. “The cruellest of events can be seen inside plush homes, where domestic workers experience inhuman attitudes generally.”

Fozia Masoom, deputy director child protection of the Sindh Social Welfare Department, said that there were 25 million children out of school, out of which 15 million were alarmingly economically active. She said that none of the four provinces seemed interested in conducting fresh surveys.

Social activist GR Balouch said that the government and the citizens should work hand-in-hand to persuade the wealthy to educate the children they have employed to work in their homes.

The speakers said that the government had failed to conduct a fresh child labour survey since 1996, which made it hard to correctly ascertain the details of children working in different sectors around the country, particularly in Sindh. They said that laws enacted in 2017 were not fully aligned with Pakistan’s international obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Labour Organisation’s Convention No. 138 and No. 182 as well as the Sustainable Development Goals’ target 8.7.

Officials at the CRM Sindh had strongly urged the government to take action against child labour and prevent children from economic exploitation, violence and abuse. Kapil Dev from the UN Women, Nisar Nizami of DevCon, Salam Dharejo from Terre Des Hommes and Kashif Bajeer of the CRM also spoke at the seminar.

Our Correspondent