

Report of Media Seminar

Creating Media Awareness about Vulnerability of Flood Affected Children to Worst Forms of Child Labour

Dated: 25 September 2010

Venue: Avari, Beach luxury, Karachi



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Some earlier assessments said around 20 million people were affected by the recent flood in Pakistan. These are the worst kind of disasters in Pakistan's recent history. However, the UN estimates say a total of 14 million people have been affected by the floods, massive than the 2004's Tsunami and 2005 Pakistan earthquake, with millions of children and women struggling to survive in precarious conditions.

Keeping this background in mind, International Labour Organization (ILO) in collaboration with Journalists for Democracy and Human Rights (JDHR) Pakistan (www.jdhr.org), a countrywide network of journalists and a media think tank linked to other networks in South Asia and South East Asia, organized one day Media Sensitization Seminar at Hotel Avari, Karachi on 25th September 2010.



A view of the participants attending the ILO-JDHR seminar on 25th September 2010 in Karachi

The major objectives of this media seminar were:

- 1) To encourage media highlight the need to protect the flood affected children from becoming victim of the worst form of child labour
- 2) To identify the ways and means to motivate people to support education for flood affected children to prevent

them becoming victim of the worst forms of child labour (WFCL)

To meet these objectives, a large number of professional journalists from Karachi were invited. Over 50 journalists took active participation in the session discussing various aspects and role of media in protecting the flood affected children from being used as child labourers. A senior television journalist and Executive Director of the Journalists for Democracy and Human Rights (JDHR) Mr Khalid Jamil, Senior Programme Officer ILO Mr. Muhammad Saifullah Chaudhry, representatives from employers' federation and workers federal in their respective presentations took stock of the situation and alarmed against raising voice for the vulnerable children as a collective social responsibility. They highlighted the importance of the objectives of the seminar and its linkages to the work of journalists.

After introduction of the Journalist, Khalid Jamil, spoke about story ideas and available media space and formats for writing stories and preparing TV reports on the issues involving children and the child labour. He also explained that the floods have caused widespread destruction affecting a total of some 4 million people. He shared some of his experience working as journalists in the flood affected areas and how he saw vulnerability of children to child labour. He urged the journalists to play their social responsibility towards these children who are at risk of being turned as child labourers. He said media colleagues can do stories around it alarming parents and relative to keep watching the situation of their children again any sort of exploitation.

Mr Saifullah Chaudhry said the ILO is closely working with all stakeholders and is concerned about the state of the children badly affected by the recent floods in Pakistan. He said ILO considers media its strategic partner and believes that the media in coordination with other institutions working to protect the rights of the children can play a vital role in saving the lives and future of these vulnerable children. Keeping its promise to eliminate all kinds of the worst forms of child labour in Pakistan, ILO believes that its partnership with media is crucial.

Mr saifullah said ILO had organized a series of media trainings and seminars to take journalists on board and this seminar is also an example of its seriousness towards working with media on a very serious issue of child labour in the post floods emerging situation. He hoped that media people will keep vigil on the

situation and will promptly report on possible vulnerabilities of the children at risk of child labour as result of the flood.

A senior editor of The Frontier Post, G.N. Mughul, while speaking as chairperson of a session also shared his experiences. He advised the journalists to visit their respected areas inundated in the flood waters to there they can see how children as risk of diseases and child labour. He analyzed that the reported news stories do not depict the vulnerabilities of the children. The real stories are still out of screen which needs to be highlighted, he added.

Mr Mughal said floods washed away belongings of both rich and poor and made many viable families vulnerable to poverty and their children to child labour. A large number of people got shocks and developed some sort of mental and emotional disorders. He emphasized that the recent floods are direct result of climate change and children are prone to climate change impacts. We need to find out solutions now, he added.

Shaista Malik from JDHR presented a slideshow of flood victim children under the age of 5 to 15 hailing from Sindh and NWFP provinces. She said the stories behind the pictures of children in the presentation depict that scarcity of food has made whole families vulnerable to hunger. Many a families have no option but to skip one meal a day. Pictures show young **children** displaced by the floods and facing harsh living conditions in the **relief** camps. Their family incomes were dropped drastically and these children are at risk of being put into child labour, she added.

Ms Shaista said the floods deprived a lot of children from the innocence of their childhood too early in their lives and they are involved in labour work to share the burden of their families.



After the presentations, the participating journalists at the Media Seminar shared their experiences on the floods related devastation in villages they visited. They expressed their concerns on massive destruction caused due to floods and they did confirm that children's vulnerability to child labour is increased amid job and other loss of other means of livelihoods. They quoting various estimates said more than 6 million children have been affected by the floods with some 2.7 million children in need of urgent, life-saving assistance. They discussed that the flood survivors are waiting for the relief services on emergency basis.

They described that the victims have lost everything to floods and are helpless to live without shelter. They also explained the condition of Flood victim children who are more vulnerable as they fall into the domain of child trafficking or forced labour. The present devastation of flood has not only affected on our economy but also hindered the social life of the masses.

The journalists team called upon the government and civil society to work together to save the future of affected children. The participants stressed that the government should take serious notice of complex situation after floods as unemployment and poverty have increased manifold.

To protect the children from becoming child labour victim, the participants suggested that national, international humanitarian partners and government should join hands and devise a joint survival strategy for the establishment of

schools, rehabilitation of flood affected families on emergency basis. They also discussed about the use of existing infrastructure as how to improve its utilization for betterment of the flood victims.

In the end of the Media Seminar, the participants gave the following recommendation:

1. Media should re-define its role to highlight the problems of flood victims particularly children.
2. After flood havoc, children and adolescents will require information on how to prepare themselves to fight against any such future situation, so appropriate psychological counseling services should be provided to them. This will also be helpful for their character building as well.
3. Government and humanitarian organizations should announce some packages for children's health and education
4. Rehabilitation of flood affectees and reconstruction of schools must be a priority in the government's next plan
5. Recent flood is due to climate change and this should be discussed at international forum.

The participants also agreed to do a pro active media work to fulfill their social responsibility towards the children.