

## **Journalist urged to join hands to create awareness against worst forms of child labour**

**Journalists by joining hands against the worst forms of child labour can highlight the issue so that correct measures can be taken by the concerned authorities to check the menace.**

This was the crux of a Media Consultation meeting on June 11 at hotel Lourdes in Quetta in which journalists hailing from Quetta, Awaran, Khuzdar, Dera Murad Jamali, Osta Muhammad, Noushki and Chagai including presidents of Awaran and Khuzdar press clubs participated and exchanged views. JDHR's Executive Director and senior media trainer and journalist Mr Shafqat Munir and Quetta team including senior journalist Shahzada Zulfikar and Mr Mujeeb Ahmad, Bureau Chief Aaj TV conducted the consultation meeting.

Journalists for Democracy and Human Rights (JDHR) in collaboration with ILO IPEC and the Ministry of Information's Media project is organizing series of such media consultations to form and activate a Media Coalitions against the Worst Form of Child Labour. The key resource persons requested the participants to join the Media Coalition and contribute through it as a collaborative effort to create awareness against the worst forms of child labour so that working children and those vulnerable to such situation could be protected



*A few participants during the Media consultation meeting in Quetta on June 11, 2009*

The consultation meeting was piggybacked by another training session on “media for peace and development” also conducted by the three senior journalists.

On an input by the National Project Manager, ILO IPEC Media Project, Ms. Saba Mohsan, the consultation meeting took the 12<sup>th</sup> June, the world child labour day, as a media hook and the issue of child labour was raised during the consultation meeting and the significance of the 12<sup>th</sup> June was highlighted. One of the participants Ms Zaibun Nisa Nousheen, a reporter from Jang Quetta wrote a story, which was published in daily Jang Quetta on 12<sup>th</sup> June.



*Shafqat Munir speaking at the consultation while Mr Mujeeb Ahmad, Bureau Chief Aaj TV, Quetta is sitting- June 11, 2009*

Speaking during the consultation, Mr Shafqat Munir said that it is unfortunate that children in Pakistan are being plunged into a trap of the worst forms of child labour. The number of working children is growing day by day due to economic pressure and costly and inaccessible education. The exact number of such children has not been determined as only 1996 labour survey is quoted in this regard which counts working children as only 3.3 million while independent child watch groups count them 15 million. If we look at the demographic trends and Pakistan's current population of over 170 million, the number of children may exceed the existing number agreed and quoted by many organizations including ILO, he added.

Shafqat called upon media and journalists to work through the stories of working children in their respective areas, provinces and the country and help determine the trends in the worst form of child labour, how to reverse these trends and how to get their children out of the hazardous working conditions. He said media and journalists, by virtue of their social responsibility and mandate, are the friends and watcher of children's rights in Pakistan. Media and journalists are the ones who have unearthed many case stories in which children were being subjected to the worst forms of child labour including camel jockeys, domestic child workers, chemical industry's working children, soccer ball industry and many other areas.

Shafqat said journalists by joining hands against worst forms of child labour can highlight the issue so that correct measures can be taken by the concerned authorities to check the menace. He also briefed the participants about ILO IPEC and the Ministry of Information's Media project under which as implementing partner,

Journalists for Democracy and Human Rights is organizing series of media consultations to form and activate a Media Coalitions against the Worst Form of Child Labour. He requested the participants to join the coalition and contribute through it as a collaborative effort to create awareness against the worst forms of child labour so that working children and those vulnerable to such situation could be protected.

Earlier, senior journalist and former chief of Quetta Press Club, Mr. Shahzada Zulfikar urged the need to join Media Coalition against Child Labour to share and debate their knowledge and stories against the worst form of child labour. He said journalists in Balochistan may connect with each other and colleague from other part of the country through this network and benefit from each other. He said there is no need to chase always a political and hypersensitive news story rather journalist should also file stories on child issues as children are our future. He said no body can harm journalists if they work on stories around child labour.

Adding to the debate during media consultation, Bureau Chief of AAJ Television, Mr Mujeeb Ahmad said though journalists in Balochistan face a lot of pressures from various power groups, they can work on human rights stories if they professional handle them. He suggested that stories based on correct data and information and covering all sides would be worth coverage in both electronic and print media and would create no threats for journalists. He agreed to earlier point that focusing on political story at the cost of human stories, especially stories around working children, is not the only journalism. He suggested that journalists should balance their coverage for development, human rights and political stories. He said the idea of Media Coalition against worst forms of child labour is a step to move towards fulfilling our professional and social responsibility towards working children.

During the consultation meeting, reasonable time was allocated for local journalists to speak on the situation of child labour in their areas and to give suggestions to tackle the issue. In the later part of the day, they were briefed about the child labour situation in Pakistan, particularly Balochistan and how they can contribute to eliminate the worst form of child labour. They were briefed on how to construct their story on child labour related issues. They were imparted skills on how to interact with relevant people and ministries to expose the menace.

The participants were introduced to the idea of setting up of a Media Coalition against worst form of child labour and were asked to join this coalition and an email group. Many of the journalists who have access to Internet and email joined the group while others are being kept informed on mobile phone on the story ideas shared among the group.

The participants during questions and answers sessions raised various questions and it was a general consensus that only political story is not a complete journalism rather stories around development and peace issues and human rights including working children's rights can reflect a diversified socially responsible journalism.



*Participants expressing their views during the Media consultation in Quetta- June 11, 2009*

During the session, four working groups were formed to come up with stories on human rights, especially on the working children. Later the stories were professionally examined and discussed by three key journalists.

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