

Child Domestic Work and Media Activism- Right based approach reduces vulnerability

Shafqat Munir
Development Journalist,
President JDHR
shafmunir@yahoo.com

Prevalence of child domestic work

- 250 million child workers in developing world, majority of them are domestic workers (ILO study)
- Majority of domestic workers are girls under 16
- Vulnerability to sexual abuse and violence
- 4.5% children sexually abused in Pakistan on daily basis (Sahil)
- Majority of domestic child workers, particularly girls are among those who are sexually or physically abused

Responses to child domestic work

- Domestic service is one of the world's oldest occupations in which children traditionally play a part. The mad servants (girls) are important in this regard. They normally shares work of two older servants
- Work at family by children
- Work at outside family

Situation in different societies

- Industrialized societies:
 - Decline in child domestic work. More children attend schools
 - More reliance on machines for house chores
- Developing societies:
 - Forces of demand and supply side exploit limited job opportunities, poverty, cheap labour practices
 - Strong social hierarchy
 - Priority of human energy instead of labour-saving appliances at house holds

Child Domestic Work

- Child domestic workers are the children under 18 who work in other people's households, doing domestic chores including care of children.
- They work full time in exchange for residence, food, clothes and sometimes remuneration.
- They are more vulnerable to abuse and violence as they have a little escape as compared to other child workers

Acceptability of child domestics

- Child domestic work at own families is in principle not a matter of concern unless it turns to be hazardous
- It is regarded as normal development and learning household skills.
- Parents make their children participate in family chores, such as bed making, setting table, helping in other works and look after children.
- Light work at neighbour's house for pocket money outside school hours could also be tolerated

Unacceptability of child domestics

- Work in exploitative, abusive and discriminatory atmosphere
- All hazardous works
- Worst form of child labour (ILO 182)
- Situations where child well being is compromised for household
- Hiring of girls for household chores for being a cheap labour for longer hours
- Where children are put to work at the cost of their schooling

How children get into domestics

- Poverty, orphanage, no care
- Family sends them for economic reasons
- Trafficking-organized syndicates
- Adoptions- relatives, others disguised and camouflage situations
- Run away children
- Employment

ILO conventions on child work

- Convention 138
 - Allows light works for children between 12-16 depending upon national situations
 - No hazardous work is allowed
 - Limited employment
- Convention 182
 - Speaks of the worst forms of child labour including work under abusive situations, prostitutions, pornography and trafficking for any sort of work
 - It calls for removal of children from forced labour, debt bondage, slavery or practice similar to slavery that harm their health, safety and moral well being

Push factors

- **Context of vulnerability-** poverty, lack of skills among family elders, lack of education, no jobs, conflicts, illness, natural disasters
- **Gender Discrimination-** women and girls are vulnerable as they are considered inferior
- **Ignorance of the risks-** concept of training of girls in household skills. Considered apprenticeship as alternative to education. Perception of being protected for girls as compared to outside house. False adoptions---these may turn to be risky
- **Desire of Education-** some children who could not continue education work at homes to earn money to go back to schools; sometime it happens, othertimes it does not happen
- **Social hierarchies-** lower class children work for higher class, middles class
- **Debt Bondage and trafficking-** mines, brick kilns and other hazardous places

Child domestic work violates rights guaranteed to children under CRC

- To be cared for by parents (Article-7)
- To preserve identity, nationality, name and family (Article-8)
- To freedom of expression and freedom of association (A 13, 15)
- To be brought up by parents or guardians watching best interest of children (Article-18)
- To protection from physical or mental ill treatment, neglect or exploitation (A-19)
- To protection from economic exploitation and from performing any work that interferes with education and is harmful to child's mental, spiritual or social development (Article-32)
- To be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (Article 34)
- TO be protected from abduction, sale or trafficking (Article 35 and ILO 182 also covers it)
- To be protected from torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Article 37)

Implications of work for child domestic workers

- Respect for identity, selfhood, freedom
- Parental nature and guidance
- Physical well being
- Educations development
- Psycho-social and emotional development
- Gross abuse and exploitation, sexual

What needs to be done

- Drop in Centres- providing home away from home (NGOs, social welfare departments)
- Crisis intervention- to protect child domestic workers from physical or sexual abuse
- Educational programmes
- Social life, recreation and counseling
- Raising awareness
- Collecting information through research
- Changing attitude; behaviour change communication; advocacy at local, national levels
- National legislation
- Complying international standards

Role of Media

- Importance role of media in collecting and sharing information
- Highlighting situations of child domestic work to make people change their behaviour towards them
- Protecting People's Right to Know (particularly children under CRS: Mandate of Media
- Sharing results of Scientific Research on different aspects of child domestic work with stakeholders through extended media coverage of the issue

Media Activism

- Information sharing at local, national, regional and global levels is vital to humanitarian responses towards economy, work environment and society, particularly on child domestic work.
- Media, while playing its role as the agent of information and protector of the Right to Know of the people shares information at broader level, actually raises the level of awareness about the issues which impact the livelihoods of and lives of child domestic workers
- Media activism forces policy makers and implementing agencies to move in the right direction with a rights based approach, thus avoiding harming the interests of children while formulating any policy on child domestic work
- Media activism forewarns certain communities and the people at large about the impacts of hazardous works on the development of children

Social Responsibility Theory

- Following failure of the Libertarian Theory of Media, Social Responsibility Theory of Media emerged with a rights-based approach to address real social problems facing various communities across nations.
- Under Libertarian Theory, it were the owners and the operators in the press who had to decide what should go or be blocked in print/broadcast media.
- The Social Responsibility Theory rests on the notion of a free press acting socially responsibly. It rests on the notion of free press acting responsibly towards their society with a commitment both on the part of the journalists and owners of media organizations.
- Right to Know of the People has been recognized as the supreme right of the people. Children under CRC enjoy the right to know about what is going to happen that could affect their livelihoods and is in their interest.

Media Ethics

- All journalists and media professionals have a duty to maintain the highest ethical and professional standards and need to promote within the industry the widest possible dissemination of information about the UN *Convention on the rights of the child and its two optional protocols* and their implications for the exercise of independent journalism.
- **Media organizations need to regard violation of the rights of children and issues related to children's safety, privacy, security, their education, health and social welfare, and all forms of exploitations, as important questions for investigation and public debate.**

Journalists' sense of responsibility to society

- It is considered a moral, social and professional duty of a journalist to be responsible towards society. That is why media persons are focused and concerned on the issues affecting the lives of the people as to them, news is what affects the lives of the people and/or interests to them.
- These are the two premises on which journalists write news items and draft their stories and articles. Prevailing international norms say journalists should have the freedom to gather, draft and present news stories.
- It is their free choice what to cover. But if they are barred from doing their duty or someone else decides for them what is worth covering and what is not then this is denying them their professional right.

Rights based approach

promotes right to development

- With the emergence of worldwide rights movements, awareness of human rights and a widespread rights-based approach to settle disputes and reduce vulnerabilities are gaining space across communities and countries.
- The trend now is to give rights an explicit legislative basis, and to incorporate them into a wide range of agreements and policies including commercial contracts and labour agreements, particularly when children are involved in domestic labour/work.
- The concept of rights not only covers individual freedom of expression, voting and trade, but basic needs of human beings including water and sanitation, food, housing, employment opportunities, a clean environment and increasingly gender and cultural rights, and security as the hardcore developmental issues.
- There is a consensus among the human rights groups that a rights approach could help reduce vulnerability provided legal instruments support the approach.
- Right based Vs. Interest based approaches

Principles for reporting on children

- Strive for standards of excellence in terms of accuracy and sensitivity when reporting on issues involving children.
- Avoid programming and publication of images which intrude upon the media space of children with information which is damaging to them.
- Avoid the use of stereotype and sensational presentation to promote journalistic material involving children.
- Give children, where possible, the right of access to media to express their own opinions without inducement of any kind.

Protect children while reporting

- In certain cases, using a child's identity - their name and/or recognizable image - is in the child's best interests. However, when the child's identity is used, they must still be protected against harm and supported through any stigmatization or reprisals.

- **Examples**

- **When a child initiates contact with the reporter, wanting to exercise his/her right to freedom of expression and his/her right to have their opinion heard.**
- **When a child is part of a sustained program of activism or social mobilization and wants to be so identified**

Continued....

- **When in doubt about whether a child is at risk, report on the general situation for children rather than on an individual child, no matter how newsworthy is the story.**
- **The journalist shall show particular respect to the rights of the children and adults with physical or mental incapacity**
- **Avoid at all times language, photographs, visuals and graphics that are racist, sexist, insensitive and disrespectful of men, women and children, the religious denominations, cultural communities, and gender and political preferences.**

Interviewing children

- Special attention is to be paid to each child's right to privacy and confidentiality, to have their opinions heard, to participate in decisions affecting them and to be protected from harm and retribution.
- Avoid questions or comments that are judgmental, insensitive to cultural values that place a child in danger or expose a child to humiliation, grief or trauma.
- Obtain permission from child and his or her guardian in writing with a free will for all interviews, videotaping and documentary photographs.
- Great care should always be exercised in interviewing any child in reference to any tragic or harrowing experience such as a bomb explosion, tragedy at sea and fire