

# Empowering Decent Work Committees at Local Level for Promotion of DW Activities in Toba Tek Singh, Pakistan

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**ABSTRACT---** *One of the more effective strategies in development seeks to promote members owned and managed community-based groups to implement programs meant for the community members. Child labor protection coverage is limited in most developing countries and also there is devastating conditions of Health and Safety. Decent Work committees were established in 35 villages of District Toba tek Singh in 2011 for promotion of Decent Work. A survey was conducted after four year working of DW committees to check the progress of established committees. The purpose of this study was to assess and give empirical evidences of reduction in child labor and improvement in Health and Safety values in cotton field. None of the children were engaged in hazardous work in cotton field and only 05 percent children were working under light work and 40 percent facilities regarding Health and Safety were created in four years as compared to 10 percent in 2011. 90 percent adult respondents respond that they know the work of DW committees. These results show the effectiveness of DW committees at local level and emphasis to strengthen the role of DW committees in whole the country.*

**Keywords---** DW committees, child labor, Health and Safety, facilities

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Establishment and Facilitation of Decent Work Committees is one of the most important activities on decent work promoted by WWF-P in District Toba tek Singh. These committees are based on community-driven approach for rural development and influence social factors of society. Children in Pakistan are engaged in child labor, including in agriculture and in the worst forms of child labor called bonded labor. The majority of child labor in Pakistan occurs in agriculture (UCW, 2010-2011). Data from the Government of Pakistan's 2012– 2013 National Labor Force Survey indicate that the majority of child workers reside in rural areas (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2012-2013).

Since 1999 the promotion of decent work, defined as “productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity”, has become the main objective of the ILO (Pages, 2013). Common sense would suggest that providing the authority and responsibility to organizations that are closer to the eventual beneficiaries would result in services being provided that is more related to people's needs and that emphasize the use of local skills and resources (Edmonds *et al*, 2003).

Representatives of governments, employers and workers' organizations committed themselves to an Asian Decent Work Decade during the Fourteenth Asian Regional Meeting of the International Labor Organization (2006) – reaffirming their dedication to the goal of full, productive and decent employment for all workers in Asia and the Pacific by 2015. The Government of Pakistan adopted the Labor Protection Policy and the Labor Inspection Policy in 2005 and 2006, respectively, while the National Policy on Safety, Health and Environment at Work Places was declared in India in 2009 (ILO, 2011). Child labor takes many different forms but a priority is to eliminate without delay the worst forms of child labor as defined in the ILO Convention 182, Article 3.

Pakistan's laws are not completely consistent with international standards regarding child labor. The lack of a national minimum age for employment may increase the likelihood that very young children engage in activities that jeopardize their health and safety. The minimum age for hazardous work is also not consistent with international

standards and may jeopardize the health and safety of young people ages 14 through 17 (U.S. Embassy, 2012 and ILO Committee of Experts, 2013).

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected by survey team. Different research tools were used during the survey:

- Questionnaires – children/parents/farmers/workers
- In-depth interviews with key informants and stakeholders
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs); Informal discussions
- Observations/Research notes

The study was conducted in 35 villages of district T.T.Singh, Pakistan during April to May, 2014. Villages belong to Tehsils i.e. Pirmehal, T.T.Singh and Kamalia of district T.T.Singh were part of the study as mentioned in Table 1.

Table 1: List of Villages Selected for Survey

Chak No. 308GB	Chak No. 331GB SP	Chak No. 662/3GB
Chak No. 307GB	Chak No. 331GB NP	Chak No. 663/4GB
Chak No. 322GB	Chak No. 319GB	Chak No. 666/7GB
Chak No. 328GB	Chak No. 321GB	Chak No. 691/33GB
Chak No. 329GB	Chak No. 334GB	Chak No. 692/34 GB
Chak No. 326GB	Chak No. 312GB	55 Tukra
Chak No. 287GB	Chak No. 309GB	56 Tukra
Chak No. 288GB	Chak No. 313GB	A Plot
Chak No. 325GB	Chak No. 311GB	54/2 Tukra
Chak No. 323GB	Chak No. 310GB	Zakir Abad
Chak No. 324GB	Chak No. 330 GB	C plot
Chak No. 320GB	Inyat Shah	

A survey was conducted with trained field team having pre-defined Performa to assess the percentage of Child Labor in Cotton field and observing the facilities of Health & Safety at farm level as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Performa used in survey for workers' data with Health & Safety facilities

<b>Performa for worker's data with Health &amp; Safety facilities</b>					
<b>Village name:</b>					
<b>Sr. No</b>	<b>Worker name</b>	<b>Nature of Work</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Verified by</b>	<b>No. of farms with Health and Safety facilities</b>

35 Villages were surveyed in two months. Children were interviewed between the ages of 05 to 17 years. The age of the child respondent was measured in complete years, for example, a child is 17 years old until her/his 18th birthday. Other research participants included farmers, workers, teachers, parents, employers, community leaders, civil society and other key informant stakeholders.

The Child labor, Health and Safety conditions survey interviewed 175 children, 200 workers and 350 farmers. It should be noted that not all the children interviewed were child labors. The children interviewed lived on the farms or in the targeted farming areas. The survey interviewed the children in order to determine child labor situations. 35 Key informant interviews were conducted with school leaders, principals, teachers and religious or community leaders. 30 Focus Group discussions were facilitated with farmers and workers. A total of 150 farmers and 95 workers participated. Visit of farms for assessing Health and Safety conditions was another tool used in survey.

After the data collection, it was verified from Nambardars of each village or in some cases respected person was verifier of the data. The quantitative data obtained from the field was processed and analyzed using Statistical approach. The qualitative data collected was processed and analyzed thematically. All interviews, FGDs and observations were read through and common emerging themes noted.

### 3. RESULTS

The survey had most of the data collected in Tehsil Kamalia where 65% of the children were from. This concentration is mainly due to the working conditions of the area and also due to more cotton cultivation in that area. More than half (68%) of the children interviewed were between 5 to 12 years. 20% were above 15 which is the legal working age in Pakistan showed in Figure 1.

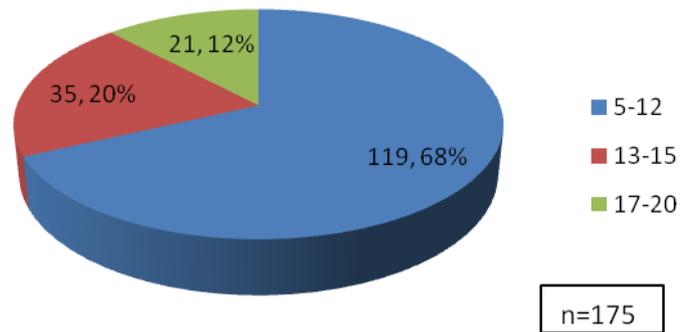


Figure 1: Age Distribution of Children

There were more males (80%) interviewed compared to females (20%) due to more involvement of males in cotton field as compared to females in Pakistan presented in Figure 2.

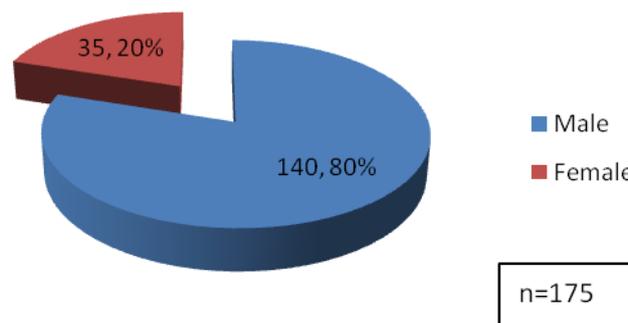


Figure 2: Distribution of Children by Gender

After the interview of 175 children, 200 workers and 350 farmers, 0 percent children were found engaged in relation to hazardous working conditions or below the minimum age of working and only 5 percent children were involved in light work mainly in the form of female pickers during the period of picking. The majority of children engaged in light work were females. Most of the children live with their families and contribute to almost all aspects of the family's well being. 80 percent (160) workers had the age more than 30 years and 20 percent (40) workers had the age more than 20 years which is permitted for work in Pakistan showed in Figure 3.

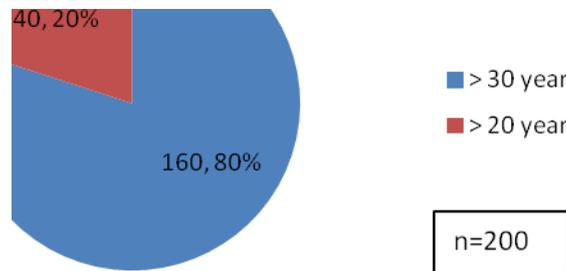


Figure 3: Distribution of workers by age

The presence and working of Decent Work committees was also assessed during survey in the form of qualitative and quantitative data. Out of 650 respondents in the form of interview, FGDs and visual observations, 90 percent (585) claimed that they are well aware with the role of DW committees established by WWF-P, 08 percent (52) responded that they know DW committees but not clear with their role and 02 percent (13) answered that they have no idea of DW committees presented in Figure 4.

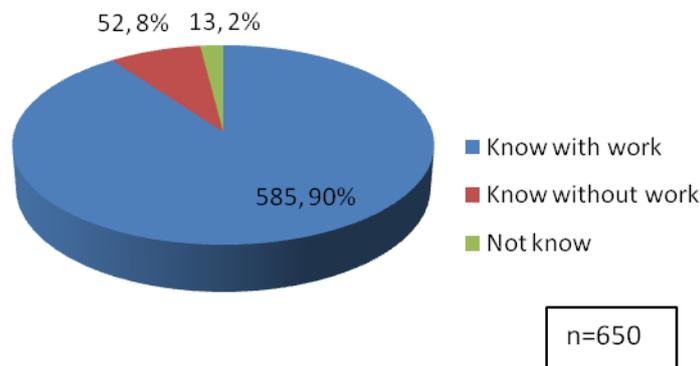


Figure 4: Knowledge of respondents about DW committees

Health and Safety conditions i.e. facility of drinking water, washing of essentials used during work and 1<sup>st</sup> aid during emergency were also assessed during survey. Total 100 farms were visited in 35 villages under the study. 40 percent (40) farms had managed the facilities of Health and Safety and 60 percent (60) farms were not equipped with Health and Safety facilities. These facilities were available only 10 percent in 2011 in survey area as showed in Figure 5.

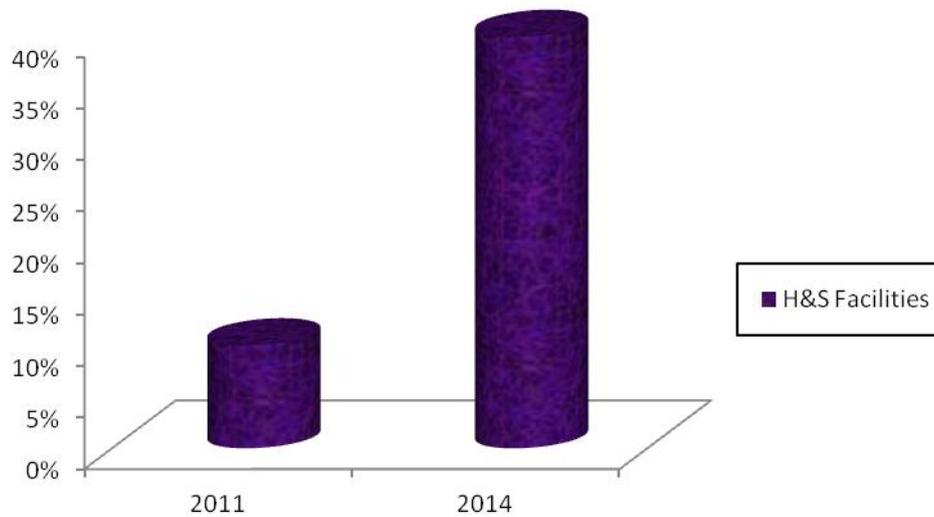


Figure 5: Health and Safety facilities for workers

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The role of DW committees is very crucial to promote DW activities and it was encouraging that within 04 years, child labor was reduced especially in hazardous work. These were impressive results and it was all due to enthusiastic work of established committees. The Government of Pakistan's 2000 National Policy and Plan of Action to Combat Child Labor outlines a strategy for combating child labor that includes awareness raising, establishing child labor resource centers, conducting surveys to expand knowledge on child labor, strengthening enforcement, expanding education facilities, and implementing poverty alleviation measures (Govt. of Pakistan, CLU, Ministry of Labor, 2000). Pakistan is also recovering from multiple natural disasters and a deteriorating security situation that has weakened the economy, driving some children out of school and into dangerous work (Save the Children, 2011).

The Government of Pakistan continued to administer the National Centers for Rehabilitation of Child Labor. The centers aim to remove children ages 5 to 14 from hazardous labor and provide them with education, clothing, and a stipend. There are currently 151 centers (U.S. Embassy, 2012). During the reporting period, the centers withdrew children from hazardous labor in different industries including agriculture (U.S. Embassy, 2011).

In 2012, the Punjab Provincial Child Labor Unit began to implement a 5-year, \$2 million project to combat the worst forms of child labor; this project was funded by the Government (U.S. Embassy, 2013 and Punjab Provincial Child Labor Unit, 2012). The project provides nonformal education and literacy services to children in the worst forms of child labor in four of Punjab's districts. The project also provides livelihood services to target families and improves working conditions (Punjab Provincial Child Labor Unit, 2012).

There is dire need of coordination between established cells to promote DW activities. One of the objectives to establish DW committees at local level by WWF-P was to strengthen links of community with Govt. departments involved in social work. There are no national-level coordinating committees on child labor in Pakistan (U.S. Embassy, 2013).

Provincial governments and labor ministries are responsible for the coordination of child labor issues on the provincial level. Provincial coordination committees along with Child Labor Resource Cells conduct research, build capacity, and coordinate child labor activities at the provincial level (U.S. Embassy, 2013 and U.S. Embassy, 2011). Work remains to be done to effectively coordinate at the provincial level. Additionally, there is a lack of sharing and coordination nationally amongst provinces (U.S. Embassy, 2013).

Provision level of Health and Safety facilities are insufficient at agriculture farms in Pakistan. Workers suffer number of diseases due to poor hygienic conditions at farms. DW committees played a major role to motivate and convince farmers for arranging valuable facilities at their farms. As, social change is not a sudden process but there are fruitful results after 04 years working of DW committees regarding Health and Safety values. Action-oriented support programs have been increasingly playing vital roles in promoting safety and health in developing countries in Asia (Kawakami *et al*, 2001).

The WIND (Work Improvement in Neighborhood Development) training program for farmers in Vietnam (Kawakami *et al*, 1998 and Khai *et al*, 1996) and the POSITIVE program for trade unions in Pakistan (JILAF, 1998 and Kogi *et al*, 1996) were formulated applying similar approaches making full use of action oriented support.

In short, it's need of the hour to work for society by giving them hope that they can change their livelihood with their own plans. These are initiatives from WWF-P to engage local people for solving their own problems. Establishment of DW committees is one of the ideas; need to devise strategic plans for promotion of Decent Work in Pakistan.

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