

Report: One Day Consultative Workshop

Chakwal

2010



Report of the One Day Consultative Workshop to assess the needs of the most vulnerable children in Choa Saiden Shah, District Chakwal: Organized by SSD and supported by PLAN Pakistan

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Acknowledgment

Society for sustainable Development would like to acknowledge the support of Plan Pakistan for providing financial support for organizing this very important activity.

We would also like to thank Social Welfare Department Chakwal and Choa Saidu Shah for providing coordination support for this activity. They also helped in ensuring participation civil society organization in the event.

We would also like to thank participation of representatives of Education department and providing their valuable input about the issues.

Our special thanks for Mr. Azam Kiyani from Plan for his ongoing support and technical input for organization of the event and for development of this report.

Background and rationale of the activity

Chakwal was given the status of Tehsil headquarter by the British in 1881 and functioned as a subdivision of Jehlum district for more than a century when it was awarded the status of district in 1985. The District has a total population of 1,083,725 spread over four subdivisions of Chakwal, Talagang, Choa Saiden Shah and Kallar Kahar with further subdivision into 68 union councils. 88% of the whole population resides in rural areas where as the district has an area of 6,524 square kilometers. The current literacy rate of the district is estimated to be 76% which confers upon it the status of 6th most literate districts in the Punjab and 11th in Pakistan.

The district can boast of rich mineral reserves in the form of oil & gas, coal, salt, lime stone and marble especially in Tehsil Choa Saiden Shah. Tehsil Choa Saiden Shah is also emerging as hub for cement production, where industry is flourishing at a fast pace. A handsome percentage of the population is employed in the mining, industrial and trading sector. Choa Saiden Shah has more than 300 functional coal mines and three cement factories which employ thousands of workers.

Recent years have seen a great increase in the number of immigrant workers coming to Choa Saiden Shah in search of employment in coal mines and in cement factories. Most of these immigrant workers come from Mardran, Swat and Karak districts in Khyber Pakhtoonkwa province. In 1980s and 1990s a large number of Afghan refugees also settled in Choa Saiden Shah. All the refugees and immigrant workers live in scattered unplanned settlements which lack all the basic facilities of life. The families and children of these immigrant workers and refugees live in extremely unhealthy and unhygienic conditions and lack access to basic facilities of life such as education, health and protection. Specially the children are extremely vulnerable and face severe protection issues. They also face violence, harassment and sexual abuse.

There is an immediate need to address the protection issues of these most vulnerable children through coordinated and well planned efforts with involvement of all the stakeholders specially the representatives of the communities who can identify the real need and help in mapping out effective strategies to address these issues.

No studies have been carried out until now either to map out these settlements to determine the exact number of most vulnerable Children or to assess the protection needs of the most vulnerable children in Tehsil Choa Saiden Shah.

Society for Sustainable Development (SSD) with support from Plan Pakistan Program organized a one day consultative workshop with all the stakeholders including social welfare department, mine welfare officer, representatives of the community, education department and civil society organizations working in Choa Saiden Shah to determine the protection needs and requirements of these most vulnerable children and to develop a strategy to address the needs.

The consultative workshop helped in identifying the immediate protection needs of the most vulnerable children in Choa Saiden Shah and in getting recommendations for developing a comprehensive strategy to address these issues with the involvement of the stakeholders and in bringing them onboard for any future initiative.

Working for the rights of the vulnerable and marginalized communities is one of the key strategic objectives of SSD. SSD has worked with many international organizations and has experience of carrying out similar activities with other organizations and areas. SSD provides technical assistance to civil society organizations in their initiatives.

The workshop also fell within the mandate of Plan international because Child and Gender Rights is one of the five core areas of Plan Pakistan. The workshop helped in increases public awareness of children and women's rights and improves health, education and protection services for children in difficult circumstances.

Process

Objectives of the workshop

- Determine the extent of the problem of child rights and child protection issues in Choa Saiden Shah
- Identify the Child Protection and child rights issues of the most vulnerable children in Choa Saiden Shah
- Develop Strategies to address the child protection issues for most vulnerable and marginalized children in Choa
- Develop a tentative work plan for future course of action

Proceedings

The workshop was planned to start at 9.30 am, but because of extreme cold weather and dense fog in the area, the participants arrived a bit late and the proceedings started around 10.00 am. Recitation of the Holy Quran was done by a participant to start the proceedings.

National Manager SSD Aftab Ahmed Awan, who also facilitated the workshop, welcomed the participants and thanked them for their participation in the workshop despite extreme weather conditions. He thanked Plan Pakistan and specially Mr. Javed Khatak for providing support for the workshop and Mr. Azam Kiyani for helping in organization of the workshop in such a short time. While discussing the objectives of the workshop he



said that the said workshop was the first step towards a long term program and commitment on part of Plan an SSD for the area. The objectives of the workshop were:

- Determine the extent of the problem of child rights and child protection issues in Choa Saiden Shah

- Identify the Child Protection and child rights issues of the most vulnerable children in Choa Saiden Shah
- Develop Strategies to address the child protection issues for most vulnerable and marginalized children in Choa
- Develop a tentative work plan for future course of action

Mr. Azam Kayani introduced Plan Pakistan Program and discussed its mandate. He informed that Plan had been working in Chakwal for more than a decade and had many partner organizations in almost all the areas of Chakwal. He said that Plan believed in long term commitment and involvement and helped the partner organizations in developing their capacity along with implementing the projects. He also discussed in detail the concept of child protection and the strategy of Plan to address the issues. He informed that Plan's work in Pakistan covers 5 core areas, all of which are rooted in the rights of the child:



- health
- education
- livelihoods
- child and gender rights
- disaster risk reduction and response

Plan also works to increase coverage of birth registration, that allows citizens easier access to health care and education, as well as greater protection against trafficking and child labour. Children have the right to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Plan Pakistan works with children and their communities to identify problems and implement solutions.

Aftab Awan gave presentations on Child Rights and Vulnerabilities of Children. In the session the rights of the children and the issues of protection were discussed in detail. The session started with generalized discussion on human rights. Basic human rights include:

- Food, shelter, medical care protection from violence, all essential for survival as a human being.
- To achieve his/her maximum potential as human being requires access to education, environment, choice, cultural life, leisure, social security and development.
- In addition, freedom from discrimination, privacy, marriage, family, freedom to choose religion and dignity.

Depriving any human being of his/her rights, stagnates their life, dignity and development and is thus unacceptable.

Characteristics of human rights are:

- **Universal:** because all individuals have human rights as they are human beings; male and female, rich and poor, black and white, young and old, etc
- **Inalienable:** because everyone is born with the same human rights. They cannot be taken away, lost or surrendered no matter what the person does, no matter who the person is and no matter where the person is.
- **Interdependent:** Because the different types of human rights are co-equal and important. They are due to every individual regardless of race, color, sex, language, religion, political belief, social origin and birth status. Also, the realization of one right often depends upon the realization of another right.



While discussing the rights of the children, the participants were informed that according to International Law, a 'child' means every human being below the age of 18 years. Childhood is characterized as a period of special consideration in human rights terms, as a period of evolving abilities and vulnerabilities relative to those of adults. Children's rights are the perceived human rights of children with particular attention to the rights of special protection and care afforded to the young, including their right to association with both parents,

human as well as well as the basic needs for development of the child. If child rights are not observed than different problems occur which include:

- Child Labor
- Child Marriages
- Child Abuse
- Child Trafficking

Group Work

After detailed discussion on these topics the participants were divided in the five groups and were given detailed instruction for performing the group work. The group work had three components:

- Identification of most vulnerable children groups in Choa Saidu Shah
- Identification of the issues of these vulnerable groups
- Recommendations' for the strategies for addressing the issues of most vulnerable children

The participants were also asked to choose a person for presenting the findings and recommendation of the group to all the participants of the workshop. Participants were given one hour to work in the group and develop their recommendations. The facilitators kept on discussing the issues with the groups during the group work as well and helped them group work.



Group 1:

According to group 1, the most vulnerable group in the area is of child laborers, who work in mines, workshops, hotels and streets. Some children are also employed as domestic laborers. The factors behind the increasing trend of child labour were identified as: Poverty, Unemployment, Illiteracy, Increasing prices and inflation, lack of awareness and social inequality. The children suffered because of these factors and faced violation of human rights, exploitation, psychological trauma and other issues. Group recommend following steps for addressing the above mentioned issues:



- Ending unemployment
- Increased educational opportunities and access
- Increasing awareness among parents and society
- Protection of the rights of the children
- Ensuring enforcement of the Child labor laws and acts
- Addressing the issues of child labor at the level of union council

Group II

Group II lacked focused and could not develop consensus on the vulnerable children of the area. Some participants were of the view the special children were the most vulnerable group in the area, where some other were of the opinion that child involved in the labour were most vulnerable group. The identified issues were child marriage, poverty, lack of awareness among parents and society and lack of education.



Group III

Group III was one the best groups and managed to identify the vulnerable group, their issues and to develop concise recommendations. There was consensus among the group that Children with Disabilities were the most vulnerable group in the area as the ratio of children with disabilities is quite high in the area. Most of the disabilities are not even identified as disabilities because of the lack of awareness among the masses regarding the issues.

The children with disabilities were facing lot of issues which included: Financial problems of the parents, Social neglect, Insufficient health facilities, discrimination from the society in general, childhood marriages and denial on the part of parents.

The group put forward many recommendations which included:

- Population planning and control
- Discouraging the tradition of cousin and in-family marriages
- Discouraging the tradition of early and childhood marriage
- Establishment of separate health facilities for children with disabilities at local level
- Advocacy for ending discriminatory treatment of children with disabilities from parents and society
- Establishment of good educational institutions for children with disabilities at local level
- Development of data base
- Ending beggary



Group IV

Group IV also identified street children and child laborers as the most vulnerable group in the area. They were of the opinion that recent times have seen a dramatic increase in the number of children involved in different types of manual labor. Child beggary is also increasing. The identified issues of the children were as following:

- Health problems
- Physical torture and abuse
- Mental torture and psychological abuse
- Lack of access to the right of education
- Lack of self respect
- Inferiority complex
- Lack of development and growth



The strategies identified were:

- Provision of friendly atmosphere
- Increased awareness among parents and society about child rights
- Increased access to education facilities
- Informal Educational centres for street children
- Discouraging early and childhood marriage
- Ban on physical punishment in schools
- Training of teachers
- Increased awareness in children regarding their rights
- Empowerment of DCCWDs
- Putting an end to emotional, physical and psychological abuse of children

Group V

Group V strongly recommended that all human beings below the age of 18 should be recognized and identified as children and should be treated as such. Education, health protection and development needs of the children should be recognized and fulfilled by the society and state.

The group also identified child labor as a serious issue and the street children and children involved in labor were identified as the most vulnerable group. The strategies recommended for addressing the issues included:

- Initiation of health insurance program for all the children below the age of five
- Teacher training programs
- Provision of friendly atmosphere and recreational facilities
- Town planning to address the issue of shelter



Concluding Session

In the end Mr. Azam Kiyani thanked the participants for their enthusiastic participation and valuable suggestions. He said that this input and healthy feedback reflected that there was great need to work in the area and the community was ready to participate and help in addressing the issues. He assured that Plan Pakistan would look into the recommendations of the workshop and the strategies suggested by the participants and will incorporate it in its future planning. He appreciated the work done by SSD for organizing the event in such a wonderful way in a short time.



Ms. Safeer Sughra, Deputy District Officer Social Welfare Choa Saiden Shah also thanked the participants. She appreciated Plan and SSD for taking this initiative. She said that now it was responsibility of Plan and SSD to ensure that all the hard work done by the participants and their valuable input does not merely remain in the files. Rather follow up activities should take place and Plan should initiate program in the area. She assured that Social Welfare Department would extent its full cooperation for any such programs in future as well

Conclusion and Recommendations

The activity proved very successful with a large of participants attending the workshop. In fact the participation even exceeded expectations. All the stakeholders including civil society organizations, public sector representatives, lawyers, teachers and political representatives took part in the workshop enthusiastically.

The participants identified several groups of vulnerable children in the area. But there was general among the group that children involved in labor, street children and children with disabilities were amongst the most vulnerable in the area. There was immediate need to start for the child labor issues and the issue of street children. Children with disabilities also needed special attention.

It was also felt that some further consultation was required to explore the problem even further. Therefore it is recommended that FGDs should conducted with special groups to discuss the issues in detail with them and get their in a much more detailed manner.