



THE STATE OF PEASANTS' RIGHTS IN SINDH IN 2024

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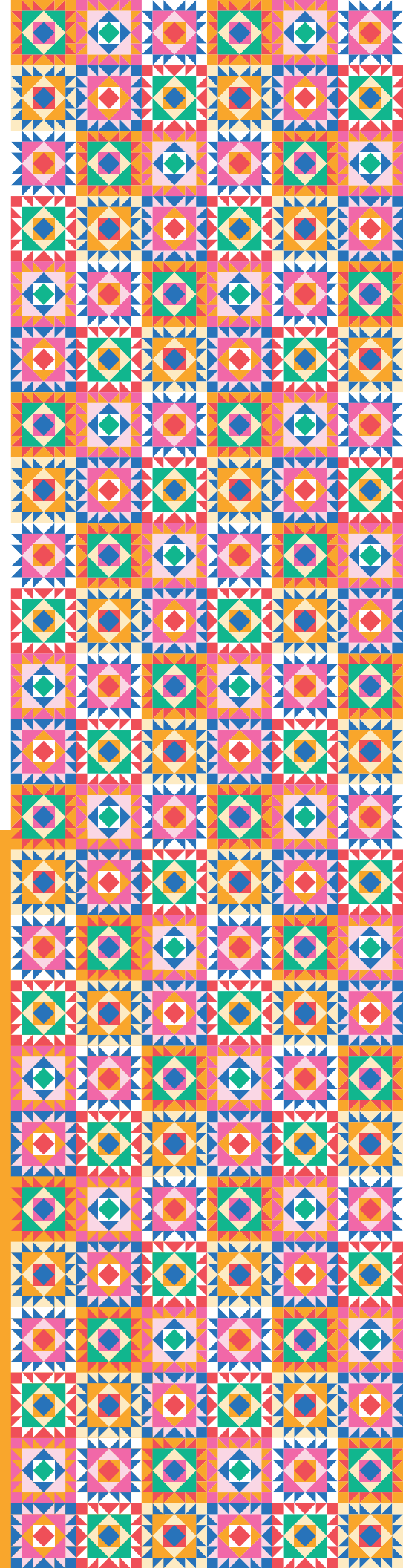
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ABOUT THE HARI WELFARE ASSOCIATION

The Hari Welfare Association (HWA) is a non-governmental organization established in 2002. The Association aims to promote and protect the social, economic, civil and political rights of peasants, rural workers, women, children, youth and religious minorities especially in rural areas of Sindh and Pakistan more broadly.

Based in Benazirabad, Sindh, the critical mission of the HWA is to educate, mobilize and organize marginalized communities, particularly peasants, rural workers, women and religious minorities, around their rights and facilitate participatory development, social justice and equality for the empowerment of vulnerable sections of society.

As part of its work for marginalized communities, promoting peasants' rights is a fundamental objective of the HWA. Since its inception, the organization has been carrying out various activities to empower the peasants and rural workers by advocating for their rights.



ABBREVIATIONS

BHC:	Benazir Hari Card
BISP:	Benazir Income Support Programme
CNICs:	Computerized National Identity Cards
DVC:	District Vigilance Committee
GoS:	Government of Sindh
HRCP:	Human Rights Commission of Pakistan
HWA:	Hari Welfare Association
ILO:	International Labour Organization
MAF:	Million Acre Feet
MICS:	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MNA:	Member of the National Assembly
MPA:	Member of the Provincial Assembly
MPI:	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NF:	Naushero Feroz
PKR:	Pak Rupees
PPPP:	Pakistan Peoples' Party Parliamentarians
SBA:	Shaheed Benazir Abad
SBLSAA:	Sindh Bonded Labour System Abolition Act
SCP:	Supreme Court of Pakistan
SHC:	Sindh High Court
SIDA:	Sindh Irrigation and Drainage Authority
SIRA:	Sindh Industrial Relations Act
STA:	Sindh Tenancy Act
SWAWA:	Sindh Women Agriculture Workers Act
TMK:	Tando Muhammad Khan
UC:	Union Council
UN:	United Nations
UPR:	Universal Periodic Review



Sindh is one of the four main provinces of Pakistan. Geographically, Sindh is positioned along the lower bank of the River Indus. Sindh constitutes a major part of the great Indus plain. The River Indus is about 2,000 miles in length. In Sindh, it covers nearly 590 miles before finally discharging into the Arabian Sea. In the southeast of Sindh is Rann of Kach and the Kach State of India. On the eastern border is Rajasthan (India). Punjab and Balochistan provinces lie to the north and west, respectively. Sindh has 29 districts, and a population of 55,696,147 according to the Census 2023.

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SINDH PROVINCE: KEY STATISTICS

The Sindh Province has a population of more than 55 million.¹ According to an estimate, 52% live in urban areas while 48% live in rural areas and around 38% of them derive their livelihoods from agriculture, livestock, fishing and forestry.²

About 37% of the province's population lives below the poverty line.³ The rural areas of Sindh stand as the second poorest in the country, following the rural areas of Balochistan. According to the 2018-2019 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), 71.4 % of the rural population of Sindh is multi-dimensionally poor while 24.8% of the urban population face multi-dimensional poverty.⁴ The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) constitutes three dimensions: education (years of schooling and school attendance), health (child mortality and nutrition) and standard of living (cooking fuel, electricity, sanitation, housing, drinking water, asset ownership). A 2024 study notes the province's MPI to be 0.292, with a high incidence of poverty at 52.50%.⁵

The key segment of the poor in the province is represented by the large proportion of rural poor who have very small land holdings or are landless.

Almost 60% of all peasants are sharecroppers in Sindh.⁶ A survey conducted in eight districts of Sindh revealed that 84% of rural households did not own any cultivable land. The survey also revealed that 21% of the population worked on farms whereas more than half (55%) of the working-age population worked as off-farm unskilled labour. Other groups with a high poverty ratio are the nomadic or semi-nomadic populations, small-scale artisanal, fisher people and sharecroppers.

The structure of Sindh's economy is composed of agriculture, industry and services sectors. Despite being the most industrialized province in the country, the agriculture sector is the largest employer of workers in Sindh. According to the Sindh Agriculture Policy (2018-2030), Sindh accounts for 18% of the country's land area, 16% of its total cropped area, and contributes about 23% to national agriculture value added. The main crops in Sindh are wheat, rice, cotton and sugarcane. Sindh has a large livestock population with 18.1 million cattle and buffaloes. Livestock production accounts for over half of the agriculture GDP of Pakistan.⁶

¹ Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 7th Population and Housing Census-2023.

² Ishrat Hussain, Sindh floods and rural economy, 2022, https://ishrathussain.iba.edu.pk/papers_articles/sindh-floods-and-rural-economy-part-i.pdf

³ Fact Sheet: Strengthening Social Protection Delivery System in Sindh, World Bank Group, Dec. 2022, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/factsheet/2022/12/19/factsheet-strengthening-social-protection-delivery-system-in-sindh>

⁴ Obaid Arshad Khan, Multidimensional Poverty Index: A Planning Tool for Sindh, Research & Training Wing, Planning & Development Department, Govt. of Sindh, 2022.

⁵ Wajiha Haq et.al., Investigation of multidimensional poverty in Pakistan at the national, regional and provincial levels,

⁶ Ibid.

According to the Labour Force Survey 2021-2022, monthly mean wages earned by male workers in the agriculture sector were Rs. 24,948 per month whereas females earned Rs. 14,036.⁷ With this meagre income, a male or a female worker cannot support a family. The Global Slavery Index 2023 indicated that Pakistan has a prevalence of 10.6 per thousand people living in modern slavery while 80.3 per thousand live in vulnerability for modern

slavery.⁸ Bonded labour is most common in agriculture, fisheries, construction, carpet industry and domestic work sectors in Pakistan. A large majority of the bonded workers are based in Sindh. Hindus make up a small minority of about 1.2% of the total population in Pakistan. The vast majority (96%) of them live in rural areas. The Hindu community is mostly concentrated in Sanghar and Tharparkar districts.

In Sindh, among Hindus, Dalits (scheduled castes) are one of the groups excluded not only by the mainstream sectors but also within the Hindu community. Their social, economic and political mobility, as well as the rights linked to these and many other dimensions, are restricted due to the entrenched caste barriers constructed and created within Hinduism. In Pakistan, the majority of Dalits are landless and work in the agriculture and brick kiln sectors. In these sectors, they are mostly employed as bonded workers, a status that reinforces their social and economic vulnerability. Poverty and economic vulnerability in rural areas reinforce poor health.

⁷ Pakistan Labour Force Survey 2021-2022, Average monthly wages of employees in the main job by occupation and sex, Table 4.20, https://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/labour_force/publications/lfs2020_21/LFS_2020-21_Report.pdf

⁸ Walk Free 2023, Global Slavery Index 2023, Minderoo Foundation, <https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/>

According to the 2021 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Acute Malnutrition (IPC AMN) analysis of the nine districts in Sindh, Pakistan, acute malnutrition is at a Critical level (IPC Phase 4) in eight districts and at a Serious level (IPC Phase 3) in one district. The situation is particularly severe in six of the eight districts classified in the Critical phase, whereby one in five children is affected by acute malnutrition. Major factors contributing to acute malnutrition include inadequate quality and quantity of food, high food insecurity, poor hygiene practices and sanitation coverage, high rates of diarrhoea, acute respiratory infection and fever, and poor health-seeking behaviour.⁹

WHO IS A PEASANT?

The definition of peasants and peasantry is marked by complicated connotations and is indicative of the historical and contemporary oppression of peasants in many societies.¹⁰ A briefing paper on the theme of the definition of peasants prepared for the first session of the Intergovernmental Working Group on United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, Geneva, 15-19 July 2013, provides a detailed background of the historical evolution of the definition of peasants, rooted in the socio-economic and political struggles as well as the emerging global context of this class of workers. According to this paper, the social scientific definitions of “peasant” generally recognize both that the category is extremely heterogeneous and that individuals and groups in the category typically engage in multiple forms of livelihood,

⁹ IPC Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, Pakistan-Sindh, April 2021- February 2022, https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/ipc_pakistan_acute_malnutrition_analysis_report-sindh-final.pdf

¹⁰ See Marc Edelman, What is a peasant? What are peasantries? A briefing paper on issues of definition, Prepared for the first session of the Intergovernmental Working Group on a United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas, Geneva, 15-19 July 2013, at <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/WGPLeasants/Edelman.pdf>

including agriculture, wage labour, pastoralism and livestock production, artisanal production, fishing and hunting, gathering of plant or mineral resources, petty commerce, and a variety of other skilled and unskilled occupations. However, it is also advisable to refer to the activist definition of the peasantry, which seeks to bring the experience of social movement into the definition of peasants.

Contemporary agrarian activists emphasize commonalities of “peasants” and “farmers,” citing arguments on economic vulnerability combined with a quest for autonomy. Activists, therefore, tend to use “peasant” and “farmer” interchangeably. Via Campesina—a coalition or movement with member organizations in over 70 countries — has been the leading force advocating for a new international instrument on peasants’ rights. The coalition promotes the following definition of the peasant:

“A peasant is a man or woman of the land, who has a direct and special relationship with the land and nature through the production of food and/or other agricultural products. Peasants work the land themselves, [relying] above all on family labour and other small-scale forms of organizing labour. Peasants are traditionally embedded in their local communities, and they take care of local landscapes and agroecological systems. The term peasant can apply to any person engaged in agriculture, cattle-raising, pastoralism, handicrafts related to agriculture or a related occupation in a rural area. This includes indigenous people working on the land.”

The term peasant also applies to the landless. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the following categories of people are considered to be landless and are likely to face difficulties in ensuring their livelihood:

- Agricultural labour households with little or no land;
- Non-agricultural households in rural areas, with little or no land, whose members are engaged in various activities such as fishing, making crafts for the local market, or providing services;
- Other rural households of pastoralists, nomads, peasants practising shifting cultivation, hunters and gatherers, and people with similar livelihoods.

Guided by research, debate and contemplation on the definition of the term “peasants”, the UN Human Rights Council on 28 September 2018 adopted a resolution – also supported by Pakistan – in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas. The Declaration defines peasants as:

ARTICLE 1

1

For the present Declaration, a peasant is any person who engages or who seeks to engage alone, or in association with others or as a community, in small-scale agricultural production for subsistence and/or for the market, and who relies significantly, though not necessarily exclusively, on family or household labour and other non-monetized ways of organizing labour, and who has a special dependency on and attachment to the land.

2

The present Declaration applies to any person engaged in artisanal or small-scale agriculture, crop planting, livestock raising, pastoralism, fishing, forestry, hunting or gathering, and handicrafts related to agriculture or a related occupation in a rural area. It also applies to dependent family members of peasants.

3

The present Declaration also applies to indigenous peoples and local communities working on the land, nomadic and semi-nomadic communities, and the landless, engaged in the activities mentioned above.

4

The present Declaration further applies to hired workers, including all migrant workers, regardless of their migration status, and seasonal workers, on plantations, agricultural farms, forests and farms in aquaculture and agro-industrial enterprises.

¹¹ Pakistan Standard Classification of Occupations-2015, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Statistics Division, Government of Pakistan.

WHAT ARE THE PEASANTS' RIGHTS?

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas comprises 28 articles covering almost as many rights. Most basic rights include the right to land and other natural resources; the right to seeds; the right to a decent income and livelihood and the means of production; the right to adequate food and food sovereignty; the right to social security; the right to participate in decision making; and, flowing from these rights, the general obligations on the States.¹²

According to a paper published by the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, "As human beings, peasants and other people working in rural areas are entitled to all human rights that have been recognized by the United Nations (UN) General Assembly since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, including those enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) adopted in 1966. However, almost 50 years after the adoption of these two instruments, the vulnerability of peasants and other people working in rural areas, including herders, pastoralists and fisherfolk, remains of particular concern. They represent 70% of the people living in extreme poverty and 80% of the world's hungry. Hundreds of millions of them are victims of multiple discrimination and violations of human rights and most of them are not effectively protected by the International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions because they are not engaged in the formal sector" (Golay, 2013).¹³

¹² Colin. H., UN Declarations on the Rights of Peasants, A tool in the Struggle for Our future, 2019, <https://www.cetim.ch/wp-content/uploads/The-UN-Declaration-on-the-Rights-of-Peasants.pdf>

¹³ Christophe Golay, Legal reflections on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas, Background paper prepared for the first session of the working group on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas (15-19 July 2013). Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/WGPeasants/Golay.pdf>

PREFACE

The Hari Welfare Association (HWA) presents its tenth report *The State of Peasants' Rights in Sindh* in 2024. During this ten-year journey, the organization has encountered various challenges in gathering and publishing evidence on peasants and rural workers of Sindh. For the first four years, the HWA faced financial constraints in publishing the report annually. Then, the Norwegian Human Rights Fund made the HWA's journey much easier. However, the issue of accessing data remained a key challenge as it was in the preliminary years.

The report highlights the resilience and determination of peasants and rural workers in Sindh. By providing a thorough overview of the developments in the agricultural and labour sectors, the HWA seeks to guide stakeholders in addressing challenges and ensuring the protection of peasants' fundamental rights. This year's report also aims to deepen the understanding of peasants' rights in Sindh, highlight significant changes and initiatives in 2024 and before, and provide a roadmap for future interventions to uphold the fundamental rights enshrined in the provincial laws, the Constitution of Pakistan, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas and other treaties to which Pakistan is a signatory.

When the HWA issued its first report (*The State of Peasants Rights in Sindh* in 2015) in 2016, there were no evidence-based reports and advocacy efforts for the rights of peasants (especially sharecroppers) and rural workers in Sindh. Since then, there has been a movement for the rights of peasants and rural workers to which not merely the HWA but many other organizations and individuals have started contributing. However,

unfortunately, the big dilemma is that neither the government nor relevant UN agencies extend support to peasants and rural workers by empowering them through capacity development, unionization and facilitating their actions in reality. Despite the hypocrisies and personal gains of individuals in these agencies, the HWA has remained a leading voice for peasants' rights, advocating for structural and institutional reforms, including the establishment of peasants' courts and tribunals and implementation of the Sindh Tenancy Act (STA), 1950, and the Sindh Bonded Labour System Abolition Act (SBLCAA), 2015.

At the ground level, in Sindh, the relationship between peasants and landlords remained exploitative, resembling a form of modern-day slavery, however, at the macro level, since 2019, there has been some legislative progress, especially the Sindh High Court's pro-peasant verdict in 2019, the passing of the Sindh Women Agriculture Workers Act (SWAWA), 2019, and the notification of DVCs across the province by December 2024 (many among these have been activated). However, a lack of political will and commitment from the government have blocked further progress. In 2024, with financial support from the Royal Norwegian Embassy, the HWA organized and registered 12 trade unions of women peasants and workers under the SIRA. The HWA successfully registered 18 trade unions in total.

In Sindh, human rights institutions play a minimal role in enforcing laws, as most of their officials are government-appointed and often offer little more than lip service on critical issues like bonded labour. The agriculture sector, where bonded labour is rampant, is largely controlled by feudal lords who also hold significant political power, making it difficult to challenge these exploitative practices. This concentration of political and economic power in the hands of

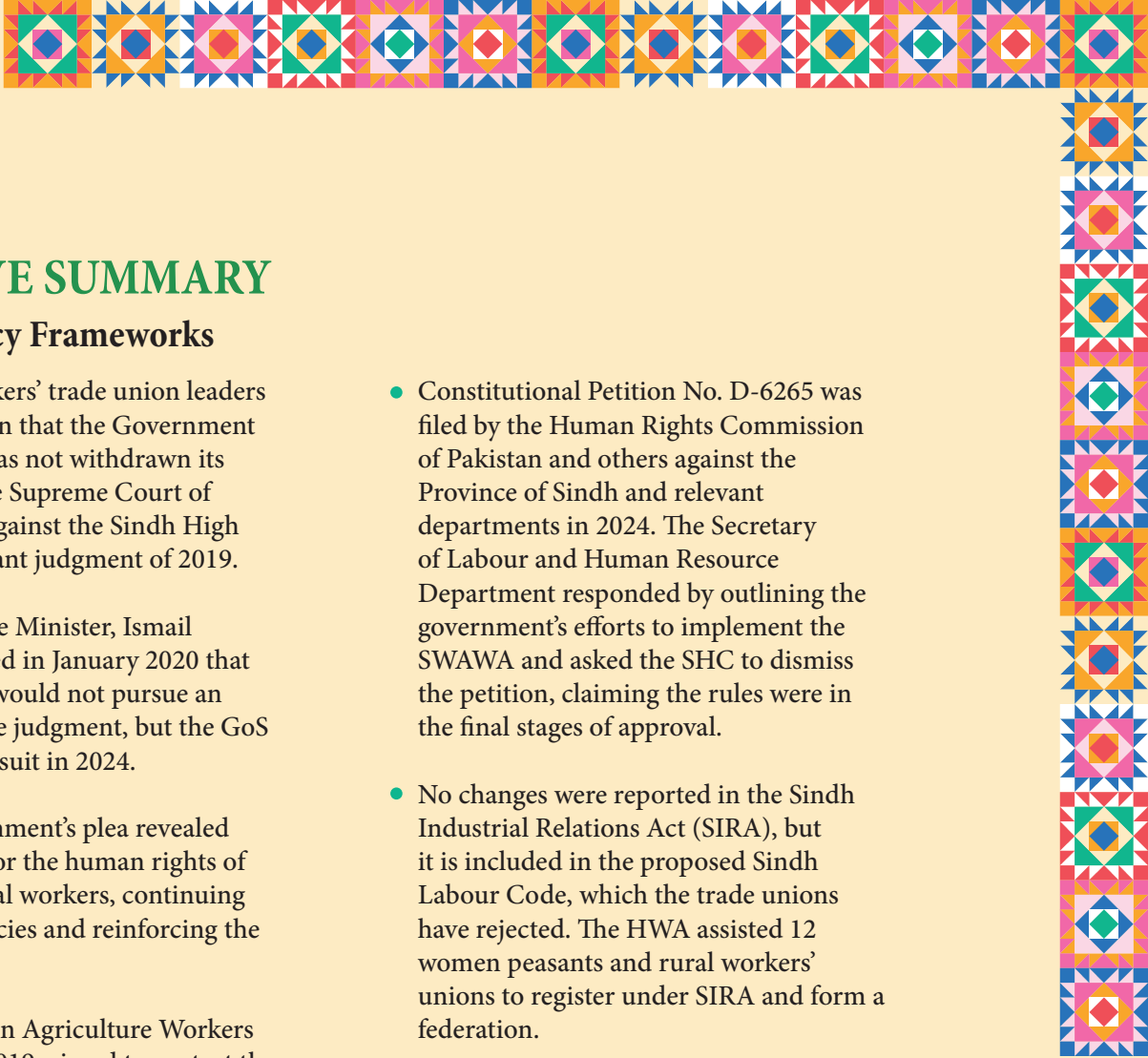
the feudal elite undermines efforts to enforce human rights laws, perpetuating a system of exploitation that continues to thrive in the region.

The year 2024 marks a turning point in our advocacy efforts in which 18 trade unions, especially women-led unions, took an active part in conducting press conferences and voicing their concerns at seminars, workshops and conferences. Moreover, at the grassroots level, they engaged employers in bargaining and got their rights. The HWA's persistent engagement with the GoS (especially officials at different human rights-related commissions and at the labour, agriculture and education departments) has borne fruit. This year, the HWA successfully lobbied for the establishment and activation of DVCs across all the remaining districts of Sindh, and by December 2024 the DVCs were constituted in all districts. The HWA also pushed for the framing and notification of rules under the Sindh Women Agriculture Workers Act.

Looking ahead, the HWA remains steadfast in its commitment to advocating for the rights of peasants and rural workers, working towards a fair and just agricultural system in Sindh and beyond. We express our gratitude to all those who have supported our efforts and look forward to continued collaboration in our mission to create a better future for the peasant community, both locally and globally.

Akram Ali Khaskheli

President
HWA, Sindh



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Legal and Policy Frameworks

- Peasant and workers' trade union leaders expressed concern that the Government of Sindh (GoS) has not withdrawn its application to the Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP) against the Sindh High Court's pro-peasant judgment of 2019.
- Sindh Agriculture Minister, Ismail Rahu, had pledged in January 2020 that the government would not pursue an appeal against the judgment, but the GoS continued its pursuit in 2024.
- The Sindh government's plea revealed lack of concern for the human rights of peasants and rural workers, continuing anti-peasant policies and reinforcing the feudal system.
- The Sindh Women Agriculture Workers Act (SWAWA), 2019, aimed to protect the rights and welfare of women agricultural workers in Sindh. Rules for implementing the Act were being finalized, with feedback from the ILO and further review by the law department.
- The HWA found gaps in the SWAWA rules, including the absence of mechanisms for enforcing minimum wage, penalties for non-compliance, and workplace safety standards.
- Constitutional Petition No. D-6265 was filed by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and others against the Province of Sindh and relevant departments in 2024. The Secretary of Labour and Human Resource Department responded by outlining the government's efforts to implement the SWAWA and asked the SHC to dismiss the petition, claiming the rules were in the final stages of approval.
- No changes were reported in the Sindh Industrial Relations Act (SIRA), but it is included in the proposed Sindh Labour Code, which the trade unions have rejected. The HWA assisted 12 women peasants and rural workers' unions to register under SIRA and form a federation.
- The Sindh Tenancy Act, 1950 has been in place for 74 years, but the changes carried out over the years, especially in 2013, favored landlords (e.g., Section 17 amendment shifted 100% of expenses to peasants). Rules for the Sindh Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act (SBLCAA), 1992, were not notified in the year 2024. The draft rules remained with the Provincial Law Department and accessible to the Provincial Home

Department but were not publicly available.

- Sindh Labour Code: Sindh CM declared the goal to develop a unified labour law by consolidating existing labour laws. The ILO assisted in drafting the code, which faced strong opposition from workers' representatives for potentially undermining labor rights. Workers rejected the code for legalizing the anti-labour contract system, which could harm peasants and rural workers who work informally or seasonally, excluding them from benefits like social security and collective bargaining.

Peasants' Representation in Legislative Assemblies

- The majority of Sindh assembly members are feudal lords or from feudal families, misrepresented as agriculturalists and businesspersons. Nine (9) members are identified as agriculturalists and 23 as landlords; many of these members are also landowners.
- Similar patterns are seen in the National Assembly, particularly among the PPP members, where many are actual landowners, but their true professions are concealed.
- A significant number of Sindh Provincial Assembly members represent feudal families, which are the core base of the PPP in Sindh.
- This misrepresentation extends beyond Sindh to other provinces as well. In the 2024 National Assembly elections, 42% (112 out of 266) of members are classified as agriculturists, often euphemisms for feudal landowners.
- Rural Sindh is heavily affected by dacoit culture and crime. Hari leaders blame feudal lords and landowners for contributing to this issue, claiming they have destroyed Sindh's agriculture sector.

Initiatives Named After Benazir

- The Sindh cabinet approved the issuance of Benazir Hari Cards (BHCs) to peasants in March 2024. Rs. 500 millions were proposed for the Benazir Women Agricultural Workers Program (BWAAP) in the 2024-25 budget.
- Rs.8 billion allocated for farmers with landholdings of 12.5 acres or less, aiming to register 788,000 of 1.2 million eligible farmers.
- 298,000 farmers were selected in the first phase, with subsidies on agricultural supplies and financial aid during disasters. The official launch of BHC distribution in Karachi took place on October 14, 2024; 42,000 farmers had been registered by November 17, 2024.
- The Bhoomitao Initiative was launched in April 2024 to benefit marginalized communities and assess food security. Rs. 30 million were allocated for the feasibility study of the program.
- The HWA raised concerns that the landless sharecropping peasants, who play a major role in agriculture, would be excluded from the benefits, as the scheme targets farmers with landholdings up to 12 acres.

Bonded Labour and Human Trafficking in Sindh

- In 2024, a total of 1,012 bonded laborers were released from the custody of landlords and brick kiln owners in the agriculture and brick kiln sectors in Sindh.
- Of the total 1012, 620 bonded laborers (children, women, and men) were released from agriculture in 2024 across various districts. Sanghar and Umerkot reported the highest number of releases, with 194 and 206 individuals, respectively. 12,005 bonded laborers were freed over 12 years (2013-2024), with 32% men, 33% women, and 35% children in the same sector.
- Of the total 1012, in 2024, 392 bonded laborers were freed from the brick kiln sector, with Umerkot (125) and Sanghar (85) being the highest districts for the releases.
- Over 6.4 million children are out of school in Sindh, and many engaged in severe child labor, depriving them of education, health, and protection. Of 1.7 million bonded laborers, approximately 700,000 are children working under inhumane conditions, mainly in the agriculture sector.
- There are many issues with bonded labour abolition efforts. Foremost is the Police's failure to include proper sections of the Sindh Bonded Labour Abolition Act in FIRs. Sindh Labour Minister promised to address loopholes in the Abolition Act and incorporate suggestions from consultations. The lack of labour officers in the districts hinders

hinders the effective operation of District Vigilance Committees (DVCs), with the Deputy Commissioner, who is uninterested, being the de facto operator of the DVCs.

- The National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) campaign was launched in September 2024 to register brick kiln workers and their families in Umerkot and other districts in lower Sindh, enabling them to obtain national identity cards and access basic rights and social benefits.

Women Peasants and Workers

- Women-led agricultural unions are on the rise in Pakistan, marking a new era of agency, protection and stability for female farmers.
- By March 2024, 11 agricultural unions were registered in Sindh, with 7 led by women. Out of 407 enrolled laborers, 205 are women. More such unions are in the process of being registered, with international funding and support from local NGOs.
- By December 2024, the HWA helped form 12 women-led trade unions for women peasants under the SIRA and facilitated the registration of one federation of these unions.
- The HWA expressed disappointment over the insufficient support from federal and provincial governments for women, peasants, and workers.
- Programs like Bait-ul-Mal, Ehsaas, and BISP, while providing financial aid, have created dependency rather than empowering rural women with skills and resources for sustainable livelihoods.

- A provincial advocacy forum was formed in Sindh in 2024 which met several times. In August 2024, it discussed the empowerment of women in the agriculture sector. The forum also highlighted efforts to review laws related to labor, child domestic labor, the Bonded Labour Abolition Act 2015, and the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act 2019.

Corporate Farming, Water Shortage, and Canals

- On March 11, 2024, the Jeay Sindh Rahbar Committee protested across Sindh against the government's plan to sell fertile land for corporate farming under its green initiative. The committee argued that Sindh's land should be distributed among landless peasants.
- On January 7, 2024, a 10-kilometer protest march in the Thatta district opposed the auction of over one million acres of agricultural land in Sindh.
- Sindh Abadgar, a farmers' lobbying group, rejected the plan to build six strategic canals on the Indus River and planned a protest movement against the project.

Tribal Conflict's Impact on Marginalized Peasants

- From October 1 to December 31, 2024, the HWA gathered data on tribal conflicts in Sindh, showed 88 murders and thousands of injuries in approximately 60 reported cases. Shikarpur district had the highest number of murders (31), followed by Ghotki (12) and Kashmore (7).
- Other districts, such as Sukkur, Larkana, and Khairpur, reported lower numbers of murders (6-8), while Naushero Feroze, Jamshoro, and Dadu had fewer incidents (3-4).
- The HWA raised concerns about the significant impact of tribal conflicts on the agriculture sector, especially affecting peasants (sharecroppers) and rural workers who rely on communal land use and labor, which are disrupted by the ongoing feuds and violent clashes.



SECTION: 1 LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

SECTION: 1 LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

In April 2024, the HWA urged the GoS to withdraw its appeal against the pro-peasant Sindh High Court's (SHC) judgment. Peasant and workers' trade union leaders grieved that the government of Sindh has not yet withdrawn its application to the Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP) against the SHC's landmark pro-peasant judgement of 2019. They had gathered in the village Sher Khan Malokhani district Matiyari to mark the International Day of Peasants. The HWA had met with the caretaker prime minister, together with Sindh Member of the National Human Rights Commission Miss Anees Haroon, to withdraw Sindh's application, who also promised to take immediate measures.

In January 2020, then Sindh Agriculture Minister Ismail Rahu (member PPPP) vowed and confirmed that his administration would not pursue an appeal in the SCP against this historic, pro-peasant judgment. However, the PPPP government stands firm against the pro-peasant rights judgement of the court. It was

highlighted that PPPP's base is peasants and rural workers who are not treated well in any matter of agriculture, especially when there is implementation of the pro-peasant provisions in the law. The GoS, on the other hand, continued to pursue the case in the SCP in 2024. The HWA received a copy of the plea filed by the GoS that categorically reveals the GoS has no concerns for the human rights of peasants and rural workers in Sindh; rather, it is pursuing the anti-peasant rights policies and the repressive feudal system and structure.¹⁴ In August 2024, HWA again urged the government to withdraw its appeal against SHC's verdict on STA.



¹⁴ Urdu Point, 2024 April, HWA Urges Sindh Govt to Withdraw Its Appeal Against Pro-peasant Sindh High Court's Judgment, <https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/hwa-urges-sindh-govt-to-withdraw-its-appeal-1815654.html>

SINDH WOMEN AGRICULTURAL WORKERS ACT (SWAWA), 2019

The SWAWA is a significant legislative development aimed at safeguarding the rights and welfare of women agricultural workers in Sindh. It allows women workers to engage in collective bargaining, access social welfare (including child health, community development, and economic benefits), and access publicly provided goods and services. However, the rules for implementing the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act were in the process of finalisation. The rules were sent to the ILO for review and feedback; afterwards, they had to be forwarded to the law department for further vetting.¹⁵ The HWA has received a copy of the Rules and found some gaps and issues, including:

- There is a lack of a clear mechanism for enforcing the minimum wage. The rules state: “The amount of pay shall not in any case be less than the Minimum Wage prescribed by the Government under Sindh Minimum Wage Act 2015” (Section-3, Rule 4). However, while the rules mandate that the minimum wage must be paid.
- There is an absence of specific penalties for non-compliance. In this regard, the rules state: “The Employer shall maintain a Register in Form ‘B’ regarding payment made to agriculture workers including women workers” (Section-3, Rule 4). While the employer is required to maintain records, there are no explicit penalties mentioned for failing to provide fair wages or comply with the registration requirements.

- There are no provisions for workplace safety standards. For instance, the rules state: “The Employer shall provide a suitable shelter to be used for women agriculture workers having a child of up to two years of age for breastfeeding to her child” (Section-6, Rule 11). While the rules focus on child nutrition, they do not set occupational safety and health (OSH) standards, such as protection from harmful pesticides, ergonomic hazards, or physical safety measures.
- There is no defined grievance redressal mechanism for women workers. The rules state: “The agriculture worker shall have the right to seek remedy against such discrimination at appropriate legal forums” (Section-11, Rule 21). While discrimination complaints can be taken to legal forums, there is no specific process, time frame, or designated body to handle grievances efficiently.
- The definition of the employment relationship is weak. For instance, the rules state: “Employer means a person who engages the agriculture women worker for any work related to agriculture as defined under Section 2(a) of the Act, or a landlord who owns the land on which agriculture-related work is being performed...” (Section-2, Definition (f)). While the definition of an “employer” includes landlords and contractors, it does not clarify the rights of seasonal workers, daily wage laborers, or those hired informally.
- There is no mention of training or skill development programs. In this regard, the rules state: “A woman agricultural worker has the right to: (a) Access government agricultural, livestock, fisheries, and other services” (Section-7, Rule 13). While there is mention of access to government services, there is no provision for structured training programs that could improve women’s skills,

¹⁵ Dawn, 2024 March, Sindh govt urged to frame rules for Women Workers’ Agricultural Act, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1824318>

productivity, and bargaining power.

- There are no specific provisions for social security coverage. The rules state: “A woman agricultural worker has the right to: © Social security as admissible” (Section-7, Rule 13). However, while social security is mentioned, the rules do not specify which schemes are available, how women can apply, and what benefits they will receive.
- There is a lack of measures to protect women from workplace harassment. The rules state: “The Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010, and other relevant laws with regard to the protection of women agriculture workers against harassment and abuse shall apply mutatis mutandis on agriculture workplaces” (Section-8, Rule 14). However, the rules rely on the Protection Against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010, without tailoring it to the specific challenges of agricultural settings, where the oversight is weak.
- There is no clear authority to oversee implementation. The rules state: “The Labour and HR Department, Sindh, shall form a committee comprising all relevant departments to protect the rights of women agricultural workers” (Section-16, Rule 38). While a committee is mentioned, no agency is explicitly designated as responsible for inspections, enforcement, and monitoring of compliance.
- There is no defined process for contract registration. In this context, the rules indicate: “The contract of employment shall be in the local language, and in case of an illiterate worker, the same shall be read over to the concerned worker in the presence of two witnesses” (Section-9, Rule 15). While contracts must be in the local language, the rules do not require these contracts to be registered with

with a government body, leaving room for manipulation by employers

HRCP AND TRADE UNIONS PETITION IN THE SINDH HIGH COURT

The petition, filed under C.P No. D-6265 of 2024 in the High Court of Sindh at Karachi was brought by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and Others against the Province of Sindh through the Chief Secretary and the Secretary, Labour and Human Resources Department, Government of Sindh. The petition concerns the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act, 2019, which was enacted to recognize the contributions of women in agriculture, ensure their rights, and promote their welfare.

In response, the Secretary, Labour and HR Department (Respondent No. 2) provided a detailed statement outlining the government's efforts in implementing the Act. The response highlights that agricultural workers already have the right of association under the Sindh Industrial Relations Act, 2013, with unions and small landlords' associations formed across the province. It also states that the Government of Sindh has allocated Rs. 500 million in the current financial year for the Benazir Women Support Programme, established under Section 15 of the Act, to provide financial and technical assistance to women agricultural workers. Furthermore, the Labour and HR Department, in collaboration with the International Labour Organization (ILO), has drafted rules for the Act, which have been forwarded to the Law Department for vetting before being submitted to the Sindh Cabinet for approval. The Benazir Women Support Programme is also part of Sindh's pro-poor Social Protection and Economic Sustainability Initiatives, with a steering committee led by the Chief Secretary monitoring its implementation.

Additionally, the response acknowledges that agriculture has traditionally been treated as part of the informal sector under labor laws, and thus, a structured implementation framework did not previously exist. However, once the rules are approved, the Act's provisions will be enforced, and the necessary measures sought by the petitioners will be taken. Based on these points, the Labour and HR Department has requested the High Court of Sindh to dismiss the petition as infructuous, arguing that the rules have already been framed and are in the final stages of approval.

SINDH INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ACT (SIRA), 2013

In 2024, no changes were reported in the status of SIRA. However, the SIRA is included in the proposed or draft Sindh Labour Code, which trade unions have rejected. On the implementation side, various peasants' and rural workers' unions were registered under the SIRA. In 2024, HWA helped 12 women peasants and rural workers unions under the SIRA and also helped them to form and register their federation.

SINDH TENANCY ACT (STA), 1950

It has been 74 years since the STA of 1950 was enacted. In 2013 and in other years, the PPPP government brought about changes in certain provisions in the STA to favour landlords. The STA's Section 17 was amended in 2013 to let peasants bear 100% of the expenses of farming a crop. The STA governs the rights and relationships between landlords and tenants, including sharecroppers, in rural areas of Sindh. However, practically, only landlords govern this relationship and enjoy all rights, and peasants remain poor and marginalized. Also, the benefits from the government subsidies programme provided in the context of floods and inflation, whereas peasants equally suffer the loss of production, never reach the peasants but only

landlords are paid. Habib Khatoon, President Sujag Women Hari Trade Union, said that the lack of enforcement of the laws, including the STA, hampers the protection and welfare of peasants and rural workers, exacerbating their difficulties in accessing land and obtaining fair treatment in their relationships with landowners.¹⁶

In July 2024, the Human Rights Commission held a session on the problems of farmers, and the challenges and loopholes in the Tenancy Act. Human rights activists, lawyers, political activists and intellectuals demanded that conditions given to land owners should be abolished and given to real farmers and agricultural workers. They also urged that a fresh legislation should be devised to remove the anti-farmer amendments made in the STA in the past. Yousuf Leghari said that now there was a need to move forward from the STA, that the Act is old and has been distorted by many amendments. Participants demanded that the rights of farmers and agricultural workers should be reorganized due to the increase in the number of agricultural workers after the current conditions of the STA and the reduction of the concept of farmers in the agricultural sector.

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¹⁶ Urdu Point, 2024 April, HWA Urges Sindh Govt to Withdraw Its Appeal Against Pro-peasant Sindh High Court's Judgment, <https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/hwa-urges-sindh-govt-to-withdraw-its-appeal-1815654.html>

workers should be reorganized due to the increase in the number of agricultural workers after the current conditions of the STA and the reduction of the concept of farmers in the agricultural sector.¹⁷

They called for bringing the STA in conformity with present conditions. It was also shared that all officers are appointed by waderas and sardars; therefore, victims' grievances remained unaddressed. If the name 'hari' was entered in Khasra Form-6, a vital document, then landlords could not deprive him/her of the land. An inspection should be there to check whether hari's name was entered in the survey number. Haris of Thar district got their names entered in the form. It was also shared that if haris were declared 'labourers' then their cases should be decided by labour courts, or haris courts should be set up so that they could find legal remedies. Registration of all haris is essential on a parity basis.¹⁸

THE SINDH BONDED LABOUR SYSTEM (ABOLITION) ACT (SBLCAA), 2015

The Rules for the SBLCAA, 2015, have not been notified yet. The draft rules were reported to be with the Provincial Law Department and were accessible to the Provincial Home Department but not to the general public.

The ILO's Committee (CEACR) noted that the All-Pakistan Federation of Trade Unions (APFTU) submitted a report on 31 August 2023 and the Pakistan Mine Workers Federation (PMWF) also submitted responses on 7 September 2023. These observations, published in 2024, highlight concerns regarding lack of implementation of

¹⁷ Dawn, 2024 July, Human Rights Commission holds session on peasant's problems, challenges, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1848629/hrcp-stresses-review-of-sindh-tenancy-act>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ The Express Tribune, 2024 September 5, Honey trapping is seen as a new trend in trafficking,

of laws addressing the worst forms of child labor. Based on the information provided by the Government, the Committee observed that labor inspections in Balochistan and KPK did not identify any cases of forced or bonded labor in 2022. However, no information was provided regarding Sindh, Punjab, or the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). Additionally, the Committee referred to the 2023 report from the National Commission for Human Rights of Pakistan (NCHR) on "The Issue of Bonded Labour in Pakistan," which highlights that bonded labor is particularly common in the rural and agricultural sectors, especially within the brick kiln industry in Punjab and agriculture sector in Sindh where sharecropping is common. Regarding the registration of brick kilns, the Committee acknowledges the Government's update that 746 brick kilns in Sindh have been registered under the Sindh Factories Act of 2015, employing 14,352 workers. Furthermore, 16 unions representing brick kiln workers have been registered. The Government has also indicated that a draft of the Sindh Domestic Workers Act was under preparation.²⁰

THE DRAFT SINDH LABOUR CODE

In June 2024, the Sindh CM declared the government's aim to develop a unified labour law encompassing all sectors. The Sindh government, in collaboration with the ILO, prepared and circulated the Sindh Labour Code, 2024, among employers and workers' bodies. The draft labour code was prepared in collaboration with the ILO by consolidating, simplifying and rationalising the existing 21 labour laws regulating matters such as occupational safety and health, industrial relations and working conditions. The draft was then circulated for consultations. The government asserted that a major advantage of the comprehensive codification of labour laws is to ensuring fundamental rights and responsibilities for businesses and workers

²⁰ ILO, 2024, Observation CEACR adopted 2023, published 112nd ILC session, 2024.

across all sectors.²¹

The government claimed the proposed code would make it easier for businesses, including investors, and workers, to navigate relevant provisions and understand clearly their roles and responsibilities. Also, definitions would be consistent across processes and entitlements, and obsolete industry-specific provisions eliminated. The laws included in the Sindh Labour Code include:

- Children (Pledging of Labour) Act, 1933;
- Industrial Statistical Act, 1942;
- Employment (Record of Service) Act, 1951;
- Maternity Benefits Ordinance, 1958;
- Road Transport Workers Ordinance, 1961;
- Tea Plantations Labour Ordinance, 1962;
- Fee-Charging Employment Agencies (Regulation) Act, 1976;
- Sindh Industrial Relation Act, 2013;
- Sindh Payment of Wages Act, 2015;
- Minimum Wages Act, 2015;
- Terms of Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 2015;
- Factories Act, 1934;
- Shops & Commercial Establishment Ordinance, 1969;
- Companies Profit (Workers Participation) Act, 1968;
- Sindh Workers Compensation Act, 2016;
- Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 2015;
- Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2017;
- Occupational Safety and Health Act, 2017;
- Home-Based Workers Act, 2018;
- Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act, 2019.

²¹ Dawn, 2024, Proposal to provide legal cover to contractual system rejected, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1838661>

ILO'S STANCE ON THE LABOUR CODE

The ILO country director stressed the need to start a process to discuss and finalise the draft Labour Code through social dialogue before its submission to the legislature. He suggested the development of further regulatory framework through rules that implemented the Code. He mentioned that it was necessary to develop mechanisms and strategies to enhance compliance in priority areas, as well as provide capacity building and training for labour officers, inspectors, judiciary and other stakeholders.²²

A report submitted on Pakistan's labor law reforms outlined specific efforts to comply with the ILO standards. The document is an update on the drafting of new Labour Codes in the provinces of Sindh and Punjab. This document formed part of the Committee on the Application of Standards reports, which was discussed at the 112th Session of the ILO Conference in Geneva on 3-14 June 2024. The report highlighted "Pakistan's progress in aligning its labor laws with international standards, with a particular focus on the Minimum Age Convention (No. 138), which addresses the elimination of child labor as part of Pakistan's commitment to fulfilling its international obligations under the ILO."²³

EMPLOYERS' VIEWS ON THE DRAFT LABOR CODE

According to the Employers' Federation of Pakistan 'the draft legislation of the Sindh Labour Code is very complicated and confusing'. For example, 'worker' is defined as an employee, but 'employee' has been defined separately. Besides, it is mentioned that "a person exercising the authority, duties or responsibilities of an

²² The News International, 2024 July, Sindh to develop unified labour laws, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1195583-sindh-to-develop-unified-labour-law-encompassing-all-sectors>

²³ ILO. 2024. Committee on the Application of Standards <https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/ILC112-CAN-D-Pakistan-C138-%5BNORMES-240516-029%5D-EN.pdf>

employer” is a worker. In the consultation meeting the participants were of the view that consolidation should have been based on existing laws, making their enforcement simple by removing obsolete provisions and making them relevant to existing needs.²⁴

TRADE UNIONS' STANCE ON THE LABOR CODE

In June 2024, workers' representatives from various sectors across the country unanimously rejected the Sindh Labour Code proposal, which provides legal cover for different forms of contractual employment. The representatives called for strengthening the tripartite mechanism and criticized the draft Code as an attempt to legalize anti-labour contract system under the guise of consolidating labor laws.

Workers' representatives were not consulted during the drafting process, and they deemed the Code illegal under both international and local laws. They argued it would strip workers of their ability to challenge the contract system while paving the way for privatization and flexible employment practices promoted by foreign donor agencies. Allegations were made that the ILO was acting as a front for employers and that the proposed Labor Code would undermine the trade union movement. Powerful state actors were believed to be backing the legislation.

Draft Sindh Labour Code was seen as a “conspiracy” to impose anti-labour laws without proper tripartite consultation. The Code was viewed as a threat to the hard-won rights of workers, gained through over a century of struggle, and an attempt to break workers' solidarity.²⁵ They identified the following list of violations of workers' rights in the draft Code:

- Elimination of workers identity and employer relationship, stripping workers of their individuality and rights.
- Legalizing the illegal contract labour system, which creates a form of modern wage slavery.
- Vulnerability to contractors, sub-contractors, and third-party agencies, leaving workers without direct employment rights.
- Factory owners exempted from legal responsibilities, undermining workers' protections and allowing exploitation to continue.
- Deprivation of legal action, social security, and pension, stripping workers of essential social safety nets.
- Workers lose rights to unionization, bonuses, working hours, and gratuity, limiting their fundamental entitlements.
- Legalizing the advance payment system, effectively reducing workers' rights to modern-day forms of slavery. Stripping government employees (grades 1-15) of union rights, blocking their ability to negotiate collectively.
- Reducing worker solidarity by dividing them into multiple categories, weakening their collective bargaining power. Placing restrictions on the right to strike, rendering it virtually impossible for workers to protest.
- Bureaucratic expansion complicates industrial dispute resolution, making the process more time-consuming and inefficient.
- Exempting employers from health and safety obligations, putting workers at risk without accountability for companies.
- Undemocratic process in drafting the Sindh Labour Code, excluding workers' voices from critical decision-making.

²⁴ Dawn, July 15, 2024, Sindh Labour Code, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1846122>

²⁵ Dawn, 2024 June 9, Proposal to provide 'legal cover to contractual system' rejected,

- Exempting employers from worker welfare responsibilities, allowing exploitation and undermining workers' fundamental rights.²⁵⁻²⁶

A former Senate chairman had condemned the draft of a new labour code in Punjab and advised the provincial government in Sindh not to introduce similar legislation without consulting workers' unions. In a statement, the former chairman criticized the Punjab Labour Code 2024, which was introduced by the provincial government, and the efforts to implement similar legislation in Sindh. The draft laws, which have yet to be approved, were developed by both Sindh and Punjab with assistance from the ILO. The leader argued that the new code could lead to "greater exploitation and insecurity" for the working class. He claimed that the law undermines job security, legalizes exploitative contract systems, restricts trade unions, and could potentially provide legal cover for bonded labour. He urged the GoS to consult labor unions before finalizing its version of the law.²⁸

HWA'S STANCE ON THE LABOUR CODE

The HWA believes that the Sindh Labour Code would undermine the rights of peasants and rural workers, increasing their vulnerability, especially since many work informally or seasonally in sectors like agriculture, farming, and livestock. The contractual labor system proposed in the code would exclude these workers from benefits typically available to formal employees, such as social security and collective bargaining.

The draft Labor Code would potentially transform the relationship between workers and employers into a system where workers are hired by contractors or sub-contractors (third parties) rather than directly by the landowners or employers. This shift could weaken the legal protections for rural workers, as they would be working under temporary or seasonal contracts, which do not offer the same level of security as permanent, formal employment.

In rural areas, peasants and sharecroppers typically work in informal arrangements, with no formal contracts or guarantees. This reflects the nature of agricultural work where wages and conditions are often governed by personal agreements between landlords and workers. The Sindh Tenancy Act, 1950, provides a legal framework for the relationship between landlords and peasants in these arrangements. However, the STA does not offer formal contracts and generally operates on informal, flexible terms—leaving rural workers without strong legal protections.

The HWA has been advocating for formal agreements under the STA, which would establish more clarity and security in the landlord-tenant relationship. This contrasts with the Sindh Labour Code's emphasis on contractual labor systems, which may not sufficiently address the unique needs of peasants working within the sharecropping system. If the STA framework is weakened or overshadowed by the Labor Code, it could undermine the legal protections the HWA seeks to strengthen for peasants.

The key confusion arises from how the Sindh Labor Code interacts with the STA, 1950, especially regarding peasants' rights. The STA currently governs the relationship between landlords and peasants—which often includes sharecropping arrangements that are informal and seasonal. While the Labor Code aims to regulate employment relationships in other

²⁶ Dawn, 2024 July 12, Sindh Labour Code draft termed 'conspiracy' against workers, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1845275>

²⁷ Dawn, 2024 June 9, Proposal to provide 'legal cover to contractual system' rejected <https://www.dawn.com/news/1838661>

²⁸ Dawn, 2024 September, Rabbani condemns proposed labour codes, <https://www.dawn.com/news/amp/1856559>

sectors, it could inadvertently encroach on the STA's provisions by promoting a formalized contractual system that does not fully account for the informal nature of agricultural work.

If the Labor Code is applied to agriculture workers, it could conflict with the STA's provisions. For example, peasants who work as sharecroppers, or under informal agreements, may lose access to customary practices protected by the STA and instead fall under a contractual framework that may not be suited to the realities of agricultural work. This could further marginalize rural workers by formalizing their employment status in a way that does not reflect their actual work arrangements.

The confusion arises from a lack of clarity regarding how the Sindh Labour Code will affect peasants under the STA of 1950, especially since sharecropping is governed by informal practices not typically addressed by the Labour Code. The formalization of contractual labor may not be suitable for agricultural workers and could undermine the protections that peasants currently receive under the STA. To prevent negative impacts, a more coherent framework that harmonizes the two legal systems would be necessary, ensuring peasants' rights are preserved while allowing for labor protections in rural areas.



SINDH'S WATER POLICY

In July 2023, Sindh's cabinet approved the water policy after a five-year-long process (2019–2023). Nine background studies were conducted with the help of FAO and the World Bank. The Policy claims to be formulated after 'a detailed consultative process'. The Policy aimed to 'secure inclusive development and management of water resources in Sindh that fosters well-being of its citizens, society, and economy... through enabling institutional arrangements and effective actions based on the principles of accountability, decentralization, participation, resilience, and transparency'.²⁹

An assessment of Pakistan's water sector policies, undertaken by the provinces under a World Bank project, identified several gaps in the Sindh Water Policy 2023.³⁰ According to the report, the Policy lacks the guidelines for climate change adaptation, exploration of non-conventional water resources to reduce the pressure on freshwater resources, use of appropriate technologies for water conservation, promotion of groundwater recharge, the roadmap for solving the urgent transboundary issues like

disposal of drainage effluents, diversion of canal water supplies and sharing of shortages during the drought period as per Water Apportionment Accord 1991, judicious economic value of water and a regulatory framework on sustainable management of groundwater to reduce its wasteful extraction.³¹

In 2024, the GoS held a stakeholders' consultation to devise a new water law for an integrated system covering all water-related authorities in Sindh. The law is to be enacted under the World Bank's Sindh Water and Agriculture Transformation (SWAT) Project and would be a unified law having components of two existing laws--Sindh Irrigation Act, 1879, and the Sindh Water Management Ordinance, 2022. In one of the consultations held in December 2024 in Hyderabad, it was pointed out by a water expert that farmers' and women's representation should be ensured in the law and the proposed Sindh Integrated Water Resource Management Department.³²

²⁹ Sindh Water Policy, Approved by the Sindh Cabinet on 22 July, 2023, Government of Sindh, <https://irrigation.sindh.gov.pk/files/PagesContent/SindhWaterPolicy/SWP.pdf>

³⁰ Assessment of Water Sector Policies and Guidelines of Pakistan: Identifying Gaps and Addressing Needs, 2023, Climate Adaptation and Resilience (CARE) for South Asia/Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, Bangkok, https://www.adpc.net/igo/category/ID1923/doc/2024-jNEq27-ADPC-Water_Sector_Pakistan_2024.02.15-For_Website.pdf

³¹ Ibid.

³² Dawn, December 13, 2024, International forum set up to draft tough laws on protecting water bodies, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1878357>



SECTION: 2 PEASANTS' REPRESENTATION IN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES

SECTION 2: PEASANTS' REPRESENTATION IN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES

MISREPRESENTATION OF PEASANTS IN SINDH ASSEMBLY

Nadir Akmal Khan Leghari from Ghotki is listed as a businessperson on the provincial assembly's website, although he is the son of Sardar Muhammad Akmal Khan Leghari, a feudal lord who owns thousands of acres of land in the region. Similarly, Sharjeel Inam Memon declared a businessperson on the provincial assembly website, is a big landowner in the Hyderabad division. Sher Muhammad Mugheri is also listed as a businessperson, yet in reality, he is a landlord. Out of the total, 9 members are identified as agriculturalists, while 23 are categorized as landlords on the provincial assembly's website. These agriculturists are also landlords. In many cases, the true professions of these members are concealed.

For instance, Nida Khuhro, the daughter of Nisar Khuhro, a member of the provincial assembly, lists her profession as "educationist," but in reality, the Khuhros are landlords. In 2018, Nisar Khuhro's nomination papers were rejected because he failed to disclose his 166 acres of land. A similar pattern can be seen in the National Assembly, where many members from Sindh, particularly from the PPP, are actually big landowners. Asif Ali Zardari, former president of Pakistan, is also a major landlord (<https://www.dawn.com/news/1414890>). This highlights the reality that a significant number of members of the Sindh Provincial Assembly are representatives of feudal families, which form the core base of the PPP in Sindh.



The misrepresentation of professional identities among members of the Sindh Provincial Assembly, particularly those from feudal families, reflects the entrenched power dynamics of the region. Concealment of their identity as landlords allows them to distance themselves from the controversial feudal system, which continues to dominate rural Sindh. The PPP, historically seen as a champion of the rural poor, paradoxically relies on support from landowning elites, including figures like Asif Ali Zardari, a major landlord. This dependency perpetuates the dominance of feudal interests within the party, despite its populist rhetoric.

Such misrepresentation undermines the legitimacy of these politicians and alienates rural communities, particularly the poor and agricultural workers, from meaningful political representation. Furthermore, it prevents necessary reforms to address systemic exploitation and inequalities faced by rural populations. The issue is compounded by weak enforcement of transparency laws, allowing landowners to maintain control over political institutions. For rural women, the lack of true representation reinforces the gender and economic inequalities they face, as feudal power structures remain largely unchallenged. True empowerment for rural communities requires dismantling these entrenched systems of power and ensuring that political representatives authentically reflect the interests of all constituents.

The PPPP has been in power in Sindh since 2013. In the lead-up to the February 2024 General Elections, the party once again sought public support for a fourth term. During their campaign, they made misleading promises, including pledging to withdraw subsidies from the elite and redirect those funds toward the welfare of

youth, peasants, farmers, laborers, and women. However, after winning the elections and forming their fourth government, their policies have not been pro-peasant or worker-friendly, as evidenced by their support for the controversial Sindh Labor Code and their refusal to withdraw the appeal in the Supreme Court of Pakistan against the Sindh High Court's pro-peasant ruling.

During the election campaign, hari leaders, including Sindh Hari Mazdoor Jaddojehad president Kanji Rano Bheel, called on all political parties to include commitments in their manifestos for securing basic rights for minority communities, ensuring that the marginalized could live peaceful lives. Expressing concern over the ongoing deprivation of minority rights, he urged political parties to uphold these rights as guaranteed by the Constitution. Mr. Rano made these statements at a seminar titled "Political Parties, Election 2024, and Hari Mazdoor," held in Essardas Bheel village. The seminar was attended by peasants from Mirpurkhas, Umarkot, Sanghar, Tharparkar, Badin, and Tando Allahyar districts.

At the seminar, Rano called for the government to reclaim over 52,000 acres of land that had been allocated under the pretext of corporate farming, demanding that it must be redistributed to poor Sindhi peasants to boost agricultural production. He also urged action to vacate land that had been allocated to peasants but was illegally occupied by feudal lords. Additionally, Rano pushed for minority communities to be granted access to university admissions and a Courts to deliver justice to peasants and to swiftly eliminate bonded labor and child labor. On the issue of education, he deplored the fact that over six million children from poor families were still out

³³ The Nation, 2024 January 29, Former Sindh CM says PPP to hold historic public meeting, <https://www.nation.com.pk/29-Jan-2024/former-sindh-cm-says-ppp-to-hold-historic-public-meeting-in-hyderabad>

of school. He urged the authorities to ensure their immediate enrolment in schools so that they could contribute positively on both national and international levels in the future.³⁴

MISREPRESENTATION OF PEASANTS IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

This misrepresentation is not limited to Sindh but is also prevalent in other provinces. During the 2024 elections, of the 266 directly elected National Assembly seats, 112 (42%) Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) are classified as agriculturists—essentially a polite euphemism for feudal landowners. These individuals primarily earn their income from land, either through rent or produce. Some own vast estates, ranging from 1,000 to 5,000 acres (often held in their name or by their family members or proxies), while others possess between 50 to 100 acres. The vast majority of those dependent on the land are peasants, sharecroppers, wage laborers, and menials.

Another 83 members are identified as belonging to the business sector, with around 25–30 having transitioned from agriculture to business or industry. This shifts the number of feudal-linked representatives in the National Assembly to 145, or 54% of the directly elected members. Additionally, three members who belong to the gaddi nashin (heirs of saints or holy men) also largely represent the feudal class, as their religious role is typically associated with substantial landholdings. This raises the total representation of the feudal class in the National Assembly to 148 members or 55% of the 266 directly elected seats. The majority of these landlord representatives come from Punjab, followed by Sindh, with a smaller number from the irrigated areas of Balochistan and Khyber

Pakhtunkhwa. In Punjab, feudalism is especially concentrated in the central and southern divisions, while Sindh hosts some of the most extreme examples of this system.

The prominence of landlords becomes even more apparent when considering indirectly elected members from reserved seats. These seats are often filled by the relatives of directly elected members or individuals tied through political favors. As a result, about 50–55% of the reserved seats go to members of the same landed class. This means that around 175 members, or 52% of the total National Assembly membership of 336, belong to the landed class, forming the largest, most powerful bloc with shared interests—socially, economically, and politically—especially concerning state policies.

Many of the landless workers of these MNAs live under debt bondage, residing in houses built on land owned by landlords and facing the constant threat of eviction if they do not comply with the landlord's demands—whether it involves voting in a particular way or adhering to other personal or political pressures. The landowners themselves are often absentee landlords, living comfortably in urban centers while their tenants toil in rural areas. Just 5% of landowners control 65% of the total farmland, while 65% of small farmers share just 15% of the land.

During the Green Revolution in the 1960s and even today, it is the large landowners who have access to agricultural credit and subsidies to finance new farming inputs and machinery. In 2018, under Rs. 227.7 billion of agricultural credit, fewer than 20,000 large landlords received the credit, while 1.75 million small farmers received only Rs 183.6 billion in farm credits. The relationship between the landed class and the State today mirrors the colonial system of indirect rule, where emperors, followed by the British colonial government, empowered local

³⁴ Dawn, 2024 December 29, Political parties asked to help minorities get basic rights, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1801485/political-parties-asked-to-help-minorities-get-basic-rights>

landed nobility. These landowners were granted titles, patronage, and the right to collect land revenue in exchange for loyalty, tax collection, and maintaining order. Large land grants were given and the landed aristocracy was incorporated into the lower ranks of the army, police, and local officers such as patwaris and soldiers.³⁵

GOS AND FEUDAL LORDS

Representatives from peasants' and workers' trade unions expressed their disappointment that the GoS has not yet withdrawn its appeal filed in the Supreme Court against the Sindh High Court's landmark 2019 pro-peasant judgment. The appeal against the 2019 judgment was filed by the GoS in January 2020, and the then-agriculture minister assured that the government would not pursue it. These views were shared during a gathering at Sher Khan Malokhani village in Matiari district, marking the International Day of Peasants.

The president of the Hari Welfare Association stated that his organization, along with the Sindh member of the National Human Rights Commission, had met with the caretaker prime minister to request his assistance in having the GoS withdraw its appeal. While the prime minister promised to help, no action had been taken so far, he noted. He criticized the PPPP government for its apparent refusal to honour the pro-peasant judgment, especially considering that its voter base includes peasants and rural workers who continue to face challenges in the agricultural sector. He also pointed out that the STA, 1950, had not been implemented for 64 years. Even after 2013, the PPPP government altered the provisions of the Act to benefit landlords. The Act governs the relationship between landlords and tenants, including sharecroppers in rural Sindh, but in practice, landlords controlled this

relationship and enjoyed all the rights under the law, while peasants remained marginalized and impoverished.

The president further noted that peasants never benefited from government subsidies provided during floods or times of rising inflation, while landlords were compensated for losses. A copy of the government's plea revealed that the government was pursuing policies that favored the feudal system and ignored the rights of peasants and rural workers.

President Sujag Women Hari Trade Union, Habib Khatoon, stated that the lack of law enforcement left peasants and rural workers without protection, making it harder for them to access land or receive fair treatment from landowners. She shared several cases of mistreatment by landlords, including an attempted rape in Mirpurkhas, a murder in Larkana, forced evictions, and other abuses of power. She detailed several disturbing incidents, such as a landlord in Mithi dispossessing peasants, police filing false cases against peasants in Dadu, and a landlord allegedly involved in an attempted rape in Benazirabad. Other reports included a peasant's murder in Mirpurkhas, abductions over debt in Badin, and the kidnapping of three daughters and their mother in Naushehro Feroze. Numerous other cases of forced evictions were reported across various districts.

³⁵ The Express Tribune, 2024 March 10, Feudalism continues its reigns, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2458881/2024-elections-feudalism-continues-its-reign>

³⁶ Dawn, 2024 April, Sindh govt's actions more favourable to landlords, say Hari unions, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1828037>

DACOITS: PRODUCTS OF FEUDALISM AND LANDLORDISM

Rural Sindh is heavily affected by dacoit culture and crime. Hari leaders have blamed feudal lords and landowners as the primary cause of this issue, claiming they have destroyed Sindh's agriculture sector. The dacoits are seen as products of jagirdars, waderas, and elected officials who have failed to deliver on their promises. The agricultural sector has been devastated, leaving peasants to suffer from hunger and starvation, and closed schools. The children of haris and laborers have had their pens taken away and weapons handed to them instead. Efforts are being made to push Sindh's progressive politicians and nationalists to the margins. These leaders have rejected the feudal-dominated government, calling for a true people's representative government in Sindh. They demand an end to the lawlessness in upper Sindh, where dacoits currently hold power.³⁷

³⁷ Dawn, 2024 May 23, Dacoits are products of feudalism, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1835051/dacoits-are-products-of-feudalism-hari-leaders>



SECTION: 3

INITIATIVES NAMED AFTER BENAZIR



SECTION: 3 INITIATIVES NAMED AFTER BENAZIR

BENAZIR HARI CARDS AND FUNDS FOR WOMEN AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

On 19th March 2024, the Sindh cabinet decided to issue BHCs to peasants across the province. Chairing the provincial cabinet, the CM directed the provincial chief secretary to devise a policy in this regard. He said BHC cardholders would be prioritized in the procurement of wheat as well. On June 13, 2024, the GoS proposed an allocation of Rs. 500 million for the Benazir Women Agricultural Workers Program (BWAAP) in the next year's budget. The Sindh CM, in his budget speech, highlighted the important role women play in Sindh's economic development and prosperity. He emphasized that the funds would improve agricultural output and the living standards of rural women.³⁹

In June 2024, the GoS unveiled an Rs30.7 billion allocation for agriculture in the 2024-2025 provincial budget, marking a 62% increase from the previous year's Rs18.9 billion. The budget covers various agricultural functions, including administration, research and extension services, plant protection, locust control, information, statistics, and nutrition programs, underscoring the government's commitment to supporting farmers.

Under the BHC initiative to provide relief, the GoS has allocated Rs8 billion for farmers with land holdings of 12.5 acres or less, aiming to register approximately 788,000 of the 1.2 million eligible farmers in the province.

³⁸ Radio Pakistan, 2024 March, Sindh cabinet decides to issue Kisan cards to peasants across province <https://www.radio.gov.pk/20-03-2024/sindh-cabinet-decides-to-issue-kisan-cards-to-peasants-across-province>

³⁹ Urdu Point, 2024 June, Sindh Govt allocates Rs. 500 million for Benazir Women Agricultural Workers Program <https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/sindh-govt-allocates-rs-500-million-for-bena-1835622.html>

The CM also highlighted the Benazir Women Agriculture Workers Assistance Program, allocating Rs 500 million to empower women in agriculture. This initiative is designed to improve the agricultural output and living standards of rural women involved in the sector.

In response to the 2022 floods that devastated 80% of the crops in the province, the Sindh took action to revitalize agriculture. The minimum support price (MSP) of wheat was raised to encourage production for the Rabi season, and over 147,000 farmers received financial assistance for wheat seed reimbursement through BISP. The budget also proposed a Rs35.9 billion allocation for irrigation, a 40% increase from the previous year, further demonstrating the government's focus on agricultural growth. However, the President of a farmers' association expressed concerns that much of the budget increase went towards employees' salaries rather than benefiting farmers.⁴⁰

On 8 October 2024, the GoS announced it would issue the BHCs through Sindh Bank, aiming to provide financial support to farmers. A meeting chaired by Sindh Agriculture Minister Sardar Muhammad Bux Khan Mahar and attended by key officials finalized the agreement to distribute the cards. In the first phase, 298,000 farmers with up to 25 acres of land were to receive the cards, offering subsidies on essential agricultural supplies such as seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides, as well as financial assistance during natural disasters. The government also announced to register an additional 1.4 million farmers soon. Sindh allocated Rs 8 billion for this initiative, emphasizing its commitment to aiding farmers through the BHC program.⁴¹ On October 14, 2024, the PPPP officially launched the distribution of

BHCs to farmers in Karachi to facilitate access to loans, and allow the purchase of pesticides and seeds. As of 17 November, 2024, a total of 42,000 farmers, including 1,000 women, had registered for the Benazir Hari Card in the Sukkur and Ghotki districts. The program registered 336,000 farmers in the province, is being implemented in two phases: the first phase targets farmers with 1-25 acres of land, while the second phase will include farmers with larger landholdings, with no upper limit. So far, Rs18 billion has been disbursed to the beneficiaries.

The GoS had announced the Benazir Mazdoor Card, aimed at streamlining benefits to the workers registered with SESSI, in October 2022. The web-based employees and employers profiling system developed by NADRA aims to bring transparency to the SESSI registration. When the available data of SESSI was verified for Benazir Mazdoor card, 40% of the registration of workers turned out fake.⁴² By June 2024, online registration for Mazdoor Card began. In November 2024 the SESSI launched an awareness campaign about the Mazdoor Card in Karachi. The card offers medical coverage, cash benefits, employment injury grants, and other welfare services provided by the SESSI to the formal sector registered workers.⁴³

⁴⁰ The Express Tribune, 2024 June, Agri allocations boosted by 62%, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2471773/agri-allocations-boosted-by-62feudalism-hari-leaders>

⁴¹ Business Recorder, 2024 October, Sindh Bank to issue Benazir Hari Cards, <https://www.brecorder.com/news/40326017>

⁴² Radio Pakistan, October 2024, PPPP Chairman launches distribution of 'Benazir Hari Cards to Farmers' in Karachi, <https://radio.gov.pk/14-10-2024/ppp-chairman-launches-distribution-of-benazir-hari-cards-to-farmers-in-karachi>

⁴³ The Express Tribune, November 2024, 42,000 farmers registered for Hari Card in Sukkur, Ghotki, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2510072/42000-farmers-registered-for-hari-card-in-sukkur-ghotki>

⁴⁴ Business Recorder, 12 October 2022, Benazir card to provide health insurance to laborers, <https://www.brecorder.com/news/40202508/benazir-card-to-provide-health-insurance-to-labourers>

⁴⁵ The Express Tribune, 2024 June, Agri allocations boosted by 62% <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2471773/agri-allocations-boosted-by-62feudalism-hari-leaders>

BHOOKMITAO AND BENAZIR WOMEN AGRI SUPPORT PROGRAMS

In April 2024, the Sindh government initiated two programs: Bhookmitao Food Security program and the Benazir Women Agriculture Workers Support program. Designed to benefit the marginalized communities, the programs are to be implemented once feasibility assessments are carried out. The Bhookmitao Food Security program seeks to implement a mix of tools and scientific approaches to assess food security. It aims to identify vulnerable groups and propose practical solutions to address food insecurity and reduce hunger in marginalized populations.

The Benazir Women Agriculture Workers Support program aims to provide social protection to women employed in agriculture through a Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program, contingent on their registration with the Labor Department and their visits to health facilities for medical check-ups during and after pregnancy. The Social Protection Strategy Unit (SPSU) is tasked to evaluate the program's feasibility and implementation strategies. Meanwhile, under the Strengthening of the Sindh Social Protection Service Delivery System program, the World Bank is supporting the Mother and Child Support program with a \$28.15 million grant. The program was launched in 15 rural districts, prioritizing areas with the highest Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI). To date, Rs 313.2 million has been disbursed to 152,349 registered beneficiaries, and the board has approved the project.

⁴⁶ Pak Observer, April 2024, Sindh initiates Bhookmitao, Benazir women Agri support programs, <https://pakobserver.net/sindh-initiates-bhookmitao-benazir-women-agri-support-programs/>

EXCLUSION OF SHARECROPPERS FROM THE BENAZIR HARI CARD SCHEME

The HWA raised concerns about the BHC initiative, which aims to provide farmers with subsidies, loans, insurance, and other benefits. While the scheme is intended for farmers with up to 12 acres of land, the HWA pointed out that the landless sharecropping peasants, who play a significant role in the agricultural workforce, would be excluded. This exclusion follows a pattern of the previous government programs, where sharecroppers were left out despite their contribution to the agricultural sector.

The HWA raised concerns that the BHCs would mainly benefit politically connected farmers, rather than those who genuinely need assistance. Furthermore, it criticized the lack of a proper survey or documentation process to identify and support the farmers most affected, such as small-scale landowners, hit by floods or inflation. The HWA called on the government to recognize peasants as agricultural workers under the STA and include women peasants under the SAWWA. The government was urged to ensure that the Hari Cards were distributed fairly to both landlords and sharecropping peasants and that landlords be required to provide written declarations of tenancy agreements. The HWA demanded that the registration process be expedited to ensure that all affected farmers, including peasants, received the financial support and relief they deserved.⁴⁷⁻⁴⁸

⁴⁷ The News International, April 2024, Growers body calls for including tenant farmers in hari card scheme, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1174456-growers-body-calls-for-including-tenant-farmers-in-hari-card-scheme>

⁴⁸ The Express Tribune, March 2024 March, Peasant's body doubts credibility of Kissan Card <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2460481/peasants-body-doubts-credibility-of-kissan-card>



SECTION: 4
BONDED LABOUR AND HUMAN
TRAFFICKING IN SINDH

SECTION: 4 BONDED LABOUR AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN SINDH



According to an ILO-Pakistan estimate, 10% of the world's total bonded labour prevails in Pakistan, which is a significant number and a large number of them are in the agriculture and brick kiln sectors in Sindh. Releases of bonded labour from the landlords' captivity take place under directives issued by the local courts. The courts issue the orders after receiving petitions from the bonded labour themselves. Judiciary-mandated law enforcement authorities present the individual family members before the court. In compliance, the police conduct raids on the premises of landlords or brick kiln proprietors, extricating the bonded laborers, and subsequently producing them before the court. During the interim period, the rescued individuals are kept within the confines of the police station. Notably, there is no documented evidence indicating any intervention by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in facilitating the liberation of bonded laborers from the custody of landlords and brick kiln owners.

⁴⁹ The News International, 2024 September 15, Nadra to launch registration drive for brick kiln workers in Sindh, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1230596-nadra-to-launch-registration-drive-for-brick-kiln-workers-in-sindh>

STATISTICS ON BONDED LABOURERS IN AGRICULTURE

TABLE: BONDED LABOURERS RELEASED IN THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR IN 2024⁵⁰

Districts	Children	Women	Men	Total
Badin	18	22	30	70
Hyderabad	16	12	14	42
Jacobabad	0	0	3	3
Khairpur	5	0	0	5
Mirpur Khas	15	10	13	38
Sanghar	67	55	72	194
Shaheed Benazir Abad (SBA)	11	15	14	40
Tharparkar	11	4	7	22
Umerkot	88	60	58	206
Total	231	178	211	620

The above table highlights the number of bonded laborers released from the agricultural sector across various districts in Sindh during 2024, with a total of 620 individuals—comprising children, women, and men—being freed from bondage.

Sanghar and Umerkot are the two districts with the highest number of releases, with Sanghar accounting for 194 and Umerkot for 206. This suggests that these districts have been the focal points of efforts to address bonded labor, possibly due to larger agricultural operations or more intense intervention programs. In Umerkot, the release of bonded children, women, and men was particularly notable, with 88 children and 60 women being freed, indicating that the vulnerable groups were the focus of rescue efforts in the region.

The district of Badin also shows a relatively high number of releases, with a total of 70 individuals freed. Among them were women (22) and men (30). The release of children (18) shows that minors were also a substantial part of the bonded labor population in the district.



⁵⁰ Source: Data gathered by the Hari Welfare Association

In contrast, districts such as Jacobabad and Khairpur have relatively low figures, with only 3 laborers released in Jacobabad and 5 in Khairpur. These lower numbers may reflect either fewer cases of bonded labor in these areas or a lack of effective enforcement of laws against bonded labor. Mirpurkhas and SBA also show notable numbers, with 38 and 40 individuals released, respectively. The release of 15 women and 13 men in Mirpur Khas suggests that both women and men were significantly affected by bonded labor in that district, while SBA shows a release distribution between men (14) and women (15). Tharparkar, with a total of 22 releases, shows a relatively lower incidence of bonded labor compared to other districts.

The overall data illustrates that bonded labor remains a significant issue in several districts of Sindh, particularly in rural agricultural communities. However, the large numbers of people freed—especially children and women—point to ongoing efforts to combat bonded labor through legal and social interventions. The variation in numbers across districts could also reflect differences in the prevalence of bonded labor, the effectiveness of anti-bonded labor initiatives, and local socio-economic conditions that contribute to the persistence of such practices.

TABLE: RELEASED BONDED LABOURERS IN THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR IN SINDH (2013 TO 2024)⁵¹

Years	Men	Women	Children	Total
2024	211	178	231	620
2023	179	178	185	542
2022	283	172	198	653
2021	445	521	499	1465
2020	1017	1154	915	3086
2019	533	583	606	1722
2018	442	485	494	1421
2017	196	221	136	553
2016	103	110	62	275
2015	29	53	51	133
2014	107	53	115	275
2013	345	264	651	1260
Total	3890	3972	4143	12005
%	32	33	35	

The above table provides a 12-year overview (2013 to 2024) of the number of bonded laborers released from the agricultural sector in Sindh, broken down by gender and age group. A total of 12,005 bonded laborers were freed over this period, with men, women, and children representing 32%, 33%, and 35% of the releases, respectively.

The data reveals fluctuation in the number of releases over the years. The year 2020 saw the highest number of releases, with 3,086 individuals (1,017 men, 1,154 women, and 915 children) freed. This spike could reflect a concerted effort or a peak in awareness and intervention against bonded labor, possibly due to government initiatives, NGOs, or increased public scrutiny during that time. In the

⁵¹ Source: Data gathered by the Hari Welfare Association

years following 2020, especially 2021 and 2022, high numbers of releases (1,465 and 653, respectively) were reported.

There was a significant drop in releases between 2014 and 2016, with releases ranging from just 275 to 133 individuals in those years. However, the later years show a recovery in numbers, especially in 2019, when the number of releases jumped back up to 1,722 individuals, highlighting that efforts against bonded labor were becoming more effective.

When looking at the gender breakdown, women and children consistently make up a significant proportion of the total releases. In the most recent year (2024), 178 women and 231 children were freed, representing 28.7% and 37.3% of

the total releases, respectively. This underscores the vulnerability of these groups who are often subjected to severe exploitation and deprivation in bonded labor scenarios.

Overall, the cumulative data suggests significant progress over the past 12 years in addressing bonded labor in Sindh's agriculture sector. The total of 12,005 releases shows the scale of the problem, while the fluctuation in numbers and the proportion of women and children freed indicate that challenges remain, particularly in addressing the root causes of bonded labor and ensuring sustainable solutions. The high proportion of children released suggests that there is still much work to be done to prevent children from being trapped in these exploitative systems.



**TABLE: DISTRICT-WISE DATA OF BONDED LABOURERS
RELEASED IN AGRICULTURE SECTOR (2018- 2024)⁵²**

Districts	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2024
Badin	33	35	133	57	16	20	70	364
Dadu	0	0	0	14	5	0	0	19
Ghotki	16	0	0	0	30	0	0	46
Hyderabad	56	2	79	106	9	0	42	294
Jacobabad	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Jamshoro	0	0	0	40	29	0	0	69
Kandhkot	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Khairpur Mirs	0	0	35	0	50	0	5	90
Larkana	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	8
Matari	24	0	234	84	19	0	0	361
Mirpurkhas	418	256	497	338	21	74	38	1642
Noushero Feroz	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	11
QS	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Sanghar	264	116	514	217	86	87	194	1478
Sukkur	0	0	80	0	11	0	0	91
Benazirabad	57	78	0	15	3	19	40	212
Shikarpur	0	1	0	23	23	0	0	47
Sajawal	0	15	0	0	3	0	0	18
Tando Allahyar	145	189	78	102	61	0	0	575
TMK	136	0	0	0	11	36	0	183
Thaparkar	0	0	0	14	13	0	22	49
Thatta	0	13	0	0	38	22	0	73
Umerkot	250	1,017	1436	455	202	283	206	3849
Total	1399	1,722	3,086	1,465	653	542	620	9487

⁵²Source: Data gathered by the Hari Welfare Association

The above table provides a district-wise breakdown of the number of bonded laborers released from the agriculture sector in Sindh between 2018 and 2024. A total of 9,487 individuals were freed during this period, reflecting significant efforts and interventions aimed at tackling bonded labor, but also highlighting persistent challenges in specific regions.

Mirpurkhas and Umerkot consistently show high numbers of releases across all years, with Mirpurkhas being the most notable district. In 2020, for example, 497 individuals were freed, and over the entire period, 1,642 bonded people were liberated in Mirpurkhas. Umerkot saw an even larger number in 2020, with 1,436 releases, contributing significantly to the overall total. These districts may have large agricultural sectors that rely on bonded labor or may have benefited from stronger interventions and rescue operations during this period. This cannot be ascertained due to a lack of research on the subject.

Matiari experienced a surge in releases in 2020, with 234 individuals freed, followed by 84 in 2021, for a total of 361 releases over the 7 years. This could indicate focused anti-bonded labor initiatives, although numbers fell sharply after 2021. Badin, a district that reported a total of 364 releases, experienced a significant peak in 2020 (133 individuals), followed by 70 in 2024. This district has remained one of the notable regions with substantial releases over time.

Sanghar also stands out with a total of 1,478 releases, including high numbers in 2018 (264) and 2020 (514). The relatively high numbers, especially in these two years, suggest that significant progress was made in this district, possibly linked to stronger enforcement of bonded labor laws or greater awareness.

Dadu, Jacobabad, Kandhkot, Larkana, Shikarpur, and Thatta show minimal or no bonded labor releases in most years, with Dadu and Jacobabad contributing very few overall releases (19 and 3, respectively). This could reflect either lower levels of bonded labor in these areas or perhaps less effective rescue operations. In some cases, it might also indicate limited reporting or intervention during certain years.

There are also districts with low but notable contributions. Khairpur Mirs (90 total) saw a large release in 2022 (50 people), and Sajawal (18 total) had sporadic releases, showing that bonded labor may be a persistent issue in these regions, though on a smaller scale than in the larger districts. Shikarpur, Tharparkar, and Thatta recorded only small numbers of releases, with the largest number being 23 from Shikarpur in 2021, suggesting that the problem is either less severe or less reported in these districts.

2020 stands out as the year with the highest number of releases (3,086). This could point to a concentrated effort or an effective anti-bonded labor campaign that led to the large-scale release of individuals. Or, it could be the impact of the 2020 flooding when the government declared 20 districts in Sindh as calamity-hit areas. Farms were inundated and the marginalized population was dislocated in large numbers.⁵³ In contrast, the years 2023 and 2024 saw a drop in releases (542 and 620, respectively).

Overall, the data reveals that some districts, such as Mirpurkhas, Umerkot, and Sanghar, consistently had high numbers of releases, reflecting both the prevalence of bonded labor in these regions and the effectiveness of rescue operations. Other districts like Dadu and

⁵³ Peoples Poverty Reduction Program, Govt. of Sindh, Natural calamity heavy rains/flood monsoon 2020, <https://www.pprp.net.pk/assets/pages/reports/covid-19/PPRP%20FloodHeavy%20Rain%20Response-2020.pdf>

Jacobabad reported minimal or no releases, which may suggest either a lower incidence of bonded labor or limited enforcement and awareness efforts. While the number of bonded laborers released is substantial, the data underscores the ongoing need for continued vigilance and interventions, particularly in the districts that show persistently high numbers. It also highlights the importance of district-specific approaches, as some areas continue to face higher levels of bonded labor despite overall progress.

TABLE: DATA ON BONDED LABOURERS RELEASED IN THE BRICK KILNS

TABLE: BONDED LABOURERS RELEASED IN THE BRICK KILN SECTOR IN 2024⁵⁴

Districts	Children	Women	Men	Total
Hyderabad	8	5	4	17
Khairpur	5	6	7	18
Mirpur Khas	14	9	16	39
Sanghar	28	32	25	85
SBA	6	8	10	24
Matiari	13	17	11	41
NF	2	1	2	5
TMK	14	11	13	38
Umerkot	57	32	36	125
Total	147	121	124	392

The above table provides data on the number of bonded laborers released from the brick kiln sector in Sindh in 2024. A total of 392 bonded laborers were freed across various districts, including children, women, and men. This data highlights both the severity of bonded labor in the brick kiln industry and the ongoing efforts to address this issue.

Umerkot stands out as the district with the highest number of releases, totaling 125 individuals, including 57 children, 32 women, and 36 men. This suggests that Umerkot has a significant presence of bonded laborers in the brick kiln sector, and efforts to release them have been notably successful. The high number of children being freed is a particularly concerning indicator of child labor in this sector.

Sanghar follows closely, with a total of 85 releases, including 28 children, 32 women, and 25 men. Sanghar also reflects a pattern of bonded labor that impacts a significant number of families, with women and children making up a large portion of the released individuals. Mirpurkhas reported 39 releases, with 14 children, 9 women, and 16 men. While the number is lower than in Umerkot and Sanghar, it still represents a considerable effort in combating bonded labor in this district.

Matiari had 41 releases: 13 children, 17 women, and 11 men. This indicates that bonded labor is a persistent issue in this district, affecting both genders and all age groups, though the releases skew slightly toward women. Khairpur and Hyderabad also had substantial releases, with 18 and 17 people freed, respectively. These two districts contribute to the total efforts in addressing bonded labor in the brick kiln sector, though their numbers are smaller in comparison to districts like Umerkot and Sanghar.

Tando Mohammad Khan recorded 38 releases of 14 women, 11 men, and 13 children. Shaheed Benazirabad had 24 releases. Naushero Feroze saw a smaller total of 5 releases, which could suggest that the bonded labor issue in the brick kiln sector is less severe or that fewer cases have been reported or addressed

⁵⁴ Source: Data gathered by the Hari Welfare Association

Overall, the data shows that Umerkot, Sanghar, and Mirpur Khas are the primary districts where bonded labor remains a significant issue in the brick kiln sector, with high numbers of releases, especially among children and women. The presence of large numbers of children among released individuals highlights the ongoing issue of child labor in this sector, which requires urgent attention.

While Matiari, Khairpur, and Hyderabad also report meaningful numbers of releases, these districts may not have as severe or widespread bonded labor issues as the leading districts but still require continued monitoring and intervention. A total of 392 individuals freed is a positive sign of efforts to address bonded labor, but the persistence of high numbers, especially of vulnerable groups, such as children and women, suggests that systemic changes in labor practices, legal enforcement, and social awareness are still needed to tackle the root causes of bonded labor in the brick kiln industry. These figures point to the importance of both

immediate rescues and long-term strategies to prevent bonded labor from continuing to affect marginalized communities in Sindh.

In addition of labor bondage, the incidents of violence, exploitation and insecurity faced by farmers in rural areas were also reported. These incidents led to protests in response to perceived injustices and lack of protection from the authorities. In Tharoshah, district Nushero Feroze, on 9 November 24, a body of a peasant was found near the area. The body of the deceased, Khadim Jiskani, was discovered hanging from a tree in the village of Mohlan, with accusations of murder. Protesters gathered at the scene to demand justice. In Khipro, Sanghar district, on 14-Oct-24, an incident unfolded at the residence of a landowner near Khipro. Armed individuals attacked, killed and looted livestock, leaving the bodies behind. A protest lasting six hours followed, with over six armed men occupying the residence of landowner Sher Khan Hangurjo and taking farmers hostage.



TABLE: BONDED LABOURERS IN THE BRICK KILN SECTOR IN SINDH IN 2022, 2023 AND 2024⁵⁵

	2022				2023				2024				
	Children	Women	Men	Total	Children	Women	Men	Total	Children	Women	Men	Total	Grand total
Badin	0	0	0	0	12	15	14	41	0	0	0	0	41
Dadu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ghotki	0	1	3	4	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
Hyderabad	22	19	20	61	0	0	0	0	8	5	4	17	78
Jacobabad	0	1	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Jamshoro	2	2	5	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9
Kandhkot	2	2	3	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
Khairpur Mirs	2	3	2	7	0	0	0	0	5	6	7	18	25
Larkana	2	3	4	9	0	0	0	0					9
Matiari	14	9	9	32	17	15	14	46	13	17	11	41	119
Mirpurkhas	0	0	0	0	4	6	9	19	14	9	16	39	58
NF	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	5	5
QS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					0
Sanghar	21	20	28	69	31	43	52	126	28	32	25	85	280
Sukkur	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
SBA	8	11	12	31	4	5	3	12	6	8	10	24	67
Shikarpur	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					0
Sajawal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					0
Tando Allahyar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					0
TMK	0	0	0	0	1	5	13	19	14	11	13	38	57
Thaparkar	0	0	0	0	36	33	24	93					93
Thatta	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					0
Umerkot	20	18	22	60	24	31	27	82	57	32	36	125	267
Total	93	89	110	292	129	154	156	439	147	121	124	392	1123

⁵⁵ Source: Data gathered by the Hari Welfare Association

The above data on bonded laborers in the brick kiln sector across Sindh for 2022, 2023, and 2024 paints a detailed picture of the situation and the efforts made to release these laborers. The total number of bonded laborers fluctuated during these years, with 292 recorded in 2022, 439 in 2023, and 392 in 2024. While there was a noticeable increase in the number of releases in 2023, there was a slight decrease in 2024. This could be indicative of efforts to reduce bonded labor, yet there remain substantial numbers still trapped in such conditions.

In terms of gender and age distribution, the release of children across all three years has been significant. In 2022, 93 children were freed, increasing to 129 in 2023 and 147 in 2024. This demonstrates an ongoing effort to rescue minors from exploitative conditions. The data also highlights that women have made up a significant portion of the freed bonded laborers, with 89 women in 2022, 154 women in 2023, and 121 women in 2024. The release of men has also been substantial, with 110 men in 2022, rising to 156 in 2023, before slightly declining to 124 in 2024.

The regional distribution shows that Umerkot has consistently reported high numbers of bonded laborers, with 60 released in 2022, 82 in 2023, and 125 in 2024. Similarly, Matiari, Mirpurkhas, and Sanghar have also seen high release numbers over these years, with Sanghar alone releasing 69 laborers in 2022 and 126 in 2023. The districts of Thatta, Sajawal, and Shikarpur had no reported releases in certain years, indicating either a lack of effective intervention or lower rates of identification of bonded laborers in these areas.

This data reflects both the ongoing prevalence of bonded labor in the brick kiln sector and the continuous efforts of various agencies to identify and release these workers. However, the numbers remain high, signalling that much

needs to be done in terms of prevention, rehabilitation, and long-term support to ensure that those freed from bonded labor can reintegrate into society with dignity and independence.

CHILD BONDED LABORERS IN SINDH

More than 6.4 million children are out of school in Sindh, most of them engaged in the worst forms of child labour, depriving them of their right to health, education, protection and development. According to the HWA's estimates, of 1.7 million bonded labourers in Sindh, 700,000 are children, working under inhumane working and living conditions imposed on them by their landlords in the agriculture sector.

According to the data collected by the HWA, from 2013 to 2024, on the orders of courts in Sindh, 4143 (35%) children, including minors, were released along with their adult family members from the custody of landlords in the agriculture sector. Besides the agriculture sector, children under 15 years of age are exploited, abused, and tortured in bangles, brick kilns, fisheries, auto workshops, cotton picking, and chilli picking sectors/activities in the province. Labor inspectors, social welfare officers, and child protection officers completely ignore the future of these children and do not reach them or rescue them. Many are sent to towns to work as domestic slaves, and their wages are paid to the agents, who pay nominal money to their parents. The government's sheer ignorance and absence of policy and plan to eradicate child labour have also added to the miseries of the children and their families. The low-income families had increasingly pushed their children towards hazardous labour because of lack of work opportunities for adults, inflation, and low-paid work.

The government is good at introducing laws but is worst at implementing the laws. The children are engaged in the worst forms of child labour due to the non-implementation of the STA, 1950, the Sindh Child Protection Authority Act, 2011, the Sindh Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2013, the SBLSAA, 2015 and the Sindh Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2017.⁵⁶

SINDH'S BONDED LABOUR CRISIS: WOMEN AND AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

Women and girls in the agriculture sector in Sindh province have been significantly impacted by social, economic, and political systems dominated by feudal and tribal leaders. The leaders hold considerable power in legislative assemblies and bureaucratic institutions. Women in rural areas are being victimized in every aspect of life, suffering social, economic, and political injustice due to the non-implementation of laws designed to protect peasants and rural workers.

The ineffective implementation of the SBLSAA, 2015, has led to peasants repeatedly approaching local courts to secure the release of family members from the custody of landlords. Between 2013 and 2024, 12,005 bonded labourers were freed from the agriculture sector with 33% (3972) of them being women. These women have faced severe hardships, including economic exploitation, physical abuse, and denial of their rights to education, voting, and choosing their spouses. The press statement also noted that district vigilance committees established under the SBLSAA, 2015, have not been effective in rescuing bonded labourers or supporting those released by the local courts.

⁵⁶ Dawn, 2024 June 14, 700,000 children among 1.7m bonded labourers working in Sindh's farm sector, <https://www.daily-sun.com/post/626380>

In agriculture, female workers earn less than Rs10,000 per month despite working 12-hour days. Workers receive PKR 10,000, even though the GoS has set a minimum wage of PKR 37,000 per month. Women farmers typically have limited access to financial resources such as loans and subsidies. This restriction prevents them from investing in modern farming techniques. Women in rural Sindh often rely on traditional methods due to their lack of access to capital and modern farming equipment.⁵⁷ Despite the ILO estimating a living wage of Rs60,000 to 65,000, women typically earn only a fraction of this amount.⁵⁸

BONDED LABOUR AND THE SENATE

In response to a notice submitted in early January 2024 by a senator in the Senate of Pakistan, asking about the steps taken by the Government to abolish bonded labour in the country during the last three years, the Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development stated that following the 18th Constitutional Amendment, the subject of labour was devolved to the federating units (provinces), making them responsible for labour legislation and its enforcement, including the regulation of bonded labour. The District Vigilance Committees (DVCs) have been established in every district to address and monitor issues related to child labour, bonded labour, and human trafficking. It was further said that a training program for DVC members was held in Hyderabad, attended by senior officials from the District Government of Sindh. Additionally, the Minister noted that a provincial-level multi-stakeholder consultation was conducted in Hyderabad on 13 December 2021, where participants were sensitised to the Sindh Bonded Labour (Abolition) Act, 2015, and

⁵⁷ New X World, September 13, 2024, Sindh's bonded labour crisis: women and agricultural workers most affected <https://www.newsx.com/world/sindhs-bonded-labour-crisis-women-and-agricultural-workers-most-affected/>

⁵⁸ Dawn, 2024 May, Workers vulnerable without unions, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1831790>

the Prohibition of Employment of Children Act, 2017.⁵⁹

NADRA REGISTRATION DRIVE FOR BRICK KILN WORKERS IN SINDH

On 16 September 2024, the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) announced to launch a special campaign to register brick kiln workers in Umerkot and other districts in lower Sindh. This initiative aimed to ensure that these workers and their families, many of whom remain unregistered, could obtain their national identity cards and gain access to fundamental rights and social protection benefits, including healthcare and education. A lack of official documentation often leaves these vulnerable workers susceptible to exploitation and denies them their fundamental rights as citizens. The Sindh Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act's implementation has challenges and, thus, requires stronger mechanisms to rehabilitate bonded laborers. The practice of "Peshgi," a system of debt bondage prevalent in the brick kiln industry, is a critical area requiring further scrutiny and legislative action.

The brick kiln workers in Sindh work in precarious conditions. These conditions are extremely vulnerable and lead to exploitation, debt bondage, and health hazards. There was also the impact of the 2022 floods on these workers, underscoring the urgent need for greater regulation and support within the industry. Research found that 90% of the brick kiln workers were forced to take loans just to meet their basic needs, which trap them in a vicious cycle of debt bondage. The devastating floods of 2022 exacerbated their plight, as work was suspended for months, further crippling their already meagre incomes.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Senate Secretariat., 334th Session January 5, 2024, Questions for oral answers and their replies https://senate.gov.pk/uploads/documents/questions/1704425140_795.pdf

⁶⁰ The News International, 2024 September 15, Nadra to launch registration drive for brick kiln workers in Sindh,

Lack of literacy and accounting skills makes workers vulnerable to exploitation through wage manipulation and unfair deductions by employers. Residing in cramped, unsanitary conditions on-site exposes workers and their families to communicable diseases. Exposure to extreme heat, dust, and risk of injuries further jeopardizes their health.⁶¹

INEFFECTIVE DISTRICT VIGILANCE COMMITTEES (DVCs)

The DVCs set up under the SBLsAA, 2015, comprise elected representatives of the area, representatives of the district administration, lawyers, media, labor and human rights activists and Labour Department officials. The DVCs are responsible to ensure the law is effectively implemented. However, the DVCs do not convene their regular meetings and fail to enforce the Act.

The brick kiln owners are responsible for the unsafe and unbearable working conditions being faced by kiln workers. Owners are required to contribute money equal to 5% of a worker's wage for their security, but they do not do this. There are more than 160 kilns in the Tando Hyder union council of the Hyderabad district alone, and each had between 100 and 150 workers. In many instances, the owner gives a loan to a worker, which spirals into a lifetime of servitude. Brick kiln workers are denied social security cards despite the existence of legal provisions. In Tando Hyder, not a single kiln worker possessed a social security card, which was a clear violation of the law.

In a seminar held in September 2024 in Hyderabad, Panhoon Bheel, a trade unionist, said that his family had been working at kilns for generations without basic facilities, like healthcare, education or social security card. He added that emergencies compel them to get

⁶¹ Ibid.

advance against wages and this trapped them in a cycle of bonded labour. If they were given their rightful social security cards, many of their problems could have been resolved.⁶²

Earlier, in August 2024, a stakeholders' consultation was held to identify gaps and develop a framework for legal and institutional reforms to eradicate bonded labour and child domestic labour in Sindh. It was noted that only 12 of Sindh's 29 districts have notified DVCs.

POLICE AND DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION: FAILURE TO PROTECT BONDED LABOURERS

The police's failure to include proper sections of the Sindh Bonded Labour Abolition Act in FIRs is one of the main reasons the law is not implemented. It is alleged that the police-landlord nexus is strong and prevents this to happen. The Sindh Labour minister promised to address loopholes in the bonded labour system abolition act and would incorporate the suggestions from the consultations.⁶³ The authorities in the DVCs responsible for the implementation include deputy commissioner and a labour officer subordinate to him. The absence of labour officers in the districts, and disinterest of the deputy commissioners are the main reasons that DVC meetings are not held.⁶⁴

⁶² Dawn, 2024 September 6, Ineffectiveness of vigilance committees encouraged bonded labour, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1857219>

⁶³ Dawn, 23 August 2024, Rights body expresses concerns over non-inclusion of bonded labour laws in FIRs, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1854067>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

COMPLEXITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE RELEASED WORKERS

In February 2024, a raid was conducted by Talhi police following an order from the Umerkot Sessions Court. The Court had received a complaint from Jagsi Bheel a few days earlier, alleging that 14 of his relatives, including Dodo Bheel, were being held at a farmland. According to the complaint, the individuals were denied basic rights, such as a share in the crop, wages, freedom of movement, and medical treatment. The petitioner requested the court to order their immediate release from what he described as "illegal confinement." Aziz Khoso, the landlord's younger brother, told reporters that the rescued individuals had borrowed Rs. 500,000 from his brother and were allegedly fabricating the situation to evade repayment.⁶⁵

This news story highlights that marginalized communities, such as the Bheel community, are allegedly exploited under the guise of debt repayment. While the rescue operation underscores the role of judicial intervention and law enforcement in addressing such injustices, it also reveals the ongoing challenges in distinguishing between genuine indebtedness and unlawful confinement. The conflicting narratives—the peasants' claim of deprivation versus the landlord's assertion of a fabricated ploy—reflect systemic socio-economic disparities and the lack of effective mechanisms to resolve disputes fairly.

In May 2024, on the court order, Sindh police raided a landlord's private jail and freed 33 farmers, including women and children in Umarkot. The raid was conducted following a petition filed by farmer Nursingh Kolhi in the Umerkot Sessions Court against landlord

⁶⁵ Dawn, 2024 February 24, Police recover 14 'bonded' peasants, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1816668/police-recover-14-bonded-peasants>

Hamza Rind. In the petition, Nursingh Kolhi alleged that landlord Hamza Rind had imprisoned women, children, and men in his private jail and forced them into bonded labour. The petitioner appealed to the Sessions Court to release the imprisoned children, women and farmers from the landlord's private jail. The Sessions Court took serious notice and issued orders to the police to recover the 33 imprisoned children, women and farmers from the private jail immediately.⁶⁶

The above news story again underscores the systemic exploitation that traps marginalized farmers and their families in cycles of forced servitude. The swift action by the Umerkot Sessions Court and Sindh police highlights the critical role of judicial oversight and law enforcement in addressing human rights abuses. However, the reliance on individual petitions to prompt such interventions reflects the ongoing challenges in ensuring proactive enforcement of anti-bonded labour laws and the protection of vulnerable communities.

Nawabshah police raided a brick kiln near Khadar and rescued 20 bonded labourers. The operation was conducted on the orders of the Sessions Court following a complaint by Sabagho Oadh, a resident of Umerkot, seeking the release of his relatives from illegal captivity. Led by SHO Qurban Kalhoro, Khadar police raided the kiln owned by Islamuddin Pathan and Abdul Wahid Pathan, freeing six children, eight women, and six men. The labourers reported that they had been working at the kiln for a year without being paid, were subjected to forced labour and physical abuse, and were prohibited from leaving. They appealed to authorities for justice, demanding their unpaid wages and action against the kiln owners.⁶⁷

The above stories also indicate a routine procedure for the release of bonded labourers. Specifically, these steps are:

- Individuals/peasants run away from the captivity;
- File a petition (not an FIR);
- Court takes notice;
- Court issues the order to produce peasants;
- Bailiff/lawyer submits the order to the police;
- The police conduct the raid;
- Peasants are brought to the police station;
- The police present them in the court;
- The court releases the peasants.

As given in the above case, there are a few steps reported by the media stories, but these reports do not offer deeper insight into what happens after the presentation in the court and release from the court. The HWA has witnessed awful scenes after the release from the court, revealing horrible conditions and treatment of released bonded labourers.

DOUBLE DISCRIMINATION: PAKISTANI DALITS STRUGGLE FOR DIGNITY

Members of Pakistan's Scheduled Caste communities are gradually entering the country's political landscape and receiving recognition at the highest levels. However, systemic changes, affirmative action, and the implementation of laws to uphold their rights remain critical for their struggle for equality. An agricultural laborer from Sindh, part of a Dalit community historically marginalized under the Hindu caste hierarchy, when approached by the HWA, expressed a desire to migrate for a better social and financial position. Many others in his village share similar plans, hoping to escape pervasive discrimination and economic hardships

⁶⁶ Dawn, 2024 May 29, Sindh police raid landlord's private jail, <https://pakobserver.net/sindh-police-raid-landlords-private-jail/>

⁶⁷ Dawn, 2024 December 29, 20 bonded labourers freed in raid on brick kiln near Khadar, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1881655>

The Dalit community in Pakistan comprises 32 Scheduled Castes listed in a 1957 Presidential Ordinance, with a majority residing in Sindh. Historically relegated to menial jobs, they continue to face discrimination in education, healthcare, and political participation alongside systemic challenges like bonded labor and poor living conditions. Research highlights that nearly half of this community works as agricultural laborers and daily wage earners, often under exploitative conditions exacerbated by limited access to resources like education, clean water, and proper healthcare. Despite legislation such as the Sindh Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 2015, enforcement remains weak, and authorities rarely take action against powerful landowners.

Efforts to politically empower the community, including reserved seats in elections and job quotas, have faced challenges. Policies introduced under previous regimes, such as separate and joint electoral systems, have had mixed outcomes. While some members have successfully entered politics, the community as a whole remains underrepresented. Discrimination extends to burial practices, with encroachments on traditional burial grounds forcing communities to relocate their deceased to distant locations. Although some courts have ruled in favor of Scheduled Castes on encroachment issues, enforcement remains incomplete.

The community's vulnerabilities are further compounded by environmental and social challenges. Sindh's Scheduled Caste communities were particularly affected by the 2022 floods, and districts with high Dalit populations reported alarming rates of suicide. The Supreme Court of

Pakistan's rulings and the minority commissions have acknowledged these challenges and proposed solutions. However, lack of implementation underscores the persistent neglect of marginalized communities. Unless substantial efforts are made to address their grievances, systemic marginalization of these communities will continue to symbolize their struggle for dignity and equality.⁶⁸

THE ROAD TO FREEDOM

The desolate settlements in Sindh's Tando Haider area, with their humble mud houses missing basic amenities, silently bear witness to modern-day slavery and the deep-rooted exploitation of bonded labourers. These villages, located approximately 200 kilometres from Karachi, are home to individuals who have endured oppression, forced labour, and captivity under brutal landlords. Once shackled by the chains of bondage, some of these freed farmers have risen as beacons of hope, dedicated to liberating others from the fate they once faced. These villagers were helped in their fight against exploitation by human rights organizations. Now free from the scourge of bonded labour and the private jails of their employers, the former captives have taken on the mantle of resistance. They are the new vanguard of this movement. One of them has endured violence and imprisonment for 25 years in their fight for the release of peasants held in bondage. They recount that a family member was handed over by a landlord to his son, and pleas for their return fell on deaf ears. Married off at a young age, this person and their spouse worked under gruelling conditions, receiving meagre compensation and facing harsh punishments for any resistance.

⁶⁸ DND, 2024 March, Double discrimination: Pakistani Dalits struggle for dignity in their land of birth, <https://dnd.com.pk/opinion/double-discrimination-pakistani-dalits-struggle-for-dignity-in-their-land-of-birth/>

In Sindh, the organized struggle against forced labour began in 1992, when human rights organizations formed a task force headquartered in Hyderabad. International support also played a crucial role. After years of legal battles, some individuals and their families were finally freed. One of the individuals, passionate about education, faced severe restrictions under an oppressive landlord. He eventually sought help from the rights groups, pursued legal action, and gained freedom for himself and his extended family. When peasants began gaining freedom, camps were set up at various places. There were transit camps and permanent camps where freed peasants began settling. Some organizations also worked to rehabilitate and train these farmers. Land was allocated near Hyderabad to maintain their connection to agriculture while providing nearby employment opportunities. Thus, villages were established for the freed farmers. Some individuals, after gaining freedom, dedicated themselves to helping others. They learned how to file habeas corpus petitions in court and work with the police to conduct raids on private jails. Despite facing life-threatening challenges, they remain committed to their cause.

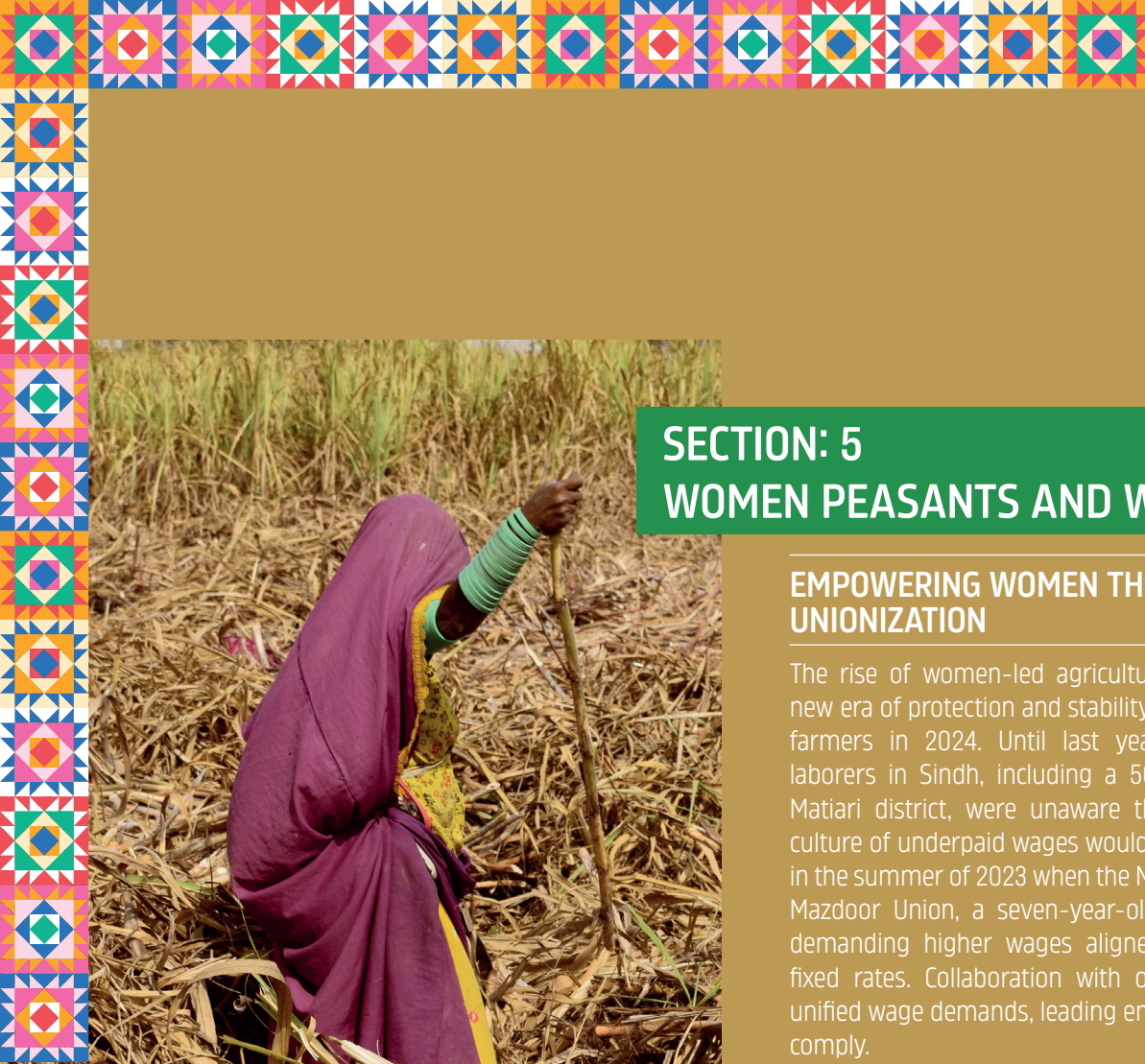
Currently, camps for freed farm workers continue to operate, but the conditions remain dire. Most homes lack basic facilities, including health services, schools, safe drinking water, and paved roads. Philanthropic organizations have made some efforts, such as establishing schools, but much remains to be done. Advocates for the community highlight the ongoing misery and call for better government and NGO interventions. Rising land prices and inadequate follow-up support compound the challenges faced by these communities.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Fahmida Riaz Shehwani, 2024, The road to freedom, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/1223041-the-road-to-freedom>

Modern slavery continues to exist in various forms in the province of Sindh. While the law provides for the abolition of bonded labour, enforcement remains weak, and employers are rarely punished. Advocacy groups continue to rely on court petitions to secure freedom for individuals, as district vigilance committees formed in recent years have proven ineffective. The struggle against exploitation and modern slavery continues, with brave individuals leading the charge to ensure freedom for the most vulnerable.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Ibid.

SECTION: 5
WOMEN PEASANTS AND WORKERS



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EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH UNIONIZATION

The rise of women-led agricultural unions marked a new era of protection and stability for Pakistan's female farmers in 2024. Until last year, many agricultural laborers in Sindh, including a 50-year-old laborer in Matiari district, were unaware that the longstanding culture of underpaid wages would end. This shift began in the summer of 2023 when the Moomal Cotton Picking Mazdoor Union, a seven-year-old union, led a strike demanding higher wages aligned with government-fixed rates. Collaboration with other unions ensured unified wage demands, leading employers to eventually comply.

The Sindh Labour Department mandates a minimum daily wage of PKR 1,230 for unskilled workers. Following the strike, employers agreed to pay according to these rates and enhance traditional in-kind payments. Employers admitted that the shortage of workers forced compliance with demands. Agricultural workers gained inclusion under the SIRA 2013. Since the implementation of the law in March 2024, eleven (11) agricultural unions have been registered in Sindh, with the women leading seven unions. Of the 407 enrolled laborers, 205 are women, and more unions are in the process of registration, supported by international funding and local NGOs. By the end of December 2024, the HWA had also helped 12 trade unions of women peasants under the SIRA and one federation of these 12 trade unions.⁷¹

⁷¹ Zulfiqar Kunbhar, March 2024, The Pakistani women spearheading agricultural reform, Fair Planet, <https://www.fairplanet.org/story/the-pakistani-women-spearheading-agricultural-reform/>

The rise of women-led agricultural unions in Sindh could signal a shift towards better protection and stability for female peasants in Pakistan. Historically, female agricultural workers, like Naseem Mallah, faced gender-based wage discrimination and poor working conditions. However, in 2023, Mallah and other members of the Moomal Cotton Picking Mazdoor Union successfully initiated a strike to demand fair wages, leading to employers in their area agreeing to increase wages in line with government standards. This victory has had a significant impact on women's financial empowerment, improving their families' living conditions.⁷²

A successful case was reported from the Shaheed Benazirabad district, where a peasant woman shared how many of the women working with her in the fields often complained about not being paid fairly. In 2013, the province's evolving legal framework recognized agricultural and fishery workers as industrial laborers, granting them the right to organize, form trade unions, and negotiate with landlords and employers. As a result, around 50 women working in the fields decided to form their trade union, presenting a united front that ultimately led to improved wages, bringing them closer to the official fixed rates that had previously been denied to them. These women, who manually pick cotton, had previously been paid below the official rates by their employers. But after uniting, they decided to take a stand. When offered Rs800 per maund (a traditional unit of weight in South Asia equivalent to 40 kilograms), they rejected the offer and demanded Rs1,200 instead. Their solidarity forced the employer to meet their demand. These women found their collective voice, and the increase in their income allowed them to purchase clothing and school supplies for their children.⁷³

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

CALL TO EMPOWER RURAL WOMEN

The HWA voiced against the lack of effective support from the federal and provincial governments for women, peasants and workers. Programs like Bait-ul-Mal, Ehsaas, and BISP, while providing financial aid, have created dependency rather than equipping rural women with the skills and resources necessary for sustainable livelihoods.

The HWA criticized the exclusion of sharecroppers unregistered under the STA 1950, who received no support even after the devastating 2022 floods. The women play a vital role in agriculture but are ignored in relief efforts. The lack of enforcement of protective laws, such as the Sindh Women Agriculture Workers Act, leaves rural women vulnerable. Without legal enforcement, rural women cannot report violence effectively. Jamul Malokhani, General Secretary of the Mai Bakhtawar Hariyani Trade Union, described the dire conditions of rural women in Sindh as akin to modern slavery. Despite the SBLSAA 2015, many women continue to live without basic amenities and civil rights. The Union President, Heer Malokhani, criticized the government's inaction, noting that the District Vigilance Committees remain inactive even after bonded laborers are freed from the captivity of the landlords.

The HWA was critical of the GoS's failure to implement the SWAWA, passed in December 2019, designed to recognize women's contributions to agriculture and guarantee their rights, including equal pay, unionization, and social security. Four years later, the board has not been appointed, nor have any unions formed, and nor have grassroots efforts initiated to register women agricultural workers under this Act. Rural women in Sindh face significant challenges, including low

literacy rates, limited access to education and healthcare, and persistent poverty. In districts like Tharparkar, Sanghar, and Mirpurkhas, over 70% of women work in agriculture but lack necessities such as nutrition and education.⁷⁴

CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN PEASANTS IN THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR

Findings from a study by Pakistan's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) reveal that women farmers in Pakistan remain largely unrecognized for their critical contributions to the agriculture sector, food security, and the economy. The key challenges faced by women peasants and workers in Sindh, as outlined in the text, include:

1. Lack of Recognition and Legal Protection:

- Women's labour in agriculture is undocumented, and they are rarely acknowledged as "farmers."
- Labour laws do not cover the agriculture sector, and there is no national law safeguarding the rights of women in agriculture.

2. Workplace Harassment and Violence

- Frequent sexual harassment and violence in agricultural workplaces.
- Hostile working environments with exposure to violence, harassment, and verbal abuse.
- Lack of awareness about gender-based violence and harassment among women farmers.
- Fear of job loss, cultural pressures, and lack of support prevent reporting of incidents.

3. Weak Governance and Enforcement

- Departments of Agriculture and Labour do not monitor the working conditions of women farmers.
- Limited enforcement of existing laws, including the SBLSAA, 2015, and the SWAWA, 2019.
- Inactive District Vigilance Committees meant to assist bonded laborers.
- Lack of implementation of the STA, 1950 and other pro-peasant laws.

4. Socioeconomic Vulnerability

- Persistent gender-based wage disparities, with women earning far below the minimum wage despite their labor-intensive roles.
- Harsh conditions for women in bonded labor, trapped in cycles of debt, and subjected to physical and psychological abuse.
- Displacement and destruction caused by disasters, like the 2022 floods, compounding poverty and homelessness.
- Burden of household responsibilities doubling women's work.

5. Limited Access to Resources and

- Poor access to education, health services, clean drinking water, and sanitation facilities.
- Inadequate awareness and access to legal help.
- Exclusion from government aid programs and ineffective implementation of social safety nets.
- Women's representation in irrigation and land management remains minimal.

6. Health and Safety Issues

- Exposure to pesticides and other agricultural chemicals causing health problems.
- Long-term health risks due to imbalanced nutrition.
- Lack of adequate healthcare, resulting in high maternal mortality rates.

7. Lack of Land Ownership

- 98.7% of women in rural Sindh do not own land, and are denied property rights.

8. Dependency Concerns

- Non-contributory initiatives like the Sindh Benazir Income Support Programme exist, but there are concerns about creating dependency rather than empowerment.

9. Hardships Due to Floods

- Women, particularly those affected by the 2022 floods, face exploitation, lack of social protection, and living in miserable conditions.⁷⁵

10 Cultural and Structural Barriers

- Feudal land ownership systems exacerbate gender inequalities, limiting women's access to resources and benefits.
- Local customs and cultural norms perpetuate the undervaluation of women's contributions to agriculture.
- Limited inclusion of women in decision-making processes or leadership roles.

⁷⁵ The Express Tribune, 2024 May, Women peasants in rural Sindh face multiple challenges, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2466927/women-peasants-in-rural-sindh-face-multiple-challenges>

11. Education and Skill Deficits

- Lack of education perpetuates poverty and exploitation, limiting employment opportunities.
- Insufficient skill-building initiatives to empower women as leaders in agriculture.
- These challenges collectively highlight the systemic neglect and exploitation faced by women peasants, compounded by weak institutional support and socio-cultural barriers.⁷⁶⁻⁷⁷

PROVINCIAL ADVOCACY FORUM FOR EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AGRICULTURE WORKERS

A provincial advocacy forum was formed in Sindh and met a couple of times during the year 2024. In August, the forum highlighted efforts to review laws related to labor, including child domestic labor, the Bonded Labour Abolition Act 2015, and the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act 2019. It was shared that the draft rules for the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act have been sent for review, after technical consultation and stakeholder engagement. The legal framework surrounding bonded labor was discussed, referencing constitutional provisions and the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1992. The forum underscored the importance of collaborative efforts to empower women agricultural workers and recognize their contributions to the economy. Participants shared challenges, such as low wages, lack of social protection, and limited access to resources and training. Advocacy sessions, stakeholder alliance meetings, and awareness initiatives were

⁷⁶ European Times, 2024 September, Women in Pakistan's Agricultural Sector Suffer, <https://www.rtvonline.com/english/international/16634>

⁷⁷ Business Recorder, 2024 May, Women workers and peasants living in miserable conditions, <https://www.brecorder.com/news/amp/40305375>

noted as ongoing efforts to address these issues.⁷⁸

In another meeting of the Provincial Stakeholders Alliance (PSA), a labor official discussed the Rules of Business for the Sindh Women Agriculture Workers Act 2019, noting that the rules had been submitted to the ILO for review and would subsequently be sent to the Law Department for vetting. The act, a significant legislative step for South Asia, mandates protection for women workers in agriculture, focusing on their welfare, safety, and rights.⁷⁹

WOMEN PEASANTS' ISSUES: LACK OF COVERAGE

At a seminar organized by a local welfare association in the Matiari district, peasants voiced their concerns, emphasizing the lack of coverage under welfare initiatives and the failure of the government to enforce minimum wage standards. Despite announcements made by the GoS to support peasants, women peasants and workers' situation remained unaddressed. A female peasant noted that essential support, such as literacy and healthcare, remain inaccessible to them. She pointed out that although the minimum wage in the province is set at Rs 32,000 per month, they received less than a third of that amount for their full day's labor. The issue of debt bondage was also a major topic of discussion, with peasants expressing their inability to escape this cycle due to the immediate financial relief it provides. Another peasant woman emphasized the additional challenges faced by female peasants in negotiating fair wages, workplace facilities,

and protective gear with employers. She mentioned that the literacy course equips workers with the skills to address these issues effectively.⁸⁰

CAPACITY BUILDING OF WOMEN PEASANTS

The Sindh Community Foundation has opened ten literacy centers for women in agriculture to equip them with basic literacy, numeracy, and essential reading and writing skills. These are established in 10 villages in the Matiari district, with support from an international organization. In 2024, a total of 350 women cotton workers attended the courses provided at the center. In 2023, 359 women completed a six-month literacy course. The representative highlighted that the comprehensive literacy program is to equip women with vital skills and confidence, leading to long-term improvements in their lives.⁸¹

In 2024, the HWA set up 12 basic literacy centres across the Matiari, Sanghar and Benazirabad districts of Sindh, which provided over 600 women peasants and rural workers with basic literacy skills, numeracy, and essential life skills.⁸² The HWA has also formed 12 trade unions of women peasants in Matiari, Sanghar and Benazirabad districts of Sindh and helped them to get registered with the labour department under the SIRA 2013. The unions' members were trained and educated on how to run the affairs of the unions and also how to engage in advocacy in light of their fundamental rights enshrined

⁷⁸ EPak Observer, 2024 August, Provincial Forum seeks empowerment of women, <https://pakobserver.net/provincial-forum-seeks-empowerment-of-women-agricultural-workers-in-sindh/>

⁷⁹ Urdu Point, 2024 March, Implementation of Sindh Agriculture Workers Act-2019 Demanded, <https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/implementation-of-sindh-agriculture-workers-1810154.html>

⁸⁰ The Express Tribune, 2024 April, Plight of female peasants remains unreported, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2461670/plight-of-female-peasants-remains-unreported>

⁸¹ Business Recorder, 2024 March, SCF sets up 10 Literacy Centres for women agriculture workers, <https://www.brecorder.com/news/40294104/scf-sets-up-10-literacy-centres-for-women-agriculture-workers>

⁸² The Express Tribune, 2024 April, Plight of female peasants remains unreported, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2461670/plight-of-female-peasants-remains-unreported>

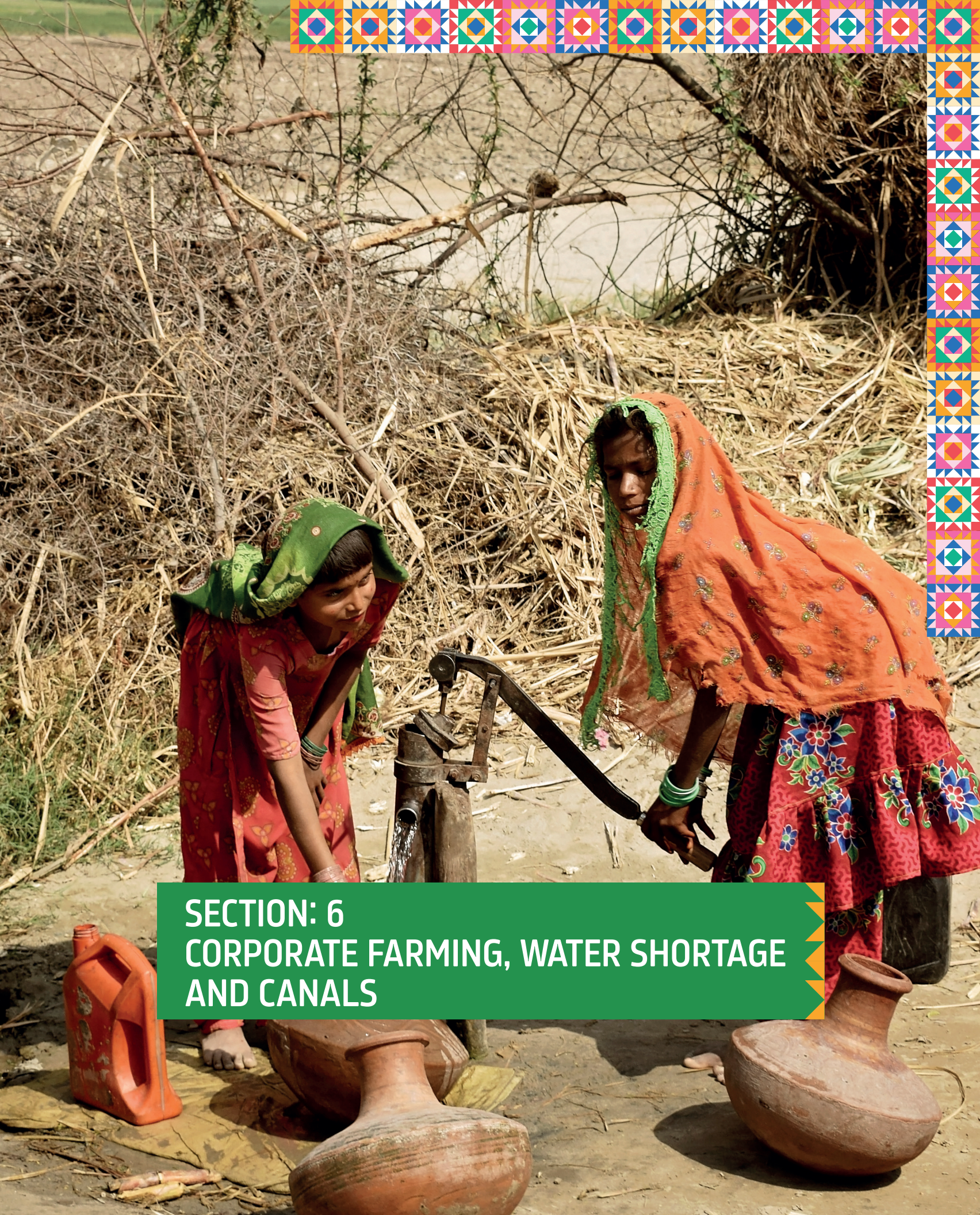
in the Constitution of Pakistan, ILO conventions, and UN treaties.

POLICE OFFICERS' TRAINING ON WOMEN-SPECIFIC LAWS

In a joint training program organized by the Sindh Human Rights Commission (SHRC) and the Sindh Police Training Wing Larkana at Larkana, the police officials were educated about human rights laws with a special emphasis on women, children, and human trafficking. The training covered various legislations, including the Sindh Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 2015, and its Rules 2020, as well as the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, 2018, and its Rules 2020. Section 374 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC), which deals with bonded labor, was also discussed, underlining the commitment to addressing this serious issue.

The SHRC stressed the significant role of inspectors and their responsibility in upholding justice, particularly in implementing crucial legislative amendments. He discussed the Sindh Protection of Human Rights Act of 2011, and its impact on safeguarding human rights, as well as the Juvenile Justice System Act of 2018, which calls for a specialized and sensitive approach to cases involving minors. Other laws, such as the Sindh Child Marriage Restraint Act, 2013, and its Rules 2016, the Sindh Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2013, and the Protection against Harassment of Women at the Workplace Act, 2010, including its Amendment in 2022, were discussed. The Deputy Inspector General Police emphasized the positive role the police can play in upholding the human rights of women and children.

⁸³ Dawn, 2024 March, Police urged to cultivate an understanding of women-specific laws, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1819444>



SECTION: 6 CORPORATE FARMING, WATER SHORTAGE AND CANALS

SECTION 6: CORPORATE FARMING, WATER SHORTAGE AND CANALS

MOTIVATION FOR CORPORATE FARMING

Some individuals advocate for land reforms within the context of corporate and cooperative farming, citing examples from countries that have implemented such reforms to harness the potential of these farming models, supported by modern technologies that have driven agricultural revolutions. These transformations led to unprecedented increases in crop yields and the emergence of a thriving middle class, thereby expanding rural prosperity. In Pakistan, the modest land reforms under President Ayub Khan and the first phase of reforms introduced by the then Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto largely failed to disrupt the power of the landed elite, allowing them to retain substantial landholdings.

The first Corporate Agricultural Farming Policy was devised under General Pervez Musharraf's rule in June 2003. Now the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) founded in June 2023,⁸⁴ 'designed, spearheaded, and launched by the country's military leadership',⁸⁵ is 'to facilitate corporate farming'.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan, Circular No. 29 - Reference No. CLD/RD-660(1)2003 Corporate Agriculture Farming (CAF) Policy <https://www.secp.gov.pk/document/corporate-agriculture-farming-caf-policy/?wpdmdl=13333&refresh=67dbc04cd27c61742454860>

⁸⁵ Profit, September 24, 2023, What's all the fuss about corporate farming? <https://profit.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/09/24/whats-all-the-fuss-about-corporate-farming/>

⁸⁶ Dawn, 29 January 2024, Impetus for corporate farming, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1809409>



Proponents of corporate farming argue that Pakistan has the potential to cultivate up to 22 million acres through corporate farming. Critics suggest that land acquired by the state and allotted to small farmers, many of whom lacked the funds or financing to fully utilize the land, was often purchased by large landowners.

Supporters of corporate farming claim that the sector suffers from low productivity due to the lack of large-scale, corporate farming operations. Over the last decade, the sector's growth has been stagnant, averaging just 1.7%. Experts believe Pakistan could potentially double its agricultural output, which would not only enhance food security but also boost agricultural exports. Currently, Pakistan imports over \$10 billion worth of agricultural products annually.

Bashir Jan Mohammed, an entrepreneur with over five decades of experience in the edible oil industry, notes that domestic oil production (around 0.5 million tonnes) is far too small to meet the demands of a population of 250 million, which requires around 4.5 million tonnes. This necessitates the importation of edible oils and oilseeds, placing significant pressure on the country's foreign exchange reserves.

Experts say the agricultural sector needs to grow consistently at a rate of 4-5% annually to meet the needs of an expanding population and achieve the desired GDP growth of 7-8%. The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) estimates that agriculture contributes around 45% to the national economy. Despite the challenges, food exports grew by nearly 50% in the first half of FY24, rising to \$3.48 billion from \$2.32 billion the previous year, largely due to factors such as the depreciation of the rupee and disruptions in the global supply chain.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Dawn, 29 January 2024, Impetus for corporate farming, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1809409>

Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industry (HCSTSI) while appreciating the federal government's initiative in crafting a corporate farming policy, pointed to the fact that land ownership is already highly skewed in Pakistan. Hence, without robust data collection, the policy may inadvertently favour large landowners, thereby neglecting smaller cultivators and perpetuating disparities.⁸⁸ A member of the Chamber of Agriculture noted that corporate farming is suitable for state lands that are spread over thousands of acres. Cooperative farming suits the private sector, as there are lands in pockets from five to 16 acres.⁸⁹

The current caretaker government has renewed its focus on promoting corporate farming, a sector that has remained marginal to date. In FY23, only 732 of the 27,746 companies registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan were involved in corporate agriculture. To encourage this sector, the government is considering the introduction of the Agriculture Development Authority Act, which has been welcomed by business leaders, including FPCCI President Atif Ikram. This could allow Pakistan to bring up to 22 million acres under cultivation.⁹⁰

Critics argue that corporate farming laws are skewed in favor of large investors, leaving small farmers at a disadvantage. The legislation primarily benefits large investors and could push smaller farmers out of business, unable to compete with corporate entities. There are also concerns about the potential sale of large tracts of land to both domestic and foreign corporations and the impact of corporate farming on water resources, soil quality, and pollution.

⁸⁸ Tribune, March 19, 2024, Experts push for corporate farming, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2459777/experts-push-for-corporate-farming>

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Dawn, 29 January 2024, Impetus for corporate farming, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1809409>

Some believe the solution lies in fostering cooperative farming for smallholders, an approach that has not succeeded under Pakistan's economic model. Farmers with small landholdings could retain their legal title while sharing profits within cooperatives, potentially achieving economies of scale to compete with large corporations. In line with this, the GoS has entered into a joint venture agreement with an army-backed company to cultivate over 52,000 acres of barren land across six districts for 20 years. This initiative, part of the Special Investment Initiative Facilitation Council (SIFC), aims to develop water resources through alternative methods beyond traditional irrigation channels. The company will share 40% of its profits with the GoS and invest 40% in local infrastructure, irrigation, solar-powered water supply, schools, and hospitals. The remaining 20% will be allocated to research and development in the local area. This agreement follows a successful pilot project in Punjab, and the SIFC scheme is set to expand across all provinces.⁹¹ However, it said that the Special Investment Facilitation Council had been illegally constituted to usurp Sindh's resources. It should hence be disbanded, and all lands handed over to SIFC should be returned to Sindh.⁹²

SINDH-WIDE PROTEST AGAINST CORPORATE FARMING

The Jeay Sindh Rahbar Committee held protests across Sindh on March 11, 2024, against the government's move to sell the province's fertile land for corporate farming under its green initiative. It pointed out that Sindh's lands should have been distributed among landless peasants.⁹³

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Dawn, 2024 May 23, Dacoits are products of feudalism, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1835051/dacoits-are-products-of-feudalism-hari-leaders>

⁹³ Dawn, 2024 March, Sindh-wide protest planned for tomorrow against corporate farming, <https://www.dawn.com/news/amp/1820135>

Also, the leaders of the Sindh Hari Tehreek (SHT), a movement advocating for the rights and welfare of farmers, peasants, and laborers in the province, strongly condemned the transfer of approximately 1.3 million acres of Sindh's land to foreign investors under the guise of corporate farming. They have called for the cancellation of major projects such as Bahria Town, Zulfikarabad, and DHA City.

The SHT demanded an end to the auctioning of Sindh's land in the name of corporate agricultural farming. One of their resolutions emphasized that instead of selling the land to local and foreign investors, it should be allocated to landless peasants. The group also accused the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) of being established to exploit the lands and resources of various ethnic groups in Pakistan, particularly the Sindhi people. They argued that by transferring 1.3 million acres of Sindh's land to the SIFC for corporate farming, an initial attempt is being made to seize the region's historic lands from the Sindhi nation.⁹⁴

MARCH AGAINST CORPORATE FARMING

On 7th January 2024, a 10-kilometer protest march was organized in Thatta district to express opposition to the auction of over a million acres of agricultural land in Sindh. The protestors expressed their belief that an agricultural revolution is only possible through the distribution of land among landless peasants. Participants deplored that the precious land of Sindh would be allocated for corporate farming under the guise of an agricultural revolution. They argued that true reform could only occur by giving land to the people. They demanded the removal of encroachments from Keenjhar and Haleji lakes, Kohistan and Bhanbhor, and the

⁹⁴ Dawn, March 10, 2024, Farmers' body hits out at govt policy for corporate farming, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1820437/farmers-body-hits-out-at-govt-policy-for-corporate-farming>

coastal regions. Slogans such as “stop land grabbing,” “deny corporate farming,” “stop the auction of Keenjhar Lake,” and “stop the auction of Karoonjhar Hills” were raised.

The leaders criticized the government’s handling of the local population, claiming that local people were being forced off their lands in the Thatta district. The protestors blamed the political leadership for allowing land to be sold to international companies and for the forced acquisition of land for mega housing schemes. Concerns were raised that the K-IV project would divert water from Keenjhar Lake to housing schemes, depriving the local population of their water share. The protesters condemned the destruction of Sindh’s natural lakes and tourist and cultural sites, warning that the people of the province would resist projects intended to grab their land.⁹⁵

WORSENING HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION

In its 38th annual general meeting, held in November 2024, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCPC) highlighted the worsening human rights situation and the climate crisis as an existential threat, particularly emphasizing the water scarcity issue in Sindh. The HRCPC criticized the canal constructions on the Indus River under the Green Pakistan Initiative, which have sparked protests from small farmers and peasants. The immediate concern is the severe water shortage in lower riparian Sindh, where the canal projects have faced strong opposition from local farmers and peasants.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ The Express Tribune, 2024 January, 10-km protest march held against corporate farming, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2452552/10-km-protest-march-held-against-corporate-farming>

⁹⁶ The Express Tribune, 2024 November, HRCPC warns of rights violations, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2510267/hrcpc-warns-of-rights-violations>

INDUS RIVER SYSTEM AUTHORITY (ISRA) ACT

The Sindh Hari Tehreek (SHT) strongly opposed the caretaker government’s amendment of the Indus River System Authority (Irsa) Act, arguing that it violates Articles 154 and 155 of the Constitution, and called for its repeal. In a conference held during the SHT Workers’ Convention in Shahpur Chakar town of Sanghar district, the SHT emphasized that Irsa should be an independent, autonomous body, and should not be controlled by the federal government. It was stated that any dams constructed on the Indus River, or canals branching off from it, pose a threat to the river’s survival and called for the immediate dismantling of these dams and canals. In a resolution, the SHT demanded that farmers receive fair prices for their crops and called for legal action against profiteers and dishonest traders. The group condemned the exploitation of farmers, referring to it as “economic murder” due to inadequate crop prices.

The need to address the “mafia” involved in the sale of fake fertilizers, seeds, and pesticides, urging enforcement of the relevant laws was highlighted. The conference underscored the importance of establishing Hari Tribunals, each led by a District and Session’s judge, in every district to handle farmers’ cases. Special courts should also be established to address agricultural issues. Participants advocated for the creation of villages on state-owned land under the Gothabad Scheme, with essential facilities such as roads, electricity, clean drinking water, and access to health and education services.

The SHT asked for measures to ensure the availability of irrigation water to lower riparian regions and the immediate dismantling of illegal watercourses established by influential landowners, ministers, and advisers. It further emphasized the need to strengthen the embankments of the river and the banks of canals. Other resolutions adopted at the conference included demands for a new, fair census in Sindh, the restoration of lasting peace in gang-affected upper Sindh districts, and a review of the concurrent list to return certain portfolios to the provinces, as was intended by the 18th Constitutional Amendment.⁹⁷

SIX CANALS PROJECT

In a conference titled 'Save Sindh's National Resources and Secular Identity' held in Hyderabad, the participants called for the withdrawal of proposed amendments to the Irsa Act and the cancellation of the six-canal project planned over the Indus River, and distribution of land to the landless peasants instead of being allocated for corporate farming. They demanded the implementation of the 1991 Water Accord, the cancellation of the new command area development project, and the release of 10 MAF of water downstream at Kotri. The participants advocated for a new agreement between Punjab and Sindh based on the 1945 accord and international principles.

The speakers pointed out that the amendments to the Irsa Act were being proposed through the misuse of presidential powers, which would violate the 1991 Water Accord by transferring provincial powers to the federation. Despite the canal project being under review by the Council of Common Interests (CCI), it had been approved by the Central Development Working Party (CDWP),

which the speakers equated to a new 'One Unit' for Sindh. A leader claimed that the plan was designed to irrigate Punjab's desert while leaving Sindh's agricultural lands barren under the control of powerful entities.

A development expert argued that Sindh had not received its fair share of water under the 1991 Water Accord and that the construction of new canals over the Indus would worsen the situation for the people of Sindh. The Green Pakistan Initiative involved completing six canals, with the Greater Thal Canal (GTC) being particularly problematic. Although the canal's construction was opposed by Sindh, it was approved by Irsa in 2002, despite objections. The expert further explained that Punjab now planned to expand the GTC and develop command areas of the Thal Canal and Chaubara Branch Canal, which would divert Indus water to irrigate land in the Cholistan area, threatening the water supply for Sindh. An analyst suggested that a constitutional and legal battle was necessary to protect Sindh's water rights, noting that work on four out of six planned canals had already been completed during the previous regime.⁹⁸

MULTI-PARTY WATER CONFERENCE

On 2nd November 2024, the Jeay Sindh Rehbar Committee discredited the water conference being organized by a religious political party (JUI-F) in Sindh, accusing it of being aligned with the ruling parties at both the federal and provincial levels. In a statement, a representative of the committee criticized the provincial government for depleting Sindh's budget and natural resources while also allowing the federal government to do the same. The committee reiterated claims that the federal government was taking control of lands in Sindh under the guise of corporate

⁹⁷ Dawn, 2024, March 10, Farmers' body hits out at govt policy for corporate farming, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1820437/farmers-body-hits-out-at-govt-policy-for-corporate-farming>

⁹⁸ Dawn, 2024 November, Conference demands plan to amend Irsa Act be dropped, six-canal project shelved <https://www.dawn.com/news/1871485/conference-demands-plan-to-amend-irsa-act-be-dropped-six-canal-project-shelved>

corporate farming, which would deprive local peasants and farmers of their rightful ownership of agricultural land. It was also pointed out that key tourism spots in Sindh, including lakes, mountains, and deserts, are under federal control. The committee further accused the provincial government and another national political party of undermining judicial independence through a constitutional amendment.⁹⁹

On 19 November, the JUI-F organized the multi-party conference in Karachi on the issue of six canal project. In the conference, both the ruling party PPP, and opposition parties in Sindh rejected the proposal to dig additional six canals from the Indus River and warned that any such move from the Centre would meet strong resistance from the people of the province. A joint declaration demanded to halt amendments to the Indus River System Authority Act as well as the construction of new canals on the Indus River, rejecting the proposed projects Thar Canal, Raineer Canal, Cholistan Canal, Greater Thar Canal, Kachhi Canal, and Chashma Right Bank Canal.¹⁰⁰

WATER SHORTAGE IN SINDH

Like previous years, the year 2024 witnessed a rift between the provinces of Sindh and Punjab over the shortage of water allocation for both kharif and rabi seasons' crops. Though the waters of the Indus River system are distributed under the 1991 Indus Water Apportionment Accord, an agreement between the provinces of Pakistan on sharing the waters of the Indus River system, the conflicts persist. According to research, the Accord does not provide a strong framework within which to operate on many thematic issues—e.g., objectives, environmental flows, urban water, water quality, and terminology.

⁹⁹ The Express Tribune, 2024 November, Nationalists rebuke JUI-F water moot <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2506841/nationalists-rebuke-jui-f-water-moot>

¹⁰⁰ Dawn, 24 November, 2024, Ruling parties, opposition in Sindh join hands to reject six canal project, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1874429>

Operating Rules can and often do remain outside of formal apportionment plans; however, for the Indus Basin, the Operating Rules lack clarity and appear to be at odds with the Accord. Also, the water balance of the Indus Basin lacks accuracy and a large volume of water is unaccounted for (accounted for as losses/gains).¹⁰¹

In February 2024, the Sindh province accused Punjab of denying its rightful share of water under the 1991 IRSA accord, while Punjab dismissed these allegations as unfounded. As a lower riparian province, Sindh voiced its grievances for failing to release sufficient water to protect the environment, flora, and fauna in the Indus Delta region south of Kotri.

In March 2024, Sindh urged the federal government to ensure a steady water supply for crop production. It was noted that while the Nara and Rohri canals were receiving 7,200 cusecs of water, other canals were facing up to 70% water shortages. Sindh, which relies heavily on water from the Tarbela Dam for the early Kharif season (April 1 to June 10), expressed concerns that any disruption in water supply would significantly affect cotton production for the 2024–25 season. In April, the Indus River System Authority (Irsa) on Thursday accepted Sindh's request for release of water to the province over and above its share.

In June, Sindh claimed that it faced a 29% water shortage in early Kharif, despite available storage. It argued that water transfers from the Indus zone to the Jhelum–Chenab (JC) zone and the operation of link canals by Punjab worsened

¹⁰¹ Arif, A. Anwar, et al., Pakistan's Water Apportionment Accord of 1991: 25 Years and Beyond, *Journal of Water Resources Planning and Management*, Issue 144, Vol.1, 2017, <https://ascelibrary.org/doi/10.1061/%28ASCE%29WR.1943-5452.0000831>

¹⁰² Pakistan Today, 2024 March, Sindh urges Centre to ensure water supply for crop production, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2024/03/28/sindh-urges-centre-to-ensure-water-supply-for-crop-production/>

¹⁰³ Dawn, April 5, 2024, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1825754/sindh-starts-getting-more-water-than-its-share>

the situation. Sindh maintained that it used less than its allocated share, while Punjab accused it of underreporting water usage. On the other hand, Sindh objected to Punjab's decision to operate link canals, which it believed diverts water away from Sindh's share. Sindh argued that these practices resulted in a significant water shortage, especially as Punjab continued to transfer water despite ample availability in its regions.

Sindh insisted that discharging water downstream from Kotri is necessary to meet drinking water needs, particularly for the city of Hyderabad. Water quality issues, such as contamination from Manchhar Lake, have negatively impacted water supplies in the region. Punjab's claims about the storage levels in Mangla Dam were disputed by Sindh which raised concerns about discrepancies in water discharge reports. Sindh asserted that Punjab has often misreported or underreported the actual discharge, leading to imbalances in the distribution of water.¹⁰⁴ In October, the Irsa Advisory Committee approved an anticipated water shortage of 16% for Punjab and Sindh during the Rabi season 2024-25, as the possible availability at the canal heads was less than anticipated.¹⁰⁵

CHOLISTAN CANAL PROJECT

In February 2024, the National Economic Council conditionally approved the Development of National Irrigation Network plan under the Green Pakistan Initiative. Pursuing the proposed large-scale corporate agriculture, the plan seeks to construct six strategic canals on a fast-track basis. These include the Chubara Canal as the second phase of the Greater Thal Canal, the Kachhi Canal, the Raineer Canal, the Thar Canal, the Chashma Right Bank Canal and the Cholistan Flood Feeder Canal. Sindh, the lowest riparian, had raised objections against the Cholistan Flood

Feeder Canal for which availability was certified by the Indus River System Authority (Irsa) in January 2024.¹⁰⁶

the Sindh Abadgar Board, an organization of agriculturalists of Sindh, while rejecting the plan, noted that the government had not conducted feasibility and environmental studies, neither secured approval from the provinces nor verified water availability. The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) had approved the first phase of the Cholistan Canal project, which aims to irrigate the Cholistan desert. Concerns were raised about the credibility of the water availability certificate issued by the Indus River System Authority. The certificate, valid from April to September, assumed the availability of surplus water during the flood season. However, the group pointed out that the authority did not take into account the recurring water scarcity issue in Sindh between March and May each year. Furthermore, it was noted that surplus water typically becomes available starting in July, not in April, due to the flood season.

The impact of rising temperatures and droughts on the Indus Delta and lower riparian areas and the depletion of aquifers were pointed out. The group also expressed concern about the canal's reliance on floodwater and the potential impact on water allocations for other canals. There was uncertainty about how the Rasul barrage in Punjab would be able to feed both the Jalalpur and Cholistan canals, given that both canals depend on the same water sources.

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¹⁰⁴ Dawn, 2024 June, Sindh sticks to its guns on water shortage, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1837651>

¹⁰⁶ Dawn, October 24, 2024, Divisive canals, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1867286>

uncertainty about how the Rasul barrage in Punjab would be able to feed both the Jalalpur and Cholistan canals, given that both canals depend on the same water sources.¹⁰⁷

The Sindh Taraqqi-pasand Party (STP) which organized a protest at Hatri Pass, raised its concerns that the construction of six canals on the Indus River would push millions toward a precarious future. Insufficient release of water downstream of Kotri Barrage has already led to sea intrusion, destroying the delta. The agricultural sector in Sindh, already struggling due to a lack of water, would face further collapse if the canal project proceeds. Resistance to similar projects in the past was highlighted as evidence of Sindh's resolve to protect its resources. The STP vowed to continue agitation until the canal project is shelved.¹⁰⁸

HYDRO-AGRO INFORMATICS PROGRAM

In May 2024, the GoS announced the Hydro-Agro Informatics (HAI) program, an initiative under the Sindh Water and Agriculture Transformation (SWAT) project funded by the World Bank (WB). Aiming to streamline water management and agricultural practices in Sindh, being developed in collaboration with stakeholders, including the Sindh Irrigation Department, Sindh Irrigation and Drainage Authority (SIDA), and the Agriculture Delivery Unit of the Sindh Agriculture Department, the HAI is to integrate comprehensive data on irrigation channels, agriculture, and weather, accessed through advanced technologies. The HAI is to be prepared in two phases—seven months for design and another one-and-a-half year for implementation.

¹⁰⁷ The Express Tribune, 2024 November, Sindh Abadgar Board opposes canals,

¹⁰⁸ Dawn. 2024, November 10, Six-canal project to push towards the edge of precipice, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1871299>

SIDA's GIS specialists have already begun digitising data on water channels, drainage systems, embankments, tube wells, groundwater, small dams, and water flows. This comprehensive digital database is to inform departments, farmers, and local communities about water flow, weather, crop conditions, and productivity, replacing outdated conventional systems.¹⁰⁹ In September, the US-Pakistan Center for Advanced Studies in Water (USPCAS-W) signed an agreement to design Phase-1 of the Hydro-Agro Informatics (HAI) Program in Sindh.¹¹⁰

WHEAT PRICING AND PROCUREMENT

In Sindh, wheat pricing and procurement by the government, managed through 353 Wheat Procurement Centers across Sindh, is fraught with complexities of fraud and embezzlement. Hence, every year the small growers face hardship and suffer losses. In March 2024, it was alleged that the Sindh Food Department orchestrated the theft of 379,062 sacks of wheat from various warehouses in the province over the past years, valued at Rs3 billion. Using the pretext of the 2022 rains, these officials resorted to deceitful tactics, including the falsification of records to cover up their illicit activities.¹¹¹

In April, underscoring the systemic mismanagement leading to wheat shortages and fluctuating flour prices, the Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industry (HCSTSI) asked for digitising the inventory of wheat across all warehouses in Sindh, stressing the need to ensure availability of accurate and comprehensive data on all wheat transactions

¹⁰⁹ The Express Tribune, 2024 May, Sindh launches hydro-agro programme, https://tribune.com.pk/story/2465088/sindh-launches-hydro-agro-programme#google_vignette

¹¹⁰ USPCAS Mehran University News, September 16, 2024, USPCAS-W Signs Agreement for Phase-1 of Hydro-Agro Informatics Program <https://water.muet.edu.pk/uspcas-w-signs-agreement-for-phase-1-of-hydro-agro-informatics-program/>

¹¹¹ The Express Tribune, March 31, 2024, Massive corruption scam, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2461173/massive-corruption-scam-unveiled-in-sindh-food-dept>

conducted by both the government and private sectors.¹¹²

Several constitutional petitions have been filed alleging misuse of discretionary powers while distributing gunny bags, bardana, to the growers through political interference and influence, or to fictitious persons by manipulating records. A public interest litigation filed in April at the High Court Sukkar revealed the official respondents were in connivance with each other and demanding illegal gratification. The wheat growers were forced to sell their crop for as low as Rs. 3280 per kg in the open market other than the Government rate of Rs. 4000 per 40 kg, hence the genuine wheat growers were deprived of millions of rupees.²

The Sindh Agriculture Research Council (SARC) an advocate for small growers rejected the Rs4,000 per 40 kg support price, demanding instead a price of Rs6,000 per 40 kg. It was argued that the government needs to align the support price with rising inflation, as growers already spent more on crops due to the increasing costs of seeds and fertilizers. The Council called for greater focus on research and development (R&D) in the agriculture sector to boost crop yields and address future food security concerns. Instead of allowing third-party intermediaries to distribute gunny bags for wheat procurement, the government should provide them directly to small growers to ensure that farmers benefit from the policy. The middlemen were purchasing wheat from growers at prices ranging from Rs2,800 to Rs3,500 per maund, thus there is a need to eliminate their role.¹¹⁴

¹¹² The Express Tribune, April 9, 2024, Transparency in wheat procurement, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2462133/transparency-in-wheat-procurement-sought>

¹¹³ High Court, Sindh Bench, Sukkar, Constitution Petition No. D- 414 of 2024, <https://caselaw.shc.gov.pk/caselaw/view-file/MjEzNDAXY2Ztcy1kYzgz>

¹¹⁴ The Express Tribune, 2024 March, Farmers ask Sindh to begin wheat buying <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2459393/farmers-ask-sindh-to-begin-wheat-buying>

A portrait of a young woman with a blue headscarf and a colorful geometric border at the top and right. The woman is smiling and looking directly at the camera. She has a nose ring and is wearing a necklace. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

SECTION: 7 TRIBAL CONFLICTS' IMPACT ON PEASANTS



SECTION: 7

TRIBAL CONFLICTS' IMPACT ON PEASANTS

The Sindh province has several tribes predominantly in the northern regions, leading to a myriad of disputes that have adverse consequences for the local populace, particularly peasants. According to a study, the influence of criminal gangs, backed by influential figures such as landlords, tribal chiefs, politicians, and religious leaders, further complicates the dynamics of tribal violence. Tribal conflicts pose a significant impediment to development in Sindh.¹⁰⁵ According to analysts, the perceived inability to achieve societal goals through legitimate means can lead to criminal behavior. The breakdown of state institutions-- that are meant to maintain the rule of law--gives strength to tribal leaders. The lack of meaningful education and employment opportunities also makes people cling to tribal sardars.¹⁰⁶

DATA FROM THE FIELD

The HWA gathered 3-month data on tribal conflicts between armed groups in Sindh from 1 October to 31 December 2024. During these three months, 88 individuals were murdered, and hundreds were injured in around 60 cases of conflicts reported in the local Sindh media.

¹⁰⁵ ZH.Z. Sabir et al, A comprehensive study of upper-Sindh tribal conflicts, Journal of Development & Social Sciences, Oct-Dec 2023, Vol.4, No.4, <https://ojs.jdss.org.pk>

¹⁰⁶ Dawn, August 18, 2023, Understanding tribal conflict, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1770782>

TABLE: IN SINDH, TOTAL MURDERS IN TRIBAL CONFLICTS REPORTED FROM 1 OCT TO 31 DEC 2024

Districts	Total Murders
NF	3
Sukkur	7
Matiari	1
Sanghar	2
Dadu	4
Jamshoro	3
Kashmore	7
Ghotki	12
Shikarpur	31
Mirpurkhas	1
Larkana	8
Khairpur	6
Jacobabad	1
SBA	2
Total	88

The above table shows that Shikarpur district stands out with the highest number of reported murders, at 31, which constitutes a significant portion of the total. Following this, Ghotki and Kashmore each reported 12 and 7 murders, respectively. Other districts such as Sukkur, Larkana, and Khairpur had a moderate number of murders, ranging from 6 to 8. Naushero Feroze (NF), Jamshoro, and Dadu had comparatively fewer reports, with 3 to 4 murders in each.

Several districts had only 1 or 2 reported murders, including Matiari, Mirpurkhas, Jacobabad, and Shaheed Benazirabad, indicating lower levels of violence in these areas during the specified period. Overall, the table highlights that Shikarpur, Ghotki, and Kashmore are the most affected districts in terms of tribal conflict-related murders in Sindh during the last quarter

of 2024, while other regions experienced lower levels of violence.

VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN DISTRICTS

SUKKUR

- 8 October: A youth, Tariq, was killed in a shooting near Rohri, following a dispute between two factions of the Jagirani community over stolen livestock. His mother and father were injured in the incident.
- 21 October: A young man was killed near Panoo Akil due to an old land dispute between two factions of the Chachar community. Three others were injured in the incident.
- 25 October: A young man was shot dead by assailants from the Arain community near the New Pandh police station due to an old dispute.
- 26 October: A fight erupted between the Mehr and Jatoi communities near Panoo Akil, injuring three persons from rocket fire.
- 7 November: A young man from Panoo Akil was killed in Karachi following an old dispute.
- 25 November: A youth named Abdul Karim was shot dead near Rohri due to an old dispute between two factions of the Jakrani community.
- 27 November: A shooting between the Jakrani factions near Sukkur resulted in the death of one individual and the injury to another.
- 17 December: A shooting near New Pandh left one dead and several others injured in a conflict between the Jat and Chachar communities.
- 18 December: A young man named Sameer was shot dead near Ghotki, as a result of a family feud.

- 19 December: A young man was killed near the Sukkur Bypass as part of a dispute between two factions of the Jakrani and Jatoi communities. The murder escalated tensions between the two groups.
- 24 December: A man from the Jatoi community was shot dead on Sukkur Road after a long-standing feud between two rival factions.

SHIKARPUR

- 7 November: A major dispute between two factions near Mian Sahib led to the killing of 10 people, including four from the Rato Kalr faction and six from the Din Mohammad Kalr faction.
- 30 December: A violent tribal conflict led to the death of an individual, further escalating the ongoing violence between the Khoso and Qadri communities.
- 28 October: Two people were killed and three injured near Sultan Kot due to a long-standing conflict between two factions over land.
- 28 October: A land dispute led to a shooting near Mian Sahib, killing two individuals and injuring three others.
- 28 November: A conflict near Laki resulted in the death of a youth.
- 26 October: A violent conflict erupted near Laki Ghulam Shah between two factions of the Jagirani community, injuring 10 people, including four women.
- 25 November: A conflict near Dakhin resulted in the injury of a local from a long-standing dispute.
- 25 December: A conflict between two families in Shikarpur resulted in the death of a young man. The families were involved in a property dispute that had been ongoing for several years.
- 23 October: A shooting over a land dispute near Chak left a youth, Miraj Qadri, dead.

- 23 October: A conflict between two factions near Rustam led to a shooting, leaving one person severely injured.
- 22 October: A land dispute led to a shooting in Laki Ghulam Shah between two factions of the Mehr community resulted in the death of a youth.
- 22 December: A land-related dispute between two groups near Shikarpur resulted in the shooting death of a 30-year-old youth. The incident left several others injured.
- 1 November: A conflict between two factions near Chak led to the death of a 30-year-old youth, Phelwan Kalr, and the injury of another.
- 18 November: A shooting between two factions near Digun led to the death of a local.
- 13 December: A shooting occurred near Rustam, killing a member of a local family.
- 11 November: A shooting near Bagharji due to an ongoing land dispute between two factions resulted in death of a person.

SHAHEED BENAZIRABAD

- 13 December: A former reporter, Khawaja, was killed in an attack, while his brother and brother-in-law were injured, due to a long-standing tribal dispute.

SANGHAR

- 10 October: Two youths were killed and one was injured near Sanghar in a shooting involving two factions of the Bugti and Umrani Tribes, triggered by a long-standing feud.

NAUSHERO FEROZE

- 7 October: A man was shot dead in the middle of the market on Laka Road due to an old conflict. The assailants killed 35-year-old Hussain Dahri near the railway crossing as part of an ongoing feud between two factions of the Dahri community.
- 28 October: A youth Aijaz Panhor was shot dead in a feud between two factions of the Panhor community.

MIRPURKHAS

- 31 October: A fight broke out between two factions near Dighri, leading to the death of a youth Gul Mohammad Abro.

MATYARI

- 9 October: A man named Musa Jakrani was shot dead at a hotel in Bhit Shah as part of an ongoing conflict between two factions of the Jakrani community.

LARKANA

- 30 November: A shooting near New Dero resulted in the death of a youth, while two others were injured in an ongoing conflict.
- 28 November: A 12-year-old long-standing conflict over 3,200 acres of land resulted in the death of 27 individuals.
- 26 December: A shooting near Larkana left two people dead after a land dispute between the two tribes, the Laghari and Jatoi communities.
- 20 November: A shooting occurred near Garhi Yasin, resulting in the death of a youth, Dhani Bakhsh Phor, due to a longstanding dispute.
- 12 November: A shooting occurred due to the Jia-Dahani conflict near New Dero, leading to the death of a youth, Asad Jiho, from the Jeho community.

- 11 November: A long-running dispute near New Dero resulted in the deaths of two individuals and the injury of several others.

KHAIRPUR

- 23 November: A shooting between two factions of the Jatoi community near Gambat led to the death of a youth.

KASHMORE

- 25 November: A shooting broke out in Kandhkot between the Mahmadani and Bungwar factions, killing a youth named Dhonar Panhul Mahmadani.
- 23 November: A shooting near Kandhkot between the Khoso and Gola factions resulted in the death of one youth and the injury of another.
21 December: A man was killed in a shooting near Kashmore during a tribal dispute between two factions of the Baloch and Shah communities.
- 19 November: A shooting erupted near Tangwani between the Malik-Choliani communities, resulting in the death of two individuals.
- 17 October: A conflict between the Mehr and Sabzoi communities near Kandhkot led to the murder of a private school teacher, Azhar Ali Mehr, who was shot while on his way to school.
- 15 December: A youth named Abdul Ghaffar was shot and killed due to a tribal dispute between the Domki and Bhutto communities.
- 2 November: A shooting in Kandhkot, related to the Mehr-Bungwar dispute, resulted in the death of a youth named Abdul Ghaffar Bungwar.

JAMSHORO

- 13 October: A youth named Aris Khoso was shot dead near Bhambhor, following an old feud between two factions of the Khoso community.

JACOBABAD

- 29 November: A youth named Shahzado was shot dead near Thul due to a long-standing tribal feud.
- 28-Dec-24: A tribal feud near Jacobabad between the Baloch and Rajper communities led to a violent altercation, resulting in the death of an individual.

GHOTKI

- 6 December: A shooting erupted near Panjoo Akil between the Mehr and Jatoi communities, resulting in the deaths of two brothers and one injured.
- 3 December: A shooting occurred near Pyaro Station due to an old feud, killing one youth.
- 23 November: A shooting occurred near Khanpur, resulting in the death of a youth, Dost Ali Jafri.
- 22 October: A violent conflict erupted near Obaro between two factions of the Kori community, resulting in the death of a young man, Abdullah Kori, due to gunfire.
- 20 December: In a violent conflict in Ghotki between the Sial and Solangi communities, one person was killed and several others sustained injuries during the altercation.
- 11December: A police constable was killed near Ghotki in a shooting linked to a long-standing conflict between local factions.

DADU

- 31 December: A shooting between the Jakrani and Memon communities resulted in the death of one youth. The tension had been escalating for months over a long-standing dispute.
- 29 November: In a shooting between two factions near Johi over an old land dispute, a youth, Abid Jamali, was killed.

- 23 December: In an escalating feud between two factions of the Khoso and Memon communities, a person was shot dead during a violent clash that also left two people injured.
- 18 November: A violent conflict between the Jilbani and Khoso communities near Meher led to the murder of a youth, Aabid Jamali, and the injury of one person.
- 16 October: A dispute between two factions escalated in Johi, resulting in the injury of a farmer. Citizens held a protest at Fazi Chowk, where there was an exchange of gunfire.
- 13 October: A fight broke out in the Mehar court due to an old dispute, leaving nine people injured. The conflict occurred between two factions of the Mehar community.
- 11 November: A fight between two factions near Mehar led to the brutal killing of a youth, with four brothers among the seven accused.

The HWA has persistently raised serious concerns about the tribal conflicts and their significant impact on the agriculture sector, particularly on peasants (sharecroppers) and rural workers. Agriculture in these regions relies heavily on communal land use and labor, making it vulnerable to the disruptions caused by ongoing tribal feuds and violent clashes.

In districts like Sukkur, Shikarpur, and Dadu, where the data shows frequent violent incidents related to land disputes and factional rivalry, the livelihoods of rural workers and sharecroppers are at risk. Sharecroppers, who depend on the stability of land agreements and communal relationships, are particularly vulnerable to such disputes. For example, the repeated violence over land issues near areas like Laki Ghulam Shah, Mian Sahib, and Mehar affects agricultural productivity. These conflicts lead to the destruction of crops, disruption of land cultivation, and displacement of rural workers. Furthermore, the fear of violence also discourages laborers from working, or farmers from planting crops in the conflict zones.

The rise in fatalities, injuries and overall insecurity, particularly in regions such as Ghotki, Larkana, and Kashmore, further exacerbates the economic conditions for rural populations. The deaths of key community members, often stemming from long-standing feuds, create an environment of instability where workers may lose their livelihood, either through direct casualties or by being forced to leave the area for safety. Moreover, the lack of social cohesion due to these feuds can disrupt local support systems and labor relations, which are crucial in rural settings. In addition, in areas like Shikarpur and Kashmore, where families are caught in property disputes or tribal rivalries, the violence has destroyed infrastructure and resources necessary for agriculture. This involves the burning of crops, damage to farming equipment, and a lack of access to agricultural inputs, further impairing the economic stability of peasant workers.

TRIBAL CONFLICTS AND LONG-TERM INSTABILITY

Armed tribal conflicts do not only disrupt immediate agricultural production but also create long-term instability that could prevent the region from attracting investment in the agricultural sector. With such violence occurring sporadically across various districts, the resulting uncertainty has deterred both local and external actors from supporting the agricultural sector, hindering its growth and development. Hence, these ongoing tribal conflicts are deeply detrimental to the agricultural landscape in Sindh, adversely affecting peasants, sharecroppers, and rural workers who rely on peace and stability to sustain their livelihoods. The persistent violence undermines agricultural productivity, limits access to livelihood resources, and creates a climate of fear and precarity for rural communities.

These conflicts in Sindh also have a severe impact on the region's infrastructure, particularly in

areas crucial to the well-being of peasants and rural workers. Health services, schools, and transportation networks, which are essential for these communities, are often disrupted by the ongoing clashes. Hospitals and health centers in conflict zones are not immune to the effects of tribal disputes. Attacks on medical staff or damage to facilities have prevented access to essential healthcare for families and workers. In areas like Shikarpur, Dadu, and Ghotki, where violence is frequent, rural populations may find themselves without necessary medical care, leading to a deterioration of public health.

Schools are similarly affected by the instability created by tribal conflicts. Teachers and students face the risk of injury or death, as reported in incidents involving teachers being targeted due to tribal disputes and killed in broad daylight. For instance, in Dadu and Jacobabad, there have been reports of shootings and violent altercations near schools. As a result, education for children of rural families was disrupted or entirely halted, which is particularly damaging for young peasants and their families who rely on education to improve their social mobility. Teachers, especially those from vulnerable communities, also faced threats to their safety, further limiting the availability of education.

Additionally, roads and transportation networks that connect rural areas to markets, schools, and hospitals are often damaged or rendered unsafe due to these conflicts. This restricts the movement of agricultural produce, supplies, and even workers, further isolating rural communities. In some cases, people are forced to travel long distances or even abandon their homes, leading to displacement and an inability to earn their living through agriculture. The damage to infrastructure caused by tribal conflicts deepens the hardships faced by peasants and rural workers. It limits their access to vital services like healthcare, education, and transportation, and compounds the economic and social challenges they already endure.



SECTION:8 PEASANTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL LANDSCAPE



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UN'S WORKING GROUP ON PEASANTS: CALL FOR INPUT AND THE FIRST REPORT

The Working Group on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas was established by the UN in 2023 for three years. During its first year, the Working Group gave a call for input and asked the Member States, their human rights institutions, civil society and peasants' unions to provide input. The aim was to seek and receive information from all relevant sources on the progress made and difficulties encountered in the implementation of the Declaration at the national, regional and international levels.

Five independent experts were appointed as members of the Group in March 2024 who held their first session online in July. The Group gathered information on progress, challenges, and experiences related to the Declaration on the Rights of the Peasants at national, regional, and international levels. The Group presented its first report in the Human Rights Council's fifty-seventh session held in Sept-Oct 2024. The report provides a brief analysis of the situation of peasants and other people working in rural areas and a conceptual framework to guide its interpretation of the Declaration and facilitate its implementation at the national, regional and international levels.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ OHCHR, Implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/calls-for-input/2024/implementation-united-nations-declaration-rights-peasants-and-other-people>

In response, the Working Group received input from 10 Member States, 11 national human rights institutions and 54 plus civil society organizations around the globe. There was no input from Pakistan. The responses received would be discussed by the Working Group at its second session, from 21 to 25 October 2025.¹¹⁸

THE STATEMENT BY THE UN WORKING GROUP ON PEASANTS

On 17 December 2024, the Working Group on Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas issued a statement marking the sixth anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP). The statement emphasized that peasants and rural workers are essential for achieving social and climate justice, and their voices must be heard in both national and international negotiations.

Six years after the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration, there is increasing recognition among governments of the vital role played by 1.2 billion peasants and rural workers worldwide in combating climate change, conserving biodiversity, and eradicating hunger. The UNDROP puts values on local traditional knowledge, culture, and diverse livelihoods, including indigenous varieties, highlighting the interconnection between culture, nature, and society.

The UN Working Group on the Rights of Peasants acknowledged the progress made in implementing the Declaration at the national level through legislative and judicial processes. With its innovative interpretations of human rights, UNDROP should also serve as an essential tool for regional human rights courts and mechanisms. However, the Group remained concerned that peasants and rural workers

continue to face discrimination and significant human rights violations, suffering disproportionately from hunger, poverty, displacement, and conflict. Despite providing up to 80% of local food consumption in developing countries, peasants and rural workers represent 80% of the world's hungry and 70% of those living in extreme poverty.

The rights holders covered by the UNDROP are on the frontlines of pressing global challenges, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. The UNDROP offers a range of solutions to protect and advance food sovereignty, biodiversity, seed rights, access to land, fair working conditions, and legal participation, with special attention to women, girls, youth, and older people.

Despite UNDROP's provisions for active and free participation in policies that affect their lives and livelihoods, peasants and rural workers remain insufficiently involved in decision-making on land use, biodiversity conservation, trade, economic agreements, and climate action. Their demands have been largely excluded from global forums, such as the United Nations Conference on Biodiversity (COP 16) and the United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP 29). This reflects a broader systemic issue of exclusion at both the global and national levels.

The Working Group stressed the need for greater inclusion of peasants and rural workers in policy-making processes and discussions on economic, social, environmental, and climate justice. Given the ongoing exclusion faced by these communities, the Working Group decided to focus its 2025 thematic report on the rights of peasants and rural people to free and active participation.

¹¹⁸ OHCHR, 2024 December, Peasants and people working in rural areas are key to ensuring social and climate justice and their voices must be heard at national and international negotiations, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/peasants/2024-WG-Peasants-UNDROP-anniversary-en.pdf>

¹¹⁸ Ibid.



SECTION: 9 RECOMMENDATIONS

SECTION: 9 RECOMMENDATIONS

- The GoS should ensure the full implementation of the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act (SWAWA) by establishing a clear enforcement mechanism for minimum wage, workplace safety, and penalties for non-compliance.
- The GoS should withdraw its appeal against the Sindh High Court's pro-peasant judgment, reinforcing the protection of peasants' rights.
- The GoS should establish dedicated labor officers in districts to ensure the proper functioning of the District Vigilance Committees (DVCs) and ensure the inclusion of bonded labor abolition provisions in FIRs.
- The GoS should provide government grants and incentives for women-led agricultural unions and ensure their integration into policy-making and legislative processes.
- The GoS should encourage public-private partnerships and international NGOs to continue supporting the registration and development of women's trade unions, particularly in rural and agricultural sectors
- The GoS should ensure greater representation of women in agricultural decision-making bodies at both provincial and national levels.
- The GoS should revise non-contributory programs like Bait-ul-Mal, Ehsaas, and BISP to reduce dependency and revamp the contributory schemes, such as SESSI, expanding its coverage, and empowering rural women through the provision of healthcare, skills training, resource access, and sustainable livelihood initiatives.



- The GoS should prioritize income-generating opportunities for landless sharecropping peasants, ensuring they are included in subsidy, loan, and insurance schemes like the Benazir Hari Cards (BHCs).
- The GoS should initiate vocational training programs aimed at equipping rural women and peasants with skills in agricultural technology, business management, and leadership.
- The GoS should promote financial literacy and entrepreneurship among women farmers to reduce reliance on external aid and enhance long-term economic stability.
- The GoS should advocate for policies that prioritize land redistribution among landless peasants instead of selling fertile land to corporate entities, in line with the demands raised by the Jeay Sindh Rahbar Committee.
- The GoS should ensure that agricultural land is used sustainably, prioritizing the needs of local farmers over corporate interests and ensuring access to land for marginalized communities.
- The GoS should strengthen policies around land reform that aim to equitably distribute land to landless peasants and promote agricultural productivity.
- The GoS should implement land reforms with an emphasis on equitable access to resources for marginalized peasants, especially women and landless sharecroppers.
- The GoS should develop an integrated water management plan to address water scarcity, focusing on equitable distribution to ensure that small-scale and marginalized farmers have sufficient access to water for agriculture.
- The federal government should review the proposed six strategic canals on the Indus River to assess their potential negative impacts on small-scale farmers, ensuring that such projects do not marginalize local agricultural communities.
- The GoS should strengthen security and law enforcement in tribal areas to prevent violence and protect marginalized peasants and rural workers.
- The GoS should promote peace-building initiatives and conflict resolution programs to mitigate tribal conflicts and reduce their disruptive impact on agriculture.
- The GoS should prioritize the safety of peasants and rural workers in conflict-prone regions, ensuring that they have access to security and legal protection from violence and exploitation.
- The GoS should implement stronger enforcement of the Sindh Bonded Labour Abolition Act, ensuring that perpetrators of bonded labor practices are held accountable.
- The GoS should increase awareness and sensitization campaigns about bonded labor in rural areas, encouraging victims to report violations and ensuring they have access to legal recourse.
- The GoS should support initiatives aimed at preventing human trafficking and bonded labor by improving identification and registration systems for vulnerable populations, particularly women and children.

- The GoS should establish rehabilitation programs for freed bonded laborers, focusing on providing education, healthcare, and skills training to reintegrate them into society and the workforce.
- There should be support from the GoS to strengthen platforms like the Provincial Advocacy Forum in Sindh to allow marginalized communities, particularly peasants and women, to voice their concerns and influence policy changes.
- The GoS should increase awareness of agricultural policies and labor laws, empowering rural communities to advocate for their rights effectively.
- The GoS should collaborate with international organizations like the ILO and local NGOs to ensure continued support for labor rights, women's empowerment, and sustainable agricultural practices in Sindh and other provinces.

ANNEXURE 1:
TABLE: CASES OF BONDED LABOURERS IN THE AGRICULTURE SECTOR REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN RELEASED THROUGH COURTS IN SINDH IN 2024

S #	Area/Town, district and reporting date	Details	Children	Man	Man	Total	Newspapers
1	Chotiyaryun, Sanghar, 8-Jan-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on the private jail at Gagh Mori of landlord Mushtaq Arain recovered 7 peasants from the captivity of a Local landlord	3	1	3	7	Panhji Akhbar
2	Jam Sahib Shaheed Benaziranad 25-Jan-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on the private jail at Jam Sahib of landlord Imam Bux Raisaani and recovered 40 peasants from the captivity of a Local landlord	11	15	14	40	Panhji Akhbar
3	Kunari Umarkot 26-Jan-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on the private jail Samaro of landlord Jusaf Jat recovered 21 peasants from the captivity of a Local landlord	7	6	8	21	Mehran TV
4	Jhudo Badin 15-Feb-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail Jhudo of landlord Sehmla Punjabi recovered 16 peasants from the captivity of a Local landlord	5	4	7	16	Times News
5	Kunari Umarkot 21-Feb-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at Village Muhammad Ramzan Rind of landlord Abbas Ali recovered 32 peasants from the captivity of a local landlord	21	5	6	32	Kawish
6	Jhudo Badin 22-Feb-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at Gagh Mori of landlord Mushtaq Arain recovered 7 peasants from the captivity of a local landlord	2	2	3	7	Awami Awaz
7	Talhi Umarkot 23-Feb-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on a private jail in Village Chakhaar near Takhi of landlord Abdul Kareem Khoso and recovered 14 peasants from the captivity	4	4	6	14	Panhji Akhbar
8	Jhudo Badin 27-Feb-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail in Jhudo of landlord Sajid Korai recovered 11 peasants from the captivity	3	4	4	11	Awazmi Awaz
9	Samaro Umarkot 29-Feb-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail in Samaro of landlord Saifullah Talpur and recovered 30 peasants from the captivity	11	10	9	30	Awaz News
10	Kunari Umarkot 15-Mar-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on a private jail at Mehmood Abad of landlord Maqsood Ahmed and recovered 10 peasants from the captivity	5	3	2	10	Kawish

11	Kunari Umarkot 15-Mar-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail near Kunari of landlord Haroon Samejo recovered 16 peasants from the captivity	5	7	4	16	Dharti News
12	Mirpur Buriro Jacobabad 3-Apr-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail in Mirpur Buriro of landlord and recovered 3 peasants from the captivity	0	0	3	3	Awami Awaz
13	Hyderabad Hyderabad 17-Apr-2024	Session Judge conducted a raid on the police Station at Hyderabad under the control of a landlord and recovered 6 peasants from the captivity	0	0	6	6	Awazmi Awaz
14	Nao Kot Tharparkar 11-May-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at Nanghar of landlord Khan Muhammad Qaimkhani and recovered 22 peasants from the captivity	11	4	7	22	Kawish
15	Khipro Sanghar 24-May-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at Khipro of landlord Arif Dars recovered 3 peasants from the captivity of a Local landlord	0	0	3	3	Panhji Akhbar
16	kunari Umarkot 28-May-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at Village Palio Khan of landlord Hamzo Rind and recovered 33 peasants from the captivity	16	9	8	33	Panhji Akhbar
17	Nabi Sar Umarkot 29-May-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at Nabisar of a landlord and recovered 8 peasants from the captivity	2	3	3	8	Kawish
18	Jhol Sanghar 12-Jun-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at Jhol of landlord Fazal Karim Jatt and recovered 18 peasants from the captivity	10	3	5	18	Kawish
19	MirpurKhas MirpurKhas 15-Jun-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at Mirpur Khas of landlord Soomar Mangrio and recovered 13 peasants from the captivity	6	3	4	13	Facebook/ Social Media
20	Hyderabad Hyderabad 26-Jun-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at Shai-khupora Punjab of a landlord and recovered 22 Sindh's peasants from the captivity	11	6	5	22	Kawish
21	Sanghar Sanghar 28-Jun-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at Sanghar of landlord Hashim Pathan and recovered 11 peasants from the captivity	4	3	4	11	Kawish
22	Kunari Sanghar 28-Jun-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at Kunari of landlord Tarique Dars and recovered 14 peasants from the captivity	3	4	7	14	Kawish
23	Nabi Sar Umarkot 28-Jun-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at Nabi Sar of landlord Qadir Bux Chandio and recovered 7 peasants from the captivity	2	2	3	7	Panhji Akhbar
24	Bodar Farm Badin 2-Jul-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at Bodar Farm of landlord Abdul Majeed Qaimkhani and recovered 36 peasants from the captivity	8	12	16	36	Panhji Akhbar

25	Khair Pur Khairpur 10-Jul-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on a private jail at Khairpur and recovered 5 peasant-children from the captivity of a landlord	8	0	0	16	Panhji Akhbar
26	Kunari Umarkot 19-Jul-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail near Kunri and recovered 8 peasants including 3 children and 3 women from the captivity of a landlord Maaz Memon	2	3	3	8	SS NEW Channal
27	Sindhri MirpurKhas 22-Jul-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at Sindhri Village Kamran Nizamani of a landlord and recovered 8 peasants from the captivity	9	7	9	25	Kawish
28	Husri Hyderabad 25-Jul-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at Husari and recovered 14 peasants from the captivity	5	6	3	14	Awami Awaz
29	Shahdad Pur Sanghar 17-Aug-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at Shadad-pur of landlord Mukhatiar and recovered 36 peasants from the captivity	12	9	15	36	Panhji Akhbar
30	Khipro Sanghar 23-Aug-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at Khipro of landlord Sabir and recovered 15 peasants from the captivity	6	4	5	15	Panhji Akhbar
31	Khipro Sanghar 24-Aug-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at Khipro of landlord Ali Hasan Mari and recovered 6 peasants from the captivity	0	2	4	6	Panhji Akhbar
33	Kunari Umarkot 5-Sep-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at Kunari Bhan Shakh of a landlord and recovered 10 peasants from captivity	7	2	1	10	Panhji Akhbar
34	Kunari Umarkot 19-Sep-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on a private jail at Kunari and recovered 8 peasants from the captivity of a local landlord	3	3	2	8	Kawisht
35	Samaro Umarkot 25-Sep-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail of a landlord, near Samaro and recovered 8 peasants from the captivity of landlord Muhammad Paryal Bhurgri	3	3	3	9	Awami NEWS HD
36	Sanghar Sanghar 19-Oct-24	Mangli Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail of a local landlord Saeed Khan Pathan near Sanghar and recovered 8 peasants from his captivity	2	3	3	8	Panhji Akhbar
37	Sinjhero Sanghar 20-Oct-24	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail of local landlord near Sinjhero and recovered 27 peasants from the captivity	9	11	7	27	Panhji Akhbar
38	Khipro Sanghar 31-Oct-24	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail of local landlord Imam Bux Jhando Uris near Khipro and recovered 22 peasants from his captivity	9	6	7	22	Panhji Akhbar
39	Khipro Sanghar 11-Dec-24	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail of local landlord Amin Nuhrio at village Chansri near Khipro and recovered 16 peasants from his captivity	5	6	5	16	Panhji Akhbar
40	Khipro Sanghar 31-Dec-24	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail of local landlords Ali Bux Mari and Mureed Mari near Khipro and recovered 11 peasants from the captivity	4	3	4	11	Panhji Akhbar



ANNEXURE 2:

TABLE 2: CASES OF BONDED LABOURERS IN THE BRICK KILN SECTOR REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN RELEASED THROUGH COURTS IN SINDH IN 2024

S #	Area/Town, district and reporting date	Details	Children	Man	Man	Total	Newspapers
1	Khipro Sanghar 21-Jan-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on the private jail Village Dobto of Brick kiln owner Hashim Pathan and recovered 10 labourers from the captivity	1	4	5	10	Kawish
2	Malkani Shareef Khairpur 31-Jan-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on the private jail Malkani Shareef Komb Brick kiln owner Gulzar Khoso and recovered 18 labours from the captivity	5	6	7	18	Panhji Akhbar
3	Moroo Noushoroferoz 21-Feb-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on the private jail Moroo of the landlord and recovered 5 peasants from the captivity	2	1	2	5	Facebook/ social media
4	Hosrri Hyderabad 13-Mar-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on a private jail Near Tando Alam Mari Brick Kiln and recovered 17 labours from captivity	8	5	4	17	Kawish
5	Matari Matari 25-Apr-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on the private jail of a brick kiln owner Bismillah Khan Pathan near Matari and recovered 41 labours from captivity	13	17	11	41	Awami Web News
6	Shahpur chakar Sanghar 2-May-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on a private jail at Shahpur Chakar Chodgi Road brick kiln owner Noorullah Riasti and recovered 21 labours from captivity	8	6	7	21	Panhji Akhbar
7	Pithori Umarkot 14-May-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at Pithori Brick Kiln owner Sarwar Pathan and recovered 28 labours from the captivity	13	8	7	28	Kawish
8	Shahpur chakar Sanghar 20-May-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on a private jail at the Shahpur Chakar Brick Kiln owner and recovered 9 labours from captivity	3	4	2	9	Panhji Akhbar
9	Kunari Umarkot 5-Jul-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on a private jail at Kunari Brick Kiln owned by Kala Khan Pathan and recovered 61 labours from his captivity	32	14	15	61	Panhji Akhbar
10	Sindhri MirpurKhas 29-Aug-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on a private jail at a brick kiln owned by Sharafat Khan Pathan near Sindhri. Police recovered 39 workers from the illegal captivity	14	3	16	39	Awazmi Awaz

11	Chaodagi Sanghar 14-Sep-2024	Police on court's order conducted a raid on a private jail at a brick kiln near Shahpur Chakar Chaodagi, and recovered 45 Brick kiln workers from the illegal captivity of the owner Hayat Khan Pathan.	16	18	11	45	SS NEW Channel
12	Kunri Umarkot 9-Oct-24	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at a brick kiln near kunri, and recovered 9 workers from the illegal captivity of the owner Nazar Pathan.	2	3	4	9	Panhji Akhbar
13	Nao Kot Umarkot 23-Nov-24	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at a brick kiln near Nao Kot, and recovered 9 workers from illegal captivity of the owner.	2	3	4	6	Panhji Akhbar
14	Tando Muhammad Khan Tando Muhammad Khan 11-Dec-24	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at a brick kiln near Tando Muhammad Khan, and recovered 38 workers from illegal captivity of owner Shahbaz Pathan.	14	11	13	38	Panhji Akhbar
15	Kunri Umarkot 21-Dec-24	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at a brick kiln near Kunri, and recovered 18 workers from the illegal captivity of owner Nazar Pathan.	7	5	6	18	Panhji Akhbar
16	Sakrand Shaheed Benazirabad 28-Dec-24	Police on court's order conducted a raid on private jail at a brick kiln near Sakrand PS Khadhar, and recovered 24 workers from illegal captivity of Brick kiln owner Islam Din pathan.	6	8	10	26	Kawish

About the HWA

Hari Welfare Association (HWA) is a non-governmental organization (NGO). It was formed in 2002 and formally registered in 2003. Through research, advocacy and lobbying, HWA aims to promote economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights of peasants and other workers engaged in agriculture in rural areas of Sindh and Pakistan. A woman chairperson leads HWA. It is working for the promotion and protection of peasants and rural communities/groups in rural parts of Pakistan with the main focus in Sindh. It also aims to struggle for sustainable agriculture and opposes corporate driven agriculture transnational companies that are destroying rural people's culture and nature. HWA campaign for environmental, social, economic, civil, political issues, and challenges to the current landownership system and patterns that have deprived vulnerable peasants and put the rural agriculture environment at stake and destruction in the hands of corporate companies.

VISION:

Development of a progressive, educated, peace-loving and non-discriminatory society that is materially optimum, socially equitable and sustainable.

MISSION:

Collectively ensure environmental and social justice, human dignity, and respect for human rights of peasants to secure sustainable societies.

OBJECTIVES:

1. To advocate and network for economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights of peasants and other people and workers living in rural areas.
2. To build the capacity of community organizations mainly peasants on self-resilience.
3. To advocate and networking for the protection of children and women from abuse, neglect, violence, and exploitation.
4. To promote quality and gender-sensitive education in under-served areas.



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