

THE STATE OF PEASANTS' RIGHTS IN SINDH IN 2025

HARI WELFARE ASSOCIATION

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About the Hari Welfare Association (HWA)

HWA is a non-governmental organization established in 2002 and registered in 2003. 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 the rural areas of Sindh and, more broadly, in Pakistan.

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

The HWA has helped peasants and rural workers form and register 18 unions (including 12 women) under the Sindh Industrial Relations Act of 2013, showing notable progress in empowering communities and encouraging positive change.

Abbreviations

BHC:	Benazir Hari Card
BISP:	Benazir Income Support Program
CNICs:	Computerized National Identity Cards
Cr.P.C.	Criminal Procedure Code
DVC:	District Vigilance Committee
GoS:	Government of Sindh
HRCP:	Human Rights Commission of Pakistan
HWA:	Hari Welfare Association
ILO:	International Labor Organization
MNA:	Member of the National Assembly
MPA:	Member of the Provincial Assembly
NF:	Naushero Feroz
PKR:	Pak Rupees
PPPP:	Pakistan Peoples' Party Parliamentarians
SBA:	Shaheed Benazir Abad
SBLSAA:	Sindh Bonded Labor System Abolition Act
SCP:	Supreme Court of Pakistan
SHC:	Sindh High Court
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



Figure I: Map of Districts in Sindh Province

Sindh is one of four provinces in 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 approximately 2,000 miles in length. In Sindh, the river covers nearly 590 miles before it merges into the Arabian Sea. In the southeast region of Sindh is the 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 30 districts and a population of 55,696,147, according to the 2023 Census.

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PREFACE

This is the tenth report of the Hari Welfare Association (HWA) titled *The State of Peasants' Rights in Sindh for the year 2025.* During this ten-year journey, the organization has encountered various challenges in gathering and publishing evidence on peasants and rural workers of Sindh. The purpose of this report is to highlight the resilience and determination of peasants and rural workers in Sindh. This is done by providing a thorough overview of developments in the agricultural and labor sectors. Through this, the HWA has the following aims:

1. Guide relevant stakeholders on addressing challenges and protecting peasants' fundamental human rights
2. Deepen the general public's understanding of peasants' rights in Sindh
3. Highlight significant changes and initiatives in 2025 and previous years
4. Provide a roadmap for future interventions to uphold the fundamental rights of peasants (which are highlighted in the provincial laws of Sindh, 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 in 2015, titled The State of Peasants Rights in Sindh, it marked the beginning of evidence-based advocacy for peasants and rural workers' rights in Sindh. This pioneering report remains the only consistent voice for marginalized peasants at the national level, emphasizing its critical role in shaping ongoing efforts.

Since then, there has been a movement for the rights of peasants and rural workers, to which not only the HWA but also many other organizations and individuals have begun contributing. However, the concern is that neither

the governments nor the relevant UN agencies extend support to peasants and rural workers by empowering them through capacity development and unionization, and by facilitating their actions in practice. Despite the 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 the implementation of the Sindh Tenancy Act (STA), 1950, and the Sindh Bonded Labor System Abolition Act (SBLSAA), 2015.

At the micro level in Sindh, exploitation by landlords persists despite some legislative progress, such as the Sindh High Court's 2019 verdict and the enactment of the Sindh Women Agriculture Workers Act 2019 (SWAWA). Notification of District Vigilance Committees (DVCs) by December 2024 shows progress, but limited political will has hindered further protection of peasant rights.

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 Sindh Industrial Relations Act (SIRA). The HWA successfully registered 18 trade unions in total, and in 2025, the HWA worked with and engaged all unions with the help of the Norwegian Human Rights Fund.

In Sindh, human rights institutions played a minimal role in enforcing the law, as most of their officials are government-appointed and only offer lip service on critical issues such as bonded labor. However, these appointed officials are somehow far better than the political feudal elites, who totally control the administrative and legislative arenas of the province and beyond. The agriculture sector, where bonded labor is prevalent, is largely controlled by feudal lords who also hold significant political power, making it difficult to challenge these exploitative practices. Also,

the brick kiln sector, controlled by capitalists and feudal mafias, has become a serious battleground for workers' rights. This concentration of political and economic power in the hands of the feudal and political elite undermines efforts to enforce human rights laws, perpetuating a system of exploitation that continues to thrive in the region.

The year 2025 marks a turning point in our advocacy efforts, during which 18 trade unions, especially women-led unions, have actively held press conferences and voiced their concerns at seminars, workshops, and conferences. The HWA's persistent engagement with the Government of Sindh (GoS) (especially with officials across various human rights-related commissions and the labor, agriculture, and education departments) has created significant progress in establishing peasant rights in the province. This year, the HWA successfully lobbied for the establishment and activation of DVCs across all remaining districts of Sindh, and by December 2024, DVCs had been constituted in all districts. In 2025, the HWA also pushed for the establishment 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 Khaskheli

President
Hari Welfare Association, Sindh

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Legal and policy frameworks

Despite some positive laws, challenges such as weak enforcement and institutional fragmentation remained the biggest barriers to upholding peasants' rights in Sindh. Also, peasants' political representation remained completely absent in 2025. The Sindh Assembly passed no resolutions on sharecroppers or rural workers. The dominance of landlords and elites in legislatures perpetuated exclusion, leaving peasants underrepresented in debates over important issues like taxation, irrigation, and tenancy reforms. The following are legal and policy frameworks introduced to uphold peasants' rights in Sindh.

The Sindh Tenancy Act (STA) 1950, which governs landlord–tenant relations, was not amended to adequately protect sharecropping peasants, as it has not been updated since the peasants' rights declaration. The Ropshi case, which took place in 2025, highlighted the boundaries of the judiciary. Although violence was alleged, the High Court ruled that tenancy disputes must be pursued in civil or tenancy forums, not in criminal courts. This reinforced the STA's jurisdiction but underscored peasants' limited access to justice.

The Sindh Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act (SBLSAA) 2015 remained inactive in 2025 because of the persistence of bonded labor in agriculture and brick kilns. Weak vigilance committees and poor rehabilitation support further limited its impact, leaving peasants even more vulnerable to debt bondage.

The Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act (SWAWA) 2019 saw major progress in 2025, with draft rules vetted by the law department. This milestone will allow the Act to be operationalized, as it has still not been acted upon since its draft in 2019. No board was appointed, no unions were registered under it, and grassroots mobilization was absent, leaving women even more vulnerable, especially considering their structural neglect.

The following are the structural inequality figures that are relevant for this report:

- 51% of rural households are landless
- 5% of landlords control 64% of farmland
- 65% of farmers own only 15% of the land
- Women own just 3% of land — excluded from rights and credit.

The Draft Sindh Labor Code (2025) aimed to consolidate nearly 190 labor laws to improve the conditions of peasant workers in Sindh. However, this was opposed by the Civil Society, which feared dilution of protections for workers across all sectors of the economy, including informal and agricultural workers—concerns centered on whether peasants and sharecroppers would be excluded from minimum-wage and collective-bargaining rights.

An important aspect of the fight for peasants' rights is the Sindh Water Policy 2023, which promises equitable distribution of water to all residents. In 2025, research notes that peasants continued to fear that landlords would dominate water allocation decisions, further perpetuating inequalities in access to water.

On 28 July 2025, Sindh fixed the monthly minimum wage at Rs. 40,000, effective from 1 July. This amended minimum wage amount applied to all unskilled workers (including those in the agricultural sector), with piece-rate payments set at Rs. 192 per hour or Rs. 1,538 per day. The notification legally prohibited compensation to workers below the minimum wage, ensuring stronger wage protections for peasants.

Violence against women and girls in rural areas

In 2025, HWA documented 772 cases of violence against peasant women and girls in Sindh. Of these, 218 murders, 138 kidnappings, 124 suicides, 104 incidents of rape and sexual assault, 74 domestic violence incidents, 72 honor killings, 35 forced marriages, and 7 harassment/injury cases were reported. The highest frequency of incidents was noted in Khairpur (75 cases), Larkana (55), Dadu (45), Sukkur (40), and Ghotki (35). Each district showed distinct violence patterns, from honor killings to abductions and rape.

Protests by rural workers and peasants

Between April and November 2025, Sindh saw 120+ protest events, often drawing 1,000–2,000 participants. This marked one of the most sustained mobilizations of peasants and rural workers in recent years.

The "six new canals" project on the Indus River was the main grievance identified by the protestors, as it was perceived as an existential threat to the river's ecology and economy. This project, launched by the Pakistani government, aimed to irrigate millions of acres of desert land.

Uproar against this project unified diverse actors, including communist committees, nationalist parties, the ulema, and student unions.

Protesters' grievances fell into four categories:

- Canal projects & corporate farming (Kotri, Hyderabad and Karachi).
- Water scarcity & corruption (Sanghar, Matiari and Rohri canal).
- Crop pricing & adulterated inputs (Khairpur and Larkana).
- Land/labor rights abuses (Jamshoro, Sehwan and Khairpur).

Social safety initiatives

The GoS expanded Maternal & Child Support (MAMTA) to 22 districts, and cash support increased from Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 41,000 over three years. By September 2025, 770,000 women were registered at 800 health facilities, strengthening maternal nutrition and safe delivery programs in rural parts of Sindh.

Benazir Hari Card Program targeted 1.4 million farmers with subsidies, interest-free loans, crop insurance, and climate-resilient practices. By late 2025, 80,000 farmers registered digitally, though landless peasants and women often faced exclusion due to reliance on land records. For women's inclusion, a special desk for women farmers was established in May 2025, offering training, advisory services, crop insurance, and solar irrigation schemes. Despite this, structural barriers persisted: women owned only 3% of land and were often excluded from registration systems.

Bonded Labor

In 2025, bonded labor remained a deeply entrenched problem across Sindh, with 1,311 laborers rescued from brick kilns and the agricultural sector. These rescues were carried out through police raids, court orders, and emergency interventions, reflecting the scale of exploitation in rural labor systems.

The brick kiln sector accounted for 743 releases, including 262 men, 220 women, and 261 children. The near-equal proportion of men and children highlights the family-based nature of kiln bondage, where entire households were confined under debt arrangements. Districts such as Umerkot, Sanghar, Matiari, and Badin emerged as hotspots of bonded labor, with repeated discoveries of illegal confinement and forced labor.

In the agricultural sector, 568 laborers were freed, comprising 206 men, 171 women, and 191 children. Similarly to the brick kilns sector, children made up nearly one-third of those who were rescued, underscoring the persistence of child labor in feudal tenancy systems. Major operations were recorded in Umerkot, Sanghar, Mirpurkhas, and Shaheed Benazirabad, where private jails and landlord violence were repeatedly uncovered.

When combined, the figures show 468 men, 391 women, and 452 children among those released. The high proportion of children, more than one-third of all victims, demonstrates that bonded labor in Sindh has functioned as an intergenerational system, trapping entire families in cycles of debt, exploitation, and coercion.

District wise data from 2018 to 2025 reveals a cumulative total of 10,053 bonded laborers released in agriculture. Umerkot alone accounted for 4,068 cases (40.5%), making it the epicenter of bonded labor in Sindh. Mirpurkhas followed with 1,764 cases, and Sanghar with 1,576 cases. Together, these three districts accounted for nearly three-quarters of all reported cases, highlighting the concentration of exploitation in lower Sindh.

Although numbers declined after 2021 (with 1,465 releases in 2021, 653 in 2022, 542 in 2023, 620 in 2024, and 568 in 2025), the persistence of hundreds of rescues annually demonstrates that bonded labor remains a structural feature of Sindh's rural economy. The dominance of women and children among those released further confirms that bondage operated as a household system of exploitation, deeply tied to poverty, landlessness, and feudal control.

Enforcement patterns revealed that most rescues were reactive, triggered by police raids, judicial orders, or media exposure. However, there was minimal evidence of sustained prosecutions, rehabilitation, or compensation for victims. The recurrence of raids in the same districts indicated that bonded labor remained structurally embedded in both industrial exploitation at kilns and feudal control in agriculture.

Conflicts in rural Sindh

From January–June 2025, a total of 337 victims of tribal and communal violence were documented across Sindh. Of these, 201 were injured, and 136 were murdered, showing a high proportion of violent and life-threatening outcomes. The majority of victims were men (192 injured, 125 murdered), but women (7 injured, 8 murdered) and children (2 injured, 3 murdered) were also affected.

Khairpur district recorded the highest combined number of victims, with repeated clashes among tribes such as Narejo, Junejo, Rahujo, and Jatoi. On 5 January 2025, five people were killed in a clash between the Solangi and Narejo clans in Khairpur; on 12 May, two were killed and two were injured in Gambat; and on 25 June, two were killed and five were injured in Kot Diji.



SECTION 1: LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

SECTION 1: LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS

The legal and policy framework governing peasants' rights in Sindh in 2025 reflects persistent structural challenges. Sharecropper peasants, landless tenants, and women agricultural workers remained significantly vulnerable in the rural economy. While legal provisions exist for these marginalized populations, their impact is often limited by weak and uneven implementation.

In 2025, policy discourse around these issues has begun to focus on enforcement, institutional accountability, and inclusion for peasants' rights. Civil society organizations, labor unions, and human rights groups have played a key role in advancing this policy shift. Judicial interventions at the district court level have emerged as important mechanisms for accountability, though they also highlight gaps in executive governance and proactive policy enforcement. Throughout the year, HWA has also noted a couple of policy and legal changes, which will be elaborated upon in the following sections.

This section highlights various legal and policy frameworks relevant to the struggle for peasants' rights. It provides a deep dive into them, offering an overview of the current state of affairs.

1. The Sindh Tenancy Act (STA), 1950

Although this act has its limitations, the Sindh Tenancy Act (STA) 1950 remains the cornerstone of agrarian relations in Sindh, governing the rights and obligations of landlords and tenants. Originally designed to regulate rent, eviction, and sharecropping arrangements, the Act continues to work to redefine the legal status of peasants in the province. In 2025, there were no major legislative amendments or new bills directly related to the STA 1950. Scholars and civil society actors argue that the law is ill-equipped to address contemporary agrarian realities, particularly the informal nature of tenancy agreements and the persistence of exploitative sharecropping practices (Ahmed, 2025; Gazdar, 2023).

Many disputes are resolved outside formal legal mechanisms, often through landlord-dominated systems, which limit peasants' access to justice. For sharecropping peasants, the STA provides nominal protection, but fails to ensure enforceable rights. Issues such as insecure tenure, unequal crop-sharing arrangements, and lack of documentation persist. Moreover, the Act does not adequately incorporate gender considerations, leaving women largely invisible within tenancy relations.

2. Ropshi case verdict of the High Court

Ropshi, a farmer from Mirpurkhas, believed he was owed a large sum, about 1.4 million rupees and 150 maunds of wheat, from the crops he and his family had cultivated on the land of Moso Mehar. When he pressed for his share, violence followed: his house was entered, goods taken, and threats made against his family. Twice in May 2025, he said, the private respondents attacked him, yet when he went to the police, filing for an FIR was denied.

Frustrated, he turned to the courts, filing an application under Sections 22-A and 22-B of the Criminal Procedure Code. However, the Additional Sessions Judge in Mirpurkhas dismissed his plea, holding that the matter was civil rather than criminal and rooted in tenancy rights and crop-sharing. Ropshi then sought relief under Section 561-A of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), hoping the High Court of Sindh would overturn that decision (Ropshi v. SSP Mirpurkhas & Others (Criminal Miscellaneous Application No. S-111 of 2025).

His lawyer argued that the allegations clearly disclosed cognizable offenses and that the refusal to register an FIR was unjust. The respondents' counsel countered by stating that this was a tenancy dispute best suited to the Tenancy Tribunal and accused Ropshi of trying to disguise a civil matter as a criminal one. The Deputy Prosecutor General supported this view, citing the police inquiry that had already classified the issue as civil.

Justice Jan Ali Junejo of the Sindh High Court examined the record and found that the heart of the dispute was indeed about crop proceeds and savings. While criminal allegations had been raised, they were tied to the underlying civil disagreement. The Court emphasized that criminal law should not be used to enforce civil claims, and that the proper forum was the Tenancy Tribunal or civil courts under the Sindh Tenancy Act, 1950.

The judgment also recalled earlier rulings, including the Ghulam Ali case (PLD 2020 Sindh 284), which clarified jurisdictional boundaries after the separation of the judiciary from executive authority. It reiterated that tenancy disputes must be handled under tenancy law and that remedies are available to peasants and tenants.

In the end, the High Court upheld the lower court's order, rejecting Ropshi's application on July 9, 2025. He was directed to pursue his claims for crop shares and savings before the appropriate civil or tenancy forum, rather than through criminal proceedings (Sindh High Court, 2025). This story highlights that while allegations of violence may arise in such disputes, the law insists on distinguishing between civil grievances and criminal offenses.

3. The Sindh Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act (SBLSAA) 2015

The SBLSAA of 2015 addresses debt bondage across various sectors of the economy. However, it is a central law in the agricultural sector, which is notorious for debt bondage practices. The SBLSAA aims to eradicate debt-based labor practices that have historically trapped peasants in cycles of exploitation. The Act provides vigilance committees, penalties, and rehabilitation mechanisms for affected people.

In 2025, the Act was reviewed during policy consultations organized by the Sindh Human Rights Commission and civil society organizations such as HWA. These discussions highlighted that bonded labor persists in agriculture and brick kilns despite the legal prohibition. Weak enforcement, inactive vigilance committees, and inadequate rehabilitation support were identified as key challenges in the emancipation efforts for bonded laborers (SHRC, 2025). For sharecropping peasants, bonded labor often intersects with tenancy arrangements, particularly where debt is tied to agricultural inputs or advances from landlords. The limited implementation of SBLSAA leaves many peasants vulnerable to coercive labor practices. Without effective monitoring and rehabilitation, the law's transformative potential remains largely unrealized.

4. The Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act 2019

In addition to the STA of 1950, a significant development in Sindh's agrarian legal landscape is the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act (SWAWA) of 2019. This law marked a major shift by formally recognizing women's contributions to agriculture, livestock, and fisheries, and by aiming to ensure their rights, participation, and access to social protection.

By 2025, the SWAWA had moved into an active phase of contestation and partial operationalization. Institutions such as the Sindh Human Rights Commission convened stakeholder consultations involving government departments and civil society organizations to review draft rules. Simultaneously, litigation initiated by the HRCP and the HWA sought judicial enforcement of the Act.

In response to the litigation, the Labor and Human Resources Department informed the High Court of Sindh that the draft rules had been forwarded to the Department of Law, Sindh, for legal vetting. This marked a transition from legislative intent to potential implementation (HRCP, 2025).

By 2025, the SWAWA had moved from symbolic legislation to active contestation: rules were under review, petitions were filed to enforce implementation, and provincial stakeholders were pushing for stronger gender-sensitive frameworks. However, progress remained uneven, with civil society pressing the government to operationalize protections.

- *Background to the petition on the SWAWA of 2019*

The petition (filed under C.P No. D-6265 of 2024 in the High Court of Sindh at Karachi) was brought forward by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and Others (including HWAs and women peasant unions) against the Province of Sindh. This was done through the Chief Secretary and the Secretary, Labor and Human Resources Department, Government of Sindh. The petition sought to operationalize the SWAWA of 2019, which was intended to recognize women's contributions to agriculture, ensure their rights, and promote their welfare.

In response, the Secretary of Labor and the HR Department (Respondent No. 2) provided a detailed statement outlining the government's efforts in implementing the Act. The response highlights that women 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 Program, established under Section 15 of the Act, to provide financial and technical assistance to women agricultural workers. Furthermore, the Labor and HR Department, in collaboration with the International Labor Organization (ILO), has drafted rules for the Act, which have been forwarded to the Law Department for vetting before submission to the Sindh Cabinet for approval. The Benazir Women Support Program 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 that, as a result, 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 Labor and HR Department 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.T

5. The Draft Sindh Labor Code

The Sindh Labor Code was introduced as a draft in 2025 as a major policy initiative to consolidate nearly 190 labor laws into a single framework. While the government framed this as an attempt to modernize, civil society organizations opposed the draft for several missing elements.

Labor unions and organizations argued that the draft was developed without meaningful consultation and risked diluting existing protections. Groups such as the National Trade Union Federation emphasized that consolidation could erase sector-specific safeguards, particularly for informal and agricultural workers (Dawn, 2025). For peasants, the implications are significant. If the definition of "worker" under the new code does not explicitly include agricultural laborers and sharecroppers, they may be excluded from labor protections. This raises concerns about access to minimum wage laws, social security, and collective bargaining rights.

6. The Sindh Water Policy 2023

Water access is a critical determinant of agricultural productivity and livelihood for those who live in rural areas. The implementation of the Sindh Water Policy 2023 and the drafting of a new water law in 2025 marked a shift toward integrated water resource management. The Sindh government initiated the drafting of a comprehensive water law aligned with the 2023 policy. Additionally, the Sindh Water & Agriculture Transformation Project launched a Strategic Water Plan to address water scarcity, environmental degradation, and the pressing need for equitable water distribution for people in marginalized positions.

For sharecropping peasants, equitable water distribution is essential. While the policy promises improved access and sustainability, its benefits depend on inclusive governance. If water allocation systems prioritize landowners, peasants may remain dependent on landlords for access, reinforcing existing inequalities (World Bank, 2025).

HWA is also concerned that the delay in rule-making undermines the credibility of the Act. There is also concern that weak enforcement mechanisms risk leaving women agricultural workers unprotected.

7. Minimum wage notification in 2025

The Government of Sindh, through its Labor and Human Resources Department, issued a notification on 28 July 2025 fixing the minimum monthly wage at Rs. 40,000 for all unskilled adult and adolescent workers employed in industrial and commercial establishments across the province, effective from 1 July 2025. This wage applies uniformly to both registered and unregistered establishments and ensures equal pay for male and female workers. Employers must also revise piece-rate payments so that workers earn at least Rs. 192 per hour or Rs. 1,538 per day, while wages for skilled and semi-skilled workers can no longer fall below this minimum. Existing benefits such as housing, utilities, medical care, pensions, bonuses, and food allowances must continue and cannot be counted toward meeting the minimum wage requirement. Furthermore, government and private institutions that hire through contractors are prohibited from accepting tenders proposing wages below Rs. 40,000 per month. The notification emphasizes that the revised wage is a baseline, not a ceiling, and employers are encouraged to offer higher wages voluntarily or through collective agreements (Labor & Human Resource Department, Notification, 2025).



Table 1: Minimum wage for unskilled workers in Sindh from 2010 to 2025

Year	Minimum wage in PKR
2010	7000
2011	7000
2012	8000
2013	10000
2014	12000
2015	13000
2016	14000
2017	15000
2018	16200
2019	17500
2020	17500
2021	25000
2022	25000
2023	32000
2024	37000
2025	40000

The table above, prepared by HWA, shows that between 2010 and 2025, Sindh's minimum wage increased nearly sixfold, rising from PKR 7,000 to PKR 40,000 per month. The sharpest growth occurred after 2020, with significant consecutive hikes driven by severe inflationary pressures and rising living costs. However, at the grassroots level, workers are barely given PKR 15,000 after toiling 12 hours in the scorching sun and cold winter.

[1] HWA has gathered details by reviewing old documents and newspapers.

8. Pro-peasant Sindh High Court's (SHC) judgment of 2019

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 judgment of 2019.

In 2025, there was no withdrawal of the Government of Sindh's appeal pending before the Supreme Court of Pakistan, prior to the Supreme Court's judgment against the Sindh High Court's landmark 2019 pro-peasant judgment. Peasant and workers' trade union leaders expressed grief and frustration that, despite repeated demands, the provincial government had not taken back its application. Civil society and union representatives highlighted that the SHC's 2019 judgment had been a breakthrough for peasants, particularly sharecroppers, as it recognized their rights and strengthened their position under tenancy laws. However, the continuation of the appeal in the Supreme Court was seen as a deliberate attempt to stall or dilute those gains. In 2025, union leaders reiterated that the government's stance undermined its own commitments to agrarian reform and social justice.

The persistence of the appeal was framed as part of a broader pattern: while Sindh had passed progressive laws, such as the Sindh Women Agricultural Workers Act (2019), and initiated water governance reforms, the reluctance to withdraw the challenge to the SHC judgment revealed policy contradictions. For peasants, this meant continued uncertainty about whether the protections affirmed in 2019 would be upheld or weakened at the national level.

9. Peasants' Representation in Legislative Assemblies

For HWA, the question of political representation remains central to understanding the condition of peasants and rural workers in Sindh in 2025. The Sindh Assembly did not pass a single definitive resolution on any of the issues of sharecropping peasants and rural workers in 2025. Although agriculture remains one of the most important sectors of Pakistan's economy, the political voices of peasants, tenant farmers, and agricultural laborers are largely absent from legislative institutions. In Sindh, where a substantial portion of the population depends on agriculture, fisheries, and livestock for survival, rural communities continue to face political exclusion, economic exploitation, weak labor protections, and limited participation in governance structures.

The legislative assemblies of Pakistan, including the Sindh Assembly and the National Assembly, remain dominated by influential landlords, tribal elites, industrialists, and political dynasties. This concentration of political power has contributed to the continuation of feudal structures, inequitable land ownership patterns, and weak implementation of agrarian reforms. In 2025, peasant organizations, labor unions, and civil society groups repeatedly highlighted that the legislative process continued to neglect the rights and welfare of peasants and rural workers.

The year 2025 witnessed significant debates concerning agricultural taxation, irrigation policies, rural development, bonded labor, tenancy laws, and lawlessness in Sindh's riverine areas. However, despite these developments, peasants remained underrepresented in policymaking processes that directly affected their livelihoods. This chapter examines the political representation and misrepresentation of peasants and rural workers in Pakistan's legislative assemblies in 2025, with particular focus on Sindh. It also analyzes the relationship between the Government of Sindh and feudal landlords, as well as the socio-political conditions that perpetuate dacoit culture in rural Sindh.

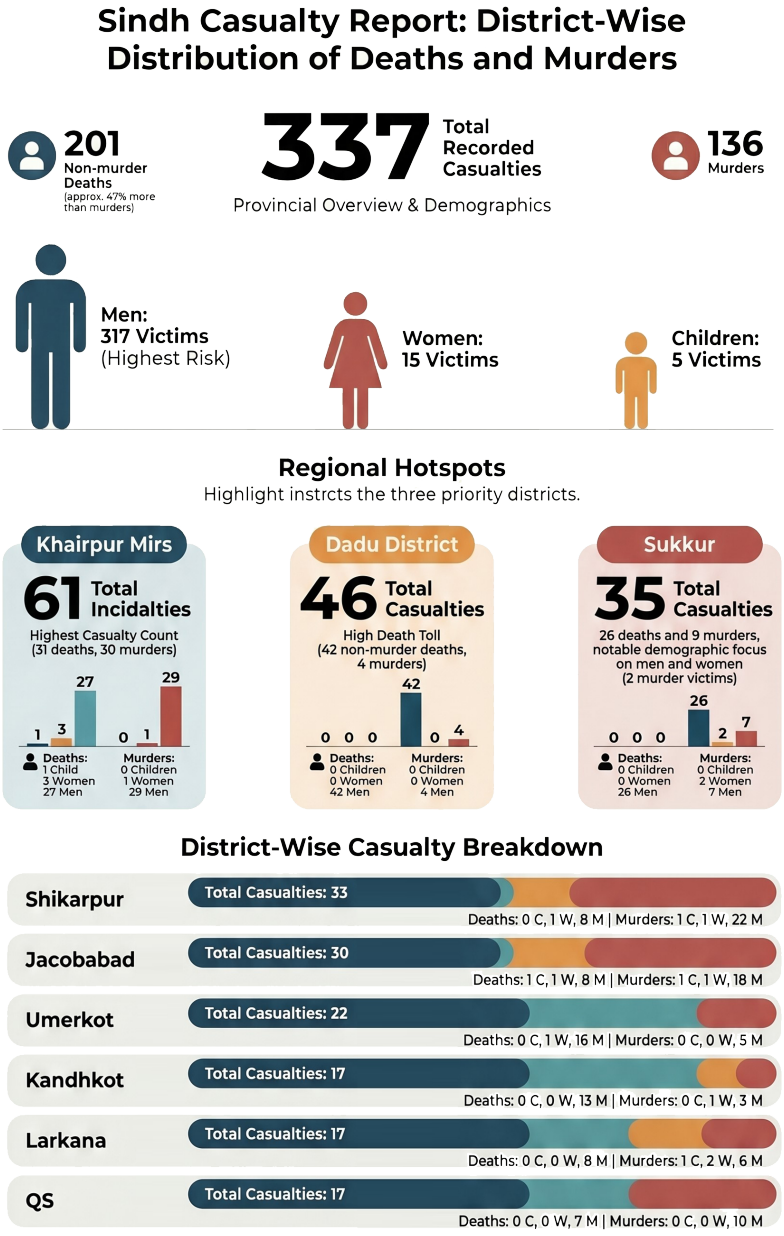




SECTION 2: CONFLICTS IN RURAL SINDH

Key Data on Conflicts

From January to June 2025, the HWA documented various incidents of tribal disputes, armed clashes, retaliatory violence, and communal conflicts across Sindh. The following compiled data reveals that violent conflict remained deeply entrenched in many rural districts, particularly northern Sindh, where tribal identities, feudal structures, and weak state intervention continue to shape local power relations.



According to the data, a total of 337 victims were recorded during the six months, including:

- 201 injured persons
- 136 murdered persons

The statistics indicate an alarming level of lethal violence, as a substantial proportion of 40.4% of disputes escalated into killings rather than being limited to injuries or non-fatal confrontations. The overwhelming majority of victims were adult men, although women and children were also affected in several incidents, demonstrating the broader social impact of tribal and communal violence.

The violence was heavily concentrated in districts such as:

- Khairpur Mirs
- Jacobabad
- Shikarpur
- Sukkur
- Ghotki
- Kashmore
- Dadu
- Kandhkot
- Qambar Shahdadkot
- of the Larkana division

These districts have historically experienced tribal feuds, armed rivalries, and disputes linked to land, honor, political influence, and local dominance. The recurring appearance of the same tribal groups throughout these incidents demonstrates the persistence of retaliatory conflict systems that remain inadequately addressed through formal legal institutions.

Khairpur emerged as one of the most violence-affected districts during the reporting period. Numerous incidents involved tribes such as Narejo, Junejo, Rahujo, Dhamya, Jatoi, Shahani, Syed, Sheikh, Gopang, and Malak. The district witnessed repeated killings and armed confrontations across areas, including Peer Goth, Ranipur, Kot Diji, Gambat, Babarlo, and Khairpur city.

On 5 January 2025, five people were killed in a violent clash between the Solangi and Narejo clans in Khairpur. Similarly, on 12 May 2025 in Gambat, two men were killed, and two others were injured in a conflict between rival Junejo groups. On 25 June 2025 in Kot Diji, two people were killed, and five were injured in a conflict between rival Ujjan groups. The repeated recurrence of such incidents reflects the deeply rooted nature of tribal polarization and revenge-based violence in the district.

Overall, Khairpur recorded the highest combined number of victims, including both injuries and killings, demonstrating the severity and continuity of armed tribal conflict in the

Persistent Armed Tribal Violence

Jacobabad also remained one of the most conflict-prone districts. Repeated incidents involved tribes such as Banglani, Chachar, Jagirani, Bhayo, Brohi, and Bajkani. On 8 January 2025 in Thul, three men were killed in an old tribal conflict between rival Banglani groups. On 31 January 2025 in Dodapur, a woman and her son were killed while a minor girl was injured during a tribal clash. Further incidents in Ghouspur and Garhi Khero demonstrated continuing cycles of retaliatory violence.

Similarly, the Kashmore district witnessed recurring tribal clashes involving the Domki, Bhangwar, Tangwani, and Bhutto groups. On 21 May 2025 in Tangwani, one man was killed, and seven people were injured in a violent conflict between rival Tangwani factions.

The repeated violence in Jacobabad and Kashmore reflects the weak penetration of formal dispute resolution systems and the continuing influence of armed tribal structures.

Shikarpur recorded multiple deadly incidents linked to Mahar, Jatoi, Brohi, Sundhrani, and Kalhoro tribal rivalries. On 23 April 2025, in Garhi Yaseen, five people were killed in a violent clash between the Mahar and Marfani tribes. On 17 June 2025 in Madeji, four people were killed in a conflict between the Junejo and Kalhoro groups.

Sukkur district also experienced tribal violence. On 2 June 2025 in Bagarji, three people, including a woman, were killed, and five others were injured in a tribal conflict between the Jatoi and Khohara tribes. In Rohri on 13 June 2025, ten people were injured in a clash between the Jahanjha and Metam tribes, demonstrating the scale of collective armed confrontation.

Dadu district witnessed several major violent confrontations resulting in mass injuries. On 19 June 2025 in Bhann, twenty-two people were injured in a violent clash between the Solangi and Bughio tribes. Earlier, on 25 April 2025, ten people were injured in a conflict between the Jamali and Panhwar groups. These incidents indicate the use of organized armed force and collective mobilization during tribal disputes.

Qambar Shahdadkot similarly recorded repeated killings and injuries. Incidents in Shahdadkot, Qambar, Miro Khan, and Qabo Saeed Khan involved Chandio, Magsi, and Buleedi groups. On 24 February 2025 in Miro Khan, two people were killed, and two were injured in a tribal conflict, while on 7 April 2025 in Qambar, one person was killed and four others were injured in a clash between rival Chandio factions. The data overwhelmingly show that men remained the primary victims of this tribal and communal violence:

- 192 injured men
- 125 murdered men

This reflects the male-dominated nature of armed tribal disputes, where men are typically direct participants in retaliatory attacks and armed confrontations. However, women and children were also affected. The data recorded:

- 7 injured women
- 8 murdered women
- 2 injured children
- 3 murdered children

Several incidents directly targeted or affected women and minors. On 19 February 2025, in Shikarpur, a man and his daughter were murdered while a woman was injured in a tribal conflict. On 15 May 2025 in Larkana, a child was killed, and two other children were injured in a clash between the Khera and Gadd groups. On 11 June 2025 in Kot Diji, a married couple were killed while their child daughter was injured in a tribal conflict between rival Gopang groups. These incidents demonstrate that tribal violence increasingly extends beyond direct combatants and affects entire households and communities.

Structural nature of the violence

The incidents collectively reveal the normalization of armed tribal conflict across several regions of Sindh. Most disputes appear to be linked to:

- old tribal enmities
- revenge killings
- land disputes
- honor-related tensions
- and struggles for local dominance

The repeated references to conflicts "between two parties" or "between rival tribes" demonstrate the persistence of parallel tribal power structures operating alongside formal state institutions. The high number of killings further indicates:

- weak law enforcement
- ineffective mediation mechanisms
- easy access to weapons
- and limited state capacity to prevent retaliatory violence

any conflicts involved collective armed mobilization rather than isolated individual acts, suggesting organized patterns of violence deeply embedded in local social structures.

Overall, HWA data for January to June 2025 shows that tribal and communal violence remained a serious human rights and law-and-order challenge across Sindh. With 337 victims, including 136 killings, the data highlights the ongoing prevalence of armed feuds and retaliatory violence in rural districts. HWA also gathered data on tribal conflicts between October and December 2024, during which 88 murders were reported across Sindh, with Shikarpur (31) and Ghotki (12) recording the highest tolls. Other districts, such as Larkana (8), Kashmore (7), and Sukkur (7), also faced significant violence, while several districts reported only isolated cases.

In 2025, the concentration of incidents in Khairpur, Jacobabad, Shikarpur, Sukkur, Dadu, Kashmore, and Qambar Shahdadkot demonstrates the persistence of violent tribal structures, weak dispute resolution systems, and inadequate state intervention. The involvement of women and children further underscores the broader social consequences of the continuing conflict in Sindh's rural communities.



SECTION 3:
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN RURAL SINDH

SECTION 3: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN RURAL SINDH

In 2025, HWA gathered data on news stories on violence against women and girls reported in the local Sindhi newspapers (i.e., Awami Awaz, Kawish, and Pahinji Akhbar). HWA documented 772 cases of violence against women and girls in Sindh province throughout 2025. These numbers reflect not only reported incidents but also the actual prevalence, which is likely higher due to cultural barriers to reporting.

Of the total 772 reported cases, 218 were incidents of women and girls' murders. It includes inter-tribal fatalities, accidental discharges, and deliberate family-perpetrated killings. There were 138 incidents of kidnapping and abduction, with a high incidence among students and minors, frequently involving forced religious conversion. Other incidents include:

- 124 incidents of suicide, including attempts, show a sharp upward trend directly linked to economic deprivation and domestic distress

> The cases of suicide in Sindh reveal a profound statistical link between the province's socio-economic decline and the rising suicide rate among women. Poverty can be viewed as a cause for suicide, which is proved through the multiple suicide cases citing economic deprivation as the direct cause. Notable examples include Hakeema, aged 55, in Tando Bago on May 20; Sawera Lashari, aged 15, in Sobhodero on June 4; and Dua in Larkana on March 26. Maternal despair is also evident, as in Mirpurkhas on December 2, when Kavita Kohli, seven months pregnant, committed suicide due to her husband's unemployment and extreme poverty. Demographically, the victims are predominantly young women and teenagers, such as a 16-year-old in Badin and a 19-year-old in SBA, who faced a combination of domestic friction and financial insolvency.

- 104 incidents of rape and sexual assault, which included gang rape and paedophilic assaults, with notable involvement of domestic facilitators
- Domestic violence accounted for 74 incidents, encompassing severe physical torture, property disputes, battery, and acid attacks
- 72 incidents of honor killings (Karo Kari), crimes motivated by "honor" allegations that were often used as leverage for financial settlements
- Forced and child marriage was documented in 35 incidents, including "Vani" and "Sang Chatti" (compensation) cases involving girls under 15
- 7 incidents of harassment and injury, which included digital harassment, professional victimization, and non lethal tribal crossfire

Geographical Hotspots and Distribution

- In Khairpur, 75 cases were reported, which was the most volatile region, with leading numbers in Murders and Domestic Violence cases in the year
- In Larkana, 55 cases were reported, which included injuries resulting from tribal conflicts and domestic torture
- In Dadu, 45 cases were characterized by abductions and the kidnapping of female students
- In Sukkur, 40 cases were reported, with a high incidence of Honor Killings and forced marriages of Hindu minors.
- In Ghotki, 35 cases were reported, largely linked to Rape and "Honor" compensation scams involving local influential actors.

Honor Killing (Karo-Kari) Trends

In rural areas, honor-based violence continues to be a mechanism for extrajudicial execution. The analysis reveals that the perpetrator is almost exclusively a close male relative. The documented relationships include the following:

- Spousal violence in 2025 often involving husbands, such as the murder of 25-year-old Wadhal Rind in Ubauro on April 29.

- Fraternal and paternal perpetrators included brothers-in-law and fathers-in-law, exemplified by the killing of Zahida in Ghouspur by her father-in-law on May 5.

- Extended kinship violence was also documented, with cousins and uncles implicated, such as the murder of Rukhsana Kosh by her cousins in Ubauro on June 26.

- A critical trend identified in Ghotki (Row 471) revealed the professionalization of honor allegations, where 17 influential individuals were arrested for orchestrating false accusations to extort "compensation" payments, demonstrating that honor claims often serve as a pretext for financial exploitation.

- Domestic violence and marital abuse in 2025 were marked by extreme physical cruelty and the use of violence to settle property disputes. Public cases like that of Sobia Rind in Hyderabad on April 3 highlighted victims resorting to press conferences as a last defense against spousal battery.

- Property-related attacks included the violent beating of two women in Faiz Ganj on April 4 during an illegal land-grabbing attempt, showing how women were targeted to weaken family claims.

- Marital extremism escalated lethally, such as the husband in Sindhri on April 2, who murdered his wife and children by setting them on fire, and the poisoning of Subhana in Matli on August 25.

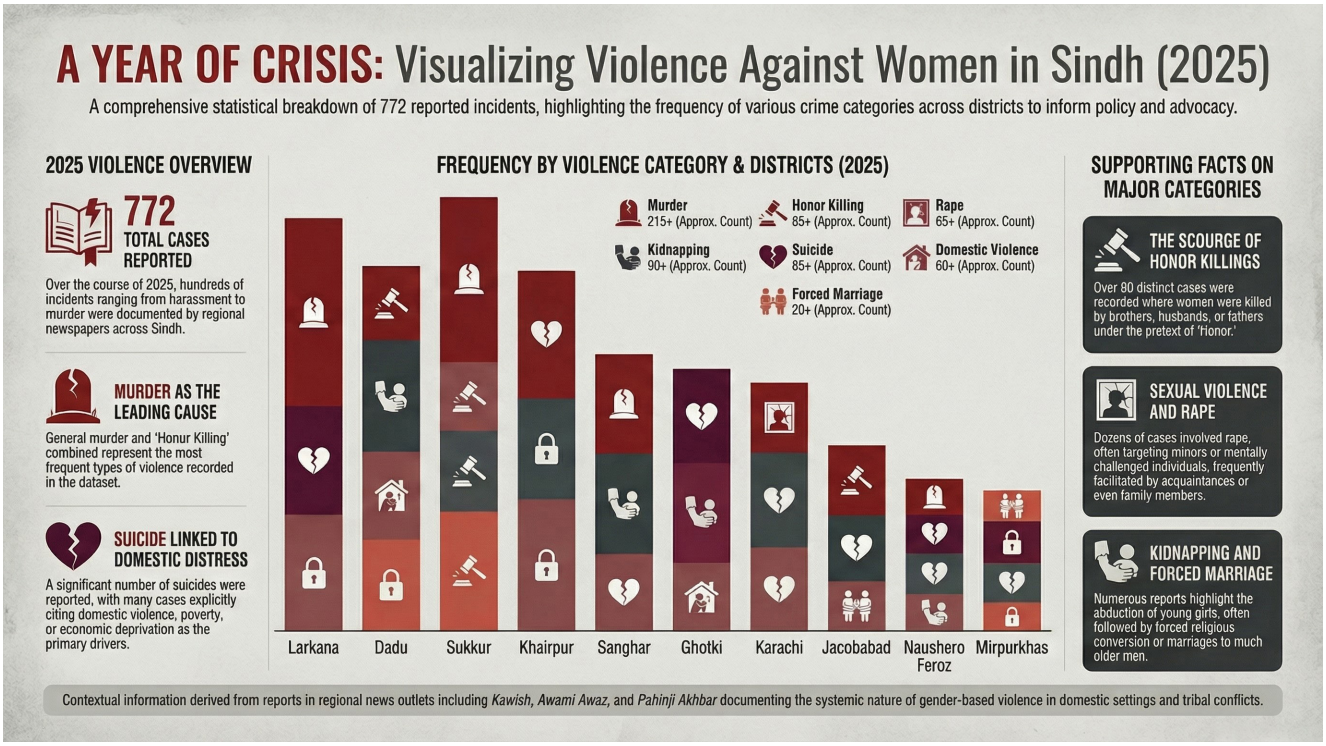
- Minors and teenagers remained the most vulnerable demographic, with 2025 data showing frequent "commodity-based" violence. Sexual violence against children included extreme brutality, such as the assault on an 8-year-old girl in Khanpur on May 5, the assault on a 12-year-old at Sohail Raza Farm on August 6, and the rape and murder of Insaf Ali in Sukkur on August 9, whose body was found in a garbage dump.

- Child and forced marriages were also prevalent, with girls used as currency in exchange cases (Vani/Sang-Chatti), such as in Shikarpur on April 4. Specific marriages included 14-year-old Dilkash to 14-year-old Zeeshan Lound in Setherja on April 19, and 15-year-old Seeta to a 58-year-old Sub-Inspector in Mithi on February 19.

- Abductions of students further underscored their vulnerability, with Rukhsana Solangi kidnapped from a sewing coaching center in Dadu on May 20, and intermediate student Fiza Rajput abducted in Dadu on June 4.

- Tribal conflicts and state-perpetrated violence further complicate the 2025 security landscape. Women have frequently been collateral damage victims, if not direct targets, in clan disputes, as seen in Shikarpur on May 11, where a mother of six was murdered during an inter-tribal clash, and in Rustam on the same day, where a mother of four was killed in similar crossfire. State violence also played a role, with police-led drone attacks causing fatalities in Naudero on July 13 and Lucky Ghulam Shah on November 13, including the death of Lalli Badani. Direct harassment by state officials underscores institutional failures, exemplified by the case of student Azra Narejo in Tando Allahyar on May 22, who protested harassment by DSP Khadim Hussain Narejo, highlighting the absence of adequate protection mechanisms.

- The 2025 data paint a grim picture of systemic failure. The high volume of family-perpetrated murders and the rise in suicides among young women point to a society under extreme socio-economic and patriarchal pressure. The practice of "Vani" (Sang-Chatti) persists as a tribal judicial tool, and the "honor" label has increasingly been co-opted by influential local figures for financial gain. Without institutional reform in law enforcement and targeted economic support for vulnerable women, these documented cases of violence will continue to escalate.



Analysis of Women and Girls-related cases in Courts in Tharparkar

HWA was able to gather four petitions decided by the Court of the Sessions Judge, Tharparkar, at Mithi in 2025. It shares the analyses of these petitions. These reveal important patterns in the use of Section 491-A of the Criminal Procedure Code (Cr.P.C.) in rural Sindh, particularly regarding family disputes, women's autonomy, child protection, kinship authority, and the role of the police in recovery proceedings. Although all cases formally concern "illegal detention," the factual matrices differ substantially, exposing tensions between patriarchal control, women's agency, customary relations, and procedural limitations of the criminal justice system.

Section 491-A Cr.P.C. functions similarly to a habeas corpus jurisdiction at the Sessions Court level, enabling courts to recover (allegedly) illegally detained persons, especially women and children. In Sindh, such petitions are frequently used in disputes involving marriage, elopement, child custody, domestic violence, forced confinement, and abduction allegations. The Tharparkar cases demonstrate that the provision is often transformed from a pure liberty-protection mechanism into a forum for resolving familial and social conflicts.

A comparative reading of these cases shows that the court primarily relied upon:

- police recovery reports
- voluntariness of statements
- family status and kinship relationships
- and perceived credibility of allegations

However, the depth of judicial scrutiny varied considerably from case to case. Each case's analysis is provided in the following:



CASE 1



Mst. Zubedan v. SSP Tharparkar & Others (CMA No. 04/2025): Missing Minor Girl and Procedural Minimalism

This case involved an eight-year-old minor girl, Miss Gul Niazan, allegedly abducted and illegally detained by private respondents belonging to the same village and biradari (Mehranpota community). The mother approached the court under Section 491-A Cr.P.C., while an FIR under Section 365-B PPC and Section 3 of the Trafficking in Persons Act, 2018 had already been registered. This was the gravest case among all petitions because:

- the alleged victim was a minor child
- kidnapping allegations were involved
- trafficking provisions had been invoked
- and the accused remained absconding

Unlike the other cases involving adults and domestic disputes, this case directly implicated child protection and possible trafficking concerns.

The court dismissed the petition primarily because the child had not been recovered, and an investigation was already pending.

This reveals a highly procedural and narrow approach. Rather than exercising proactive supervisory jurisdiction over the investigation, the court effectively deferred entirely to the police machinery.

The order exposes structural deficiencies in rural Sindh: poor tracing mechanisms, lack of victim-sensitive investigation, weak enforcement in remote areas, and the absence of institutional child recovery systems.

The dismissal arguably prioritized procedural closure over substantive protection of the child.

Traditionally, habeas corpus jurisdiction is expansive and protective. In cases involving minors, courts elsewhere in Pakistan often:

- direct constitution of special investigation teams,
- require periodic progress reports,
- monitor investigation,
- or transfer the inquiry to higher authorities.

The Tharparkar court did none of these. The order, therefore, reflects judicial passivity in a child disappearance case.



CASE 2



Dharshi v. SSP Tharparkar & Others (CMA No. 253/2025): Alleged Forced Relationship and Assertion of Female Agency

This case differed fundamentally because the alleged detainee, Sht. Amiyan voluntarily appeared before the court and denied being the applicant's wife. Instead, she accused the applicant of:

- mistreating her elder sister,
- expelling her from the marital home,
- and then attempting to claim her as his wife

Unlike many customary or patriarchal settings where women's voices are marginalized, the court relied decisively on Amiyan's statement. Her testimony entirely altered the narrative.

This reflects a comparatively rights-oriented judicial posture:

- woman's autonomy was recognized,
- coercive marital claims were rejected,
- and her preference to return to her parents was honored.

The statement also reveals layered patriarchal abuse:

- domestic violence against the elder sister,
- possible coercive relationship formation,
- and instrumental treatment of women within kinship structures.

The applicant attempted to legitimize his claim through litigation, but the proceedings exposed contradictions in his narrative.

This case highlights the fragility of women's status in rural kinship systems. The applicant was already married to the detainee's elder sister, suggesting:

- possible polygamous intentions,
- exploitative intra-family relations

The court avoided engaging with broader gender violence questions and instead disposed of the matter narrowly through voluntariness.

The court's strength lay in its respect for the woman's statement. However, it did not examine:

- allegations of maltreatment of the elder sister,
- potential domestic violence,
- or coercion within the household structure.

Thus, while autonomy was recognized, structural abuse remained unaddressed.



CASE 3



Zubair v. Ghulam Ali (CMA No. 260/2025): Family Hierarchy and Judicial Assumptions About Marriage

This case involved a son alleging that his mother and younger siblings were being wrongfully detained by his stepfather/father figure. The court dismissed the petition after observing that "It is beyond imagination that a husband can detain his legally wedded wife and children." This statement is perhaps the most legally and sociologically problematic among all the orders. The court's reasoning reflects a deeply patriarchal assumption that:

- marriage inherently negates illegal confinement
- husbands naturally act in the interests of wives
- and family relations are incompatible with coercion

This assumption contradicts contemporary understandings of domestic abuse and coercive control. Modern human rights jurisprudence recognizes that illegal detention can occur within family settings through:

- mobility restrictions
- economic dependency
- threats
- emotional coercion
- isolation

The court's categorical statement effectively immunizes domestic spaces from scrutiny.

Instead of a judicial inquiry, the matter was resolved through an undertaking by the husband, and apparent satisfaction of the applicant. This reflects the broader tendency of lower courts in rural Sindh to prioritize reconciliation and family settlement over rights adjudication.

Unlike in the Dharshi case, Masmat Rehana's statement was not substantively discussed. The court relied more heavily on:

- kinship logic
- social presumptions
- and male undertakings

This reveals an inconsistency in the treatment of women's agency across cases.



CASE 4



Masmat Sahib Khatoon v. Allah Bachayo & Others (CMA No. 277/2025): Fragmented Custody and Individualized Choice

This case involved a mother seeking recovery of her adult daughter (Masmat Moomal) and two granddaughters. The detainees voluntarily appeared before the court, but their preferences differed:

- Moomal and Zeenat wished to accompany the applicant
- Zainab wished to stay with her uncle to care for her ill father

This case demonstrates the court's comparatively nuanced handling of family disputes. Rather than treating the detainees collectively, the court recognized individualized preferences.

This is significant because each detainee's statement was considered separately, the choice was individualized, and the court avoided imposing a single-family solution.

Although framed as illegal detention proceedings, the matter effectively became a child custody and guardianship dispute. However, the court:

- conducted no welfare inquiry,
- made no best-interest assessment,
- and did not appoint guardianship proceedings.

This reflects how Section 491-A petitions are routinely used as substitutes for proper family court mechanisms.

One problematic dimension concerns the treatment of minors' wishes. The court relied heavily on stated preferences despite:

- the young ages involved
- possible family pressure
- and a lack of psychological ssessment

In formal child rights jurisprudence, children's wishes are relevant but not determinative without a welfare evaluation.

Comparative Analysis of the Four Cases

The four cases decided by the Sessions Court, Tharparkar, during 2025 demonstrate significant variations in the types of cases, such as disputes, judicial reasoning, and the treatment of women and children under Section 491-A Cr.P.C. The case filed by Masmat Zubedan is concerned with the disappearance of an eight-year-old minor girl, Gul Niazan, who was allegedly abducted and illegally detained by private respondents.

Unlike the other cases, the alleged detainee was never recovered. The court adopted a procedural approach and dismissed the petition after relying upon the police report that neither the accused nor the child had been traced. The case exposed serious weaknesses in child protection mechanisms and reflected limited judicial intervention despite the gravity of allegations involving kidnapping and trafficking provisions.

In contrast, the Dharshi case revolved around an alleged forced relationship and wrongful confinement of an adult Hindu woman, Sht. Amiyan. The proceedings took a different direction when the woman voluntarily appeared before the court and categorically denied being the applicant's legally wedded wife. Instead, she alleged that the applicant had mistreated her elder sister, who was actually his wife, and later attempted to force a relationship with her. In this case, the court relied heavily on the woman's own testimony and recognized her autonomy by allowing her to return to her parents as she wished. Compared with the Zubedan case, judicial recognition of female agency was considerably stronger.

The Zubair case reflected a domestic family conflict involving a son who claimed that his stepfather or father figure was illegally detaining his mother and younger siblings. Unlike the Dharshi case, the court did not substantially examine the possibility of coercion within the household. Instead, the judge observed that it was "beyond imagination" that a husband could detain his legally wedded wife and children. This reasoning reflected deeply patriarchal assumptions about the family and marital authority. Rather than treating the matter as a serious liberty concern, the court resolved the dispute by requiring the husband to give an undertaking permitting the applicant to meet his mother. The case, therefore, illustrated judicial preference for reconciliation and informal settlement over rigorous inquiry into domestic confinement.

The Sahib Khatoon case involved a family custody dispute concerning an adult daughter and two minor granddaughters, also allegedly confined by relatives. Unlike in the Zubair case, the court recorded the statements of all detainees individually and allowed each person to decide independently where they wished to reside. Two detainees chose to accompany the applicant, while one minor girl wished to stay with her uncle to care for her ill father. The court

accepted these preferences and disposed of the petition accordingly. Although the approach appeared more individualized and liberty-oriented, the court still failed to conduct any structured child welfare assessment despite the involvement of minors.

Collectively, these cases reveal important socio-legal themes regarding the administration of justice in rural Sindh. One recurring pattern is the treatment of the family as both a protective and potentially oppressive institution. While courts generally presume the legitimacy of family authority, the petitions themselves reveal that coercion, forced relationships, confinement, and abuse may emerge from within these domestic and kinship structures. The judiciary, therefore, oscillates between protecting individual liberty and preserving patriarchal family order.

Another important feature is the courts' strong dependence on the voluntary appearance and oral statements of alleged detainees. Once detainees appeared in person before the court, judges generally disposed of the petitions quickly, without extensive evidentiary inquiry. This approach prioritizes speedy settlement and practical resolution, but it also risks overlooking hidden coercion, intimidation, emotional pressure, and social constraints influencing the detainees' statements.

The cases further demonstrate weak child protection jurisprudence in lower courts. The disappearance of the minor girl Gul Niazan did not result in proactive judicial monitoring of the investigation. In contrast, the wishes of minor girls in the Sahib Khatoon case were accepted without any detailed inquiry into their welfare or vulnerability. These patterns suggest insufficient integration of child-rights principles into Section 491-A proceedings in rural Sindh.

Finally, the cases illustrate the informalization of justice in rural districts. Section 491-A proceedings frequently operate less as strict constitutional liberty hearings and more as informal forums for mediation, negotiated undertakings, kinship accommodation, and social reconciliation.

Although such approaches may reduce immediate family tensions, they may also obscure structural violence against women and children and reinforce patriarchal social arrangements under the guise of consensual settlement.

Overall, these Tharparkar cases illustrate the contradictory nature of lower-court justice in rural Sindh in 2025. On one hand, the court occasionally affirmed women's autonomy and recognized voluntary choice, particularly in the Dharshi and Sahib Khatoon cases. On the other hand, patriarchal assumptions remained deeply embedded, especially in the Zubair case, where marriage itself was treated as incompatible with unlawful detention.

Most significantly, the Gul Niazan case exposes severe institutional weaknesses in responding to missing and abducted minor girls. The court's passive reliance on police investigation demonstrates the limited operationalization of child protection principles in rural criminal justice systems. Collectively, these cases reveal that Section 491-A Cr.P.C. in Sindh functions less as a strict constitutional liberty mechanism and more as a hybrid forum for managing kinship conflicts, marital disputes, custody disputes, and social disorder in rural communities.



SECTION 4:
RESISTANCE OF RURAL WORKERS AND PEASANTS

Between April and November 2025, Sindh province witnessed a sustained and high-intensity mobilization of agrarian workers, small-scale farmers, rural activists, and political activists. The data gathered by HWA show over 120 distinct protest events, frequently drawing crowds of 1,000 to 2,000 participants. This period marks a significant escalation in rural unrest, characterized by a cross-class and cross-ideological coalition; the movement unified traditionally disparate actors, ranging from communist labor committees and nationalist parties to religious scholars (Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam) and university student bodies. The primary structural catalyst for this provincial mobilization was the proposed "6 new canals" project on the River Indus. This project served as a unifying grievance, perceived by rural stakeholders as a direct threat to the province's ecological and economic survival.

However, this overarching concern was supported by localized distress regarding chronic water scarcity, specifically, tail-end water deprivation, systemic irrigation corruption, and the volatility of the agricultural commodity market. The scale and diversity of the tactics employed suggest a sophisticated level of strategic coordination aimed at both the provincial administration and local feudal power structures.

The chronological progression of the 2025 movement reveals distinct phases of mobilization. In April, protests reached their peak, driven by opposition to the "six new canals" and corporate farming initiatives. This period was marked by provincial scale highway blockades and highly visible torch-bearer rallies.

Between May and August, the focus shifted toward localized grievances related to water management. Demonstrations centered on acute shortages in specific canal branches, such as the Nara and Rohri canals, alongside tail end water deprivation and widespread corruption within the irrigation department, particularly demands for bribes.

By October and November, the movement evolved to address issues of agricultural economic survival. Protests increasingly concentrated on market pricing for rice and wheat crops, as the harvest season underscored inequities in crop valuation and the urgent need for fair pricing mechanisms

Primary grievances of the protestors

The categorization of primary grievances in Sindh during 2025 highlights four major areas of contention. The first involves new canal projects, where peasants and activists rejected initiatives such as the "new canals," the "six new canals" on the Indus River, and the "Namanzoor" canal project. These protests also opposed corporate farming schemes, with demonstrations recorded in Kotri, Hyderabad, Tando Bhago, Kunri, Gambat, Talhar, Karachi, and Mirpur Sakro.

The second grievance concerns water management and scarcity, characterized by severe shortages in canal branches, deprivation at the "tail-end," bribery demands for water supply, illegal shifting of watercourses such as Lundo Shahk, and outright closures of water channels. These issues were reported in Sanghar, Matiari, Naushero Feroz, Umerkot, Tando Allahyar, Jacobabad, Rohri (Kazi Wahh), and SBA (Gupchani).

The third grievance concerns crop pricing and the agricultural economy, where farmers protested the failure to fix wheat prices, inadequate rice rates, and the sale of low-quality or adulterated urea by local dealers such as Chetan Das. These problems were documented in Khairpur, Qamber, Jhok Shareef, Golarchi, Warah, Larkana, and Naukot.

Finally, land and labor rights formed a critical grievance category. Reports included feudal land grabbing, feudal violence, and impunity, such as the torture of Daulat Ram, forced labor in brick kilns, wage disputes in date gardens, and family detentions in feudal mansions in Sehwan. These incidents were reported in Kaloi, Jamshoro, Naushero Feroz, Mirpur Sakro, Sajawal, and Khairpur.

Geographic areas and mobilization centers

The geographic hotspots and mobilization centers of 2025 reveal distinct patterns of protest activity across Sindh. Sanghar emerged as a focal point for water scarcity demonstrations, particularly targeting mismanagement in the Babu Chann and Sarhari branches. Matiari and Mithiari witnessed repeated mobilization against the irrigation department's bribery demands and water shortages in the Rohri canal subdivisions. Naushero Feroz became a center of grievances involving feudal land grabbing and the detention of peasant families. Mirpurkhas served as a strategic hub for large scale marches concerning the Nara Canal and the "Sindhu Darya te Canal Namanzoor" movement.

Strategic choke points were also central to mobilization. Protesters frequently suspended regional trade by blocking National Highways at multiple points simultaneously. In addition, bridges ("pulls") across the province were strategically blocked by JUI led demonstrations, paralyzing internal connectivity.

Key marches further underscored the scale of mobilization. In Kunri, protesters organized a 20-kilometer endurance march to oppose the new canal project. In Mirpur Bathoro, a large scale march extended for 8 kilometers, while in Phuldiyun to Sindhri, a significant regional rally was staged in Mirpurkhas.

Types of protest tactics

The typology of protest tactics in Sindh during 2025 demonstrates a diverse range of strategies employed by peasants, civil society, and political groups. Roadblocks were the most prevalent form of direct action, with key incidents including a seven-hour blockade in Tando Muhammad Khan and a five-hour traffic suspension at the Daharki bypass. Rallies and marches took multiple forms: "torchbearer" rallies were organized in the evenings to maximize visibility and symbolic opposition; "Bedari" (awareness) marches were led by civil society to broaden the movement's base; and "shutter down" strikes involved coordinated business closures alongside rallies to demonstrate total local solidarity.

Symbolic and cultural resistance also played a significant role. Civil society held Eid Namaz on boats in the Indus River at Kotri to emphasize the river's sanctity. In Sakrand, protesters wore kafan (shrouds) on their heads to symbolize the existential threat posed by canal projects. Sustained hunger strikes were recorded in Dadu to highlight peasant resolve. At the same time, endurance marches such as the 20 kilometer trek in Kunri and the eight kilometer march in Mirpur Bathoro underscored the physical stakes of the struggle.

Direct action further escalated tensions. University students organized Indus Highway blocks to leverage intellectual and youth influence. In Moro, civil unrest led to police clashes and one fatality, marking a peak in regional tension and illustrating the volatility of the protest landscape.



Stakeholders

In addition to peasants and rural workers, many political and non-political groups took part in the protests and also organized protests for peasants and rural workers. The movement in Sindh during 2025 was characterized by a diverse organizational structure involving multiple stakeholders. Political and nationalist organizations played a central role, including Awami Tehreek, the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA), Jamiat Ulema e Islam (JUI), Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI), the Communist Party of Pakistan, and the Shaheed Bhutto group. Alongside them, agrarian committees and labor unions such as the Sindh Hari Committee, Poriyat Mazhamat Tehreek, All Pakistan Gadani Ithehad, and various local farmers' committees mobilized rural workers and peasants.

Thematic and civil society movements also contributed significantly, with groups such as Sindhu Bachayo Tehreek, JWC, Sindhu darya te canal na manzoor, and Sujagh Bar Tehreek organizing campaigns on water rights and canal projects. Social and religious leadership was visible through the involvement of religious scholars (Ulema) and the Sufi Faqeer Janarn Committee, who provided moral and cultural legitimacy to the protests.

Youth and academic bodies, particularly university student unions across Sindh and localized groups such as the Mehar Ali Jamali village students, added intellectual and organizational strength. Finally, community groups, including Nojawan Ithehad, Thar Sujaag Sathh, and Bhittai Welfare, ensured grassroots mobilization and sustained participation at the village level.

Sindh: A Year of Rural Resistance

The year 2025 marked a massive surge in civil unrest across Sindh, Pakistan, driven by grievances within agricultural and rural sectors. Protests were sparked by the '6 New Canals' project on the River Indus, raising fears of exacerbated water shortages. Beyond water

Beyond water issues, the movement forressiny. Beyond water issues, the movement addressed economic instability, low crop prices, and human rights concerns, with diverse actions ranging from rallies to high-impact roadblocks.

TIMELINE OF ACTIVITY (2025)



APRIL:
The Peak of Mobilization
Highest density of activity, protests occurring almost daily across multiple districts simultaneously.

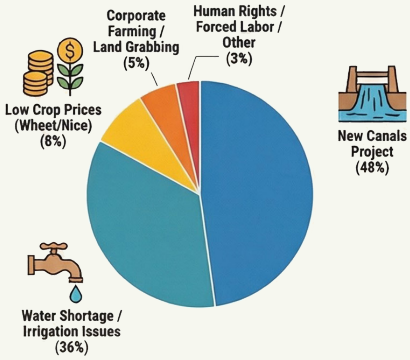


MAY – AUGUST:
Sustained Water Grievances
Shift toward localized protests by farmers targeting irrigation departments over severe water shortages and bribery.

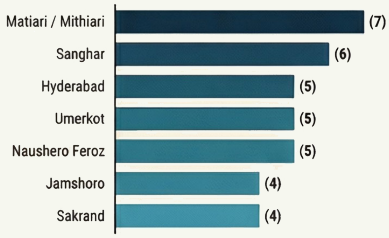


OCTOBER – NOVEMBER:
Economic Shift
Year-end protests transitioned to economic focus, with farmers protesting low crop prices for rice and wheat in Larkana, Warah, and Golarchi.

DRIVERS OF UNREST
(Reason Distribution)



GEOGRAPHIC HOTSPOTS
(Active Districts)



The Epicenter: Central Sindh. Districts like Hyderabad, Jamshoro, and Matiari saw the most frequent activity due to proximity to the River indus and major highways.

Expanding Beach. Unrest was not limited to cities; rural areas in Sanghar and Umerkot showed high frequency of roadblocks by local farmers.

NATURE OF RESISTANCE



Rallies and Marches (52%)
Included historical marches (some over 20km) and unique 'torched-bearer' rallies.



Roadblocks and Highway Suspensions (48%)
High-impact events, often blocking national highways for 5 to 7 hours to suspend traffic.

Diverse Tactics. Protests also included hunger strikes in Dadu and symbolic 'Eid Namaz' on boats in the Indus River.

SCALE OF PARTICIPATION



Largest Single Mobilizations (2,000+)
Biggest crowds were seen in Bulri Shah Kareem, Mirpur Sakro, and coordinated JUI roadblocks across the province.

Significant Local Turnouts (1,000+)
Over 10 events recorded 1,000+ participants, including major rallies in Gambat, Talhar, and Tando Jam.

Women and Children Participation
Notable events in Naseerabad and Chambar featured high participation from women and children against canal projects.

Peasant and Corporate Farming and Canal Projects

The conflict over land and water intensified in July 2024, when the federal government approved the Cholistan Canal project, sparking fears of dispossession in Sindh (Dawn, 2025). Activists accused the Indus River System Authority (IRSA) of manipulating water statistics to deprive Sindh of its rightful share under the 1991 Accord. By late 2024, nationalist parties and peasant organizations began mobilizing against what they termed "economic genocide" through corporate farming and canal construction.

Launched in July 2023, the Green Pakistan Initiative (GPI) aimed to corporatize agriculture by allocating 4.8 million acres (1.94 million hectares) of land for industrial farming (Abbas, 2025). Using the Land Information & Management System (LIMS), authorities classified peasant-cultivated lands as "unused," enabling transfer to corporate entities. Critics argued that this entrenched elite control displaced peasants and diverted water resources through six proposed canals along the Indus River. "Food will be shipped to the Gulf and Global North countries, while increasing hunger and deprivation at home" (Abbas, 2025, p. 7).

April 10, 2025 (Kot Addu, Punjab): Police arrested farmers and seized tractors at Ehsan Pur Seed Farm, despite a court stay order. Protests forced authorities to retreat, symbolizing a rare victory for peasants (Abbas, 2025).

APRIL 10, 2025

(Kot Addu, Punjab): Police arrested farmers and seized tractors at Ehsan Pur Seed Farm, despite a court stay order. Protests forced authorities to retreat, symbolizing a rare victory for peasants (Abbas, 2025).

APRIL 13, 2025

Nationwide mobilization by Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee (PKRC) and allied unions rejected GPI leases and canal projects.

APRIL 18-29, 2025

(Babarloi, Sindh): A two-week sit-in blocked highways, prompting the Council of Common Interests to suspend canal construction.

MAY 6, 2025

(Bhakkar Convention): Hundreds of landless peasants, women, and youth denounced corporate land grabs and demanded agrarian reform.

Also, artists, writers, and poets joined protests in March 2025, warning that new canals would "turn Sindh into a desert" (Samo, 2025). The Sindh Chamber of Agriculture, founded in 1935, organized mass rallies demanding the cancellation of canal projects and highlighting that 5% of landlords control 64% of farmland, while 51% of rural households remain landless (Abbas, 2025).

On the other hand, peasant groups secured court-ordered stays of eviction and machinery confiscation. They also demanded repeal of colonial-era laws such as the Colonization of Lands Act (1912) and Land Acquisition Act (1894), which continue to justify displacement in the name of "public interest."

In this political resistance, women play an important role. They played a central role in mobilizations, particularly in Badin, Sujawal, and Arifwala, leading marches and reviving ancestral seed varieties. Agroecology and seed sovereignty became pillars of resistance, with community seed banks preserving biodiversity and rejecting GMO inputs (Abbas, 2025).

Statistics and Structural Inequality

- 51% of rural households are landless.
- 5% of landlords control 64% of farmland.
- 65% of farmers own only 15% of land.
- Women own just 3% of land, facing systemic exclusion from rights and credit (Abbas, 2025).

The struggle against corporate farming and canal projects represents a broader fight for land, life, and liberation. By combining legal advocacy, grassroots mobilization, and agroecological resilience, Pakistan's peasants are defending their livelihoods, ecological diversity, and sovereignty against state-backed dispossession.

On February 16, 2025, Bhit Shah hosted a historic nationwide Kisan Conference, organized by the Pakistan Kisan Rabita Committee, with strong support from the Sindhi Hari Tehreek, the Hari Jidojehad Committee Sindh, and the Sindh Hari Purohit Committee. Farmer leaders and activists from across Pakistan gathered in Hyderabad to declare resistance against corporate farming, canal construction on the Indus River, and exploitative agricultural policies.

The conference rejected corporate farming as a "death warrant" for small farmers and warned that new canals on the Indus would turn Sindh into a desert. Delegates demanded the abolition of corporate farming, equitable land distribution to tenant farmers and landless peasants, compensation for 2022 flood victims, higher taxation on the wealthy, refusal to repay foreign debts, and protection of indigenous farmer communities such as the Bheel, Meghwar, Kolhi, and Bagri from discrimination. They also called for the inclusion of tenant farmers in the Kisan Card scheme and the continuous operation of the rice plant in Shikarpur.

Prominent leaders, including Farooq Tariq, Advocate Wasand Thari, Ammar Ali Jan, Umrah Samo, Mustafa Chandio, Younis Rahu, and Ali Khoso, reaffirmed their commitment to defending farmers' rights and resisting anti-people policies. The gathering marked the beginning of a nationwide movement for farmers' rights, food sovereignty, and social justice (Pakistan Kisan Rabita Committee, 2025, February 16).





SECTION 5:
BONDED LABOR AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN SINDH

1. Bonded Laborers Released in the Brick Kiln and Agricultural Sectors in Sindh in 2025

The combined data from the brick kiln and agricultural sectors reveals that bonded labor has remained a widespread and systematic problem across Sindh during 2025. A total of 1,311 bonded laborers were reportedly released through police raids, court interventions, and rescue operations from both sectors combined. These cases were documented across multiple districts, including Umerkot, Sanghar, Matiari, Badin, Mirpurkhas, Hyderabad, Tharparkar, Shaheed Benazirabad (SBA), Tando Muhammad Khan, Larkana, and Qambar Shahdadkot.

Out of the total rescued laborers:

- 743 laborers were released from the brick kiln sector.
- 568 laborers were released from the agricultural sector.

These statistics demonstrate that brick kilns accounted for a slightly larger share of bonded labor cases, although agricultural bondage also remained deeply entrenched within Sindh's feudal rural economy.

Among the 743 released laborers in the brick kiln sector:

- 262 were men
- 220 were women
- 261 were children/minors

The near-equal proportion of men and children highlights the family-based nature of bonded labor in brick kilns. Entire households were trapped in debt bondage arrangements, forcing children into labor alongside parents. The brick kiln sector showed:

- higher overall rescue numbers,
- repeated raids on kiln owners,
- illegal confinement of entire laboring families,
- widespread use of debt bondage

Many cases involved laborers being freed from "captivity" or "private detention" by kiln owners. Umerkot, Sanghar, Matiari, and Badin emerged as major hotspots for kiln-based bonded labor.

Among the 568 released laborers in the agricultural sector:

- 206 were men
- 171 were women
- 191 were children/minors

The agricultural sector similarly relied on family labor systems, in which women and children constituted a substantial portion of the bonded workforce. Children constituted nearly one-third of all rescued agricultural laborers, indicating persistent child labor within rural agrarian relations. The agriculture sector reflected:

- strong feudal and landlord domination
- repeated discoveries of "private jails"
- coercive control over peasants
- and violence against laborers

Agricultural bondage was closely linked with landlessness, hereditary debt, and dependency on powerful landlords. Umerkot, Sanghar, Mirpurkhas, and SBA recorded some of the largest agricultural rescue operations.

When both the brick kiln and agricultural sectors are combined, a total of 1,311 bonded laborers were released during 2025, including 468 men, 391 women, and 452 children/minors.

In summary, the data demonstrates that children constituted an exceptionally high proportion of bonded labor victims in both sectors. This indicates that bonded labor in Sindh during 2025 was not limited to adult workers but operated as an intergenerational system affecting entire peasant and laboring families.

Umerkot was the most affected in both sectors, indicating that it remained one of the major centers of bonded labor in Sindh during 2025. Numerous raids were conducted against both brick kiln owners and agricultural landlords.

The district displayed a recurring pattern of family confinement, debt bondage, and forced labor.

Sanghar and Matiari also emerged as major districts where laborers were repeatedly rescued from private jails, captivity, and coercive labor arrangements.

The recurrence of similar cases suggests that bonded labor systems remained structurally embedded within local labor relations.

The cases collectively revealed multiple forms of abuse, including debt bondage, illegal confinement, forced labor, withholding of wages, child labor, physical violence, abduction, torture, and restrictions on movement.

Some incidents also involved direct violence by landlords and kiln owners against laborers attempting to escape or protest exploitation.

As far as enforcement patterns are concerned, the data indicates that most laborers were released through police raids, court orders, or emergency interventions following media exposure.

However, the frequent nature of the raids demonstrates that state intervention remained largely reactive rather than preventive. Despite rescue operations, there was little evidence of:

- sustained prosecutions,
- rehabilitation programs,
- compensation mechanisms,
- or structural labor reforms.

These combined statistics from 2025 demonstrate that bonded labor remained a large-scale structural human rights issue in Sindh. The release of 1,311 laborers, including 452 children, reveals the persistence of exploitative labor systems despite constitutional prohibitions and bonded labor laws.

The data further shows that bonded labor in Sindh operated through two interconnected systms:

- industrial exploitation in brick kilns
- feudal control within agriculture.

Feudal elites thrive on poverty, debt dependency, caste marginalization, and weak state regulation in both sectors. Although rescue operations provided temporary relief to many workers, the recurring nature of the cases indicates that the broader socioeconomic conditions sustaining bonded labor remained largely unchanged throughout 2025.

2. Bonded Labor in the Agricultural Sector of Sindh in 2025

The agricultural bonded labor cases reported during 2025 demonstrate that forced labor and illegal confinement remained deeply rooted within Sindh's rural agrarian economy. Unlike the brick kiln sector, where exploitation is concentrated around industrial labor sites, agricultural bonded labor was embedded within feudal landholding structures, private farms, and landlord-controlled rural communities. The cases reveal that peasants and agricultural workers across districts such as Umerkot, Sanghar, Mirpurkhas, Badin, Matiari, Tharparkar, Shaheed Benazirabad (SBA), and Qambar Shahdadkot continued to experience debt bondage, captivity, violence, and severe restrictions on freedom of movement.

The cases indicate that bonded labor in agriculture remained widespread across lower Sindh and adjoining rural districts. Umerkot emerged as the most heavily affected district, with repeated police raids throughout the year on agricultural farms and private detention sites. Numerous landlords and farm owners, including individuals identified as Arain, Kalar, Bhatti, Rind, Samo, and Jatt, were accused of illegally confining peasants and forcing them into labor.

The recurrence of cases in Sanghar, Mirpurkhas, and SBA further demonstrates that agricultural bondage is not an isolated phenomenon but a structural feature of Sindh's feudal agrarian economy. Workers were repeatedly rescued from farms, "private jails," and landlord-controlled compounds, indicating that coercive labor relations remain normalized in several rural regions.

A significant feature of the agricultural cases is the large number of laborers recovered in police operations. Several raids resulted in the release of entire peasant families rather than individual workers. Some of the largest incidents included:

- 45 peasants freed in Mirpurkhas in February 2025
- 37 peasants released in Sanghar in May 2025
- 33 laborers freed in Umerkot in September 2025
- and multiple cases involving 20–32 laborers across Mirpurkhas, Sanghar, Badin, and Umerkot.

The data indicates that bonded labor in agriculture is intergenerational and family-based. Men, women, and children were jointly trapped within exploitative labor arrangements tied to debt, advances, and dependency on landlords. Entire households were often prevented from leaving farms until debts were repaid, creating conditions resembling servitude.

Once again, the participation of women and children also demonstrates how bonded labor extends beyond economic exploitation into social control over peasant families. Workers living on landlord-controlled farms often lacked independent housing, access to justice, education, healthcare, and alternative employment opportunities.

One of the most disturbing features of the agricultural cases is the repeated reference to "private jails." Numerous incidents explicitly described peasants being rescued from:

- private detention facilities
- captivity of landlords
- forcibly confined compounds

Cases from Sanghar, Matiari, Qambar Shahdadkot, Umerkot, and SBA repeatedly used the term "private jail," indicating the existence of coercive systems in which landlords exercised quasi-feudal authority over laborers. Such terminology suggests that bonded labor in Sindh often exceeds ordinary labor exploitation because of unlawful imprisonment and forced confinement.

The persistence of these practices reflects the weakness of state oversight in rural areas, where influential landlords continue to wield significant social, economic, and political power. Police intervention generally occurred in these cases after complaints, media reporting, or external pressure, rather than government prioritizing.

Nearly all documented releases occurred through police raids. This indicates that state intervention remained largely reactive rather than preventive. Instead of conducting systematic labor inspections or proactively enforcing bonded labor laws, authorities intervened only after severe violations became publicly visible.

The recurring raids in districts like Umerkot and Sanghar also suggest that many landlords continued to operate exploitative labor systems despite prior enforcement actions. The absence of information on prosecutions, convictions, compensation, or the rehabilitation of rescued workers signals weak accountability mechanisms.

Court-led or institutional rehabilitation processes appear largely absent from the reported incidents. Most cases focused solely on the immediate rescue of workers without addressing long-term socio-economic vulnerabilities that force laborers back into debt bondage.

Several cases revealed extreme violence used to maintain labor control. In October 2025, a laborer named Ramzan Janddani in Tharparkar was reportedly kidnapped, stripped naked, and tortured by local feudals. This case illustrates the violent coercive methods often employed against peasants who resist exploitation or attempt to escape bonded labor arrangements.

Similarly, references to captivity and private jails indicate that intimidation, physical abuse, and threats were integral components of the labor control system. Bonded labor in agriculture, therefore, operated not only through debt dependency but also through direct coercion and fear.

These incidents reflect the persistence of feudal power relations in Sindh's countryside, where landlords frequently exercise control extending beyond economic relations into policing, punishment, and social domination over laboring communities.

The victims of agricultural bonded labor were overwhelmingly drawn from marginalized peasant communities, landless rural households, and socially vulnerable castes. Many laborers depended entirely upon landlords for:

- seasonal employment
- loans and advances
- shelter
- food
- and social protection

This dependency created exploitative patron-client relations in which peasants were unable to leave farms due to accumulated debts and a lack of economic alternatives. The system was reinforced by widespread rural poverty, unequal land ownership, and weak implementation of labor protections.

The repeated appearance of influential landlords and agriculturists in these cases also highlights the structural imbalance between powerful landowners and impoverished peasants. In many areas, laborers lacked access to legal representation, unionization, or institutional support capable of challenging feudal authority.

As with the brick kiln sector, many agricultural bonded labor cases were reported in regional newspapers, on television channels, and on social media rather than in official state documentation. Local media, therefore, played a crucial role in exposing abuses and publicizing rescue operations.

However, reliance on media reporting also indicates the absence of a centralized governmental monitoring system for bonded labor. The actual scale of agricultural bondage is therefore likely much larger than reflected in documented reports.

The agricultural cases collectively demonstrate that bonded labor in Sindh during 2025 remained structurally connected to feudal land relations and rural inequality. Despite constitutional prohibitions under Article 11 and legal protections under the Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act, 1992, peasants continued to experience:

- debt bondage
- unlawful confinement
- private imprisonment
- forced labor
- violence
- denial of freedom of movement

The repeated recovery of workers from farms and private jails illustrates that bonded labor was not an exceptional occurrence but a continuing feature of Sindh's agrarian order. Police raids occasionally disrupted individual cases of exploitation, but the broader socioeconomic conditions sustaining bonded labor, including concentrated land ownership, poverty, caste marginalization, and weak rural governance, remained largely unchanged throughout 2025.

Districts	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Total
Badin	33	35	133	57	57	20	70	31	395
Dadu	0	0	0	14	5	0	0	0	19
Ghotki	16	0	0	0	30	0	0	0	46
Hyderabad	56	2	79	106	9	0	42	0	294
Jacobabad	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3
Jamshoro	0	0	0	40	29	0	0	0	69
Kandhkot	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Khairpur Mirs	0	0	35	0	50	0	5	5	90
Larkana	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	8
Matiari	24	0	t	84	14	0	0	17	378
Mirpurkhas	418	256	497	338	21	74	38	122	1764
NF	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	11
QS	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	20	21
Sanghar	264	116	514	217	86	87	194	98	1576
Sukkur	0	0	80	0	11	0	0	0	91
Benazirabad	57	78	0	15	3	19	40	39	251
Shikarpur	0	1	0	23	23	0	0	0	47
Sajawal	0	15	0	0	3	0	0	0	18
Tando Allahyar	145	189	78	102	61	0	0	0	575
TMK	136	0	0	0	11	36	0	0	183
Thaparkar	0	0	0	14	13	0	22	22	71
Thatta	0	13	0	0	38	22	0	0	73
Umerkot	250	1,017	1436	455	202	283	206	219	4068
Total	**1399**	**1,722**	**3,086**	**1,465**	**653**	**542**	**620**	**0**	**10053**

Data Analysis

The district-wise data of bonded labor cases in Sindh reveals a highly uneven geographical concentration of exploitation, with a few districts accounting for the overwhelming majority of reported cases. Of the 10,053 bonded labor cases, the largest number was reported in Umerkot, which alone accounted for 4,068 cases, representing approximately 40.5% of the provincial total. This indicates that Umerkot remained the most severely affected district and the principal center of bonded labor in Sindh. The exceptionally high number reflects the deep entrenchment of debt bondage in both the agricultural and brick kiln sectors of the district.

The second-highest number of cases was reported in Mirpurkhas, with 1,764 cases, followed by Sanghar with 1,576 cases. Together, these three districts, Umerkot, Mirpurkhas, and Sanghar, accounted for nearly three-quarters of all reported bonded labor cases in Sindh. The concentration of cases in these districts demonstrates that bonded labor is particularly prevalent in lower Sindh, where large agricultural estates, brick kiln industries, rural poverty, and unequal labor relations are deeply rooted.

A second group of districts reported moderate but still substantial numbers of bonded labor cases. These included:

- Tando Allahyar (575 cases)
- Badin (395 cases)
- Matiari (378 cases)
- Hyderabad (294 cases)
- and Benazirabad (251 cases)

These districts also represent agriculturally productive regions with significant reliance on seasonal and informal labor. The high number of cases in these areas suggests the persistence of exploitative labor systems linked to feudal landholding patterns, debt dependency, and weak labor regulation.

Other districts showed comparatively lower totals but still reflected the presence of bonded labor practices. These included:

- TMK (183 cases)
- Sukkur (91 cases)
- Khairpur Mirs (90 cases)
- Thatta (73 cases)
- Tharparkar (71 cases)

- Jamshoro (69 cases)
- Shikarpur (47 cases)
- and Ghotki (46 cases)

Smaller numbers were reported from districts such as Dadu, Sajawal, Naushehro Feroze (NF), Larkana, Jacobabad, Kandhkot, and Qambar Shahdadkot (QS). However, lower recorded figures should not necessarily be taken as evidence of the absence of bonded labor. In many rural areas, cases remain underreported due to fear of retaliation by landlords or kiln owners, weak documentation systems, limited media access, and poor access to legal remedies for laborers.

The data overall demonstrates that bonded labor in Sindh is concentrated primarily in rural and agrarian districts where poverty, landlessness, caste marginalization, and dependence on landlords or labor contractors remain widespread. The dominance of districts such as Umerkot, Mirpurkhas, and Sanghar indicates that bonded labor is not an isolated phenomenon but a structural feature of the rural economy in several parts of Sindh.

Year-Wise Released Bonded Laborers in agriculture, Sindh, from 2013 to 2025

Table:
Bonded laborers released and escaped from the custody of landlords from 2013 to 2025

Years	Men	Women	Children	Total
2025	191	171	206	568
2024	211	178	178	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	29
2014	107	53	115	275
2013	345	264	651	1260
Total	**4081**	**4143**	**4349**	**12573**

The year-wise data on released bonded laborers in Sindh from 2013 to 2025 demonstrate the large-scale and persistent nature of bonded labor affecting men, women, and children across the province. During this period, a total of 12,573 bonded laborers were reportedly released through police raids, court interventions, and rescue operations. Among them were:

- 4,081 men,
- 4,143 women,
- and 4,349 children.

The data reveal that children constituted the largest category of released bonded laborers, highlighting the deeply family-based and intergenerational nature of bonded labor in Sindh. The near-equal distribution of men, women, and children further indicates that entire families, rather than individual workers alone, were trapped in systems of debt bondage and forced labor.

The statistics show a gradual increase in the number of bonded laborers released between 2013 and 2020. In 2013, a total of 1,260 laborers were released, including an exceptionally high number of children (651), indicating widespread child labor and family bondage during that year. After fluctuating between 2014 and 2018, the numbers increased significantly in:

- 2019 (1,722 releases),
- and especially 2020 (3,086 releases).

In 2020, the highest number of bonded laborers was released during the entire period under review. This included:

- 1,017 men,
- 1,154 women,
- and 915 children.

The exceptionally high figures for 2020 may reflect:

- intensified rescue operations,
- improved reporting,
- increased media visibility,
- or heightened labor vulnerabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The large number of women and children released during 2020 further suggests that labor bondage operated primarily through family-based labor arrangements in both the agriculture and brick kiln sectors.

Following the 2020 peak, the number of reported releases declined:

- 1,465 in 2021,
- 653 in 2022,
- 542 in 2023,
- 620 in 2024,
- and 568 in 2025.

Although the numbers decreased after 2021, the continued release of several hundred bonded laborers annually demonstrates that bonded labor remained a persistent structural issue in Sindh. The decline does not necessarily indicate a reduction in exploitation itself. Instead, it may reflect:

- inconsistent documentation,
- reduced rescue operations,
- weaker media reporting,
- or limited institutional monitoring.

An important feature of the data is the consistently high proportion of women and children among rescued laborers. For many years, women and children together outnumbered adult men. For example:

- In 2021, women constituted the largest category with 521 releases,
- While in 2013, children formed more than half of all released laborers

This pattern demonstrates that bonded labor in Sindh is not simply a labor rights issue but also a serious gender and child rights concern. Women and children frequently work alongside male family members under coercive debt arrangements, often without wages, educational access, or freedom of movement.

The high number of child laborers also reflects the hereditary and intergenerational character of bonded labor systems. Children born into indebted, laboring families frequently enter the labor force at an early age, especially in brick kilns and on farms.

The statistics collectively reveal that bonded labor in Sindh remained deeply embedded within the province's rural and informal economy throughout the period from 2013 to 2025. The repeated rescue of thousands of laborers over more than a decade indicates that:

- debt bondage,
- illegal confinement,
- forced labor,
- and exploitative labor arrangements continued despite constitutional prohibitions and bonded labor legislation.

The data also demonstrates that bonded labor disproportionately affected poor, landless, and socially marginalized communities, particularly in districts dominated by feudal agricultural relations and brick kiln industries.

The year-wise statistics on the release of bonded laborers between 2013 and 2025 reveal the scale, continuity, and family-based nature of bonded labor in Sindh. With a cumulative total of 12,573 rescued laborers, including 4,349 children, the data demonstrates that bonded labor remained a major human rights and labor rights issue throughout the province.

The dominance of women and children among released laborers further indicates that bonded labor in Sindh functioned as a system of household and intergenerational exploitation rather than isolated labor abuse. Although rescue operations continued throughout the period, the persistence of high numbers across multiple years shows that the structural causes of bonded labor, including poverty, debt dependency, caste marginalization, and unequal rural power relations, remained largely unresolved.

3. Bonded Labor in Brick Kiln in Sindh During 2025

The documented cases from 2025 reveal that bonded labor in Sindh's brick kiln sector remained widespread, systematic, and deeply entrenched across several districts, including Umerkot, Sanghar, Matiari, Badin, Hyderabad, Shaheed Benazirabad (SBA), Tharparkar, Tando Muhammad Khan, Larkana, Mirpurkhas, and Naushehro Feroze. The cases demonstrate recurring patterns of debt bondage, illegal confinement, forced labor, physical violence, wage deprivation, and police intervention. They further show that brick kiln workers, including women and children, continued to experience severe violations of labor rights and human dignity despite constitutional prohibitions and bonded labor legislation in Pakistan.

A striking feature of the cases is the concentration of incidents in southern and eastern Sindh, particularly Umerkot, Sanghar, Matiari, and Badin. Umerkot alone accounted for a very large number of raids and recoveries throughout the year, indicating that the district remained one of the major centers of bonded labor in the brick kiln sector. Repeated operations against kiln owners such as Nasir Pathan and Akram Pathan suggest that exploitative labor systems were not isolated incidents but part of a continuing pattern of abuse.

Similarly, Sanghar and Matiari emerged as major districts where laborers were repeatedly recovered from captivity-like conditions. The recurrence of raids in these districts indicates the persistence of private coercive labor regimes operating with relative impunity. The geographical spread of cases across Sindh also demonstrates that bonded labor is not confined to one locality but constitutes a province-wide structural issue linked to rural poverty, caste hierarchies, debt dependency, and weak labor regulation.

The data shows that the number of laborers released in individual raids ranged from small groups of four or five persons to large-scale recoveries involving more than forty workers. Some of the largest recoveries included:

- 47 laborers freed in Sanghar in October 2025,
- 46 laborers released in Matiari in March 2025,
- 41 laborers freed in Hyderabad in November 2025,
- and multiple incidents involving 30–38 laborers in Badin, Sanghar, and Tando Muhammad Khan.

These numbers reveal that bonded labor systems often involve entire families rather than individual workers. Men, women, and children were collectively trapped within debt bondage arrangements, living and working under the control of kiln owners.

The repeated appearance of family-based labor groups also reflects the hereditary and intergenerational nature of bonded labor in Sindh. Children frequently accompanied parents into kiln work, leading to child labor and the denial of education. In some cases, minors themselves were explicitly identified among the recovered laborers, such as the four minor bonded laborers freed in Larkana in July 2025.

Most releases occurred through police raids, while some cases involved direct intervention by district courts. The repeated use of police operations demonstrates that many laborers were being held in conditions resembling unlawful confinement or private detention. Several reports specifically described laborers being freed from the "captivity" or "private jail" of kiln owners, indicating severe restrictions on movement and liberty.

Court-ordered releases in SBA also show the continuing importance of judicial mechanisms in addressing bonded labor. However, reliance on reactive raids rather than preventive labor inspections reflects institutional weakness. State authorities generally intervened only in response to complaints, media attention, or legal action, rather than through systematic labor monitoring.

The recurring raids against kiln owners with similar surnames, particularly "Pathan," also suggest the existence of powerful kiln-owner networks operating across districts. Despite repeated recoveries, the data do not indicate long-term prosecutions, convictions, or structural reforms, raising concerns about the sustainability of enforcement efforts.

Although most incidents were categorized as "release bonded labor," some cases exposed more direct forms of violence and coercion. In April 2025, in Tharparkar, a woman and her family publicly protested against forced labor and nonpayment of wages at Yaqoob Nohrio's

kiln. This case highlighted the economic dimension of bondage, where workers were trapped not only through debt but also through systematic wage withholding.

Another Tharparkar case involved a peasant family protesting to secure their release from bonded labor conditions, showing that resistance by workers themselves remained an important but risky strategy. In Sanghar during October 2025, a kiln worker named Prem Chand alias Kheero Oad was reportedly beaten and abducted by the kiln owner, illustrating how violence and intimidation were used to maintain labor control and suppress dissent.

These incidents reveal that bonded labor in brick kilns is not merely an economic arrangement but often involves physical coercion, threats, illegal confinement, and punitive violence against workers attempting to escape or demand wages.

Most victims in the brick kiln sector belonged to marginalized rural communities, including scheduled caste Hindu groups, landless peasants, and impoverished laboring castes. Debt bondage in Sindh operates through advances (peshgi), where laborers borrow money from kiln owners for survival needs and later become trapped in exploitative labor arrangements with inflated debts, restricted movement, and hereditary dependency.

The involvement of entire families, including women and children, demonstrates how poverty and social exclusion reinforce labor exploitation. Workers often lacked access to legal aid, formal contracts, education, and alternative employment opportunities, and escaping bondage was extremely difficult.

The repeated appearance of Pathan kiln owners in the cases also reflects unequal power relations between economically dominant kiln operators and socially vulnerable labor communities. Laborers frequently depended on owners not only for wages but also for housing, food, and loans, creating conditions of near-total dependency.

An important feature of the cases is that many incidents were reported in regional Sindhi newspapers, on television channels, and on social media platforms rather than in official government reports. This indicates that media organizations and local journalists played a critical role in documenting abuses of bonded labor and publicizing rescue operations.

However, dependence on media reporting also suggests the absence of a centralized, transparent governmental database on bonded labor cases. The fragmented nature of reporting may therefore underrepresent the true scale of exploitation in Sindh's brick kiln sector.

Taken collectively, the cases demonstrate that bonded labor in Sindh during 2025 remained a structural and recurring phenomenon rather than a series of isolated violations. Despite constitutional guarantees under Article 11 of the Constitution of Pakistan and the Sindh Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act, 2015, laborers continued to face:

- illegal confinement,
- debt bondage,
- wage exploitation,
- child labor,
- physical violence,
- and restrictions on mobility.

The repeated rescue operations reveal both the persistence of exploitation and the inadequacy of preventive state mechanisms. While police raids occasionally secured the release of workers, the broader system enabling bonded labor, including rural poverty, caste inequality, weak labor inspections, and impunity of kiln owners, remained largely intact throughout 2025.



June 16–19, 2025: The Registration Campaign

In mid-June 2025, the Sindh Human Rights Commission (SHRC), in collaboration with NADRA and civil society organizations such as SPARC, launched a four-day CNIC registration drive targeting brick kiln workers across Sindh. The initiative began on June 16 at Zaman Brick Kiln, continued at Super Chand Brick Kiln on June 17, Subhan Brick Kiln on June 18, and concluded at Lucky Brick Kiln on June 19 (Sindh Human Rights Commission, 2025).

NADRA's Mobile Registration Vans (MRVs) provided on-site services in underserved regions, including Tando Hyder (Hyderabad), Umerkot, and Mithi (Kaloi). This outreach ensured that marginalized workers—previously excluded from formal identity systems—received Computerized National Identity Cards (CNICs), granting them access to legal protections, social services, and recognition as citizens (Sindh Human Rights Commission, 2025).

International reports underscored the urgency of this initiative. The U.S. State Department (2025) estimated that 4.5 million workers nationwide were trapped in bonded labor, with Sindh and Punjab being the most affected provinces. Brick kiln workers, often undocumented and vulnerable, were among the most exploited groups, facing systemic exclusion from legal and social protections (U.S. State Department, 2025).

In parallel with human rights concerns, research highlighted the environmental costs of kiln operations. A study by Narejo, Mustafa, and Rajput (2025) examined traditional manual red brick kilns in North Sindh and found that kiln activity significantly contributed to smog duration during the winter months. The regression analysis revealed that winter day length and brick drying time were key variables influencing smog production, with broader implications for public health and environmental governance. The study recommended stricter regulation of kiln operations to mitigate negative externalities (Narejo, Mustafa, & Rajput, 2025).

Taken together, the CNIC registration drive represented a landmark effort in empowering marginalized workers by bridging the identity gap. While bonded labor remained a pervasive challenge, the initiative marked progress toward inclusion, accountability, and the protection of rights. At the same time, environmental research underscored the need for integrated governance to address both labor rights and ecological sustainability in Sindh's kiln sector.

	2022				2023				2024				2025				
	Children	Women	Men	Total	Children	Women	Men	Total	Children	Women	Men	Total	Children	Women	Men	Total	Total
Badin	0	0	0	0	12	15	14	41	0	0	0	0	30	34	34	98	**139**
Dadu	0	0	0	0	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	0	0	0	0	**5**
Hyderabad	22	19	20	61	0	0	0	0	8	5	4	17	24	15	12	51	**129**
Jacobabad	0	1	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**3**
Jamshoro	2	2	5	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**9**
Kandhkot	2	2	3	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**7**
Khairpur Mirs	2	3	2	7	0	0	0	0	5	6	7	18	0	0	0	0	**25**
Larkana	2	3	4	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	4	**13**
Matiari	14	9	9	32	17	15	14	46	13	17	11	41	30	35	30	95	**214**
Mirpurkhas	0	0	0	0	4	6	9	19	14	9	16	39	12	8	15	35	**93**
Noushero Feroz	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	2	5	8	6	10	24	**29**
QS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Sanghar	21	20	28	69	31	43	52	126	28	32	25	85	39	30	40	109	**389**
Sukkur	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Benazirabad	8	11	12	31	4	5	3	12	6	8	10	24	15	17	24	56	**123**
Shikarpur	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Sajawal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Tando Al-lahyar	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
TMK	0	0	0	0	1	5	13	19	14	11	13	38	38	24	32	94	**151**
Thaparkar	0	0	0	0	36	33	24	93	0	0	0	0	3	2	2	8	**101**
Thatta	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**
Umerkot	20	18	22	60	24	31	27	82	75	36	32	125	59	48	62	169	**436**
Total	93	89	110	292	129	154	156	439	165	125	120	392	262	220	261	743	**1866**

The dataset on brick kiln–related bonded labor releases in Sindh from 2022 to 2025 shows a total of 1,866 laborers freed across multiple districts. The distribution is highly uneven, with a strong concentration of cases in a small number of districts, indicating that brick kiln exploitation is geographically clustered rather than evenly spread across the province.

The data reveal that bonded labor in the brick kiln sector is heavily concentrated in a few districts, particularly Umerkot, Sanghar, Matiari, and Tando Muhammad Khan (TMK). These four districts alone account for a substantial proportion of the total releases, highlighting them as key hotspots of kiln-based labor exploitation in Sindh.

At the end, Umerkot recorded the highest number of released laborers (436 cases), followed by:

- Sanghar (389)
- Matiari (214)
- TMK (151)
- Badin (139)

Together, these five districts account for the majority of all recorded brick kiln labor releases during the period, indicating a strong spatial clustering of bonded labor in southern and southeastern Sindh.

A second group of districts shows moderate levels of bonded labor releases, including:

- Benazirabad (123)
- Tharparkar (101)
- Mirpurkhas (93)
- Khairpur Mirs (25)
- Naushehro Feroz (29)

These districts reflect the wider spread of brick kiln industries across rural Sindh, particularly in areas where migrant and seasonal labor is heavily dependent on advance-based wage systems and informal labor contracts.

Several districts recorded very low or zero reported cases, including: Dadu, Sukkur, Shikarpur, Sajawal, Tando Allahyar, Thatta (0 cases), and Ghotki (5), Kandhkot (7), Jamshoro (9), Jacobabad (3), Larkana (13).

However, these low figures should not be interpreted as evidence of the absence of bonded labor. Instead, they may reflect

- underreporting,
- weaker monitoring mechanisms,
- lower visibility of brick kiln operations,
- or fewer documented rescue operations in those areas.

The data indicates that brick kiln bonded labor in Sindh is structurally concentrated in districts with:

- high poverty levels,
- strong rural labor dependency,
- active brick kiln industries,
- and weak enforcement of labor laws.

The dominance of Umerkot, Sanghar, and Matiari aligns with broader patterns observed in agricultural bonded labor, suggesting that these districts function as dual-exploitation zones where both agricultural and industrial (brick kiln) bonded labor coexist.

The prevalence of bonded labor in TMK, Badin, and Benazirabad further indicates the integration of kiln labor systems into broader rural economies where workers are frequently trapped through debt advances, intergenerational labor arrangements, and restricted mobility.

The presence of multiple zero-reporting districts does not necessarily indicate freedom from bonded labor. Instead, it highlights a key limitation of the dataset: reliance on recorded rescue operations rather than systematic labor audits. In districts with weak media presence or limited enforcement activity, bonded labor may remain hidden or undocumented.

The brick kiln sector data from 2022–2025 demonstrates that bonded labor in Sindh remains highly concentrated in a small number of rural districts, particularly Umerkot, Sanghar, Matiari, and TMK. With a total of 1,866 reported releases, the findings confirm the continued presence of systemic labor exploitation within brick kiln operations across the province.

The uneven district distribution, combined with clusters of high-incidence areas, suggests that bonded labor is structurally embedded within specific regional economies rather than randomly distributed. Despite periodic rescue operations, the persistence of high numbers in the same districts indicates that the underlying economic and institutional drivers of bonded labor remain largely unchanged.

Year-Wise Analysis of Brick Kiln Bonded Labor Releases in Sindh (2022–2025)

The dataset on brick kiln bonded labor releases in Sindh from 2022 to 2025 shows a total of 1,866 laborers freed, including men, women, and children. The figures reveal not only yearly fluctuations in total releases but also a consistent presence of children and women, highlighting the deeply family-based nature of brick kiln labor exploitation in Sindh.
The data shows a clear rising trend in total releases over time:

- 2022: 292 laborers
- 2023: 439 laborers
- 2024: 392 laborers
- 2025: 743 laborers

The number of released laborers increased sharply in 2023 compared to 2022, remained relatively stable in 2024, and then surged significantly in 2025, which recorded the highest figure of the four years. This sharp rise in 2025 suggests intensified rescue operations, increased reporting, or heightened visibility of bonded labor cases rather than a sudden emergence of the problem.

Across all four years, the data show a relatively balanced distribution among men, women, and children, indicating that brick kiln bonded labor is overwhelmingly family-based rather than individualized exploitation.

Children consistently account for a significant share of released laborers, rising from 93 in 2022 to 262 in 2025. This sharp rise indicates that:

- entire families are trapped in kiln-based debt bondage,
- child labor is structurally embedded in kiln operations,
- and generational transmission of labor exploitation is widespread.

Women also form a substantial portion of bonded laborers, increasing from 89 in 2022 to 220 in 2025. This reflects:

- household-based labor systems,
- women's participation in brick molding and kiln work,
- and their vulnerability within debt-based family labor arrangements.

The sharp increase in 2025 suggests either expanded enforcement or greater documentation of male-dominated labor households in kiln raids.

The data demonstrates that brick kiln bonded labor in Sindh is not an individual employment issue but a household-based system of forced labor, where:

- entire families are bound through debt advances,
- children work alongside parents,
- and women are actively engaged in production cycles.

The steady increase in total releases over time may reflect:

- intensified police raids and judicial interventions,
- growing media coverage,
- or improved identification of bonded labor cases.

Labor-related

However, the persistence of high numbers across all years suggests that the underlying system of debt bondage remains structurally intact.

The year-wise data from 2022 to 2025 reveals that brick kiln bonded labor in Sindh affected 1,866 individuals, with a consistently high proportion of children and women. The increasing trend, particularly the sharp rise in 2025, highlights both the scale of exploitation and the growing visibility of rescue operations. Overall, the evidence confirms that bonded labor in brick kilns continues to operate as a family-based, intergenerational system of economic coercion, deeply embedded in rural Sindh's labor market structures and sustained by debt dependency and weak enforcement mechanisms.

4. Bonded Labor related Petitions in Umerkot in 2025

HWA collected 11 orders from the Sessions Court of Umerkot regarding allegations of bonded labor and illegal confinement. The period under review encompasses judicial orders issued in 2025. The primary legal mechanism utilized in these petitions is Section 491 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), invoked as a writ of habeas corpus to secure the liberty of individuals allegedly held in unlawful custody. This analysis focuses on the jurisdictional areas of Kunri, Pithoro, and Umerkot. The detainees predominantly represent marginalized socio-economic strata, specifically Hindu castes including Bheel, Kolhi, and Oad, as well as the Machhi (Muslim) caste.

The judicial record for 2025 begins with several early January orders addressing bonded labor and illegal detention. On 4 January 2025, two separate applications were filed: Ramchand reported the detention of seven workers at the brick kiln of Haji Kashif, while Rasing highlighted the confinement of seventeen individuals on the agricultural land of Zamendar Meerio. Just three days later, on 7 January, Satram petitioned for the release of fifteen detainees from Ismail Kunbhar's brick kiln. On 10 January, Ramesh documented ten workers held on the agricultural land of Moosa Kalar. By 18 January, Khushi Ram had identified nine detainees at Mir Raza's brick kiln, and on 24 January, Ranjho reported eleven individuals detained on Luquman Mahar's agricultural land.

The mid year registry shows continued exploitation. On 5 June 2025, Ramchand again petitioned for the release of six workers detained on Shalo Malhi's agricultural land. Later, on 24 July 2025, Loung reported the largest single case of the year, with twenty six detainees confined on the agricultural land of Yameen Khaskheli. These cases illustrate the persistence of bonded labor practices across both kiln and agricultural sites, despite judicial intervention.

The petitions reveal a systemic pattern of alleged labor exploitation, consistently divided between two categories of workers: industrial brick kiln laborers and agricultural peasants, locally referred to as Haris. This categorization underscores the breadth of bonded labor practices across both industrial and agrarian sectors, highlighting how exploitation is embedded in multiple layers of Sindh's rural economy.

Financial exploitation emerges as a recurring grievance. Applicants frequently cited landlords' and kiln owners' refusal to settle accounts or pay wages. In Case No. 11 of 2025, for example, respondents counter-claimed outstanding debts, a tactic often used to justify retaining workers under coercive conditions. Such financial entrapment reflects a deliberate strategy to perpetuate dependency and restrict mobility, ensuring that workers remain bound to exploitative arrangements.

Beyond economic pressure, coercion was frequently alleged to involve physical threats and restrictions on movement. Case No. 100 of 2026 and Case No. 46 of 2026 specifically described the use of armed guards to enforce confinement, while Case No. 833 of 2025 alleged harassment, torture, and deprivation of food and medicine. This illustrates how bonded labor can evolve into multi-generational cycles of exploitation, with workers trapped for years under conditions of systemic abuse.

The judicial process in Umerkot in 2025 adhered to the standardized framework set out in Section 491 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC). Petitions were filed to safeguard personal liberty, followed by formal notices to respondents. The court then issued a Rule Nisi, directing the Station House Officer (SHO) to conduct surprise raids. These proceedings were overseen by different presiding officers, most notably Judge Abdul Qudoos Memon, with Judge Abdul Ghaffar Khoso presiding over Case No. 21 of 2025 and Judge Karamuddin Junejo handling Cases No. 40 and 46 of 2026. After raids, detainees were produced in open court, where voluntary statements were recorded to determine whether individuals were residing at the sites of their own free will.

A critical finding was the divergence between workers' allegations and the official police mashirnamas (recovery memos). Police reports consistently claimed that detainees were "enjoying their liberty" and showed no overt signs of confinement. The judiciary, however, distinguished between "illegal detention in the legal sense" (physical barriers such as locks or chains) and the subjective deprivation of liberty. Courts frequently noted that, prima facie, no case of illegal detention was made out, yet they routinely overrode police narratives by prioritizing the expressed will and preference of the laborers. This approach underscored the judiciary's recognition that coercion can exist without visible restraints.

The constitutional framework provided the foundation for these decisions. Article 9 of the 1973 Constitution of Pakistan guarantees the right to life and liberty, while Article 14 upholds human dignity and prohibits exploitation. The courts emphasized the summary nature of Section 491 proceedings, limiting their scope to restoring liberty rather than adjudicating property or financial disputes. For instance, in Case No. 833 (Loung), the court rejected a request to return household articles, clarifying that such matters fall within the jurisdiction of civil or revenue courts. Across all eleven cases, the judiciary consistently prioritized detainees' volition, ordering them "set at liberty" to proceed to destinations of their choice. Respondents were reminded that debt recovery could not justify confinement and must be pursued through proper legal forums. Collectively, these outcomes highlight the Sessions Court's role as a critical safeguard against bonded labor, reinforcing constitutional protections of liberty and dignity for marginalized populations in Sindh.

5. Routine procedure followed in the release

HWA collected 11 orders from the Sessions Court of Umerkot regarding allegations of bonded labor and illegal confinement. The period under review encompasses judicial orders issued in 2025. The primary legal mechanism utilized in these petitions is Section 491 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), invoked as a writ of habeas corpus to secure the liberty of individuals allegedly held in unlawful custody. This analysis focuses on the jurisdictional areas of Kunri, Pithoro, and Umerkot. The detainees predominantly represent marginalized socio-economic strata, specifically Hindu castes including Bheel, Kolhi, and Oad, as well as the Machhi (Muslim) caste.

The routine bonded labor released stories indicate the following routine procedure/steps are followed:

- Individuals/peasants run away from 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.

6. District Vigilance Committees in Sindh, 2025

In 2025, Sindh's district administrations intensified efforts to combat human trafficking and bonded labor, particularly in sectors such as brick kilns and informal labor markets. However, they were least active in the agricultural sector. District Vigilance Committees (DVCs), mandated under Section 15 of the Sindh Bonded Labor System Abolition Act of 2015, became focal points for monitoring, coordination, and enforcement of the law. Many DVC meetings were held across the province, but the news or minutes of these meetings were not shared publicly. As a result, it is impossible to determine how many DVC meetings were held or what actions were taken to ensure implementation of the 2015 Act. Interestingly, HWA has noted the following stories published on the district administration's official Facebook pages, yet such stories are rare.

On 29 December 2025, Deputy Commissioner West, Ali Zulfiqar, convened a DVC meeting alongside the Additional Deputy Commissioner-II. The agenda focused on monitoring efforts against human trafficking and bonded labor, highlighting the district's commitment to implementation and vigilance (Deputy Commissioner West, 2025). Similarly, in South Karachi

Karachi, Assistant Commissioner Revenue Najeebullah Kalwar presided over a District Human Rights and Coordination Committee meeting on 30 September 2025, addressing child beggary, bonded labor, and challenges faced by the transgender community (Deputy Commissioner South Karachi, 2025). These meetings underscored Karachi's role as a hub of diverse social issues requiring multi-sectoral responses.

On 27 August 2025, Additional Deputy Commissioner-II, Ms. Saba Israr Bhutto, chaired a joint meeting of the Anti-Human Trafficking & Anti-Bonded Labor Monitoring Committee and the District Coordination Committee on Child Protection. Representatives from police, NADRA, women's development, labor, and social welfare departments participated. The committee resolved to conduct joint visits to brick kilns, compile records of registered kilns, and address issues such as CNIC issuance, child labor, and harassment of women workers. Ms. Bhutto emphasized the need to strengthen referral mechanisms to ensure timely reporting and effective coordination (Deputy Commissioner Hyderabad, 2025).

On 28 November 2025, Deputy Commissioner Subhash Chandar presided over a DVC meeting focused on preventing forced child labor at brick kilns. He stressed strict enforcement of Sindh's child labor laws and parental awareness. Civil society organizations, including SPARC, reported the presence of over 80 unregistered kilns that lacked basic facilities such as education, healthcare, and clean water. The absence of Labor Department officials was noted with concern, reflecting gaps in institutional accountability (Associated Press of Pakistan [APP], 2025).

Across Sindh, DVCs in 2025 demonstrated a growing institutional awareness of bonded labor and child exploitation. While challenges such as unregistered kilns and departmental absences persisted, the committees provided a platform for coordination among state institutions, civil society, and local governance structures. Their meetings reflected both the urgency of the problem and the incremental steps toward systemic reform.



SECTION 6:
SOCIAL SAFETY INITIATIVES

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In 2025, Sindh's social safety programs expanded significantly, with initiatives targeting maternal health, adaptive social protection, and poverty alleviation. The government increased cash transfers, piloted climate-resilient interventions, and broadened their coverage to vulnerable groups such as landless peasants and workers.

Maternal and Child Support Program (MAMTA)

The Sindh Social Protection Authority (SSPA) expanded the Maternal and Child Support Program (MCSP), also known as MAMTA, to 22 districts in 2025. Pregnant and lactating women were provided Rs. 41,000 in cash support over three years, an increase from Rs. 30,000 previously. By September 2025, 770,000 women had been registered at 800 health facilities, including 740 centers operated by the People's Primary Healthcare Initiative (PPHI) and 62 by the Department of Health. The initiative, part of a Rs. 48.3 billion social protection program aimed to improve maternal nutrition, encourage antenatal visits, and promote safe deliveries (The Nation, 2025).

Adaptive social protection (ASP) pilots

In May 2025, Sindh launched Adaptive Social Protection (ASP) pilots in Badin, Sanghar, Sujawal, Thatta, and Karachi, with support from the European Union (EU), BMZ Germany, and GIZ Pakistan. These pilots tested innovative poverty-alleviation models designed to address vulnerabilities stemming from climate change, floods, and droughts. The ASP program emphasized data-driven approaches, inter-agency data sharing, and anticipatory action to protect populations before disasters struck. Importantly, officials highlighted a shift in focus from landowning farmers to landless rural workers, who remain among the most underserved groups in Sindh (Business Recorder, 2025).

Strategic expansion and governance

By late 2025, Sindh's social protection agenda had become embedded in provincial development planning. The Sindh government contributed Rs. 6.3 billion to the broader program, while international partners provided further technical and financial support. The initiatives combined conditional cash transfers, healthcare integration, and climate-resilient strategies, reflecting a holistic approach to social safety. Officials emphasized that embedding adaptive social protection within Sindh's governance framework was critical to addressing poverty, advancing gender equity, and managing disaster risk (The News International, 2025).

Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) t

The Benazir Income Support Program remained Pakistan's largest social protection program in 2025, continuing to provide financial assistance to millions of economically vulnerable households, particularly women. The program primarily targeted poor women through direct cash transfers intended to reduce poverty and support household consumption (Business Recorder, 2025).

In Sindh, BISP remained highly significant because of widespread rural poverty, recurring climate disasters, and chronic economic insecurity among peasant and laboring communities. Rural women, especially widows, divorced women, and female-headed households, continued to constitute a major proportion of BISP beneficiaries.

The program operated through the National Socio-Economic Registry (NSER), which identified eligible families based on poverty scores and socio-economic indicators. Eligibility requirements in 2025 included valid computerized national identity cards (CNICs), low poverty scores, and absence of significant assets or government employment within the household (Business Recorder, 2025, November 4).

BISP continued to prioritize women beneficiaries, reflecting the program's long-standing emphasis on women-centered financial assistance. The program also aimed to strengthen women's control over household finances and reduce extreme poverty. In rural Sindh, many women agricultural workers depended on BISP assistance to purchase food, medicine, educational materials for children, and other household necessities.

However, civil society organizations and labor rights activists raised concerns that the program primarily focused on short-term income support rather than sustainable economic empowerment. Critics argued that although BISP provided important relief for low-income families, it did not sufficiently address unemployment, landlessness, agricultural exploitation, or the absence of labor protections for rural women workers.

Public debate during 2025 also highlighted concerns regarding the politicization of welfare schemes, inclusion and exclusion errors, and fraud risks associated with beneficiary verification processes (Reddit, 2025).

Despite these drawbacks, BISP remained a critical source of survival for many rural households in Sindh. With rising inflation and agricultural instability in 2025, the program played an important role in preventing further deterioration in food security and household income among vulnerable communities.

Benazir Hari Card Program in Sindh

One of the most significant agricultural support initiatives introduced and expanded in Sindh during 2025 was the Benazir Hari Card program. The Government of Sindh launched the scheme to support small and marginal farmers through financial assistance, subsidies, crop insurance, and agricultural modernization initiatives (Benazir Haari Card, 2025). The term "Hari" refers to farmers or peasants in the Sindhi language and reflects the program's stated objective of supporting cultivators and agricultural workers. The initiative was closely associated with the Pakistan People's Party (PPPP) leadership and was promoted as a pro-farmer welfare program to strengthen Sindh's agricultural economy (Benazir Haari Card, 2025).

The Benazir Hari Card program in 2025 sought to achieve several objectives, including financial support for small farmers, reduction of agricultural production costs, provision of subsidies on seeds and fertilizers, access to interest-free agricultural loans, crop insurance, digital registration of farmers, and promotion of climate-resilient agricultural practices (Punjab Government Schemes, 2025). According to official statements, the Sindh government planned to register approximately 1.4 million farmers under the program (Punjab Government Schemes, 2025).



Registration and Expansion in 2025

The Sindh government formally expanded online registration for the Benazir Hari Card in 2025. In February 2025, Sindh Agriculture Minister Sardar Muhammad Bakhsh Mahar announced the launch of online registration and introduced a digital platform for farmer registration and verification, streamlining the process (The News International, 2025).

The government also emphasized digitization to reduce corruption and improve beneficiary verification. Farmers were required to provide CNICs, proof of land ownership or cultivation, and registration with agricultural authorities.

By late 2025, government officials stated that approximately 80,000 newly registered farmers had completed the verification process to receive Benazir Hari Cards (JSF, 2025).

The program initially targeted small farmers cultivating limited acreage. Eligibility criteria focused primarily on farmers who possess or cultivate relatively small agricultural holdings (The News International, 2025).

The GoS claimed that the Benazir Hari Card program offered multiple forms of financial and agricultural assistance during 2025. Including:

- Cardholders were promised subsidies on seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, agricultural machinery, and solar-powered irrigation systems. The Sindh government argued that rising agricultural input costs had severely affected small farmers and that subsidies were necessary to maintain agricultural productivity (The News International, 2025).
- The program also included access to interest-free agricultural loans. Provincial authorities stated that these loans would help farmers purchase quality seeds, fertilizers, and agricultural equipment without falling into exploitative debt relationships (The News International, 2025).
- Crop insurance emerged as another major component of the initiative. Given Sindh's vulnerability to floods, droughts, pest outbreaks, and other climate-related disasters, the government presented crop insurance as essential to protecting small farmers against agricultural losses (The News International, 2025).
- The program further emphasized climate adaptation and sustainable agriculture. In 2025, the Sindh government announced subsidies for drip irrigation systems and solar-powered tube wells to promote environmentally sustainable farming practices (Samaa TV, 2025).

Women Agricultural Workers and the Benazir Hari Card

Women agricultural workers were among the most marginalized labor groups in Sindh in 2025. Rural women remained heavily involved in agricultural production, livestock management, cotton picking, harvesting, fisheries, and post-harvest activities. Despite their substantial contribution to agriculture, women workers often lacked formal recognition, minimum-wage protections, social security, and ownership rights due to gender inequality. The Sindh government attempted to integrate women into agricultural support programs through several initiatives linked to the Benazir Hari Card program.

Special Desk for Women Farmers

In May 2025, the Sindh government announced the establishment of a special desk for women farmers within the Agriculture Department (Glory Magazine, 2025). The initiative aimed to address issues specifically affecting women agricultural workers and farmers. According to official statements, the desk would focus on

- Awareness programs for women farmers
- Agricultural training
- Advisory services
- Crop insurance
- Solar tube well schemes
- Financial inclusion
- Access to agricultural subsidies

The initiative reflected the growing recognition of women's contribution to agriculture in Sindh (Glory Magazine, 2025).

Legal Context of Women Agricultural Workers

The policy discussions of 2025 were linked to earlier legislative developments concerning women agricultural workers in Sindh. The Sindh Women Agriculture Workers Act, 2019, formally recognized women agricultural workers and guaranteed labor protections, including equal wages, registration rights, maternity protections, access to healthcare, social security, and the right to unionize (Reddit, 2019).

The law also envisioned the issuance of Benazir Women Agricultural Workers cards for registered women workers. Despite legal protections, implementation remained weak in 2025. Many women agricultural workers continued to work informally without contracts, minimum wages, occupational safety protections, or social security coverage.

Peasant organizations argued that most rural women remained excluded from formal agricultural registration systems because agricultural land is usually registered in the names of male family members. Although the Benazir Hari Card and BISP programs provided important financial relief during 2025, several concerns and criticisms were raised by peasant organizations, labor rights groups, and civil society actors. Critics argued that welfare programs could not substitute for structural agrarian reforms. Landlessness, feudal domination, and exploitative tenancy systems remained major causes of rural poverty in Sindh.

Criticisms were also raised by relevant parties regarding transparency, beneficiary selection, and political influence in welfare distribution. Spouses and relatives of government officials also constitute a larger share of beneficiaries of this program (Tahir, 2024; Staff Reporter, 2025). Civil society organizations emphasized the need for independent monitoring and stronger accountability mechanisms to prevent corruption and favoritism.

The digitization of registration systems created barriers for many rural communities lacking internet access, digital literacy, or official documentation. Rural women faced particular difficulties in accessing online registration platforms. Some critics argued that long-term dependence on cash assistance programs could discourage broader economic reforms and employment generation. Others rejected this argument and emphasized that BISP remained essential for survival among highly marginalized communities facing severe economic insecurity (Reddit, 2025).

Overall, in 2025, the Benazir Income Support Program and the Benazir Hari Card initiative played important roles in supporting vulnerable rural populations in Sindh. BISP continued to provide critical financial assistance to poor women and low-income households. At the same time, the Benazir Hari Card program sought to modernize agricultural support systems for small farmers through subsidies, loans, insurance, and digital registration.

The inclusion of women agricultural workers within policy discussions represented an important development, particularly through the establishment of special government mechanisms focusing on women farmers. However, despite these initiatives, rural women workers continued to face structural inequalities, including landlessness, informal labor conditions, exclusion from registration systems, and weak implementation of labor protections.

The programs demonstrated the Sindh government's growing emphasis on social protection and agricultural welfare. Nevertheless, peasant organizations continued to highlight that sustainable rural development required deeper structural reforms, including equitable land distribution, stronger labor protections, gender justice, and meaningful political representation for peasants and rural workers.



SECTION 7: PEASANTS IN THE INTERNATIONAL LANDSCAPE

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In 2025, across the globe, peasants, rural workers, and rural women workers continued to play a prominent role in struggles for social, economic, and environmental justice. Across continents, peasant movements, farmers' organizations, rural women's networks, labor unions, and civil society groups mobilized through protests, assemblies, press conferences, international forums, and advocacy campaigns to defend their rights and livelihoods. These actions reflected growing concerns over land concentration, climate change, food insecurity, declining farm incomes, labor exploitation, and the expansion of corporate control over agricultural systems.

2025 also witnessed increased efforts to advance the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2018. International and regional mobilizations highlighted key rights recognized under UNDROP, including the right to land, seeds, food sovereignty, decent work, social protection, participation in decision-making, and gender equality. Rural women's organizations, in particular, drew attention to persistent barriers to land ownership, access to productive resources, and recognition of unpaid care and agricultural work.

The events documented in this section demonstrate that peasant rights are increasingly being framed as human rights concerns within global policy debates. They also illustrate the growing interconnectedness of local struggles with international movements seeking equitable, sustainable, and rights-based food systems.

From the 2025 international landscape on peasants' rights, there are clear but mostly indirect linkages to formal UN human rights mechanisms, such as:

- UPR (Universal Periodic Review)
- General Assembly documentation
- Human Rights Council reporting mechanisms
- ICESCR / ICCPR monitoring structures

However, peasants' rights are still not consistently mainstreamed as a distinct agenda item within these mechanisms, even though they appear in broader discussions of rural development, labor rights, gender equality, and food security.

Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

In 2025, the UPR continued its regular cycle, reviewing multiple states (e.g., the 50th UPR Working Group session in November 2025). While the reviews primarily focused on civil, political, and governance issues, recommendations frequently touched indirectly upon rural populations, especially through:

- women's rights in rural areas
- labor protections and decent work
- land inequality and discrimination
- food security and social protection

However, peasants, as a legal category (as defined in UNDROP), were rarely explicitly referenced, highlighting a gap between grassroots rural mobilizations and formal UPR language (UPR Info, 2025).

Human Rights Council (HRC) and General Assembly

A key development in 2025 was the continuation of institutional reporting on peasants' rights under the UN system, including:

- The Report of the Working Group on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (A/HRC/60/33) was presented to the Human Rights Council in 2025 (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2025).
- A Secretary-General note to the General Assembly (A/80/180) addressing the right to participation of peasants under UNDROP (United Nations General Assembly, 2025).

These documents indicate that peasants' rights are increasingly being treated as:

- a systemic human rights issue, and part of broader discussions on participation, inequality, and rural development.

However, these remain reporting and dialogue mechanisms, not enforcement tools.

ICESCR and ICCPR relevance

In 2025, treaty bodies and monitoring processes were linked to the following:

- ICESCR (economic, social, and cultural rights)
- ICCPR (civil and political rights)

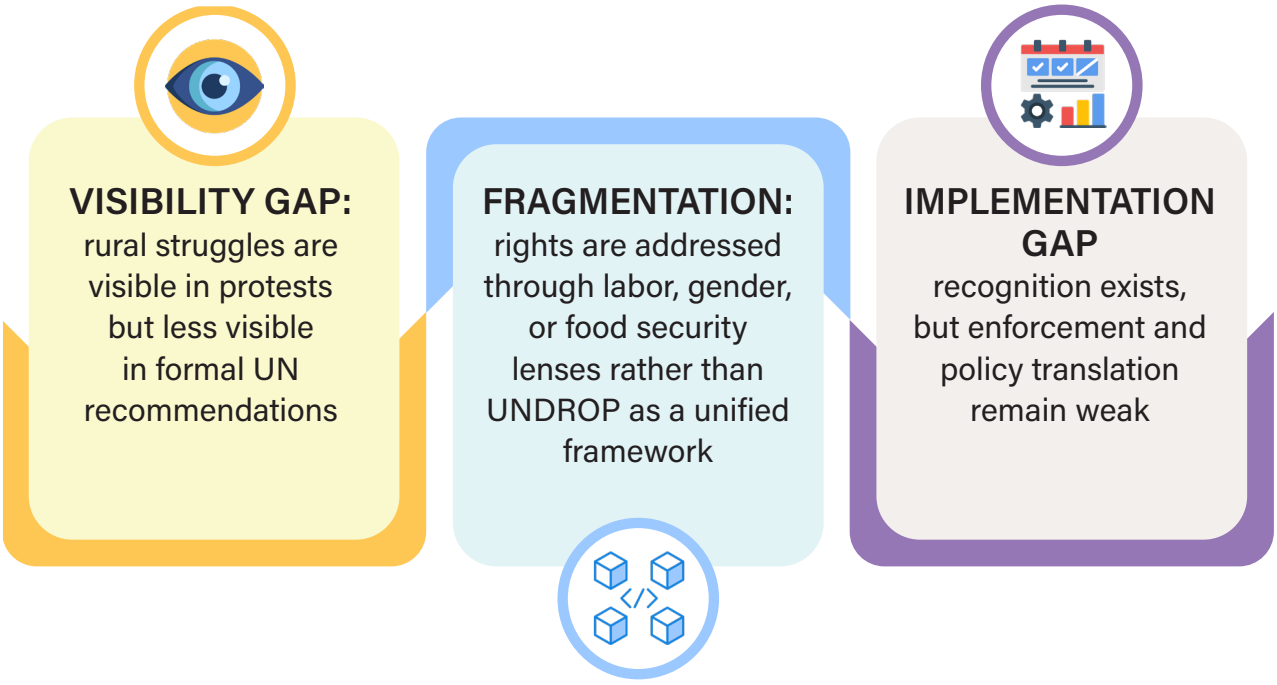
These bodies did not produce peasants-specific binding interpretations, but their monitoring frameworks continued to address issues strongly connected to rural populations, including:

- right to work and fair wages (ICESCR Articles 6 and 7)
- right to adequate food (ICESCR Article 11)
- gender equality in employment and land access
- freedom of association for rural workers and farmers
- participation in public affairs (ICCPR Article 25)

Thus, peasants' rights are legally embedded but fragmented across existing treaties, rather than consolidated in enforcement practice, thereby limiting the scope for implementation.

Across the UPR, General Assembly, HRC reporting, and treaty-body systems in 2025, a consistent pattern emerges:

- Peasants' rights are increasingly recognized in international human rights discourse, but they remain structurally "diffused" across multiple frameworks rather than centrally institutionalized.



Peasants and rural workers' 'rights-related activities in 2025

These international developments of 2025 demonstrate that peasants' rights remain a significant issue on the global human rights agenda. From grassroots protests and mass mobilizations to international forums and United Nations advocacy processes, peasant organizations and their allies continue to demand recognition, protection, and implementation of rights related to land, livelihoods, labor, food sovereignty, and participation.

The HWA has identified the following list of events/activities related to peasants' rights and rural workers either by peasants and rural workers themselves or by activists, NGOs, and INGOs:

On 8 March 2025

International Women's Day Mobilizations:
Rural women's organizations across Africa, Asia, and Latin America organized marches, assemblies, and advocacy actions which demanded land rights, equal pay, food sovereignty, and protection from violence against women workers (Rural Women's Assembly, 2025).

On 12 March 2025

CSW69 Rural Women's Advocacy Initiative:
The Rural Women's Assembly announced its participation in the 69th Commission on the Status of Women, highlighting rural women's experiences of inequality and exclusion from decision-making processes (Rural Women's Assembly, 2025).

On 18 March 2025

at the "From Beijing to Countryside" Parallel Event in New York, rural
women leaders presented evidence on gender inequality, land access, and labor conditions affecting women in rural communities worldwide (Rural Women's Assembly, 2025).

On 24 March 2025

Global Call to Action for International Day of Peasant Struggles:
La Via Campesina launched its international campaign demanding land, water, and territorial rights for peasants and rural workers (La Via Campesina, 2025).

From 1 to 16 April 2025

the International Mobilization Period for Peasant Rights was observed:
Member organizations of La Via Campesina held educational events, press briefings, and solidarity actions ahead of the International Day of Peasant Struggles (La Via Campesina, 2025).

On 17 April 2025

International Day of Peasant Struggles:

Thousands of peasants, farm workers, and rural activists organized rallies, marches, and public forums defending agrarian reform and food sovereignty (La Via Campesina, 2025).

On 17 April 2025

the Agrarian Reform March in Paraguay was held:

Peasant and Indigenous organizations mobilized to demand stronger agrarian reform policies, secure land tenure, and recognition of peasant rights (La Via Campesina, 2025).

On 1 May 2025

International Workers' Day Rural Labor:

Agricultural laborers and rural workers participated in May Day demonstrations highlighting decent work, living wages, and labor protections (International labor movement actions, 2025).

On 5 June 2025

the World Environment Day Agroecology Campaigns:

Peasant organizations linked climate justice with land rights and promoted agroecology as a pathway to sustainable rural livelihoods (La Via Campesina, 2025).

On 9 July 2025

in India, a nationwide worker-farmers strike:

Farmers' unions and trade unions jointly protested labor reforms, agricultural policies, and threats to rural livelihoods (Times of India, 2025).

In August 2025

Rural Labor Rights Mobilizations in Punjab, India:

Agricultural labor organizations held demonstrations demanding employment guarantees, pensions, and land rights for landless workers (Times of India, 2025).

From 30 to 31 August 2025

the Colombian Popular Peasant Assembly was organized:

Hundreds of peasant representatives met to advance agrarian reform proposals and strengthen national peasant organizing efforts (Government of Colombia, 2025).

On 18 September 2025

UN Human Rights Council Side Event:

International organizations examined challenges and best practices in implementing the rights of peasants and rural workers under UNDROP (UN Human Rights Council partners, 2025).

From 2 to 3 October 2025

International Forum on Peasants' Rights, in Spain:

Peasant movements, researchers, and civil society organizations discussed implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP).

On 3 October 2025

Colombian Popular Consultation for Agrarian Reform:

Peasant organizations launched a national consultation process to strengthen public support for agrarian reform policies (Government of Colombia, 2025).

On 15 October 2025

International Day of Rural Women:

Rural women's organizations held advocacy campaigns focusing on access to land, credit, leadership opportunities, and labor protections (Rural Women's Assembly, 2025).

On 16 October 2025

World Food Day Peasant Mobilizations:

Farmers' organizations organized events promoting food sovereignty and support for small-scale producers (La Via Campesina, 2025).

In November 2025

COP30 Rural Peoples Advocacy in Brazil:

Peasant organizations called for stronger recognition of small-scale food producers in climate negotiations and adaptation planning.

In 21 November 2025

A Joint Workers–Farmers Campaign Against Labor Codes (India):

Trade unions and farmers' organizations intensified nationwide mobilization against labor reforms viewed as harmful to workers and rural communities (IndustriALL Global Union, 2025).

On 26 November 2025

Nationwide Workers–Farmers Protests (India):
Coordinated demonstrations took place across multiple states demanding labor protections, fair agricultural policies, and social security guarantees.

On 30 November 2025

the Greek Farmers' Protest Wave Begins:
Farmers initiated nationwide protests over delayed subsidies, rising production costs, and insufficient compensation for agricultural losses.

In December 2025

the Tractor Mobilizations in Thessaly, Greece:
Thousands of tractors participated in demonstrations demanding fair prices, energy support, and disaster compensation.

In December 2025

Road and Border Blockades by Greek Farmers:
Farmers escalated protests through transport disruptions and public demonstrations to pressure authorities on subsidy and pricing issues.

In 10 December 2025

a Global Webinar on Participation Rights under UNDROP:
International experts and peasant leaders discussed how rural people can effectively participate in decision-making processes affecting their livelihoods.

In December 2025

Peasant and Rural Worker Advocacy Ahead of 2026 Mobilizations:
Regional networks in Europe, Latin America, and Asia held planning meetings, press conferences, and strategy sessions focused on agrarian reform and labor rights campaigns in 2026.



The diversity of actions undertaken throughout the year reflects both the persistence of structural challenges facing rural communities and the growing capacity of peasant movements to organize across national and regional boundaries. Rural women workers emerged as particularly important actors, highlighting the intersection of gender inequality, labor exploitation, and unequal access to productive resources.

Collectively, these events underscore the relevance of UNDROP as an international framework for advancing the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas. They further demonstrate that achieving equitable and sustainable rural development requires meaningful participation of peasants and rural workers in decision-making processes, stronger state accountability, and continued international solidarity in support of their rights and aspirations.



SECTION 8: RECOMMENDATIONS

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The provincial government of Sindh can play a crucial role in safeguarding the essential human rights of the people who reside in the province. For this reason, the following recommendations are aimed at the GoS and the HWA advocates and urge representatives to implement them to uphold the fundamental rights of peasants in the province.

1. 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.
2. The GoS should withdraw its appeal against the Sindh High Court's pro-peasant judgment, reinforcing the protection of peasants' rights.
3. 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.
4. The GoS should provide government grants and incentives for women-led agricultural unions and ensure their integration into policy-making and legislative processes.
5. 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.
6. The GoS should ensure greater representation of women in agricultural decision-making bodies at both provincial and national levels.
7. The GoS should revise non-contributory programs like Bait-ul-Mal, Ehsaas, and BISP to reduce dependency and revamp contributory schemes, such as SESSI, by expanding its coverage and empowering rural women through healthcare, skills training, access to resources, and sustainable livelihood initiatives.
8. 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).

9. The GoS should initiate vocational training programs to equip rural women and peasants with skills in agricultural technology, business management, and leadership.

10. The GoS should promote financial literacy and entrepreneurship among women farmers to reduce reliance on external aid and enhance long-term economic stability.

11. The GoS should advocate for policies that prioritize land redistribution to landless peasants rather than selling fertile land to corporate entities, in line with the demands raised by the Jeay Sindh Rahbar Committee.

12. 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.

13. The GoS should strengthen land reform policies to equitably distribute land to landless peasants and promote agricultural productivity.

14. The GoS should implement land reforms with an emphasis on equitable access to resources for marginalized peasants, especially women and landless sharecroppers

15. 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.

16. The federal government should recalibrate and revise the proposed six strategic canals project on the Indus River to assess its potential negative impacts on small-scale farmers, ensuring that such projects do not further marginalize local agricultural communities.

17. The GoS should strengthen security and law enforcement in tribal areas to prevent violence and protect marginalized peasants and rural workers.

18. The GoS should promote peace-building initiatives and conflict resolution programs to mitigate tribal conflicts and reduce their disruptive impact on agriculture.

19. 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

20. The GoS should strengthen enforcement of the Sindh Bonded Labor Abolition Act, ensuring that perpetrators of bonded labor are held accountable.

21. 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.

22. 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.

23. 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.

24. There should be support from the GoS to strengthen platforms such as the Provincial Advocacy Forum in Sindh, enabling marginalized communities, particularly peasants and women, to voice their concerns and influence policy changes.

25. The GoS should raise awareness of agricultural policies and labor laws, empowering rural communities to advocate effectively for their rights.

26. 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.

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