

# Pakistan:

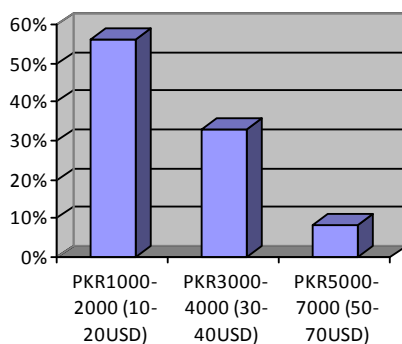
## Domestic Servant to Domestic Worker

### Decent Work and Living Wages: Human Rights Violations to Women Domestic Workers in Pakistan

The majority of domestic workers in Pakistan earn less than one dollar a day. This is 3 times less than others doing similar work.

Survey data from Punjab Province shows 56% of domestic workers earn PKR 1000-2000 (10-20USD) per month. This is 3 times less than the minimum wage of similar wage earners.

#### Domestic Workers' Monthly Wage



Domestic workers sustain families. Due to a poor economy, the majority of their spouses are unemployed. In Punjab 80% of domestic workers are Christian women, who face religious as well as gender-based discrimination. Abuses are hidden, as domestic work is in private homes.

#### National & Provincial Legislation

The draft Domestic Workers (Employment Rights) Act 2013 is currently tabled and under discussion in Parliament.

The draft law mandates the below (a partial list):

- minimum wages as per the Minimum Wage Ordinance 1961
- non-discrimination
- holidays and leave
- maternity and health benefits
- compensation for injury
- written contracts
- a termination notice period

The draft Domestic Workers Act emphasises workers must be called 'domestic workers,' not 'servants.' Both employers and workers would be registered, and the Act sets up a dispute resolution mechanism

In parallel, the 2012 National Policy on Home Based Workers also sets standards for conditions in domestic work. It is only a federal guideline and ineffectual until Provincial governments pass legislation and implement policy.

Punjab Provincial government has begun this process. The draft Punjab Act and Policy include the major elements of the National Policy for Home-Based Workers in Pakistan, recognizing home-based workers as 'workers' and entitling them to social protections available to other workers.

Domestic workers are waiting for the new policies and the human rights guarantees they will provide.



Domestic Workers telling their stories to a project researcher

#### About the Research Programme

Community Health Advocacy Network at Nation (CHANAN) conducted the feminist participatory action research for this brief from Aug 2012 – July 2013 in 5 Punjab districts: Lahore, Multan, Faisalabad, Sialkot and Kasur. CHANAN worked together with SATH Pak Lahore, PDF Multan, Meesaq Foundation, SHADO Sialkot, Lok Vehar, AWAM Faisalabad, Itihad Foundation and CRC Kasur.

This research is part of APWLD's FPAR Programme in 8 countries.

#### Women Speaking about Working Conditions

**Naheed Baji:** I left for a day and went to see my ill mother. When I came back, my employer falsely blamed me for theft.

**Razia:** If we reach the employers' home late, they abuse us. Sometimes they deduct from my salary. Each day I spend Rs 50 on travel, and earn Rs 500. It's very difficult to manage my daily life.

**Kiran Baji:** My employer's driver always harassed me, singing different kinds of harassment songs. One day he tried to rape me. I immediately informed my Baji (Female Employer). When Baji asked him, he denied it and threatened me.

**Anytain Bibi:** My employer said: If you change religion, we will support you fully. I said that I love my religion and can't change; you can change your worker.



Focus Group Discussion with Domestic Workers

### **Labor Policy and Sufficient Wages**

*We need to change Pakistani labour policy so that domestic workers get rights due to them. Why is this not happening? Domestic workers work from morning till night, and those who reside at workplaces do double duty. It is strange that there are no parameters for sufficient wages.*

*There is a need to ensure their social rights, such as better health, education facilities for their children and social security, reducing social injustice.*

- Deputy Director of Regional NGO

### **5 Issues Women Domestic Workers Face**

#### **1) False Accusations of Theft**

43% of domestic workers in Punjab have faced allegations for stealing cash, jewellery and other valuables. Some NGOs help women with bail and court proceedings.

#### **2) Low Incomes and Little to No Leave**

Survey data suggests 58% of domestic workers get 2 days off a month, 9% get no days off. Wages are typically under 1 dollar a day. When domestic workers demand unpaid wages, they are often humiliated.

#### **3) Sexual Harassment**

23% of domestic workers report sexual harassment, while 45% report abusive language/violence and insecurity at the workplace. Younger women are harassed more often. Rape is not uncommon.

#### **4) Forced Religious Conversion or other Religious-based Discrimination**

Minority women (Christians, Hindus, and others) in Pakistan are discriminated against at all levels, even by NGOs, some of which refuse them assistance. Minorities in Pakistan typically do not have access to education or well-paid jobs. 80% of domestic workers in Punjab are Christian. 23% report forced religious conversion or other discrimination at work. Some women are raped by employers and then forced to marry them and convert to Islam. Some who are forced to convert and marry employers are women who are already married. Their husbands often refuse to allow them to see their children. Many women refuse to convert, and as a result face allegations of theft or threats. Some women are labelled as 'blasphemers' against Islam.

#### **5) Daughters at Work**

Many domestic workers take their daughters to work. The girls are rarely paid (only 18% receive additional income) and the risk of rape is high. Schooling (often unaffordable anyway) often stops.

#### **Changes Required/Policy Recommendations:**

Employers treat domestic workers like servants. Women domestic workers must be treated as *workers* by employers and all government entities.

- The draft Domestic Workers (Employment Rights) Act 2013 needs to be agreed with the rights of domestic workers as a central focus and subsequently fully implemented and monitored.
- The government and employers must guarantee that domestic workers receive health insurance, maternity payments, pensions, compensation for unpaid wages or other violations.
- A registration system as well as a complaint and follow up mechanism need to be set up to protect women. Women also need education centers with human rights trainings, skills centers, counseling and rehabilitation centers.
- Domestic workers would benefit from awareness-raising including exposure visits to police stations, high courts, women's protection cell and supportive organizations.
- The federal government should facilitate a process whereby every province in Pakistan adopts an Act and Policy mirroring the National Policy on Home-Based Workers. The Punjab Act and Policy must be properly implemented.