

# Progress of Human Development in Pakistan

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Pakistan appeared on the map of the world on the 14th of August, 1947. During its existence of more than five and half decades, Pakistan has a number of achievements to its credit. Some examples include, (i) Pakistan is the fourth largest producer of Cotton after U.S.A. China and India. (ii) Sixth most populous country, (iii) the seventh country is possession of nuclear arms, and second biggest fountain inaugurated by the President Pervez Musharraf. As per Government reports the macro-level economic conditions have improved. External debts have been reduced substantially. Growth in reserves has been maintained during the last five years. Foreign Exchange reserves have also increased. The Prime Minister is reported to have informed the National Economic Council<sup>(1)</sup> that.

- ❖ Unemployment has declined from 7.7% in 2003-04 to 6.8% in the first quarter of the current fiscal year.
- ❖ Poverty declined from 32.1% in 2001 to 25.4% in 2005.
- ❖ Urban poverty declined from 22.7% in 2001 to 17.2% in 2005.
- ❖ Rural poverty declined from 39% in 2001 to 31.8% in 2005.
- ❖ Growth rate of GDP is expected to be 6.40% against target of 8% for 2005-2006.

However, the above listed positive economic indicators have not contributed to the progress of human development in the quality of life in Pakistan. Incidence of violence against women and cases of 'Karo-kari' are increasing due to illiteracy, feudal domination, poverty and unemployment disputes, etc.<sup>(2)</sup>

Khaleeq Kiani<sup>(3)</sup> reported that inflation was estimated at 8.4% during the first 6 months of the current year against the budgetary target of 8.2%. The 'Core inflation' (non-energy inflation) also moved up to 7.6% as against 6.6% during the same period last year. Inflation as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) during the first six months of the current year also increased to 11.10% as against 10.4% during the same period last year. Thus, the pressures Created by rising inflation reduced the purchasing power of the masses, marginalized the low income groups and force them to lead a life of deprivation. The women population of Pakistan especially that inhabiting the rural areas is most vulnerable to poverty, unemployment, gender inequality etc.

Similarly, the conditions of the industrial workers in Pakistan do not conform with the relevant ILO Conventions and labour laws. Remuneration paid to the female workers is also in general lower than that paid to the male workers for the same job. According to survey conducted jointly by the Federal Bureau of Statistics (FBS) and the Ministry of Labour man-power and overseas Pakistan's there were about 3.3 million children working in the different sectors of the textile industry in 1996.<sup>(4)</sup> Child labour is extensively being used in textile industry, carpet weaving, agriculture, brick kilns etc. even to day.

The miserable plight of the poor in Pakistan especially women, industrial workers and Child labour has attracted the attention of NGO's in Pakistan and foreign development organisations. These agencies have started welfare work in Pakistan. Some of these activities are reported as under:

## 1. Social responsibility and environmental requirements

As is well known World Trade Organisation, i.e., global free trade regime commenced with effect from 01.01.2005. Buyer's in the developed countries of U.S.A, E.U. Demand that the textile products imported by them should have been manufactured by:

- ❖ Use of processes which are environmentally friendly.
- ❖ Textile mills which discharge waste water effluent after treatment so that it does not pose any threat to humans, environments, inland and coastal fisheries etc.
- ❖ Textile mills which comply with requirements of social responsibility and fulfil their obligation in this respect.

Pakistan is a signatory to the relevant International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions pertaining to worker's conditions of work and therefore it is necessary for the textile mills to ensure compliance with and environmental requirements.

However, excluding the best practice mills, progress in the average run of mills in Pakistan is not reported to be satisfactory in fulfilling these requirements, WTO has assigned the duty of improving the living and working conditions of workers throughout the world to the European Union Since 1995.

In this connection a delegation of buyers from U.S.A. and E.U. conducted social audit of quite a large number of textile mills in Pakistan located in the industrial estates around Lahore in 2004. The owners of textile mills were warned and advised to improve environmental, health, hygiene and working conditions of workers upto the standards of relevant ILO conventions and labour laws. Thus, it is obvious that unhindered market access to textile exports from Pakistan to the developed countries of U.S.A, E.U. will be subject to the compliance by the concerned textile mills with social and environmental requirements.

## 2. Elimination of Child Labour

Majyd Aziz<sup>(5)</sup> reported that FBS underestimated the number of Child labourers in Pakistan and the actual number of child workers in the industry could be as high as 4 million.

ILO is sponsoring following activities in Pakistan under its International Programme for the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC):

- ❖ Establishment of education and training centres for child labour in carpet weaving Jointly with Pakistan Carpet Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PCMEA)
- ❖ Translations of national and international instruments on child labour and protection of working children jointly with the Employer's Federation of Pakistan (EFP).

### 2.1 Rugmark Label Scheme

In collaboration with the carpet importers of U.S.A PCMEA has launched Rugmark Label scheme with the object of elimination of child labour in the carpet industry. Under this initiative, carpet importers pay a voluntary surcharge. The amount so collected is utilized for education and rehabilitation of former child workers. However, importers, ensure that the carpets being bought by then were woven without involvement of child labour.

Similar initiatives are urgently required for elimination of child labour in different sectors of the textile industry, agriculture, brick kilns etc.

## 3. National Plan of Action (NPA)

As per media reports 30% of mothers die of iron deficiency<sup>(6)</sup>.

Over 40% of women in reproductive age in Pakistan suffered from iron deficiency anemia (IDA), a condition that claims the lives of 30% mothers in the country. Over a third of reproductive age women suffer from severe iodine deficiency while alarming levels of vitamin A deficiency (VAD) is rampant among all popu-

lation groups. Similarly, malnutrition in children in Pakistan, India and Bangladesh has been estimated from 38% to 51% as compared to 26% in some countries of subsaharan Africa <sup>(9)</sup>.

In order to deal with this alarming situation and to control malnutrition a National Plan of Action (NPA) has been developed by the Ministry of Health with the support of Micronutrient Initiative (MI) a non-profit organization. The implementation of NPA and the results achieved in reducing the malnutrition levels in women and children will be watched with keen interest.

#### 4. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

About 77% of the births in Pakistan take place at home. The estimated maternal mortality ratio is 300-700 / 100,000 of population which is very high <sup>(9)</sup>. The infant and under five mortality rates per 1000 live births are 82 and 103 respectively.

UNFPA would provide \$6.0 million to support various Women Related Programmes in 10 districts of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir. The assistance was recently formalized at a signing ceremony held at the Ministry of Population welfare on 01.03.2006 in Islamabad.

The UNFPA's activities are directed towards provincial and federal planners and policy makers. The objective is to ensure that reproductive health and gender related issues are included in the strategy of the Government focussing on poverty reduction. The strategy seeks to build upon government initiatives while taking advantage of new technical and scientific advances emerging internationally.

#### 5. Women's Employment Concerns and Working Conditions (WEC-PK)

The international labour Organisation ILO and the Federal Labour Ministry will jointly impart market need-oriented training to 6000 women improve their quality of life <sup>(9)</sup>. According to official sources, project aims at enhancing the quality of women's employment. It will be completed at a cost of 3.0 million Canadian dollars provided by Canadian International Development Agency. (CIDA) Ms. Sadia Hamdani, ILO, Senior Program Officer informed that 1500 women from each province would be selected for training in various disciplines. Project was designed to provide direct assistance to both rural and urban women getting access to decent employment through social security, legal literacy training, advocacy campaign and other support services and facilities. One major element of the project would be promotion of equal opportunity policies.

#### 6. Role of Women in Development Stressed.

The Parliamentary Commission for Human Rights, PCHR firmly believes that women development is the key to speeding up the progress and development of a nation. Islam designated high and respectable status to women and ensure their protection in all spheres of life, but inspite of this women continue to languish economically and socially. <sup>(10)</sup>

The chief coordinator, PCHR, Mr. Shafique Chandhry informed that following bills have been moved by PCHR to restore status of women in Pakistan and provide legal protection to them:

- ❖ Amendment of Hudood Ordinance.
- ❖ Enactment of laws against honour killings.
- ❖ Prevention of domestic violence against women.
- ❖ Amendments in the Qazaf and offence of Zina.

- ❖ Prohibition of custom of 'wani'.
- ❖ Prohibition of marriage with Quran Act 2005.
- ❖ Economic Stability of women Bill 2005.
- ❖ Working women protection bill 2005.
- ❖ Uplift and welfare of women bill 2005.

#### 7. Human Development Index (HDI)

Importance of HDI in the development of a country during his lecture to the faculty and the students of Textile Institute of Pakistan on 01.03.2006. Some of the main points discussed by him in this context are briefly reported as under:

- ❖ HDI must be reckoned in deciding whether a country is really developed in addition to economic development.
- ❖ Quality of life of the population, e.g. life expectancy, adult literacy, gender related development are important criteria for the assessment of development of a country in addition to GDP per capita.
- ❖ Gender related development is one of the most important factors considered in the determination of the level of development of a country. Women must have freedom equal to that enjoyed by men. Woman must have access to basic education health facilities, shelter, decent employment, social security etc.
- ❖ Priority assigned to education and health in public spending in Pakistan is much lower than that to military expenditure. Public expenditure on health and education in 2001 was only 2.7% as compared to 4.5% on military. The population has limited access to resources of living.
- ❖ Saudi Arabia, South Africa cannot be considered as countries inspite of high GDP per capita because of low HDI,s.
- ❖ Norway is a more developed country than U.S.A inspite of lower GDP per capita mainly because of higher HDI.
- ❖ During the last 10 years quality of life in India, Bangladesh, South Korea and Srilanka has made progress and is better than that in Pakistan. Consequently these countries are more developed than Pakistan.

Mr. Zaide concluded his lecture by emphasizing that real development means economic strength as well as human development including quality of life, education and freedom of women, equal opportunities for women to progress in life, social security, maintenance of law and order, protection of religions beliefs, life and property of the citizens by the state.

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