Labour

The state shall ensure the elimination of all forms of exploitation and the gradual fulfilment of the fundamental principle, from each according to his ability, to each according to his work.

Constitution of Pakistan

Article 3

Slavery is non-existent and forbidden and no law shall permit or facilitate its introduction into Pakistan in any form. All forms of forced labour and traffic in human beings are prohibited. No child below the age of 14 years shall be engaged in any factory or mine or any other hazardous employment.

Article 11 (1-3)

Every citizen shall have the right to form associations or unions, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of sovereignty or integrity of Pakistan, public order or morality.

Article 17(1)

The state shall make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work ...

Article 37(c)

The state shall secure the well-being of the people, irrespective of sex, caste, creed and race, by raising their standard of living, by preventing the concentration of wealth and means of production and distribution in the hands of a few to the detriment of general interest and by ensuring equitable adjustment of rights between employers and employees, and landlords and tenants; provide for all citizens, within the available resources of the country, facilities for work and adequate livelihood with reasonable rest and leisure; provide for all persons, employed in the service of Pakistan or otherwise, social security by compulsory social insurance or other means; provide basic
necessities of life, such as food, clothing, housing, education and medical relief, for all such citizens, irrespective of sex, caste, creed or race, as are permanently or temporarily unable to earn their livelihood on account of infirmity, sickness or unemployment; reduce disparity in the income and earnings of individuals ... 

Article 38(a) to (e)

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 4

Everyone, as a member of society, has a right to social security ....

Article 22

Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 23 (1-4)

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holiday with pay.

Article 24

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Article 25(1)

State parties recognise the right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 32(1)

Improved quality of life and better terms and conditions at workplace — as measured through increase in real wages, safe work environs, reasonable work hours, protection from income loss during sickness, disability and old-age, and freedom to form unions — remained a dream for a majority of workforce in 2014. Labour laws violations continued unabated throughout the year.

The granting of the Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) Plus status
Labour to Pakistan, providing preferential access to the EU market through reduced tariffs under the EU trade programme, from January 1, 2014 offered the only silver lining for workers. The GSP Plus is conditional to compliance with eight ILO core labour conventions out of 27 international standards and covenants on labour, human and women’s rights, environment, narcotics and corruption. There was hope that the government would now take serious note of labour rights violations. However, during the year, neither the federal government nor the provincial governments came out with any firm plan for the implementation of labour laws.

Various groups of workers in the public sector as well as informal sector rallied for payment of dues and salaries, increase in wages and implementation of minimum wages during the year. The trade unions in the public sector resisted privatization and lobbied for legislative reforms.

In January, the Privatization Commission announced privatization of nine entities — Pakistan Steel Mills, Oil and Gas Development Company Ltd, PIA, Heavy Electrical Complex, NPCC, LESCO, FESCO, Northern Power Generation Company, Habib Bank and Allied Bank. The Joint Action Committee of PIA Employees, All Pakistan Wapda Hydro-Electric Workers Union and the Northern Power Generation Company workers held numerous meetings and rallied against impending privatization.

The International Trade Union Confederation (IUTC) Global Rights Index 2014 ranked Pakistan as among the world’s worst countries for workers with a ranking of 4 on a scale of 1- 5+. Countries with the rating of 4 reported
systematic violations and the government and/or companies were found engaged in serious efforts to crush the collective voice of workers and putting fundamental rights under continuous threat.

**The labour market**

The Federal Bureau of Statistics did not release the quarterly Labour Force Survey Reports in the year 2014. The annual Labour Force Survey 2013-2014 was not published till the year end. The last Labour Force Survey 2012-2013 had noted a labour force of 59.74 million workers. Of them, 56.01 million were employed, indicating a shortfall of 3.73 million jobs and an unemployment rate of 6.2 per cent. Unemployment among 15-29 years was higher at 9.2 per cent. Labour force participation rate was 32.9 per cent with a wide disparity between men (49.3%) and women (15.6%) participation rates. A significant proportion, 69.48%, of the employed labour force in Pakistan, worked for 40 to 56 or more hours a week, indicating lower productivity per hour as well as low level of wages. The bulk, 59.9%, of the labour force fell under the category of 'vulnerable employment' that include own account workers and contributing family workers.

**Laws, policies and litigation**

In May 2014, after persistent lobbying by the trade unions and pressure from the ILO for four consecutive years, the restrictive condition of 50 workers as mandatory for the formation of union was finally removed from the Punjab Industrial Relations Act 2010 through an amendment.

In August, the Sindh High Court gave a judgment with complex implications on the formation of trade unions and settlement of industrial disputes. Disposing of 52 different constitutional petitions filed by several public and corporate sector institutions, and trade unions, relating to the IRA 2012 legislated by the federal government, a full bench of the high court held that the federal government was competent to legislate on matters relating to companies that operate trans-provincially. This judgment led to transfer of all cases pertaining to trans-provincial establishments from the Labour Court to the NIRC of appropriate jurisdiction causing hardships to the workers as there was just one NIRC bench in each province. This judgment indicated the pitfalls of dual federalism that some experts had been pointing out in the post-18th Amendment years.

A draft labour policy, shared with trade union representatives by the Government of Punjab in April 2014, was criticized on several points. Lack of tripartite mechanism for drafting the policy was also pointed out. Till December, the policy was not finalized. In January, a draft Domestic Workers (Employment Rights) Act 2013, applicable only to the Federal Capital Territory, was tabled.
Labour in the Senate and referred to the Standing Committee on Law and Justice.

Wages and pension

In June 2014, both Punjab and Sindh governments increased the minimum wages for unskilled workers from Rs 10,000 to Rs 12,000 a month for the fiscal year 2014-2015. The Punjab government revised and notified minimum wages in 51 industries, increased the death grant from Rs 2 lacs to 4 lacs through an amendment to the Workmen’s Compensation Act 1923 and enhanced the workers’ group insurance from Rs 2 lacs to Rs 4 lacs through an amendment to the Industrial and Commercial Establishment Ordinance 1968.

The Balochistan government raised the minimum wages from Rs 9,000 to Rs 10,000. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government increased the wages up to Rs 12,000 in June. Later, on the opposition’s demand the government raised the minimum wages to Rs 15,000. However the KP government did not notify the change till the end of the year.

With no effective mechanism for the implementation of labour laws, a majority of the workers remained deprived of minimum wage of Rs 12,000 in the year 2014. The official data (Pakistan Labour Force Survey) of 2013 had noted 20 per cent of employed workers getting up to Rs 5,000 per month and 41.73 per cent earning a monthly salary between Rs 5,000 to Rs 10,000.

The gap between wages of low-income and high-income groups widened further in 2014. The official data (PLFS) indicated a six-fold gap between

![Image](image-url)  

The disagreement between the EOBI and finance ministry means that pensioners continue to wait with a committee now formed to resolve the issue.
elementary occupation (Rs6,952) and the managers’ salary (Rs36,946). The rural-urban and male-female wage differentials were also very high.

The country has a statutory minimum wage fixing system which does not function. Minimum wage setting is not carried out institutionally but arbitrarily, based on political expediency. Wage-setting through collective bargaining agency is rare as trade unions stand shrunk in number, size and power.

The existing meagre pension of Rs 3,600 a month was not raised in the year 2014. There are 329,336 retired persons in the miniscule formal sector drawing monthly old-age pension from the EOBI, which ranges from Rs3,600 to Rs6,240 a month. Government employees are drawing a minimum pension of Rs3,600. In June the federal government announced an increase in pension up to Rs 6,000 for government employees. However, in July, the EOBI Board rejected the increase and stated that Rs3,600 would remain the minimum pension for government employees till 2027 unless contributory amount was increased!

**Occupational safety and health**

There were no visible signs of change in the deplorable occupational safety and health conditions for most workers in 2014. The causes of the worst industrial disaster — Baldia factory fire of September 2012 — established by the initial proceedings of the case in the year 2013-2014 included serious violations of labour laws and building safety laws and criminal negligence of the factory owners and the state departments’ officials.

The criminal proceedings during 2014 against the owners of the Baldia garment factory, Ali Enterprise, established that the factory was not registered under the Factories Act and was never inspected by the labour inspector from the Labour Department, Electricity Department and SITE Authority as mandated under different laws. The factory owner had violated several building bye-laws and obtained a fake international certification SA8000. The owners, not acquitted of the charges, remained at large on bail through the year. Thus, it is not only the employers, but a strong nexus between industrialists, state officials and political elite that resists implementation of safety and health laws at work places.

Officially 73.6 per cent workers are employed in the informal sector, comprising small to medium-sized industrial units, that shun registration and violate labour laws. In medium-sized units, conditions are not better as the employers evade implementation of related laws and bust unions. Even large production units in the country often do not have adequate occupational health and safety management systems in place. Pakistan Readymade Garments Manufacturers and Employers Association has 551 registered members in the country, according to its website in 2014, and the Baldia factory, Ali Enterprises, where the disaster took place, is one of its members. This gives a fair idea of the extent of violations and the existing conditions of safety and health in
Baldia factory fire: Criminal case and compensation

After more than two years of the worst industrial disaster in Pakistan that killed 255 workers in a garment factory in Baldia, SITE, Karachi, all the accused, including the factory owners, are on bail in the criminal case filed on September 12, 2012. The charges have still not been framed against the accused and the criminal trial has yet to begin. No cases have been registered for the violations of fire and safety laws, social security laws and building laws.

On the last hearing of the criminal case held on September 26, the Sindh High Court issued contempt notices to the head of the National Forensic Science Authority (NFSA) and the in-charge of its DNA laboratory over their failure to submit a detailed report on the identification of burnt bodies from the Baldia factory fire. The division bench headed by Chief Justice Maqbool Baqar also issued a contempt notice to the Employees Old-Age Benefit Institution (EOBI) chairperson for failing to submit a report on the payment of statutory pension to the families of the 255 workers who had died in the fire.

Financial compensation to the families of the victims was facilitated by the judicial activism of the Sindh High Court, on a petition filed by the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER), the National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) and other organisations. By August 2014, each family of the 255 deceased received Rs13 lakhs, and each of the 55 injured people received from Rs1,25,000 to Rs 6,10,000 depending on the nature of their injuries. Pensions to the victim families are finally also being paid. This financial compensation included relief provided by the state, dues under various laws and $US 1 million provided by KiK Textilien i.e. the German company, the main buyer of the Baldia factory garments.

different industrial sectors.

The provincial labour departments are responsible for documenting industrial accidents under various laws. However, due to poor governance and inefficient functioning, documentation is not done regularly and it is rarely shared with the public. Hence the only source of information on industrial accidents is the media.

According to a recent ILO-Pakistan report, the country lacks an efficient labour inspection system. The departments are grossly under-funded and under-staffed. Labour inspectors lack modern training and capacity to undertake effective monitoring. In 2012, there were 337 labour inspectors in the country.
that is, one labour inspector for every 25,000 workers.

The Sindh Labour Department shared a draft policy on occupational safety and health in September at a tripartite consultation meeting. This was one of the outcomes of an ILO-solicited Joint Action Plan shared earlier in January. The department finalized the draft policy in November and sent it to the provincial cabinet for approval in December.

The Punjab Labour Department reported setting up of a Labour Inspection Computerized System. By September data of 4,917 factories was entered and inspection reports of 1,111 factories received on line. However, this data was not available on the department’s website. The department also shared at a consultation that in the previous nine months, it inspected 7510 factories in the province.

**Industrial Accidents in 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.#</th>
<th>Nature of accident</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>Injured</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Well repairing</td>
<td>7 Jan</td>
<td>Samozai Pirbandah, Mardan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>16 Jan</td>
<td>Lowari Tunnel, Chitral</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Well repairing</td>
<td>20 Jan</td>
<td>Pakpatan</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Coal mine</td>
<td>30 Jan</td>
<td>Orakzai</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Marble quarry</td>
<td>31 Jan</td>
<td>Mohmand Agency</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Construction-site roof collapse</td>
<td>3 Feb</td>
<td>Ring Road, Peshawar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Boiler explosion</td>
<td>4 Feb</td>
<td>Bhagbanpura Lahore</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Mine roof collapse</td>
<td>7 Feb</td>
<td>Qila Saifullah, Chaman, Balochistan</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Several</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Boiler explosion</td>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>Kot Lathpat Lahore</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Electric shock</td>
<td>20 Mar</td>
<td>Vita Textile Mills, Sohrab Goth, Karachi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Boiler explosion</td>
<td>2 Apr</td>
<td>Sadhoki Gujranwala</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Well cleaning</td>
<td>20 Apr</td>
<td>Mailsi, Vihari</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Boiler explosion</td>
<td>22 Apr</td>
<td>Samundri Road Faisalabad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Sewer cleaning</td>
<td>7 May</td>
<td>Kot Salamatpura, Kasur</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Electric shock</td>
<td>15 May</td>
<td>Narang Mandi, Muridke</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Electric shock</td>
<td>16 May</td>
<td>Shalimar, Lahore</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
During 2014, a significant number of occupational accidents were reported in the media as shown in the Table (not exhaustive of all media reports). The causes included boiler explosions, roof collapse at construction site, well-digging, electrocution and coal mine accidents. Boiler explosions are frequent and the reasons include lack of hiring of qualified and certified boiler engineers by the employers, lack of maintenance and inspection. Accidents in the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.#</th>
<th>Nature of accident</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
<th>Injured</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Fire cracker explosion</td>
<td>22 May</td>
<td>Memon Goth, Karachi</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Coal mine cave-in</td>
<td>30 Jun</td>
<td>Jhimpir</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Electric shock from machinery at loom</td>
<td>07 Jul</td>
<td>Sadhar, Faisalabad</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Poisonous Gas leakage</td>
<td>07 Jul</td>
<td>Bhagbanpura Lahore</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Boiler explosion</td>
<td>26 Sep</td>
<td>SITE Karachi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Well digging</td>
<td>17 Jul</td>
<td>Mithi, Tharparkar</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Gas cylinder blast</td>
<td>13 Jul</td>
<td>Gajumata, Lahore</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Construction site roof collapse</td>
<td>10 Jul</td>
<td>Kandhkot Sindh</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Electric shock</td>
<td>Aug</td>
<td>Gia Mosa, Shahdara</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Electric shock</td>
<td>Aug</td>
<td>Muridke</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Explosion</td>
<td>19 Aug</td>
<td>Pakistan Ordnance Factory, Attock</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Well digging</td>
<td>24 Aug</td>
<td>Landhi, Karachi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Boiler blast</td>
<td>25 Aug</td>
<td>Sukkur</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Poisonous gas leak (oil factory)</td>
<td>8 Sep</td>
<td>Hyderabad</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Electric shock (construction)</td>
<td>9 Sep</td>
<td>Faisalabad</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Coal mine blast</td>
<td>10 Sep</td>
<td>Orakzai, FATA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Several</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Electric shock (construction)</td>
<td>11 Sep</td>
<td>Topi, Swabi</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Electric shock (road digging)</td>
<td>13 Sep</td>
<td>Kahna, Punjab</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Construction-demolition</td>
<td>14 Sep</td>
<td>Khara, Kasur</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Well digging</td>
<td>20 Sep</td>
<td>Renala Khurd</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Well digging</td>
<td>29 Sep</td>
<td>Mangan, Okara</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
construction sector result from lack of safety measures for workers and violations of building standards by the establishments. Electrical workers and line installers die of electric shock because international electrical standards, codes and regulations are violated by the companies’ management.

Hazardous occupations

Mining and stone-crushing

In January, two coal miners were killed and five injured in a cave-in accident in Orakzai Agency. In February, five workers died in Chaman when a chromite mine’s roof caved in. On 30 June, two coal miners died and two were seriously injured in another similar accident at the mining zone of Yaqoob Brohi village near Jhimpir, Sindh. The mining zone had no medical facility and the only rural health centre in the area was non-functional.

One of the most hazardous occupations in the world, coal mining is fraught with great dangers to workers in Pakistan. Coal and minerals are extracted through simple tools with no safety provisions. Coal dust inhalation, methane gas explosions, fires, cave-ins, poisonous gas leakages and haulage accidents are frequent in coal mines. The data from the Inspectorate of Mines and Minerals, Punjab, quoted by the media in September 2014, revealed that on an average 62 workers die and 14 are injured annually in the province during mining operations. According to a trade union activist, accidents in mines take
Deaths from Silicosis

In July, the outgoing chief justice Tassaduq Hussain Jillani took suo motu notice of the death of 18 labourers in Gujranwala. The notice was taken on an application filed by the Public Lawyers Front, a civil society organization, under Article 184 (3) of the constitution, pointing to the death of a young labourer in May 2014 and of 17 more workers who died of silicosis during the last couple of years. All the 18 workers were employed by four different stone crushing factories in the same vicinity. The deceased labourers had made repeated requests to the factory owners, but they were neither provided with any masks to protect them from silica powder inhalation, nor did the factory owners install any dust control equipment. The court was also informed that more than 100 labourers of stone crushing factories had died from silicosis in Dera Ghazi Khan and other regions of Punjab in the last few years.

A three-judge bench of the Supreme Court, headed by chief justice Nasirul Mulk, at its subsequent hearings in September and October directed the Punjab government to award compensation to the heirs of 18 labourers. The court was informed that a nine member committee, comprising minister of labour, secretaries’ of Labour Department, Environment Protection Department, Industries Department, was formed to ensure compliance with labour safety standards and to submit an implementation plan. The provincial government approved Rs 5.4 million for compensation to the heirs of the deceased. The court was further informed that the provincial government had so far paid Rs0.5 million as compensation to families of each of the 34 labourers who had died in Dera Ghazi Khan.

In Pakistan there is no law on silicosis whereas in India there are 15 legislative pieces on this fatal occupational disease. The risks can be reduced by providing protective gear including full face safety helmets to workers and installing dust settlers, scrubbers, mechanisation, wetting methods and controlled environment in the industry.
place almost daily but are seldom reported. The accidents causing deaths, injuries and occupational diseases, particularly silicosis — an incurable and progressive disease — are frequent among miners.

An important intervention against the lack of occupational safety and health conditions in the mining sector was the *suo motu* notice of deaths of 18 workers due to silicosis taken by Tassaduq Hussain Jillani, the former Chief Justice of Pakistan in July. (see Box)

Pakistan has not ratified the ILO Safety and Health in Mines Convention 1995 (No. 176) and neither does it follow the 2006 ILO Code on Safety and Health in Underground Coalmines that sets out general principles and specific guidance in all aspects of mining operations, including record keeping and documentation. There was no demand for ratification of the international occupational safety and health standards either from the trade unions or from civil society organizations.

**Electrical works**

On August 20, a Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) workers’ rally highlighted the rising number of casualties as a result of electrocution during the performance of their duties. More than 25 linesmen were electrocuted in a couple of months due to the unsafe working conditions. Again in November, three members of the line staff of LESCO died of electrocution within three days. According to the trade union, there are about 22,000 linesmen in Pakistan, and of them 100 linesmen lose their lives annually, while many are disabled for life. Line installers and repairmen, involved in various processes of generation, transmission and distribution of energy across the country, encounter serious hazards on the job that is considered one of the ten most dangerous occupations in the world. The workers in Pakistan are neither provided with any protective gear nor do they receive adequate training.

**Ship-breaking**

On November 1, two accidents on yard number 107, Gadani Beach, were reported. According to Bashir Mehmoodani, President Gadani Ship-breaking Mazdoor Union, 15 workers were injured when a faulty lift fell on the ground. In a joint statement along with the National Trade Union Federation, the union leader highlighted the plight of the workers in the most hazardous sector in Pakistan and demanded compensation to injured workers, abolition of contact system and registration with EOBI and SESSI.

Ship-breaking is one of the most hazardous works relegated by the rich north to the countries in the south. The workers at the Gadani yard, often exposed to deadly toxins, exploding gases, falling steel plates and other dangers, get a pittance for their risky labour. According to a recent study, an estimated
12,000 to 15,000 workers are engaged at the shipyard. Mostly aged 18 to mid-50s, the workers are not provided with any safety gear and have no, or limited, access to medical aid or emergency services. They live in the vicinity without the facility of safe drinking water, electricity and decent shelter. As the Gadani Beach is located away from the city, the workers’ exploitation does not get the attention of the media.

Labour struggles against bondage and exploitative terms and conditions

Pakistan ranked sixth highest among 167 countries on the Global Slavery Index 2014 for the prevalence of modern forms of slavery that include debt bondage. According to the Index estimates, there are 2,058,200 people in Pakistan living a life of slavery. Brick kiln and agriculture are the sectors most afflicted with debt bondage.

*Brick-kiln workers*

Brick-kiln workers, one of the most vulnerable groups, continued their fight against exploitative terms and conditions of work, including bondage prevalent in the sector. In several districts in Punjab, the workers submitted applications to the district coordination officers and filed petitions at the court against the owners.

The year 2014 witnessed increasing incidents of conflict between workers and owners of brick kilns in the province of Punjab, leading to a rising wave of collective protests. The fight between the owners and the workers intensified due to the government intervention which gave recourse to the workers to seek justice and caused the owner to retaliate: the Punjab government reactivated the District Vigilance Committees in late 2013. According to the Punjab Labour Department, the reactivated committees held 199 meetings during Oct 2013 to March 2014. 399 FIRs were lodged against brick kiln owners who were guilty of keeping labour in bondage.

During January and February, the brick kiln workers of Toba Tek Singh staged rallies at the office of the District Labour Officer and demanded implementation of wage rates notified by the government in 2013. In late March, workers sat in front of District Coordination Officer’s office in Faisalabad for implementation of the minimum rate of Rs 740 per one thousand bricks. After 34 hours of sit-in when the government and owners did not agree, the workers started a long march towards Chief Minister’s House in Lahore. More than one thousand men, women and children marched for 80 km despite threats by police and owners. The workers from Nankana Saheb and Sheikhupura districts joined the march. Finally an agreement was signed between the Labour Qaumi Movement, Brick Kiln Owners Association and District Managements of Faisalabad and Nankana Sahib pledging to pay Rs 740 per 1,000 bricks and not to detain workers against their will.

In April, three separate incidents of physical violence, torture and illegal
detention perpetrated by the brick kiln owners of Kasur, Punjab, on the workers were reported when they demanded wages at the rate notified by the Punjab government in 2013 and asked for social security registration cards. In one case in April, four brick kiln owners were arrested when they fired at a court bailiff and the police that had raided the kilns for release of workers from illegal detention. On April 22, the Kiln Owners Association of Sahiwal demanded withdrawal of the Factories Act from the brick kiln sector revealing the height of irrationality, feudal mentality and disrespect for laws. In May, 19 brick kiln workers were freed from a Kasur brick kiln on court orders.

In June, brick kiln workers from Vehari filed a petition in the Lahore High Court, Multan, against the owners. In an incident in Sialkot district, a brick kiln owner and his henchmen kidnapped a family of workers, murdered the head of the family and detained the family members. In July, Lahore High Court ensured the release of 20 brick kiln workers from illegal detention by a kiln owner in Kasur. In September, there was a report of a kidnapping by the brick kiln owner of a worker in Sargodha.

In December, brick kiln workers of Muzaffargarh district held sit-ins
against lower than notified wages paid by the owners. The district has 160 brick kilns and about 26,000 labourers. The rate of bricks was Rs 888 per 1,000 but the owners were paying only Rs 530. The District Coordination Officer formed a committee to ensure implementation.

**Agricultural workers**

During the year, many cases of non-payment of dues, harassment and eviction of share croppers and daily wage workers were reported from different districts of Sindh province. According to a labour organization which facilitated the peasants to file cases in the Tenancy Tribunals under the Sindh Tenancy Act 1950, 12 cases were filed against different landlords in district Sanghar from January till August and five cases were registered in Umrot for settlement of dues and against eviction. Another civil society organization filed 93 cases in Umrot district during the first 6 months and more than 200 cases were filed in other districts for the release of bonded labourers in farming and brick kiln sectors.

In February, 13 peasants were recovered from the private jail of a landlord in Hafizabad, Punjab, on the directive of the Lahore High Court. The peasants had been in bondage for the last 10 years. In July, 100 workers, women and children included, were freed from a brick kiln in the suburban area of Hafizabad and three landlords were arrested who had kept the workers in subhuman conditions and extracted their labour on the brick kilns and the farms of the

![Women cotton pickers unload cotton blooms plucked from plants to make a bundle in a field. Many cases of non-payment of dues, harassment and eviction of share croppers and daily wage workers were reported in 2014.](image)
accused. The workers informed the officials that the owners had killed six people for trying to escape.

In June, 72 bonded labourers of 8 families released on the directive of the Sindh High Court, Hyderabad Bench, by a landlord in Umarkot, staged a sit-in in front of the Hyderabad Press Club demanding recovery of their cattle and belongings snatched by the landlord. The labourers were employed as daily wage workers by the landlord for the previous six years but were harassed, tortured and denied fair wages. The civil society activists helped the workers to access their livestock through legal procedure.

**Child labour**

Though according to the ILO Global Report on Child Labour 2013, child labour is on the decline globally, the number of children engaged in labour is increasing in Pakistan despite the slight decrease in the labour force participation of the age cohort 10-14 years. The absolute number of children aged 10-14 years engaged in productive activities, according to the PLFS in 2012-2013 was 6.81 million, with a participation rate of 11.4 per cent whereas in 2011-2012 the labour force participation rate in the age group 10-14 was 11.8 per cent and their absolute number was 6.75 million. The increase in child labour is due to overall population increase and lack of access to schooling for a larger number of children. About 5.5 million children were reported to be out of school in Pakistan in a recent UNESCO study.

In the Child Labour Index 2014, guided by relevant ILO conventions on child labour, Pakistan ranked 9 at the bottom among 196 countries. The index is developed by a Uk-based company, Maplecroft Global Risk Analytics, which undertakes financial risk analyses for multinational companies. Pakistan was evaluated as an 'extreme risk' country where abuse of child workers is most widespread.

According to a 2014 statistics published by the UNESCO, 13 per cent
children of age 10-14 were engaged in labour in Pakistan. Of them, 76 per cent were toiling in agriculture (farming and fishing), 14.6 per cent were involved in services sector (food catering, automobile repair and transport, domestic services, construction,) and 9.3 per cent were working in the industrial sector (brick kilns, surgical instruments, football stitching, carpet weaving, coal mining).

The last national survey on child labour was done in 1996. Since then, there has been no effort to determine the magnitude and the extent of child labour in the country. In 2013, rapid assessment surveys on the worst forms of child labour were conducted in the selected districts of the four provinces under the ILO and the Provincial Child Labour Units. In Sindh, the survey in six districts—Thatta, Badin, Tando Allahyar, Sanghar, Kamber-Shahdadkot, Dadu—revealed that child labour is most prevalent in the households where adult members earn below minimum wages and where government schools do not exist or education is unaffordable. Child labour was the highest in agriculture. A new sector that has emerged afflicted with child labour in recent years in rural Sindh is transport (QingQi rickshaw driving). Wood work and rag picking were two other hazardous sectors in these districts where a high prevalence of child labour was found.

After the devolution of labour, only Punjab province replaced the federal law with the Employment of Children (Amendment) Act 2011 and drafted the Prohibition of Employment of Children Bill 2012. Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunwa provinces had not finalized the draft laws by the yearend.

As children have no agency or representation, no voices, demands or protests are ever heard from the children themselves of their exploitation as labour. Human rights groups and civil society organizations working on children
keep the issue alive. During the year there were sporadic news of extreme forms of child labour abuse — torturing to death, sexual exploitation — in agriculture and domestic services.

**Recommendations**

1. Formulation and implementation of a legal framework for labour laws at the federal level for harmony of laws in the provinces; speedy adaptation/reframing of labour laws by the provinces; coverage of agricultural workers in all labour laws;

2. Establishment of a unified body/authority for occupational safety and health; strengthening the labour inspection system at provincial level;

3. Effective implementation of national minimum wages, maximum working hours, minimum rest and paid leave; old-age benefits in relation to minimum wage; single labour welfare authority for national oversight and decentralised implementation;

4. Social Security to cover injury, sickness, loss of job, in relation to minimum wage;

5. Registration of workers with local government, independently of enterprises and current employment.