



NATIONAL COMMISSION ON  
THE RIGHTS OF CHILD

# Annual Report

## 2023-2024

National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC)







**NATIONAL COMMISSION ON  
THE RIGHTS OF CHILD**

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# ACRONYMS

AIOU	Allama Iqbal Open University
CRVS	Civil Registration & Vital Statistics
CSA	Child Sexual Abuse
CSEA	Child Sexual Exploitation & Abuse
CSJ	Centre for Social Justice
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
FCDO	Foreign Commonwealth Development Office
FIA	Federal Investigation Agency
FIR	First Information Report
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Group Development Pakistan
ICT	Islamabad Capital Territory
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPS	Institute of Policy Studies
IRC	International Rescue Committee
LoA	Letter of Agreement
MoHR	Ministry of Human Rights
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoIT&T	Ministry of Information, Technology & Telecommunication
MoL&J	Ministry of Law & Justice
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NADRA	National Database & Registration Authority
NCHR	National Commission on Human Rights
NCRC	National Commission on the Rights of Child
NCSW	National Commission on the Status of Women
NIC	National Identity Card
NPB	National Police Bureau
NUML	National University of Modern Languages

OCSEA	Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
OOSC	Out-of-School Children
PAHCHAAN	Protection and Help of Children Against Abuse & Neglect
PAS	Pakistan Administrative Services
PEIRA	Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Authority
PGGA	Pakistan Girls Guide Association
PODA	Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy
PPA	Pakistan Pediatric Association
PPC	Pakistan Penal Code
PTA	Pakistan Telecommunication Authority
PTPA	Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, 2018
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAPM	Special Assistant to the Prime Minister
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SFJ	Search For Justice
SSDO	Sustainable Social Development Organization
TIP	Trafficking in Persons
ToT	Training of Trainers
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNTOC	United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime
WCD	World Children's Day
WHO	World Health Organization
ZARRA	Zainab Alert Response & Recovery Agency

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the annual report of the National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) for the reporting period April 2023 to March 2024, showcasing our journey driven by a unified commitment to children's fundamental rights and highly encouraging results.

A pivotal accomplishment that marked the first year of this second NCRC's tenure has been the introduction of our 3-year strategic plan, charting a structured path for our endeavours in navigating the dynamic terrain of child rights in Pakistan. Informed by thorough consultations and active engagement with stakeholders, this plan underscores our dedication to actions

grounded in evidence and cross-sectoral collaboration.

At the heart of our strategy lies the inclusion of varied viewpoints through our established advisory committees, which consist of child rights and legal experts, religious scholars, and representatives from minority communities. These committees have deepened our comprehension of intricate issues and offered invaluable insights, shaping our advocacy and programming endeavours. Looking ahead, we will establish a child advisory group to ensure safe, meaningful, and inclusive involvement of children in our efforts.

Our strategic alliances have played a crucial role in upholding children's rights. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has offered technical expertise and financial assistance, aiding us in executing child-centric programs. Additionally, our partnerships with various embassies, such as the Embassy of Spain and the French Embassy, have allowed us to host arts competitions and awareness campaigns, highlighting important child rights issues. Collaborations with the Foreign Commonwealth Development Office (FCDO), Sustainable Social Development Organization (SSDO) Pakistan, Meta, Zindagi Trust, Pakistan Girls Guide Association (PGGA), Group Development Pakistan (GDP), and OBUN2 are poised to drive substantial change. Through collective efforts, we are implementing effective initiatives that will tangibly improve the lives of children throughout Pakistan.

Furthermore, we have made notable progress in tackling urgent issues such as child labour in domestic work, access to education for all, birth registration, child trafficking, child marriage, digital safety, and child participation. Through focused advocacy campaigns and synergies, we





have pushed for legislative reforms, raised awareness, and galvanised political, institutional, and social support to address these challenges.

In line with its mandate, the Commission has produced a range of publications to advance child rights through localised research and evidence-based analysis. Each publication serves as a cornerstone in our advocacy efforts, offering valuable insights and data-driven recommendations to shape policies, laws and programming aimed at enhancing the enforcement of child rights in Pakistan. Notably, the Policy Brief on Child Trafficking and the Situation Analysis of Child Online Protection in Pakistan provide comprehensive examinations of critical challenges facing children, empowering advocates with compelling evidence to drive systemic change and legislative reform. Additionally, resources like 'Safeguarding Your Child in the Digital Age' provide practical strategies for parents, educators, and policymakers to navigate the digital landscape responsibly and safeguard children from online threats.

Moreover, our steadfast commitment to redressing child rights violations is illustrated through our handling of **322** complaints during this reporting period. Each complaint represents a child whose rights have been safeguarded, highlighting our dedication to fostering justice and protection for every child in Pakistan. To further strengthen our efforts, the Commission has improved coordination with provincial police departments and child protection authorities, facilitating the prompt referral and resolution of child rights violations.

Additionally, I am pleased to acknowledge the proactive engagement of the Commission in raising awareness about child rights on national, regional, and international platforms. Through participation in **33** events and **20** engagements with media outlets, we have amplified our voice, articulated our stance, and advocated for the protection and promotion of child rights, thereby enhancing the visibility of our mission.

As we reflect on our achievements of the past year, we recognise the challenges that lie ahead. Nevertheless, with determination, collective action, and the unwavering support of multiple stakeholders, I am confident that we will continue to make progress toward realising our vision of a Pakistan where every child avails his/her fundamental right to survival, development, protection and participation.

I express my sincere gratitude to our esteemed partners, associates, and my dedicated team for their steadfast commitment to the cause of child rights. Together, let us continue to promote and protect the rights of every child in Pakistan in line with the country's international obligations.

With gratitude,



Ayesha Raza Farooq,  
Chairperson, NCRC

# KEY HIGHLIGHTS



Legal / Policy Reforms and Initiatives

**18**



Consultations on Child Rights Issues

**22**



Policy Recommendations

**56**



Advocacy Meetings

**20**



Conferences/ Seminars/ Symposium/ Events

**10**



Awareness Campaigns

**11**



Research & Publications

**10**



Participation in TV Programs

**20**



Participation in Child Rights Advocacy Events

**33**



Social Media Outreach

**980,308**



Complaint Handling

**322**

# Overview of NCRC

Empowering Every Child, Every Day







# 1. Overview of NCRC

## 1.1 About NCRC

The NCRC is a statutory body established by the Government of Pakistan for the promotion and protection of children's rights in Pakistan, in line with the country's international obligations. The NCRC's mandate is to examine and review policies, laws, practices/proposals, inquire into violations of child rights, conduct research, raise awareness, provide technical support and advise the Government on legislative and policy matters by virtue of section 15 of the National Commission on the Rights of Child Act, 2017.

## 1.2 History

The establishment of the NCRC was initiated following recommendations from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) during its fifty-second session. While reviewing Pakistan's 3rd and 4th periodic reports submitted to the UNCRC, the Committee emphasised the necessity for Pakistan to establish a dedicated body to enforce and uphold child rights. These recommendations, based on a thorough evaluation of Pakistan's adherence to UNCRC standards regarding children's rights, prompted the creation of the national body.

*Pakistan was the sixth country and the first Muslim State in the world to sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 12th November 1990.*

The NCRC was formed essentially as an advisory body to ensure that all policies, laws, programmes and administrative mechanisms are aligned with the country's international obligations, largely reflected in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (1973). Moving forward, Pakistan remains committed to working in partnership with state actors, civil society, international treaty bodies and other relevant stakeholders to uphold the rights of children as per their best interests.

The first Commission officially assumed office on 28th February 2020 under the leadership of Ms Afshan Tahseen Bajwa as the first Chairperson for a period of three years. Following the conclusion of the first term of the Commission, on 11th April 2023, Former Senator Ms Ayesha Raza Farooq took charge as the Commission's new Chairperson.

## 1.3 Mandate

The NCRC primarily functions as an advisory entity tasked with researching, reviewing, assessing, inquiring, advising and subsequently advocating for protecting and promoting children's rights across Pakistan. Additionally, the Commission remains dedicated to contributing to holding duty-bearers accountable for their actions and decisions, thereby fostering a culture of accountability and transparency in the realm of child rights.

The key functions of the Commission are stated below:

## Legal & Policy Reforms

The Commission reviews existing laws protecting children and proposes amendments if necessary.



## Coordination

The Commission collaborates with other provincial commissions and organizations to ensure coordinated efforts towards protecting children's rights.



## Inquiries Related to Child Rights Violations

The Commission investigates cases of child rights violations and recommends appropriate actions to relevant authorities.



## Addressing Child Rights Issues

The Commission identifies obstacles preventing children from enjoying their rights, such as violence and exploitation, and suggests solutions.



## Research and Database

It supports child-focused research and maintains a database of important information to inform decision-making.



## Awareness Raising

The Commission raises awareness about children's rights in society and educates the public on methods of protection.



## Reviewing International Commitments

It advises the government on international agreements related to child rights that should be adopted.



## Other

The Commission may conduct any other task related to child rights that the State may be requesting from the Commission.





## 1.4 Composition

As per section 3 of the National Commission on the Rights of Child Act, 2017, the NCRC consists of a Chairperson and seven members (one from each of the 4 provinces, one from Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), the NCRC Secretary, and two child members). It also includes ex-officio members – officers of grade 20 and above - from the Federal Ministries of Human Rights (MoHR), Interior, and Foreign Affairs, the Chairpersons of the Provincial Children's Rights Commissions, as well as the Chairpersons of the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) and the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW).



**Ayesha Raza Farooq**  
Chairperson



**Khalid Latif**  
Secretary NCRC



**Khalid Naeem**  
Member ICT



**Mehek Naeem**  
Member Punjab



**Pirbhu Lal Satyani**  
Member Sindh/Minorities



**Nadia Bibi**  
Member  
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



**Muhammad Hassan**  
Male Child Member

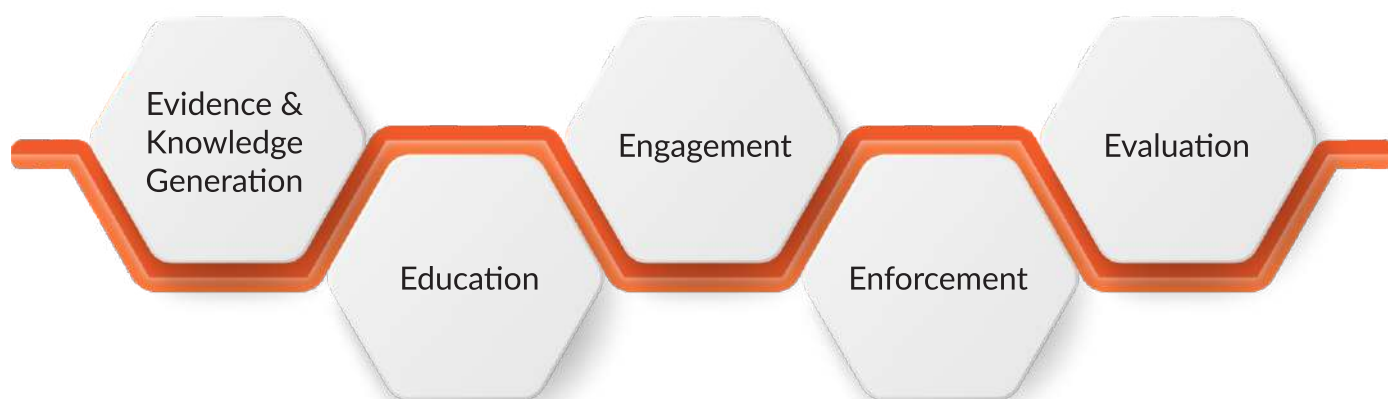


**Rabia Imran**  
Female Child Member

## 1.5 NCRC's Methodology

To execute its mission, the NCRC relies on a 5-Es approach, which comprises of Evidence & Knowledge Generation, Education, Engagement, Enforcement, & Evaluation shaping the Commission's strategies to protect and promote the rights of children across Pakistan.

- **Evidence & Knowledge Generation:** The NCRC prioritises evidence-based decision-making, policy and legal reform, and programming, recognising the importance of reliable data and comprehensive research to guarantee relevance, effectiveness, and impact.
- **Education:** Education stands as a cornerstone of the NCRC's methodology, empowering stakeholders and NCRC's members themselves with the knowledge, skills, and awareness necessary to uphold children's rights as per international standards.
- **Engagement:** Safe, meaningful, diverse, and inclusive engagement is placed at the core of the NCRC's working approach; the Commission believes that it is essential to secure multi-sectoral collaboration and healthy partnerships to drive sustainable change.
- **Enforcement:** As mentioned earlier, the NCRC is essentially an advisory body, but it focuses on ensuring that its strategic work contributes to a transformative process that will eventually help improve the enforcement of child rights in Pakistan.
- **Evaluation:** Continuous evaluation and critical analysis are integral components of the NCRC's methodology, enabling the Commission to review and assess the alignment of policies, laws and programs with international obligations but also providing the NCRC's team with an opportunity to monitor the impact of its own work, and identify improving areas, as well as examples of good practices.



*Figure 1: NCRC's 5Es Methodology*

## 1.6 Guiding Principles

At each step of its mission, the NCRC follows four key principles that serve as a compass, guiding the Commission's actions and decisions to protect and promote children's rights:

- The best interest of the child
- Dignity of the child
- Non-discrimination
- Right to be heard

Moreover, at each step of its work, the NCRC applies a 'Do No Harm' policy, zero tolerance for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. Finally, the NCRC puts gender equality and inclusiveness at the centre of its action: during consultations and interactions, we ensure that participants and respondents from different genders, regions, ethnicities, religions, socio-economic backgrounds, and with disabilities are involved and given an opportunity to tangibly contribute to our action to uphold child rights in Pakistan.







# Institutional Strengthening

Protecting Our Children, Protecting Our Future.







## 2. Institutional Strengthening

The NCRC team has taken very encouraging steps to strengthen its operational capacity and improve its governance to deliver better with and for the children in a participatory, inclusive, and informed manner.

### 2.1 Launch of the NCRC's 3-year Strategic Plan

The NCRC unveiled a 3-year strategic plan<sup>1</sup> aimed at guiding the NCRC's action to promote and protect child rights in Pakistan. The strategy was informed by extensive multi-stakeholder (including children) consultations and a thorough desk review; it also includes an action plan.

Key priority areas include evidence generation, partnership and transformation, in line with global efforts to foster the enforcement of children's rights. The plan garnered praise from international organisations, government officials, and civil society, highlighting its creative and child-sensitive nature, as well as its potential to positively influence the lives of children across the nation.

By 2026, the strategic plan aims to deliver a measurable improvement in the Pakistani child rights landscape, making every effort to support Pakistan in upholding its promise to promote and protect child rights as per international obligations and constitutional principles.



Islamabad: A glimpse of the launch event of the NCRC's 3-year strategic plan.

### 2.2 Notifying Advisory Committees

Pakistan is a vast, colourful and diverse country. Hence, ensuring the rights of all children in the country necessitates the collection and consideration of various perspectives. On that basis, the

<sup>1</sup>The strategic plan can be downloaded from our website <https://ncrc.gov.pk/>

NCRC has established advisory committees comprising child rights practitioners, thematic experts, religious scholars, and representatives of minority groups. These committees constitute invaluable platforms for gathering insights, views, and recommendations from a wide array of stakeholders, enriching the Commission's understanding of the complex issues affecting children's rights.

The NCRC regularly convenes meetings with these advisory committees, fostering dialogue, collaboration, and the exchange of ideas. During these sessions, committee members provide valuable input and feedback on the Commission's work, policies and initiatives. This collaborative approach ensures that the NCRC's actions are informed and aligned with the needs and aspirations of all segments of society.

Moreover, the NCRC seeks the support of these advisory committees in advocating to reinforce its expertise, influence and network. Additionally, alongside engaging with existing advisory committees, the NCRC is in the process of establishing a dedicated child advisory body in the spirit of Article 12<sup>2</sup> of the UNCRC.



Islamabad: The Chairperson NCRC chairs the advisory committee meetings.

### 2.3 Commission Meetings

The Commission conducts regular meetings, which enables timely and need-based communication and decision-making among members. These horizontal gatherings provide a vital space for Commission members to convene, discuss progress, address challenges, and strategise for the future. Through these meetings, the NCRC has been able to streamline its decision-making processes, ensuring that key actions and interventions receive the full approval and endorsement of the Commission for effective implementation.



Islamabad: The Chairperson NCRC steers the Commission's meetings in alignment with the agenda.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>



## 2.4 Capacity-Building

The NCRC believes in investing in its human resource to strengthen their capacity for safeguarding children's rights more effectively. For example, the NCRC members, staff and consultants participated in a training session led by the Punjab Police on criminal investigation procedures and a workshop on child labour organised by the International Labour Organization (ILO). These workshops helped the Commission in understanding the context, international and national legal framework on child labour in domestic work resulting in improving the bill drafted by the Commission to criminalize child labour in domestic work. Moreover, understanding the criminal investigation process assisted the Commission in dealing with child rights violations and handling complaints in a timely and effective manner.



*Islamabad: A training session on child labour arranged by ILO for the NCRC.*



*Islamabad: A training session on criminal investigation procedures arranged by Punjab Police at the NCRC headquarters.*

## 2.5 Strategic Partnerships

The NCRC has established strategic partnerships to further its mission in alignment with its strategic plan. Below is a concise overview of the partnerships that have been formalised:

**UNICEF:** UNICEF stands as a longstanding strategic partner of the NCRC, offering technical expertise and financial support to protect and promote children's rights in Pakistan. The support provided by UNICEF has enabled the NCRC to implement significant programs and initiatives, ranging from awareness campaigns to evidence-based child-participatory policy advocacy efforts and preparing policy briefs on key child rights issues.



*Islamabad: Representatives of the NCRC with UNICEF's Regional Director and Country Representative.*

**Embassy of Spain:** In collaboration with the Embassy of Spain, the NCRC organised the 'Color of Dreams' Embassy of Spain's Art Competition on Child Rights, a celebration of World's Child Day (WCD) in November 2023. Through art, children's views pertaining to child rights issues and mitigations were gathered and taken into consideration to devise the NCRC's communication strategy and action plan.



*Residence of Spain, Islamabad: The Chairperson NCRC Ayesha Raza Farooq calls upon the Ambassador of Spain H.E. José Antonio de Ory.*

**French Embassy:** The NCRC has partnered with the French Embassy to spearhead an awareness campaign aimed at preventing child labour in domestic work, child sexual abuse and promoting the enrollment of Out-of-School Children (OOSC). The campaign is set to be launched in May 2024.



*Embassy of France: The Chairperson NCRC Ayesha Raza Farooq with the Ambassador of France H.E. Nicolas Galey.*



**FCDO:** The NCRC has joined hands with FCDO to unveil a report titled 'State of Pakistan's Children' that will encapsulate a comprehensive snapshot of child rights issues in Pakistan. This report will be updated annually and form a useful tool to assess Pakistan's overall progress towards the promotion and protection of child rights.



NCRC Head Office: The Chairperson NCRC Ayesha Raza Farooq is engaged in a meeting with Ms Jo Moir, Development Director, FCDO and Mr Ali Naqvi, Social Development Advisor, FCDO.

**SSDO Pakistan:** A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the NCRC and SSDO Pakistan, focusing on various areas, including awareness raising, campaigning, capacity building, and stakeholder coordination to counter child trafficking.



NCRC Head Office: The Chairperson NCRC Ayesha Raza Farooq and Executive Director of SSDO Mr Kausar Abbas exchange MoU signed between both organizations.

**OBUN2:** The NCRC has also signed a Letter of Agreement (LoA) with OBUN2 to collaborate on developing a cutting-edge digital portal on child rights in Pakistan, fostering research-based data and evidence. The portal is set to be launched in April 2024. This will strengthen the basis of evidence to monitor Pakistan's progress towards the enforcement of child rights as per international and constitutional obligations.



NCRC Head Office: The Chairperson NCRC Ayesha Raza Farooq and Executive Director of OBUN2 Mr Qindeel Shujaat sign LoA.

**Meta & Zindagi Trust:** The NCRC spearheaded a campaign on digital safety in collaboration with Meta & Zindagi Trust and plans to conduct trainings for educators, parents and children on corporal punishment.



NCRC Head Office: Representatives of the NCRC and META pose for a group photo.

**PTA & Telenor:** The NCRC, in collaboration with Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), UNICEF, and Telenor Pakistan, launched a parental guide titled 'Safeguarding your Child in the Digital Age' to raise awareness on digital safety among parents and caregivers.

**ITA:** In collaboration with Idara-e-Taleem-o-Agahi, the NCRC launched a book on child protection, 'Zor se Kehna Nahe', to raise awareness and prevent Child Sexual Abuse (CSA).



*NCRC Head Office: The Chairperson NCRC Ayesha Raza Farooq and Baela Jamil, Chief Executive Officer, ITA pose for a photograph.*

**PGGA:** In alliance with PGGA, the NCRC took part in the World Children's Day celebration through meaningful child participation; on this occasion, a charter of demands drafted by children was presented to Mr Anwar-ul-Haq Karar, Caretaker Prime Minister at the time.



*NCRC Head Office: The Chairperson NCRC Ayesha Raza Farooq and Ms Maria Maud Sabri, National Commissioner, PGGA are engaged in a meeting.*

**GDP:** A consultation took place with more than 200 participants from across Pakistan to help the NCRC devise key strategic action points and reform the law to end child labour in domestic work.



*Islamabad: The Chairperson NCRC Ayesha Raza Farooq, Ms Saima Qadeer, Executive Director, GDP and Ms Valerie Khan, Senior Technical Advisor, GDP raise their hand to pledge against child labour in domestic work.*

These partnerships have yielded significant results, including increased awareness about children's rights through events like the 'Color of Dreams' Art Competition and the forthcoming awareness campaign with the French embassy. Additionally, the collaboration with UNICEF, SSDO Pakistan, FCDO, Meta, Zindagi Trust, GDP and OBUN2 will strengthen the NCRC's capacity to implement impactful programs and initiatives, contributing to the realisation of its strategic objectives.



# Progress

Childhood is for Learning, Not Labouring





## 3. Progress

In the progress section, we have provided a detailed breakdown of our progress across different thematic areas. Each thematic area represents a specific focus of our work, encompassing various aspects of child rights and protection.

### 3.1 Child Labour in Domestic Work

Child labour in domestic work remains a pressing issue in Pakistan, where an alarming number of children, approximately 264,000<sup>3</sup>, are engaged in domestic work, often to support their families' survival. This harmful practice deprives children of their fundamental rights to quality education, proper nutrition, development and healthcare and exposes them to various forms of abuse and exploitation, or even death. Despite efforts by federal and provincial governments to address this issue through laws, policies, and programs, child labour in domestic work persists and often constitutes a modern form of slavery, which violates the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan along with the country's international obligations.

According to ILO 1 in every 4 households in Pakistan engages a child for domestic work.

Amidst a notable increase in cases of child labourers exploited and abused in domestic work, the NCRC urged the federal government to legislate more adequately to end this concerning situation and rally support for the safeguarding of children's rights across the nation. In addition to the proposed legislative change, the NCRC members have also joined hands with the media and civil society to raise awareness of the adverse effects that labour in domestic work has on children and what alternative solutions could be worked upon.

#### Measures Taken by the NCRC in Rizwana Torture Case

The NCRC acted swiftly upon receiving information regarding the alleged torture of a minor girl named Rizwana, who was employed as a live-in domestic worker at the residence of a civil judge in Islamabad.

Upon learning about the incident through media reports, the Chairperson NCRC, accompanied by Ms Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) Youth Affairs, visited Rizwana at Lahore General Hospital, reassuring her family of support and security. The Chairperson NCRC maintained direct communication with the Office of the Inspector General Police ICT, inquiring about the case's progress, ensuring a watertight investigation and called for the inclusion of additional pertinent charges in the FIR, including 'attempt to murder' and section 3 of the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act, 2018.



Lahore: The Chairperson NCRC is talking to media after seeing Rizwana at Lahore General Hospital.

Letters were also sent to the Medical Superintendent at Lahore General Hospital Punjab, urging prompt sharing of medico-legal reports. Additionally, the NCRC advocated for gender sensitivity in the investigative process, requesting the inclusion of a senior female police officer in the Joint

<sup>3</sup> [https://webapps.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/kd00098.pdf](https://webapps.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/kd00098.pdf)



Investigation Team (JIT). The Commission's actions were focused on thorough fact-finding and engagement with relevant authorities to expedite the investigation and support Rizwana's well-being.



A copy of the letter received from ICT Police adding a senior female police officer in JIT.



A copy of the letter sent to the Medical Superintendent for sharing medico-legal reports of Rizwana.

Amidst a notable increase in cases of children exploited and abused in domestic work, the NCRC urged the federal government to legislate more adequately to end this concerning situation and rally support for the safeguarding of children's rights across the nation. In addition to the proposed legislative change, the NCRC members have also joined hands with the media and civil society to raise awareness of the adverse effects that labour in domestic work has on children and what alternative solutions could be worked upon.

### National Level Consultative Process to Shape and Improve the Bill on Child Labour in Domestic Work

The inaugural nationwide stakeholder consultation on child labour in domestic work was organised in ICT in collaboration with GDP and SSDO. The consultation provided a large platform for stakeholders from across the country to engage in a substantive dialogue, sharing insights and actionable solutions to combat this form of child abuse and exploitation.

Following the initial draft of the Prohibition of Child Labour in Domestic Work Bill 2024, the NCRC further embarked on a consultative journey to engage other stakeholders in refining and strengthening the proposed legislation. A series of technical exchanges took place in Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, culminating in a concluding consultation in the federal capital.

These consultations engaged more than 400 participants including government representatives, civil society organisations, legal experts and child rights champions, to discuss and provide input on the bill. Valuable feedback from stakeholders was carefully considered, leading to significant improvements in the bill.



Lahore: Consultation on draft Prohibition of Child Labour in Domestic Work Bill 2024.



Peshawar: Consultation on draft Prohibition of Child Labour in Domestic Work Bill 2024.



Karachi: Consultation on draft Prohibition of Child Labour in Domestic Work Bill 2024.







Quetta: Consultation on draft Prohibition of Child Labour in Domestic Work Bill 2024.



Islamabad: Consolidation consultation on draft Prohibition of Child Labour in Domestic Work Bill 2024.

## Outlook of the Prohibition of Child Labour in Domestic Work Bill 2024

The proposed bill seeks to amend the Pakistan Penal Code of 1860 with the primary objective of outlawing child labour in domestic work, thereby aiming to eradicate this harmful practice. It introduces a new provision, Section 374A, which specifically targets the exploitation and abuse of children in domestic work. This section explicitly prohibits the employment of individuals under the age of eighteen years as a live-in domestic worker under any circumstances, regardless of the consent of the child, at his home or at any premises of a third party. The bill introduces stricter punishments with imprisonment for perpetrators not less than 3 years and may extend up to seven years and a fine not less than one hundred thousand rupees.

The bill allows a child above the age of 16 to be engaged in domestic work involving light work of not more than 2 hours per day under the supervision of a parent. Moreover, the bill offers comprehensive definitions of key terms like "domestic work" and "domestic worker" to ensure clarity and coherence in its implementation. Importantly, it emphasises that child victims of domestic labour exploitation are not to be held criminally accountable, and instead, they are entitled to legal protection and compensation through established legal channels.

In line with its commitment to combatting child labour in domestic work, the bill designates offences related to child labour in domestic settings as non-bailable, non-compoundable and cognisable, underlining the gravity of these violations and the urgency of addressing them effectively.



## Advocacy for Legislation

Following the conclusion of the consultative process aimed at improving the draft bill, the NCRC, alongside its partners, has reassured its commitment to combating child labour in domestic work. With the completion of this phase, the NCRC has forwarded the bill to the federal MoHR, which will subsequently present it to the Cabinet for consideration.

The NCRC in collaboration with UNICEF, has launched a national campaign to raise awareness about the prevention of child labour in domestic work, foster social disapproval of child labour in domestic work, increase reporting of child labour cases and garner public support for legislative reforms.

## Voices for Change - Stakeholder Demand for Legislation



*"The capacity-building session conducted by ILO aimed to equip the NCRC members with the necessary knowledge and expertise to address child labour effectively. We are committed to supporting the NCRC in their efforts to enact legislation that aligns with international standards."*

**Geir Thomas Tonstol**  
Country Director, ILO



*"Protecting our children from exploitation and ensuring their well-being is a top priority, but legislation takes time, and the Ministry of Law & Justice reaffirms its support to the NCRC."*

**Raja Naeem Akbar**  
Secretary, Ministry of Law & Justice (MoL&J)



*"UNICEF remains committed to supporting the NCRC in their efforts to protect children from exploitation and abuse."*

**Dr. Inossua Kabore**  
Deputy Representative, UNICEF



*"The legal framework is necessary to define and address exploitative practices, setting clear standards for accountability and enforcement."*

**Dr. Ehsan Sadiq**  
Director General, National Police Bureau (NPB)

### 3.2 Access to Education

In Pakistan, the issue of OOSC persists as a significant challenge, with over 26.2<sup>4</sup> million children currently out of school, according to a report prepared by the Pakistan Institute of Education in collaboration with UNESCO, based on the 2021 and 2022 data.

Given the urgency of addressing this issue, the NCRC has taken proactive measures to initiate a consultative process aimed at mainstreaming OOSC and enhancing access to quality education for all. The objectives of the consultations were to understand the current education landscape, assess provincial education priorities, reflect on lessons learned and draft policy recommendations to enhance education for all children, including those out of school and in special education schools.

The NCRC conducted four consultations, one in each province, to engage stakeholders and discuss the progress of Education Sector Plans, specifically addressing OOSC and improving the quality of education in special education schools. These consultations served as platforms for dialogue, reflection, collaboration to identify challenges, share insights and formulate recommendations for policy advocacy.

**Snapshot of OOSC in Pakistan**  
Punjab: 10.11 million  
Sindh: 7 million  
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: 3.6 million  
Balochistan: 3.1 Million  
ICT: 0.8 Million



*Peshawar: Member Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadia Bibi leads the provincial consultation on Free & Compulsory Education.*



*Lahore: The Chairperson NCRC steers the provincial consultation on Free & Compulsory Education.*

<sup>4</sup> <https://pie.gov.pk/SitelImage/Downloads/PES%20Highlights%202021-22%20New.pdf>





Quetta: Participants are engaged in group work during the provincial consultation on Free & Compulsory Education.



Karachi: The Chairperson NCRC leads the provincial consultation on Free & Compulsory Education.

### Challenges in Ensuring Equitable Access to Education

Through these discussions, several key challenges emerged. Addressing these challenges is crucial for ensuring equitable access to quality education for all children across Pakistan.

Budgetary constraints	Inconsistencies in school standards	Insufficient number of secondary schools
Gender disparities	Political interference in appointments	Lack of functional parent-teacher councils
Inadequate teacher training	Economic challenges	Access to education

## Recommendations for Enhancing Access to Education

The consultations yielded the formulation of comprehensive recommendations to address the challenges faced in the education sector.

Door-to-door enrollment campaigns	Increasing budget allocation	Improving school infrastructure
Mobilising resources through public-private partnerships	Promoting awareness of non-formal education	Policy reforms in teacher training and appointments
Adopting a gender-responsive approach	Introducing scholarships and stipends	Encouraging double shifts in schools
Developing comprehensive curriculum standards	Enhancing teacher's capacity	Providing meals in schools
Integrating religious education into the formal education system		

## NCRC's Advocacy for Mobilizing Government to Take Concrete Measures

The NCRC is committed to advocating for the adoption and enforcement of recommendations emerging from consultations with both provincial and federal governments to address the challenges faced by OOSC in Pakistan. The Commission has written letters to all the Chief Ministers urging them to prioritise education and take decisive action to tackle the issue firsthand. An additional meeting was convened with the Chief Minister of Balochistan to discuss strategies for improving access to quality education and mainstreaming OOSC. Through these advocacy efforts, the NCRC aims to mobilise political will and garner support for policy reforms and resource allocation to ensure that every child in Pakistan has the opportunity to access education and fulfil his/her potential.

In a significant development, Prime Minister Mian Shehbaz Sharif has declared an 'Education Emergency' across Pakistan to enrol OOSC and promote literacy. This step marks a pivotal moment in our efforts to ensure every child has the opportunity to access education and realise their full potential.

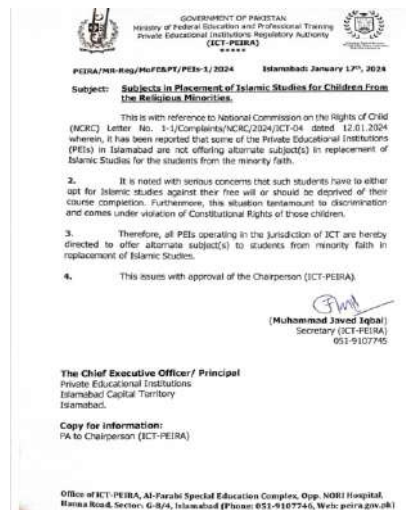


Quetta: The Chairperson NCRC Ayesha Raza Farooq, Chief Minister Balochistan Sarfraz Bugti and member Sindh/Minorities Pirbhu Satyani pose for a photograph.



## Ensuring Inclusive Education for Minority Students

The NCRC wrote a letter to the Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Authority (PEIRA), highlighting concerns about the lack of alternative subjects for minority students in replacement of Islamic Studies at private educational institutions in Islamabad. The letter emphasised the importance of accommodating diverse students' needs and promoting inclusive education. Following the letter, the NCRC continued to follow up with PEIRA to ensure appropriate action was taken to address the issue. As a result of the NCRC's advocacy efforts, PEIRA intervened and directed all educational institutions within the ICT jurisdiction to offer alternate subjects for minority students, thereby ensuring that every child has access to education that respects their cultural and religious identity.



*A copy of the letter received from PEIRA directing schools to offer alternate subjects.*

## 3.3 Birth Registration

The issue of birth registration in Pakistan is deeply concerning, with the country grappling with alarmingly low registration rates, which are among the lowest in the world. According to UNICEF, Pakistan is home to approximately 9%<sup>5</sup> of the world's 166 million unregistered children. Moreover, only 42% of children under the age of 5 years have their birth officially recorded. Without proper registration, children are deprived of their fundamental rights and access to essential services, hindering their ability to fully participate in society, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and marginalisation and denying them of their fundamental right to justice.

*Pakistan is amongst the countries with the lowest birth registration rate with a mere 42% of children registered under the age of five years.*

The absence of birth registration exacerbates numerous protection issues for children, including child domestic labour, child marriage and various other vulnerabilities. Without accurate documentation of birth, determining a child's age becomes challenging, leaving them disposed to exploitation and abuse.

The NCRC is aware of the gravity of the birth registration issue in Pakistan and its devastating implications for children's rights and well-being. In line with its strategic plan, the NCRC devised a comprehensive course of action to tackle this pressing issue, focusing on involving federal and provincial governments, NADRA and UNICEF to ensure that every child in Pakistan is registered at birth.

### Advancing Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) at International Level

The NCRC team advocated for the strengthening of Pakistan's CRVS system at a significant Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) side event facilitated by UNICEF in New York. During the event, the NCRC's Chairperson underlined the importance of enhancing the CRVS system through various measures, including interoperability with the health sector, fee waivers for birth registration within legally permissible timeframes, and collaboration with key sectors such as education, nutrition and social protection. By aligning CRVS initiatives with SDG 16.9, Pakistan can demonstrate its commitment to comprehensive development.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/pakistan/stories/digital-birth-registration-helps-make-pakistan-safer-place-children>



New York: The Chairperson NCRC Ayesha Raza Farooq participates in the SGD CRVS side event at UNGA.

## Strengthening Birth Registration at the National Level

The NCRC also initiated a series of strategic engagements with key stakeholders at both the federal and provincial levels. A letter addressed to the Prime Minister prompted immediate action, leading to a pivotal meeting convened by the Secretary MoHR. This meeting, attended by the NCRC and representatives from relevant government departments, including Education, Interior, Law, NADRA and the ICT Municipal Corporation, aimed to tackle the alarming number of unregistered children.

Furthermore, the NCRC engaged with Chairman NADRA Lieutenant General Muhammad Munir Afsar in a set of meetings, demonstrating a shared commitment to enhancing the birth registration system and ensuring every child's birth is duly recorded.

The NCRC reached out to all provincial Chief Ministers and Chief Secretaries, urging collective action to address the issue. Subsequent high-level multi-stakeholder meetings were convened with Syed Asif Hyder Shah, Chief Secretary of Sindh; Mir Sarfraz Bugti, Chief Minister of Balochistan; Shakeel Qadir, Chief Secretary of Balochistan; Zahid Akhtar Zaman, Chief Secretary of Punjab; Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry, Chief Secretary of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; and other provincial departments. These meetings aimed to advocate for taking concrete measures for improving birth registration.

Government of Pakistan  
National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC)

Islamabad, 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024

To,  
Mr. Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti,  
Chief Minister,  
Government of Balochistan,  
Quetta, Pakistan.

Subject: **CONGRATULATIONS ON TAKING OATH AS CHIEF MINISTER OF BALOCHISTAN**

Honourable Chief Minister,

The National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) is an independent statutory body established by the Government of Pakistan to promote, protect, and fulfil children's rights in Pakistan. The NCRC has the mandate to examine and review policies, laws, practices, and proposals, inquire into violations of child rights, conduct research, raise awareness, build capacities, provide technical support and advise the Government on legislative and policy matters by virtue of the National Commission on the Rights of Child Act, 2017.

On behalf of the NCRC, I congratulate you on your appointment as the Chief Minister of Balochistan. We are confident that your office will diligently work on improving children's rights in the province. As you take charge of this important position, I write to you with a sense of hope and urgency regarding the welfare and rights of children. We are presenting to you a set of immediate actions that we believe will significantly improve the lives and rights of children in Balochistan:

**a) Improving Birth Registration:** It is deeply concerning that birth registration levels in Pakistan remain alarmingly low, with the country having the lowest registration rates in the world. According to UNICEF, approximately 9% of the world's 146 million unregistered children are in Pakistan. Therefore, we recommend implementing legal measures for the first 60 days of birth to ensure that no child is deprived of this fundamental right due to financial constraints. Additionally, advocating for health sector interoperability with Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems through seamless data sharing will improve birth registration rates, which are crucial for evidence-based policy decisions concerning children.

**b) Banning Child Domestic Labour:** The prevalence of child domestic labour in Pakistan, as reported by the International Labour Organization (ILO), is deeply concerning. Every fourth household in our country employs a child in domestic work, perpetuating a cycle of exploitation and denying children's access to education and safe childhood. The NCRC appreciates the Government of Balochistan for adding domestic child labour to the list of hazardous occupations in the Balochistan Employment of Children (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 2021. However, the NCRC proposes to spearhead awareness campaigns

Government of Pakistan  
National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC)

To improve the enforcement of this law and thus safeguarding children from this form of exploitation.

**c) Addressing Out-of-School Children:** Pakistan has one of the highest numbers of out-of-school children in the world as it is home to more than 26.2 million out-of-school children. The NCRC recommends allocating funds for awareness-raising campaigns for engaging communities and promoting school enrollment. Fostering the successfully tested public-private partnerships model will help in addressing the severe shortage of teachers and inadequate infrastructure in schools. Furthermore, addressing the fragmentation in the education sector and promoting inclusive education policies will help in ensuring equitable access to quality education for children.

**d) Countering Child Marriage:** Pakistan is home to nearly 19 million child brides; 1 in every 6 young women were married in childhood according to UNICEF. To combat this practice, we propose that legal reforms be undertaken, and 18 years be set as the minimum age of marriage for both boys and girls. This legislative reform would help to prevent early marriages and promote the education and empowerment of girls.

We believe these immediate actions will serve as crucial steps towards upholding the rights and well-being of children in Balochistan. The undersigned requests a meeting with you on Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024 to discuss these recommendations and the way forward.

With profound regards & best wishes,

*Ayesha Raza Farooq*  
Ayesha Raza Farooq,  
Chairperson,  
National Commission on the Rights of Child.

Government of Pakistan  
National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC)

Islamabad, 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2024

To,  
Mr. Zahid Akhtar Zaman,  
Chief Secretary,  
Government of Punjab,  
Lahore, Pakistan.

Subject: **REQUEST FOR A MEETING TO EXPLORE WAYS OF IMPROVING BIRTH REGISTRATION IN PUNJAB**

Honourable Chief Secretary,

The National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) is an independent statutory body established by the Government of Pakistan to promote, protect, and fulfil children's rights in Pakistan. The NCRC has the mandate to examine and review policies, laws, practices, and proposals, inquire into violations of child rights, conduct research, raise awareness, build capacities, provide technical support and advise the Government on legislative and policy matters by virtue of the National Commission on the Rights of Child Act of 2017.

1. Birth registration is a fundamental right of every child and is critical for scientific and evidence-based policy and decision making. With regards to birth registration, it is deeply concerning that Pakistan has the highest burden of unregistered children globally, with 4.3 million unregistered children under age one and over 17 million unregistered children under age five. Subsequent to NCRC's participation as a member of the Pakistan delegation at the SDG Summit side event on "Unlocking SDG 16.9: Harnessing the UN Legal Agenda for Leaving No One Behind" held at UNICEF HQ in New York on 15<sup>th</sup> September, 2023, we have been keenly advocating for establishing a universal, free, and interoperable Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) system aligned with the health and national ID systems.

2. The key recommendations that arose from this event were shared with the Prime Minister's office. While meetings are underway at the federal level to discuss the way forward, the undersigned requests a meeting with you, to draw your attention to the following points:

a) Health sector's interoperability with CRVS systems to improve birth registration rates at the health facility level through seamless data exchange.

b) For waivers for birth registration within the legally permissible timeframes (60 days) to ensure that no child is deprived of their fundamental right.

c) Simplification of CRVS business processes to help improve birth registration rates.

3. To ensure comprehensive discussions and representation from relevant departments, we kindly request that Secretary Local Government, Secretary Health, and NADRA Officials also participate in the meeting. We believe participation and collaboration is crucial in formulating effective strategies to improve birth registration rates in Punjab.

4. We propose scheduling the meeting in the afternoon of **01<sup>st</sup> or 02<sup>nd</sup> April 2024** in a time convenient for your schedule. Your support and leadership in addressing this critical issue of birth registration will be pivotal in safeguarding the rights and well-being of children in Punjab.

*Ayesha Raza Farooq*  
Ayesha Raza Farooq,  
Chairperson-NCRC

Office # 502, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Executive Trust Complex, Agha Khan Road, F-5/1, Islamabad. Ph: 011-9283214

Copies of the letters sent to Chief Ministers and Chief Secretaries for strengthening birth registration.



During these engagements, key recommendations were presented to tackle the issue of birth registration effectively, laying the groundwork for collaborative efforts to safeguard the rights of every child in Pakistan.



Karachi: The Chairperson NCRC conducts a meeting with Syed Asif Hyder Shah Chief Secretary Sindh to improve birth registration.



Peshawar: The Chairperson NCRC holds a meeting with Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to improve birth registration.



Quetta: The Chairperson NCRC conducts a meeting with Shakeel Qadir Chief Secretary Balochistan to improve birth registration.





*Punjab: The Chairperson NCRC holds a meeting with Zahid Akhtar Zaman Chief Secretary Punjab to improve birth registration.*

### Counting Every Child - Advocacy for Birth Registration

- **Fee Waiver:** Advocacy for a fee waiver for birth registration during the first 60 days after birth, ensuring that financial constraints do not deprive any child of this fundamental right.
- **Health Interoperability with CRVS:** Emphasising the importance of interoperability between the health sector and CRVS systems to facilitate seamless data sharing and birth registration.
- **Law Reform:** Proposing amendments in rules and regulations to streamline and facilitate the birth registration process and address existing barriers.
- **Simplification of CRVS Business Process:** Calling for simplifying the CRVS business process to make birth registration more accessible and efficient for parents.

As a direct outcome of these meetings, provincial governments are actively considering the possibility of waiving birth registration fees to remove financial obstacles to registration. Notably, in Balochistan, Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa steering committees have been established comprising representatives from the Health Department, Local Government, UNICEF Pakistan, NADRA, and NCRC. These committees are tasked to lead efforts to enhance birth registration rates. These measures mark a pivotal shift in addressing the birth registration challenges and have generated considerable momentum towards achieving comprehensive and inclusive registration coverage.

In the pursuit of fostering awareness on birth registration, the NCRC diligently followed up with PEMRA through meetings and writing letters, and as an outcome TV commercials were aired free of cost through national and regional channels. This campaign will help in tackling the low rates of birth registration and instil a sense of urgency in communities, emphasising the invaluable advantages it offers to children.

### 3.4 Child Protection

Pakistan's vulnerability to child trafficking is exacerbated by its unique geographic location (Pakistan is a place of arrival, transit and departure) and compounded by various socio-economic factors. This pervasive issue manifests in several forms, such as bonded labour, domestic servitude, forced marriages, organ trafficking, and drug trafficking. Child trafficking inflicts severe physical, psychological, and social harm on its victims, resulting in widespread violations of children's rights. According to the 2023 annual report on Trafficking in Persons (TIP) by the US Department of State, the Government of Pakistan identified 35,309 trafficking victims, of which 3,187<sup>6</sup> were children—an

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/pakistan>



alarming statistic demanding immediate action. Recognising this urgency, the NCRC has implemented a range of initiatives aligned with its strategic plan to combat child trafficking.

### Launch of Policy Brief on Child Trafficking and Panel Discussion

The NCRC launched its Policy Brief<sup>7</sup> on Child Trafficking in a ceremony held in Islamabad, with a panel discussion. This comprehensive document provides an in-depth analysis of the current child trafficking landscape in Pakistan, the challenges faced and recommendations for effective prevention and intervention strategies. It reflects the complexities of child trafficking and offers targeted solutions to combat this grave violation of children's rights.

The panel discussion featured prominent experts in the field of child trafficking. Kausar Abbas, Executive Director of SSDO, shared valuable insights into the challenges surrounding child trafficking. At the same time, Zaheer Ahmed, Former Director of the Anti-Human Smuggling Unit at the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), and Azam Tabani from the NPB provided a law enforcement perspective on the issue. Shahida Gilani, Senior Programme Officer, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) specialising in Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling, shared a nuanced understanding of the dynamics involved in combatting these crimes. Moderated by Mehek Naeem, NCRC Member Punjab, the panel discussion fostered a collaborative exchange of ideas and highlighted the collective determination to end child trafficking.



*Islamabad: A glimpse of the event organised to launch Policy Brief on Child Trafficking*

<sup>7</sup>The policy brief can be downloaded from our website <https://ncrc.gov.pk/>

## Advocacy for Legal Reforms to Combat Child Trafficking

The policy brief on child trafficking highlights the need for legislative measures, mostly with regard to the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Act (PTPA), 2018. In light of those recommendations, the NCRC has been advocating with the Ministry of Interior to amend the current legal framework. The proposed amendments include the following:

- Broaden the definition of 'trafficking in persons' to encompass all means and purposes of trafficking as outlined in the Palermo Protocol.
- Include a non-obstante clause in the PTPA to give it an overriding effect over contradictory laws, ensuring clarity and certainty in its application.
- Define 'structured group' more explicitly to establish the involvement of organised criminal groups in human trafficking, drawing guidance from the definition provided in the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC).
- Revise the provision for compensation to victims of trafficking under section 13 of the PTPA to ensure that victims receive compensation regardless of apprehension, identification, prosecution, or conviction of the offender, with funding possibly sourced from public revenues.
- Amend section 3 of PTPA to remove the option of fines as punishment for trafficking offences, focusing solely on imprisonment or imprisonment together with fines to uphold the severity of the crime and deter potential offenders effectively.

Moreover, the NCRC wrote letters to the Ministry of Interior (MoI), FIA, and NADRA and highlighted the crucial need to monitor convicted offenders to prevent them from relocating and repeating offences. By integrating criminal records between the FIA and NADRA, law enforcement agencies can effectively track and monitor trafficking offenders, thereby enhancing efforts to combat child trafficking in Pakistan.

## 3.5 Child Sexual Abuse

In Pakistan, child sexual abuse remains a major issue, based on alarming statistics and reports. According to Cruel Number 2023 by SAHIL, an average of 11 children fall victim to sexual abuse every single day. A total number of 4,213<sup>8</sup> child abuse cases were reported across Pakistan in 2023. This staggering figure highlights the urgent need for robust measures to protect children across the nation. Such incidents not only inflict physical and psychological harm on children but also represent a grave violation of their fundamental rights. The NCRC aims to address systemic challenges that perpetuate such abuse and advocate for policies and initiatives aimed at preventing and addressing child sexual abuse effectively.

*According to Cruel Numbers 2023, 53% of the victims of Child Sexual Abuse were girls and 47% were boys.*

### Inclusion of Child Rights in Political Manifestos

During the General Election 2024 campaigns, the NCRC reached out to political parties, asking them to include child rights -including child protection- as a priority in their political program. Letters were sent to all parties, urging them to include dedicated sections on child rights in their manifestos. These positive steps indicate a growing recognition of the importance of protecting and promoting child rights in the country's political landscape. By galvanising political will and mainstreaming child rights considerations into political discourse, the NCRC aims to ensure that the voices and needs of children are not only heard but also prioritized at the highest levels of decision-making.

<sup>8</sup> <https://sahil.org/cruel-numbers/>





Islamabad, November the 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Islamabad, 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023

Subject: INCLUSION OF CHILD RIGHTS IN THE MANIFESTO OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Subject: APPEAL FOR THE PROTECTION OF AFGHAN REFUGEE CHILDREN

Dear Sir,

Dear *Khairun Nisa Begum*,

The National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) has been established by the Government of Pakistan as an independent statutory body for the promotion, protection and fulfillment of Children's rights. It has the mandate to examine and review laws and inquire into violations of child rights and advise the Government on legislative and policy matters by virtue of the National Commission on the Rights of Child Act, 2017. Copy of NCRC Act, 2017 is attached at Annex-1.

We write as advocates and defenders of children's rights in Pakistan to express our concern about the Government's *Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan* as the decision is invariably affecting the children involved. As a statutory body whose mandate is to promote and protect children's rights in Pakistan, in line with section 15 of the National Commission on the Rights of Child Act 2017, we are extremely concerned about the situation at hand. However, at the same time, it is important to mention here that we recognize the security challenges faced by the country and appreciate Pakistan's significant role in hosting refugees especially Afghans for over the last 40 years.

2. The role of political parties in addressing child rights is of paramount importance as they have the power to shape policies, advocate for legislation, and allocate resources to protect and promote the rights of children in Pakistan. It is essential for political parties to recognize and address the alarming rates of child rights violations and abuse prevalent in our society. Unfortunately, Pakistan remains plagued by child rights issues of child labor, child trafficking, child marriage and child physical and sexual abuse. Pakistan also has one of the highest out of school children and child mortality rates, and lowest birth registration in the world. Political parties must take immediate and decisive action to put an end to these atrocities and ensure that every child in Pakistan is guaranteed their fundamental rights and protection under the law.

2. It is to be stated that we have received reports from the relevant United Nations agencies, foreign missions, media representatives, civil society, and legal fraternity of incidents where Unaccompanied and Separated Children (USAC) have been detained and are being sent back to Afghanistan with no one to look after them.

3. In view of the dismal indicators, being a mainstream political party, you are requested to include a dedicated chapter on "protection, promotion and fulfillment of child rights" in your manifesto. Some of the priority areas may include a) increase enrollment and reduce number of out of school children in line with Article 25-A of the Constitution. b) strengthen legal and policy framework around child labour and child marriage, c) increase birth registration and, d) ensure child centric budgeting.

3. We have also taken notice of the incidences where several asylum seekers and refugees, accompanied with children, whose applications are pending with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or who have been registered with the UNHCR have been deported despite the Government's assurance to the contrary. In this regard, it is requested that children belonging to refugee families registered with the UNHCR awaiting asylum are protected and treated with dignity in line with the Constitution of Pakistan and international obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

4. The National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) eagerly awaits your commitment to take concrete actions aimed at eradicating child rights violations, and kindly requests that your esteemed party inform us of the specific measures you plan to take in order to address these crucial issues. Moreover, we would like to offer our guidance and support to your party in crafting effective policies and strategies. By working together, we can build a safe, nurturing, and inclusive Pakistan for our children.

4. It is further important to state that we have been closely coordinating with relevant stakeholders and have successfully intervened to address repatriation and detention of some of the unaccompanied children whose registration is pending with the UNHCR; such incidences highlight here the impact that a timely intervention and effective coordination can make in the given circumstances.

5. We are confident that the Honorable Prime Minister will hear our appeal to uphold the Rule of Law and safeguard the rights of the children, making their welfare and promotion of best interests the utmost priority.

*Aysha Raza Farooq*  
(Aysha Raza Farooq)  
Chairperson-NCRC

Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister,  
Government of Pakistan.

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*A copy of the letter sent to a political party.*

*A copy of the letter sent to Caretaker Prime Minister amidst repatriation plan.*

## Protecting Children's Rights Amidst Repatriation Plan

Addressing child protection concerns and complaints regarding the government's repatriation plan for illegal foreigners, the NCRC wrote directly to Mr Anawr-Ul-Haq Kakar Caretaker Prime Minister at the time, insisting on the need to protect children's rights during the execution of this policy. The Commission urged a child rights-based approach, aligning with Pakistan's constitutional and international obligations. Advocating for the protection of affected children, the NCRC aims to uphold the dignity of the children affected by the repatriation plan.

## Brief to the Supreme Court of Pakistan on Child Trafficking and Child Sexual Abuse

The NCRC submitted a detailed brief to the Supreme Court of Pakistan, on the directives of the Honourable Chief Justice Mr Umar Ata Bandial focusing on child trafficking, abuse, and cruelty in the aftermath of child domestic worker torture case (Tayyaba) by an additional District and Session Judge. The document offers a deep understanding of Pakistan's socio-economic and cultural landscape, highlighting the context in which these issues arise. It meticulously analyses existing legal frameworks, including the PTPA 2018, to pinpoint shortcomings. Furthermore, the brief explores international legal instruments and proposes legislative and institutional reforms to address these critical challenges.

## Advocacy for Child Protection Policies

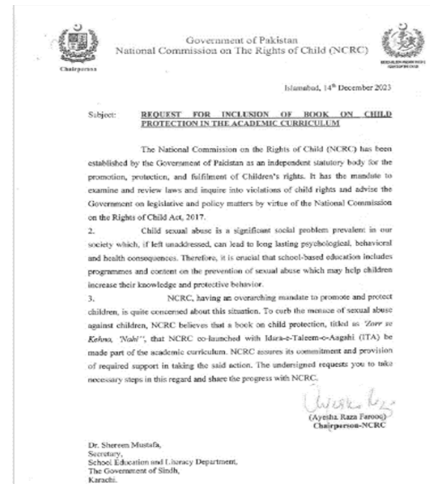
At the federal level, the NCRC collaborated closely with the MoHR to provide valuable input for improving the ICT Child Protection Policy. Subsequently, the MoHR is steering the consultative

process to improve the policy and the consolidation workshop is planned with the NCRC to finalize it. This policy, once notified, will serve as a critical framework for ensuring that children within the ICT jurisdiction are protected from harm and abuse, aligning with international standards and best practices in child protection.

Furthermore, recognizing the importance of comprehensive child protection measures at the provincial level, the NCRC followed up with provincial child protection authorities in Sindh, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to inquire about the status of child protection policies. The NCRC has extended its support and committed to facilitating provincial child protection authorities for notification and implementation of these policies, thereby enhancing the protection of children across the country.

### Book Launch "Zor se kehna, NAHEE!"

In collaboration with Idara-e-Taleem-o-Agahi, the NCRC organised a book launch event unveiling "Zor se kehna, NAHEE!" The book focuses on 'good touch and bad touch,' serving as a user-friendly tool for empowering children, parents, and educators to counter Child Sexual Exploitation & Abuse (CSEA). The book exemplifies the power of literature and semiotics in addressing and promoting awareness of child protection issues and fostering a safer and more nurturing environment for children. The NCRC wrote letters to the National Curriculum Council, and all the provincial education departments advocating for making this book part of the academic curriculum.



A copy of the letter requesting for inclusion of book in curriculum.



NCRC Head Office, Islamabad: Launch event of the book titled 'Zor se kehna, NAHEE!'

## **Awareness Campaign to Counter Child Sexual Exploitation & Abuse**

The NCRC has partnered with the French embassy to launch an awareness campaign to prevent child labour in domestic work, child sexual abuse and promote the enrollment of OOSC. The campaign's primary goal is to foster a widespread understanding of the detrimental effects of abuse and exploitation, underlining the critical importance of education for all children. One significant aspect of the campaign is shedding light on how being out of school can exacerbate children's vulnerability to child labour and sexual abuse. When children are out of school, they lack the protective environment and supervision provided by educational institutions. Without access to education, they may find themselves in situations where they are coerced or forced into exploitative labour, including domestic work, where they are at risk of physical, emotional and psychological harm. The campaign is set to be launched in May 2024 on social media platforms.

## **3.6 Child Marriage**

Child marriage is a violation of children's rights that disproportionately affects girls, robs them of their childhood, disrupts their education, gravely affects their physical and mental health, exposes them to violence/abuse and perpetuates the cycle of poverty and exploitation. This is especially true in the case of female children who are prone to intimate partner violence and run the risk of early conception and childbirth-related complications. Pakistan is home to nearly 19 million<sup>9</sup> child brides; 1 in every 6 young women was married in childhood, according to the country profile on Child Marriage by UNICEF in 2021. In light of this alarming situation, the NCRC recognised the urgent need to address child marriage as per its strategic priority, diligently took cognisance of this issue and worked on advocating for legal and policy reforms.

### **Advocacy for Raising Minimum Marriageable Age to 18 Years**

The NCRC spearheaded advocacy efforts aimed at raising the minimum marriageable age for both boys and girls to 18 years, in alignment with several relatively recent jurisprudence by apex courts and international treaty bodies. The NCRC engaged with relevant authorities, including the Federal MoHR, and Social Welfare and Law departments in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Balochistan advocating for legislative amendments.

With an aim to curb child marriage, the NCRC proposed harmonising age standards across provincial and national laws by raising the minimum marriageable age to 18 years for both boys and girls and integration of National Identity Cards (NICs) as a means of age verification at the time of nikkah. The proposed amendments are also in line with the constitutional principles of equality and non-discrimination, particularly Articles 25 and 35 of the Constitution of Pakistan, which provide equal protection under the law, prohibit discrimination based on sex and encourage affirmative action. These efforts represent a critical step towards ensuring that every child has the opportunity to grow, learn, and thrive in a safe, healthy and supportive environment.

<sup>9</sup> <https://data.unicef.org/resources/is-an-end-to-child-marriage-within-reach/>





F. No. 2-7(PC)/NCRC/2023-24

Islamabad, 16<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Subject: **PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO RAISE THE MINIMUM AGE OF MARRIAGE FOR GIRLS**

The National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) has been established by the Government of Pakistan as an independent statutory body for the promotion, protection, and fulfillment of children's rights. It has the mandate to examine and review laws, inquire into violations of child rights, and advise the Government on legislative and policy matters by virtue of the National Commission on the Rights of Child Act, 2017.

2. Child marriage is a violation of children's rights that robs them of their childhood, disrupts their education and makes them susceptible to violence and abuse. This is especially true in the case of female children who are prone to intimate partner violence and run the risk of early conception and childbirth related complications. Therefore, it is important to align the age of marriage of boys and girls by raising the minimum age of marriage for girls to 18 years. The suggested alignment is also crucial to prevent discrimination based on gender. Setting 18 years as the minimum age serves as an objective standard of maturity and safeguards a child from marriage when they are not ready and lack the legal rights of an adult.

3. The proposed amendment is aligned with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) ratified by Pakistan in 1990. Moreover, the proposed definition is in conformity with the recommendation made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its concluding observation on the fifth periodic report of Pakistan. The Committee demonstrated concern about the difference between the minimum legal age for marriage of boys (18 years) and that of girls (16 years) in Child Marriage Restraint Acts of different provinces (except Sindh) and suggested that the age of marriage of boys and girls be aligned by raising the minimum age of marriage for girls to 18 years.

4. The proposed amendment also takes into consideration the Majority Act, 1875 which fixes the age of majority at 18 years except in the case of a person for whom there is a guardian appointed by court, in which case the age is fixed at 21 years. Additionally,

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ensuring that both boys and girls are equally protected from adverse effects of child marriage is aligned with Articles 25 and 35 of the Constitution of Pakistan which guarantee equal protection of law to all, prohibits any discrimination based on gender, and allows the state to make special provisions for the protection of women and children.

5. In light of foregoing, the undersigned requests that the proposed amendment be promptly laid before the legislative assembly so that it can be passed and incorporated into the relevant law.

o/c

*Ayesha Baza Farooq*

(Ayesha Baza Farooq)  
Chairperson-NCRC

Syed Sikandar Shah,  
Secretary,  
Social Welfare, Special Education, Literacy,  
Non-formal Education & Human Rights Department,  
Government of Balochistan,  
Quetta.

Copy to:

- i. Minister for Human Rights, Ministry of Human Rights, Islamabad.
- ii. Secretary Human Rights, Ministry of Human Rights, Islamabad.
- iii. Secretary, Law and Parliamentary Affairs, The Government of Balochistan, Quetta.



Office # 502, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Evacuee Trust Complex, Agha Khan Road, F-5/1, Islamabad. Ph: 051-9203214

A copy of the letter sent to Social Welfare Department, Balochistan for raising minimum age of marriage.

## Review of ICT Child Marriage Restraint Amendment Bill 2023

The NCRC thoroughly reviewed the ICT Child Marriage Restraint Amendment Bill 2023, drafted by the Ministry of Law and Justice in collaboration with the NCSW, proposing amendments to the Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929 for Islamabad Capital Territory. Key amendments include defining a 'child' as below 18 years, designating the Family Court as the judicial authority, and imposing stricter punishments. Another key highlight is making NICs mandatory at the time of nikkah to ensure accurate age determination and prevent child marriage from happening. The NCRC supports these amendments to combat child marriage and protect children's rights. The bill also enhances the punishments provided for contracting, solemnising, and promoting or permitting child marriages to curb this practice and create stronger deterrence against the same.

## 3.7 Digital Safety

Pakistan, like many other countries, grapples with the challenges posed by the digital revolution. According to the cyber tipline report for 2022, a staggering 2,059,884<sup>10</sup> cases of online child sexual abuse and exploitation were reported in Pakistan, ranking it as the 4th highest in the world. Children are particularly vulnerable to various forms of online threats, including cyberbullying, grooming, exposure to inappropriate content and online sexual exploitation. The anonymity and accessibility of the internet make it easier for perpetrators to target and exploit children, often with devastating consequences.

In light of these challenges, the NCRC prioritised safeguarding children's digital safety, actively addressing concerns regarding online child protection.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.missingkids.org/cybertiplinedata>

## Situational Analysis of Child Online Protection in Pakistan

The NCRC launched the Situational Analysis of Child Online Protection in Pakistan in a ceremony held at Telenor Headquarters. This comprehensive report delves into various aspects of online child protection, providing valuable insights into the current landscape and offering recommendations for stakeholders at all levels.

The document explores different forms of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA), shedding light on the various risks faced by children in the digital sphere. From cyberbullying to online grooming, the report thoroughly examines the challenges confronting young internet users.

The report also examines Pakistan's legal and institutional frameworks for child online protection. It analyses the existing laws and policies aimed at safeguarding children in the digital age and identifies areas for improvement to enhance the country's response to online threats. From gaps in legislation to inadequate enforcement mechanisms, the analysis highlights the obstacles hindering the effective protection of children online.

Additionally, the report offers comprehensive recommendations tailored to policymakers, law enforcement agencies, educators, parents and other stakeholders. These recommendations aim to address the identified challenges and strengthen efforts to protect children in the digital realm.



*Telenor Headquarter, Islamabad: Launch event of the report titled 'Situational Analysis of Child Online Protection in Pakistan'.*

## Launch of Guidebook for Parents, Teachers & Children on Digital Safety

The NCRC, in collaboration with PTA, UNICEF and Telenor Pakistan, held a launching ceremony for the parental guide<sup>11</sup> titled 'Safeguarding your Child in the Digital Age' - a guide for parents and caregivers. Representatives from the Ministry of Information Technology & Telecom (MoIT&T), PTA, Telenor, NCRC and UNICEF Pakistan also attended the event.

An interactive session involving children from schools and their caregivers was organised to empower both children with the knowledge and skills needed for a safer online experience. Overall, the guidebook provides practical guidance to parents, teachers and children, equipping them with the tools necessary to navigate the digital world securely. Through continued awareness-raising efforts and collaboration with stakeholders, the NCRC aims to ensure that every child in Pakistan can explore the internet safely and responsibly.

<sup>11</sup> The guidebook can be downloaded from our website <https://ncrc.gov.pk/>





Telenor Headquarter, Islamabad: Launching ceremony of the parental guidebook titled 'Safeguarding your Child in Digital Age'.

### Social Media Campaign on Digital Safety

The success of the recent social media campaign on digital safety led by the NCRC in collaboration with Meta and Zindagi Trust unfolded over five days, captivated audiences and generated an astounding 24 million impressions collectively. A total of five videos were disseminated on digital safety, including:

- Locked Profile
- Privacy Checkup
- Hidden Words
- False Information
- Supervision Tool

Each day, the campaign delved into crucial aspects of online safety, privacy, and combating false information. Our audience's engagement and response were noteworthy and indicative of the campaign's significant impact in fostering awareness and initiating meaningful conversations. The synergy between the NCRC, Meta, and Zindagi Trust created a campaign that resonated widely and left a lasting impression on millions.



Thumbnails of the videos produced for the digital safety campaign.



### 3.8 Child Participation

“Nothing about us, without us!” this motto has often been used to ensure that children's voices were taken into consideration for matters that impact them. The NCRC has tried to abide by this value and so far, this participatory approach has enabled relevance and efficiency in the Commission's policy and legal advisory work.

*The NCRC is the only Commission in the SAARC region with two child members*

Pakistan is home to a vast population of youth, with more than 102<sup>12</sup> million individuals under the age of 18. These young citizens represent the creative present but also the future of the nation and are integral stakeholders in matters concerning children's rights and welfare. It is imperative to recognise the importance of their voices and perspectives and ensure meaningful child participation in decision-making processes that impact their lives. Child participation is no tokenism; it entails actively engaging children in discussions, consultations and decision-making processes and taking their views into consideration. The NCRC is working on forming a child advisory group to provide a platform for children to express their views, concerns and aspirations, enabling us to understand the challenges they face in a better way and collaborate on identifying effective solutions. This participation will meaningfully contribute to more inclusive and participatory policy recommendations.



*NCRC child members participating in different activities.*

#### Children's Consultations

In collaboration with UNICEF, the NCRC spearheaded a series of children-led consultations on child rights, sparking a nationwide dialogue. The first of these consultations was "Children in the Lead: Voices Unleashed", held at the National Assembly of Pakistan, where young advocates addressed critical issues like child labour, child marriage, and education. Subsequently, consultations were held in Multan, Quetta, Peshawar and Hyderabad engaging children who prompted policymakers and stakeholders to prioritise child-centric policies and highlighted issues for immediate attention of policy-makers, governments and communities.



*Islamabad: A glimpse of children's consultation conducted in the National Assembly of Pakistan.*

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.pbs.gov.pk/>





Multan: Children participate in the consultation.



Quetta: Children's consultation in progress.



Karachi: A glimpse of children's consultation.







*Peshawar: Children participate in the consultation.*

### **Colour of Dreams: Embassy of Spain's Art Competition – A Celebration of World's Children Day**

In partnership with the Embassy of Spain, the NCRC organised the 'Color of Dreams: Embassy of Spain's Art Competition on Child Rights,' engaging 310 boys and girls from diverse educational backgrounds (public, private and institutes for children with disabilities). The young artists expressed their concerns on themes like child marriage, online protection, corporal punishment, mental health etc. The competition empowered children as advocates for change and the artworks offered insights into the challenges that children face in Pakistan. During the award ceremony, children explained their artworks, showcasing their deep understanding and creativity. The NCRC furnished a detailed report with the recommendations of children and taking forward the advocacy efforts, the NCRC is committed to addressing their concerns in a meaningful way, which is reflected in our strategic plan.



*Residence of Spain, Islamabad: A glimpse of children participating in arts exhibition.*



## Every Girl Leading the Way - World Children's Day

In collaboration with PGGA and UNICEF, the NCRC organised an event, "Every Girl Leading the Way", on World Children's Day, showcasing girls' pivotal role in shaping the future. Distinguished speakers highlighted the importance of protecting children's rights, with children actively participating in discussions and activities. A Charter of Demands was drafted by the Girls Guide, advocating for measures such as banning child marriage, criminalising child labour, ensuring access to education, guaranteeing gender equality, eliminating violence, safeguarding freedom, providing healthcare and promoting birth registration. The active participation of children in activities and discussions during the event highlighted their awareness of their rights and reminded us of their crucial role in fostering a fairer and inclusive society.



Islamabad: WCD celebrations at PGGA headquarters.

## Presenting Charter of Demands to the Caretaker Prime Minister

The NCRC and the MoHR joined hands to celebrate World Children's Day at the Prime Minister's Secretariat. The celebration witnessed the official launch of the Zainab Alert Response & Recovery Agency (ZARRA) Alert app by Mr Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar, Caretaker Prime Minister at the time. The launch of this app marks a groundbreaking initiative for the prompt recovery of missing and abducted children.

The children's presentation of a Charter of Demands added more significance to the event. It is important to note that this Charter was not a standalone effort but a culmination of the collective voice of children who had previously participated in various activities related to World Children's Day, organised by the NCRC. These children formulated demands that reflect their concerns, aspirations, and vision for a better future and called upon the government to take affirmative action for Banning Child Marriage; Criminalising Child Labour; Ensuring the Right to Education; Guaranteeing Gender Equality; Eliminating Bullying and Violence; Safeguarding Freedom and Participation; providing



quality health care, taking measures for environmental protection, and ensuring timely Birth Registration.

The Charter of Demands presented to the Caretaker Prime Minister by children represents their spirited advocacy and thoughtful contributions, showcasing their engagement and awareness of the issues that matter to them. This shows how the NCRC helps empower children to shape the narrative concerning their rights and well-being.



Prime Minister's Secretariat, Islamabad: Launch event of the ZARRA Alert app.

### 3.9 Juvenile Justice

The NCRC undertook visits to central jails in Sindh, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to identify pressing gaps in the juvenile justice system. With a multifaceted approach aimed at collecting comprehensive data and assessing the conditions faced by juvenile detainees, these visits had two objectives.

The primary objective was to gather crucial data on juvenile offenders, documenting the number of children detained and the nature of their offences. This data serves as a basis for informed decision-making, allowing the NCRC to better understand the scope and magnitude of juveniles detained and suggest policy recommendations.

Secondly, these visits were instrumental in assessing conditions within juvenile detention facilities, including the treatment of juvenile detainees and the facilities and services available to them in line with the Juvenile Justice System Act 2018. By engaging directly with juveniles and observing conditions firsthand, the NCRC gained invaluable insights into the challenges faced by juvenile detainees and identified key areas for improvement.



These visits served as a critical starting point for driving evidence-based advocacy and policy reforms in the juvenile justice domain. Following the visits, the NCRC wrote letters to all provincial prison departments, requesting district-wise data on juveniles detained with the category of offence.



*Karachi Central Jail: The Chairperson NCRC and member Sindh/Minorities Pirbhu Satyani assess the prevailing conditions of juveniles detained.*



*Lahore Central Jail: The Chairperson NCRC and member Punjab Mehek Naem visit the jail to assess the living conditions.*



*Haripur Jail: Member Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadia Bibi visits jail to assess the conditions of juveniles detained.*



### 3.10 Ensuring Minimum Quality Care Standards for Children

In line with its mandate to safeguard the rights and welfare of children across Pakistan, the NCRC undertook a comprehensive assessment of alternative care facilities. Aiming to uphold the highest standards of care for vulnerable children, the NCRC team conducted thorough assessments during visits to orphanages and shelter homes in Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and ICT.

The NCRC visited five orphanages in Islamabad: EDHI Homes, Pakistan Sweet Homes, Al-Khidmat, Aghosh Homes, and SOS Village; all campuses of Khpal Kor in Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; a shelter home managed by the Social Welfare Department in Malir, Sindh; and Kashana Homes in Lahore, Punjab. During these visits, the NCRC team engaged directly with staff, residents and stakeholders to gain insights into various aspects of care provision.

Assessments covered a wide range of factors, including living conditions, educational opportunities, healthcare provisions and overall well-being of children. These assessments were not only about monitoring existing practices; they were strategic exercises aimed at identifying areas for improvement and making substantive recommendations to enhance the implementation of child rights policies.

The NCRC's proactive approach to ensuring quality care for children is to ensure that every child, irrespective of their circumstances, receives the care, support and opportunities they deserve. By actively engaging with orphanages and shelter homes, the NCRC is driving positive change and advocating for the rights and well-being of children.



Swat: Member Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadia Bibi visits a campus of Khpal Kor.



Karachi: Member Sindh/Minorities Pirbhu Satyani visits a shelter home managed by the Social Welfare Department.





Islamabad: Secretary NCRC Khalid Latif visits Aghosh Homes.



Lahore: Member Punjab Mehek Naeem visits Kashana Homes.

### 3.11 Religious Freedom

In the wake of the tragic events involving the mob attack on churches and homes of Christian residents in Jaranwala, the NCRC swiftly responded to address the concerns and issues faced by the minority communities affected by the incident.

Recognizing the gravity of the situation and the unrest among the Christian community, particularly children facing discrimination at school, a delegation from the NCRC, comprising Pirbhu Satyani, Member Sindh/Minorities and Mehek Naeem, Member Punjab, visited Jaranwala. The primary objective of this visit was to engage directly with the minority communities/children, listen to their grievances, and undertake efforts to uphold religious freedom and harmony.

During the visit, the NCRC delegation engaged in meaningful discussions with members of the minority communities to gain a firsthand understanding of their concerns. The delegation expressed solidarity with the affected families and assured them of the NCRC's support.

The NCRC reiterated its stance against all forms of discrimination and violence based on religious beliefs. Emphasising the need for collective efforts, the NCRC underscored its commitment to creating a society where every individual, regardless of their faith, can live without fear of persecution or discrimination. In solidarity with the affected communities, the NCRC stands resolute in its mission



to uphold religious freedom and harmony, safeguarding the rights and dignity of all children in Pakistan.



*Jaranwala: Mehek Naeem member Punjab and Pirbhu Satyani member Sindh/Minorities meet community members.*

### **3.12 Redressal Mechanism for Child Rights Violations**

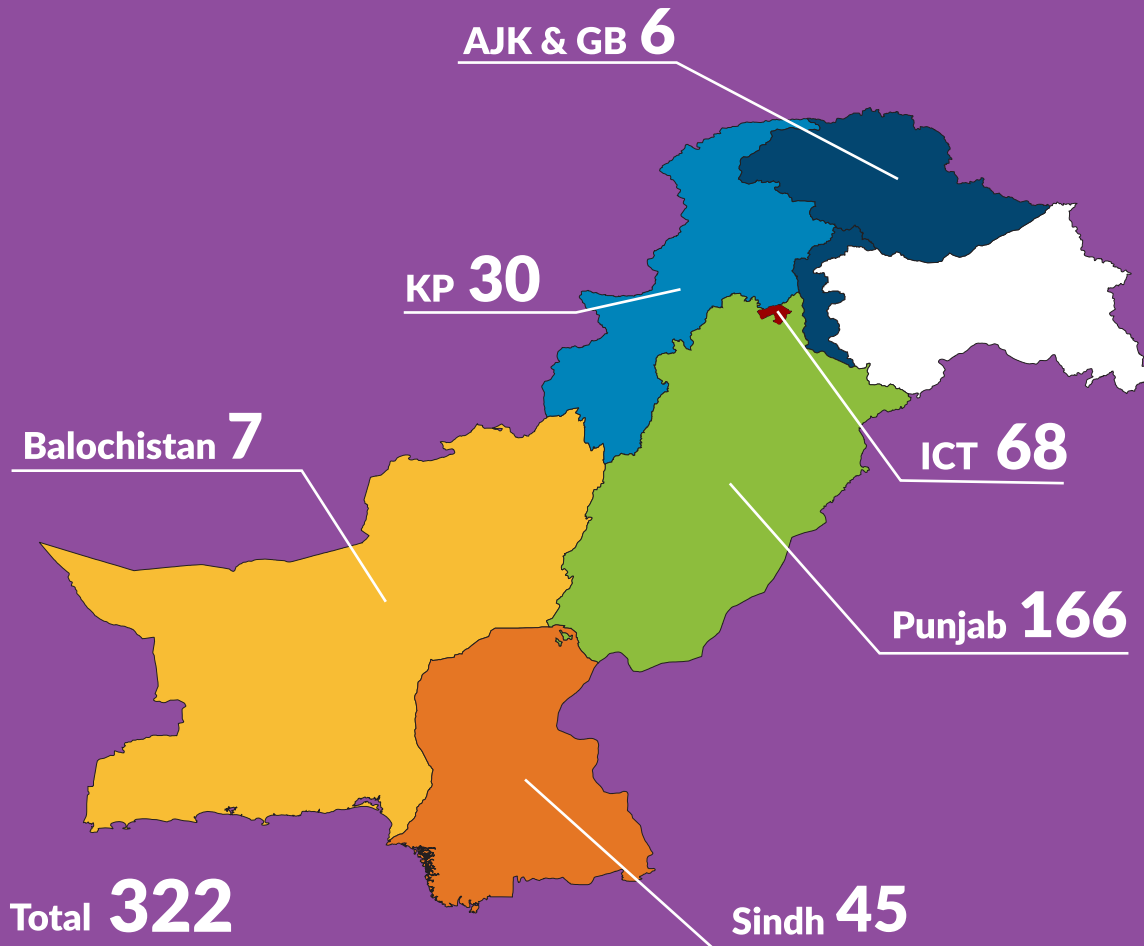
Section 15 of the National Commission on the Rights of Child Act, 2017 outlines the responsibilities of the Commission, primarily focusing on investigating complaints pertaining to child rights violations. The Commission is empowered to gather information and operate citizen-centric, ensuring that the voices of those affected are heard and addressed. It's important to note that this section solely permits the Commission to take cognisance of complaints, correspond with relevant authorities and refer complaints to concerned authorities for swift redressal. However, it's crucial to understand that the NCRC is not an executive body responsible for direct service delivery. Instead, its role revolves around advocacy, awareness-raising and recommending policy measures to safeguard and promote the rights of children.



## Complaint Handling

The NCRC's commitment to child rights remained strong as it addressed 322 complaints related to children's rights violations in the reporting period from April 2023 to March 2024. These cases serve as a reminder of the vital role the NCRC plays in documenting child rights violations and advocating for and protecting children's rights.

The geo-geographical breakdown of the complaints is stated below:



Nature of complaints handled:

 <b>160</b> Sexual Abuse	 <b>55</b> Child Labour	 <b>49</b> Missing Children	 <b>15</b> Child Marriage & Forced Conversion
 <b>7</b> Online Abuse	 <b>3</b> Murder	 <b>2</b> Corporal Punishment	 <b>31</b> Other

## Strengthening Coordination Mechanism

The NCRC initiated strategic engagements with provincial police departments to enhance the coordination mechanism for timely referral and resolution of child rights violations and complaints. These engagements included meetings with key stakeholders such as Riffat Mukhtar Raja, Inspector General of Police, Sindh; Abdul Khaliq Shaikh, Inspector General of Police, Balochistan; Dr Usman Anwar, Inspector General of Police, Punjab; and Mr Akhtar Hayat Khan, Inspector General of Police, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The primary objective of these meetings was to get accurate data for evidence generation and informed policy interventions and establish a more robust and efficient coordination mechanism between the NCRC and the provincial police departments for addressing child rights violations promptly and effectively. During these productive discussions, several key outcomes and commitments were reached:

- **Data Sharing and Periodic Updates:** The police departments pledged to share data of cases involving juveniles periodically and the NCRC receives timely information on child rights violations, enabling prompt intervention and support for affected children and their families. This proactive approach enables informed policy interventions and targeted interventions to address specific challenges related to child rights protection.
- **Legal Aid Provision:** Recognising the importance of legal assistance for children in need, particularly those awaiting bail due to surety bonds in minor offences, the police departments committed to sharing the information with the NCRC for referring such cases to relevant legal aid service providers.
- **Focal Persons for Coordination:** Each police department nominated focal persons responsible for coordinating with the NCRC. The designated individuals serve as points of contact for addressing child rights complaints and facilitating communication and collaboration between the police departments and the NCRC.

The collaborative efforts between the NCRC and the provincial police departments mark a significant step forward in strengthening the protection of children's rights in Pakistan. By establishing a more effective coordination mechanism, the NCRC aims to ensure timely and appropriate responses to child rights violations, ultimately contributing to the well-being and safety of children across the country.



Lahore: The Chairperson NCRC and member Punjab Mehek Naeem are in a meeting with IG Punjab Dr Usman Anwar.





*Peshawar: The Chairperson NCRC and member Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are in a meeting with IG Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mr Akhtar Hayat Khan.*



*Karachi: The Chairperson NCRC and member Sindh/Minorities Pirbhu Satyani are in a meeting with IG Sindh Riffat Mukhtar Raja.*



*Quetta: The Chairperson NCRC and member Sindh/Minorities Pirbhu Satyani are in a meeting with IG Balochistan Abdul Khaliq Shaikh.*



### 3.13 Attending Senate and National Assembly Standing Committee Meetings

The NCRC is mandated to advise the Government on legislative and policy matters by virtue of section 15 of the National Commission on the Rights of Child Act, 2017. Keeping up with its mandate, the NCRC appeared before the Senate's Standing Committees on Human Rights in 7 meetings and 5 times in the National Assembly's Standing Committees on Human Rights. During these meetings, the NCRC team provided comprehensive briefings on crucial matters pertaining to child rights and child labour in domestic work, highlighted the progress made in the recent child labour in domestic work cases offering evidence-based recommendations and informed opinions on policy initiatives to the Standing Committees.

These meetings served as a platform for monitoring progress in the implementation of existing laws and policies related to child rights, as well as for assessing the effectiveness of interventions aimed at addressing key child rights issues such as child sexual abuse, child labour in domestic work and child marriage etc. By actively engaging with key stakeholders, including parliamentarians, government officials and civil society organizations, the NCRC mobilised support for legislative and policy reforms that prioritize children's well-being.



*Islamabad: Chairperson NCRC participates in the Senate's Standing Committees on Human Rights.*

### 3.14 Awareness Raising

The NCRC is mandated to raise awareness of child rights issues and educate the public. Hence, the members of the Commission and the Chairperson participated in various consultations and events to raise awareness on child rights issues in a culture and gender-sensitive manner.

#### Participation in Events

To promote child rights and raise awareness on a national and international scale, the Chairperson and members of the Commission participated in **33** events. These engagements provided the Commission with an opportunity to represent the Commission, articulate its stance and advocate for the protection and promotion of child rights while enhancing the visibility of its mission. Across a range of events ranging from conferences, seminars, training, consultations, workshops and awareness drives, the NCRC team conveyed the Commission's commitment to safeguarding the rights and well-being of children, particularly highlighting pressing issues such as child labour, child marriage, online protection, violence against children, CSA, access to education, child trafficking, birth registration and WCD.

#### 1. Regional Moment of Reflection on Adolescent Girls in South Asia Workshop:

The Chairperson NCRC represented Pakistan at the 'Regional Moment of Reflection on Adolescent Girls in South Asia Workshop' organised by UNICEF in Nepal. During her remarks she emphasised the importance of inclusivity and empowerment, highlighting the Commission's commitment to including both male and female adolescent members.



*Nepal: The Chairperson NCRC participates in the Regional Moment of Reflection on Adolescent Girls in South Asia.*

**2. Regional Consultation of Child Rights Institutions in South Asia:** The Chairperson NCRC and two members of the Commission participated in a regional consultation of Child Rights Institutions in Maldives facilitated by UNICEF and presented the progress of the Commission. The

Chairperson introduced NCRC's mandate and highlighted ongoing efforts to uphold child rights and the Commission was appreciated as it is the only Commission in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) region with two child members.



*Maldives: The Chairperson NCRC, member ICT and member Khyber Pakhtunkhwa participates in the Regional Consultation of Child Rights Institutions in South Asia.*

**3. Cutting-Edge Models for Victim-Centric Service Delivery:** The Chairperson NCRC led a high-level delegation to the United Kingdom to immerse in cutting-edge Police and Prosecution Operating Models, with a special focus on Operation Soteria. The delegation delved into the intricacies of advanced Police and Prosecution Operating Models in the UK. This experience provided invaluable insights into the latest



methodologies and technologies employed in ensuring the safety and well-being of children.



London: The Chairperson NCRC leads the high-level delegation in the United Kingdom.

4. **TedTalk:** The Chairperson, NCRC delivered a TEDx talk titled "Finding Balance: Addressing the Root Causes of Child Labour" at the TEDx Lahore chapter. This was part of the efforts to enhance behavioural change and stop child labour. Drawing on her expertise, the Chairperson NCRC provided valuable perspectives on tackling the issue of child labour. She emphasised the critical importance of addressing poverty, improving access to education and challenging societal norms to strike a balance and effectively combat child labour.



Lahore: The Chairperson NCRC delivers a TedTalk.

5. **Brown Bag Launch:** The Chairperson, NCRC, participated as a panellist at the Brown Bag Launch organised by ILO and shed light on the pressing issue of child labour in domestic work and the legal reform and behavioural change which was required to stop this harmful practice.



Islamabad: The Chairperson NCRC speaks at the Brown Bag Launch.

6. **Lecture to the PAS:** The Chairperson NCRC gave a lecture to the Pakistan Administration Services (PAS) Probationers on the legal terrain of child rights in Punjab. Her lecture not only highlighted the existing challenges but also emphasised the lacunas in implementation.



Lahore: The Chairperson NCRC and the participants of the training pose for a group photo.

7. **SSDO Conference:** The Chairperson, NCRC, participated as a panellist at the International Conference Against Trafficking and Forced Labour in Pakistan, organised by SSDO Pakistan.



Islamabad: The Chairperson NCRC receives a shield from the Kausar Abbas Executive Director SSDO.



8. **Lecture on Inclusive Education:** Khalid Naeem, Member ICT, delivered a lecture on "Inclusive Education for Out-of-School Children" at the Education Department, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Islamabad.



Islamabad: Khalid Naeem member ICT gives a lecture at AIOU.

9. **Advancing Social Justice:** At a conference organised by ILO, the Chairperson, NCRC, gave an address on the imperative need to combat child labour and strengthen child protection measures.



Islamabad: Participants pose for a group photo at the end of conference.

10. **Lahore Literary Festival:** The chairperson participated in a panel discussion on practical and legislative approaches towards protecting the rights of women and children at the Lahore Literary Festival.



Lahore: Participants pose for a group photo after the conclusion Lahore Literay Festival.

11. **STEM Learning Festival:** Pirbhu Satyani, Member Sindh/Minorities, participated in the Sujawal STEM Learning Festival as a panellist. He talked about the NCRC's tireless efforts towards implementing Article 25-A and education should not only be of good quality but inclusive. This was part of efforts towards increasing social support for inclusive education.



Karachi: Pirbhu Satyani Member Sindh speaks at the STEM Learning Festival.

12. **Cruel Numbers Report:** Pirbhu Satyani, Member Sindh/Minorities, represented the Commission at Sahil's launch of the report Cruel Numbers 2023.





Islamabad: Pirbhu Satyani Member Sindh participated in the launch event organized by Sahil.

**13. Conference on Behaviour Change & Community Engagement:** The Chairperson participated in the conference titled "Integrating Behaviour Change and Community Engagement in Policy and Programming for Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Child Marriage, and Social Cohesion", arranged by AWAZ-II.



Islamabad: The Chairperson NCRC speaks at the conference arranged by AWAZ-II.

**14. Invest in Women, Accelerate Progress:** The Chairperson, NCRC, participated in a Facebook live program, 'Invest in Women, Accelerate Progress,' organised by UNICEF.



Islamabad: The Chairperson NCRC participates in a webinar arranged by UNICEF.

**15. ASER Report Launch:** As a panellist at the ASER Report Launch event, the Chairperson, NCRC, highlighted the report and discussed mitigation strategies to improve the education sector.



Islamabad: The Chairperson NCRC participates in the ASER Report launch event.

**16. Social Justice:** Pirbhu Satyani, Member Sindh/Minorities, participated in a recent consultation organised by the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), addressing concerns and expectations regarding establishing a statutory National Commission for Minorities Rights.



Islamabad: Pirbhu Satyani member Sindh/Minorities participates in the consultation.

**17. Consultation on Child Protection Policy:** Member Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadia Bibi represented the Commission at Stakeholder's Consultation on the Draft Child Protection Policy for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and insisted on the need to finalise and notify it to guide and structure efforts related to child protection in the province.





*Peshawar: Participants pose for a group photo at the end of consultation.*

**18. Launch of Empowering Women & Girls Project:** Nadia Bibi, Member Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, participated in the launch event 'Empowering Women & Girls Project' organised by SPARC.



*Islamabad: Nadia Bibi member Khyber Pakhtunkhwa speaks at the launch event.*

**19. Dynamic Woman's Award:** Mehek Naeem, Member Punjab, was honoured with the prestigious "Dynamic Woman's Award" at the Women's Day 2024 Celebration.



*Lahore: Mehek Naeem member Punjab receives the award.*

**20. Lecture at IPS:** Khalid Naeem, Member ICT, delivered a lecture titled "Policy and Mechanism of Human Rights with Specific Reference to Child Rights" at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS).



*Islamabad: Khalid Naeem member ICT delivers a lecture.*

**21. Environmental Awareness Drive at F9 Park:** Member Sindh/Minorities Pirbhu Lal Satyani represented the NCRC and awarded certificates to participating children at the Environmental Awareness Drive at F-9 Park organised by GDP.



*Islamabad: Pirbhu Satyani member Sindh/Minorities and participants pose for a group photo.*

**22. Symposium on Empowering Families through Positive Parenting:** Member Punjab Mehek Naeem participated in a pre-conference symposium on Positive Parenting organised by UNICEF, World Health Organization (WHO) and Protection and Help of Children Against Abuse & Neglect (PAHCHAAN).





Islamabad: Mehek Naeem member Punjab and participants pose for a group photo.

**23. Nurturing the Spiritual Development of Children:** The Chairperson NCRC participated in the 5-day Training of Trainers (ToT) award distribution ceremony on Nurturing the Spiritual Development of Children, organised by Islamic Relief Pakistan.



Islamabad: The Chairperson NCRC receives a shield from IRC.

**24. Training of Child Protection Committees:** The Chairperson NCRC participated in the training of Child Protection Committees organised by the International Labour Organization and Sahil.



Islamabad: The Chairperson NCRC receives a memento from ILO.

**25. Maternal Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response:** Pirbhu Satyani, Member Sindh/Minorities, represented NCRC at the Ministry of National Health's consultative meeting on Maternal Perinatal Death Surveillance and Response.



Karachi: Pirbhu Satyani member Sindh/Minorities pose for a group photo with the participants.

**26. PODA's 16th Annual Rural Women Leadership Conference 2023:** The Chairperson NCRC gave closing remarks at Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy's (PODA's) 16th Annual Rural Women Leadership Conference 2023, focusing on strategies to combat child marriage, which have informed the legal reform and will be discussed while discussing the next national framework to end child marriage.



Islamabad: The Chairperson NCRC speaks at the conference arranged by PODA.

**27. 75th UDHR:** The Chairperson NCRC represented the Commission at the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) organised by the French Embassy.





Islamabad: The Chairperson NCRC speaks at the event organized by French Embassy.

**28. International Day for Persons with Disabilities:** In an event organised by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Australian High Commission to mark the International Day for Persons with Disabilities, Chairperson NCRC addressed the global challenges faced by children and parents with disabilities.



Islamabad: The Chairperson NCRC receives a token of appreciation from UNFPA.

**29. Seminar on Facilitation of Differently-abled Persons:** Khalid Naem, Member ICT, NCRC, represented the Commission at a seminar organised by the National University of Modern Languages (NUML), focusing on the facilitation of persons with disabilities.



Islamabad: Khalid Naem member ICT pose for a group photo with the participants.

**30. Situation Analysis of Child Domestic Labour in Punjab:** Member Punjab Mehek Naem participated in the launch of a report, Situation Analysis of Child Domestic Labour in Punjab, organised by Search for Justice (SFJ) and NCHR.



Lahore: Mehek Naem member Punjab speaks at the launch event.

**31. 8th Annual PPA Symposium & 13th National Child Rights Conference:** Member Punjab Mehek Naem participated in 14th National Child Rights Conference organized by Pakistan Pediatric Association (PPA).



Lahore: Mehek Naem member Punjab speaks at the launch event.

**32. Stakeholders Consultation on Child Trafficking and Bonded Labour in Karachi:** The Chairperson NCRC participated in the Stakeholders Consultation on Child Trafficking and Bonded Labour organised by SSDO and the Sindh Human Rights Commission in Karachi.



*Karachi: The Chairperson NCRC addresses the consultation organized by SSDO.*

**33. Consultation on Climate Change:** On World Children's Day, the NCRC participated in a national consultation titled "For Every Child, Every Right," organised by the International Rescue Committee (IRC).



*Islamabad: Participants pose for a group photo.*

## NCRC in the Media

The Chairperson and members of the Commission have been actively engaging with regional, national and international media outlets through participation in **20** programs and interviews to raise awareness about child rights issues and advocate for their protection and promotion. Here is a detailed account of these activities:

- **PTV News:** Khalid Naeem, Member ICT, shed light on the significance of World Day of Social Justice on PTV.
- **ARY News:** The Chairperson NCRC, in an interview with ARY NEWS, talked about ensuring safety and justice for victims of violence and abuse.
- **Safe City:** Mehek Naeem, Member Punjab, discussed child rights on the morning show of Safe Cities, Punjab.
- **The News:** In an article published by The News, on WCD, the Chairperson NCRC called for enhanced legal and institutional mechanisms to protect vulnerable children.
- **Dawn News:** An article in the Dawn News highlighted the recent report 'Situational Analysis of Child Online Protection in Pakistan' published by the NCRC.
- **Dawn News (Op-ed):** An op-ed piece published in Dawn News 'Online Darkness' highlights the NCRC's report 'Situational Analysis of Child Online Protection in Pakistan'.
- **Roze TV:** Khalid Naeem, Member ICT, took the spotlight on Roze TV's talk show "Situation of Child Labour in Pakistan."
- **PTV Ramadan Transmission:** The Chairperson, NCRC participated in Ramadan transmission on PTV hosted by Ahsan Khan and Rabia Anum and talked about the efforts of the Commission to curb child domestic labour.



- **Metro Matters:** Pirbhu Satyani, Member Sindh/Minorities, highlighted the issue of child labour in Pakistan in a talk show on Metro Matters.
- **92 News:** The Chairperson NCRC participated in Subha Saveray Pakistan on 92 News and discussed the significance of WCD.
- **The News:** An article by Chairperson NCRC published in The News shed light on the tragic case of Rizwana, the urgent need for legislative reforms and enforcement of child-related laws.
- **Subh-e-Pakistan:** In an informative segment, Member ICT Khalid Naeem discussed the importance of WCD in a talk show on PTV News Subh-e-Pakistan.
- **Dawn News:** In conversation with Dawn News, Chairperson NCRC emphasised the pivotal role of the NCRC in safeguarding children's rights, underscoring the Commission's mandate to investigate violations.
- **Geo News:** Member ICT Khalid Naeem, in a special news report, highlighted the work of the Commission on addressing child rights issues and complaints related to child rights violations.
- **Ananke:** The Chairperson NCRC was interviewed by Ananke's editor and discussed child labour issues in the context of modern slavery and human trafficking.
- **92 News:** In an interview with 92 NEWS, the Chairperson NCRC addressed the alarming increase in torture cases involving child domestic labourers.
- **ARY News:** As cases of child labour in domestic work surged, the Chairperson called upon all key stakeholders to take decisive action by criminalising child labour in domestic work in an interview with ARY News.
- **NEO News:** The Chairperson NCRC demanded comprehensive FIRs in cases like Rizwana's torture during an interview with NEO News.
- **Dawn News:** In a discussion with Dawn News, Chairperson NCRC highlighted the critical need for a unified approach to support rape victims.
- **Podcast - Talking Ideas:** The Chairperson NCRC participated in a podcast, Talking IDEAS, with Dr. Faisal Bari, Dean, School of Education, LUMS, where she discussed the NCRC's efforts to criminalise child labour in domestic work and bring about legal reforms.







### NCRC unveils three-year strategic plan on child trafficking

UNICEF

**LAUNCH OF Strategic Plan 2023-2026**

**LAUNCH OF Policy Brief on Child Trafficking**

The National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) unveiled a three-year strategic plan and policy brief on child trafficking. The plan is a result of a comprehensive review and consultation process and is aimed at addressing the root causes of child trafficking and promoting the rights of every child.

The NCRC's strategic plan is a three-year roadmap to address the rights of every child. It is a comprehensive document that outlines the organization's vision, mission, and strategic objectives. The plan is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The plan is divided into three main areas: **Prevention**, **Protection**, and **Redress**. The prevention section focuses on raising awareness and building resilience among children and their families. The protection section focuses on identifying and addressing the root causes of child trafficking. The redress section focuses on providing legal and social support to victims of child trafficking.

The policy brief provides a detailed analysis of the current situation of child trafficking in Pakistan and offers recommendations for policy and legal reforms. It highlights the need for a multi-sectoral approach to address this issue and calls for stronger collaboration between government agencies, civil society, and the private sector.

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### Civil society demands govt criminalise child labour in domestic work

KARACHI: Human rights, child rights, civil society activists, legal experts, independent human rights institutions, police and government representatives on Thursday underlined the need to finalise the law to criminalise child domestic labour to curb this slavery-like practice in the country, which is exploitative in nature.

They expressed serious concern about the increasing incidents of forced and even degrading cases of labour on were highlighted due to poverty.

### NCRC unveils 3-year strategic plan & policy brief on child trafficking

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### Child labour described as a modern form of slavery

KARACHI: Human rights, child rights and legal experts and representatives of independent human rights institutions, police and government officials on Thursday underlined the need to criminalise child domestic labour practice which, they described as a form of modern slavery.

They were speaking at a consultation session on Labour Bill 2024, jointly organised by the National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) and Unicef in a local hotel.

The consultation was aimed at discussing the recommendations to be incorporated into the bill. They expressed serious concern about the increasing incidents of forced and even degrading cases of labour on were highlighted due to poverty.

### Rights activists call for criminalising child labour

Child rights activists, civil society members, legal experts, and government and justice representatives on Thursday underlined the need to criminalise child domestic labour to curb this slavery-like practice in the country, which is exploitative in nature.

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### NCRC Urges Immediate Action To Tackle Pakistan's Out-Of-School Children Crisis

KARACHI: With more than 26.2 million children out of school in Pakistan, the country ranks among the highest globally in terms of out-of-school children. Such, specifically, faces a significant challenge, with over 7.6 million children not attending any educational institutions.

These alarming statistics were revealed during the Sindh Provincial Consultation on Free and Compulsory Education, a collaborative effort by the National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) and the School Education and Literacy Department, Sindh Government, according to a statement issued.

The meeting, chaired by NCRC Chairperson Ayesha Farooq, was attended by representatives from the government's education departments, provincial education departments, and international school representatives.

The NCRC Chairperson emphasized the critical state of education in Sindh and called for a multi-sectoral approach to address this issue. She highlighted the need for a comprehensive strategy that focuses on improving the quality of education and ensuring that every child has access to free and compulsory education.

The Sindh government officials expressed their commitment to addressing the out-of-school children crisis and called for stronger collaboration with the NCRC and other stakeholders. They highlighted the need for a multi-sectoral approach that involves government agencies, civil society, and the private sector.

### Rights Groups, Activists Call For Criminalising 'Slavery-Like' Child Domestic Labour

Speakers identify poverty as the main reason for child domestic labour in Pakistani society. They pointed out both parents and employers, who are mostly rich families, were deemed responsible for this menace.

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### '26.2m children are out of school'

Sindh alone has 7.6m children not attending schools

KARACHI: The country has been facing a staggering crisis with over 26.2 million children out of school, placing it among the highest globally for out-of-school children.

Sindh, in particular, grapples with a significant challenge, with more than 7.6 million children not attending any educational institutions.

The aforementioned alarming figures emerged during the Sindh provincial consultation on free and compulsory education, a collaborative effort between the National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) and the School Education and Literacy Department, Sindh government, convened at the reforms support unit on Friday.

### Silent screams

Ayesha Raza Farooq

Face etched, eyes swollen, still smacked, bones broken, heart broken, and gut-wrenching state of 14-year-old Ayesha a day after she was admitted to a hospital in Lahore.

In any capacity in a household. Other laws related to child labour include Employment of Children Act 1991 in FCT, Punjab Restriction on Employment of Children Act 2016, Domestic Workers Act 2022, and Punjab Prohibition of Child Labour and Brick Kiln Act 2016 in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Prohibition of Employment of Children Act 2015 and KP House, Hazara, Mardan, Bannu, and

force, holding employers and care givers accountable. Although defers due to observations by the law makers for the NCRC remains committed to refuting the myth through stakeholder consultations.

Meanwhile, provincial-level sectoral activists and provincial child protection authorities also joined the call for prohibiting child domestic labour. Ayesha Raza Farooq, a prominent voice for child rights, rightly points out that blaming poverty is not an excuse for neglecting children in labour. We must unite – all citizens including parents, teachers, religious scholars, political class, government, and civil society activists – to advocate for a child labour-free Pakistan.

Legislative bills exist across the country but are not being implemented. The NCRC has been advocating for the implementation of existing laws but also a Social Inclusion Law. A Comprehensive Child Protection (SBCC) Commission must also act towards child labour, recognising it as an affront to the rights of our most vulnerable.

As we commemorate Universal Children's Day, I implore every household to envision a child labour-free Pakistan. Let us collectively ensure that every child experiences the right to education and a bright future. NCRC will persist in its mission, and we urge all to join in this crucial endeavor for a brighter and more just future.

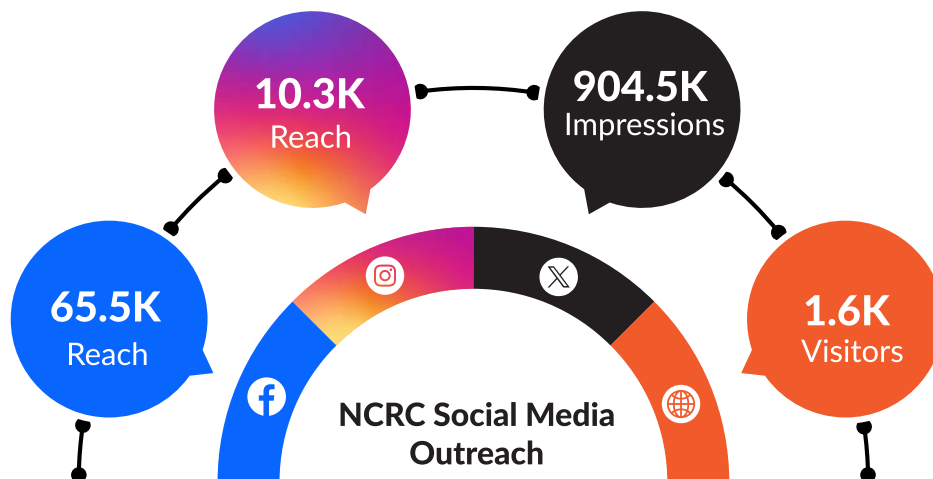
The writer is the chairperson, National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC).

### NCRC Urges Immediate Action to Tackle Pakistan's Out-Of-School Children Crisis

The number of out-of-school children in Pakistan has surpassed the 26.2 million mark – with 7.6 million in Sindh alone – the most in any country in the world. It has prompted national rights organisations to ring alarm bells and demand immediate action to tackle the issue.

## Outreach of NCRC

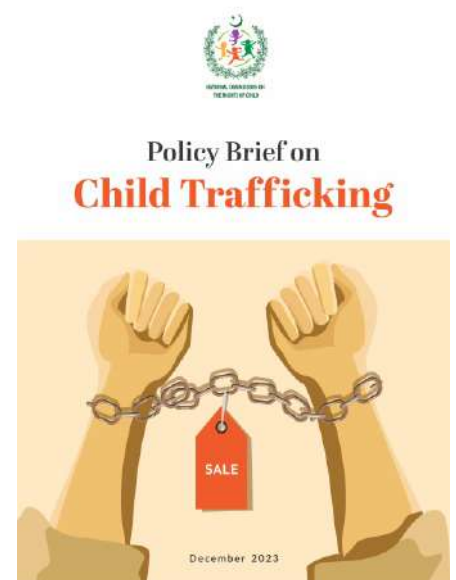
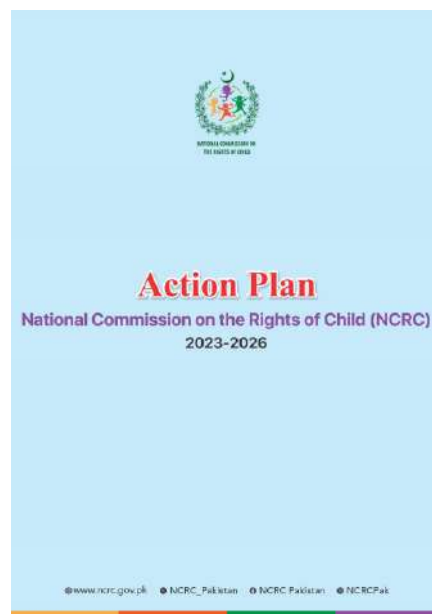
Throughout the year, the NCRC utilised its digital platforms, including the website and social media channels, to engage and educate communities across Pakistan. With a reach of 981,900 people, the Commission provided updates on its work, raised awareness on child rights issues, and disseminated publications. Through dynamic content, the NCRC fostered dialogue, shared resources, and empowered stakeholders to advocate for the rights and well-being of children.



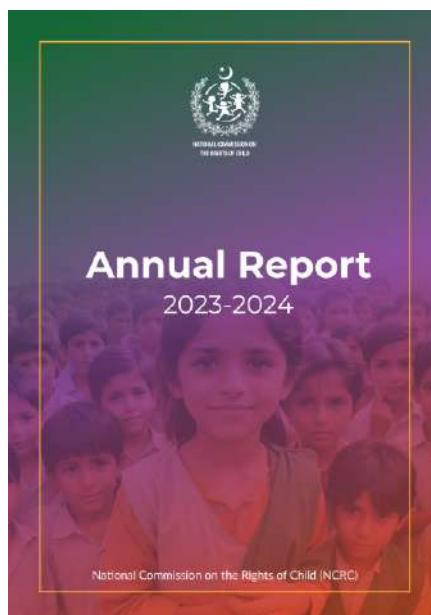
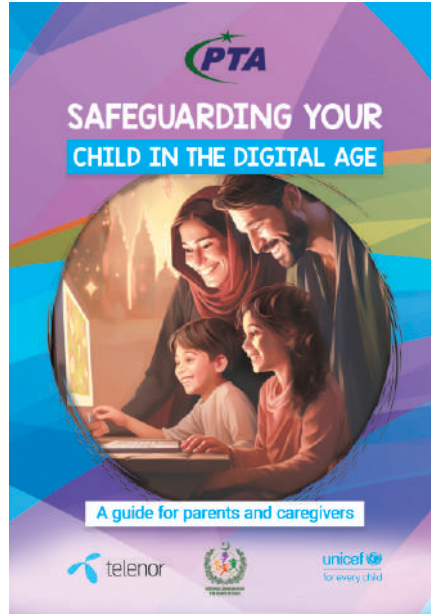
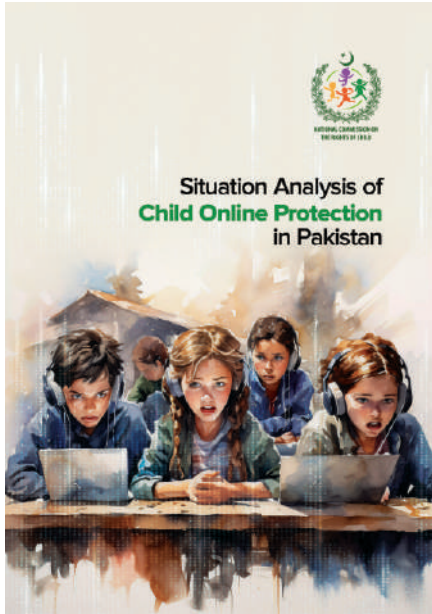
Total Reach: **981.9K**

## Publications

The NCRC is committed to disseminating valuable information and insights to promote child rights and protection. Hence, these publications serve as essential resources for policymakers, practitioners, educators, parents and the wider community, empowering them with knowledge and strategies to create child rights-based environments for children to thrive.







# Lessons Learnt

**End Child Marriage, Empower Dreams**







## 4. Lessons Learnt

- **Clarifying the Role and Mandate of NCRC:** The NCRC being a relatively new Commission, established in 2020, faces challenges in terms of stakeholder awareness at both provincial and federal levels. Many stakeholders remain unfamiliar with its functions and mandate. It is crucial to clear ambiguity surrounding the NCRC's mandate as it is an independent statutory body tasked with advising the government on child rights issues rather than being directly responsible for service delivery. As a watchdog body tasked with inquiring about child rights violations and identifying gaps in services, confusion persists among parliamentarians and stakeholders regarding its role. Hence, it is crucial to emphasise that the NCRC's primary function is to serve as a watchdog, monitoring adherence to child rights standards and advocating for necessary reforms to ensure the protection and well-being of children across Pakistan.
- **Establishment of a National Child Helpline:** In light of the current fragmented landscape of child rights institutions across federal and provincial levels, where each operates its own helpline without coordination, there is an urgent need to establish a centralised national child helpline. The lack of coordination among these helplines leads to un-streamlined reporting mechanisms, inadequate data management, ineffective referral systems, siloed efforts and lack of coordination in jurisdictional matters. By establishing a national helpline, stakeholders can access a unified platform for reporting child rights violations, ensuring timely and coordinated responses to incidents. This centralised system not only enhances accountability but also facilitates more effective interventions, ultimately safeguarding the rights and well-being of children nationwide.
- **Data Collection for Informed Policy Decisions:** The absence of comprehensive data on children's issues in Pakistan highlights a critical gap in addressing child rights violations. Given the alarming instances of children's violations in the country, reliable data is crucial for informed policy formulation. As a watchdog body, the NCRC plays a pivotal role in advising the government on policy formulation, legal reforms and policy adjustments. Without accurate and up-to-date data, it becomes challenging to identify trends, assess the magnitude of issues and advise the government.
- **Capacity-Building for Justice System Actors and Media:** The NCRC has recognized the critical importance of capacity-building initiatives targeting justice system actors and media professionals. In dealing with high-profile cases involving child rights violations, it has become evident that building the capacity of the media on child safeguarding standards and reporting practices is essential. Furthermore, instances have been observed where law enforcement agencies, particularly the police, have failed to file timely and comprehensive First Information Reports (FIRs) in cases of child rights violations. Therefore, enhancing the capacity of the police on child rights laws and the child protection framework is essential to improve service delivery and ensure timely and effective response to incidents. Additionally, capacity-building efforts aimed at justice system actors are crucial to streamlining children's access to justice during pre-trial and post-trial levels in a child-centric manner.

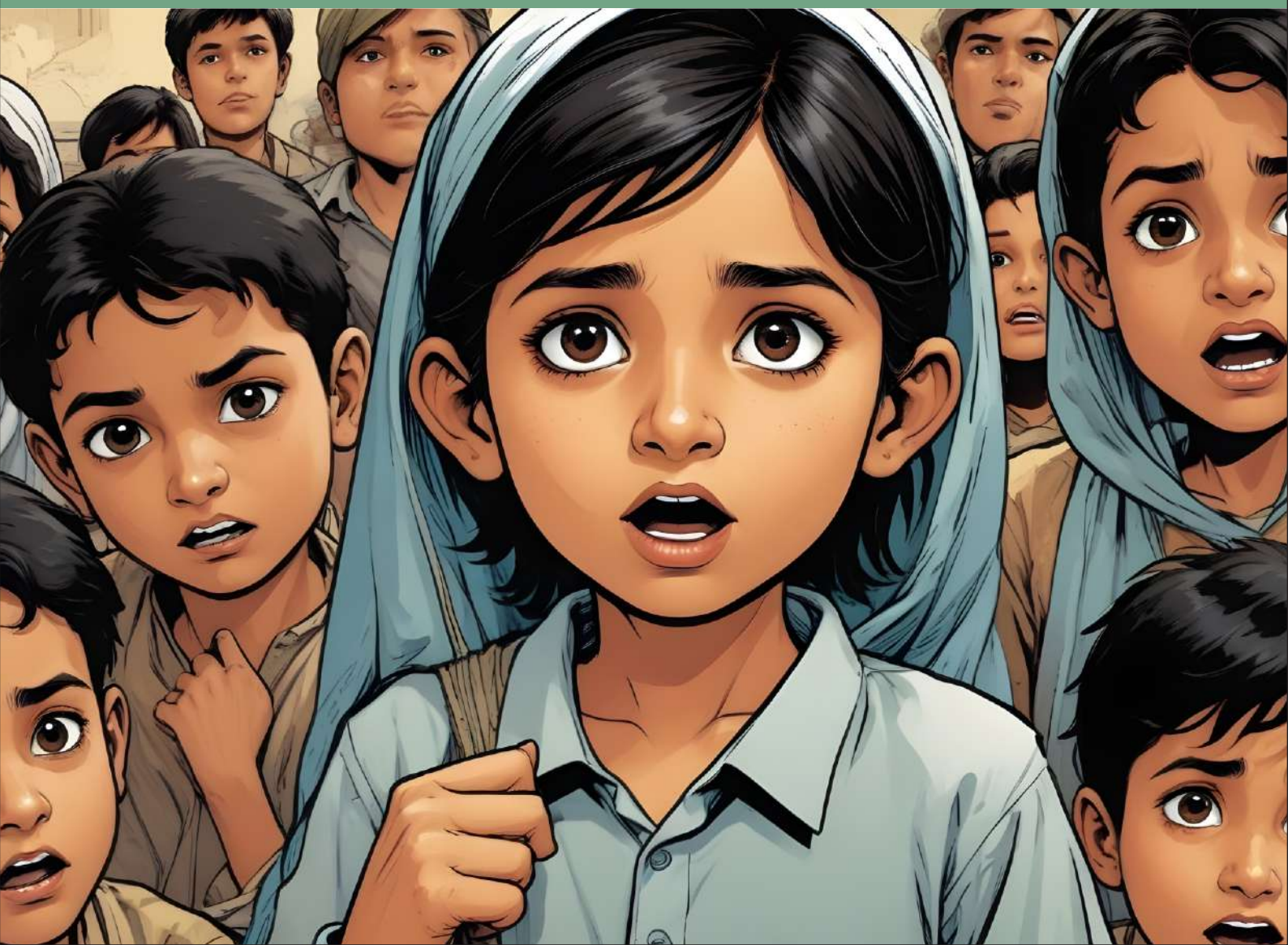
Therefore, the NCRC will advise the government on the necessity of investing in capacity-building initiatives to strengthen the justice system's ability to protect children's rights effectively.





# Examples of Good Practices

Speak Up for Those Who Can't







## 5. Examples of Good Practices

**Child Participation:** The NCRC's commitment to child participation is evident through its efforts to actively engage children in decision-making processes. Recognising the importance of their perspectives, the NCRC ensured children's voices were heard at various levels, from policy formulation to program implementation. Through nationwide consultations and dialogues held at national and provincial levels, children had the opportunity to articulate their concerns and present their demands to policymakers. Additionally, the children drafted a Charter of Demands and presented it to the Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar at the time.

**Advisory Structures:** Keeping in mind the diversity of cultures and religions being practiced in Pakistan it is crucial to take into account the perspective of experts from various backgrounds. Establishing advisory committees comprising of experts from diverse fields facilitates informed decision-making and enriches the understanding of issues related to child rights. Leveraging the expertise of such individuals, the NCRC formulated 3 committees (minorities, religious scholars & child rights experts) that enhance the Commission's capacity to address emerging challenges in the realm of child rights.

**Stakeholder Engagement:** With a population of over 244 million it is of utmost importance for the government and other stakeholders to work together and engage with each other through consultations, especially for child rights advocacy and programming. Involving a diverse range of stakeholders including government agencies, civil society organizations, academia and communities ensures that interventions are informed by local context, needs and perspectives and that the interventions can reach the grassroots level. This participatory approach fosters ownership, accountability and sustainability of initiatives. The NCRC ever since taking the office has been continuously engaging stakeholders in consultative processes and utilising their expertise for the effective implementation of programs developed for upholding child rights in the country.

**Strategic Partnerships:** The NCRC has formally entered into agreements for establishing strategic partnerships with governmental and non-governmental entities, as well as international organizations to amplify the reach and impact of initiatives aimed at promoting child rights. Such collaborative efforts result in innovative approaches and resource mobilisation for effective implementation of programs at the grassroots level. The strategic partnerships are crucial in addressing child rights issues in the country and for efficient redressal of child rights violations.

**Multi-Sectoral Coordination:** The NCRC realised that with its headquarters in ICT, it is important to develop coordination with relevant stakeholders at national, provincial and district levels. Recognising the complex nature of child rights violations, concerted efforts across sectors are essential for effective response mechanisms. Collaboration between government agencies, civil society organizations and international partners is crucial to address systemic issues comprehensively. Along with forging meaningful coordination with government and non-government organizations, it is also crucial for all such organizations to work with each other to minimize duplication of efforts and maximize the impact of all such efforts for the promotion of child rights. Keeping in view the need for multisectoral coordination, the NCRC advocated for notifying provincial steering committees and engaging key stakeholders like NADRA, UNICEF, local government, Health, Education departments, and Police to work together to increase birth registration.

Another example of good practice is the NCRC's consistent follow-up with PEMRA for the allocation of airtime to raise awareness of child rights. As a result of rigorous coordination and follow-up a total of

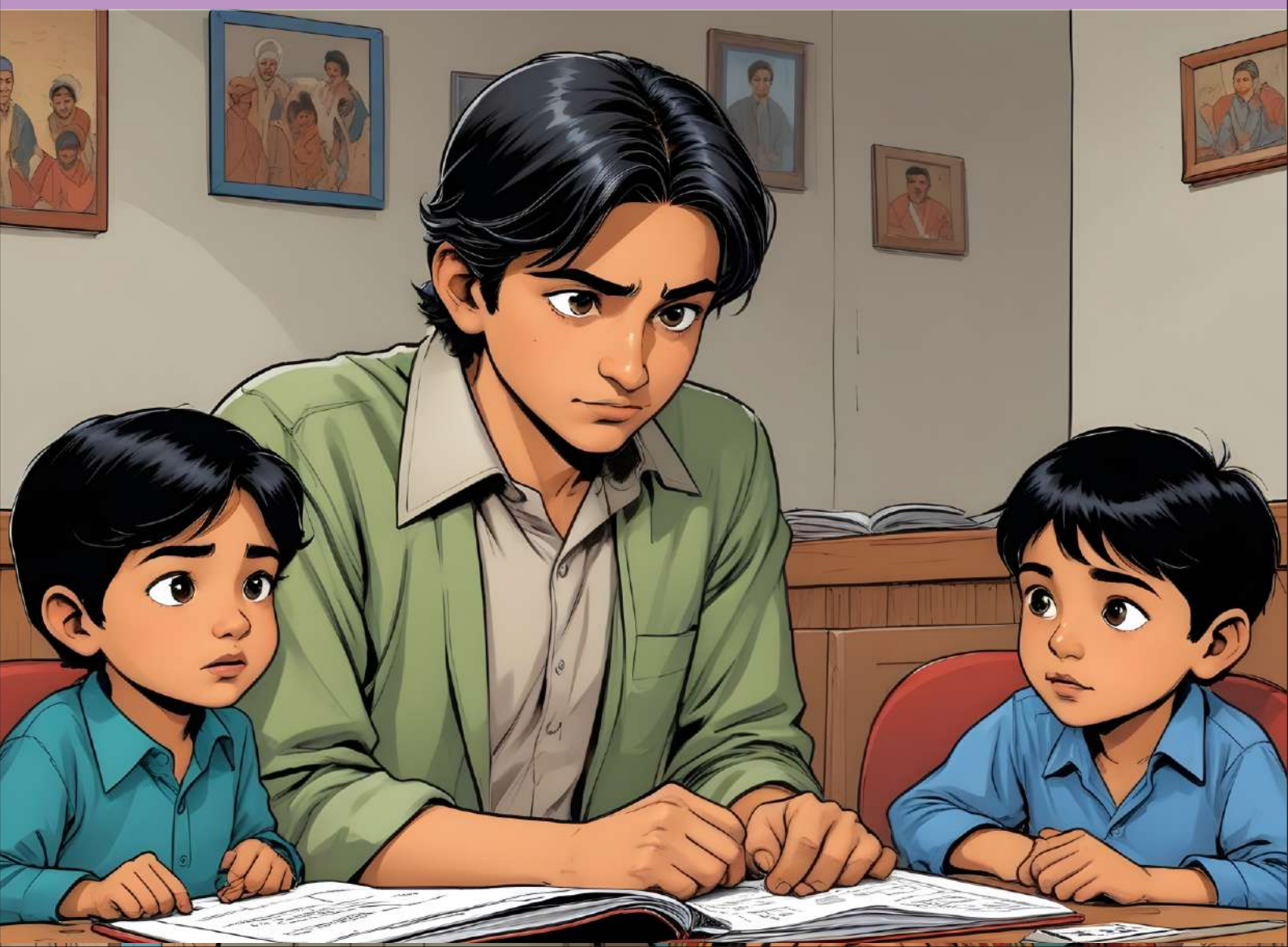


842 spots were aired on national television to raise awareness on prevention of child labour in domestic work, countering OOSC and increasing birth registration. Sometimes coordination and follow-up are important to reach the desired results.

**Awareness Raising:** Community-level awareness campaigns are crucial to improve reporting mechanisms and access to services for children. These campaigns should be conducted at both national and provincial levels to empower communities to identify and address child rights violations effectively. Moreover, understanding and utilizing the power of social media in raising awareness of child rights and addressing child rights issues is essential in the digital age. The NCRC has collaborated with various partners and developed extensive social media campaigns that are aimed at raising awareness of child rights issues at the community level.

# Finance

## Guidance, Not Punishment







## 7. Finance

Budget Heads	Final Budget 2023-2024	Expenditure Till 18th April, 2024	Final Budget 2022-2023	Actual Expenditure 2022-2023
Employee Related Expenditure	36,500,000	36,248,459	56,934,000	56,927,484
Operating Expenses	15,400,000	14,223,620	8,287,000	8,282,565
Physical Assets	3,540,000	-	69,000	68,736
Repair & Maintenance	1,060,000	180,988	330,000	328,844
<b>Total (PKR)</b>	<b>56,500,000</b>	<b>50,653,067</b>	<b>65,620,000</b>	<b>65,607,629</b>

In the financial year 2022-23, the Government of Pakistan initially allocated PKR 29.196 million. During June 2023 supplementary grant amounting to PKR 37 million was allocated to clear the salaries of the previous Commission which was disbursed during June 2023. A total of PKR 65.620 million was allocated to NCRC during the financial year 2022-23.



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