

# National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC)

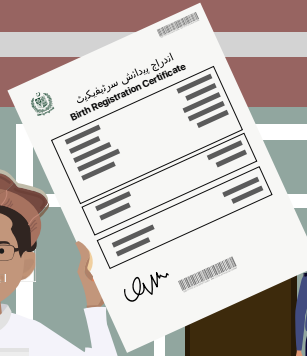


QUARTERLY

# NEWSLETTER

JANUARY - MARCH 2024

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## About The NCRC

The National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC) is an independent statutory body established by the Government of Pakistan for the promotion, protection, and fulfilment of 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.



# Message from the Chairperson

I am delighted to share with you the remarkable progress and impactful initiatives undertaken by the Commission in our ongoing mission to safeguard and promote the rights and well-being of children across Pakistan during the quarter.

The NCRC unveiled its 3-year strategic plan, a roadmap developed through rigorous consultation with stakeholders, experts, and civil society. This strategic blueprint is designed to effectively navigate the evolving factors impacting the child rights landscape in Pakistan. A central pillar of this strategic plan is the prioritization of evidence generation, knowledge enhancement, and transformative action.

Our recent endeavors have been marked by extensive collaboration, advocacy, and tangible outcomes that resonate with our vision for a society where every child's rights are not only acknowledged but also protected and upheld.

From spearheading consultations to improve legislation prohibiting child labour in domestic work to advocating for birth registration reforms and launching comprehensive policy briefs on critical issues such as child trafficking and online protection, the NCRC has remained steadfast in its commitment to driving positive change.

The NCRC has taken proactive steps to address Pakistan's issue of over 26.2 million out-of-school children. Through consultations across provinces, stakeholders were engaged in dialogue to understand challenges and formulate concrete policy recommendations to ensure that the voices of children are heard and their rights are prioritized.

Furthermore, our advocacy campaigns, in collaboration with esteemed partners like UNICEF, have been instrumental in raising awareness and fostering meaningful behavioral change regarding pressing issues such as child domestic labour. Together, we are igniting conversations, challenging societal norms, and

paving the way for a brighter, more equitable future for our children.

Additionally, I am delighted to announce the launch of our latest initiative, the Guidebook for Parents, Teachers & Children titled "Safeguarding Your Child in the Digital Age." Developed in collaboration with the PTA, UNICEF, and Telenor Pakistan, this guidebook is a comprehensive resource aimed at empowering caregivers with the knowledge and tools to protect children online.

As we continue to navigate the complex landscape of child rights advocacy, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated team, partners, and supporters whose unwavering commitment and tireless efforts drive our collective mission forward.

With gratitude,



Ayesha Raza Farooq,  
Chairperson, NCRC



# Members NCRC



**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

\* Seat of Member Balochistan is vacant and will be filled.

# Key Functions of the Commission

## 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.



# Key Achievements of the Quarter

## INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING

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

Addressing the pressing need arising from the swiftly changing factors impacting the child rights landscape in Pakistan, the NCRC unveiled a forward-thinking 3-year strategic plan. This initiative is a result of a comprehensive desk review and consultative process with key stakeholders, child rights experts, and voices from civil society, demonstrating the NCRC's commitment to promote and protect child rights in line with Pakistan's international obligations.

The NCRC's strategic vision is anchored in the promise to uphold the rights of every child. By the year 2026, the strategic plan aims to deliver a measurable improvement in the enforcement of child rights, making every effort that this promise is translated into impactful evidence-based actions by state entities and civil society.

A key priority outlined in the strategic plan is the focus on evidence generation, knowledge and transformation. The NCRC aims to build a robust foundation of evidence-based practices, equipping policymakers and stakeholders with the insights needed to inform impactful policies and interventions.

Emphasising collaboration as a cornerstone, the NCRC's strategic plan prioritises partnerships with diverse stakeholders. The collaborative approach recognises the collective responsibility of all sectors to protect and promote the rights of children in Pakistan. Finally, the strategic plan is not just a document but a commitment to transformative actions.

During the launch, Ayesha Raza Farooq, Chairperson, NCRC, emphasised the potential impact of the strategic plan. "This is not just a

roadmap; it is a commitment to transforming the destiny of our children. By implementing evidence-based strategies and fostering partnerships, we aim to enforce the rights of every child in Pakistan actively," she said.

Dr. Rinchen Chopel, Member of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) addressing the launch event stated "The Commission's strategic plan is a beacon of hope, providing a roadmap for transformative actions. As a Member of the UNCRC, I commend this initiative and believe it will contribute significantly to shaping a future where the rights of every child are not only acknowledged but actively protected and promoted."

Christine Chung, representing the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), said, "In May 2023, Pakistan was subject to the first cycle of the universal periodic review, during which the government made commitments to work on recommendations from other member states that included combatting child marriage and raising the minimum age of marriage, promoting children's right to quality education, combating child labour. Our office acknowledges that these recommendations have been translated into the strategic plan presented by the Commission".

Dr. Inoussa Kabore, Deputy Representative of United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), stated, "The strategic plan is a commendable step towards safeguarding children's rights in Pakistan. We believe that the strategic priorities outlined – evidence and knowledge, partnership, and transformation – align with the

global efforts to ensure every child's well-being. This collaborative approach sets a positive precedent for effective child rights enforcement, and we look forward to witnessing the lasting impact of this strategic plan on the lives of children across the country."

"Prioritising awareness, capacity building, and policy reform will transform the future of children in Pakistan. The enforcement of the child rights laws and making a coordination mechanism with provincial child protection authorities is the need of the hour " stated AD Khawaja, Federal Secretary, Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR).

Chief Guest Mushaal Hussein Mullick, Special Assistant to Prime Minister, stated, "Child trafficking is a violation of the fundamental rights of our most vulnerable population. The policy brief and strategic plan embodies the NCRC's commitment to confronting this issue head-on, focusing on prevention, protection, and prosecution".

The launch of the NCRC's strategic plan is a significant milestone as, with a comprehensive roadmap in place, the NCRC will lead the transformative actions that will positively impact the lives of children across the country.



## 9th Commission Meeting

During the 9th commission meeting, chaired by Chairperson, NCRC, a comprehensive progress report highlighting key initiatives, progress, budget spending and the way forward was discussed. In the meeting, key activities, including the launch of a situational analysis of child online protection in Pakistan and a guidebook for caregivers on child online protection, were presented. The activities reflect the NCRC's commitment to safeguarding children in the digital age. Additionally, the NCRC introduced its strategic plan, outlining our vision and priorities for the future. Notably,

efforts to combat child trafficking were bolstered with the drafting of a policy brief, along with a bill aimed at criminalising child labour in domestic work. The NCRC shared that it is collecting vital data on juveniles in prisons to inform evidence-based interventions. Furthermore, the NCRC is following up on high-profile torture & abuse cases related to children like Fatima Furriro and Rizwana, ensuring justice and protection for the children involved. These initiatives underscore our unwavering dedication to advocating for and protecting children's rights across Pakistan.

## Capacity-Building Session on Child Labour Concepts and Legal Instruments by ILO

The International Labour Organization (ILO) conducted a capacity-building session to empower members, consultants, and legal experts of the NCRC with comprehensive insights into child labour concepts and legal instruments. Led by experts from the ILO, this session provided a deep understanding of child labour, spanning international and domestic legal frameworks. Participants engaged deeply in discussions regarding the various forms of

child labour and explored how these are defined within both international instruments and our national legal context.

Equipped with this deep understanding, the NCRC has crafted a robust Prohibition of Child Labour in Domestic Work bill. This legislation aligns with global standards set forth by the ILO and ensures practical and impactful implementation within the domestic landscape.



## STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The NCRC forged partnerships to further mission to safeguard the rights and well-being of children across Pakistan.

### MoU with SSDO Pakistan

The NCRC entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Sustainable Social Development Organization (SSDO) Pakistan, marking a pivotal step towards ensuring the protection of our children's rights. This strategic

partnership will focus on various areas of cooperation, including awareness raising, campaigning, capacity building, and coordination of stakeholders.



### LoA with OBUN2

The NCRC has signed a Letter of Agreement (LoA) with OBUN2, signalling a commitment to foster research-based collaboration. Through this agreement, both organisations will collaborate to develop a cutting-edge digital portal dedicated to gathering data related to

child rights in Pakistan. This portal will serve as a vital resource, providing accessible, reliable, and up-to-date information to enhance awareness and understanding of child rights among stakeholders and the general public alike.



## LEGAL & POLICY REFORMS

# The NCRC Concludes Consultative Process To Improve the Prohibition of Child Labour in Domestic Work Bill 2024

The NCRC successfully conducted the consultations on the Draft Bill on the Prohibition of Child Labour in Domestic Work. The consultation, organised by the NCRC, brought together stakeholders, experts, policymakers, bureaucrats, child rights experts and representatives from civil society organisations. To get a holistic review of the bill, the NCRC conducted consultations in all provinces, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sindh, and Balochistan, for a detailed deliberation on the draft bill.

The consultative process to discuss the Prohibition of Child Labour in Domestic Work bill 2024 with key stakeholders culminated in a strong commitment to bringing legislation to put an end to this menace. This bill is designed to bring about transformative change by strengthening legal measures against individuals engaging children in domestic labour. By proposing amendments to the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860, and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898, the NCRC aims to criminalise child domestic labour and underscore the prioritisation of children's rights and well-being.

The proposed bill seeks to insert a new section, 374-A, into the Pakistan Penal Code, specifically addressing child domestic labour. This section aims to criminalise the live-in domestic work of children below the age of eighteen years. Offences related to child domestic labour are categorised as non-bailable, non-compoundable, and cognisable, with penalties including imprisonment ranging from three to seven years and a fine not less than one hundred thousand rupees.

During the consolidation consultation in Islamabad, an improved bill was shared with the

audience, reflecting insights gathered from previous consultations. The draft bill prohibits the exploitation of children in domestic work and proposes stringent penalties for perpetrators.

Commenting on the consultation, Chairperson, NCRC, stated "Today's consultation marks a significant milestone in our collective efforts to combat child domestic labour and uphold the rights of every child. The collaborative approach adopted throughout this process underscores our commitment to creating a future where every child can thrive free from exploitation."

Geir Thomas Tonstol, Country Director, ILO, emphasised the importance of international cooperation in addressing child labour, stating, "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."

Raja Naeem Akbar, Secretary Ministry of Law & Justice (MoL&J), highlighted the government's commitment to protecting children's rights, stating, "Protecting our children from exploitation and ensuring their well-being is a top priority, but legislation takes time, and Ministry of Law & Justice reaffirms its support to the NCRC."

Dr. Inossua Kabore, Deputy Representative, UNICEF, reiterated the importance of prioritising children's rights, stating, "UNICEF remains committed to supporting the NCRC in their efforts to protect children from exploitation and abuse."

Dr Ehsan Sadiq, Director General, National Police Bureau, said "The legal framework is necessary to define and address exploitative practices, setting clear standards for accountability and enforcement."

Speakers at the consultations highlighted poverty as a key driver of child domestic labour and emphasised the need for parental awareness and education incentives. They underscored the importance of finalising the legislation to criminalise child domestic labour and prevent further exploitation of children.

Additionally, stakeholders stressed the role of NGOs in raising awareness and providing support to vulnerable children.

The consultations concluded with a commitment from all stakeholders to work collaboratively towards enacting legislation that safeguards the rights and well-being of children across Pakistan. The NCRC, along with its partners, reaffirmed their dedication to combatting child domestic labour and ensuring to take the advocacy efforts forward with the new cabinet.



## The NCRC Spearheads Efforts to Tackle Pakistan's Out-of-School Children: A Consultative Approach

In Pakistan, the issue of out-of-school children persists as a significant challenge, with over 26.2 million children currently out of school. Recognising the urgency of addressing this issue, the NCRC has taken proactive measures to initiate a consultative process aimed at mainstreaming out-of-school children and enhancing access to quality education for all.

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

The objectives of the consultations were to:

- Understand the current landscape of education, including access to education for out-of-school children and the quality of education provided in special education schools.
- Assess the status of education priorities in each province in alignment with provincial education sector plans.
- Reflect on lessons learned, challenges faced, and pending priorities related to free and compulsory education.
- Draft policy recommendations to enhance education for in and out-of-school children and children in special education schools.

During the consultations, several challenges were highlighted, which include:

- Budgetary constraints lead to limited financial resources for education development plans.

- Standardisation issues cause inconsistencies in school standards, particularly in rural areas.
- Lack of authentic data regarding out-of-school children with disabilities exacerbating planning efforts.
- Insufficient number of post primary schools, hindering access to secondary education.
- Gender disparities in education are perpetuated by socio-cultural norms.
- Political interference affects appointments and governance within the education system.
- Lack of functional parent-teacher councils and inadequate teacher training.
- Data availability gaps hinder effective planning and intervention strategies.
- Economic challenges force children to prioritise work over education.

Drawing from the discussions, a set of recommendations emerged from consultations to address these challenges effectively:

- Implement door-to-door enrollment campaigns to reach out to out-of-school children.
- Prioritise budget allocation for development plans to improve infrastructure and resource availability.
- Mobilise resources through public-private partnerships and donor support.
- Promote awareness of non-formal education options for children unable to access formal schooling.
- Advocate for policy reforms in teacher training and appointments to enhance professionalism.
- Adopt a gender-responsive approach to

promote girls' education and address disparities.

- Introduce scholarships and stipend programs to incentivise school attendance.
- Encourage double shifts in schools to accommodate out-of-school children.
- Develop comprehensive curriculum standards and enhance teachers' capacity.
- Formalise madrassahs and integrate religious education into the broader education system.
- Provide meals in schools to improve attendance.
- Ensure a 10% quota in private schools for underprivileged students and regulate

admissions.

- Introduce adult literacy and social security programs to ensure retention in schools.

The NCRC's consultative process underscores its commitment to addressing the complex issue of out-of-school children in Pakistan. The consultations have laid the groundwork for informed policy recommendations and advocacy efforts by fostering dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders. Through continued advocacy and concerted action, the NCRC strives to ensure every child has access to quality education and the opportunity to fulfil their potential.



## Counting Every Child: NCRC's Advocacy for Strengthening Birth Registration

### FEDERAL LEVEL:

The NCRC wrote a letter to the Prime Minister of Pakistan regarding the birth registration issue, which led to immediate action. Upon the Prime Minister's notice, the Secretary MoHR convened a pivotal meeting with Chairperson, NCRC, and key stakeholders from the departments of Education, Interior, Law, National Database & Registration Authority (NADRA) and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Municipal Corporation to address the alarming number of unregistered children.

During the meeting, it was recommended to implement a legal fee waiver for birth registration after the first 60 days to ensure that no child is deprived of this fundamental right due to financial constraints. Additionally, enhancing interoperability between the health sector and Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) systems was emphasised to facilitate seamless data sharing and birth registration. Birth registration is crucial for making evidence-based policy decisions concerning children's welfare and ensuring their rights are safeguarded.



### SINDH:

In a significant step towards advancing child rights and promoting birth registration in Sindh, the NCRC, led by the Chairperson, and representatives from UNICEF and NADRA, met with Syed Asif Hyder Shah, Chief Secretary Sindh. The meeting aimed to advocate for implementing a health-interoperable birth registration system in the province, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16.9 and the NCRC's strategic plan.

During the meeting, four key recommendations were presented to the Chief Secretary Sindh:

- **Fee Waiver:** Advocating 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 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.

Chief Secretary Sindh expressed his full commitment to lead the implementation

process and took immediate actions, including the constitution of a CRVS Working Group. Additionally, he pledged to take up the fee waiver issue to the cabinet to alleviate the burden on parents.

Furthermore, NADRA announced plans to introduce a pilot for health interoperability in Sindh, with technical support from UNICEF, further enhancing the registration process.

This collaborative effort marks a significant milestone in the journey towards ensuring every child's right to birth registration. It underscores the importance of inter-agency cooperation in advancing child welfare and protection.

#### **BALUCHISTAN:**

Chairperson, NCRC, and Pirbhu Satyani, Member Sindh/Minorities, called upon Mir Sarfraz Bugti, Chief Minister of Baluchistan, for a meeting to address critical child rights issues and advocate for necessary reforms to protect the well-being and rights of children in the province.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister expressed his commitment to several key initiatives:

- **Raising the Minimum Marriageable Age for Girls:** The Chief Minister pledged to raise the minimum marriageable age for girls to 18 years.
- **Tackling Out-of-School Children:** Recognising the alarming rate of out-of-school children in Baluchistan, the Chief Minister committed to launching awareness campaigns and advocacy efforts to address this pressing issue.
- **Improving Birth Registration Rate:** The Chief Minister acknowledged the importance of birth registration and pledged to introduce fee waivers and streamline business processes to improve the birth registration rate in Baluchistan.
- **Combatting Child Domestic Labour:** The Chief Minister emphasised the need for concrete steps to protect vulnerable children from exploitation.

The meeting highlighted the government's proactive approach towards addressing critical child rights issues and its commitment to creating a safer and more conducive environment for children in Baluchistan.



Moreover, Chairperson, NCRC led a delegation to meet with Shakeel Qadir, Chief Secretary of Baluchistan, in pursuit of advancing birth registration efforts aligned with SDG 16.9.

During the meeting, the Chief Secretary expressed support for upholding child rights and prioritising birth registration. Recognising the



importance of collaboration between sectors, he emphasised the need to strengthen ties with the health sector and streamline CRVS processes.

The Chief Secretary instructed his team to explore the feasibility of waiving birth registration fees, aiming to eliminate financial barriers to registration. Additionally, he took

decisive action by initiating the establishment of a steering committee comprising representatives from his secretariat, the Health Department, Local Government, UNICEF

Pakistan, NADRA, and NCRC. This committee will spearhead efforts to improve birth registration rates across Balochistan.



## COORDINATION

### Strengthening Coordination Mechanism for Addressing Child Rights Complaints

#### SINDH:

Chairperson, NCRC, led a delegation to meet Riffat Mukhtar Raja, Inspector General of Police, Sindh, to enhance the coordination mechanism for timely referral of child rights violations and complaints. During the productive meeting, IG Sindh pledged to share data on cases involving juveniles periodically, facilitating the provision

of legal aid and help those awaiting bail due to surety bonds in petty crimes. Notable officials from the police department, including Zubair Dreshak, Deputy IG and Sheeraz Nazir, Additional IG, joined the discussion, demonstrating a collective commitment to prioritise efforts for improving child rights and safeguarding children from harm and abuse.



**BALUCHISTAN:**

Chairperson, NCRC, and Member Sindh/ Minorities met Abdul Khaliq Shaikh, Inspector General of Police, Balochistan, to address child rights violations in the province. IG Balochistan expressed strong support for establishing a robust coordination mechanism to address child rights complaints effectively. He pledged to

regularly share data on cases involving juveniles and proposed the formation of a coordination committee to ensure prompt action on child protection issues. The meeting also included plans for capacity-building sessions and awareness programs on child rights, underscoring the commitment to creating a safe environment for all children in Balochistan.



## The NCRC Convenes Second Meeting of the Working Group of Minorities on Child Rights

The NCRC organised the second meeting of the Working Group of Minorities on Child Rights, chaired by Chairperson, NCRC. This meeting served as a platform to reinforce the NCRC's commitment to protecting and promoting the rights of every child, particularly those belonging to minority communities.

During the meeting, Chairperson, NCRC, provided a comprehensive briefing on the Commission's initiatives and efforts aimed at

safeguarding the rights of children across Pakistan. Pirbhu Satyani, Member Sindh/Minorities presented updates on previous meeting minutes and outlined the actions taken since then.

A significant highlight of the meeting was the discussion surrounding the recent monitoring visit conducted by the NCRC to the affected minority communities in the Jaranwala case. Additionally, the Commission shared insights

into the ongoing development of a policy brief focused on forced conversions, underscoring the NCRC's proactive approach to addressing critical issues faced by minority children.

The discussion centred around pressing concerns such as bonded labour, child labour, children in detention, and corporal punishment,

particularly as experienced by minority children, and participants provided valuable insights and highlighted areas where the NCRC's intervention and support are crucial in ensuring the protection and well-being of minority children.



## Meeting with Donor Agencies, INGOs & Civil Society

In a meeting with the European Union Delegation to Pakistan, chaired by Jeroen Willems, Head of Cooperation, Chairperson, NCRC, shared insights about the Commission's impactful initiatives and explored potential

areas for collaboration. The discussion centred on identifying synergies and opportunities for bilateral cooperation, underscoring the importance of collective efforts in promoting and protecting the rights of children in Pakistan.



Additionally, Chairperson, NCRC, engaged in a productive dialogue with the Commissioner Pakistan Girls Guide Association, focusing on

avenues for collaboration to enhance teachers' training and awareness sessions on children's online safety in both public and private schools

nationwide. The meeting emphasised the significance of empowering educators and

promoting child-centric approaches to education.



## Meeting with Key Government Stakeholders

Chairperson, NCRC, engaged in a productive meeting with Mir Jam Kamal Khan, Minister for Commerce, to deliberate on crucial matters concerning child rights and Pakistan's international obligations and GSP+ commitments. The meeting served as a platform

to underscore the importance of upholding child rights within the framework of Pakistan's international agreements. Both representatives recognized the pressing need to ensure that children's rights are protected and prioritized in all spheres of policy and practice.

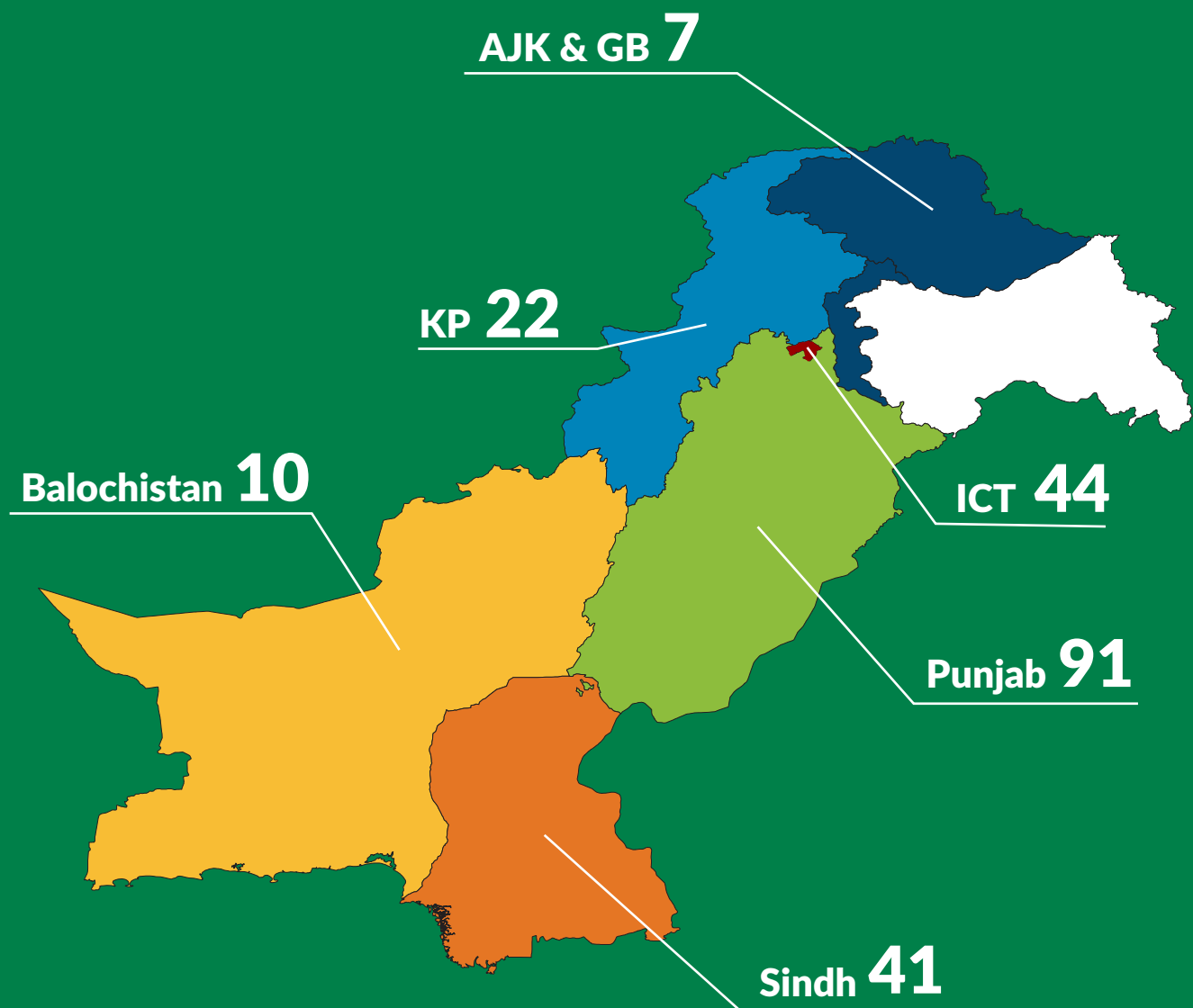


## Inquiries Related to Child Rights Violations

### Complaint Handling

The NCRC's commitment to the well-being of children remained strong as we addressed 215 complaints related to children's rights in the first quarter of 2024. These cases serve as a reminder of the vital role the NCRC plays in advocating for and protecting children's rights. Each complaint

handled represents a child whose voice was heard and whose rights were defended, reinforcing our dedication to creating a society where children can thrive without fear or injustice.



Total **215**

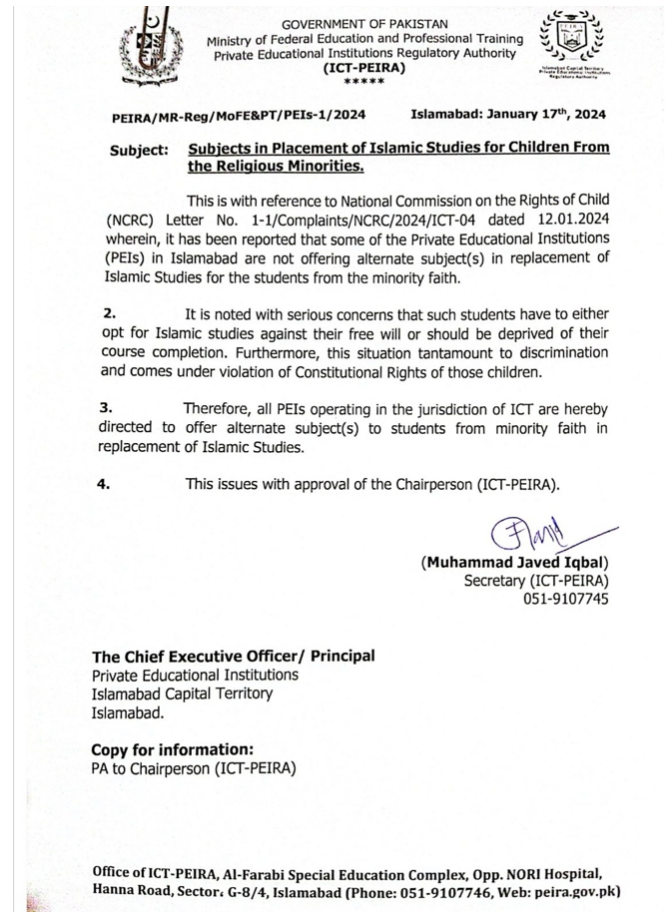
## ADDRESSING CHILD RIGHTS ISSUES

### Ensuring Inclusive Education: PIERA Directs Educational Institutions to Offer Alternate Subjects for Minority Students

In response to concerns raised regarding the alternative of Islamic Studies for children from religious minorities, significant steps have been taken to promote inclusive education in Islamabad.

The NCRC received a complaint that some private educational institutions in Islamabad were not offering alternate subjects in place of Islamic Studies for minority students, potentially excluding them from accessing education tailored to their beliefs and backgrounds. In light of this issue, the Private Educational Institutions Regulatory Authority (PIERA) took notice and intervened to address the matter.

PIERA, recognising the importance of accommodating the diverse needs of students, directed all educational institutions within the jurisdiction of ICT to ensure the provision of alternate subjects for minority students. This directive aims to uphold the principles of inclusivity and equality in education, ensuring that every child has the opportunity to pursue their education in an environment that respects their cultural and religious identity.



### Upholding Religious Freedom: The NCRC Delegation Visits Jaranwala to Support Minority Communities

Following the disturbing events of the recent mob attack on churches and homes of Christian residents in Jaranwala, the NCRC took swift action to address the concerns and issues faced by the minority communities affected by the incident.

Recognising the unrest and fear among the Christian community, particularly among children, a delegation from the NCRC, comprising of Pirbhu Satyani, Member Sindh/Minorities and Mehek Naeem, Member Punjab, visited Jaranwala. The primary objective

of the visit was to engage directly with the minority communities, listen to their grievances, and undertake efforts to uphold religious freedom and harmony in the region.

During the visit, the NCRC delegation had meaningful discussions with members of the minority communities to understand their concerns firsthand. 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 and emphasised the need for collective efforts to create a society where every individual, regardless of their faith, can live without fear of persecution or discrimination.



## Enhancing Services for Children with Disabilities

Khalid Naeem Member ICT has developed a comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation plan for the Directorate General of Special Education, aimed at enhancing services for the education and rehabilitation of children with disabilities.

The monitoring plan uses a strategic approach to revolutionize the delivery of support to these children, ensuring they receive the necessary resources to thrive.

## Improving Access to Education

Khalid Naeem, Member ICT, and Khalid Latif, Secretary NCRC, engaged in productive discussions with officials from the National Commission of Human Development (NCHD) and the National Book Foundation to explore

plans to establish non-formal schools and develop specialized books for out-of-school children within the non-formal education system.

## RESEARCH & DATABASE

### Brief on Policy Child Trafficking

The NCRC launched its Policy Brief on Child Trafficking in a ceremony held in Islamabad. The policy brief delves into the multifaceted issue of child trafficking, providing an in-depth analysis of the current landscape, challenges faced, and recommendations for effective prevention and intervention. The comprehensive document reflects the complexities of child trafficking to develop targeted solutions.

At the launch of the Policy Brief on Child Trafficking, a panel discussion took centre stage, featuring prominent experts in the field. Kausar Abbas, Executive Director of SSDO, lent his expertise, offering valuable insights into the multifaceted challenges surrounding child trafficking. Joining him on the panel were Zaheer Ahmed, Former Director of the Anti-Human Smuggling Unit at the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), and Azam Tabani from the National Police Bureau, bringing a wealth of experience that added a law enforcement perspective to the discourse. Shahida Gilani, Senior Programme Officer specialising in Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling, provided a nuanced understanding of the intricate dynamics involved in combatting these grave issues. The panel discussion was moderated by Mehek Naeem, Member Punjab who guided the conversation, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the policy brief's key



### Policy Brief on Child Trafficking



recommendations and fostering a collaborative exchange of ideas among the participants. This insightful panel discussion underscored the collective commitment to addressing the urgent challenges posed by child trafficking. It emphasised the importance of collaborative efforts to create effective solutions in the ongoing fight against this heinous crime.



## The NCRC Launches 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.

Identifying the challenges and issues surrounding child online protection is a crucial aspect of the report. 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.



## Disrupting Harm Project

Disrupting Harm is a multi-country, three-year research project by UNICEF, Interpol, ECPAT International, and its local partners with the NCRC as a key partner. The purpose is to conduct research on online child sexual exploitation and abuse issues in Pakistan. Two initial consultative meetings were organised to collect evidence on the nature and scope of online child sexual exploitation and abuse and the readiness of national protection systems to respond to these forms of violence against

children. A comprehensive analysis of national legal provisions and policy frameworks pertaining to online child sexual exploitation and abuse has been conducted. This critical examination provides essential groundwork for understanding the existing legislative landscape and identifying areas for enhancement or reform. In order to test the methodology and tools used for household surveys, pilot testing is underway.

## AWARENESS RAISING

# Launch of Guidebook for Parents, Teachers & Children Titled 'Safeguarding your Child in the Digital Age'

The NCRC, in collaboration with Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), UNICEF, and Telenor Pakistan, held a launching ceremony for the parental guide titled "Safeguarding your Child in the Digital Age-Guide for Caregivers. Representatives from the Ministry of Information Technology & Telecom (MoIT&T), PTA, Telenor, NCRC, and UNICEF Pakistan also graced the ceremony with their presence.

Dr. Umar Saif, Caretaker Minister MoIT&T, was the chief guest of this occasion. During his address, Dr Saif emphasised the critical need to safeguard children online in today's digital age. He stressed that it is the collective responsibility of society to not only establish a secure online environment for children but also to proactively educate and support them in navigating the digital landscape safely.

While Chairman PTA, Major General (R) Hafeez Ur Rehman, reiterated PTA's dedication to promoting a secure online environment, with a particular emphasis on safeguarding the youth and children of the nation. He praised the efforts of the PTA's Child Online Protection Committee and expressed confidence in the ongoing collaboration with all stakeholders to ensure children's online safety and promote responsible internet use among children, caregivers, and

educators through various initiatives.

Speaking on the occasion, Khurram Ashfaque, CEO of Telenor Pakistan, said, "With a staggering statistic revealing that 1 in 3 internet users worldwide is a child, it's evident that safeguarding their online experience is paramount."

"We cannot afford to turn a blind eye to the dangers that lurk in the digital realm. Every child deserves the right to explore the internet safely and securely, free from harm or exploitation. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that this fundamental right is upheld. Let us work together to raise awareness, strengthen legislative frameworks, and empower our children with the knowledge and skills they need to navigate the digital world safely." said Chairperson, NCRC.

The ceremony included an interactive session involving children from schools and their caregivers. This session aimed to equip them with vital knowledge about online threats and promote safe online practices. It exemplified the commitment of the participating organisations to empowering both children and caregivers with the necessary tools for a safer online experience.



## The Commission participated in various consultations and events to raise awareness of child rights

### Brown Bag Launch

ILO recently organised a Brown Bag Launch, shedding light on a pressing issue in Pakistan: child domestic labour. According to ILO statistics, 1 in every 4 households in Pakistan employs children in domestic work, highlighting the widespread prevalence of this issue. As a panellist at the event, Chairperson, NCRC,

emphasised the urgent need to shift mindsets regarding child domestic labour. She highlighted that while legislation is essential, it alone won't suffice to address the issue effectively. Instead, it's crucial to empower women, prioritise education, and give children a voice and agency in their own lives.



### TedTalk

Chairperson, NCRC, delivered an insightful TEDx talk titled "Finding Balance: Addressing the Root Causes of Child Labour" at TEDx Lahore chapter. In her thought-provoking presentation, Ayesha delved into the complex layers underlying child domestic labour in Pakistan, offering a deep exploration of its root causes.

Drawing on her expertise as Chairperson of the NCRC and her extensive experience in the country's political landscape, Ayesha 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.



She also highlighted the urgent need for holistic approaches to address the root causes of child labour in Pakistan.

## Lecture on Inclusive Education

Khalid Naeem, Member ICT delivered an enlightening lecture on "Inclusive Education for Out-of-School Children" at the Education Department, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Islamabad. He emphasised the critical importance of ensuring access to education for every child, irrespective of their circumstances, discussed the challenges faced by out-of-school children and highlighted the need for inclusive educational practices to address these challenges effectively.



## Advancing Social Justice

During a conference organised by ILO, Chairperson, NCRC, gave an address on the imperative need to combat child labour and strengthen child protection measures. She emphasised the pivotal role of robust legal frameworks, impactful awareness campaigns, and comprehensive child labour surveys in

eradicating child labour and fostering child protection. In addition, she discussed the urgency of changing community attitudes and behaviours regarding child labour. She stressed that it is essential to challenge and transform the societal norms that normalise children working instead of attending school.



## Lahore Literary Festival

Chairperson represented the Commission at the Lahore Literary Festival and participated in a panel discussion on practical and legislative approaches towards protecting the rights of women and children alongside inspiring voices Dominique Sigaud and Khawar Mumtaz, moderated by Asma Hamid. The NCRC

commends the support of the French Embassy for arranging this insightful session. The French Embassy's partnership with the NCRC to raise awareness on the prevention of child sexual abuse through a comprehensive campaign is invaluable.



## 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 discussed the crucial theme of 'Transforming Education: Addressing Out-of-School Children through Policy Reforms and Alternative Pathways'. In Pakistan, addressing the challenge of out-of-school children demands thoughtful policy reforms and innovative approaches. Emphasising inclusivity,

policymakers must prioritise measures to identify and support children currently not attending school. Flexible learning options like distance education or community-based programs offer alternative pathways for these children to access essential knowledge and skills. At youth STEM Learning Festival in Karachi, he also speak about child rights, school safety, and quality/accessible education for all children in both emergencies and normal situations.



## SSDO Conference

Chairperson, NCRC, participated as a panelist at the International Conference Against Trafficking and Forced Labour in Pakistan, organised by SSDO Pakistan in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad. She shared insightful

perspectives on protecting children from bonded labour and trafficking, emphasising actionable steps to enhance victims' access to vital support services.



## Cruel Numbers Report

Pirbhu Satyani, Member Sindh/Minorities, represented the Commission at Sahil's launch of the report *Cruel Numbers 2023*. The report not only unveils the alarming numbers of children that are abused, but it also highlights the factors that render our children vulnerable to such

atrocities. Each number in this report represents a child whose innocence has been brutally stolen and whose trust has been shattered. It is our collective responsibility to work tirelessly towards creating a safer environment for our children.



## Conference on Behaviour Change & Community Engagement

At 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 in collaboration with the British Council, the Chairperson emphasised the crucial role of behavioural change and

community involvement in the effective implementation of laws. She pointed out that legislation alone is not sufficient and highlighted the need for active participation and engagement from communities to address issues such as GBV, child marriage, and social cohesion.



## 'Invest in Women, Accelerate Progress'

Chairperson, NCRC, participated in a Facebook live program, 'Invest in Women, Accelerate Progress,' organised by UNICEF. During the insightful discussion, she underscored the critical role of education and skills development in empowering women and girls and narrowing gender disparities. She emphasised that investing in girls' education is not just an investment in individuals but also in the prosperity and progress of society as a whole. Educated and empowered girls have the potential to become catalysts for positive change, driving transformational impact within their families, communities, and beyond. The



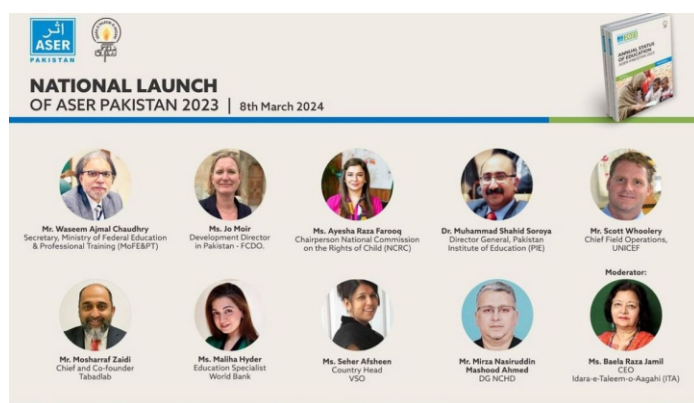
NCRC has prioritised girls' education in its 3-year strategic plan.

## ASER Report Launch

The recently launched ASER 2023 Report has shed light on both progress and persistent challenges in the realm of education in Pakistan. While the report shows improvements in primary school enrollment, it also highlights significant disparities based on wealth and

gender.

As a panellist at the ASER Report Launch event, Chairperson, NCRC, assumed a crucial role in addressing the challenges highlighted in the report and discussing mitigation strategies to improve the education sector.



## Centre for 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.



## Launch of Empowering Women & Girls Project

Nadia Bibi, Member Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, participated actively in the launch event 'Empowering Women & Girls Project' organised by SPARC, where she shared her invaluable insights on the importance of empowering women and girls in our society. Her remarks emphasized the critical role that empowerment plays in ensuring the rights and well-being of women and girls, ultimately fostering a more equitable and inclusive society for all. The launch of the Empowering Women & Girls Project signifies a crucial step towards promoting gender



equality and advancing the rights of women and girls in Pakistan.

## Dynamic Woman's Award

Mehek Naeem, Member Punjab, was honoured with the prestigious "Dynamic Woman's Award" at the Women's Day 2024 Celebration, hosted by the Phoenix Foundation for Research and Development in collaboration with Pakistan Girl

Guides Association Punjab and Rotary Clubs of Lahore South. The event took place at the Girl Guides House in Lahore, where Mehek Naeem's outstanding contributions and leadership were celebrated and recognised.



## Lecture at IPS

Khalid Naeem, Member ICT had the honour of delivering a thought-provoking lecture titled "Policy and Mechanism of Human Rights with Specific Reference to Child Rights" at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS). This session attracted an audience comprising IPS Research Scholars, lawyers, faculty members, and students from various universities. During the

lecture, he delved deep into crucial aspects of safeguarding child rights, emphasising the importance of effective policies and mechanisms in ensuring the protection and promotion of these rights. His insights shed light on the challenges children face in our society and the urgent need for concerted efforts to address them.



## Advocacy Campaign on Countering Child Domestic Labour

At the heart of the NCRC mission lies a vision for Pakistan where every child's rights are not just acknowledged but also respected, protected, and fulfilled. Recognising that achieving this mission requires a collective effort, the NCRC launched a social media campaign, urging everyone to join hands and make a difference in the lives of children.

The NCRC, in collaboration with UNICEF, have designed an advocacy campaign to counter the grave issue of child domestic labour in Pakistan. This comprehensive initiative has been meticulously crafted to drive awareness and foster meaningful behavioural change within our society.

The campaign's planning involved extensive collaboration between the NCRC and UNICEF, with a shared goal of addressing the urgent need to combat child domestic labour. Drawing upon insights from research and stakeholder consultations, a multifaceted approach was devised to effectively convey the message and

evoke empathy among the target audience.

Central to the campaign's strategy was the creation of a compelling video advertisement designed to resonate with viewers on an emotional level. The video ad portrays a scene of a young girl, her face filled with hope, as she imagines herself attending school while ironing the uniform of her employer's daughter. This powerful depiction serves as a stark reminder of the harsh realities faced by children trapped in domestic labour. The video also issues a compelling call to action, urging viewers to join the movement to stop employing children in labour.

Since its launch, the campaign has gained significant traction, sparking widespread debate and discussion among the public. Disseminated across social media and electronic platforms, the campaign has reached a vast audience, igniting a collective dialogue on the urgent need to end this harmful practice.



## Harnessing the Importance of International Days for Child Rights Advocacy via Social Media

In recognition of the pivotal role that international days play in raising awareness and driving advocacy efforts, the NCRC has leveraged social media platforms to share impactful advocacy messages. These posts have been strategically crafted to highlight key child rights issues and foster dialogue among stakeholders.

Here's a glimpse of the themes covered in our recent social media campaign:

**Birth Registration:** We shared statistics from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Labour Survey Report 2022, emphasising the importance of birth registration in ensuring children's access to their fundamental rights.

**Child Labour:** Our posts shed light on the prevalence and consequences of child labour, urging for concerted efforts to eliminate this harmful practice and protect children from exploitation.

**Child Domestic Labour:** We highlighted the plight of children engaged in domestic labour, advocating for their rights to education, protection, and a childhood free from exploitation.

**International Day of Women and Girls in Science:** We celebrated the achievements of women and girls in science, underscoring the

importance of gender equality and inclusive access to education and opportunities.

**World Day of Social Justice:** A post emphasised the need for social justice and equity for all children, regardless of their background or circumstances.

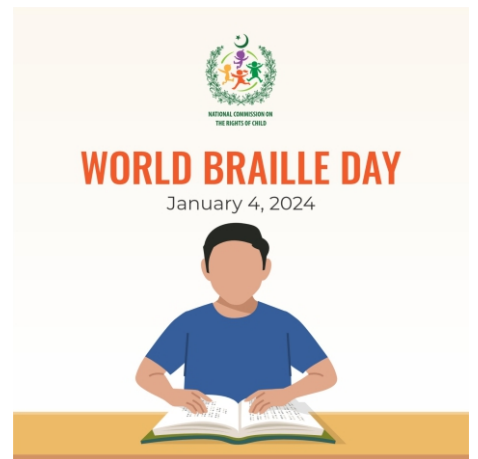
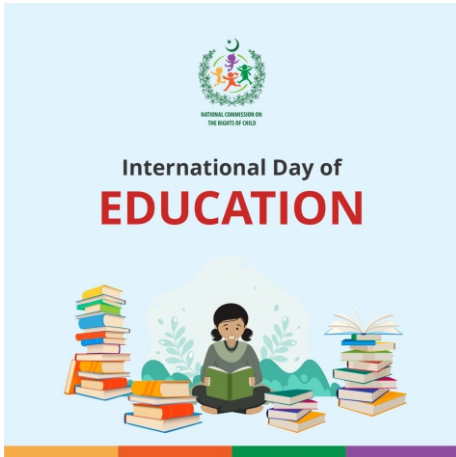
**Polio Day:** We raised awareness about the importance of polio eradication efforts, urging for continued support to ensure a polio-free future for children.

**International Day of Education:** We advocated for quality education for all children, highlighting its transformative impact on their lives and future opportunities.

**Pakistan Day:** We celebrated Pakistan Day, reaffirming our commitment to protecting and promoting the rights of all children in the country.

**World Braille Day:** We honoured World Braille Day, recognising the importance of accessibility and inclusivity for children with visual impairments.

Through these targeted social media posts, the NCRC aims to amplify children's voices and advocate for their rights while fostering greater awareness and engagement among the public and policymakers alike.



## NCRC in the Media

**PTV News:** Khalid Naeem, Member ICT shed light on the significance of World Day of Social Justice on PTV.



**ARY News:** Chairperson, NCRC, in an exclusive interview with ARY NEWS, unveiled a significant step towards ensuring safety and justice for victims of violence and abuse. The inauguration of the Anti-Rape Crisis Cell at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) will provide timely response and expedited justice for victims of sexual violence, particularly women and girls.



**Safe City:** Mehek Naeem, Member Punjab, discussed child rights on the morning show of Safe Cities, Punjab.



**The News:** Chairperson, NCRC, called for enhanced legal and institutional mechanisms to protect vulnerable children while talking to the News reporter for an article. She said, "Under Section 15(f) of the NCRC Act, 2017, our mandate entails taking measures to preventing physical and sexual violence, abuse, exploitation and trafficking of children. While we diligently forward recommendations to both federal and provincial authorities, it's crucial to note that we lack the authority to pursue legal action against institutions or individuals."



**Dawn News:** An article in the Dawn News highlights the recent report 'Situational Analysis of Child Online Protection in Pakistan' published by the NCRC. "Children may be exposed to inappropriate content for their age or inappropriate contacts, which makes them highly vulnerable to violence including sexual abuse and exploitation - a risk that is growing exponentially with the rapidly increasing use of technology," the report added.

**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'.

### Online darkness

**T**HE digital age is not without a grave demerit — a child's screen-time has replaced much of regular life. This concern is amplified by the presence of online child pornography rings always on the lookout for vulnerable minors to exploit. On Monday, the National Commission on the Rights of Child released a report, *Situational analysis of child online protection in Pakistan*, which asserts that "children may be exposed to inappropriate content for their age or inappropriate contacts, which makes them highly vulnerable to violence

**Roze TV:** The Khalid Naeem, Member ICT took the spotlight on Roze TV's talk show "Situation of Child Labour in Pakistan." He pointed out the key factors that contribute to child labour and what the Commission is doing to protect children from this menace.



**PTV Ramadan Transmission:** Chairperson, NCRC, participated in Ramadan transmission on PTV hosted by Ahsan Khan and Rabia Anum. She talked about the efforts of the Commission to curb child domestic labour after taking charge. She highlighted the draft bill that the NCRC has drafted for criminalising CDL to hold the perpetrators accountable and raise awareness to increase reporting of CDL cases and encourage people not to engage children for domestic help.



**Metro Matters:** Pirbhu Satyani, Member Sindh/Minorities, took the spotlight in a talkshow on Metro Matters with Akhtar Shaheen. He talked about the issue of child labour in Pakistan, highlighted key factors promoting this injustice and examined the existing legal framework. Most importantly, he emphasized the crucial role the Commission plays in curbing child labour.





# Report Complaints



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