

# **Gender dimensions of bonded labour in brick kilns in Punjab province of Pakistan**

## **Report of a research and analytical study**

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# Executive Summary

- The main objective of the study was to assess and document the gender dimensions of work at brick kilns.
- The study was carried out at 35 brick kilns located in all zones of Punjab Province of Pakistan. The study used key informants and Focal Group Discussions to elicit information about social, economic, health and other aspects of work at brick kilns, which may shed light on the gender dimensions of work.
- All the women and child workers below the age of 14 years were found to be engaged in the most labour intensive and least paying process of brick making i.e., molding of bricks (patheras). The males were engaged in all processes, most of them paying a better remuneration.
- The household decisions were taken in consultation with both partners of the house but males had final say in matters concerning money and material.
- All religious and biradris were reflected in the workers and no distinct difference was found in terms of gender dimensions of work due to religious, ethnic or biradri background of the workers. However the Christian workers were found to be more egalitarian in terms of their attitude towards gender issues.
- There is no separate agreement of payment with each family member in case of patheras; the payment is made to the whole family unit jointly in this case. All other categories of workers were engaged in their individual capacity.
- The study indicates that there is no interference in the worker's family affairs by the employers and they are free to send their children to any school or their marriages but the work should not suffer which was the sole concern of the owner.
- The average earnings of females and males (based on the differed. While the average adult male earned 276 rupees per day, the average female adult worker earned 227 rupees per day while a child earned an average of 87 rupees a day. The lower earning of the females was mainly due to their pre-occupation with the care of children, cooking and household chores.

- Various kinds of deductions are made from earnings of workers, but no interest is charged. However the penalty for damaged bricks is to be borne by the workers. Also there are deductions for the residence and electricity charges. The peshgis (or advances) are also deducted from wages in most cases. The recruiting agent (jamandar) also deducted 10 rupees per 1000 bricks as his commission.
- The average amount of Peshgi received by the pathera families was found to be 60,045 rupees. Most workers mentioned poverty, ill health, expenditures on marriages and social customs as the main reason for receiving peshgis.
- While a majority of males (over 80%) has national ID cards, only about 30% females were found to possess these cards, with the exception of Southern Punjab where over 60% of the females had their ID cards.
- There was general lack of education facilities at or near brick kilns. The families were also found to be not highly motivated about education. Only 7% boys and 6% girls of school-age were found to be enrolled at schools.
- There were some cases of harassment of women which was by the community, owner or by husbands but women were not very vocal about it or they did not consider it a problem and take it as a routine affair.
- Women were generally found to be handicapped due to social restrictions to move about in the community and had to take someone with them for going to markets, religious places and even to visit someone in the neighborhood. Women were found to be reluctant participants in the FDGs even when only females were involved.
- None of the workers were found to be covered under the labour laws. Though almost all the brick kilns have been registered as ‘Factories’ in Punjab under the Factories Act, 1934, the protection and benefits available to the worker in factories like social security, working hours, leaves, maternity protection, labour welfare schemes are yet to reach the workers at brick kilns.
- Occupational health and safety assessment of workers and their workplaces revealed a number of hazards faced by both male and females at the brick kilns.
- Prevalence of low weight was double in the girls than the boys, indicating possibility of lower health and nutrition status of females in the brick making families.

- The girls and women were generally more anaemic compared with the boys and men. This again is indicative of the poor nutrition and disease burden carried by females.
- The prevalence of musculoskeletal problems was high in the adults and female brick kiln workers. Similarly the problems seem to increase with advancing age. The differences in proportions between the control group brick kiln workers were statistically significant for several of the musculoskeletal disorders. The overall ratios of musculoskeletal complaints were higher among the male workers than female workers in all sectors and were more pronounced in the adult workers.
- A large proportion of the brick kiln families suffered from scabies, while many of the workers had cuts and bruise.
- The workers in various sections of the brick kilns suffered from high dust exposure, heat stress, burs and cuts, very poor personal hygiene, risks of head and body injuries, heat and cold stress, bites from insects and snakes and musculo-skeletal disorders due to poor posture, repetitive work and lifting of loads.
- The living conditions of the workers were also in very poor shape and exacerbated the hazards faced by them at work.

# Background and Introduction

## 1.1 Background Information

In Pakistan, bonded labour is found in different forms, especially in the rural areas and in certain disadvantaged geographic regions. The problem of bonded labour is outcome of poverty, backwardness, illiteracy and outdated customs. The workers in the brick kiln sector are one of the most vulnerable segments of workforce. Due to remoteness of the brick kilns, most of these workers cannot avail the regular social services including the education, health, financial support and other services provided by the state to its citizens.

The phenomenon of bonded labour is more common in the brick kiln sector in all provinces of Pakistan, majority of the brick kilns are located in Punjab province. Despite the judgment of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and the promulgation of Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 1992 and Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Rules 1995, the complaints of bonded labour persist in the society. The Government of Pakistan has announced a National Policy and Plan of Action on Bonded Labour.

The gender dimension of the problem has remained largely ignored so far. While both genders are vulnerable to bondage, it is the women who bear most of the brunt of the advances and loans received by their men folk. As women have little say in the economic matters in the household, usually are illiterate and have restrictions on their mobility, they are vulnerable to bonded labour. The advances and peshgi received due to social, health or other needs plunge the whole families and occasionally generations into bonded labour. The women lack the negotiation skills and have little or no access to formal means of borrowing; as a result they suffer the worst. Girls are more prone to child labour in brick kilns as they have fewer opportunities for education and mobility and are at risk for poor health and are often used by families as bargaining chip for advances and loans.

To explore the gender dimensions of the bonded labour problem in brick kilns, an analytical and research study was carried out. The was to have information for

proposing tangible actions by all key stakeholders for addressing gender concerns during formulation of national policies and implementing of programmes targeted at elimination of bonded labour in the country.

The present report is based on the health and safety risk assessment study of the workers involved in brick kiln sector carried out by Centre for the Improvement of Working Conditions & Environment Lahore. It was carried out with the help of Pak Swedish Teachers Association (PSTA), which is running a network of schools and other facilities for the brick kilns workers in Punjab province of Pakistan.

## **1.2 History of Brick making**

Brick is as old as civilization itself, dating back to ancient Mesopotamia around 500 BC. The thick clay and mud deposited by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers was reinforced with straw and shaped into brick then dried in the sun. As time progressed, bricks were glazed in a variety of colors and used to adorn the facades of the ziggurat, or temple towers, built as stairways to and for the gods. Eventually, and most likely as a reaction to the realization that when wooden houses burned, the brick on the remaining chimneys had been strengthened, fire-hardened bricks began to replace adobe ones in India and the Middle East.

The archeological ruins of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa which date back over 4000 years indicate that brick making was well developed in India in ancient times. Mohenjo-Daro had mud-brick and baked-brick buildings. Covered drainage system in addition to this, soak pits for disposal bins, a large state granary, a spacious pillared hall, a collage of priests, a large and imposing building and a citadel mound which incorporates in its margin a system of solid burnt brick tower. The brick making industry in sub-continent particularly in Pakistan has not changed much over the millennia.

## **1.3 Description of Brick making Process**

There are approximately 8000-15000 (according to various sources) brick



kilns in the country, out of which approximately 5000 are in Punjab province alone. The bricks are made from clay. Each kiln usually runs in 3-4 cycles every year. In one cycle approximately 1-7 million bricks are prepared. The whole process is based on manual work. These pictures describe the brick making process as is being practiced these days. Whole families are usually engaged in the brick making. Each picture is numbered and represents a sequence of processes taking place.



The clay is mixed with water and kneaded manually. The clay is usually transported to the kiln site with tractor driven carts. And water is mixed overnight. Before sunrise, the brick making families start kneading it.

It takes approximately 2 hours for 2-3 persons to prepare the mud sufficient for day's work (approx. 2000 bricks). This process is carried out mainly by males (adults and boys)

The mud is transported on wheel barrows to the site where bricks are made. In one go approx. 40-60 kilograms is transported. Here boys and girls and occasionally adults are engaged.

Bricks are made by hand molding. The molds are either wooden or iron lines with wood. This is the most labour intensive process. Most family members work on this process. Payment is also made according to the number of bricks made. The wet clay bricks are left in the open to dry for a day before they are turned (see background in pic # 2) . Sand is also used in the molds reduce the stickiness of clay. Approximately 30-150 persons or 10-50 families are involved in this process at each kiln. They live at the site in poorly constructed shelters. Molding process is usually done by the whole family unit, where children work as helpers in making and transporting mud to the molding site, while the adults (men and women) make the bricks by pressing the mud in hand-held molds one by one. On average an a family of 2 adults and three children can make 500-1200 bricks a day depending on their skill and physical health.



Once the bricks have slightly dried, the rough edges are removed with a wooden plate. All these processes are carried out by crews of family members including children.



Bricks are left in the sun for approximately one week to completely dry them. Then they are transported to the kiln on animal driven carts or donkeys. This is a male dominated work carried out by men and boys.



The bricks are transported and stacked in the kiln for firing.



The stacked bricks are covered with clay and red bricks and holes are left for pouring fuel (which in this



case is coal). This is a specialized work done by skilled workers (males only) known as *jalai walas*. With the increasing prices of coal a number of cheaper fuels are being used, many of which pose grave environmental threats due to emission of toxic gases and smoke. The alternate fuels used include plastic scrap, shredded rubber tyres, wood shavings, dried fruit pulp, poultry farm droppings and used lubricant oils.

Different stages of firing of bricks



Black smoke bellowing from chimney of a kiln on fire.

The firing continues for approx. 4 days. The end produced is red clay bricks. As firing of a portion is completed the holes are covered with bricks to let them cool for a week.



Fired bricks are removed from the kiln and either transported directly to customers or are stacked outside the kiln for later sale



## **Literature review on Gender Dimensions of work at Brick Kilns**

Very little is known about the gender dimensions of work at the brick kilns, as very few published studies exist about the topic.

Most important study the subject was carried out in India<sup>1</sup>, was carried out by Dr. Dharam Pal Singh Professor Department of Social Work, Punjabi University Patiala, India. Dr. Singh looked into the social and economic aspects of work of women workers in the brick kilns in 5 districts of Haryana State in India. Key findings of the study are given below:

- The study was based on interaction with 410 women workers employed in 547 brick kilns situated in the five districts of Haryana State was done from March 1999 to December 2001.
- The surveys of the Labour Bureau, Government of India, carried out in 1988, in the north Indian states of Punjab and Haryana, found out that the women workers employed in the brick kilns were mostly migrant labour brought from areas either within or outside the state. The women constituted nearly 44 per cent of the total work force working in the kilns. And nearly 94 per cent of them worked as helpers to moulders or loaders and unloaders.
- About 87.31 per cent women working in sampled kilns were found to be less than 45 years of age whereas just 12.68 percent women were above 45 years. Of these 86.10 per cent were married, 10 per cent were unmarried and 3.90 per cent women were single (widows or divorced).
- Women workers mainly work in the semi-skilled jobs as helpers in moulding, in carrying and unloading operations. In moulding operations, they make cakes of mud and pass them on to their male partners. They carry raw bricks from the drying yard to the trenches on horse/pony driven carts, unload baked bricks and carry them to the storing yard in hand driven

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<sup>1</sup> DP Singh, "Women Workers in the Brick Kiln Industry in Haryana, India", Indian Journal of Gender Studies, Vol. 12, No. 1, 83-97 (2005)

carts or on their heads. Out of the sampled women work force, 77.56 per cent worked *Pathers*, 11.95 per cent were involved in carrying operations while 10.49 per cent women performed operations relating to the unloading of the trench.

- Only 6.34 per cent agreed that the women in brick kilns are either looked down or physically harassed. A little more than one tenth (10.48 per cent) replied in the negative and said there is no harassment in brick kilns.
- With regard to the income of women for the whole season, (normally starting from November to June) it was found that 72.44 per cent families (Table 2) were able to earn more than Rs. 20,000 per season. 12.44 per cent were likely to earn something between Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 30,000 while 16.83 per cent families expected between Rs. 30,001 to Rs. 35,000. The proportion of families who expected to earn more than Rs. 35000 was 18.54 per cent. The earnings of brick workers were found to be higher than those of the common rural workers as there was steady work available at brick kilns.
- Three-fourths of (77.81 per cent) the families of these women were in debt whereas just 22.19 per cent had not taken any money from anywhere. The breakup of the families who were under debt showed that the amount of debt of about 50.98 per cent families was less than Rs. 5000. The debt of about 2.68 per cent families was between 5001 and 7000 while in 4.88 per cent it was between Rs. 7001 and 10,000. There were around 10 per cent families whose debt was between Rs.10, 001 and Rs. 15,000. About 9.27 per cent families owed more than Rs.15, 000.
- The data reflected that there were just 17.31 per cent women who took decisions themselves, and these women were either divorced, widowed or those whose husbands were addicted to alcohol, lottery or gambling. However, in normal circumstances it was the husbands only who took the majority of the decisions.

Another major work on the bonded labour was carried out by Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (PILER<sup>2</sup>)

The study estimates that more than half a million men, women and children work in brick kilns. The majority work as makers of unbaked bricks -- *patheras*; followed by those doing the work of kiln stacking and unloading -- *bharai* and *nikasi walas*; and of baking -- *jalai walas*. With the exception of salaried *jalai* workers, payment to other labour is by piece rate on the basis of 1000 bricks. Excluding Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (and, probably, Balochistan), women make a significant contribution as *patheras* through family kiln labour across Pakistan. But women, like children and adolescents, are rarely, if ever, directly acknowledged as labour (i.e., receive advances and compensation) except when they must inherit liability for outstanding debts. This study also reaffirms that brick kilns across the country depend on the labour of children (10-14years) as *patheras* and of male adolescents (14 –17 years) in other work groups. Female children not working at the kiln perform domestic chores to free up older family members for kiln work. Migrants, in general, and traditional “low-caste” family labour in particular, continue to characterize labour in the brick kilns. Even though Muslims make up the majority of the workforce, Christians also supply a significant proportion of *pathera* family labour, especially in Punjab. Afghan refugees have also replaced some of the traditional migrant labour. Interestingly, in receiving smaller initial advances, Afghans encounter lower debts. Females from both local and Afghan households generally do not participate in kilnwork.

## **Brick Industry in Pakistan**

According to World Bank, Pakistan is faced with an annual shortage of 1.5 million of housing units. The fired clay bricks are the most important construction material used in Pakistan, thus the brick kiln industry is pivotal in meeting the demand of housing in the country. According to some estimates<sup>3</sup>, brick industry contributes approximately 1% of the GNP of Pakistan and according to 1996

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<sup>2</sup> Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research, “Unfree labour in Pakistan: Work, debt and bondage in brick kilns” Working Paper published by International Labour Office, Geneva March 2004

<sup>3</sup> Lecture by Engineer Rukhsana Rahooja principal Scientific Officer, Council for Works and Housing Research, Ministry of Science & Technology, Government of Pakistan

estimates, its employment cost was 310 million, which should have substantially in view of the inflation and massive boost in construction in the 2000 and afterwards. According to estimates the annual production of bricks in Pakistan was 22 billion in 1996 and the total production value was Rs. 1527 billion. Bull Trench Kiln (BTK) is commonly used in Pakistan and produce approximately 70% of the bricks. This industry is largely rural based. It does not seek government or other financial and technical assistance mostly due to fear of taxation. Hence there has been little technical progress in production methods.

### **Data about brick kilns in Punjab**

The brick kilns are classified as factories under the Factories Act 1934. The factories have to be registered under this Act with the Directorate of Labour Welfare which is the Inspectorate of Factories. Due to their rural nature and distant locations, very few brick kilns were registered as factories till 2007. However in 2007 subsequent to the order of the Supreme Court of Pakistan<sup>4</sup> and under the directions of the Government of Punjab the district formations of the Labour and Human Resource Department, Government of Punjab launched a vigorous campaign to register brick kilns under the Factories Act, 1934. The inspecting officers paid visits to the brick kilns and collected data about the employment and ownership and filed papers for their registration. According to the registration data compiled by the Directorate of Labour Welfare, there were a total of 3836 brick kilns in Punjab. Out of these 3579 employing 97455 workers were registered. The remaining 257 kilns were not registered till September, 2008 due to various reasons including incomplete information or closure of the work at the kiln. The data about the brick kilns in Punjab is presented in Table 1.1

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<sup>4</sup> Supreme Court of Pakistan, Human Right case No, 5091 of 2006

**Table 1.1 District-wise data about brick kilns in Punjab (as of 30 September, 2008)<sup>5</sup>**

S. No.	Name of the District	Total No. of Brick kiln	Total No. of Registered Brick kilns	Un - Registered Brick kiln
1.	Faisalabad	222	222	0
2.	Kasur	196	167	29
3.	Multan	180	180	0
4.	Sahiwal	176	176	0
5.	Bahawalpur	173	160	13
6.	Sheikhupura	159	159	0
7.	Rawalpindi	152	147	5
8.	Gujranwala	150	141	09
9.	Gujrat	148	148	0
10.	Vehari	130	106	24
11.	Pak pattan	130	130	0
12.	Sialkot	129	129	0
13.	Lahore	120	120	0
14.	Narowal	120	94	26
15.	Muzaffargarh	119	119	0
16.	Chakwal	115	115	0
17.	Jhang	106	99	07
18.	Layyah	105	82	23
19.	Okara	101	101	0
20.	R.Y.Khan	98	84	14
21.	Khaniwal	94	94	0
22.	T.T. Sing	88	83	5
23.	Sargoda	88	129	0
24.	Nankana	85	82	3
25.	Jhelum	74	44	30
26.	M.B. Din	73	63	10
27.	Lodhran	69	17	52
28.	Bhakkar	65	65	0
29.	Attock	60	60	0
30.	Khushab	54	51	03
31.	Mianwali	54	50	04
32.	Bahawalnagar	54	54	0
33.	Hafizabad	45	45	0
34.	D.G.Khan	33	33	0
35.	Rajanpur	30	30	0
36.	Total	3836	3579	257

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<sup>5</sup> Internal record of the Directorate of Labour welfare Punjab

## **Objectives**

The main objective of the study was to assess and document hazards and risks faced by workers in brick kiln sector. The study focused on the following aspects:

- An assessment of the physical hazards to which workers are faced with in brick kilns.
- Assessment of physical health, injuries, nutritional status of the child, young and adult workers.
- Preparation of guidelines for employers, government, workers and concerned stakeholders based on the finding of the study to reduce and mitigate health and other hazards in brick kiln industry and promote healthy employment in this sector.

# Study Design & Methodology

An average brick kiln usually spans in an area of one acre. The location of brick kiln is selected very carefully. It should not be located in water-logged area or in the areas prone to flooding. Also the soil surrounding the kiln should be resistant to erosion by water. Besides the area occupies by the kiln itself, around 5-6 acres of land is needed for the soil from which bricks are made. This land is usually acquired on lease by the kiln owners. Top soil of up to 3 feet is removed for mud making. Thus the level of surrounding soil goes down as the top soil is removed. Some land owners prefer these deep fields as they become more suitable for planting the paddy crop. An average kiln of one acre size has one smoke stack. Coal, furnace oil, wood chips, saw dust, poultry droppings, rice husk and various fuels are used to fire/bake the green bricks. The investment of the owners goes mainly for hiring the brick makers (patheras) and other labour, purchase of fuel for burning and for leasing land for making mud for the bricks.

The brick kilns are usually found in clusters of 3-5 kilns in a radius of 1-3 kilometers. Most of these clusters are located alongside the busy roads. An important consideration for establishing a kiln is the availability of suitable soil. Isolated brick kilns are also present in the far-flung area. Preliminary visits of the area were made to have a firsthand knowledge of the process, locations and work patterns in the brick kilns.

## 2.1 Objective

The main objective of the study was to assess and document the gender dimensions of the bonded labour problem in clay brick manufacturing sector in Punjab province of Pakistan. The study tried to find the answers to the following key questions:

- What is the demographic profile of the workforce in the brick making processes?
- Regional variations if any in the pattern of employment by gender?
- What are the financial needs and constraints of women, which compel them to bonded labour?
- What are the special problems of girl children?

### Zone wise number of brick kilns that were selected for study

S. No.	Name of the District	Total No. of Brick kilns	Number selected for study	Number of workers interacted with through Group Discussions
	<b>North Zone</b>	<b>1067</b>	<b>11</b>	95
1.	M.B. Din			
2.	Gujrat			
3.	Sargoda			
4.	Khushab			
5.	Mianwali			
6.	Rawalpindi			
7.	Chakwal			
8.	Jhelum			
9.	Attock			
10.	Narowal			
11.	Sialkot			
	<b>Central Zone</b>	<b>1448</b>	<b>14</b>	260 (including 60 participants of female only DGs)
1.	Lahore			
2.	Sheikhupura			
3.	Kasur			
4.	Okara			
5.	Gujranwala			
6.	Hafizabad			
7.	Faisalabad			
8.	Jhang			
9.	Nankana			
10.	T.T. Singh			
1.	<b>South Zone</b>	<b>1280</b>	<b>10</b>	86
2.	Bhakkar			
3.	Multan			
4.	Vehari			
5.	Khanewal			
6.	Sahiwal			
7.	Lodhran			
8.	Pak pattan			
9.	Bahawalpur			
10.	Bahawalnagar			
11.	R.Y.Khan			
12.	D.G.Khan			
13.	Rajanpur			
14.	Layyah			
	Muzaffargarh			

- What are the legal, social, cultural and economic and other barriers which make female workers prone to bonded labour in brick kiln?
- What kinds of abuse and violence, discrimination and harassment are faced by men and women if any at the workplace?
- What measures need to be taken to address the problems of female workers and their families?
- What kinds of psychological stresses and social problems faced by the female workers?
- What are the health and safety implications of work at brick kilns for the women and men?
- Preparation of guidelines for government and other stakeholders based on the finding of the study to address the gender dimension of bonded labour.

## **2.2 Sampling strategy and data collection tools**

The universe of the study was 3579 brick kilns in 34 districts of Punjab registered by the Labour Department. A total of 35 brick kilns (1%) covering all zones (central, northern and southern Punjab) were visited by the study teams. Various data collection and analysis instruments were used to collect and process information. These include:

1. For the purpose of study, the province was divided into 3 zones (North, Central and South). The exact brick kilns and families/persons targeted for data collection were identified based on the ease of approach as well as the geographical region.
2. The data was collected by trained interviewers. They did not use forms and papers in front of the respondents and FGD participants. Due to peculiar situation of the brick kilns, where there is possibility that the workers are not forthcoming with the information, they were approached at their homes or places away from the workplaces.
  - Interviews with key informants (officials of federal and provincial labour ministry/department, local government, inspecting officers, police officials, lawyers, complaint cells, women rights organizations, trade unions, religious leaders, brick kiln owners.

- Visits to the selected brick kilns in different areas in Punjab to observe the work and collect information and interact with workers, supervisors and employers.
  - Focus group discussions were held with families (including adult males, females and children at 10 brick kilns
  - The preliminary findings of the study were presented in a small tripartite workshop and the study and its recommendations were finalized after consultation with the stakeholders.
  - Another 5 focus group discussions were held by female moderators exclusively with female brick kiln workers on the recommendations of the workshop in order to have a better understanding of the views of female's population at brick kilns.
3. The forms and interview questions were finalized after pretesting at sites to check for their relevance and to find out any lapses. All collected data was manually checked to remove any anomalies. The structured data was analyzed through MS Excel and SPSS to tabulate the results.

### **Strategy for OSH component**

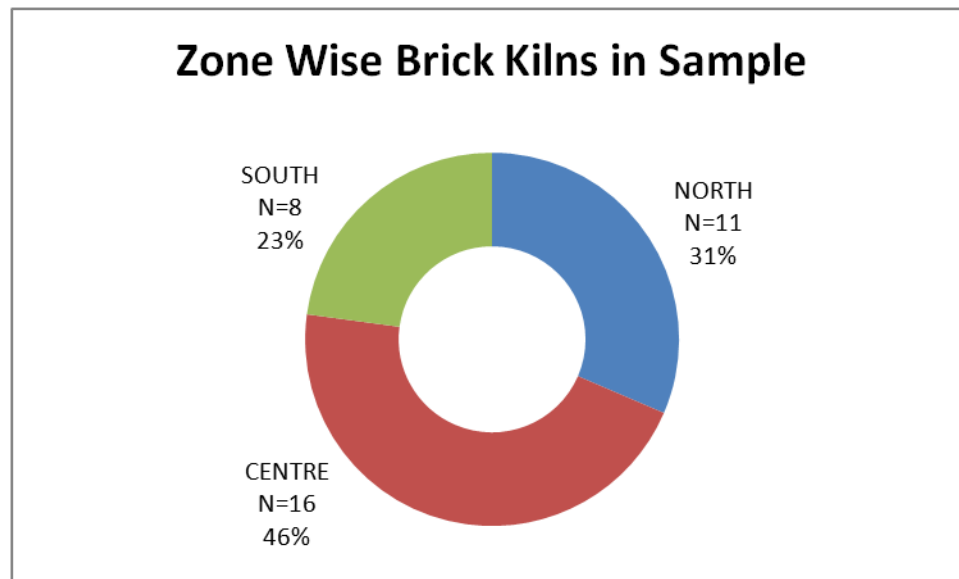
As the CIWCE Lahore had already carried out a study on occupational safety and health at the brick kilns, the data of this research was analysed and has been included in the present report. For the OSH assessment, a team of technicians and a trained physician visited 6 brick kilns (3 each in districts of Lahore and Kasur). The families were informed about the intent of the study and those present on the day of the visit and agreeing to participate were examined by the physician who recorded his observations based on clinical judgment in a structured questionnaire. So the respondents of the study include only those families who were present on the day of the visit by the survey team and agreed to participate.

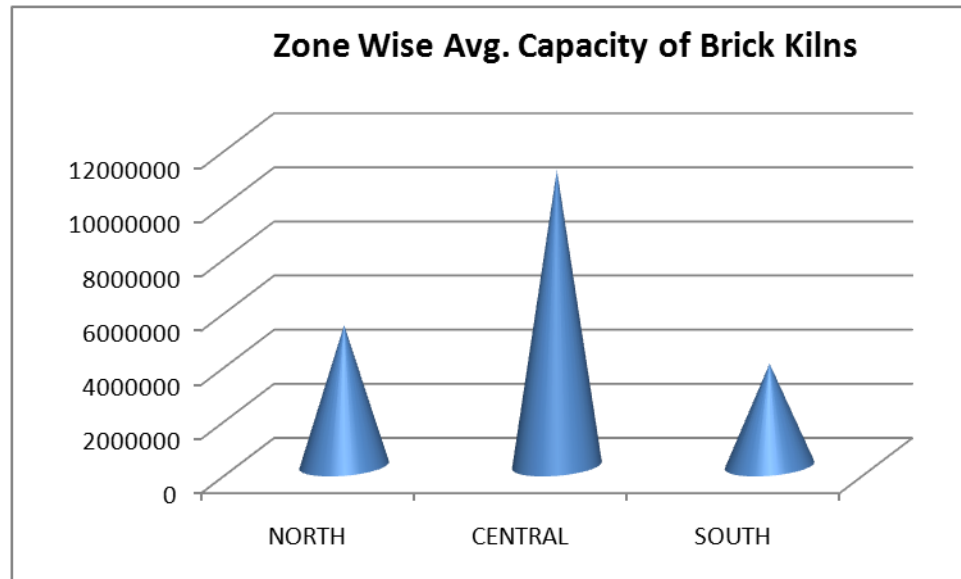
## Chapter –3

### Gender Dimension of Work in Brick Kilns-findings and analysis

#### About the brick kilns

In this study, 35 brick kilns were randomly covered including 46% from the central zone, 31 % from the Northern and 23 % from the Southern zone of Punjab province. These kilns vary considerably in terms of average capacity across zones, which is 10930313 bricks per year in the centre, 5188636 in the Northern and 3768750 in the Southern zone. This means the size of establishment also varies in terms of workers.





## Participants

Considering the sensitive nature of issue, that is, gender dimension of work at brick kilns, and dearth of data on this issue, the data was gathered by using both quantitative and qualitative techniques. Firstly, to develop a general profile of brick kiln workers and their work, a structured questionnaire was administered with a key informant at each kiln. All these respondents were male, mostly from kiln management (63%) including mainly kiln owner and *Munshi* (manager). In the North, 36% owners and 55% *munshi* and the South, 63% owner, 25% *munshi* were the informants. However, in the Centre, a variety of respondents included owners (25%), *munshi* (6%), *Pathera* (13 %, N=2), *pathera/Jamandar* (19%), *jamandar* (6%), labour councilor (6%) and the Pak Swedish Teachers Association (PSTA) staff (13%), who provide education facilities to the kiln workers throughout Punjab. One PSTA staff (9%) was also key informant in the Northern zone. As two third of all respondents were from the management side (owners and *munshi*), this might have biased the quantitative information in their favour rather than offering a neutral picture which also covers workers' perspectives, especially those of female workers.



Secondly, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were carried out with groups of workers by using a check list covering various dimensions of gender issue. A total of 441 workers were interacted in this manner, including 60 female workers interacted through specially arranged female only FDGs. It was not an easy task to approach workers, not only female but male workers too, at brick kilns. In some cases, it involved threat of violence or rudeness from owners or their representatives. In others, the local traditions did not allow females to discuss anything with outsiders. Once enumerators/facilitators could push the wall of secrecy n security erected by owners and managers, 39 attempts were made to conduct a FGD. Of these, 13 were such where female presence could not be made possible. Typical responses from men included;

*Aurtan di ki zaroorat ae, sade kolon puch lo jo puchna* (there is no need to talk to women, ask us and we can tell you everything)

*Ayh bicharian te jawab hi nahin de sak dian* ( oh these poor things do not have potential to respond)

*Mein te bulaya, ayh shramandian* (I have asked them to join but they feel shy)

(Recorded by various FGD facilitators)

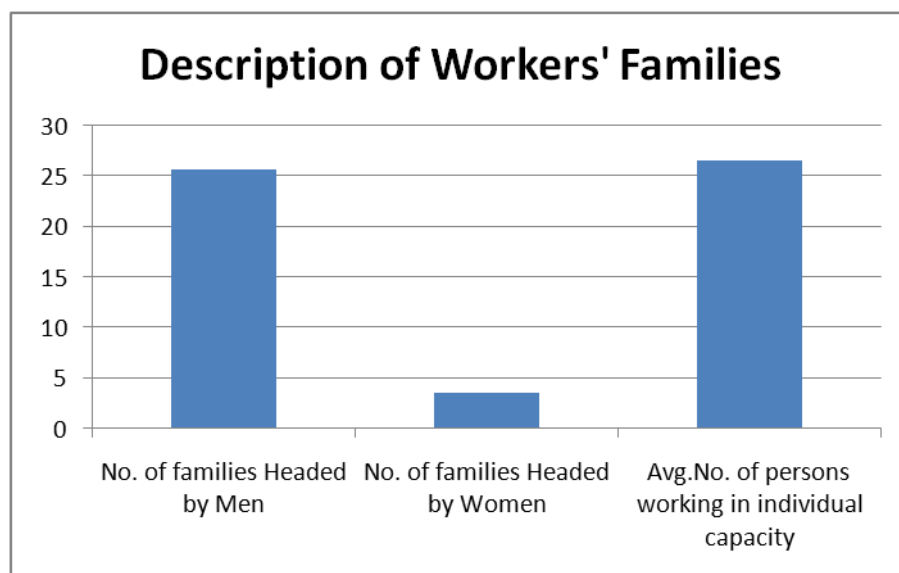
Six discussions were held with one family unit each, that is, one adult male and female and their school going children under 8 years of age in five cases. In one instance, children, who took part in the discussion, were, up to 16 years of age and working at the kiln.

Where women were present in the group, they sat silent most of the time. When facilitator/s tried to involve them by directly asking a question, they would laugh shyly, try to hide behind each other or keep looking at the floor to avoid eye contact with the facilitator (observation by various FGD facilitators). Some mature age women, who spoke at all, did simply affirm the male response. Children did not speak at all. Over all, it was an adult male view point of the gender dimension of work at kilns.

To overcome this problem, five FGDs were conducted in Lahore and Kasur with female brick kiln workers only and by a female moderator. (No male was allowed to be part of this discussion). This strategy helped in getting the views of women solely and they spoke openly and highlighted the grim picture of the state of women working at brick kiln.

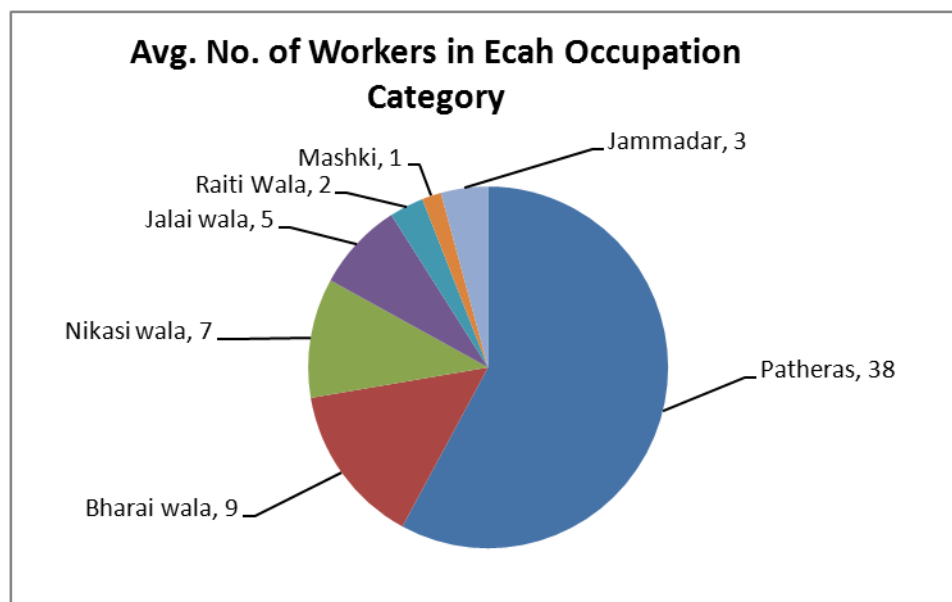
### Workers' profile

Brick kiln workers are employed in individual capacity (Mean=27, Minimum=3, Maximum=60) as well as a family (Mean= 26, Minimum=5, Maximum=100). There are female headed families too (Mean=3, Minimum=1, Maximum=7).

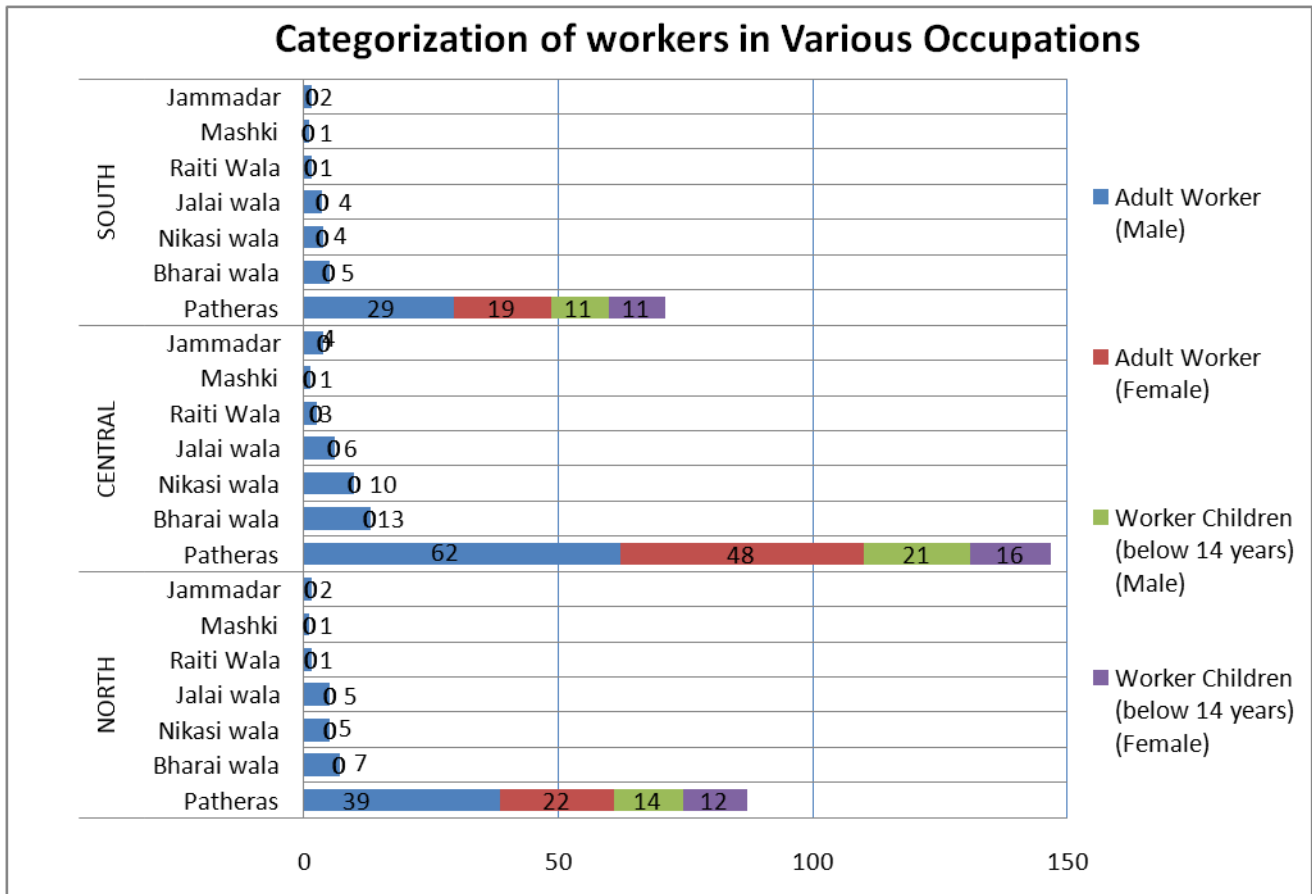


However, these Means may not fully reflect the situation at various establishments as ranges are real wide. This trend is similar in all three zones. In the North, calculated mean of the number of families is 21 (Minimum=5, Maximum=35), of female headed families is 3 (minimum=2, Maximum=5) and of individual employees is 33 (Minimum=5, Maximum=100). In the Centre, it is 33 (Minimum=17, Maximum=60), 4 (Minimum=1, Maximum=7) and 23 (Minimum=5, Maximum=50) respectively and in the South it is 15 (Minimum=3, maximum=25), 3 (Minimum=2, Maximum=4) and 24 (Minimum=10, Maximum=60) respectively.

Further, focus group discussions with workers revealed that some of those employed as families are generational workers means their forefathers were working on the same brick kilns and they just followed the trend. For example, almost all participants of the FGDs in Lahore district were generational workers.



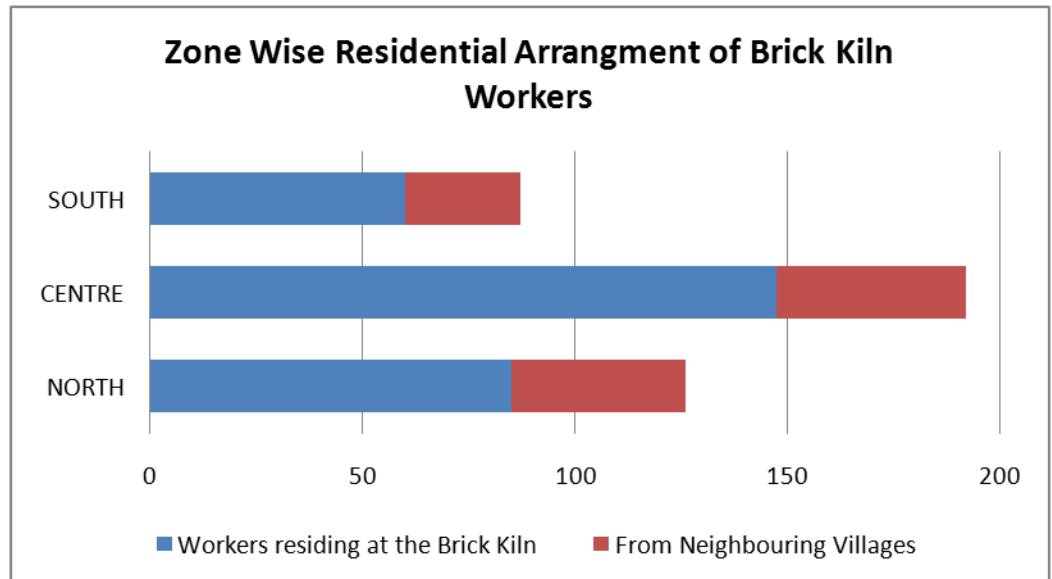
It is worth noting that only *pathera* work as families. In all other occupations related to brick kiln, workers are employed in their individual capacity including *Bharai wala* (Mean=9), *Nikasi wala* (Mean= 7), *Jalai wala* (Mean=5), *Raiti wala* (Mean= 2), *Mashki* (Mean=1) and *Jamandar* (Mean=3) over all and the trend remains the same across zones. Amongst *pathera* families, workers composition include male adult workers (Mean=47), female adult workers (Mean= 35), male children below 14 years of age (Mean= 17) and female children below 14 years of age (Mean= 14) over all.



There are no considerable variations between the zones with regard to composition of *pathera* families employed at the kilns. However, on two kilns in the Northern zone (Narowal and Mianwali), there were no female or child workers. The reason for this is told that it is not a *riwaj* (custom) there.

#### **Residence, origin, religion, kinship**

Majority of the workers reside at the kiln (Mean=110, Minimum=10, Maximum=300). Remaining come from the neighbouring villages (Mean=39, Minimum=5, Maximum=140).



The trend is similar in all three zones. Most workers are local (N=31, Mean=75, Minimum=5, Maximum=100), though, they might not be working in their native districts. However, in one incidence, there were 70 Afghans working on one establishment in the Northern zone. Workers include both Muslims and Christians in the North and the centre. However, most workers were Muslims in the South as there were only two Christian workers on one establishment. Religion does not play any significant role in the lives of brick kiln workers. Occasionally, they attend weekly prayers, that is, Muslims offer Friday prayer and Christians attend Sunday service. Men, irrespective of religion, frequently described women as superstitious, believing in Djins, ghosts (*bhoot preet*) and evil spirits (*Saya*). Comments such as the following were common by the male participants of the FGDs;

*Yeh marz to aurton mein aam he* (this disease is common among women)

From FGDs in Rawalpindi, Silakot

*Aurton or bachon mein jin bhoot aa jate hein* (women and children are visited by Djins)

From FGD in Lahore

To counter these evil forces, women frequently visit *Pirs* (spiritual healers) and offer devotional meals in charity (*Khatam*), again, as described by men;

*Dam darood karati hein, khatam dilate hein* (go for spiritual treatment, offer devotional meals)

**However in the FGDs with women, they denied any believe in *jin* or *bhot pareet*. They said they visit *Pirs* in case of Muslims and Fathers in case of Christian's respondents if there is some problem in the family as someone is ill and ask the holy person to pray for them. But no case of *jin* on any women is reported or in their knowledge.**

In terms of *Biradri* affiliation, there are Muslim *Sheikh* (27%), *Massadi* (27%), *Gil* Christian (9%), *Mundle* (9%) and others (27%) in the North. Muslim *Sheikh* (63%) is the dominant biradri of brick kiln workers in the centre, whereas remaining includes *Bhatti*, *Gil* and *Khokhar* Christians and *Gil Jat*. In the South, 75% workers are *Massadi*, others include Muslim *Sheikh* and *Balochi*. Generally, religious belief and *Biradri* did not much affect gender dimension of work at brick kilns as division of labour, female movement and their role in family decision making process remains same across various groups. However, Christian families and groups appear to be more egalitarian as almost all of them declared that all household possessions are common property of all the family members (FGDs in Lahore, Qasoor) compared with Muslims who, in many cases, declared it the property of male head of the family. However, this difference may partly be attributed to the regional socio cultural variations as most of these responses came from FGDs in the Northern and Southern zone (Rawalpindi, Gujrat, Sialkot, Sahiwal, Khanewal).

**A woman complained that her husband has sold the jewels given by her parents on her wedding and has kept his own untouched. Others were of the view that every valuable of the household is the property of their *mard* (husbands).**

### **Payment schedule and rates**

Payment schedules and average rates of payment were studied at length. There are no gender differences in terms of schedule or rates of payment. Payment schedule

is same for *patheras* throughout as they are paid weekly (on Thursday generally) in all zones. Rates of payment slightly vary between the zones as average rate of payment for *patheras* in the north is Rs 333 per 1000 bricks, whereas it is Rs 314 per 1000 bricks in the centre and Rs 334 per 1000 bricks in the South. However, both schedule and rate of payment differ for other occupations and across zones.

In the North, workers are paid either weekly, monthly or per season. This include *bharai wal*, who, on average is paid at the rate of Rs 101 per 1000 bricks or Rs 6000 per month (91% weekly, 9% monthly), *nikasi wala* at the average rate of Rs74 per 1000 bricks or Rs 6000 per month (91% weekly, 9% monthly) and *raiti wala* at the average rate of Rs300 per 1000 bricks or Rs 5333 per month (10% weekly, 90% monthly). *jalai wala* and *mashki* are paid monthly at the the rate of Rs8818 per month and Rs 5250 per month respectively. While for *jamandar*, payments could be made weekly (40%) at the rate of Rs 10 per 1000 bricks or Rs 56667 per season (60%).

In the central zone, *bharai wala* is paid either weekly (88%) at the average rate of Rs 128 or Rs 5000 per month (12%). Similarly, *nikasi wala* is paid either weekly (81%) at the average rates of Rs 65 per 1000 bricks or Rs 5333 per month (19%). However, *jalai wala*, *raiti wala* and *mashki* are all paid at the average rate of Rs 7375 per month, Rs 5533 per month and Rs 5133 per month respectively, whereas *jamandar* is paid either weekly (56%) at the average rate of Rs 9 per 1000 bricks, monthly (7%) at the rate of Rs 12000 or Rs 83333 per seasonal (37%).

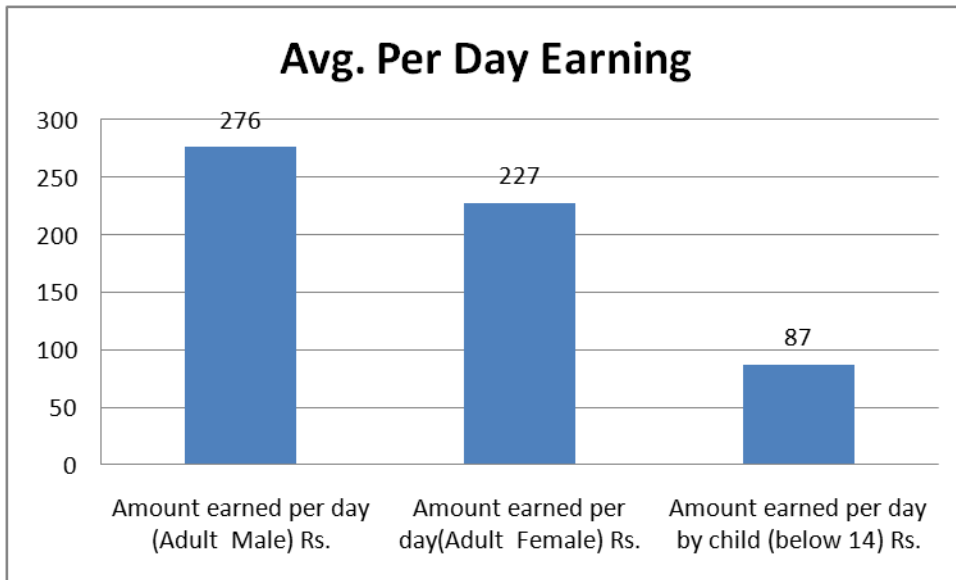
In the South, *bharai wala* (Rs 115 per 1000 bricks) and *nikasi wala* (Rs 54 per 1000 bricks) are paid weekly like *pathera*, which is similar to the central zone. However, *jalai wala* (Rs 8625), *raiti wala* (Rs 5250) and *mashki* (Rs 5250) are all paid on monthly basis whereas *jamandar* is paid either weekly (88%) at the rate of Rs 11 per 1000 bricks or Rs 6375 per month (12%).

## **Earnings**

There are no significant variations in average rates of payment by occupation between the zones, however, average earning differs considerably between male, female and child workers. On average, adult male workers earn Rs 276 per day (Minimum=150, Maximum=500, adult female workers earn Rs 227 per day (Minimum=125, maximum=350) and a child below 14 years of age earn Rs 87 per day (Minimum=50, Maximum=200). Workers explain these differences in terms of individual capacity to work (male being stronger physically), however, it is worth further probe that how much time male, female and child workers each spend in brick making and what other chores each perform. For example, it is clear

from FGDs that women spend time in household chores and children attend school in addition to their work at the kiln.





Also, worth noting are the regional differences in daily earnings within some groups of workers, despite the fact that there is not much difference in terms of average rate of payment as mentioned earlier. For example, maximum earning of an adult male worker in the North is Rs 500 per day compared to his counterparts in the centre (Rs 350) and the South (Rs 300). Further, a child below 14 years of age earn up to Rs 200 per day in the centre, whereas his/her peers in the North and South can make it up to Rs 100 per day only. To explain these differences, it requires further probing.

## Deductions

Various deductions are made from the workers' earnings. For families, these deductions are made from the overall income of all members of the family working at kiln. Most common is a deduction of Rs 19 per 1000 bricks on average for damaged bricks. In the North, it could range between Rs10-20. In the centre and the South, however, it remains Rs 20 throughout. Further, a deduction ranging between Rs 1-200 per month is made for accommodation on the kilns. In addition, an average of Rs 342 per month (Minimum=100 in the North, Maximum=700 in the South) electricity charges are also deducted from the workers' earnings. Workers do not complain about these deductions, however, wish that there should be no deductions except for the *Peshgi* (advance money) they have taken;

*Jo lia he who wapis karna chahiye, deegar katotian naheen honi chahiye, government ko chahiye ke hamari madad kare ta ke hamari amdan behtar ho, jaise Benazir income support program se* (we have to return what we have received in advance, however, there should be no other deductions, government should help us to have a better income, such as from Benazir Income Support Program)

FGDs in Rawalpindi, Gujrat, Qasoor, Okara, Sahiwal, Khanewal

## ***Peshgi* (advance money)**

*Peshgi* (advance money) is a common phenomenon in the brick kiln industry. Workers in all occupations across the zones take *peshgi*. However, it is *jamandar*, who have received highest amount (Mean=96552) followed by *patheras* (Mean=60045) in all three zones in the present study. Compared with these two, average amount of *pashgi* for *bharai wala* is Rs 28303, *nikasi wala* Rs 19515, *nalai wala* Rs 50645, *raiti wala* Rs 12050 and for *mashki* Rs 18714. As workers' family earning and expenditure were not the focus of this study, it is hard to comment directly on their economic wellbeing, however, the reasons given for taking *peshgi* tell a lot in this regard. Mostly, *peshgi* is received due to poverty and ill health or to fulfill social obligations like marriage and death ceremonies. Female headed worker families receive *peshgi* too. Terms and conditions for *Peshgi* are same both for male and female workers/families. In the North, 18% (N=2) and in the South, 9% (N=1) respondents told that female headed families have not received any *peshgi*. It was made clear by the respondents, however, that it was either family's choice and not any restrictions imposed by kiln management on female headed families to receive *peshgi* or *peshgi* is not a practice at all.

However, it is not clear from the data that how common is *peshgi* among female headed families on 32 kilns where it is a practice. This could have been a valuable information in understanding relevance of economic factors to the gender dimension of work at the brick kilns.

Various modes of settling the *peshgi* include routine deduction in wages (53% in the North, 49% in the centre, 50% in the South), return in lump sum at the end of the season (9% in the centre) or getting *peshgi* from another employer to return the present one (47% in the North, 42 % in the centre, 50% in the South). However, the most frequently used is the deduction in wages (over all 50%). All respondents from the North and the South told that *peshgi* imposes no restrictions on movement of workers as long as they can settle it in any of the above mentioned modes. However, 25% respondents (N=4) from the central zone declared that *peshgi* restrict workers' movement in terms of taking another job at some other place, though, workers are not restricted in their decisions regarding marriage, maternity and enrolment of children in school. In the North, 9% (N=1, owner) and in the centre, 6% (N=1, *munshi*) respondents informed that interest is applied on *peshgi*. The rate of interest is 10% in the North and Rs 60 per week in the central zone establishment. Others denied the practice.

**The women told that all payments are made in the name of husbands; (*khata mard ke nam hota he*). Even where a male does not work at kiln the payments are made in the name of husbands. All family has a joint *khata*, and paid jointly. As if a family made 1000 bricks, they would be paid Rs. 350 and Rs. 100-150 would be deducted from this amount if they have taken loan in advance.**



In fact, *peshgi* is a complex issue with both pros and cons. On one hand, considering various factors such as absence of any social protection scheme for brick kiln workers, widespread unemployment in the country, poor occupational skills (to switch to another occupation) among them, their next to none access to another source of credit, and widespread unemployment in the country, *peshgi* is only resort for many workers. Although, those who do not take *peshgi*, called *Keetikar*, are paid higher wages. They can also switch to another occupation easily, however, such cases are fewer. On the other hand, *peshgi* being prohibited legally, owners are also reluctant to offer because they do not have legal support for return of advance money. So, one needs to exercise fair bit of caution in concluding *peshgi* a blessing or a curse, rather it requires a full fledged and impassionate investigation in the role of *peshgi* in overall business cycle of a brick kiln. Similarly, how do this practice affect female workers in particular, requires further probe.

### **Contract, terms and conditions of employment**

Majority of the *patheras* (60%) are brought to a kiln by *jamandar* who receive a commission of Rs 10 per 1000 bricks on average for this recruitment. All *jamandars* included in this study were male. Remaining *patheras* like other workers may come to the kiln on their own, be introduced by the fellow workers or may be directly recruited by the owner. The agreement is reached between the employer and the male head of the family where whole family is involved; more than 80% respondents in all three zones were of the view that female members of the family are consulted on agreement. Same was told by men in the FGDs where females had a token presence, that is, sitting silently.

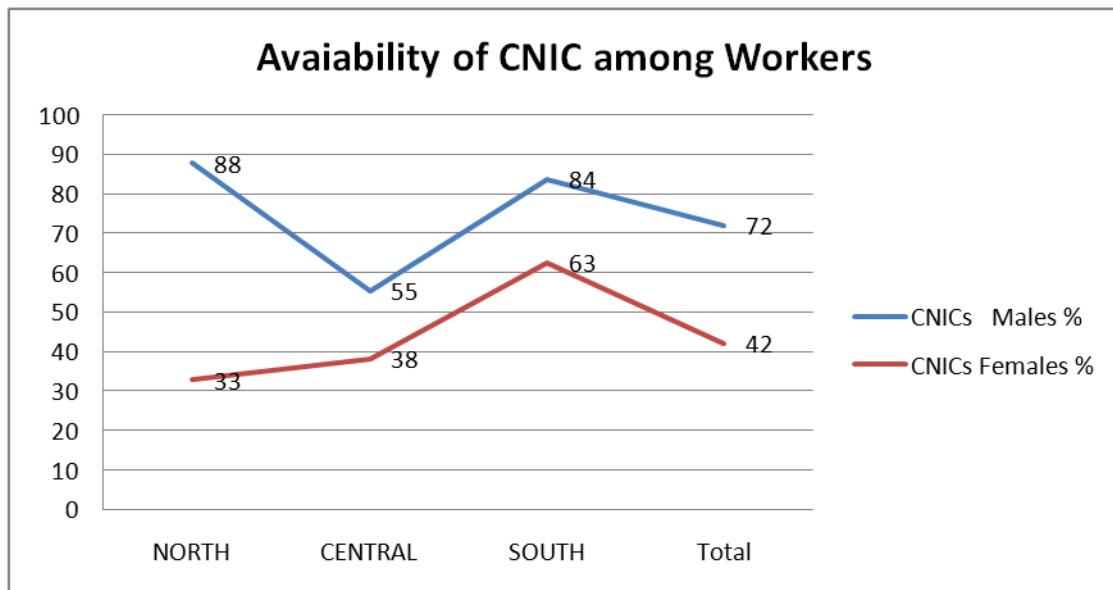
### **The female FGDs also affirm the statements of their male counterpart that they took the money after consulting with them.**

The contract is almost always oral between *patheras* and the employers. However, in other occupations, there are incidences of a written contract, for example, over all 30% (N=8) *bharai wala* and 17% (N=6) *jamandar* have a written contract with their employers. According to the key informants, workers fully understand the terms and conditions of the contract. However, it is worth recalling here that most respondents were from management side. In FGDs, workers informed that the terms and conditions of agreement are same for both male and female workers. In the North, 27% (N=3) and in the centre, 25% (N=4) respondents revealed that workers have to forfeit their national identity cards at the time of taking employment. Owners' concern those workers who have received *peshgi* will

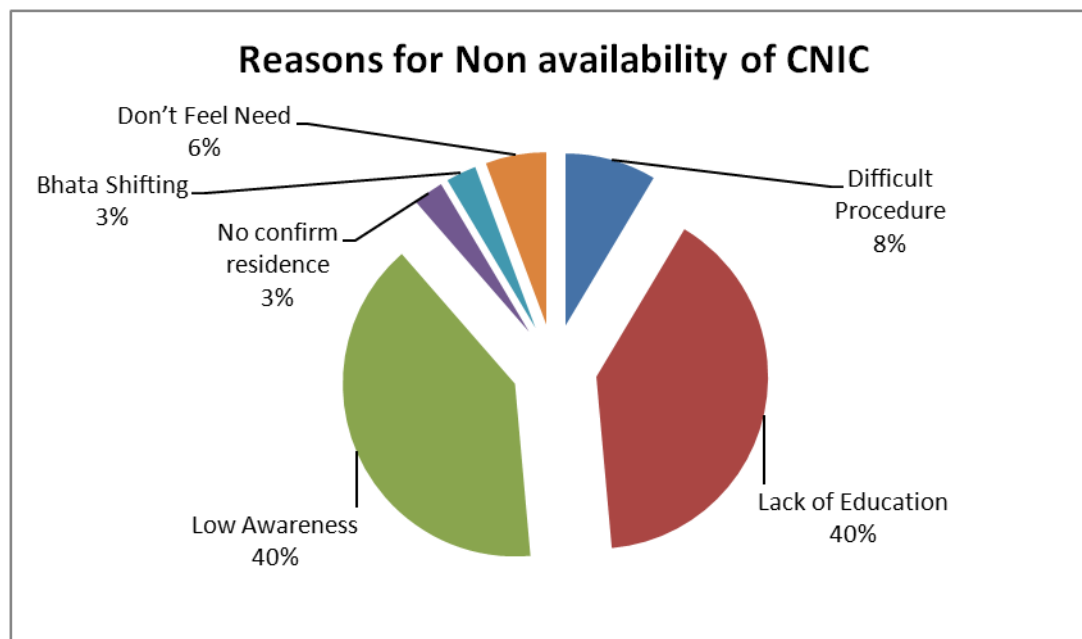
runaway or that workers will leave during the season lead to this confiscation of CNICs. Further, 13% respondents (N=2) from the central zone shared that workers have to buy food from employer's specified outlet. However, it was further explained that one reason for doing so might be the distance between the kiln establishment and any market. So, if the kiln is situated far away from any market place, kiln owners set up a small shop at the kiln for the sake of workers' convenience.

### Registration and identity

Most male workers have got their computerized national identity cards (CNICs) including 88% in the North and 84 % in the South. However, this percentage is lower for males (55%) in the centre. It is even lower for females in the North (33%) and in the centre (38%). Interestingly, female workers in the backward South are comparatively better off as 63% have their CNICs.



Majority of the females having the CNIC either keep their cards in their own custody or with the family documents in the custody of male head of the family. Having identity and registration are important in claiming one's basic civil, economic and political rights such as signing a job contract, registering a complaint with police, casting vote to choose one's representatives and benefiting from social protection schemes such as the Food Stamp scheme or Benazir Income Support scheme. This means, female brick kiln workers are at a loss at this important front, which increase their vulnerability both as a worker and as an independent human being.



Main reasons for not having the CNICs include lack of awareness and education (over all 80%), difficult process of getting registered (8%) and constant movement of workers from one place to another (6%). Remaining (6%) did not feel any need for having a CNIC. Although, present data do not establish the link, however, one reason for employment agreement being reached between the employer and the male head of a family could be nonexistence of female identity cards. This, in turn, stems from the prevalent stereotypical beliefs and attitudes towards females that they are weaker sex, lack potential to conduct their life on their own and are dependent on males (*see quotes from FDGs in the beginning of this chapter*).

### **Social security benefits**

None of the workers or key informants interacted during the study reported coverage of workers under the benefits provided by the state under labour laws. Though the brick kilns were generally registered as “factories” by the Labour department under the factories Act, 1934, the benefits and protection provided to workers by this law and other allied legislation was not available to the workers in the brick kilns. It is important to note that except for small population of 6% (N=1) covered by the Food Stamps scheme from the Pakistan Bait ul Mal, brick kiln workers receive no benefits such as social security, pension, sickness allowance and maternity leave among others under labour laws and social

protection schemes other than a small. This is a tough scenario for females in general and female headed families in particular. Studies on gender discrimination as well as national health data around the world had shown that female health is a low priority within families and at national level. So, if a female brick kiln worker falls ill, she will not only lose her daily earning, she may also not receive treatment from the limited family budget in the absence of any medical allowance. In maternity, this situation may extend to a considerable period of time and may cause risk to maternal and child health.

### **Case Study**

**Sakina bibi's husband was an addict and did not do any work. As she was uneducated no work was available for her. She come to know of a nearby brick kiln and came there in search of work and shelter. She got the work and house for her family. In the course of time she got pregnant. She asked her employee for vacations who refused. She had to work in her pregnancy as there was no other bread earner in the family. When it became impossible for her to work she asked her employee to let her remain in the house for some days when she does not do any kind of work. But he refused again and not only throws her out of the job but also from the house, family's only shelter. She gave birth to a dead child.**

(Name of the female is changed for keeping confidentiality)

### **Children's Education**

According to the key informants, over all, only 7% male and 6% female children of the brick kiln workers were attending school. The issue was taken up in the FGDs. Most workers declared that the owners have no say in decisions related to their personal lives such as schooling of children. However, there were voices of dissent too;

*Malik to chahta hi naheen ke in ke bache parhen* (Owner do not wish that our children get education)

FGDs Lahore

## **Incidence of crime, harassment of female workers**

In the FGDs, most male participants described the work environment and their respective residences at the kiln as safe, free of any harassment and ensuring enough privacy;

*Purdeh ka munasab intezam hae* (there is reasonable arrangement of *pardah*)

*Aurtein khud ko mehfooz khial kartee hein* (women feel safe)

Various FGDs in all three zones

However, key informants reported incidence of crime on 19% (N=3) kilns in the central zone. All these incidents involved women, that is, young women ran away with or kidnapped by men;

*Larka larki ko bhaga kar le geya* (a young man and woman ran away)

Location is not being revealed for ethical considerations

In two cases, young couple got married and came back, however, in the third one, woman was recovered and returned to her parents. It was interesting to note that in FGDs, usually participants ruled out any incidents of harassment or violence against women, however, if it happens, they declared females as responsible (and not victim). In such cases, female mobility is further curtailed;

*Ghar bitha lia jata hae* (they have to stay at home)

Location is not being revealed for ethical considerations

**The FGDs with women depicted other side of the picture. They unanimously said that they face harassment when they go to markets on roads by passersby. At one location, females also complained of harassment by *jamadars*, *munshi* and owners. On asking who harasses more they said**

***“Oh sab raley onday nain”* (they are all one).**

**One incident of violence was reported by a woman, who stated that the brick kiln owner had beaten her accusing her of loose character. This woman was still working at the same brick kiln. The owner stated that an unknown male had visited the house of this women, other workers had complained to him and asked to intervene.**

**The women also complained of lack of toilet facilities, due to which they have to go to the fields. This creates opportunities for harassment of females.**

***“Rafa e hajat ke liey bahar jana parta he aur as pas itni abadi he bari mushkil hoti he, bohat subha ke waqt jate hain ya andhere ke bad. Din ke waqt koi jaga nahi he jahan ja sakain.”***

**(There is no place to go in the day time and we go for toilet in the open in the early hours of the day or after sunset as it is a crowded place).**

### **Women’s social status**

FGDs shed light on the low social status of female brick kiln workers when men term them poor things, helpless, not having potential to respond to questions about their own lives and superstitious (quotes above). In addition, family income is deposited with the men and they perform outdoor tasks such as shopping and taking children to doctor and women move alone only in need;

*Bawaqt e majboori bahar ja sakti hein* (women can go out/move alone in need)

FGDs Lahore, Qasoor, Rawalpindi

*tar mard hi bahar ka kam karte hein* (Usually, men perform the tasks involving mobility)

FGDs Khanewal

Although, most male participants declared that females have equal status (as men) in the family, however, they also claimed that household possessions are men’s property. At the same time, men also tell that women have household duties along with their work at the kiln, so, they have no time to learn any other skill and/or avail other opportunities of better earning, consequently, gaining some social and economic worth.

**The women said that we don’t go alone to the markets, friend’s home or to a religious place even. Our male said “*kisi ko sath le ker jao*” (take someone with you).**

**The women told that they don’t offer equal meal to girls and boys and give the best portion to their boy child. They also said that girls are not encouraged to get education and boys are compelled to go to school.**

**Women said that they buy clothes for all in the family and all other things are bought by the male partner even the grocery. It is seldom that they buy vegetables for cooking themselves this also is done by their *mard* (husband).**

## Chapter –4

### Occupational Health and safety problems of the workers

As mentioned in Chapter 2, a separate study to assess occupational safety and health and risks associated with work at brick kilns was carried was also undertaken to assess the occupational safety and health problems faced by the workers. The findings of this part of the study are given below:

**Table 4.1 Age and Gender Profile of Respondents**

Age Group	Respondents					
	Males		Females		All	
	n	%	N	%	n	%
<10	51	50.5	37	52.1	88	51.2
10-14	25	24.8	21	29.6	46	26.7
16	6	5.9	3	4.2	9	5.2
17	4	4.0	-	-	4	2.3
18	5	5.0	4	5.6	9	5.2
Total (children and young persons)	101	100.0	71	100.0	172	100.0
Adults 19-25	43	35.5	15	25.9	58	32.4
26-30	15	12.4	16	27.6	31	17.3
31-45	40	33.1	17	29.3	57	31.8
46 above	23	19.0	10	17.2	33	18.4
Total	<sup>121</sup>	100.0	58	100.0	179	100.0

## 4.1 Physical health indicators of the children, young and adult brick kiln workers

An analysis of health and safety indicators measured as a result of clinical observations as well as the tests administered to the children, young workers, and adult workers is given in this Chapter. All the respondents were examined by a physician, who also asked questions about the history of illnesses. The physician used a standard questionnaire (given at the end of this report) to record his observations. The data of these findings is summarized below. It is arranged according to the body and organ systems examined

## 4.2 General Health Examination

All the respondents were physically examined by the occupational physician. The physician recorded his opinion on vital health indicators and diseases suffered by these children. The results of this part of examination in this section.

## 4.3 Weight and Height

The physician observed the weight and height of the respondents and noted if this was normal for the age group and gender the person belonged to. The data of weight and heights of respondents is given in Tables 3.5-3.6

**Table 4.2 Prevalence of lower than normal body weight**

Age Group	Respondents					
	Males		Females		All	
	N	Prevalence (%)	n	Prevalence (%)	n	Prevalence (%)
<10	2	3.9	5	13.5	7	8.0
10-14	2	8.0	1	4.8	3	6.5
15	1	10.0	1	16.	7	2
16	-	-	-	-	-	-
17	-	-	-	-	-	-
18	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	5	5.0	7	9.9	12	7.0
<b>Adults 19-25</b>	4	9.3	1	6.7	5	8.6
<b>26-30</b>	1	6.7	-	-	1	3.2
<b>31-45</b>	2	5.0	4	23.5	6	10.5
<b>&gt;46</b>	4	17.4	-	-	4	12.1
<b>Total</b>	11	9.1	5	8.6	16	8.9

As can be seen the prevalence of low weight was double in the girls than the boys, indicating possibility of lower health and nutrition status of females in the brick making families.

**Table 4.3 Prevalence of lower than normal height**

Age Group	Respondents					
	Males		Females		All	
	N	Prevalence (%)	n	Prevalence (%)	N	Prevalence (%)
<b>10</b>	1	2.0	3	8.1	4	4.5
<b>10-14</b>	1	4.0	-	-	1	2.1
<b>15</b>	1	10.0	1	16.7	2	12.5
<b>16</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>17</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>18</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	3	3.0	4	5.6	7	4.1
<b>Adults 19-25</b>	2	4.7	-	-	2	3.4
<b>26-30</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>31-45</b>	-	-	2	11.8	2	3.5
<b>&gt; 46</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	2	1.7	2	3.4	4	2.2

#### 4.4 Anemia

As can be seen the girls and women were generally anaemic compared with the boys and men. This again is indicative of the poor nutrition and disease burden carried by females in general population as well.

**Table 4.4 Prevalence of anemia among the respondents**

Age Group	Respondents					
	Males		Females		All	
	n	Prevalence (%)	n	Prevalence (%)	n	Prevalence (%)
<10	8	15.7	4	10.8	12	13.6
10-14	2	8.0	3	14.3	5	10.9

15	1	10.0	1	16.7	2	12.5
16	1	16.7	1	33.3	2	22.2
17	-	-	-	-	-	-
18	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	12	4.7	-	-	-	-
Adults 19-25	2	4.7	-	-	-	-
26-30	-	-	1	6.3	-	-
31-45	3	7.5	5	29.4	-	-
>46	8	34.8	4	40.0	-	-
Total	13	10.7	10	17.2	-	-

#### 4.4 Musculo-skeletal Problems

The work at brick kilns specially on making mud bricks involves manual handling of heavy weights of mud and green bricks, long working hours with awkward posture, monotonous and repetitive work, and other risk factors which involve extensive use of hands, shoulders, back muscles and joints. Some tasks are carried out in uncomfortable and cramped posture. In order to assess the impact of work on the musculo-skeletal system of the respondents they were thoroughly examined. All the respondents were asked questions about the symptoms of various musculo-skeletal problems. The results of this part of examination are given in Tables 4.5

**Table 4.5 Musculo-skeletal disorders of Brick Kiln workers**

<i>Disease/Health Indicator</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Prevalence in brick kiln workers (%)</i>
<b>Repetitive Strain Injury</b>	Males	44(30.1)
	Females	22(31.0)
	All	66(30.4)
<b>Low Back Pain</b>	Males	96(65.8)
	Females	46(64.8)
	All	142(65.4)
<b>Pain Neck &amp; Shoulders</b>	Males	75(51.4)
	Females	41(57.7)
	All	116(53.5)
<b>Frequent Headache</b>	Males	30(20.5)
	Females	24(33.8)
	All	54(24.9)
<b>Joints Pain</b>	Males	37(25.3)
	Females	20(28.2)
	All	57(26.3)

<b>Knock Knee</b>	Males	14(9.6)
	Females	11(15.5)
	All	25(11.5)
<b>Bow Legs</b>	Males	4(2.7)
	Females	3(4.2)
	All	7(3.2)

The comparative results of this section reveal that the prevalence of these problems was high in the adults and female brick kiln workers. Similarly the problems seem to increase with advancing age, which indicates that the probability of musculo-skeletal disorders grows with increasing age and experience. The overall ratios of musculoskeletal complaints were higher among the male workers than female worker in all sectors and were more pronounced in the adult workers.

#### 4.5 Skin diseases and problems

A large proportion of the brick kiln families suffered from scabies, while many of the workers had cuts and bruise. The data about skin problems is presented in Table 4.5-4.7

**Table 4.5 Prevalence of Scabies**

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Respondents</i>					
	Males		Females		All	
	n	Prevalence (%)	n	Prevalence (%)	n	Prevalence (%)
<b>&lt;10</b>	21	41.2	15	40.5	36	40.9
<b>10-14</b>	8	32.0	5	23.8	13	28.3
<b>15</b>	2	20.0	1	16.7	3	18.8
<b>16</b>	1	16.7	1	33.3	2	22.2
<b>17</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>18</b>	1	20.0	-	-	1	11.1
<b>All children &amp; young persons</b>	33	32.7	22	31.0	55	32.0
<b>Adults 19-25</b>	4	26.7	2	12.5	6	19.4
<b>26-30</b>	4	26.7	2	12.5	6	19.4
<b>31-45</b>	3	7.5	5	29.4	8	14.0
<b>≥46</b>	3	13.0	-	-	3	9.1
<b>All adults</b>	13	10.7	10	17.2	23	12.8

**Table 4.6 Prevalence of Cuts and bruises**

Age Group	Respondents					
	Males		Females		All	
	n	Prevalence (%)	n	Prevalence (%)	n	Prevalence (%)
<10	3	5.9	1	2.7	4	4.5
10-14	11	44.0	6	28.6	17	37.0
15	4	40.0	1	16.7	5	31.3
16	1	16.7	-	-	1	11.1
17	2	50.0	-	-	2	50.0
18	2	40.0	-	-	2	22.2
All children & young persons	23	22.8	8	11.3	31	18.0
Adults 19-25	14	32.6	2	13.3	16	27.6
26-30	10	66.7	4	25.0	14	45.2
31-45	18	45.0	1	5.9	19	33.3
≥46	8	34.8	2	20.0	10	30.3
All adults	50	41.3	9	15.5	59	33.0

## 4.6 Working conditions and hazards faced

Table 4.7 summarizes the findings of the study based on the observations made during the visits

**Table 4.7 A summary of hazards faced by workers in various sections of the brick kilns**

S. No.	Type of work	Type of workforce/tasks	Main hazards encountered by child and young workers
1.	Patheras	This is the main task in which the families are engaged. The families are usually employed in the form of a production unit. The families make the mud the night before it is to be used. The mud is made by soaking the clay with water and kneading it with legs and shovels. The next day the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cold and heat stress from mud making and work in the open area without shades or shelter</li> <li>▪ Manual handling of heavy load of mud</li> <li>▪ Awkward posture resulting in musculoskeletal disorders</li> <li>▪ Harassment by the employers or their supervisors</li> <li>▪ Very long and unusual working hours.</li> </ul>

		<p>mud is transported to brick making site in wooden carts, where bricks are made by pressing the mud in iron moulds. The bricks are left to dry and then are turned over to dry further. One family of 4 (two adults and two children usually makes 1000-1500 bricks a day.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Snake and insect bites from working in the open.</li> <li>▪ De-hydration due to lack of adequate drinking water.</li> </ul>
2.	<b>Bharai walas</b>	<p>These are workers with a gang of donkeys who pick up dried mud bricks and stack them in the kiln. The work involved frequent bending, lifting of heavy loads</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Exposure to heat and cold</li> <li>▪ Foot and leg injured due to fall of bricks</li> <li>▪ Exposure to biological hazards due to work in close proximity with donkeys</li> <li>▪ Manual handling</li> <li>▪ Dehydration due to non inadequate availability of drinking water.</li> </ul>
3.	<b>Jalai wala</b>	<p>These workers feed the fuel (coal and other materials) in the burning kiln</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Very high heat stress</li> <li>▪ Burns</li> <li>▪ Dehydration from loss of water</li> </ul>
4.	<b>Nikasi wala</b>	<p>These are workers with a gang of donkeys who pick up fired red bricks from the kiln and stack them outside The work involves frequent bending, lifting of heavy loads and throwing bricks which are caught by their partners who stack them one by one</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Exposure to heat and cold</li> <li>▪ Foot and leg injuries due to fall of bricks</li> <li>▪ Exposure to biological hazards due to work in close proximity with donkeys</li> <li>▪ Manual handling</li> <li>▪ Dehydration due to non inadequate availability of drinking water.</li> </ul>

## **Living conditions**

The brick kiln workers and their families particularly the patheras reside in the shelters provided by the brick kiln owners. These shelters are poorly maintained, water supply is inadequate, cramped and animals and humans live together. A few glimpses of the living conditions are given below to illustrate the point.

### **Toilet**



### **Kitchen and eating area**



**Utensils are the main assets the families own**



**Houses consists of temporary shelters barely saving the families form the elements**



## **Chapter –5**

### **Recommendations for addressing the gender concerns at brick kilns**

As is evident from the findings of this study presented in Chapters 3&4 there a number of problems faced by brick kiln workers which are unique and required a unique solution. These workers are highly vulnerable to exploitation, lack an effective voice and have virtually no bargaining power. The females face double jeopardy due to the gender biases and barriers in the traditional rural hierarchical society and the nature of process at brick kilns where the whole family units have to work as production crews and have very limited chances of interaction with the surrounding villages and communities. While both genders are vulnerable to bondage, it is the women who bear most of the brunt of the advances and loans received by their men folk. As women have little say in the economic matters in the household, usually are illiterate and have restrictions on their mobility, they are vulnerable to bonded labour.

However these workers are playing important role in the supply of materials for the construction industry which has seen unprecedented growth in the last decade in Pakistan. The work at brick kiln is also an important source of livelihood for the marginalized segments of the society with very low level of literacy, no permanent residence and no property of their own. However the full potential of these workers has to be realized without jeopardizing by mitigating the problems. A number of actions if taken by the government, employers, and other concerned stakeholders can resolve the problems of the workers particularly those of female workers. In the subsequent sections important actions are presented

## Statutory reforms and implementation of laws

The present laws though in theory cover brick kilns like any other manufacturing facility; however the implementation of laws in this sector has been patchy at best so far.

Though theoretically the brick kiln workers are eligible for coverage under the labour laws and Social Security Scheme. Coverage under labour laws would also lead to fewer turnovers of workers and less reliance on hefty loans and advances these workers have to ask their employers to provide them in order to meet their health and other social burdens. Key laws which are potentially applicable to brick kiln workers.

<b>Name of Law</b>	<b>Applications</b>
Factories Act, 1934	Regulates the working conditions in factories, employing 10 or more workers
Industrial Relations Act, 2008	It provides framework for the industrial relations between management and the workers. It regulates the trade union activities
Provincial Employees' Social Security Ordinance, 1965	Provides social security benefits to the secured workers in the form of healthcare, sickness and maternity benefits, disability pension etc.
Workmen's Compensation Act 1923	Provides the institutional mechanism for provision of monetary compensation in case of work-related accidents resulting in injuries or death.
Payment of Wages Act, 1936	Determines the mode of payment of salaries and wages of industrial workers
Minimum Wages Ordinance, 1961	Specifies the Minimum Wage to be paid to different categories of workers
Employment of Children Act, 1991	Regulates the employment of children

The West Pakistan Maternity Benefit Ordinance, 1958	Entitles female workers to paid maternity leave
Employees Old Age Benefits Act, 1976	Entitles the workers to receive old age pension

### **Education**

Provision of education and literacy is one action which can eliminate bonded labour from the society. Education is the greatest tool for empowerment. Girls' education is even more vital as the girls can educate the next generations and educated girls are not likely to be exploited through bondage. There is an urgent need to bring education accessible to the brick kiln workers. Special tailor made non formal education and adult literacy programmes need to be launched considering the peculiar needs of families of brick kilns. The government of Punjab is already moving ahead in this area and two major schemes have been launched, one by the Labour department in Lahore and Kasur districts while another by the Literacy and Nonformal Basic Education department in two districts of Southern Punjab, where non formal schools will be opened for the families at brick kilns.

### **Skill Training**

The women interacted during the study all wanted to learn an alternate skill, which can supplement their income, but none of the skill development schemes of the government have yet touched the brick kilns community. There is a need to provide some useful skills to the women, specially the girls of 14-18 years of age, as these are usually more receptive to skill learning and usually have appetite for skill programmes. The skills desired by the workers during interactions include:

- Tailoring
- Needlecraft
- Poultry raising
- Dairy farming
- Small business

## **Improving health of girls and women**

Ill health and expenditure on health has been mentioned as a major reason for seeking advances by the brick kiln workers. Women and girls were found to be facing malnutrition and other symptoms of neglect of health. There is need to start a campaign to raise health awareness especially of the girls and women of brick kiln families. A team of doctors and paramedics may visit the brick kilns to record the ailments and provide advice and basic treatment to women and children and put them in contact with the local health facilities.

## **Improving Living Conditions**

The living conditions of the brick kiln families are very basic and shanty-like. Animals like donkeys and goats share the same sleeping quarters with the family members. The shabby structures are inadequate to protect the inhabitants from elements of nature. There is need to provide adequate housing facilities at the brick kilns. The lack of toilet facilities increases vulnerability of female workers to harassment.

## **Microfinance**

By increasing the access of vulnerable families and communities to formal means of credit, the bonded labour can be eliminated. The major cause of bonded labour is the economic dependence of the families on the advances and loans from the employers. By increasing the access of women to microfinance, they can be empowered and their exploitation avoided.

## Registration

By issuing ID cards and other documents and by enrollments in voter lists and census the families at brick kilns can be empowered. As women were found not to have access to the National ID cards due to their limited mobility and lack of will ion the part of the family, there is need to start a special campaign to provide CNICs at the brick kilns by active coordination of all stakeholders. The EBLIK project of the Labour department in Punjab has started just such a programme, which need sot be replicated in the whole sector.

## Social protection programmes

The Benazir Income Support Programme and may other social protection schemes are targeted for the vulnerable communities. There is need to increase the access of families at brick kilns to such schemes, which have hitherto ignored the brick kiln workers.

## **Introduction of Technology for brick making and brick firing**

Brick making is a labour intensive task in which the whole families of brick makers are involved. As found during this study, many workers suffer from musulo-skeletal and other disorders due to their long working hours, awkward posture and repetitive and monotonous work. Due to low earnings and outdated methods of production the workers in this sector are vulnerable to exploitation. Many of these workers become trapped in debts which force them to pledge the work by their families in return for the debt incurred by them. According to some estimates there are over 6000 brick kilns in Pakistan with over half million persons involved in brick making<sup>6</sup>. The brick making is being done manually in the sub-

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<sup>6</sup> Labour, debt and bondage in Brick Kilns, Pakistan Institute of Labour Education & Research, 2003

continent for much of the past 4000 years. Though technology has been introduced in this sector all over the world, the suitable technology in Pakistan has not yet been introduced. Though extruder-based technology has been introduced at some brick kilns, it has not so far succeeded due to a number of technical and financial reasons to replace the hand-molding of bricks. There is urgent need to introduce a worker-friendly technology which can liberate the children and women from arduous labour so the children can go to schools and the women can contribute in the household income by engaging in more productive and less hazardous work like raising cattle, handicraft making and agriculture.

Similarly the brick firing technology needs are viewed in order to replace the environmentally polluting and hazardous Bull's Trench Kiln with a worker and environment friendly technology.

### **Awareness raising and capacity building**

The workers and family members in the brick kilns and public at large and other stakeholders need to be made aware of the gender dimensions of the work at brick kilns. The awareness campaign through documentaries, illustrated booklets, leaflets, posters and street theatre can be launched on this issue.