

Success Story: Advancing the Rights of Women Agricultural Workers in Punjab through Critical Analysis of the Labour Code

Under the "Creating Enabling Environment for Women Agricultural Workers" project, funded by FORUM-Asia, AwazCDS-Pakistan has achieved a significant milestone in its relentless efforts to safeguard the rights and welfare of women agricultural workers (WAWs) in Punjab. From the very beginning, the primary objective of AwazCDS-Pakistan has been to advocate for policy and legal reforms in Punjab, aiming to ensure that WAWs are recognized and entitled to the same benefits as formal sector laborers. Through consistent advocacy, strategic collaboration with diverse stakeholders, and active participation in the Provincial Stakeholders Alliance (PSA), agricultural workers have now been formally incorporated into the Punjab Labour Code 2024, marking a historic step toward securing their rights and improving their socio-economic status.

One of the standout successes was AwazCDS-Pakistan's comprehensive critical analysis of Chapter 4.2 of the Labour Code, specifically addressing the rights of agricultural workers. This analysis not only highlighted significant gaps and flaws in the law but also provided actionable recommendations to ensure the code adequately safeguards women agricultural workers.

The analysis emphasized the importance of financial remuneration over payments in kind, as in-kind compensation can be subjective and lead to exploitation. Clear frameworks for valuing such payments were recommended to ensure they are equitable and align with minimum wage standards. Another critical aspect involved the need for individual compensation for every worker, particularly in family-based agricultural work. This would ensure that all members, especially women, receive fair payment based on their contributions and hours worked.

Additionally, the analysis underscored the need to make written agreements mandatory for all agricultural workers to provide uniform protection. Leaving such agreements optional or based on demand may disadvantage workers unfamiliar with their rights. Addressing language ambiguities in the Labour Code, such as terms like "indirectly engaged" and "other arrangements," was identified as essential to closing potential loopholes and ensuring clarity and enforceability for all workers, regardless of gender or engagement status. Lastly, the framing of rules to enforce the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining was identified as a priority. Setting clear timelines and introducing interim measures to bridge the gap until comprehensive rules are in place.

This critical feedback was well-received by the Labour Department of Punjab, which appreciated the detailed analysis and acknowledged the need for improvement. In a testament to the impact of AwazCDS-Pakistan's advocacy, the department committed to incorporating these recommendations into future revisions of the Labour Code. This commitment marks a significant step toward ensuring equitable labor rights for women agricultural workers and closing gaps in the existing framework.

The success of this initiative underscores the power of collaboration and data-driven advocacy. It reflects AwazCDS-Pakistan's dedication under this project of how persistent advocacy and evidence-based analysis can lead to policy reforms that prioritize the rights of marginalized communities. This achievement not only highlights the organization's pivotal role in influencing

policy but also demonstrates the effectiveness of the Provincial Stakeholders Alliance as a platform for meaningful dialogue and commitment to continued advocacy efforts.

Annexure:

Press Coverage Report

Daily Times

Your right to know Monday, October 28, 2024

PAKISTAN

PSA holds third meeting for empowerment of women agri workers of Punjab

Agencies

OCTOBER 28, 2024



The third meeting of the Provincial Stakeholders Assembly (PSA) for the empowerment of Women Agricultural Workers (WAWs) in Punjab took place in Lahore, organized by AwazCDS-Pakistan, provided a critical platform to discuss and analyze the Punjab Labor Code 2024, especially Chapter 4.2, which outlines specific provisions for agricultural workers. Representatives from key government departments, civil society, and relevant stakeholders gathered to address challenges and advocate for the rights for WAWs.

Mr. Zia ur Rehman, Chief Executive of AwazCDS-Pakistan, provided valuable insights into the Punjab Labor Code 2024, focusing on Chapter 4.2 regarding agricultural workers. In a comprehensive brief, he highlighted areas for improvement within the labor code, especially the need for fair compensation, the right to written agreements, and collective bargaining for agricultural workers, emphasizing gender equity and individual rights. Key points included, Section 218; this section outlines rights related to compensation, agreements, and bargaining. Mr. Rehman suggested that payments in kind be minimized, and cash payments prioritized to prevent exploitation. He also stressed that individual compensation should be ensured for all family members working in agriculture, especially vulnerable female workers. In

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/1234779/psa-holds-third-meeting-for-empowerment-of-women-agri-workers-of-punjab/>



Speakers stress practical steps for women agri workers' rights

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23 hours

NEWS WIRE



Lahore - Stakeholders at a gathering have focussed on challenges being faced by the women agricultural workers (WAWs) in Punjab and proposed practical solutions to overcome barriers in order to ensure their rights protection and economic sustainability.

They expressed their views during a meeting of the Provincial Stakeholders Assembly (PSA) for the empowerment of WAWs in the province here on Saturday.

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<https://www.nation.com.pk/27-Oct-2024/speakers-stress-practical-steps-for-women-agri-workers-rights?version=amp>