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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by Stichting Global Human Rights Defence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[5 February 2024]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Alarming Educational and Social Conditions of Children in Sindh, Pakistan

In the province of Sindh, the state of education and societal conditions for children is distressingly inadequate, highlighting severe systemic neglect and inequality. A staggering 6.2 million children are deprived of basic education, remaining outside the school system entirely. Compounding this issue, 1.7 million children are subjected to labour, often in harsh and exploitative conditions, denying them their childhood and educational opportunities. Sindh's education quality is alarmingly poor; less than 10% of teachers are qualified to teach science, a crucial modern knowledge and development subject. This deficiency is further exacerbated by the lack of proper infrastructure, as approximately 70% of schools in the province lack laboratories for practical scientific learning.

The situation worsens with the revelation that an overwhelming majority of schools in Sindh has no operational library, depriving students of critical learning and personal development resources. Physical infrastructure needs to be improved, with 4,364 schools operating without building, exposing students to the elements and unstable learning environments. Gender inequality in education is starkly evident, with 49,103 primary schools across the province, yet only 7,283 are dedicated to girls, severely limiting their access to education.

Basic amenities, fundamental to any learning environment, should be more present in many schools. Five thousand nine hundred twenty-two schools need more essential facilities such as toilets and potable water, creating unhygienic and unhealthy student conditions. Over 10,516 schools have just one room, severely restricting the space and environment necessary for effective learning. This is compounded by the fact that 18,660 schools are staffed by only one teacher, limiting educational diversity and attention to individual student needs. Furthermore, many schools, totalling 12,136, do not have a single teacher, leaving many children without formal education.

According to government sources, about 7 million children, more than 44% of those aged 5-16, are out of education in Sindh. Most of the private schools in the region deny Sindhi children the right to study in their first language, while thousands of schools only exist on paper as 'ghost schools'. The government's recent closure of almost 10,000 schools, termed as unviable, exacerbates this crisis.

Considering this data, it is estimated that almost 60% of Sindhi children are denied their basic right to education. Female children are among the worst affected, with only about 30% receiving basic education. This situation is a gross violation of their fundamental rights and a barrier to their development and prospects.

These figures paint a grim picture of the educational landscape in Sindh, characterized by severe deficiencies in infrastructure, resources, and staffing, alongside stark gender disparities and a large number of children engaged in labour instead of learning. This situation calls for urgent and comprehensive intervention to ensure that the fundamental right of children to education is not just a promise but a reality for every child in Sindh.

We, therefore, urge the UN Human Rights Council to:

1. Initiate a thorough investigation into the systemic educational neglect in Sindh, focusing on the causes of gender disparities, lack of infrastructure, and the prevalence of child labour.
2. Demand immediate action from the Pakistani government to address these issues, including reopening closed schools, proper staffing, and infrastructure development.
3. Establish a monitoring mechanism to ensure that children's rights, especially regarding education, are upheld and support educational reforms in Sindh.
4. Advocate for the right of children to receive education in their native language and ensure gender equality in educational opportunities.
5. Collaborate with local and international organizations to eliminate child labour in Sindh.

6. Facilitate the provision of resources and expertise to improve the quality of education, including training for teachers and establishing necessary facilities.

We would like to appeal to the Council to recognize the urgency of this situation and take decisive action to protect the future of millions of children in Sindh.
