

# **Survey on Cotton Plantation Fields**

Sponsor by: International Labour Right Forum  
Report prepared by: Zehra Khan

## **Executive Summary**

The Home Based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF) works with informal workers in all over Pakistan. Along with advocacy and struggle for the social and economic protection of the formal and informal workers of each sector. HBWWF also works on capacity building and training of the workers and men workers. In August 2013, the HBWWF with the support of International Labour Right Forum (ILRF) carried out a survey among agricultural workers related with cotton field in five district of Sindh including Sanghar, Badin, Thatta, Tando Mohammad Khan and Matyari.

HBWWF hired the team to conduct the survey through questionnaire and field visit means and to identify the condition in which agricultural workers are living and working. The Survey was carried out in October 2013, with the survey team visiting the five districts. Quantitative data was collected to conduct a comprehensive survey with full information from the peasants.

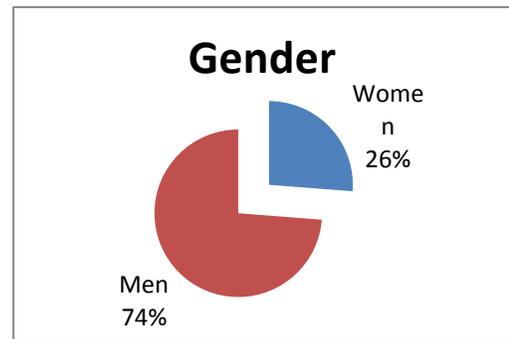
The survey was successful, have full information on workers condition which help to linked with whole textile industry.

## Objective

the main purpose of the survey was to uncover incidences of child labor and other labor rights abuses in apparel and textile supply chains (cotton plantations and in cut-and-sew manufacturing).

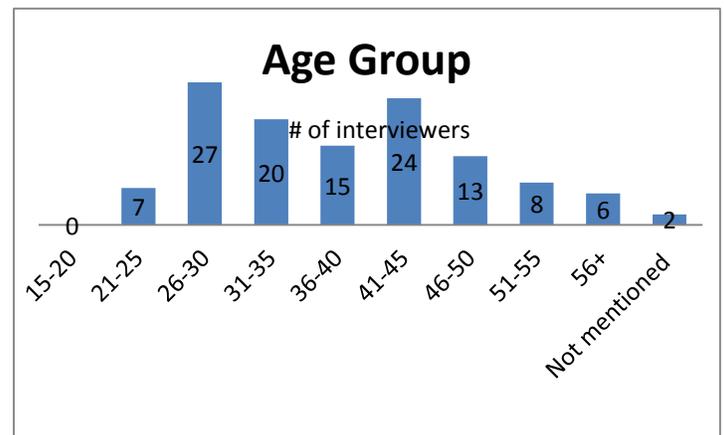
## Survey/Research Population

HBWWF surveyed the cotton plantation workers in five districts of Sindh. The total sample size of the survey was 122 cotton plantation related workers including male and female from five districts. The distribution of interviewed workers is given in chart below. Out of total, 32 women workers were interviewed during the survey and rest 74% were male agricultural workers.



**Table 1. number of interviewed workers (Gender)**

Table 2 show the age of the cotton plantation worker who were interviewed. Majority of responded (27) were belonging to the age group of 26 to 30 while 24 responded belonging to the age group of 41 to 45. Only 6 workers out of 122 were above 56 age.



**table 2: Age group**

## Research Methodology

The mapping condition of peasants conducted by Home Based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF) which is supported by International Labour Right Forum (ILRF). HBWWF team had chosen a method to interview the workers in field in five districts of Sindh. Questionnaire was shared by ILRF team for the conducting survey and the team of HBWWF amended it to related it with the ground situation. the most of the parts of questionnaire is based on quantitative method. Questionnaires were distributed to a total of seven team members (agricultural workers union) in five districts of Sindh.

That survey addressed the General Information, Occupational Safety and Health, Atmospheric Condition, Agro-chemicals (e.g. pesticides, herbicides, Sanitary Facilities, Freedom of Association, Child Labour, Force Labour, Working hours, Discrimination, Management Practices and Job satisfaction.

The main components of the Survey are as follows

1. Review of condition of cotton plantation workers
2. Interviews with cotton plantation workers in five districts of Sindh including Sanghar (45 interviewed), Badin (19 interviewed), Tando Mohammad Khan (21 interviewed), Thatta (7 interviewed) and Matyari (interviewed 30 peasants)
3. Preparation and translation of Questionnaire for gathering quantitative data from cotton plantation workers in Sindh.
4. Field visit for qualitative findings to interview HBWWF members in Gadap Town, Hyderabad and New Karachi
5. Compilation and analysis of survey data, and synthesis of qualitative information

## **Key Findings:**

### **General Data about the Persons Interviewed**

#### **Education level:**

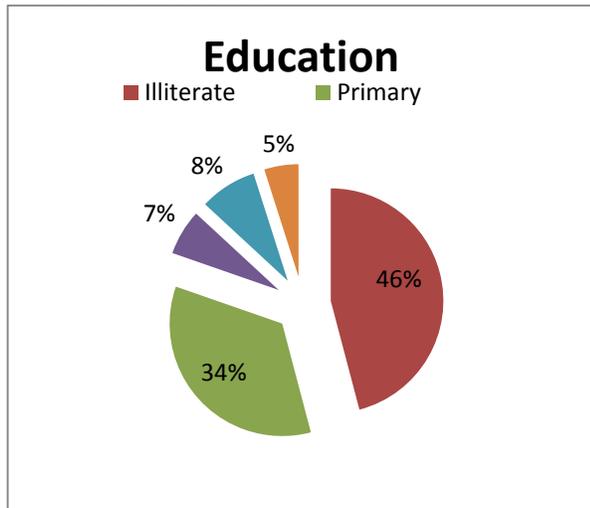
according to the constitution article 25 of Pakistan that primary education is very compulsory to all children but is hardly observed in Pakistan. Many children remain at home and engaged with economical activities due the high rate of poverty so the dropout rate from school are also very high.

In Sindh government schools are not capable to provide good and better education as many teachers not attending the classes and doing two jobs. court has order against those teacher and many inspection were also made but the result is not adequate. Schools building showing the ruins of old structures. and education level is very bad. many schools become cattle farms, and most of the schools show the picture of ghost house. it is also seen that there are many case running in court for property of government schools and colleges.

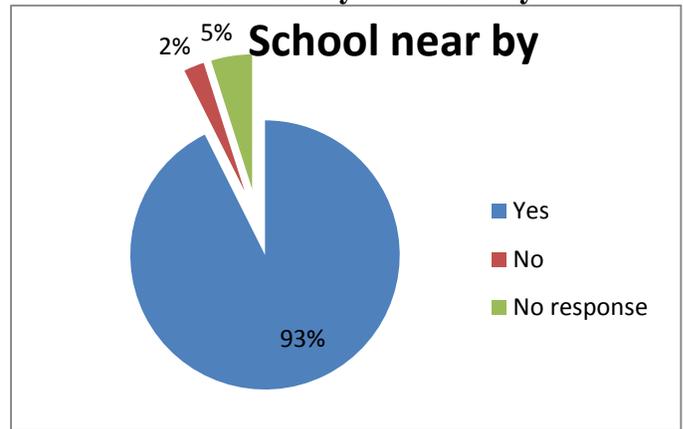
Many private schools were opened, and the process is still continued, which is not affordable for majority in Sindh. So these situation clearly shows that the education for those who can afford private schooling of their children.

Table 3 clearly indicate the ratio of literacy among the cotton plantation workers. 46% (56 responded out of 122) were didn't get the formal education whereas 34% (42 responded) get primary education while only 6 responded were inter pass. while table 3A shows that they all (93%) have schools nearby their localities they live.

**Table 3: Education**

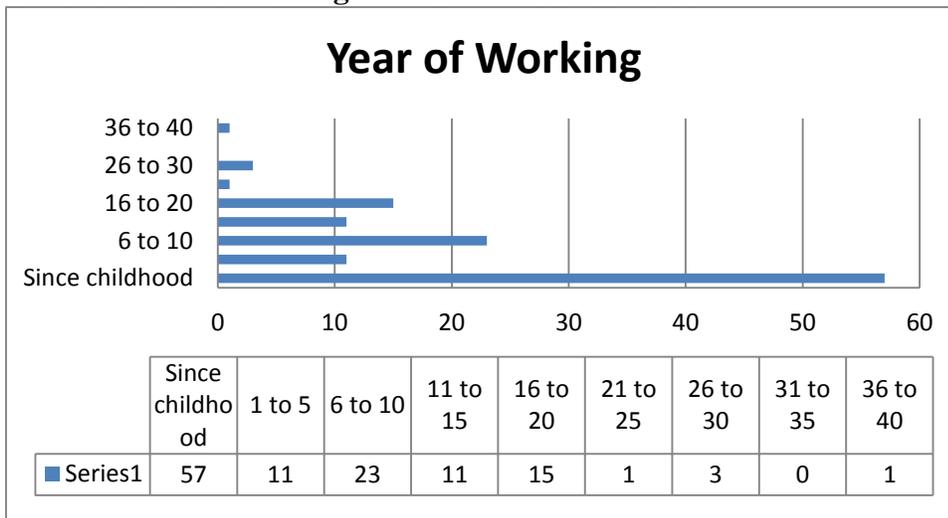


**Table 3 A: School near by their locality**



Majority of the responded (57 responded) said that they were engaged with this field since their childhood. while 23 responded that they were engaged with agriculture work for 6 to 10 years. See table 4.

**Table 4: Year of working/ associated with this field**



Regarding training and policy question majority of the responded (93%) said that they didn't get any formal training regarding the work in which they are engaged.

**Table 5: Training**

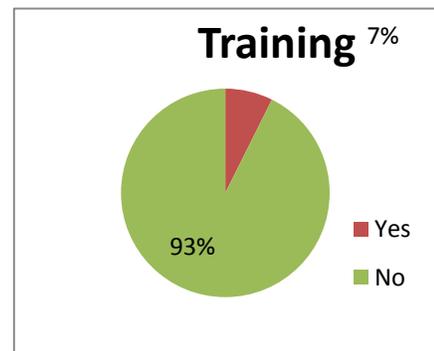
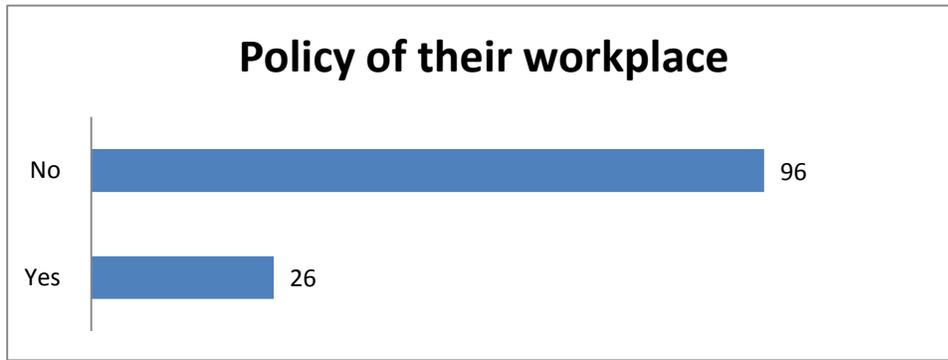


Table six indicating that the 96 out of 122 peasant didn't know regarding any policy where they work .

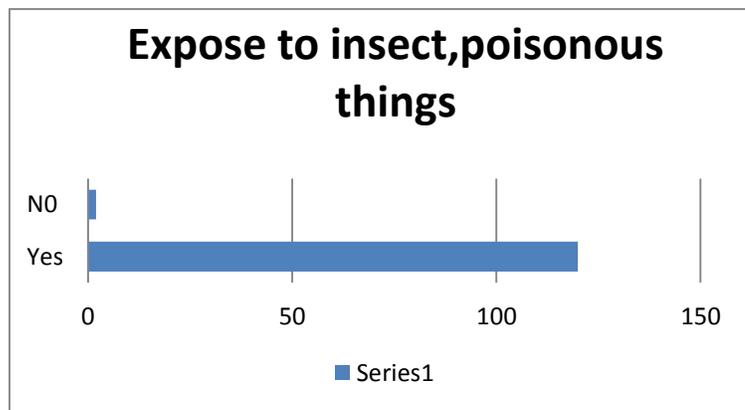
**Table 6: Policy where they work**



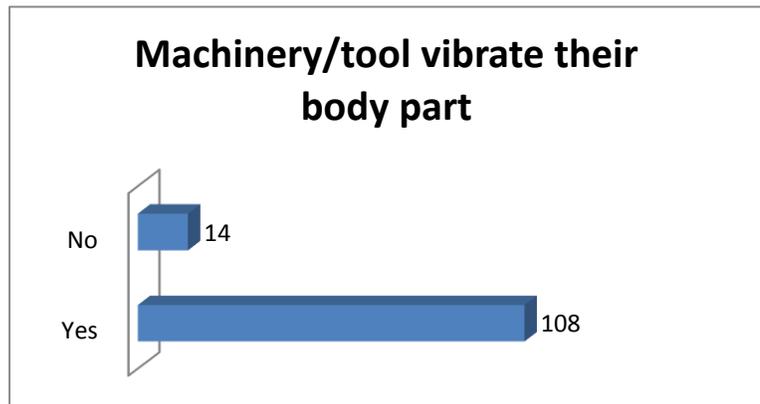
**Part 2: Occupation Health and Safety:**

It is quite amazing that Pakistan have sign 34 conventions of ILO but the core conventions on occupation health and safety are not ratified. There is a big fire case in Pakistan's history in year 2012 September that open the eyes of workers as well as the whole population that the workers in factories are working in death cambers the same situation also faced by the cotton plantation workers. they are also expose to serious health effecting issues. 120 workers out of 122 interviewed responded that they were exposed to insects, poisonous reptiles, rodents and parasites in their work environment (see table 7 and 8). 108 responded said that the machinery/tools which they use during their work vibrate their body parts of it until you feel tingling or lose sensation like the use of treasure, tractor and water lifting machine. Even the way they spray the crop is very dangerous for themselves and there is no safety measurement they were taking. they just cover it and themselves with clothes. and these gadgets were used by these peasant without having any safety measurements. 95 out of 122 responded said that they were using high voltage machines without any protectors.

**Table 7: Expose to insect and other things**



122 interviewed responded that they were exposed to



**Table: 8. Machinery/tools vibrate body part**

In Pakistan agriculture worker still working in old setup in spite of that still the major part of the economy is based on agriculture.

## Atmospheric Condition

regarding Atmospheric condition many peasants said that they have work in any season and even in adverse weather conditions to save the crops from their effects. 120 out of 122 said that their hand become soiling in winter season when they giving water in to the crops. 119 peasant said that they fell dizzy, faint or have headaches due to hot weather in summer season and also with the spray tank (see below table 9).

**Table 9: Effect due to summer and winter seasons**

Response	Fingers or toes shake from cold	Feel weak. Dizzy /faint due to hot weather	work in adverse weather conditions
yes	120	119	121
No	2	3	1
Total	122	122	122

Regarding any incident of fire or any mishap, 105 responded said that due to smell of chemicals, close room where cotton kept they felt and have fear of suffocation. One responded out of 122 responded that there is two incident of suffocation due to which they die. few of them also responded that there is also a fear of fire in field and storage places. but they didn't have any proper safety equipment to save themselves as well as the material. what they only have that is water which they use to protect the materials. agricultural worker. 103 workers responded that they their ear effect from the noise of tractor, tube well, water lifting machine and treasure, (see table 10)

**Table 10: Any incident of Fire/ suffocation, thing for safety and noise**

Responses	Incident of fire/ suffocation	Protection material	Noise effects listening
Yes	105	11	103
No	15	110	13
NO response	2	1	6
Total	122	122	122

## Agro-chemicals (e.g. pesticides, herbicides)

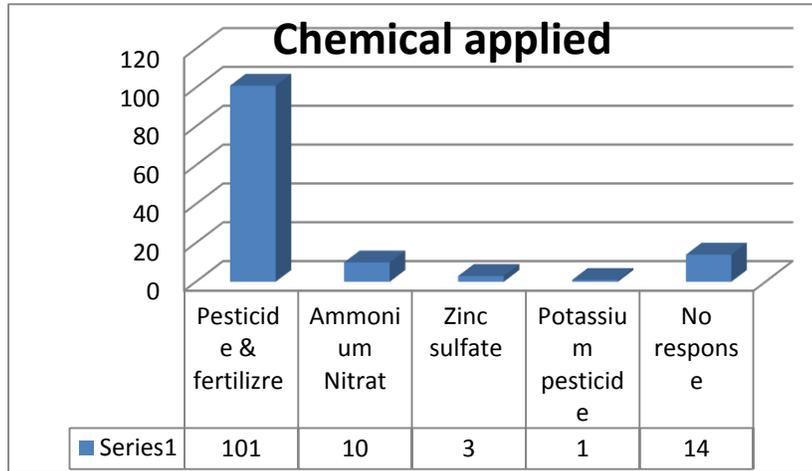
A large number of the peasant (91 responded) who questioned during survey responded that they are involve in mixing chemicals without any safety measures. They didn't use any mask or gloves to mix the chemicals or use fertilizer. They just use a cloth or tie it with them and spray tank to save from its smell. They use their own cloth (Kameez/shirt) what they wore during the fertilization process (see table 11). In table 12 responded named the chemical applied during their work but a large number of responded said the pesticides/chemicals and fertilizer they were using.

**Table 11: Expose to agro chemicals and protection material**

Responses	Exposure to agro chemicals	protection equipment
-----------	----------------------------	----------------------

Yes	91	41
No	31	81
Total	122	122

**Table**



**12: Chemicals**

On the safety disposal,

they got

information from shopkeeper/store/depot from where they buy the chemical. Three responded that they got information from company label by read it out by themselves. Only three responded that they burnt the chemical and few responded that they buried it in the ground see table 13.

question regarding information and majority of the responded said that the information

**Table 13: Information regarding chemical and its disposal**

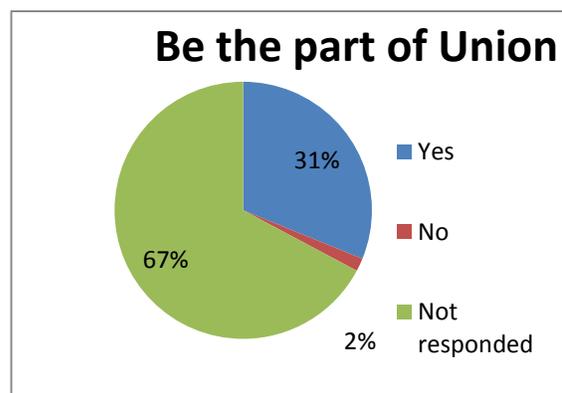
Response	Information	Disposal of chemical
Yes	68	64
NO	33	44
No response	21	14
Total	122	122

## Freedom of Association

it is very much clear with this survey that peasant didn't have their union or organization from which they can fight for their due and collective rights. Sindh Tenancy Act of 1950 is there but it is not being in practice since long due to the strong feudal system in Sindh. Majority of them were Pir (spiritual leaders) and sitting in the parliament and assemblies so no one can speak in front of them regarding their right. they have their own kingdom on which they rule.

But one thing is happened good in last year, 2013, that Sindh provincial assembly passed the Industrial Relation Act 2013 in which now the agriculture and fishery formally recognized as industry. Now the workers of both the industry can form their legal bodies to fight for their just rights.

In this regarding National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) initiated to organize agricultural workers in Sindh. They have started meetings and organized study circles with peasants and aware

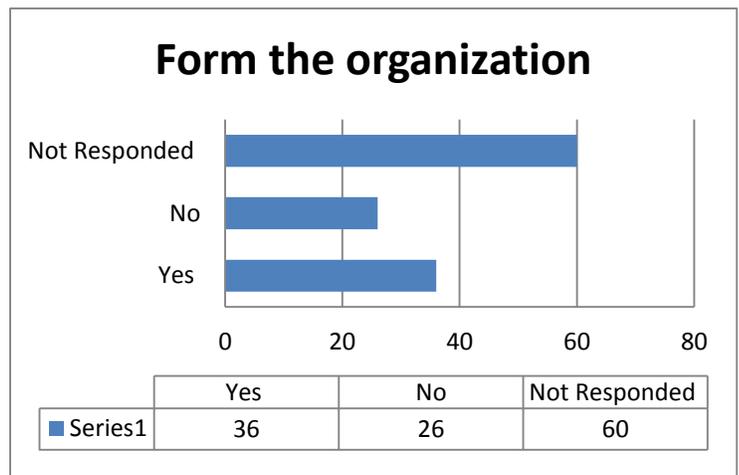


them on peasants' right. In the month of September they completed all the procedure according to the law and submitted all the documents. Now they got the registration certificate as trade union. "Sindh Agricultural General Workers Union", first ever trade union of agricultural workers, is working in whole Sindh actively. Recently NTUF organized a big convention in Bhit Shah on 14h March 2014 which was the successful event. More than 8000 peasants from Sind participated in the program and made the event successful.

According to the data collection for survey every one responded that they were not the member of any union and even they were involved in collecting bargaining process. But on the question regarding joining union only 38 (15%) responded said that they will feel comfortable by joining a union and 82 interviewers didn't responded on while only 2 responded No (see table 14)

**Table 14: Be the part of Union**

Regarding formation of organization by the peasants, 36 responded said that they were formed the organization for their due rights and 26 responded that they didn't form any organization while 60 didn't responded on the question (see table 15). Those who responded yes they Knew Hari Haqdar Tehrik (Peasant Right Movement) which is formed by NTUF, they have registered first ever union of agricultural workers of 58 Farms from five district of Sindh. They got registration in the month of January 2014 having 5000 membership.



**Table 15: Form the organization**

**Child labour:**

This survey indicated that the children from the age of 6 enters in cotton picking and other agricultural work and majority of the respondent were also engaged with this work since their childhood as their family work. children also do work on field as wage labour with their parents but it is also observe from the survey that few (16 respondents) knew that there is age limitation for starting any work which is 18 years (see table 17). Table 16 shows that 51% of the respondents said that there is no such age limitation for starting work in cotton field. 24% responded that 5 to 10 years old children were engaged with cotton plantation/agricultural work while 19% responded that the starting age for work is 15 to 18 years.

**Table 16: Age limit for hiring**

**Table 17: Policy regarding child labour**

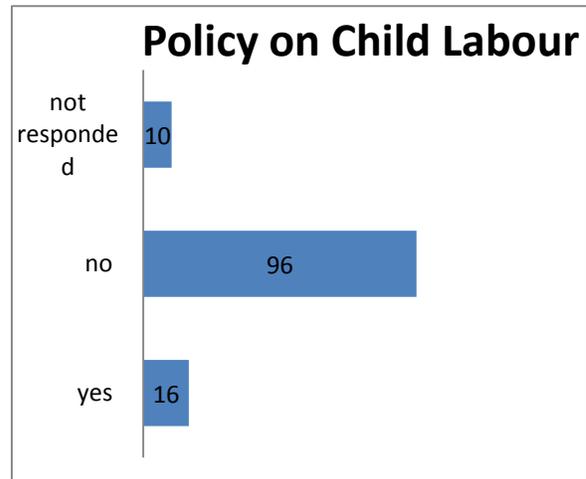
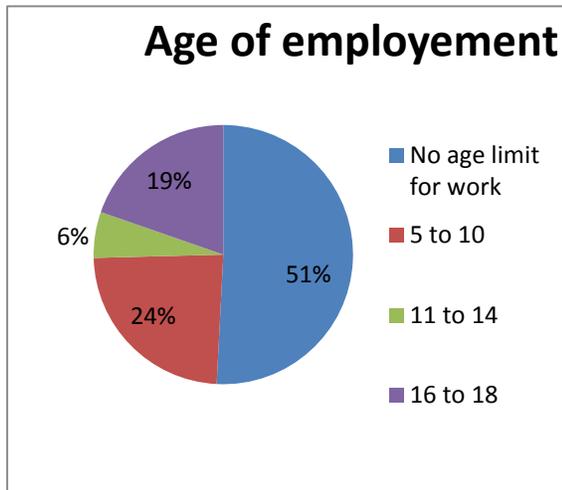
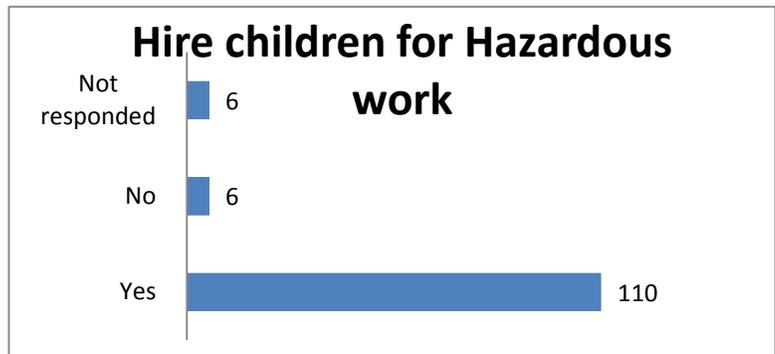
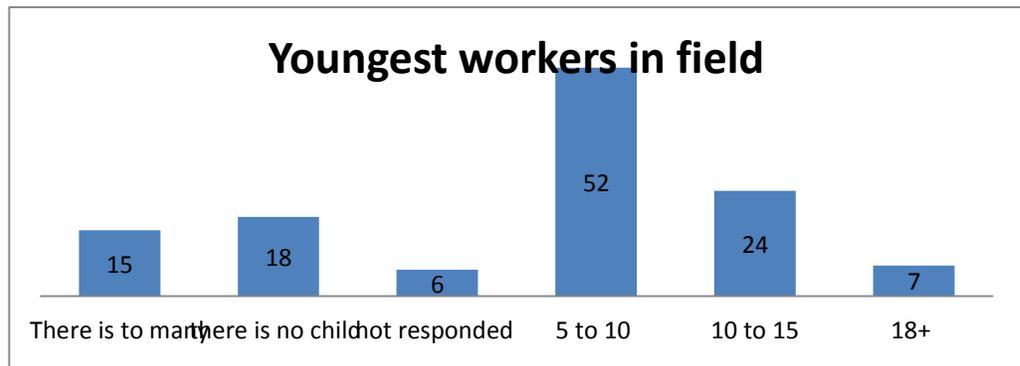


Table 18 indicating that 110 respondents answer yes that children were also engaged in hazardous task on the field. Table 19 shows the age of children which respondents indicated as they found that particular age child in farm as working. that shows that 52 respondent said that they saw 5 to 10 year old child working in farm while 18 responded that they didn't see children working on field.



**Table 18: Hire children for hazardous work**

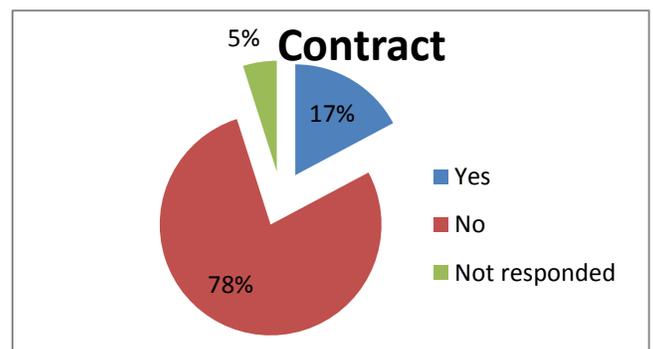
**Table 19: Youngest workers**



## Force Labour:

Force labour is very common in Pakistan especially in Brick kilns and Agricultural work. It is estimated that around 1.2 to 1.3 million are force labour in Sindh province majority of them were landless peasants. Agriculture work is totally on contract

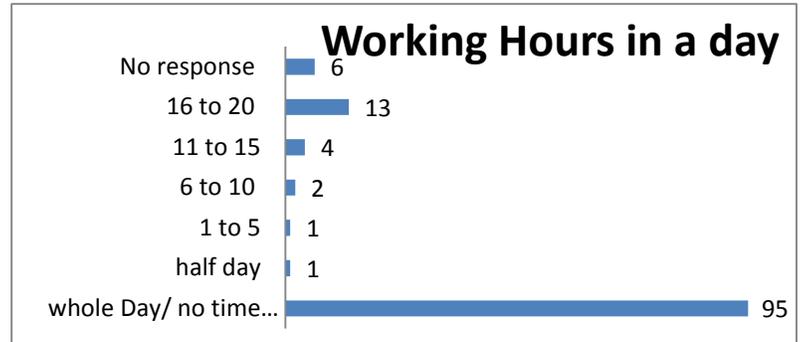
**Table 20: Official Contract**



labour who were hire on verbal evidence. they don't have any formal contract from their owners and even they were not registered under any social security nets provided by the government to the workers. 78% respondent said that they didn't submit any documents while getting work but they were given work on verbal evidence responded 17% of interviewers (see table 20)

**Table 21: hour you work in a day**

95 responded out of 122 responded that they work seven days in a week for whole day minimum 6 to 12 hours a day. but they also said that they do work for 24 hours as well when there is emergency. There is no concept of overtime. If there is crop grown on field then they have to look after it. Its 24 hours job (see table 21).



**Table 22: Decide salary or wage before starting of work**

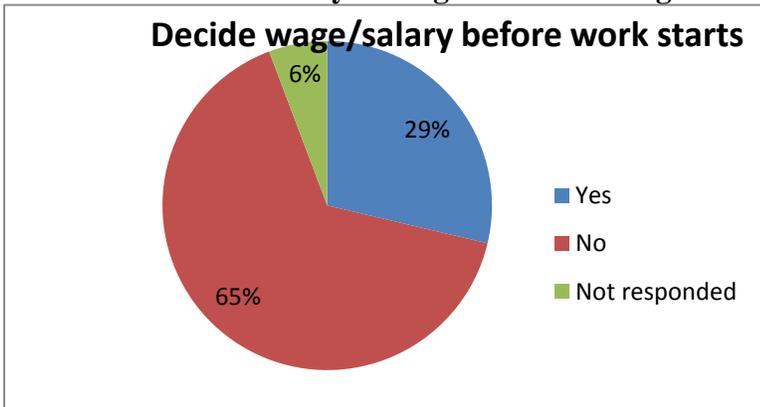
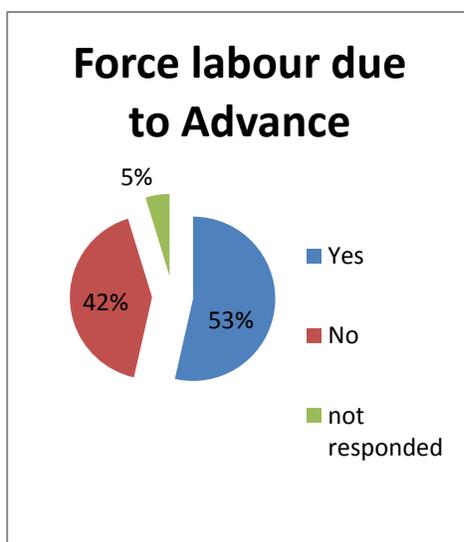


Table 22 indicating the ratio of wage/salary decides before work starting. 65% responded that the wage/ amount was not decided before work start as a large number of respondent work on share system which is usually forth part of all amount including expenses, 29% workers responded.

Question regarding any facilities or increase wages, All responded that if they do more work than the crop grew well and they earn more money as profit but not getting extra facilities or increase wages. And two responded that they got food and money as well. 79 responded that they got money after the end of the crop seasons which is almost after 6 month. Three responded that if crop is not ready on time then they didn't get any money.

Table 23 indicates that 42% responded that due to advance money they have to do work and couldn't level the place ant next time land owner didn't provide money in advance for crops.



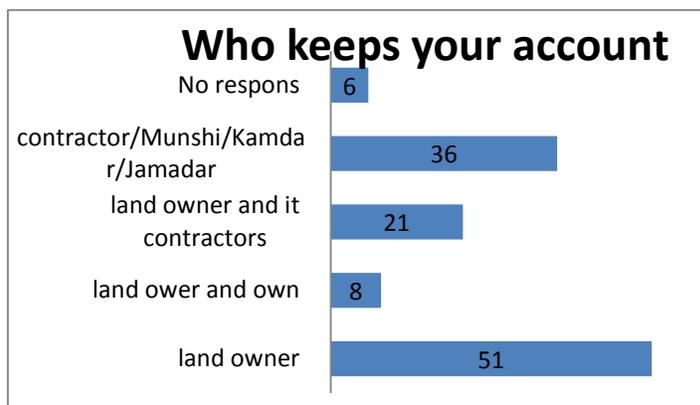
They all consider loan as the chain in their foot. but 53% said that they didn't face any pressure from the land owner.

**Table 23: Force labour due to advance payment**

51 responded that the account kept by the land owner and 36 responded that contractor kept the record of peasants accounts while only 8 responded that the account

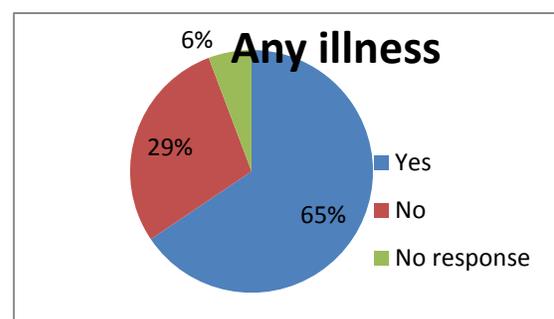
maintained by themselves and owner as well (see table 24)

**Table 24: Who keeps your account**



### Illness:

65% interviewed cotton plantation workers responded that they have illness due to the work especially due to the chemicals while 29% responded that they didn't have any problem or illness. 11 responded facing itching problem due to the use of chemicals. 39 have cough and asthma problem while 18 responded that they have seasonal viral infections. Only one said that he have TB.



**Table 25: Any illness due to this work**

When peasants got ill they majority of them use to go to BHU which is nearby from their localities and private hospital. 35 responded that they used to go to traditional medical practitioner person and spiritual/faith healer for their diseases.

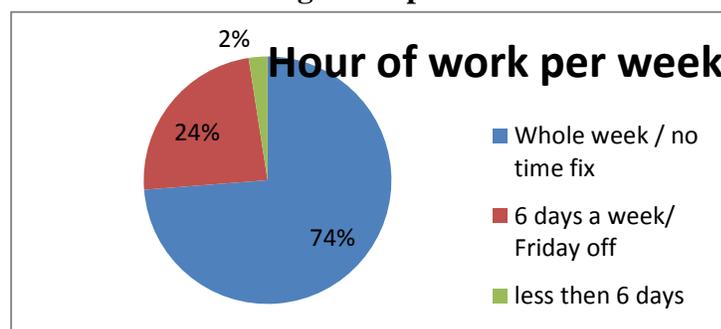
**Table 26: Treatment if got ill**

Particulars	# of Respondent
BHU/private	46
Government	35
Faith Healers /Hakeem (Traditional medical practitioner	35
Quack doctor	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>125 (double answer)</b>

### Working hours

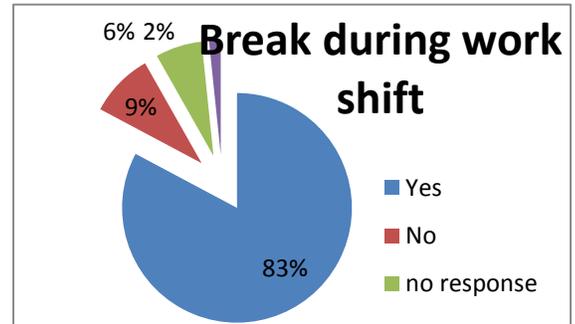
As it was mentioned earlier in the report that these peasants 6 to 7 days a week. 74% responded that there was no fix time for work on field as agriculture is 24 hours task (see table 27)

**Table 27: Working hours per week**



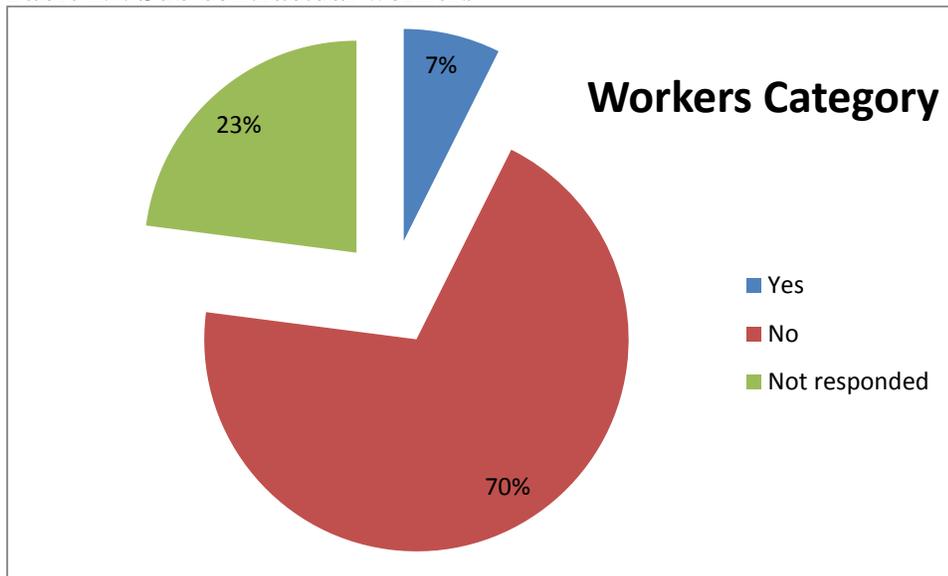
83% respondent said that they got break during work for lunch and prayers. Most of the responded said that they got off when its need or emergency otherwise they always do work. If there is no work then they have holidays (see table 28)

**table 28: Break during work shift**



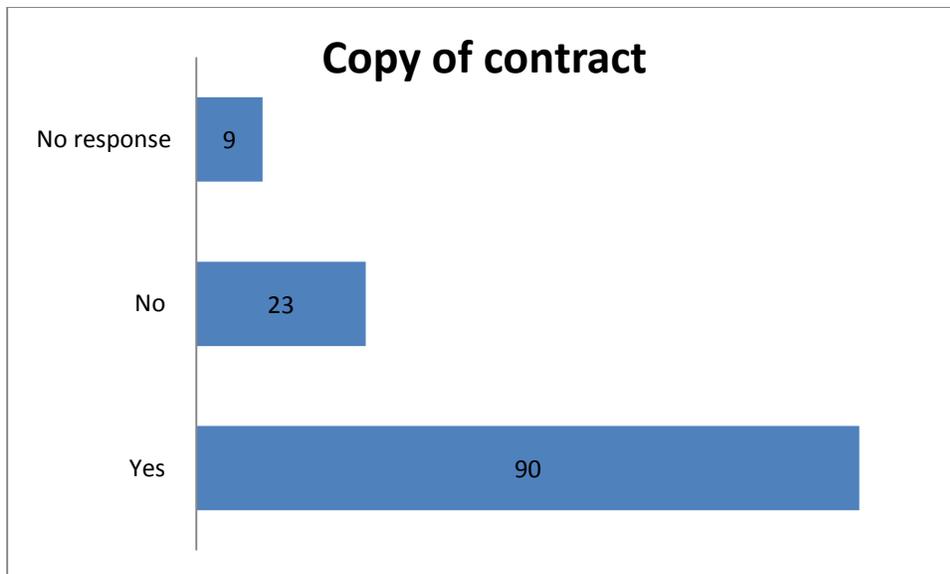
70% of the responded were do work directly with owner and only 7% responded that they work under contractual system while 23% didn't responded (see table 29)

**Table 29: Sub contractual workers**



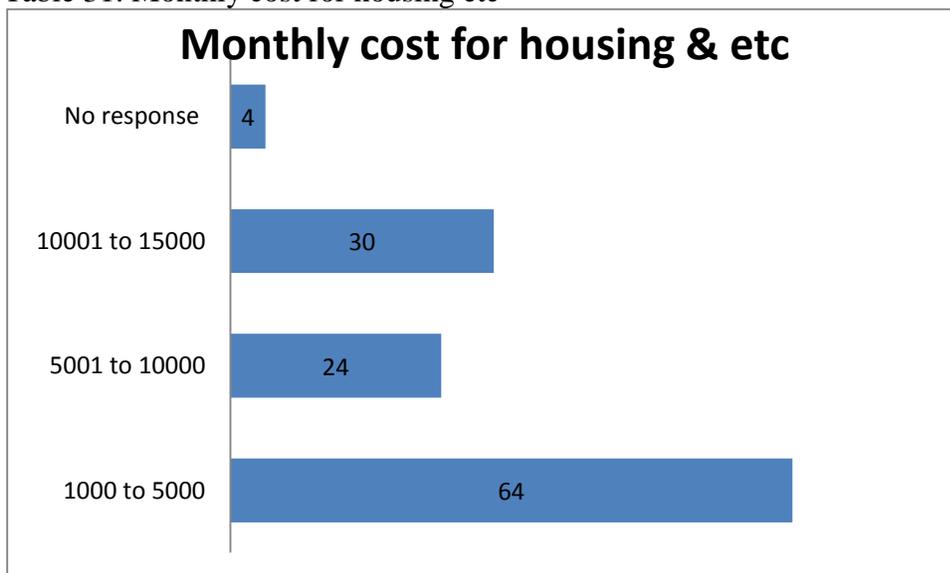
90 respondents said that they have only verbal contract with for work on field. they didn't have any written agreement which they can show. While 23 responded that they don't have any contract before starting work See table 30. All respondent said that they get their payment after ending of crops (almost 6 month latter). But for expense on daily basis they get or ask for money from land owner which cut when the final payment made with interest. Despite of hard work not a single peasant is registered with social security schemes.

**Table 30: Copy of contract**



64 responded expend 2000 to 5000 rupees o housing, utilities and transportation while 50 responded said that their total expense is 10000 to 15000 (see below table 31)

Table 31: Monthly cost for housing etc



## Discrimination

A large number of workers said that some Muslims make difference on the bases of religion and caste. Some responded that women get less wage than men for picking cotton crops. Man get 300 PR picking of 40 kg cotton while women get 200 to 250. Children get even low wages. Two responded that Muslims get their payments before non-Muslims. a large number of responded that women get off during pregnancy. 104 peasants said they got holidays on their religious

holidays. Only two responded commented that some they got holiday and some time not (see table 32) .

**Table 32: Allow to observer religious holiday**

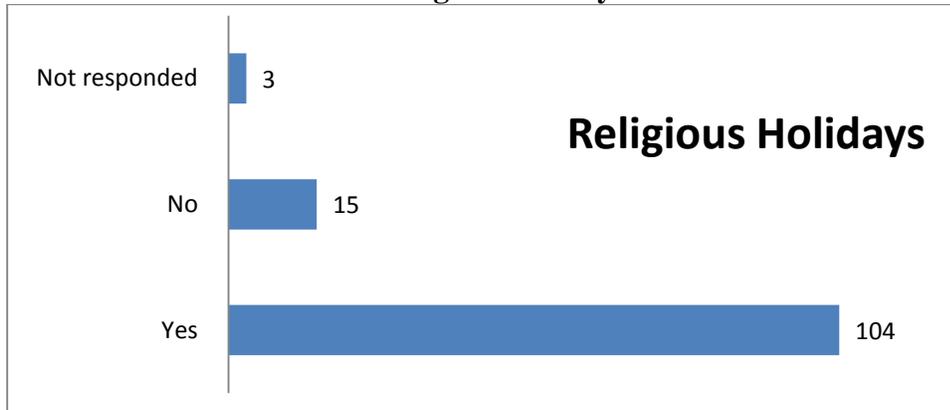
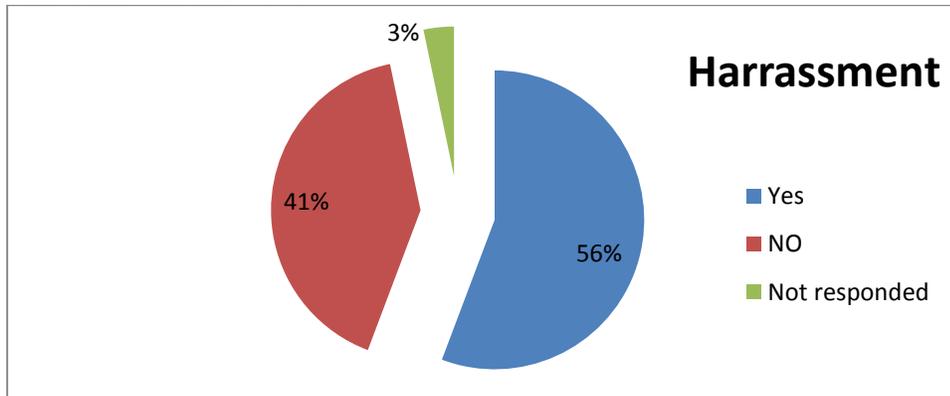
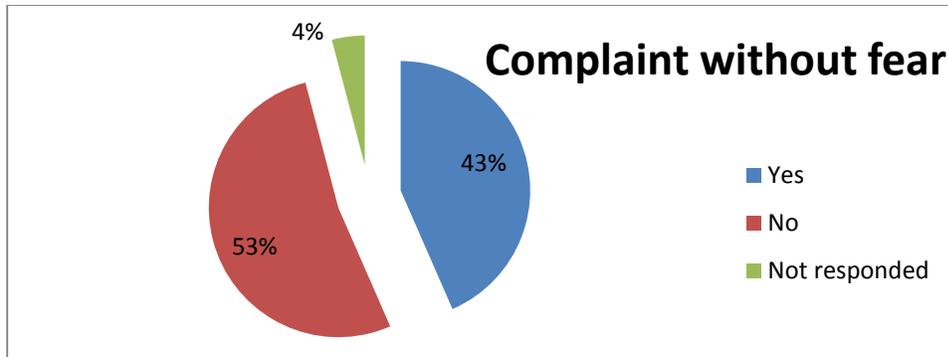


Table 33 shows that 56% respondent said that they face harassment usually which mostly physical while 41% said that they didn't face any harassment. 53 responded (43%) that raised complaints if they have without fear while 53% responded that they didn't complaint as there was not such issues even some responded that there was no result of such complaint (see table 34).

**Table 33: Harassment**



**Table 34: Raise complaint without fear**



Regarding whom they complaint majority of the workers (57) said that they directly talked with Owner of the land for any issues while 51 responded that they talked with contractor or middle men. Only five commented that if there is no way to solve the issue then the last option is court where they can go. (see below table 35) . 91 responded said that they have hope or expect that their grievances will be consider.

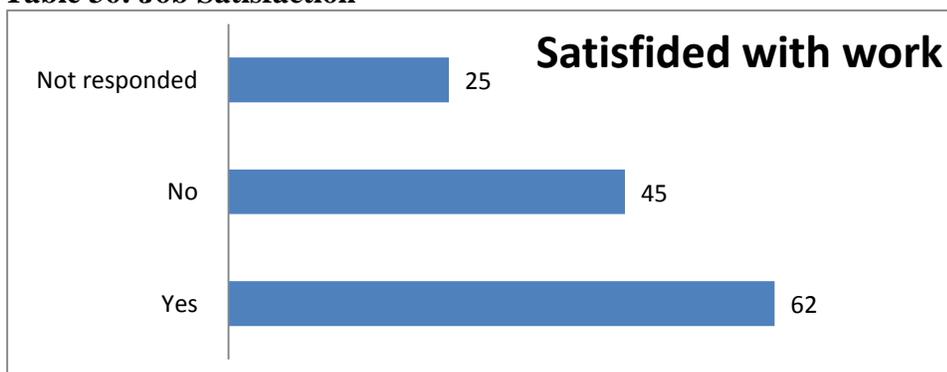
**Table 35: Whom they talk if there is such issues**

Response	# of interviewers
owner/ feudal	57
contractor/munshi/kamdar	51
sympathizer	1
no one help	13
Total	122

### Job Satisfaction:

62 respondent out of 122 responded that they were satisfied with their work which they were doing while 45 respondents were not satisfied with their work out it 25 asked for other job while other said raring animals and start its own business. Due to lack of resources and less education they were doing this work.

**Table 36: Job Satisfaction**



## Sanitary Facilities

Below chart (table 37) show the facilities which peasants have during their work. Majority of responded said that they didn't have latrine facilities at their work place they use field for that purpose. They didn't have potable water. 106 responded said they go to their home to change their clothes. Regarding showers they use well/cannel water. 72 respondent said that they have access to potable water but actually it is contaminated water which they fetch from well, hand pump or water canal.

**Table 37: Facilities**

Response	potable water	hand washing	latrines	eating areas	showers	dressing rooms
Yes	72	49	18	24	23	16
No	50	73	104	98	99	106
	122	122	122	122	122	122

**Table 38. Tools they uses and cut or any injuries see table below**

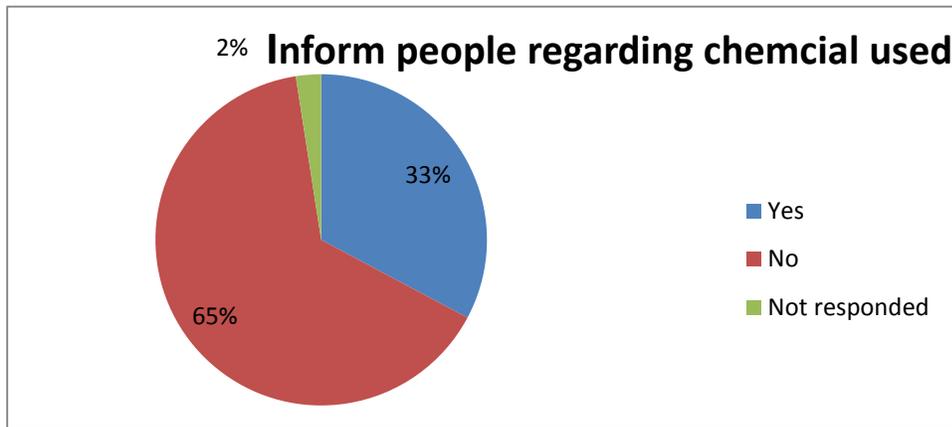
Responses	Tools in adequate condition	Risk of injuries or cutting
Yes	37	112
No	85	4
Not responded		6
Total	122	122

A large number of respondents said that they didn't get any tools from their land owner they use their own tools like clothes and other material used during work. The weight of spray tank which they carry on their should, is 40 kg. Most of the respondents said that their shoulders and back are injured due to carrying spray tank that cause spot on their back. They got cut due to Ax and sickle on their hand. During all the work their hand and foot were in great pain (see table 38).

Large proportion responded that the mix chemicals with their hand without any safety measures. during that time they cover themselves with cloth to protect from the smell. They carry spray tank on their shoulders. They use their shirt front as bag to fill the fertilizer and spread in the farm with bare hands. Only one respondent out of 122 said that they use chemical with the instruction of company mentioned on the label. And 9 didn't responded the question.

Majority of the respondent responded that they inform other people regarding the chemical they used in the field see table below 39. Majority of the respondent said that they do work by standing continuously and with sitting as well its depend on their work. When they pecking cotton their position become bend position.

**Table 39: inform other regarding chemical used in field.**



## Conclusion and

## Recommendations

the survey reveal the pathetic working and living conditions of workers in cotton plantation field and this phenomena is not new one but decade old in worsening day by day. it is required to change in process and phases. but very basic needs and rights should be protected at any cost. The new scenario is emerging after the granting of GSP+ status to Pakistan by EU from January 2014 which compel the Pakistan government to respect and implement in true spirit 27 convention including ILO core conventions in all fields from where exportable merchandize were produce for EU markets. In back drop of GSP+ the workers in cotton fields are most neglected section in supply chain of textile and garment. so it is recommended that workers in cotton plantation field should be

- Provide social security to these workers
- Health and safety at workplace
- provide training to cotton plantation workers on health and safety,
- Awareness on gender and religious harmony
- Lobbying with concern government officials for elimination in cotton plantation and education facilities provided to all children.
- implementation of labour laws in cotton plantation fields
- increase in wages for better living condition