

Socio-Climate Compliance for Resilience of Labour and Industry

This panel is not accepting abstracts

Climate change and occupational hazards have become increasingly significant concerns globally, especially in sectors involving manual labour and harsh working conditions. In Pakistan, the interplay of rising temperatures, economic vulnerabilities, and weak regulatory frameworks has exacerbated challenges for workers in various sectors, including brick kilns and Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

A recent report by the International Labour Organization, '[Heat at Work: Implications for Safety and Health – A Global Review of the Science, Policy and Practice](#),' observes that heat stress occurs when the body absorbs more heat than it can dissipate, leading to a range of health issues from heat exhaustion to life-threatening heatstroke. Long-term exposure can result in chronic conditions such as cardiovascular diseases and kidney disorders, especially Chronic Kidney Disease of non-traditional origin (CKDnt), which is becoming increasingly common among workers in hot climates. The report further notes that heat stress not only affects health but also has significant economic implications. It leads to reduced labour productivity and increases financial losses. Furthermore, outdoor workers, like brick kiln labour, face greater exposure to extreme heat and may lack access to adequate protective measures.

The Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) has collaborated with stakeholders in the brick kiln sector for several years. In 2023, SDPI developed the 'Socially and Environmentally Compliant Brick Kiln Framework' (SECBK-FW) and promoted its adoption among various stakeholders. SDPI conducted training workshops for brick kiln workers and held sessions with owners and potential bricks buyers to inform them about the framework's key features. Continuing its efforts into 2024, SDPI conducted additional training workshops and engaged with potential buyers, persuading them to adopt the framework and ensure that brick kilns comply with the established social and environmental standards.

The initiative on 'Socio-Climate Compliance for Labour and Industry Resilience' ensures that industries, particularly the construction and brick kiln sectors, adhere to the standards outlined in the ILO's 'Decent Work' framework and the Sustainable Development Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). This compliance is further strengthened by alignment with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and other relevant SDGs, addressing social protections like food security, healthcare, education, housing, fair wages, and broader socioeconomic indicators.

Pakistan is committed to meeting its international obligations given ratification of ILO Conventions, compliance with the European Union's GSP Plus framework, and alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). These commitments underscore Pakistan's responsibility to uphold international standards in areas such as labour rights, sustainable development, and climate action, particularly those in informal sectors such as brick kilns. These obligations have been reaffirmed by both the federal and provincial governments, which include labour departments equipped with inspection systems. However, these systems have numerous deficiencies that, regrettably, allow for the exploitation of labour.

The SECBK-FW offers an incentive model that integrates labour standards with environmental compliance. The framework has been prepared in line with in-depth research and analysis, aligning with Pakistan's international commitments to ecosystem protection and climate change mitigation. The framework aims to foster social and environmental compliance in the brick kiln sector of the construction industry, benefitting workers, employers, and buyers - including both government and private entities - to achieve a just transition. It is also designed to attract, convince, and motivate brick kiln owners to first register their kilns, and then register all their workers in the Employees' Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI), Social Security, and Workers Welfare Fund, by contributing on behalf of their employees. Additionally, by adopting zigzag technology among others, brick kilns can reduce environmental pollution and achieve compliance. By adhering to this framework, owners can foster a mutually beneficial relationship with their workers, creating a win-win situation.

To further structure the policy discourse, particularly on Socio-Climate Compliance in the brick kiln industry in Pakistan, this panel discussion will:

- Present key statistics from ILO's 2024 report, including worker heat exposure, rising occupational injuries, and the most affected regions.
- Highlight the increased heat stress burden on brick kiln workers.
- Suggest practical workplace solutions for reducing heat stress, like adjusting work/rest schedules, ensuring hydration, and improving ventilation.
- Explore socioeconomic uplift strategies for brick kiln workers.
- Discuss integrating occupational safety and health (OSH) into national climate policies, focusing on just transition and sustainable development.

Panel Organisers

Dr Shafqat Munir Ahmad, Deputy Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad

Email: shafqat@sdpi.org

Mr Muhammad Awais Umar, Research Associate, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad

Email: awais@sdpi.org

Ms Ramsha Mehboob Khan, Project Assistant, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad

Email: ramsha@sdpi.org

Mr Ali Rehmat, Project Assistant, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad

Email: alirehmat@sdpi.org

Mr Irfan Ahmad Chatha, Associate Research Fellow, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad

Email: irfan@sdpi.org