

## **Socially and Environmentally Compliant Construction Industry in Pakistan**

After completion of the Pakistan Decent Work Country Programme II in 2015, the Government of Pakistan (GoP) inclusive of the provincial governments, Employers Federation of Pakistan (EFP), International Labour Organization (ILO), and the Pakistan Workers Federation (PWF), signed the [Pakistan Decent Work Programme III \(PDWP-III, 2016-2020\)](#) which was later extended till 2022. The most recent PDWP-III set four priorities for collaboration: i) Promoting decent work in rural economies; ii) Promoting job creation for youth and vulnerable groups; iii) Extending social protection; and iv) Promoting ILS compliance through social dialogue.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) regarding PDWP-III defines roles and commitments by the parties. The ILO agreed to assist in resource mobilisation, while the GoP agreed to facilitate ILO to help implement the Programme. Other parties agreed to play their roles in achieving its objectives. The [PDWP-II](#), which expired in 2015, also set four priority areas (Employment, Workers' Rights, Social Protection, and Social Dialogue); and the parties noted a lot of challenges in its implementation based on which they modified the areas of interventions in the third programme.

[ILO's Decent Work Country Programme](#), implemented in phases, is a manifestation of the country's commitments to its ratification of the ILO's eight key Conventions - Freedom of Association and Collective Bargaining (C87 and C98); Forced Labour (C27 and C105); Child Labour (C138 and C182); and Equal Remunerations and Discrimination (C100 and C111). Since being granted the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP+) Plus by the European Union (EU) in 2013, enabling Pakistan duty-free access to European Union markets, the country has pledged to uphold 27 International Conventions on human rights, including the ILO ones. On 'Decent Work', Pakistan is committed to the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)-8 calling for provision of decent work for all with the aim to increase job opportunities leading to poverty reduction. This commitment is reflected in PDWP-III. When we talk about decent work, it refers to a work opportunity provided in healthy, socially, economically, and environmentally protected spaces.

Under global and national commitments, Pakistan needs to improve its largely un-unionised labour workforce, especially in the informal sectors such as bricks kilns; and to make these labour-intensive sectors socially and environmentally compliant with a just transition approach.

The construction industry, particularly the brick kilns sector, stands out as a critical area in need of alignment with the principles of 'decent work'. Embracing a 'socially and environmentally compliant' approach means ensuring practices adhere not only to the standards set by the ILO's Decent Work concept and SDG-8 but also resonate with SDG-12 (Sustainable Consumption and Production) and SDG-13 (Climate Action). Additionally, this approach champions broader social protection measures, touching upon health, education, shelter, food, wages, and other socioeconomic facets.

Pakistan's global commitments, manifested through the ratification of ILO Conventions, alignment with the European Union's GSP+ framework, and pledges under SDGs and NDCs, obligate the government to uplift its workforce, especially those in informal sectors like brick kilns. While the Federal and Provincial Governments have labour departments equipped with inspection systems, there are loopholes. Such shortcomings often inadvertently pave the way for labour exploitation.

Building upon the foundation of the 2015 Decent Work Brick Kiln Framework (DWBK-FW) by Dr Saifullah Chaudhry and insights from the [TDEA 2021 Research Report](#), SDPI introduced the 'Socially and Environmentally Compliant Decent Work Bricks Kiln Framework' (SECDWBKF). This revised framework addresses the current challenges and needs of brick kilns in an era of environmental

transitions. It highlights the dual requirement for brick kilns to be both socially and environmentally compliant. The SECDWBKF offers an incentive model, fostering adherence to labour and environmental standards, aligned with Pakistan's global commitments for ecosystem protection amid climate change. Its objectives are multifaceted:

- Encourage brick kiln owners to register their establishments.
- Ensure all workers are registered with Employees' Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI), Social Security, and the Workers Welfare Fund, with kiln owners contributing on their behalf.
- Advocate for brick kiln transitions to [eco-friendly technologies, like Zig Zag](#), to combat environmental degradation.

By adopting the SECDWBKF, brick kiln owners not only ensure environmentally friendly operations, but also create a balanced dynamic with their workers, yielding mutual benefits. This session will be looking to further catalyze discussions on a socially and environmentally compliant construction industry in Pakistan.

### **Panel Organisers**

Dr Shafqat Munir Ahmad, Research Fellow, Resilience Development Program and Director Policy Outreach, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan  
Email: [shafqat@sdpi.org](mailto:shafqat@sdpi.org)

Muhammad Awais Umar, Research Associate, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan  
Email: [awais@sdpi.org](mailto:awais@sdpi.org)

Mr Salman Danish, Research Associate, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad, Pakistan  
Email: [salman@sdpi.org](mailto:salman@sdpi.org)