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The Nation *Mass Communication*
Media and
8-4-97
social sector
(Journalism)

THE two-day (March 28-29) workshop on Social Sector Governance Reporting, jointly sponsored by the Press Institute of Pakistan and the United Nations Development Fund, Pakistan, was well-attended by social scientists, representatives of print and electronic media, advertising industry and Aurat Foundation.

What began with usual pomp and show under the glare of TV cameras and ceremonial inaugural speeches and remarks which were interspersed with pedantic academic jargon and exchanges of platitudes, ended up in serious discussions, in which social issues like child labour, the status of women, the need for effective population planning and healthcare, and the role of media, especially the newspapers, were discussed threadbare. Divided into four sessions, the workshop was heralded by four keynote speeches by eminent specialists which focussed on particular issues, then leaving the floor to the participants for open-ended discussions.

Besides other issues, three main subjects discussed in the workshop were child labour, the status of women, and the role played by the print and electronic media in creating awareness about these social issues.

The representatives of media, especially newspapers, strongly defended their roles in creating awareness about the existence of these problems, at the same time offering their advices as to how best relief could be provided to the victims of societal neglect and exploitation. It was their contention that blame lied with the government and its various departments for inaction and not taking notice of media exposures of social problems. The behaviour of PROs attached with government departments came under sharp criticism as invariably they failed in creating a rapport among different departments of the government, NGOs, social workers and community leaders. Self-seeking politicians were also criticised for a lack of political will to solve the problems of children, women and poor segments of society. "It is our collective hypocrisy that has aggravated the situation and has also created a plethora of social problems," observed a participant.

For want of space, this column is restricted to child labour only, and the role of media in exposing the plight of children working in carpet-manufacturing factories, motor workshops, roadside restaurants and in private houses as domestic servants, and how the media have espoused their causes.

Much before the well-orchestrated din was kicked up in the Western media about the plight of child labour in Pakistan, a civic-conscious producer of Lahore Television aired a long series of weekly programme entitled *Mein aur Aap* which also included several stints related to child labour. Pegged to the theme of exploitation of children, the programmes showed them working in restaurants, brick kilns and factories under brutal, inhuman and squalid conditions.

Earlier, *The Pakistan Times* through its weekly column (with the byline of Rover) published a large number of articles exposing the atrocious conditions in which minor or teenage children were forced to work so

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Earlier, *The Pakistan Times* through its weekly column (with the byline of Rover) published a large number of articles exposing the atrocious conditions in which minor or teenage children were forced to work so that they could support their families. The column started during the second half of the year 1985 continued till the end of 1988. It was, therefore, incorrect to claim that media in Pakistan were not active in creating awareness among the people about the need to provide necessary relief to the little angels who were born in servitude.