

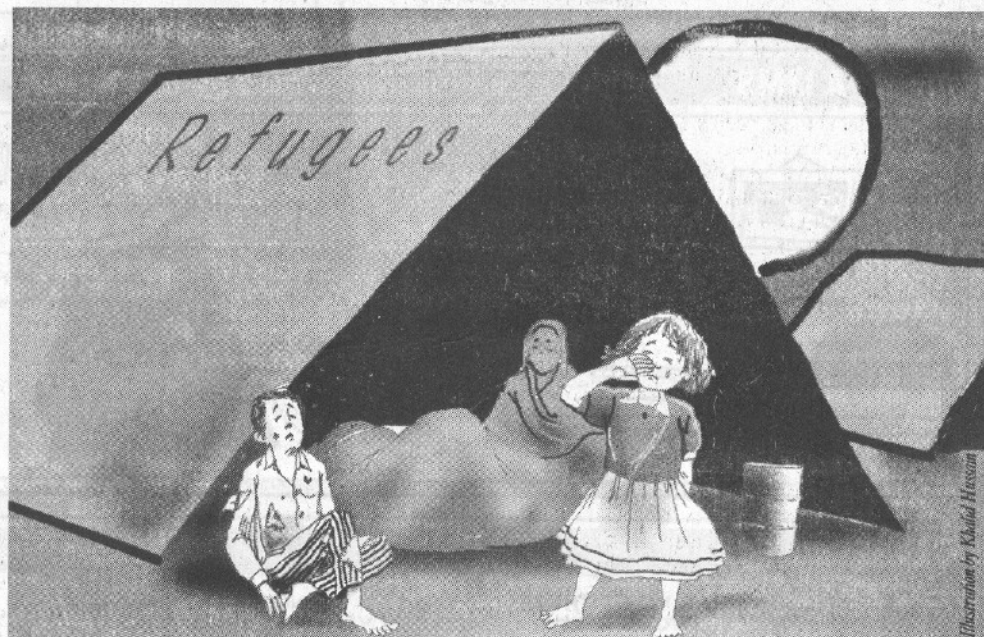
Domestic violence may lead to child abuse

greater danger from the batterer.

Even in households in which children are not themselves physically abused or neglected, they can be victimized by witnessing spousal abuse. Because children do not fully understand the dynamics of domestic violence, they may come to view power and control, aggression and violence as the only means of getting one's needs met. Children may also im-

A variety of family dynamics are at work in homes where spouse abuse leads to child abuse or neglect. Sometimes a child is the unintended victim when he or she attempts to intervene in an attack on a parent. In other instances, a child is accidentally struck by a blow directed at the mother. However, many children are deliberate targets in violent households, **Memoona Arslan** writes about domestic violence linked to child abuse with regard to Children Day.

A growing body of research points to a definite link between adult domestic violence and child abuse. These connections are pervasive. Forty-five to seventy per cent of battered women in shelters report that their batterers have also committed some form of child abuse. Even using the more conservative figure, child abuse is 15 times



more likely to occur in households where adult domestic violence is also present. Women who have been beaten by their spouses are, in turn, reportedly twice as likely as other women to abuse a child. It is also estimated that 3.3 million to 10 million children witness domestic violence each year. Many child witnesses of domestic violence experience increased problems themselves.

These connections make it important for those working in the field of child abuse and neglect to understand the connection between spousal abuse and child abuse, and to respond with treatment and protective resources that recognize the link. Cooperation between professionals working with battered women and abused or neglected children is essential. In practice, formal connections between the two fields are not often in place. They are sorely needed, however, beginning with the initial intake contact with the abused child or battered women, and continuing through assessment of the precipitating incident and family interaction,

treatment planning, intervention strategies, and evaluations of client progress.

A variety of family dynamics are at work in homes where spouse abuse leads to child abuse or neglect. Sometimes a child is the unintended victim when he or she attempts to intervene in an attack on a parent. In other instances, a child is accidentally struck by a blow directed at the mother. However, many children are deliberate targets in violent households. The severity of child abuse, and the manner in which children are abused bears a strong resemblance to the type of maltreatment experienced by their mothers.

The tremendous stress associated with living in a violent situation may also prompt physical abuse of children by those women at risk for such behaviors. Some physical or emotional abuse of children also results from battered women who are so fearful of their spouses' reaction of childhood behavior that they overdiscipline in an attempt to protect the children from what they perceive to be the

itate the violent adult behavior they observe by victimizing younger siblings, peers, and animals. Other children may adopt the victim role, becoming passive and withdrawn in their interactions with other people. Child witnesses of domestic violence may also display an inability to control and express emotion, or to delay gratification.

Only recently have helping professionals begun to coordinate interventions in child abuse and domestic violence. Further work is needed to develop joint screening mechanisms to identify families in which both types of abuse play a role in family dynamics. Assessments must also consider whether a parent has the capacity to care for her children outside of a violent situation. Intervention strategies must recognize the need for safety for victims of both spousal abuse and child abuse through services such as legal advocacy and shelter resources. Most importantly, professionals working in both fields must not lose sight of their ultimate goal—ending violence within families.

Celebrating Children's Day with shattered dreams

Child labour has assumed epidemic proportions in Pakistan. Statistics are unreliable, but the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) last year estimated the number of Pakistani working children to be realistically in the region of 11-12 million. At least half these children are under the age of 10. Despite a recent series of laws prohibiting child labour and indentured servitude, children make up a quarter of the unskilled work force, and can be found in virtually every factory, every workshop, every field, writes **Madiha Qamar.**

Child labor has assumed epidemic proportions in Pakistan. Statistics are unreliable, but the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) last year estimated the number of Pakistani working children to be realistically in the region of 11-12 million. At least half these children are under the age of ten. Despite a recent series of laws prohibiting child labor and indentured servitude, children make up a quarter of the unskilled work force, and can be found in virtually every factory, every workshop, every field. They earn on average a third of the adult wage. Certain industries, notably carpet making and brick making, cannot survive without them. One World Bank economist maintains that Pakistan's economic viability correlates with the number of children in its factories. The child labor pool is all but inexhaustible, owing in part to a birth rate that is among the world's highest and to an education system that can accommodate only about a third of the country's school-age children. Each year millions of children enter the labor force, where they compete with adults—often even with their parents—for what little work is available. In many regions the surplus of cheap child labor has depressed the already inadequate adult wage to the point where a parent and child together now earn less than the parent alone earned a year ago. As long as children are put to work, poverty will spread and standards of living will continue to decline.

To be sure, child labor is an institution throughout the Third World, and its incidence has been increasing in countries that are usually described as advanced. The worldwide population of children under fourteen who work full-time is thought to exceed 200 million. But few countries have done less to abolish or to contain the practice than Pakistan. And fewer still have a ruling class that opposes

workplace reform and human-rights initiatives as vigorously.

The median age of children now entering the Pakistani work force is seven. Two years ago it was eight. Two years from now it may be six. In the lowest castes, children become laborers almost as soon as they can walk. Much of the nation's farmland is worked by toddlers, yoked teams of three-, four-, and five-year-olds who plough, seed, and

ing of their circumstances, their parents teach them that they are expected to pay their way, to make sacrifices, and, if necessary, to travel far from home and live with strangers.

Bonding is common practice among the lower castes, and although the decision to part with their children is not made lightly, parents do not agonize over it. Neither, evidently, do the children, who regard bonding as a rite of passage, the event that transforms them into adults. Many look forward to it in the same way that western children look forward to a first communion or getting a driver's license. They are eager to cast off childhood, even if to do so means taking on adult burdens.

Early in this decade the Pakistan National Assembly enacted

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glean fields from dawn to dusk. On any given morning the canal banks and irrigation ditches in rural villages are lined with urchins who stand no taller than the piles of laundry they wash for their wealthier neighbors. Even the world-class industries of Islamabad, the modern capital, are staffed in large part by children and adolescents; politicians traveling to the National Assembly can't help noticing the ragged youths entering and exiting the brick factories, steel mills, and stone-crushing plants at all hours of the day and night. These children work with a minimum of adult supervision. An overseer comes by periodically to mark their progress and to give them instructions or a few encouraging blows, but for the better part of the workday they are left to themselves.

In rural areas children are raised without health care, sanitation, or education; many are as starved for affection as for food. As soon as they're old enough to have an elementary understand-

two labor laws meant to curb such practices. The first, The Employment of Children Act of 1991, prohibited the use of child labor in hazardous occupations and environments. The second, The Bonded Labor Act of 1992, abolished indentured servitude and the peshgi system. As progressive as these laws were, the government failed to provide for their implementation and enforcement. It also neglected to inform the millions of working children and indentured servants that they were free and released from their debts. We prefer to leave enforcement to the discretion of the police, says a Ministry of Labor official. They understand best the needs of their community. Law is not an absolute. We must expect a certain flexibility on the part of those who enforce it. Could this sometimes mean looking the other way? Absolutely.

Send your suggestions to
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