



## **1. THE NEW POVERTY LINE**

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The new poverty line set by the government classifies 53 to 59 million people out of the population of 200 million, as poor.

The Planning Commission headed by Mr Ahsan Iqbal has taken the initiative of resetting the poverty threshold that was last set in Pakistan in 2001-02 using the food energy intake method.

That method was not representative of the entire population and hence according to the poverty rates based on the 2013-14 re-estimation, the new poverty line is set at Rs3,030.32 per adult equivalent per month, due to which 29.5 percent of the population will be considered poor.

It is commendable that the government has taken this decision to raise the bar to improve the standard of living of the average citizen, but how it hopes to align policy to do that remains vague.

Even though Pakistan has performed well in reducing monetary poverty over the past 15 years, down from nearly 35pc of the population in 2001-02 to under 10pc in 2013-14, there is much to be done.

*The government has been providing Rs100 billion assistance every year to the beneficiaries of programmes like Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) but the concept of welfare has researchers from*

*around the world questioning its legitimacy to improve the lives of marginalised people.*

The Sustainable Development Goals aims to alleviate poverty by creating employment opportunities for the poor, not handing out welfare, which is a short-term solution to a consistent problem.

The government must create a robust policy to ensure that it continues on its path to reducing monetary poverty, and this can only be done when gender parity is reduced, and the poor, both men and women, are empowered.

## **2. 2.1M LIVING IN SLAVERY IN PAKISTAN: REPORT**

*Published in Pakistan Today, June 1, 2016*

More than 45 million men, women and children globally are trapped in modern slavery, far more than previously thought, while Pakistan is among the top five countries which account for 58 per cent of world population living in slavery.

The details were revealed in the 2016 Global Slavery Index, a research report by the Walk Free Foundation, an initiative set up by Australian billionaire mining magnate and philanthropist Andrew Forrest in 2012 to draw attention to the issue.

Behind India was China (3.39 million), Pakistan (2.13 million), Bangladesh (1.53 million) and Uzbekistan (1.23 million).

The report said India had the highest number of people trapped in slavery at 18.35 million,



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while North Korea had the highest incidence (4.37 percent of the population) and the weakest government response.

The report suggested that there were 28 percent more slaves than estimated two years ago, a revision reached through better data collection and research methods.

Modern slavery refers to situations of exploitation that a person cannot leave because of threats, violence, coercion, abuse of power or deception.

They may be held in debt bondage on fishing boats, against their will as domestic servants or trapped in brothels.

Some 124 countries have criminalised human trafficking in line with the UN Trafficking Protocol and 96 have developed national action plans to coordinate the government response.

However, Forrest said more robust measures were needed.

“We call on governments of the top 10 economies of the world to enact laws, at least as strong as the UK Modern Slavery Act 2015, with a budget and capability to ensure organisations are held to account for modern slavery in their supply chains, and to empower independent oversight,” he said.

“I believe in the critical role of leaders in government, business and civil society. Through our responsible use of power, strength of conviction, determination and collective will, we all can lead the world to end slavery.”

As a percentage of the population, Uzbekistan (3.97 percent) and Cambodia (1.65 percent) trailed North Korea, which the study said was the only nation in the world that has not explicitly criminalised any form of modern slavery.

The report also tracked actions and responses to the problem, with governments at the forefront including the United States, Australia, and a host of European nations including Britain, Portugal and Norway.

Those with the weakest action included Iran, Hong Kong and China.

It cited Croatia, Brazil and the Philippines as countries to take positive steps since the last GlobalSlavery Index in 2014, while praising India for making significant progress in addressing the problem.

The firm reporting on modern slavery compiled information from 167 countries with 42,000 interviews in 53 languages to determine the prevalence of the issue and government responses.