

Socio Economic Conditions of Child Labourers in Pakistan: Evidence from the Labour Force Survey

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Introduction

Child labour has emerged as a serious, widespread and growing problem in many parts of the world. Asia has a large number of children employed as child labourers. *Child Labour Survey 1996* reports that there are 3.3 million children working between the ages of 5 and 14 years in Pakistan.

Developed countries have linked trade with child labour through the Harkin Bill and the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Agreement (1994), which banned the market manufactured or mined goods produced in whole or in part by children under 15 years of age. Pakistan is also facing restrictions on some of its exports due to allegations of child labour. However, Pakistan has enacted the Employment of Children Act of 1991, which has banned employment of children below the age of 14 years.¹

The problem of child labour persists even in the presence of trade sanctions and legislation. In fact, trade restrictions and laws are only demand side factors, and they can intensify the problem, which could result in children being diverted to less desirable or more hazardous work, where it can flourish without being noticed. Therefore, mishandling of this issue can make matters go from bad to worse. We should work in a realistic way to deal with this complex issue. The policy makers, in order to combat child labour effectively, need detailed information about child labour. It is therefore relevant to explore the details about child labourers' socio economic profile in detail at the micro level. Further, factors determining parent's decision to send their children to the labour market should be identified in detail.

Keeping in view this background, the present study is an attempt to identify the socio economic features of working and non-working children between the ages of 10-14 years.² Moreover, conditions of working children

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¹ See Hyder (1998) for details.

² In Pakistan, the data about the extent of working children between the ages of 5-14 are not found well documented regularly. The Census and *Labour Force Survey* are two main sources of manpower statistics, but they set the standard age-cut off point at 10 years for labour force participation.

will also be examined in detail. This analysis would enable us to identify a range of policy variables that could be used to address the problem of child labour. It will also identify the parental characteristics of working and non-working children, which is necessary for the formulation of effective policies in reducing and eventually eliminating child labour in Pakistan

Review of Literature

The basic cause of child labour in developing countries is considered to be poverty; [Irfan (1981), Khan (1982), Levy (1985), Hussain (1986) Bequele and Boyden (1988), Ahmed (1990), Noman (1990-91), Boyden (1991), Awan (1992), Grootaert and Kanbur (1995)]. However, poverty alone is not responsible for the practice (Ray 1999). A number of other factors also affect the supply of child labour in developing countries including Pakistan. Child labour contributes to further poverty by pushing down the wage rate in the labour market.

Low wages, high cost of living and lack of adequate social security systems are the main causes of the prevalence of child labour in Hong Kong. [Porter (1975)]. Rodgers and Standing (1981) have associated child work with the mode of production and the structure of the labour market. They found that in an economy where labour intensive production techniques are used, child work would be common. Poorly endowed households are a major cause of child labour [Psacharopoulos and Assiagada (1989)]. High unemployment, unequal distribution of resources and a high dependency ratio push children into joining the labour force [Naseem (1991)]. Older siblings in the household and mother's education have a negative impact on a child's market work. Moreover, gender of the child is important; male children have higher probability of doing market work, while female children have higher probabilities of being engaged in home production [Degraff *et al.* (1993)].

More recently, Grootaert and Kanbur (1995), Basu and Van (1998), Basu (1999), Basu *et al.* (2000) have emphasised the link between household's struggle to survive and the incidence of child labour. According to Boyden (1991), the economic viability of the households depends on placing as many members as possible in the labour market. Ghayur (1997) discusses the existence of poverty in a household that pushes a child to work. While discussing the child's contribution to the household's total income, Ray (1999) concludes that the share of child earning in the household's total earning is considerably higher in Pakistan than Peru. Baland and Robinson (2000) have developed a model, in which they incorporate inequality between families. Rich families do not send their children to work,

whereas poor families do. So poverty is a major determinant of child labour. Basu *et al.* (2000) develop a model and conclude that household survival becomes an overwhelming concern when adult male members of the household become unemployed, due to unfavorable labour market conditions, then households are faced with the prospect of sending their children to work. Binder and Scrogin (1999) conclude that child's wages, parents earning capacity, household expenditure and composition play an important role in the labour force participation of children. Patrinos and Psacharopoulos (1995) investigate determinants of child labour in Paraguay and find that poverty; mother's education and number of siblings in the household have a significant effect on children's working status. Burki and Fasih (1998) analysed the supply side determinants of child labour in Punjab, Pakistan by using a reduced form model. They concluded that age and gender affect child's probability of working. Parent's characteristics and number of siblings in different age groups play a major role in children's schooling-work decisions.

Most of the research work is based on case studies covering a few villages, a city, a sub-national area and at best a province, state or an equivalent region,³ probably because of lack of systematic data collection and availability of micro-based data on child labour. Poverty is considered the most important causal factor for child labour in all these studies and provides valuable insights into the supply of child labour. However, we need to go further and ask the next question: What specific characteristics of poverty at the household level cause child labour? The proposed study will investigate the nature of child labour prevailing in Pakistan and will explore the causes of child labour in Pakistan by focusing on its supply side determinants. As child labour has a number of economic consequences, this problem needs to be analysed in detail.

Data Source

In Pakistan, a primary source of labour force data is the *Labour Force Survey* (LFS),⁴ which has been conducted annually since 1963 by the Federal Bureau of Statistics, Government of Pakistan. The purpose of the LFS is to provide policy makers and researchers with individual and household level data needed to analyse the impact of policy initiatives on households and individuals. The LFS records labour force participation for all household members of above 10 years and has questions on the labour market, education and socioeconomic

³ Bequele and Boyden (1988), Myers (1991), Jomo (1992), Groonsekere (1993) and Boyden and Myers (1995) report case studies.

⁴ See *Labour Force Survey* 1996-97, pages 27-29 for the detailed sampling methodology. Rural urban domain are also discussed in the above mentioned pages.

conditions of households. We used micro data tapes of the *Labour Force Survey* 1996-97 for this study, which has 22,060 households and 133,493 individuals. We follow the age limit of 10-14 in order to capture better information regarding child labour. The total children of age 10-14 are 17,119, and by excluding AJK, we have a sample of 15,749 children. By deleting some value data, we have a sample of 5,500 children.

Child Characteristics

Table 1 presents the distribution of children by location. The sample size of the population aged 10-14 years comprises 5,500 individuals, of which 363 (6.6 per cent) are classified as child workers and 5,137 (93.4 per cent) are classified as non-working. Among the child workers, the majority resides in rural areas (64.2 per cent), while most of the non-workers are in urban area.

Table-1: Distribution of Children by Geographical Location

Region	Working Child	Non-Working Child	Total
Urban	130 (35.8) [3.9]	3191 (62.2) [96.1]	3321 (60.4)
Rural	233 (64.2) [10.7]	1946 (37.8) [89.3]	2179 (39.6)
Total	363 [6.6]	5137 [93.4]	5500

Source: Labour Force Survey 1996-97

Note: Values in round brackets are column wise percentages and in square brackets are row wise percentages in all Tables.

Table 2 reports the distribution of child workers across the five provinces, which reveals that the Punjab received the greatest inflow of child labour (69.7%). In Tables 3 & 4 child labour is disaggregated by age and gender. We observe that as age increases child labour increases. Near 80% working children are in the age group of 12-14 years. We found that the percentage of male children engaged in labour is higher than their counter parts. This may be due to the fact that they are supposed to be the earners of their households.

Table-2: Distribution of Children by Province

Province	Working Child	Non-Working Child	Total
Punjab	253 (69.7) [10.2]	2237 (43.5) [89.8]	2490 (45.3)
Sindh	54 (14.9) [3.9]	1323 (25.8) [96.1]	1377 (25.0)
NWFP	53 (14.6) [5.3]	940 (18.3) [94.7]	993 (18.1)
Baluchistan	3 (0.8) [0.5]	637 (12.4) [99.5]	640 (11.6)
Total	363 [6.6]	5137 [93.4]	5500

Source: Labour Force Survey 1996-97

Table-3: Distribution of Children by Age Group

Age groups	Working Child	Non-Working Child	Total
10-11 Years	74 (20.4) [3.5]	2012 (39.2) [96.5]	2086 (37.9)
12-14 Years	289 (79.6) [8.4]	3125 (60.8) [91.5]	3414 (62.1)
Total	363 [6.6]	5137 [93.4]	5500

Source: Labour Force Survey 1996-97

Table-4: Distribution of children by sex

Sex	Working Child	Non-Working Child	Total
Male	271 (74.7) [9.2]	2667 (51.9) [90.8]	2938 (53.4)
Female	92 (25.3) [3.6]	2470 (48.1) [96.4]	2562 (46.6)
Total	363 [6.6]	5137 [93.4]	5500

Source: Labour Force Survey 1996-97

Educational qualification of the children is discussed in Table 5. The figures here indicate that 75.2 per cent of working children and 16.7 per cent of non-working children have no formal education. As educational level improves, the incidence of child labour decreases. In the middle class only 1.7 per cent children are labourers. Their illiteracy and lack of skills makes them vulnerable, turning them into helpless beings who can be easily targeted and preyed upon throughout their lives. After this their children must suffer the same fate resulting in a vicious circle of child labour. Table 6 presents the distribution of children by technical training, which shows that 90 per cent child workers acquired no training before entering the labour market.

Table-5: Distribution of Children by Educational Qualification

Educational Level	Working Child	Non-Working Child	Total
No formal education	273 (75.2) [24.2]	857 (16.7) [75.8]	1130 (20.5)
Incomplete primary	38 (10.5) [2.2]	1705 (33.2) [97.8]	1743 (31.7)
Completed primary	46 (12.7) [2.1]	2176 (42.4) [97.9]	2222 (40.4)
Middle	6 (1.7) [1.5]	399 (7.8) [98.5]	405 (7.4)
Total	363 [6.6]	5137 [93.4]	5500

Source: Labour Force Survey 1996-97

Table-6: Distribution of Child Workers by Technical Training

Technical training	Working Child	Non-Working Child	Total
No Training	327 (90.1) [6.4]	4752 (92.5) [93.6]	5079 (92.3)
Training	36 (9.9) [8.6]	385 (7.5) [91.4]	421 (7.7)
Total	363 [6.6]	5137 [93.4]	5500

Source: Labour Force Survey 1996-97

As we discussed earlier the majority of child labourers has not acquired formal education or any technical education. So they have to join elementary (unskilled) occupations, 35.5% belongs to this category (Table 7). It is evident from Table 8 that most child labourers are contract cultivators by employment status, the reason may be that the majority resides in rural areas. And 38.8% children work in the country side (see Table 9).

Table 10 describes that 36.9% child labourers worked 40-50 hours weekly and 27% children work above 50 hours per week. It is evident from Table 11 that 38% working children are not paid. May be they work only because their parents are working there already, or may be most of the children who worked are paid in the form of food and clothes. According to Table 12, approximately 58% children receive up to 1000 rupees per month.

Table-7: Distribution of Children by Occupation

Occupations	Working Child
Legislators, senior officials and managers	5 (1.4)
Professionals	1 (0.3)
Technicians and associate professionals	5 (1.4)
Clerks	3 (0.8)
Service workers and shop and market sales workers	32 (8.8)
Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	90 (24.8)
Craft and related workers	87 (24.0)
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	11 (3.0)
Elementary (unskilled) occupations	129 (35.5)
Total	363

Source: Labour Force Survey 1996-97

Table-8: Distribution of Children by Employment Status

Employment Status	Working Child
Regular paid employee with fixed wage	58 (16.0)
Casual paid employee	49 (13.5)
Paid worker by piece rate or work performed	91 (25.1)
Paid non-family apprentice	27 (7.4)
Own account worker non-agriculture	26 (7.2)
Own account worker agriculture	3 (0.8)
Owner cultivator	3 (0.8)
Contract cultivator	102 (28.1)
Unpaid family worker agriculture	4 (1.1)
Total	363

Source: Labour Force Survey 1996-97

Table-9: Distribution of Children by Place of Work

Place of Work	Working Child
At his/her own dwelling	39 (10.7)
At family or friends dwelling	3 (0.8)
At the employer's house	22 (6.1)
On the street	12 (3.3)
On country side	141 (38.8)
In a shop, business, office or industry	134 (36.9)
Other	12 (3.3)
Total	363

Source: Labour Force Survey 1996-97

Table-10: Distribution of Children by Weekly Hours of Work

No of Hours (per week)	Working Child
Up to 10 Hours	3 (0.8)
10-20 Hours	7 (1.9)
20-30 Hours	44 (12.1)
30-40 Hours	77 (21.2)
40-50 Hours	134 (36.9)
50-60 Hours	57 (15.7)
60-70 Hours	28 (7.7)
70-80 Hours	11 (3.0)
Above 80 Hours	2 (0.6)
Total	363

Source: Labour Force Survey 1996-97

Table-11: Distribution of Children by Periodicity of Payments

Periodicity of payments	Working Child
No Wages	138 (38.0)
Daily	55 (15.2)
Weekly	46 (12.7)
Fortnightly	7 (1.9)
Monthly	73 (20.1)
Other periodicity	2 (0.6)
Piece rate basis for service performed	39 (10.7)
Other	3 (0.8)
Total	363

Source: Labour Force Survey 1996-97

Table-12: Distribution of Child by Monthly Wages

Wages (in rupees)	Working Child
Up to 1000	129 (57.58)
1000-2000	71 (31.69)
2000-3000	19 (8.48)
3000-4000	2 (0.8)
4000 & Above	3 (1.33)
Total	224

Source: Labour Force Survey 1996-97

Parental Characteristics

Father's occupation reflects the socio-economic status of the household, and the periodicity of his earnings reflects the stability in occupation, income and socio-economic status of a household. Table 13 shows that the father's occupation strongly affects child labour. People engaged in white-collar jobs are less likely to send their children to work. The children whose fathers are blue-collar workers are more likely to send their children to work to raise the income of the family. We found that 54% children whose father's belong to elementary (unskilled) occupation are in child labour. To some extent the occupational status of the fathers also affects the choice of the occupation of their children.

Periodicity of payment of father's earnings is inversely related to child labour. The supply of child labour will be lower in households where the father has a stable and reliable source of earnings. The periodicity of earnings is ranked in the following way: the highest status is assigned to those who get a monthly income followed by those whose income is weekly, daily, fortnightly and piece rate basis for services performed, etc. Table 14 shows that there exists a strong relationship between the periodicity of father's earnings and incidence of child labour. Near 45% of the total-working children comes from households where the father's earning is on a daily or weekly or monthly basis. Among the total non-working children, 70.3 per cent of fathers earn on a monthly basis; while among the total working children 64.8 per cent of fathers do not earn on a monthly basis.

Table-13: Distribution of Children by Father's Occupation

Occupation	Working Child	Non-Working Child	Total
Legislators, senior officials and managers	3 (0.9) [0.9]	322 (6.4) [99.1]	325 (6.0)
Professionals	5 (1.5) [1.0]	512 (10.1) [99.0]	517 (9.6)
Technicians and associate professionals	4 (1.2) [1.2]	331 (6.5) [98.8]	335 (6.2)
Clerks	4 (1.2) [0.8]	496 (9.8) [99.2]	500 (9.3)
Service workers and shop and market sales workers	35 (10.3) [5.0]	670 (13.3) [95.0]	705 (13.1)
Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	36 (10.6) [21.6]	131 (2.6) [78.4]	167 (3.1)
Craft and related workers	51 (15.0) [7.3]	650 (12.9) [92.7]	701 (13.0)
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	19 (5.6) [3.6]	515 (10.2) [96.4]	534 (9.9)
Elementary (unskilled) occupations	184 (54.0) [11.4]	1427 (28.2) [88.6]	1611 (29.9)
Total	341 [6.3]	5054 [93.7]	5395

Source: Labour Force Survey 1996-97

Family's poor economic condition is one of the important determinants of child labour. The monthly wage of father and child labour are inversely related; as father's wages improve the incidence of child labour decreases. It can be seen from Table 15 that approximately 76% working children's father receive monthly wages up to 3000.

Table-14: Distribution of Children by Periodicity of Earnings of Fathers

Periodicity of Payments	Working Child	Non-Working Child	Total
Daily	92 (29.5) [10.6]	776 (15.7) [89.4]	868 (16.5)
Weekly	47 (15.1) [11.4]	365 (7.4) [88.6]	412 (7.8)
Fortnightly	8 (2.6) [13.8]	50 (1.0) [86.2]	58 (1.1)
Monthly	110 (35.3) [3.1]	3477 (70.3) [96.9]	3587 (68.2)
Other periodicity	7 (2.2) [26.9]	19 (0.4) [73.1]	26 (0.5)
Piece rate basis for service performed	43 (13.8) [14.7]	250 (5.1) [85.3]	293 (5.6)
Other	5 (1.6) [38.5]	8 (0.2) [61.5]	13 (0.2)
Total	312 [5.9]	4945 [94.1]	5257

Source: Labour Force Survey 1996-97

Table-15: Distribution of Children by Monthly Wages of Fathers

Wages (in rupees)	Working Child	Non-Working Child	Total
Up to 1000	29 (9.3) [14.2]	175 (3.5) [85.8]	204 (3.9)
1001 to 2000	127 (40.7) [12.9]	854 (17.3) [87.1]	981 (18.7)
2001 to 3000	80 (25.6) [4.9]	1547 (31.3) [95.1]	1627 (30.9)
3001 to 4000	50 (16.0) [4.3]	1121 (22.7) [95.7]	1171 (22.3)
4001 to 5000	8 (2.6) [1.7]	473 (9.6) [98.3]	481 (9.1)
5001 to 10000	12 (3.8) [2.1]	565 (11.4) [97.9]	577 (11.0)
10001 & above	6 (1.9) [2.7]	210 (4.2) [97.2]	216 (2.2)
Total	312 [5.9]	4945 [94.1]	5257

Source: Labour Force Survey 1996-97

Table 16 presents mother's monthly wages and incidence of child labour in each income category. It can be observed that 45.1 per cent of mothers of working children are found in the lowest income group of up to Rs.1000. 38 percent of the total-working children are found in the next income category of Rs. 1001-2000. Further up in the income category where mother's wages are Rs.2001-3000 per month, the incidence of child labour is only 14.1 per cent. When mother's wages are Rs 3001-4000 per month, working children form just 1.4 per cent of the total working children. Mother's occupation has a similar effect on child labour as in the case of father's occupation. Incidence of child labour was found to be highest in households where the mother had an elementary (unskilled) occupation, (Table 17).

Table-16: Distribution of Children by Monthly Wages of Mothers

Wages (in rupees)	Working Child	Non-Working child	Total
Up to 1000	32 (45.1) [22.5]	110 (32.1) [77.5]	142 (34.3)
1001 to 2000	27 (38.0) [19.4]	112 (32.7) [80.6]	139 (33.6)
2001 to 3000	10 (14.1) [14.9]	57 (16.6) [85.1]	67 (16.2)
3001 to 4000	1 (1.4) [2.9]	33 (9.6) [97.1]	34 (8.2)
4001 & above	1 (1.4) [3.1]	31 (9.0) [96.9]	32 (3.6)
Total	71 [17.1]	343 [82.9]	414

Source: Labour Force Survey 1996-97

Table-17: Distribution of Children by Mother's Occupation

Occupation	Working Child	Non-Working Child	Total
Legislators, senior officials and managers	1 (0.9) [12.5]	7 (1.5) [87.5]	8 (1.4)
Professionals	0	63 (13.2) [10.0]	63 (10.6)
Technicians and associate professionals	0	54 (11.3) [9.1]	54 (9.1)
Clerks	0	3 (0.6)	3 (0.5)
Service workers and shop and market sales workers	13 (11.4) [17.8]	60 (12.6) [82.2]	73 (12.3)
Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	31 (27.2) [23.0]	104 (21.8) [77.0]	135 (22.8)
Craft and related workers	10 (8.8) [12.2]	72 (15.1) [87.8]	82 (13.9)
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	1 (0.9) [20.0]	4 (0.8) [80.0]	5 (0.8)
Elementary (unskilled) occupations	58 (50.9) [34.3]	111 (23.2) [65.7]	169 (28.5)
Total	114 [19.3]	478 [80.7]	592

Source: Labour Force Survey 1996-97

Uneducated or poorly educated parents are another cause of child labour. There is an inverse relationship between parental education and supply of child labour. Educated parents are well aware of the worth of educating their children. Illiterate parents consider that sending their children to school is very costly and just a wastage of time and money. So they take into account the direct and opportunity cost of educating their children. Table 18 and 19 show a negative relationship between parental education status and child labour. As the educational level of parents increases, the prevalence of child labour decreases. The highest incidence of child labour is in the households

where the parents have no formal education. Table 18 shows that near 80 per cent fathers of working children have no formal education; in case of mother's education this figure goes up to 95 per cent (see Table 19). The incidence of child labour drops to zero where the father's educational level is postgraduate and the mother's level of education is intermediate. It can be seen that mother's education has a greater impact on child labour as compared to father's education. Incidence of child labour is 3 per cent, where the mother's educational level is incomplete primary. A further drop is noted in the households where the mothers have completed primary education; child labour drops to 1.1 per cent. Child labour declines further to 0.6 per cent when the mother's educational level is metric.

Table-18: Distribution of Children by Father's Educational Qualifications

Educational Level	Working Child	Non-Working Child	Total
No Formal Education	290 (79.9) [12.3]	2059 (40.1) [87.7]	2349 (42.7)
Incomplete Primary	15 (4.1) [7.6]	183 (3.6) [92.4]	198 (3.6)
Primary	27 (7.4) [4.6]	554 (10.8) [95.4]	581 (10.6)
Middle	16 (4.4) [3.1]	506 (9.9) [96.9]	522 (9.5)
Metric	10 (2.8) [1.3]	768 (15.0) [98.7]	778 (14.1)
Intermediate	2 (0.6) [0.5]	420 (8.2) [99.5]	422 (7.7)
Degree	3 (0.8) [0.6]	481 (9.4) [99.4]	484 (8.8)
Post Graduate	0	166 (3.2)	166 (3.0)
Total	363 [6.6]	5137 [93.4]	5500

Source: Labour Force Survey 1996-97

Table-19: Distribution of Children by Mother's Educational Qualifications

Educational Level	Working Child	Non-Working Child	Total
No Formal Education	345 (95.0) [8.2]	3857 (75.1) [91.8]	4202 (76.4)
Incomplete Primary	11 (3.0) [2.1]	521 (10.1) [97.9]	532 (9.7)
Primary	4 (1.1) [1.5]	269 (5.2) [98.5]	273 (5.0)
Middle	1 (0.3) [0.4]	283 (5.5) [99.6]	284 (5.2)
Metric	2 (0.6) [1.8]	112 (2.2) [98.2]	114 (2.1)
Intermediate	0	82 (1.6)	82 (1.5)
Degree	0	13 (0.3)	13 (0.2)
Total	363 [6.6]	5137 [93.4]	5500

Source: Labour Force Survey 1996-97

Conclusion and Policy Implications

This study is an attempt to describe the socio economic conditions of child labour in Pakistan and to highlight differences between households with working children and those households with out any child workers. It also discusses the labour market conditions of child workers by using *Labour Force Survey 1996-97*. Our results show that a higher proportion of children between the age cohorts of 12-14 years are involved in work and the majority of them are male. Nearly, 70 per cent reside in the Punjab and 64 per cent belong to rural areas. Working children are found uneducated and working without any technical training. The majority work in the elementary (unskilled) occupations. Around 39 per cent of child workers work in the countryside. Approximately, 58 per cent of working children earn monthly wages up to 1000 rupees and the majority work nearly 40-50 hours per week. Most of the fathers of working children are involved in elementary occupations. About 41 per cent of fathers earn incomes between 1000-2000

rupees monthly, while 45 per cent of mother's monthly income ranges up to 1000. It is observed that around 80 per cent of fathers of working children had no formal education. In case of mothers this figure goes up to 95 per cent. Evidence suggests that unbearable economic pressure forces the parents to send their children to work. Children are compelled to share the economic burden of their families. Parent's occupational status and educational level are together linked to child labour.

From the above discussion, several implications for policy makers emerge which can serve as guidelines for the eventual elimination of child labour. The problem of child labour cannot be eliminated merely by the implementation of child labour laws. There must be an easy access to education; it would not only increase the literacy rate but also decrease the incidence of child labour as a large number of children work due to low economic status of their families. Non-formal education programmes can be devised to enable working children to upgrade their skills. Economic incentives should be offered to adults to compensate for the loss of that income which results from the school education of their offspring. Adult's literacy programmes should also be promoted. Increased employment and earning opportunities for adult household members should be created.

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