

## The social and cultural issues that continue to drive bonded labor in Pakistan, despite its illegality.

**SURG** | Social Science and Journalism (SSJ) | *Tags: Group Project; International Travel; Interviews; Creative Output; Journalistic Output; Non-English Language Proficiency*

*This cover page is meant to focus your reading of the sample proposal, summarizing important aspects of proposal writing that the author did well, or could have improved. **Review the following sections before reading the sample.** The proposal is also annotated throughout to highlight key elements of the proposal's structure and content.*



Proposal Strengths	Areas for Improvement
The intended audiences is mentioned and used to justify the project's methodology in terms of its potential impact.	Field-specific jargon, like "long form feature" and "fixers" are not always defined in simple terms.
Both the documentary and long-form methods are justified and situated in terms of how they address the overall research question and the impact of the research.	
The location/country is justified, and the proposal addresses the researchers' language abilities.	
How the researchers would get access to their study subjects is described in detail, and with careful consideration of the vulnerable populations they were studying.	
A clear timeline was laid out in the methods, adding clarity and support for how feasible this study would be.	



Other Key Features to Take Note Of
The students have been de-identified. If you are writing a group project, you will want to refer to yourself by name throughout the proposal. Group projects are allotted 1 additional page beyond the 2 page limit for every person added to the project. Each group member should have a distinct role in the project and write a distinct preparation section.
This study was conducted on a vulnerable population, which requires extensive planning and considerations. If you are considering conducting research with a vulnerable population you should work closely with your professor and the Office of Undergraduate Research early on in the process to ensure you are taking the appropriate steps.
SURG proposals do not require IRB submission at time of application. However, the students must include CITI Training Certificate in Social and Behavioral Research in the appendix of their grant application; this appendix was removed from the sample grant for anonymity. Please see the Human Subjects Research section of our website for additional details.



Names of researchers and contacts have been de-identified

### The issue of Bonded Labor in Pakistan Student 1, Student 2, Student 3

Identifies study location and justification

Pakistan is still a new country in many ways. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that it is still battling various social, cultural and political issues inside its borders. One of these is the internationally agreed upon form of modern slavery: bonded labor. Despite being illegal in most countries where it is found, rights groups say bonded labor is one of the most widespread methods of forcing people to work against their will. The UN identifies 12 million people around the world who are classified as bonded labor (Sayah, 2009). Laborers across Pakistan drown in debt that they cannot pay off. In return, they agree to work in various industries owned by their bonders, such as agriculture and brick kilns, in hopes of someday paying off their loans. However, these industries are riddled in corruption, and the laborers, therefore, spend their entire life trying to pay off their loan (Chagani, 2015). At times, this can go on for generations. To illustrate how widespread this issue is, there are roughly 20,000 brick kilns across Pakistan. Most of them hire thousands of bonded laborers to keep their manufacturing going. Most of them are obscured with corruption and bonders keep increasing interest and adding expenses while paying the laborers a salary of \$5 a day (Sayah, 2009). To explore why this is the case, Student 1, Student 2 and Student 3's project will be to produce a documentary and long form feature on the social and cultural issues that keep bonded labor an active practice. This multimedia journalism project will primarily aim to target the general public, in order to raise awareness, and international humanitarian organizations that work to abolish forms of modern slavery, such as bonded labor.

As far as the Pakistani government is concerned, the bonded labor issue has been solved. Bonded labor is illegal in Pakistan. Article 3 of the constitution eliminates exploitation in the workplace, and Article 11 forbids the existence and facilitation of slavery, forced labor, and human trafficking in any form. Additionally, bonded laborers are forced to forgo their fundamental Constitutional freedoms, such as freedom of movement (Article 15), freedom of assembly (Article 16), freedom of association (Article 17), freedom of profession (Article 18), freedom of speech (Article 19), and the right to be equal citizens (Article 25-A).

In addition, special laws, such as the Bonded Labor System Abolition Act of 1992, have been enacted to abolish bonded labor. Section 4 of this Act frees all bonded laborers from the obligation to serve any creditor. It also makes void any agreements that bound them to this service. This act also requires the restoration of the bonded laborer's property, any and all of which may have been forcibly taken by the creditor for recovery of his debt (Bonded Labour in Pakistan, 2017).

However, in Pakistan, 2.3 million people across the country still suffer as bonded labor (Rafi, 2015). This issue in Pakistan only gained international coverage when Brandon Stanton, the photographer behind Humans of New York, visited Pakistan and shone a light on these laborers' plight. His photographs of their meager working conditions and their stories helped raise over \$2 million for the Bonded Labor Liberation Front (BLLF), a local organization that works to help free the laborers from their debt (Rafi, 2015). Syeda Ghulam Fatima, an activist and head of the BLLF has been harassed and beaten for her work in the area and yet chooses to remain active in the public eye in hopes of continuing to raise awareness. In an interview with a local newspaper, Dawn, she said: "It took someone from a different country coming in and spreading the word about this social ill that plagues our nation," (Chagani, 2015).

This is where we want to step in and continue where Stanton left off. We believe that what continues to drive bonded labor are the social issues that poverty-driven areas face, such as: lack of finances to provide for a family and few employment opportunities in rural areas. Through our project, we hope to answer the question of "What social and cultural issues continue to drive bonded labor in Pakistan, despite its illegality?"

This film will be relevant to two audiences: The first, our primary audience, will be the Pakistani public. Many people are aware that bonded labor exists but they do not know the reasons behind it. Through our project, we will raise awareness of how bonded laborers are treated, why the practice continues and what is being done to abolish it. Our secondary audience are the international human rights organizations that also work to abolish forms of modern slavery, such as bonded labor. Very few of these

"long form feature" needs definition

Justifies audience & includes an artist statement on what these researchers aim to accomplish through their project

Clear research aim/question

Justifies why gap should be filled

Background pulls from a variety of sources. Not all background must be scholarly literature, but non-scholarly literature should be contextualized within scholarly literature

Identifies gap(s) in knowledge

Addresses intended audiences

exist in Pakistan and, through our project, we want to encourage more international organizations to settle in Pakistan where they can contribute to the efforts of abolishing it.

Our project will include a short documentary and a long form feature piece that will look at the issue of bonded labor through three different lenses: the bonders, the bonded, and the organizations trying to help the labors. The documentary will focus on the relationship between these organizations and the bonded labors and understanding why abolishing it is unsuccessful as of yet. The feature piece will focus on the bonders themselves, seeking to understand why they continue to participate in this illegal practice. Since anonymity will be the utmost concern for bonders, the feature piece will give them a chance to speak freely and honestly under partial anonymity, such as the use of a first-name only. In this way, through the use of two different media, we will cover the story from every angle possible.

★ Clear aims established for each component of the project

To establish relationships with the different stakeholders within our project, Student 1 and Student 2 are already working with two fixers in Pakistan – [contact 1] and [contact 2] (local contacts in Appendix A) – who can provide the local assistance. Tariq, a lawyer in Pakistan, has worked on pro bono bonded labor cases. [Contact 2], a local journalist, has helped various crews cover socially taboo topics in Pakistan. We will look to [contact 1] and [Contact 2] to understand the best way to interview our subjects. Meanwhile, we have also gotten in touch with [Contact 3], an anti-bonded labor activist for over 10 years. Her familiarity with the issue is helping us navigate our way through this complex issue. Her input is also crucial in helping us contextualize, frame, and structure our documentary and feature piece. She will also be helpful in getting us in touch with ex-bonded laborers, whom she works with as part of her practice.

★ Access to study populations/sites addressed thoroughly. Appendix includes proof of contact

While in Pakistan, Student 1 will be the producer and Student 3 will be the cinematographer for the documentary. Once the footage is collected, Student 1 and Student 3 will co-direct the final product. Student 2 will be in charge of the long form feature piece. Both Student 1 and Student 2 will work together on logistics of setting up interviews, as they are both Pakistani nationals (with Student 1 a Pakistani resident). For the interviews, Student 1 will coordinate with [contact 1], [contact 2], and [contact 3] to set-up these interviews. This will include ensuring our interviewees understand our project and interview structure. During the interviews themselves, Student 3 will film and audio record, while Student 1 and Student 2 will conduct interviews in Urdu or Punjabi, the local language and dialect. This will eliminate the language barrier and further ensure that the interviewees are comfortable speaking to us and understand the project's goal.

★ Clear each student has a unique contribution to the project

★ Language is addressed

Initially, we will start with interviewing ex-bonded laborers. They will be the main subject of the documentary and feature piece, as they are central to the issue. We understand the heightened risks that exist for current bonded labors to talk to us. This is why we want to reach out to those who have successfully left this system as they do not have those risks associated and will have the incentive of telling their story. During our interviews, we hope to understand why the ex-bonded laborers took the loans in the first place, how they became unable to pay it off and wound up in the system, how they were treated and their lives as bonded laborers, and, finally, what helped free them from it, and other relevant questions (full list of interview questions in Appendix B)

★ Addresses vulnerable population considerations

Secondly, we will also be reaching out to lawyers who deal with cases of bonded labor as well as humanitarian organizations that are working in Pakistan to rehabilitate people suffering from bonded labor. This is also where [contact 3] is a crucial contact as she can coordinate for us to meet other lawyers and humanitarian organizations that are trying to curb bonded labor. During the interviews, we will talk about what they have done so far, but essentially we will focus on what is holding them back (Appendix C for interview questions). While only the documentary will focus on their relationship with the laborers, the information these humanitarians and lawyers provide will still help contextualize both media outcomes for readers and viewers who are not familiar with the bonded labor situation locally.

The feature piece will look at the current bonders that own these laborers. The few stories that exist on this issue tend to demonize the bonders. Our incentive to get them to talk to us will be the opposite: their chance to humanize their role in this issue. By promising partial anonymity – such as using only a first or last name – we will diminish certain risks. Under these one-name conditions, bonders have previously talked to journalists, and [contact 2] has ensured us that he can get us in touch with them. Student 1 will coordinate logistics with [contact 2] and the bonders. This includes disclosing the interview

★ Assertion about previous work should be cited

structure and questions to the bonders (Appendix D for interview questions). With these interviews, Student 2 hopes to get insights to their rationale behind their bonded labor operations – all of which will be talked about in the feature.

We also want to incorporate the story of a currently bonded labor but the risks of talking to us – either on video or in writing – are much higher as their lives are linked to their work. While we conduct interviews with organizations and bonders, we will continue trying to find a currently bonded labor to talk to us. We will request the organizations and bonders to put us in touch with currently bonded labor which will, hopefully, minimize the risk than if we approach them ourselves. However, we will not base our whole project around them just yet. If we find one, they will replace the role of the ex-bonded labors. If not, our project will continue to stand as currently structured.

When we are not meeting with our interviewees, Student 1, Student 2 and Student 3 will sort and go over the collected material, planning out what is still needed and coordinating with [contact 1] and [contact 2] to get additional logistics sorted.

We will work on our project from 22nd June to 17th August in the province of Punjab. Our main place of residence will be the city of Lahore – to which Student 1 is a local – but we will travel around the province to where the factories and agricultural land is located on which the bonded laborers work. Of these, we will spend the first three weeks reaching out to and interviewing organizations and bonders simultaneously. We will spend four weeks with the bonded labor themselves as theirs is a more sensitive story and, therefore, more time consuming to tell accurately. Finally, we will leave our last week as our contingency reporting week – for any last minute filming and notes before we return home. We will discuss our progress with our faculty advisors, Professor Abraham Abusharif for the feature piece and Professor Danielle Beverly for the documentary, through different points of the reporting process to ensure we have the best material to work with and how we can move forward with it. Both professors hold a wealth of knowledge and experience in their respective fields.

As a journalism major, Student 2 has taken various courses such as Enterprise Reporting and Storytelling: Magazine and Feature Writing that have skilled her for this task. She has reported on various socially offensive issues in Qatar – such as dating in a conservative society and questioning the healthcare system available for women with breast cancer. As a Pakistani national, she also feels it is her duty to voice the stories that exist in her own country where, in the future, she hopes to live, work and report. During her current Journalism Residency at National Public Radio, she has already reported and researched on issues of identity, race, religion, and culture. These experiences will help her fully explore the issue of bonded labor through her writing.

Student 1 was born and raised in Pakistan and knows the culture and language very well. In high school, he co-founded an NGO which focused on education and health and cultivated his passion for volunteering and social work, leading him to travel to Zambia, Nepal, and Romania on service trips. He will be the on ground contact person for the team and will coordinate with the fixers. Student 1 knows the language and the cultural relevance of the issue very well. He has also taken courses such as Media Construction, Digital Cinema, Long Take Cinematography, and Special Effects Cinematography that equip him with the required skillset to film and edit the documentary. He has also been a cinematographer for two Studio20Q movies: 9956 and The Heartbreak movie. By participating in this research, Student 1 hopes to gain deeper understanding of social issues faced in Pakistan and help find a solution for them. His goal is to work for a humanitarian organization, such as United Nations or Reach Out to Asia, and this project will help actualize that goal.

Student 3, a Singapore national, has taken MIT190, Directing, Digital Cinema and – just recently – a documentary class this winter quarter. For the class, he produced and directed a short documentary about the camaraderie between firemen of Evanston Fire Station Two. Through this experience, he learned how to build a relationship with the subjects in order for them to get comfortable in front of the camera. In class too, he learned how to manage feedback and apply them to his project. Student 3 has also previously gotten two grants in Qatar to produce short fiction films: 9956, a mockumentary and How to Get Over a Heartbreak, a film still undergoing post-production. 9956 was screened in film festivals in Qatar and in New York. Through these experiences, As the film needs to reach humanitarian

Timeline aids in arguing the work is feasible

Each student's distinct role is outlined throughout the proposal and each student has a separate preparation section

organizations, it is important to understand how to reach them most effectively. Therefore, Student 3 will be enrolling himself in the Finishing class, a class from the RTVF department, next quarter. In the class, he will work on his firemen documentary to a point that it is fit for the intended audience. This experience will be useful when it comes to finishing the bonded labor documentary for viewing.

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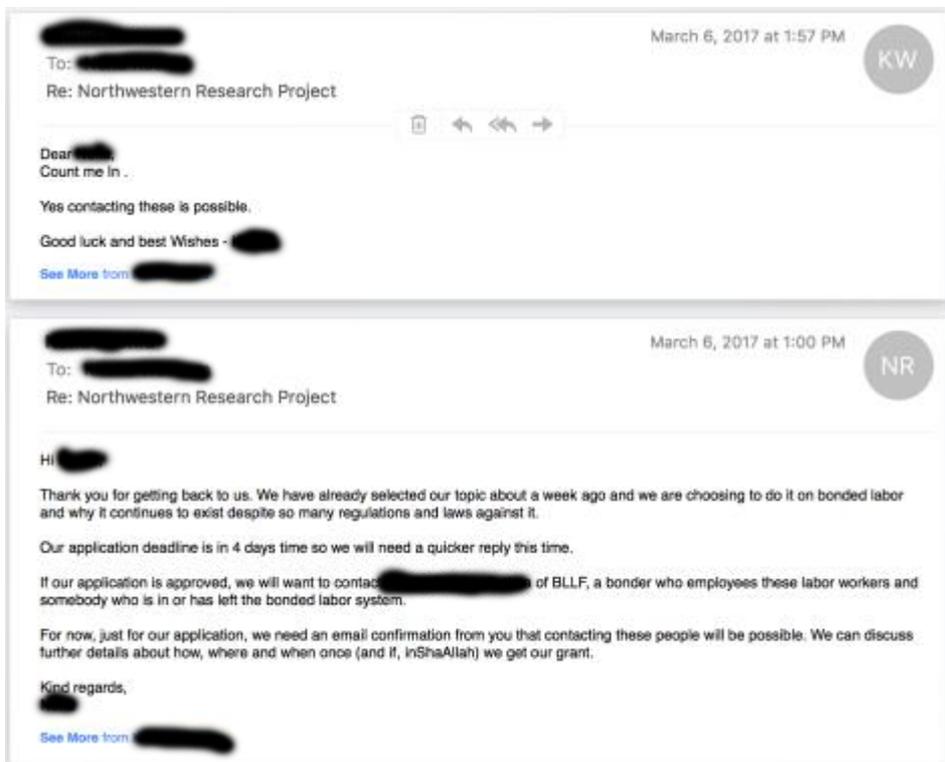
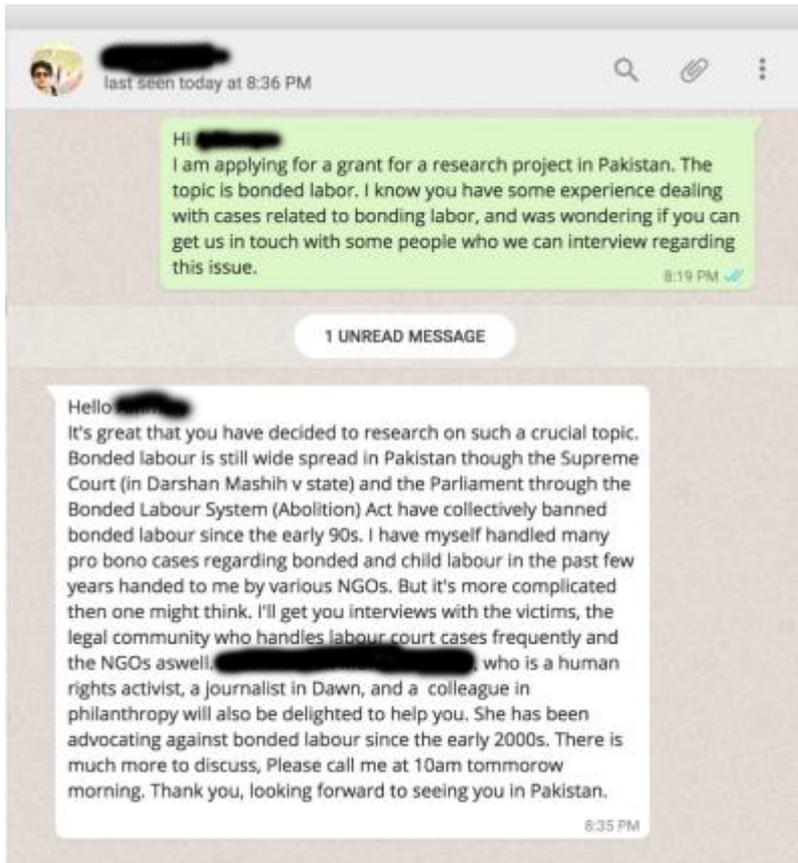
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Appendix A



## Appendix B

### Preliminary Questions for Bonded Laborers:

- 1) What work do you do?
- 2) What do you do for fun when you are not working?
- 3) How much sleep do you get?
- 4) Which meal do you look forward to most through the day?
- 5) How often do you get to contact your family?
- 6) What was your situation before you asked for a loan?
- 7) How much did you/your family owe to the bonders?
- 8) How did you/your family end up in debt to these bonders?
- 9) What other options, if any, do you have of paying back this debt?

### Additional Preliminary Questions for Ex-Bonded Laborers:

- 1) What was your situation before you asked for a loan?
- 2) How much did you/your family owe to the bonders?
- 3) How did you/your family end up in debt to these bonders?
- 4) What work did you do for your bonder?
- 5) How did you get out of the system?
- 6) What was your daily routine like while you were a bonded labor and how has it changed now?
- 7) How did your bonder treat you?
- 8) What are the main challenges you faced when you first left the system?
- 9) How is it finding work again after that?
- 10) How has the government, if at all, helped you in leaving the system?
- 11) How did the organizations, if at all, help you in leaving the system?
- 12) If you were here with a bonded laborer, what would you say to him?
- 13) Who plays the biggest role, in your opinion, in ending this issue?
- 14) What was your relationship with your bonder like?

## Appendix C

### Preliminary Questions for Lawyers and Humanitarian Organizations (Relationship with Bonded Laborers):

- 1) How did your organization start?
- 2) How difficult, if at all, was it to get in touch with the bonded laborers initially?
- 3) Are they receptive or scared to this help?
- 4) How well do you now know the bonded laborers that you are helping?
- 5) What are the common challenges trying to work with bonded laborers?
- 6) How do you protect ex-bonded labors from the dangers of leaving the bonded labor market?
- 7) Have you tried to negotiate laws and regulations with the government or with bonders themselves? If yes, how did that go? If not, why not and do you plan to?
- 8) How do you receive your funding for these operations?

## Appendix D

- 1) What is your business about? Is it one handed down from the family?
- 2) What is your role in your village/town?
- 3) What prompted you to hire bonded laborers to work for you?
- 4) Were there no other ways of getting debt paid back?
- 5) When did you hire your first bonded laborer and how did it grow from there?

- 6) Bonded labor is illegal with the law – why do you feel it is important to continue the system?
- 7) Have humanitarians/organizations/government officials ever come to ask you about this?
- 8) What is your relationship with your laborers like?
- 9) How do you help them out while they work for you?
- 10) What sources of income do you have?
- 11) How much longer do you hope to keep this system ongoing?

## Appendix E

Student 3 is a Singaporean national who will take a flight from Singapore to Lahore and back to Qatar to start classes. Additionally, while Student 2 is a Pakistani national, she is a resident of Qatar (born and raised) and, even as a Pakistani, is not local to Lahore, Pakistan. As they are traveling internationally, they will be requesting additional budget for their travel expenses. Below are screenshots for the prices for return tickets from Qatar to Pakistan (for Student 2) and from Singapore, to Pakistan and back to Qatar (for Student 3).

### Trip summary

#### ✦ Outbound flight

Doha > Lahore Thu, 22 Jun 2017

Departure	Arrival	Class	Earn Qmiles
20:30 DOH Doha, Hamad International Airport Qatar	☺ 3h 30m Non-stop 02:00 LHE Lahore, Lahore Airport Pakistan	✦ Economy (N) Baggage Allowance - 40 Kgs Included	Earn 726 Qmiles <a href="#">+ More details</a>

#### ✦ Inbound flight

Lahore > Doha Thu, 17 Aug 2017

Departure	Arrival	Class	Earn Qmiles
09:50 LHE Lahore, Lahore Airport Pakistan	☺ 3h 30m Non-stop 11:20 DOH Doha, Hamad International Airport Qatar	✦ Economy (N) Baggage Allowance - 40 Kgs Included	Earn 726 Qmiles <a href="#">+ More details</a>

Total trip price : 2465.00 QAR  
Total price for all  
passengers (1Adult)

### Your flight details



## Check your itinerary

(All times are local)

✈ Singapore - Lahore Thu, Jun 22, 2017



✈ Lahore - Doha Thu, Aug 17, 2017



## Multi-part reservation

Economy class, 1 adult

Total price

**\$687.19**

For this itinerary you need to reserve **separate tickets** for different parts of the trip. Open all the reservation sites and check ticket prices on each before making your reservation for any of them.