

Assessing the Condition of Domestic Child Workers Aftermath of Nepal Earthquake in Besisahar Municipality, Lamjung

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Abstract

Domestic Child Workers are a familiar and a serious problem throughout the world. It is also common wide-spread phenomena and emerging issue not only in urban areas but also in rural setting in Nepal. Domestic child workers are not only the problem of an individual or a family but also the common problem of the society. In this context, the main objective of this paper is to examine the major problems, health situation, and assess the working conditions of domestic child workers aftermath of April 25th, 2015 earthquake disaster in Besisahar Municipality, Lamjung, Nepal. The data and information needed for this study were obtained through the mix method with primary and secondary sources. Study finds that the education level of child domestic workers is very poor. poverty is one of the major causes for children being engaged in domestic child worker. Based on findings the overall condition for the domestic child workers in terms of basic needs like food, shelter, clothes and health was found critical.

Keywords: domestic child workers, problems, health, future aspiration

1. Background

In this modern age, every person should realize that children are an integral part of an every society. No society can even imagine its existence in absence of children. So, we say that children are our source of hope and inspiration. They are regarded as the future stars and bed-rock of the national building movement. It is true that children are our tomorrow and with the beginning of each new generation every society dreams of the prosperity for the world (Islam, Mahmud & Rahman, 2013). Generally, child labors are those workers who are below 14 years of age, deprived from minimum level of facilities, work long hours, get low wage and hamper their physical and mental development (ILO, 1999).

ILO Convention No. 189, “domestic work” means work performed in or for a household or households and “domestic worker” means any person engaged in domestic work within an employment relationship. The term “domestic work” covers a wide range of tasks and services that vary from country to country and that can be different depending on the age,

gender, ethnic background and migration status of the workers concerned, as well as the cultural and economic context in which they work. This means that a definition of domestic work and the workers involved on the basis only of the tasks being performed, risks being perpetually incomplete. Rather, the Convention No. 189 draws on the common and distinctive characteristic that domestic workers are employed by, and provide services for, third party private households.

2. Domestic child workers in Nepal

Domestic child worker is a growing problem in the world. More seriously, developing countries are victims of it. Children in low socio-economic status as well as deprived from minimum requirements are affected by the vicious problem of child labor. In Nepal, the vicious circle of poverty has paved the major way for entry of children in domestic child labor. This rapid increase of domestic child labor has several impacts on the socio-economic development of the nation. The ultimate effort is seen in the economic status of the victim's family because entry of children in child labor doesn't improve the economic status of family but runs the whole family in long run (CWIN, 2014).

According to The Children Act and Labor Act of Nepal (1992), the group of under the age of 16 years is considered as children, because below the age of 14 years children are strictly prohibited to work as labor. But the children aged between 14-16 years can work only for limited working hours. They can work 6 hours per day. If they work 3 hours continuously they should get a rest of minimum half hours (Children Act and Labor Act of Nepal 1992).

Child labor exploitation is a serious problem of the developing countries like Nepal. Thus, the child work is a cause and effect of the exploitation, socio-economic and political structure of the world. Like others developing countries, the rural communities in Nepal are going through a painful period created by increasing social injustice, economic exploitation and backwardness. The growing magnetizations among the rural population, rural migration and urbanization have also contributed to increase in the migration of child labor exploitation (Pradhan, 1995).

Domestic child workers are one of the different forms of working sector of the child labor in Nepal. Domestic child labor/worker is defined internationally as children with or without wage. Domestic child workers are employed to perform domestic works such as washing dishes, cooking, clearing the house, looking after young children and other household activities (KC, 1997). And also domestic child worker are mostly migrants, almost half of them don't receive any though most of them receive room and clothing and some are allowed to attain school, but the majority working hours exceed recommended standards working hours (Luitel, 2000).

Domestic child workers, who are allowed and freed to visit their homes, do not go their home frequently. They work in house and they don't go to school. Most of them have parents and are left by parents, relatives or middle men as salary basis for work (Luitel, 2000).

Child labor has been considered as a major social problem in Nepal. Nepal labor Act. 1992 defines the term 'child' as a person below the age of 14 years. The term 'work' can simply be considered as "economic participation outside home" The term 'child labor' implies exploitation that children are working long hours for the pay, scarifying their health, education and childhood. The term 'worker' indicates a person employed in return for payment of salary or wage in every production process, in the labor related services, construction works and peasantry works. Domestic child worker working in urban areas of Nepal are engaged in all domestic chores and some work outside the house, kitchen work, dish washing, child minding, cloth washing, house clearing, cattle raising and shop keeping are the main activities in which domestic child worker are engaged (Sharma, 2001).

Nepal is the 11th most earthquake-prone country in the world. On April 25th, 2015, people's lives took a turn for the worst when a magnitude of 7.8, earthquake struck Nepal killing 8,790 people and affecting eight million more or nearly a third of the country's population. The earthquake, followed by a massive aftershock, has left millions of traumatized people debilitated by even deeper fear and infirmity. About 1.7 million children are directly affected by the earthquake which has triggered invisible emotional distress among many. This may have deleterious effect on children and adults are most vulnerable to a range of physical and mental illnesses (Thapa, 2015).

Therefore, it is important to know about their situation at present. This study attempts to describe and explore the actual condition and problems of domestic child workers engaged in domestic works aftermath of Nepal earthquake April 25th, 2015.

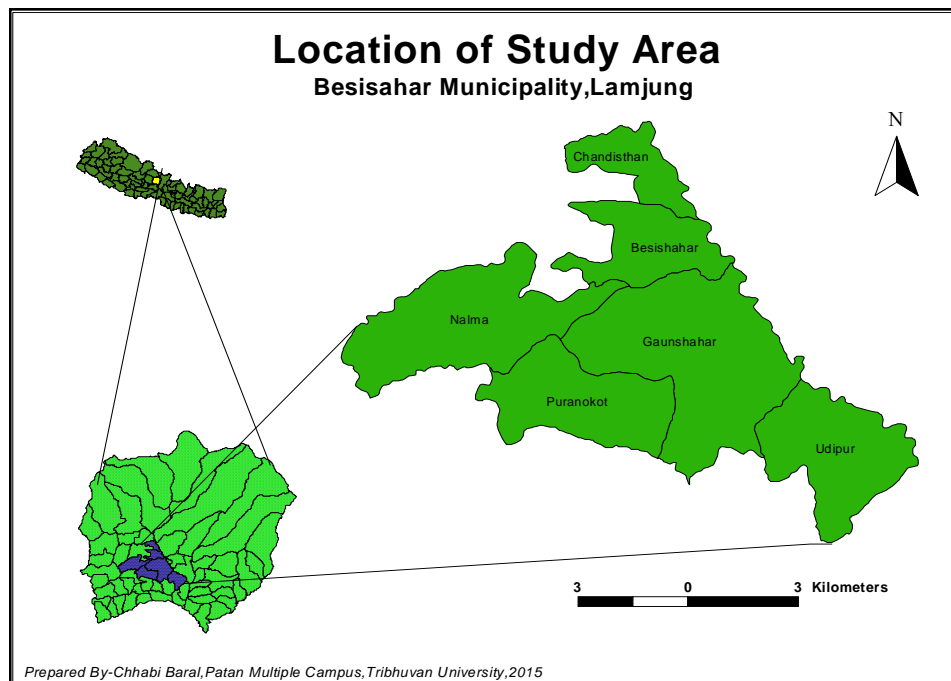
3. Data and methods

The purposive sampling method has been used to collect the information to match the research and availability of cases. All the wards of Besisahar Municipality have been selected to collect information about domestic child worker. The sample size of the study area represents the population of age between 5-17 years of 50 domestic child workers in which 20 boys and 30 girls have been taken for sample. The nature of the data is two types both qualitative and quantitative. The data has been collected from the primary and secondary sources. Structured questionnaire has been used to get the detail information about domestic child worker. It has been kept in mind that the target of the questionnaire schedule was to obtain the personal and socio-economic characteristics, caste, origin, reason

for work, income, health and schooling, relation with each other, attitude towards work and future aspirations of the domestic child worker. Small scale study confines itself to small part of western mid hill city Lamjung. So, the generalization of the research may or may not be equally applicable to the other parts of country.

4. Study area

The study has been conducted at Besisahar Municipality, Lamjung at western mid hill of Nepal. Besisahar situated in $28^{\circ}13'52''\text{N}$ $84^{\circ}22'39''\text{E}$ latitude and longitude. It is a headquarter of Lamjung and 800m height from mean sea level and Besisahar is largest among other municipalities of Lamjung district in terms of population size and social and administrative services (DDC profile Lamjung, 2015). So many child and rural poor family enter in this area either for opportunities or attraction of prosperous life. Many children are working as a domestic servant in the elite or rich family houses, hotels and restaurants. In this situation, it is very important to know that their condition of work, cause for work as domestic servant, and their relation with each other.



Besisahar Municipality has a warm and sub-tropical type of climate with deciduous forest type. [Annapurna II](#), [Machhapuchhre](#), Lamjung Himal are the beautiful scenes that can be viewed from north of Besisahar Municipality. This [Municipality](#) has 18 wards and merging six VDCs Besisahar, Gaunshahar, Udipur, Chandisthan, Nalma and Puranokot.

5. Results and discussion

5.1 Causes for domestic work

Poverty is one of the major causes for children being engaged in domestic child worker force. Almost all the domestic child workers represent low level of income of families and no land holding at all. On the other hand, family's conflicts also cause domestic work for child workers. Having established previously that parents are instrumental in sending their children to work as domestic child labor, and hope to critically examine their reasons for doing so. The respondents were questioned about the composition of their family, family status and assets. Family income, stepparents, and own idea are the main reasons for working.

Table: 1 Distribution of Cause for domestic work

Reason for working	Total Number of Boys=20	Boys N=20 %	Total Number of Girls=30	Girls N=30 %	Total no. of %
Poverty	10	50.0	3	10.0	26.0
To pay loan	1	5.0	-	-	2.0
Force by parents	5	25.0	15	50.0	40.0
Influenced by others	3	15.0	6	20.0	18.0
Expectation of better life	1	5.0	6	20.0	14.0
Total	20	100.0	30	100.0	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2015

There is difference between boys and girls regarding reasons for working as domestic child worker. As shown, boys 50 percent and 10 percent girls are engaged in domestic child work due to poverty. Similarly, out of total, 40 percent are involved in due to parent's force whereas 25percent of boys and 50 percent girls are involved in domestic child work due to force of parents. From the data it is clear that poverty is the main cause for domestic child work.

5.2 Types of Work of Domestic Child Worker.

Domestic child workers don't have any fixed work schedule. They do kitchen work, dish washing, baby caring, cloth washing, house clearing etc.

Table: 2 Types of Domestic Work

Types of work	Total Number of Boys=20	Boys N=20 %	Total Number of Girls=30	Girls N=30 %	Total Percent
Cooking and cleaning	10	50.0	15	50.0	50.0
Washing clothes	8	40.0	9	30.0	34.0
Baby care	-	-	6	20.0	12.0
Watching house	2	10.0	-	-	4.0
Total	20	10.0	30	100.0	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2015

As shown in the table 2, total 50 percent of children are employed for kitchen work. Similarly 34 percent of total child workers are engaged in washing clothes, and cleaning children followed by 12 percent of girls are engaged only for baby care. Baby care is not done by boy children. 4 percent are engaged in watching house and helping others works. Highest percent of boys 40% are employed for washing clothes where as 30 % of girls are employed for washing clothes. It seems that all domestic child workers involved in entire household works. Especially only the girls are kept for the baby care purpose.

5.3. Monthly Earning Status of Domestic Child Worker

Children are cheap labor and they are compelled to work more than adults. They work hard, but in return the payment found to be very low ranging from less than 500 to more than 2000 per month and higher of them are unpaid domestic child labors who get only food, clothes and education facilities.

Table: 3 Earning Status of Domestic Child Worker

Monthly Income	No. of respondents	Percent
0- 1000	12	24.0
1000-1500	20	40.0
1500-2000	8	16.0
Only food	4	8.0
Food /clothes/education	6	12.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Table 3 shows that only a very little children 16 percent get 1500-2000 rupees as salary and but a large 40 percent get monthly Rs 1000-1500 salary from the work. Similarly, 12% of respondents are getting only for food, clothing and education facilities from the work.

5.4. Working hours

Generally working hours for domestic child workers are higher. It can be said that they have no better status. The working hour per day varies from below 6 hours a day to more than 10 hours.

Table: 4 Distribution of Domestic Child Worker by Working Hour

Working hours	No. of Respondents	Percent
0- 6	3	6.0
6-7	15	30.0
7-8	20	40.0
8 above	12	24.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Table No.4 shows that 40 percent domestic child labors work for 7-8 hours a day, followed by 30 percent who work per for 6-7 hours. As shown, 24 percent are worked for above 8 hours per day. The table shows that many domestic child workers are forced to work for longer time. So, their worked load depends upon the owner family size and freedom.

5.5. Health condition of Domestic Child Worker.

Health aspect is a crucial factor for everyone. The study also attempts to explore the health condition of child workers. Because of unhealthy working environment and dirty work, they are likely to meet diseases.

Table: 5 Distribution of Health Status of Domestic Child Worker

Types of Illness	No. of Respondents	Percent
Cold cough	10	20.0
Fever	20	40.0
Skin problem	4	8.0
Diarrhea	6	12.0
others/no	10	20.0
Total	50	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Most of the workers suffered from fever. It has tried to describe about the health problem of the domestic child workers at the period of their involvement in the owner's house which they faced in working period. The table5 show that highest number of the children suffered from fever, 20 percent of child workers faced cough and cold, 12 percent of them suffered

from diarrhea. About 20 percent child were suffered from other diseases where as few child were away from diseases. The study found that most of the child respondents suffered from fever and were medically treated. Among the treated children, they reported that doctor's bill was paid by owners. At the illness time, owner members helped for the treatment. A few child workers got no help for treatment.

5.6 Major Problems faced by Domestic Child workers

Various Problems are faced by domestic worker in owner's family. According to the respondent, they are facing different problems at working condition and bed time. Most of the respondents were living with unsecured life.

Table: 6 Distribution of the Types of Problems

Types of Problems	Total Number of Boys=20	Boys N=20 %	Total Number of Girls=30	Girls N=30 %	Total no. of Percent
Return to home	3	15.0	6	17.0	18.0
Sleeping time	4	20.0	3	13.0	14.00
Clothing	7	35.0	6	24.0	26.00
Read & write or schooling	2	10.0	3	10.0	10.00
watching movie/serial	4	20.0	12	36.0	32.00
Total	20	100.0	30	100.0	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Table 6 shows that their problems mostly occur to return back to home, to sleep on time, to wear new clothes, to read and write or go to school and watch movies and serials.

Table indicates that the majority of the respondents face the problems to watch movies/serials. Out of total 32 percent of respondents are not allowed to see movies or serials with owner's family. 26 percent of respondents are not bought nice dresses for visits. 18 percent respondents have the problem of returning home and 14 percent of children had the problem of sleeping on scheduled time in owner's house. Similarly only 10.0 percent children have a schooling problem in owner's house.

5.7 Future Aspiration of Domestic Child Worker

The life of domestic child worker is uncertain and unpredictable. It is full of confusion. In fact, they pass their days with a hope of better future. Another aspect of child perception on work is their future intention to work. Majority of the children intend to change current work and don't to know what they will do next. They do not know how to change current

work and what was being done. In fact, boys desired to be vehicle driver in future whereas girls wanted to be part of vocational job like tailoring, beauty parlor etc. Table 7 clearly depict about the future aspiration of domestic child worker.

Table: 7: Future Aspiration of Domestic Child worker

Aspiration	Total Number of Boys=20	Boys N=20 %	Total Number of Girls=30	Girls N=30 %	Total no. of Percent
To Make good person	2	10.0	6	20.0	16.0
Driver	7	35.0	3	10.0	20.0
Change work	1	5.0	9	30.0	20.0
Earning money	6	30.0	3	10.0	18.0
Not decided	-	-	3	10.0	6.00
Don't know	4	20.0	6	20.0	20.0
Total	20	100.	30	100.0	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2015

Table 7 showsthat 20.00 percent of domestic child worker want to change their work and same as 20 percent of children don't know what they will do in future. About 6 percent of children asked, they didn't have any plan yet. Similarly, 20 percent want to be driver and 18 percent of the respondent wants to earn money for future.

6. Findings

Most of the Domestic child worker was between the ages of 10-17 years. This is the age most favored by the employers. Out Of the 50 Domestic child workers interviewed 30 were

Case Study - 1
Feeling of hardships

Maya Tamang (Pseudo Name), household children labour in Besisahar municipality ward no.12. She came from Banjhakhet VDC of Lamjung when she was 10 years old. Maya is the eldest daughter in the family, with three brothers and one sister. During her stay at this house, she had never visited her home. But she used to weep sometimes because of homesickness. Maya does not know about her monthly earnings till now. She has a great desire to learn sewing and knitting but there is no opportunity for her. Now she is working in a Brahmin house. There are four persons in the family and both employer ad mistresses are jobholders. She does the entire household chores as cooking, washing and cleaning. She feels hardship for washing utensils at late night. She wakes up at 5 am and goes to bed at 10 pm. She has to sleep on the Palang with mat, blanket and quilt. She bathes weekly and changes clean clothes. She gets medicine from her employer whenever needed. She sometimes listens to the radio; watch TV but does not play.

girls and 20 were boys. A majority of Domestic child worker were from ethnic/caste groups and poor economic background. The number of child worker's family who were engaged on agriculture were found to be 18, whereas child worker's family engaged on wage labor were

11, similarly child worker's family engaged as porter noticed to be 6. Most of those families had little area of land or no land at all.

Out of the total of 50 Domestic child workers, 16 respondent Child workers slept on floor by using bedding materials, whereas 34 respondent Child workers slept on bed. The health factor of most of the respondent was poor. Among sick children, most of them were medically treated by their owners. Among the sick child labors, only 35 no of Respondent got medicine at the time of sickness by the doctor's check. But others could not get help from their employers.

In the scenario of education of domestic child workers, the findings show that the highest percentage of domestic child workers has the primary level education. Adversely, the lowest percentage i.e. 8 percent of domestic child workers has the secondary level of education. As a conclusion, the report shows that most of the domestic child workers are illiterate or little literate.

Among 50 domestic child workers, most of the respondent i.e. 20 domestic child workers reported that they worked for 7-8 hours a day, followed by 15 domestic child worker who reported to have worked for 6-7 hours a day. There were only 3 respondents who reported to have worked for below 6 hours a day whereas 12 respondents reported to have worked for more than 8 hours a day.

In the context of distribution of the type of the problems, different problems were faced by domestic child workers in different degree. The majority of respondent i.e. 26% of domestic child workers dint get good clothing followed by 32% of domestic child workers who were not allowed to watch television, movies and serials. Furthermore, 10% of domestic child workers were deprived of schooling and 14% of domestic child workers faced the problem of sleeping schedule. The highest percentage i.e. 40% of girls faced the problem of being unable to watch movies, serials whereas highest percentage of boys 35% was not provided with good clothing.

In the context of distribution of types of work, there were different natures of work done by domestic child workers. The majority 50% of respondents were involved in kitchen work (cleaning and cooking). However, the least percentage i.e. 4% of domestic child workers was involved in watching house. Most of the boys and also the girls were involved in kitchen activities and washing clothes. Interestingly, no boys were engaged in baby caring whereas 20% of girls were involved in baby caring.

6. Conclusions

Domestic Child worker is a burning issue of Nepal. According to the constitution of Nepal, every citizen before the age of 18 years is known as children. Child labor is a serious problem because has great influences on the society. Due to poverty, illiterate and hand to mouth problems, majority of poor family child shift to the town as a domestic child worker.

Children, both girls and boys from different caste/ethnicity and various VDCs of Lamjung district and nearby district of Lamjung have come to work as household child workers in Besisahar municipality.

Although most of the children in this study were between 10-17 years of age, there were some children of only 8 years old who had also come to work as worker. At such an early age children are normally not given major responsibilities of any work in our societies. Generally, childhood is considered to be a time-period for children's socialization and self-identity formation. Given this, it is urged that steps should be taken to protect working children and enable them to improve their life standard through access to educational opportunities in particular.

Domestic Child Worker in the present study performed all types of household chores including cooking, cleaning, washing and shopping. They did most of the work without any hesitation. They worked for an average of 15 hours a day. It would very difficult to reduce the incidence of domestic child labors in Nepal without improving the economic situation of their poverty-stricken families. It would be better to capitalize the potentiality of employed and unemployed adults instead of putting children to work. One of the best alternatives that could reduce the work burden on children might be an effective compulsory education for children.

The remuneration of child workers under study was not satisfactory in comparison to their workload. They were still compelled to work in order to survive and support their poor families. The overall condition of Domestic child workers in terms of clothes, food, shelter, and health, was found to be dissatisfactory aftermath of earthquake in Besisahar Municipality.

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