

THE STATE OF CHILD LABOUR IN NEPAL

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Introduction

Since the last two decades the child labour has been increasing in Nepal. As the tendency of children to work both inside and outside home increases, the issues have also been raising from the various sectors with different approaches. Not only a number of social and development organisations but also policy makers as well as academicians have been attracted to this issue. Some are concerned with the advocacy against the violation of child rights, some are with rescuing and rehabilitating children from the streets and exploitative forms, some are with promoting awareness of parents not to send their children to work but to send them to school and some are working on this issue. However, the result is as it is, which may be considered in one way that it is coincidence of increasing child labour, especially in urban areas, and increasing activities about child labourers in the country. Accordingly, there are a number of researches conducted in different issues on child labour or child work. But the definition used has some problems when we compare various outputs with those researches. There is no uniformity in definition. It is, therefore, better first to define the child work and child labour in context.

There are a number of definitions used in the study on child labour. Most are specific to the contexts prevailing in the country. Contexts may be according to the cultural and social milieu or law generated for the governance, which creates a fundamental problem in defining child labour and makes difficulties in comparative studies among various regions. Considering these problems, various organizations and academics concerning children and labour attempt to define child labour in a manner that led to uniformity in definition.

In order to define child labour, age is vital. Minimum Age Convention No. 138 (1973) set working definition of "child" as a person below the age limit of 15 years. Later on, the UN Convention of Child Rights (1989) set a

quite wider limit of the age of "child", as up to 17 years. Nepal has ratified both conventions and made "Labour Act 1991" and "Children's Act 1992". Children Act defines "a child" as every human being below the age of 16 years and prohibits the employment of children below age of 15 years. The Labour Act 1991 defines a "minor" as a person between 14 and 18 years, which prohibits employment of children below age of 16 years and which is likely to be harmful to their life and also prohibits persons below 18 years of age in certain specified jobs (ILO/IPEC 1995).

International Labour Organization (ILO), a leading concerned organization, defines that the "most children work but all the works by children can not be considered as child labour. Child labour is something different - that young people are being exploited, or overworked, or deprived of their right to health or education - or just childhood". United Nations (1990) also defines child labour in the similar fashion. UNICEF points out that, at one end of the continuum, the work is beneficial, promoting or enhancing of child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development, while at the other end, it is destructive or exploitative. UNICEF adds that need to distinguish between beneficial and intolerable forms of child work is desirable.

This article is based on the studies conducted previously by various organizations and individuals. Accordingly, the attempt made to define child labour is scant. Concepts and definitions used in this study are, therefore, based on the specification to the purposes of the study. Definitions of child labour used by different studies, which are cited in this paper, may not be strictly comparable. But in any case, it tries to answer the questions as to how many children are working in Nepal as child labour, what are the sectors where they work, and the reasons why they become child labourer. For this clarification on who are the working children, what is meant by working children, and who actually are child labourer needs to be done at the outset.

The Context

In Nepal, more than 81 per cent of the total population depend on agriculture. More than 90 per cent live in rural areas. GNP per capita is US \$ 210.00 (PRB 1998) and over 45 per cent live below the poverty line. Literacy rate is only 40 per cent. Child population was recorded as 6,660,756 (36%) in 1991. Agriculture system is still traditional and only in the subsistence level for the livelihood. Due to persistent poverty with overwhelming agricultural economy, children constitute an integral part of family workforce. They are

engaged in ~~workforce~~ in both formal and informal sectors. Some studies found out that both boys and girls begin to work around six years of age and surprisingly spend a significant amount of their time on productive and household activities. They specially help around home, running errands, or helping their parents on the family farm (ILO/IPEC 1994).

The major jobs children involved in are: agriculture, cottage industry, manufacture, plantation, domestic, catering, selling, manual labour, tourism and travel industries, and others like ragpicking, prostitution, begging, etc. (Suwal et al. 1997; Sattaur 1993; Bajracharya, 1999). Among these sectors, some are the most intolerable and exploitative forms that seem to be a social problem. Intolerable and exploitative forms of child labour include bonded child labour, forced labour, girl trafficking, use of child labour in domestic and industrial sectors, and exploitation of child labour by carpet industries, street children, etc.

Migration of children is a way to risk exposure to health hazard as well as exploitation. Migration keeps children far away from parents and home without having love and care, which is necessary, at any rate, for child development. A considerable majority are found in urban areas, specially, cities in Kathmandu valley and the places where industries are located. Most of the children who were working as child labourers in Kathmandu valley were migrants and they were originated from the adjoining peripheral districts (Gurung 1999).

Another sector of high risk condition for child labour, especially for girls, is sexual abuse. Young girls are regularly subject to eve teasing, obscene remarks, and sexual harassment and abuse, including rape by male coworkers, (masters or brokers) and management staffs (CWIN 1993). Sexual abuse is also prevalent among the friends and low paying clients mainly in carpet factories and trafficking in young girls to brothels in Delhi, Bombay, etc., in India. The increase in the child sex trade is no doubt largely due to the internationalization of sex tourism, together with the false perception by many that there is less danger of infection from AIDS with younger partners (ILO 1998). Commercial sexual exploitation is one of the most brutal forms of violence against children. Child victims suffer from extreme physical, psychosocial and emotional abuse, which have lifelong and life-threatening consequences. They risk early pregnancy, maternal mortality and sexually transmitted diseases (ILO 1998).

Therefore, children working in several places may be prone to hazardous environment. Health and safety hazards in the working environment can be

related to the nature of the work, e.g., whether or not the work involves intrinsically hazardous process, to their exposure to hazardous substances and agents or to their exposure to poor working conditions (ILO 1998). Chemical, physical, biological, and psychological hazards are often found in combination with the workplace which will be devastating for children, causing irreversible damage to their physiological development, resulting in permanent disabilities, with serious consequences for their adult lives (ILO 1998) and their development.

Methodological Issues on Child Labour

There are basically two methods used in conducting studies on child labour in Nepal. One is *minimum method*, a micro level study that is based on the information directly obtained from the individuals. Most of this type are based on non-probability sample by selecting individuals directly. Another one is *maximum method*, a macro level study that is conducted using information obtained from the survey of the households based on the probability sample.

In various studies, estimations of the child labour have been made in different time. Some are based on facts and some are provocative, which create a lack of uniformity in estimating child labour. Provocative estimates are also based on facts but always overestimate the actual figure to draw attention of the audiences and related governmental and non-governmental agencies. Most of these estimates are based on minimum method. Information obtained by minimum method can not be used in estimating the volume of child labour because it is not a nationally representative and may not be based on the probability. However, this method has some advantages, which the maximum method could not capture. For instance, the number of domestic and bonded child labour, street children, sex workers and the details of those are usually excluded by maximum method, which are possible to capture by minimum method.

Due to having different properties, estimate of child labour based on different methods varies from one to another. Not only due to properties, but also due to definition adopted for child labour in the respective contexts, the estimate comes differently. However, it may give a glance of child working and child labourers in Nepal, based on the secondary information and studies previously made by various organizations and individuals.

Nature and Extent of Child Labour

Child labourers in Nepal have been increasing day by day. The rate of increase is 18.1% per year (Pathak 1999). There are about 500,000 children estimated in 1995 who left home and working mostly in urban areas of Nepal and in India (Pradhan 1995). Of which about 300,000 are involved in different jobs, 5000 are on the street, 40,000 are working in debt bondage, about 50,000 are working in the sex industries, 100 in prison and the remaining are trafficked to India for the several purposes. A study on street children estimates that there are approximately 26,000 children on the street and 3,700 children on the street (CWS 1996). CW/CCD (1997) found that 71 per cent in the rural, 52 per cent in the urban, and 63 per cent children in the bonded families are working either outside for pay in cash/kind or contributing to domestic work.

In 1996, the total estimated child population aged 5-14 was 6,226 thousands, which is more than 29 per cent of the total projected population in 1996 and of which males and females are 3,202 and 3,024 respectively (Suwal et al. 1997). Among the total estimated, working children were 2,596 thousands (41.7%) constituting 1,157 thousands of males (36.1%) and 1,439 thousands of females (47.6%). They are about 2,476 thousands in rural areas which is almost 21 times higher than in urban areas (120 thousands) (Table 1). This difference is even wider among males, that is, almost 24 times higher in rural than in urban areas. More females than males may be due to the working children taken are irrespective of their current school attendance and type and duration of work. Age pattern of working children shows that children aged 10-14 are about double of those aged 5-9 years. The pattern is similar among both sexes.

Table 1: Estimates of the Working Children Aged 5-14 years in Nepal, 1996 (in '000)

Categories	Male	Female	Total
Place of Residence			
Rural	1,110	1,366	2,476
Urban	47	73	120
Age Group			
5-9	352	492	844
10-14	756	893	1,645
Nepal	1,157	1,439	2,596

Source: ILO/IPEC (1998)

Note: Total may not add to the total because of the rounding effect in the decomposition process.

CBS (1999) estimates the economically active children aged 5-14 years from the information of Labour Force Survey 1998/99. The total economically active children are about 41 per cent of the total of 4,860 surveyed children (Table 2). The percentage of economically active is higher among females (45.1%) than among males (36.8%), and the sex pattern is similar also in both rural and urban residences. But the variation is relatively higher among rural children. Among the economically active, rural children are more than double of urban children; that is, 43.6% compared to 19%. For both sexes, rural-urban pattern is found to be similar to the national level. According to age distribution, economically active children aged 10-14 are almost three times higher than those aged 5-9. It is not surprising that increased age of children are more likely to work. Age pattern among sexes is also similar to the national level.

Table 2: Economically Active Children Aged 5-14 Years in Nepal, 1998/99

Categories	Male	Female	Total
Place of residence			
Rural	39.3	48.0	43.6
Urban	17.3	21.0	19.0
Age Group			
5-9	18.3	23.6	20.9
10-14	55.2	67.1	60.9
Nepal	36.8	45.1	40.9
N	2,480	2,380	4,860

Source: CBS (1999), Table 12.1.

Migration of Children: Migration of the children in search of employment has been a major way of being child labourer in Nepal. Children leaving home and living away from parents and home are a easy way of being exploited by masters. It is because children are physically as well as psychologically weak. They have almost no bargaining power to their employment. Migration of children and child labour can be seen synonymously in these respects. Therefore, unless we examine the situation of migration the study of child labour is incomplete.

City is the centre of power and privilege. It exerts its influence in charting the direction of country's political, social, and economic development. City, especially capital city, has disproportionately high share of consumption as well as investment in the urban sector (Gugler 1988). On the other hand, extreme poverty and land distribution pattern, lack of education opportunities and feudal legacy of employing servants in the rural areas are fuelling the migration of children toward the urban centres (CWIN 1997 & 1998; INSEC 1996; Gurung 1999). High growth rate of urban population (5.9% per annum during 1981-91) in Nepal can explain this situation.

The percentage of children migrated to urban areas was 54.1 irrespective of the place of origin (KC et al. 1997). Of the migrant to urban area, 53.8 were from rural and 54.8 per cent were from other urban areas. Gurung (1999) estimated the migration rate of children aged 5-17 to Kathmandu valley is 1.7 per cent from Nuwakot district and 1.6 per cent from various peripheral districts irrespective of the place of residence. The median age of them is 14 years.

Migration status can be seen clearly from the information provided by CWIN (1998) among the children working in various informal sectors in urban Nepal, even though it based on a micro-level purposive sample survey (Table 3). This shows the overwhelming majority of the surveyed children is migrant. For instance, among working children, the percentage of migrants is 97 per cent in carpet factories, 95.3 per cent in domestic servants, 93.6 per cent in shoe shining, 92.5 per cent in porting, and 86.7 per cent in tempo services.

**Table 3: Migrant Children by Types of Works
(Urban Child Labour)**

Types of Work	Migrants (%)	Non-migrants	Total (%)
Carpet	97.0	3.0	100.0
Domestic	95.3	4.7	100.0
Shoe shining	93.6	6.4	100.0
Porters	92.5	7.5	100.0
Tempo	86.7	13.3	100.0

Source: CWIN (1998), table 6. 1.

Among the working children, KC et al. (1997) estimated the migrant child labourer in the nation as a whole by blowing the sample up into the projected child population in 1996 based on the 1991 census. The definition used for "migrant child labour was limited to the information on reasons for migration reported by the respondents at the time of survey. It is defined as the children aged 5-17 who moved out from their home for 6 and more months due to both economic including agriculture, service, and search of job and non-economic reasons. Among those who moved for noneconomic reasons, children are included only those who stated they were working in economic activities immediately before and after migration.

The estimated total migrant child labour is 120 thousands, which is about 1.6 per cent of the total projected children aged 5-17 in Nepal (Table 4). Of this, males are 68 thousands and females are 51 thousands with the sex ratio of 133. The estimated child labourers are 70 thousands in age group 15-17, which is more than one-third of the total. It is about 5.3 per cent of the total projected child population aged 15-17 in Nepal. The child labourers are 31 thousands in age group 10-14 and only 5 thousands in age group 5-9 years. The variation in sex is much wider in age group 10-14; that is, sex ratio is

about 181. As Nepal is rural agrarian-based, more than 95 per cent of the child labour live in rural areas (114 thousands), whereas only 4 per cent live in urban Nepal (5 thousands). The sex ratio is 135 for rural and no sex difference is found in urban areas.

**Table 4: Estimation of Migrant Child Labour
Aged 5-17, 1995/96 (in '000)**

Categories		Male	Female	Total	Sex ratio
Residence:	Urban	2	2	5	100
	Rural	66	49	114	135
Age at move:	5-14	22	14	36	157
	15-17	38	32	70	119
Nepal		68	51	120	133

Note: Sum of the given categories may not add to total due to rounding and decomposition process. Source: KC et al. (1997), Table 2.3.

Sectors of Child Labour

There are several sectors where the children are working. Some of the major sectors, in general, are based on the previous studies done by various organizations. Suwal et al. (1997) made an estimation of economically active children according to the types of work in which they are involved (Table 5). The overwhelming majority (95%) of the economically active children is involved in agriculture and related sectors (1,576 thousands). Other sectors of the work are far behind of agriculture. After agriculture, the majority of them is involved in service (27 thousands) and closely followed by construction, transportation, and communication works (26 thousands). Children involved in general technical and production works are 14 and 13 thousands, respectively. The least children are found to be involved in sales works (7 thousands). Involvement of males is distinctly higher than the involvement of females in almost all sectors of child work. The overall sex ratio of economically active children is 116. The highest sex ratio is observed among sales workers, that is 250. This is followed by production work (160) and by construction, transportation and communication work, whereas there is no sex difference in service sectors.

**Table 5: Economically Active Children
Aged 5-14 by Types of Work, 1996 (in '000)**

Types of Work	Male	Female	Total	Sex ratio
Agriculture related	844	732	1,576	115
General technical	8	6	14	133
Sales workers	5	2	7	250
Service workers	13	13	27	100
Production workers	8	5	13	160
Construction, transportation & communication workers	15	11	26	136
Nepal	894	770	1,664	116

Source: Suwal et al. (1997), table 10.

Among the migrant children, KC et al. (1997) found the majority is engaged in agriculture (31.6%). This is followed by service (26.8%) and then by others category (24.1%) (Table 6). Others include those children working in household chores, dependants, disables, students, not working and the type of work not stated. Child labourers involved in nonagricultural sectors are also notable (8.5%).

**Table 6: Current Occupational Status of Migrant Child Labour
at the Time of Survey, 1996**

Occupational status	N	%
Agriculture	156	31.6
Service	132	26.8
Non-agricultural labour	42	8.5
Agricultural labour	18	3.7
Trade/Business	13	2.6
Cottage industry	11	2.2
Others	119	24.1
Total	493	100.0

Source: KC et al. (1997), table 2. 10.

CW/CCD (1997) found the major bulk of the working children is engaged in domestic work (Table 7). Of the total working children, domestic workers are 94.2 per cent in rural areas, 88.4 per cent in urban areas, and 64.7 per cent

among bonded children. The remaining proportion of working children for all sectors is engaged in non-domestic works. Among them, economically active children are 26.3 per cent in rural areas (22.2% in domestic and 4.1 % in non-domestic), 16.2 per cent in urban areas (10.1 % in domestic and 6.1 % in non-domestic), and 50.2 per cent in the bonded families (28.0% in domestic and 22.2% in non-domestic).

Table 7: Percentage of Children Working as Domestic and Non-domestic Sectors among Rural, Urban, and Bonded Families

Type of Children	Working Sector		Total
	Domestic	Non domestic	
Rural	94.2	5.8	100.0
Urban	88.4	11.6	100.0
Bonded	64.7	35.3	100.0
Economically Active			
Rural	22.2	4.1	26.3
Urban	10.1	6.1	16.2
Bonded	28.0	22.2	50.2

Source: CW/CCD (1997), table 4 & 23. 1.

CWS (1996) found, among the street children, majority are boys and most are between the ages of 9 and 16 years. Of the total street children, more than half of them are engaged in ragpicking and the remaining are involved in begging, tempo/taxi service, portering, and street vending. CWIN (1998) noted five major sectors, namely carpet industry, domestic servants, shoe shining, porters, and tempo *khalasis* (helpers), based on the information on migrant status of children in urban Nepal (see Table 3). All these sectors absorb the overwhelming majority of the migrant child labourers.

In addition, there are a number of girl children involving in commercial sex trade. Trafficking of girls is a serious problem in Nepal. Five to seven thousands girls are reported to have been trafficked to different brothels of India (Pradhan 1997).

Causes of Child Labour

There are several factors responsible for being child labourer. They may be from both demand and supply or push and pull sides. Both sides may be equally responsible for the problems of child labour. Child labour is closely connected with migration. There are basically two approaches of migration, that is neo-classical and structural approach. Neo-classical economists emphasis the migration depends on individual's choice or decision. Migration proceeds in response to urban-rural differences in expectation rather than actual earnings (Todaro 1976). Migrants consider the various labour market opportunities available to them, as between the rural and urban sectors, and choose the one, which maximizes their 'expected' gains from migration (Todaro 1992). This approach is less relevant to the child labourers. Making choice or decision to migrate, chances of getting job differ substantially from person to person for reasons that are social rather than random. Children may not have power to have decision. So, the idea of a 'choice' to migrate becomes questionable. The structural approach considers migration as a process (Lewis 1954; Ranis and Fei 1961). This explains the process of rural-urban labour transfer. Labour from the predominantly rural primary sector (e.g., agriculture) would migrate to the urban, secondary or tertiary sector (i.e., manufacturing and services). This process would continue until all 'surplus labour' is removed from agriculture and labour, and therefore population transfers from rural to urban locations as part of a process of capitalist development. Child migration is also a part of this process, which has been increasingly experienced in less developed countries like Nepal in present days. Both approaches see the migration as an economic matter only. There are also some other factors beyond economy, that is social factor, which also determines whether migration takes place or not.

Socio-cultural background and the land distribution patterns are the roots of the child labour. In Nepal, legacy of the feudal rule is still apparent in the great influence that village elites, large landowners and money lenders exert over the poor (Sattaur 1993), which has been continued in Nepal. This system continues to oppress the mass poverty in Nepal. Debt bondage labour under the Kamaiya system and the domestic servants are the examples of this system. On the other hand, social indifference is also root of the child labour (Pradhan 1990). The poor parents exploit their children's labour because they do not have any alternative that the society provides for them and they do it because the society lets them. In fact, the problem of the child labour arises

with the insensitivity of the society, as a whole towards a plight of children and with the ignorance which surrounds the whole issue.

Poverty may be seen with either of three main things in Nepalese context. They are land ownership or financial situation or food sufficiency for the family. People with less land directly mean that they have insufficient food for their living. National Planning Commission estimates that 6 per cent of the population owns 46 per cent of the cultivable land. Even though the Nepal is a country of agricultural economy, the agricultural system is traditional by nature. Many families do not have subsistence level of land. About 69 per cent of landholdings are less than one hectare in size (NESAC 1998:117). Most of the smallholdings provide enough food for stretches of three to eight months at a time and the people have to find work or food for the remainder of the year (Sattaur 1993). In some areas, the food is sufficient even for less than a month, that is, only 20 days in a year (Dahal 1989). For the rest of the days, people have to work outside home to earn money to buy food. Children are also part of the earners and critical for family survival among poor households. They contribute around 20-25 per cent of family income (ILO 1998).

CW/CCD (1997) reveals that the poverty has been reported as the leading reason for working outside (non-domestic work). The second main reason is parents who have been blamed for enforcing child labour. Financial trouble has been the principal cause which has led the children to be employed in industries. Lack of access to resources (poverty) has been the root cause of child labour in industries.

ILO (1995) concludes that the major causes of child labour in Nepal are identified as abject poverty and financial pressure, unemployment/underemployment, family disruption, lack of alternatives, inadequacy of education system, inadequate enforcement of legislation, abduction/deception and prevalence of public attitudes and values which tolerate and sometimes condone child labour.

CWIN (1989) notes that the 100 per cent of the children reported that they leave home expecting better life in the city. About 60 per cent of the children reported that they leave home due to too much work at home and no chances to go to school and 27 per cent reported due to step parent's maltreatment. On the other hand, the main reason why they do work is poverty (100%). About 24 per cent report that they work due to death of earning member of family.

Table 8 sums up reasons why children leave home. CWS (1996) found that the principal reasons why children leave home is domestic

problems (25.2%). This is followed by personal reasons (21.5%), other's influence (16.8%) and by poverty reasons (11.6%). INSEC (1996) found that 43 per cent of the total children reported that they left home due to parent's suggestion. Poverty reason comes at second position (19.5%) and personal reasons at third (14%). But, Gurung (1999) found the poverty reason (31 %) is the principal reason why children leave home. The next main reason is parent's suggestion (22.8%) and domestic problems (15.5%). Other's influence and personal reasons are also found to be important. However, according to the result provided by various studies, poverty, parent's suggestion, domestic problems, and personal reasons are found to be most important and common reasons behind children leaving home.

Table 8: Reasons for Children Leaving Home

Main Reasons	Sources		
	CWS 1996 (table 9.9)	INSEC 1996 (table 10)	Gurung 1999 (table 4.21)
Parent's suggestion	—	43.0	22.8
Domestic problems	25.2	4.5	15.5
Personal reasons	21.5	14.0	10.9
Other's influence	16.8	12.5	12.5
Poverty reasons	11.6	19.5	31.0
Others	15.8	6.5	7.6
Not stated	9.1	—	—
Total % N	100.0 (362)	100.0 (200)	100.0 (303)

According to the various studies, poverty reason has been made by summarizing those reasons reported by respondents, such as insufficient food at home, no or less land, or lack of money to afford food, in search of work due to lack of food. Parent's suggestion refers to both advice or enforcement for children to go outside, particularly to city, for work. Domestic problem is the summary of the reasons about lack of love, care, and parental guidance, death of parents, mistreatment by step-parents, abandoned by parents, thrown out of home, abusive and alcoholic parents, domestic quarrels, and violence in the family. Personal interests include those reasons related to dislike of village life and dream of city life, work and earn in the city, to study, or personal misdeeds like stealing, fighting, or causing trouble for the family or

neighbours. Other's influence refers to the friends' or neighbours' or brokers' influence to go outside home for work.

Discussions and Conclusions

Estimation shows that 41.7 per cent of the total projected child population in Nepal in 1996 are working in various sectors, that is 2,596 thousands. Similarly, 36.1 per cent of males and 47.6 per cent of females population are estimated to be working, they are 1,156 thousands and 1,439 thousands, respectively. Among working children, 2,476 thousands reside in rural and 120 thousands in urban areas of Nepal. Accordingly, working children aged 10-14 years are almost double of those aged 5-9 years.

Economic activity rate of children aged 5-14 years is about 41 per cent. The rate for rural areas is more than double of urban areas. This is for females, which is about 9 percentage points greater than that for males. The results indicate that females are more economically active than males and it is even more in rural areas. The methodological issue on collecting information by Central Bureau of Statistics can justify these both findings that household works have been included in the economic activity. Female participation in household chores is nearly compulsory in Nepal and this tendency is even greater in rural areas.

Migration is a process for children to become worker, especially in urban areas. The migration rate of children to the Kathmandu valley is about 1.7 per cent. The percentage of children migrated to urban areas was 54 irrespective of the place of origin in 1996. Of the migrant to urban area, about 54 per cent from rural and about 55 per cent from other urban areas. In the Kathmandu valley, the migration of children is overwhelming.

Estimation of migrant child workers shows that there are 120 thousands, which is 1.6 per cent of total projected children aged 5-17 years in Nepal. The sex ratio of migrant children is distinctly high, that is 133. Females are considerably higher than males among working children when the household works are included in the economic activity. But it has been inter-changed when the migration for economic reasons is considered. There is no unnatural result among different ages of migrant children. Children at higher ages tend to migrate more than at lower ages. The rural migrant overwhelmingly dominates the urban migration in numbers, because the urban population posits more than 90 per cent in Nepal.

In addition, there are a number of girl children involving in commercial sex trade. Pradhan (1997) noted that five to seven thousands girls are reported to have trafficked to different brothels of India.

Major bulk of the working children are engaged in domestic work. Domestic workers are 94 per cent among rural, 88 per cent among urban, and 65 per cent among bonded children. The remaining are engaged in non-domestic work. Among rural, economically active children are 22.2 per cent in domestic and 4.1 per cent in non-domestic. Among urban, 10.1 per cent are in domestic and 6.1 per cent in non-domestic. Among bonded families, 28.0 per cent are in domestic and 22.2 per cent in non-domestic. Of the non-domestic works, the child labourers are engaged in brick and tiles, match factory, confectionery, and carpet weaving.

Overwhelming majority (95%) of the economically active children are involved in agriculture and related sectors (1,576 thousands). This is followed by service (27 thousands) and construction, transportation, and communication works (26 thousands). Children involved in general technical and production works are 14 and 13 thousands respectively.

For migrant children, agriculture (31.6%) and service (26.8%) are the most common to all sectors. Besides, carpet industry, domestic servants, shoe shining, porters, and tempo khalasis are also common for migrant children in urban areas. For the street children, ragpicking is the most common, even though begging, tempo/taxi conducting, portering, and street vending are also important.

Socio-cultural background of children is the main root of child labour in Nepal. Legacy of the feudal culture is still apparent in a great influence that village elites, large landowners and money lenders exert over the poor which continues to oppress the mass poverty. Consequently, the debt bondage labour and the domestic servants are emerged. This system results into abduction/ deception and prevalence of public attitudes and values and which again results into social indifference and the insensitivity due to deprivation and the ignorance. The poor parents exploit their children's labour because they do not have any alternative and the society lets them to do so.

As Nepal is a rural agrarian country with persistent poverty, lack of access to resources has been another root cause of child labour. Poor households need money which their children can earn and children commonly contribute around 20-25 per cent of family income, since poor households spend the bulk of income on food in Nepal. Land distribution pattern is also responsible factor for the poverty. Many families do not have subsistence

level of land. People with lack of land directly means that they have insufficient food for their living. Less landholdings provide enough food for stretches of three to eight months at a time and the people have to find work or food for the remainder of the year.

In addition, parents' suggestion and domestic problems are also important for leaving home and becoming child labour. Both reasons may have two sides, that is, poverty and family problems. Parent(s) suggests or enforces their children to go for work even far from home when they do not have sufficient resources for livelihood and when they have serious problems within the family or family disruption. Family problems may be from the death of parent(s) or introduction of stepmother or step-father at home that consequent as maltreatment from the stepparents to the children. In this case, biological parent(s) may advise child to go to the work.

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