

**THE SCHOOL OF MISSION AND THEOLOGY (MHS)**



**THESIS TOPIC:**

**IMPACTS OF CHILDHOOD POVERTY ON CHILDREN'S WELL-  
BEING: A CRITICAL CASE STUDY OF CHILDREN IN TANAHUN,  
NEPAL**

**THESIS FOR**

**MASTER OF GLOBAL STUDIES**

**SUBMITTED BY CANDIDATE:**

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## **DEDICATION**

**For My Dear Wife Srijana Bhandari (Neupane), for everything**

## **Abstract**

This study aims to contribute knowledge on the effects of childhood poverty on future well-being. Poverty in this study is not only considered as the lack of money but rather the absence of choice and possibilities. Socially, physically and mentally children growing in low socio-economic background lack positive development. Poverty deprives children from proper parenting. This study also highlights that poverty causes conflictual social relationship and impact the cognition about future contributing to poor socio-emotional development. This study inspects the lives of poor children including the street children to investigate the adverse impacts of poverty on their life.

By using primary qualitative data and literature concerning poverty effects on childhood, it is found that children suffering from poverty are affected by material deprivation, poor health and weaker educational achievement because of which they are likely to perpetuate poverty.

Key terms- Poverty, Childhood, Child Labour and Well-being

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Finally, it is customary to mention that those I met, worked with and assisted by are only responsible for the good points and the responsibility of any errors of judgment or factual mistakes in this work rest with me.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

CBS- Central Bureau of Statistics

CHIP- Childhood Poverty Research and Policy Centre

CIA- Central Intelligence Agency

HDI- Human Development Index

IFAD- International Fund for Agricultural Development

INGO- International Non-Governmental Organization

NGO- Non-Governmental Organization

NSD- Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste

UNDP- United Nation's Development Programme

UNICEF- United Nation's International Children's Fund

UNESCAP- United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific



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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of Study**

More than one third of Nepal's 12.6 million children live below poverty line. According to Nepal Report (2010), two in every five children of Nepal live in absolute poverty lacking at least two basic human needs (p-1). Nepal ranks 157 of 186 countries in United Nation's Human Development Index (UNDP, 2012). Poverty is one of the undesirable social problems of developing countries like Nepal. Young children of Nepal are adversely affected by poverty. They are deprived of basic material resources and adequate needs. Poverty during the childhood of Nepalese children has multiple impacts throughout their life span. They are exposed to numerous risk factors that contribute to their poor health, pessimism, allure to drugs, ill-relationship in families and educational break-up. However, despite the increasing government poverty dimidiation policies and academic attention given to child poverty in preceding years, we still find thousands of poor children brutally persecuted by poverty causing harmful effects (Lieten, 2012).

This thesis is a study about the impacts of poverty on children's lives and life-expectation in Nepal. It aims at describing and analyzing the multi- dimensional impacts of poverty on the children's lives and well-being. This study focuses on the case of poor children living in Tanahun district of Nepal. Based on an empirical study of children in this area, I have tried to depict their situation and problems. By discussing and analyzing the empirical findings in the light of previous research and theoretical perspectives on poverty in general and childhood poverty in particular, the thesis also aims at providing insight into how poverty may affect their future lives.

### **1.2 Scope and Limitation of the Study**

The concept of childhood poverty is a wide subject. Therefore, it is obvious that it neglects many of the problems related to the topic. As it has been already stated, the purpose of this explorative essay is to highlight the situation of poor children and examine the multidimensional effects of poverty on their lives. This study is, however, limited in scope. It focuses on the study of poor children between the ages 12-16 from Tanahun district of Nepal. The description and reflection is based on the data collected from interviews and observation. Even though the material is limited, I believe that my findings can be valuable for other researchers who study childhood poverty and can be of use to people working to alleviate

childhood poverty in Nepal. This research doesn't unfold all the complex issues that can impress negatively upon children. Other crucial aspects beyond poverty are not discussed.

This study has to be limited to certain age groups. Through there are a vast majority of poor children of Nepal, this study concentrates on children of Tanahun district only. However, children from several ethnic groups have been selected purposively in order to be more inclusive and representative.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The major concern of this research is to investigate inter-relationship between childhood poverty and children's well-being. While doing so, life stories of selected poor children in Tanahun Nepal have been unrevealed. This research provides an insight on the way poor children perceive their contemporary life and view their future. Different issues like future predicament, peer relationship, deprivation of fundamental rights and fragile relationship with family members are discussed in order to reflect on the notable effects of poverty on children. This study addresses the following questions:

- What are the major problems faced by poor children?
- To what extend does the poverty affect the life situation and well-being of children?
- How does childhood poverty influence on the children's educational attainment and peer relationship?
- Do the poor children bear positive or negative cognition about future?
- What measures should be undertaken by national and local government to empower and privilege poor children?
- What are the behavioral and conceptual differences between the children living with parents and the children living outside home as street children?

### **1.4 Some Definitions and Clarifications of Terms**

#### **1.4.1Poverty**

Generally poverty is the condition where people's basic needs like food, clothing and shelter are not fulfilled. Popenoe (1995) has opined that, "Poverty is a condition of scarcity or deprivation of material resources characterized by a lack of adequate consumption of the necessities of the life (p-219). Poverty is generally of two types; Absolute poverty and Relative poverty. Absolute poverty is eradicable whereas relative poverty cannot be eradicated. Relative poverty refers to a situation when minimum standard of life cannot be achieved. But absolute poverty is destitution when people cannot consume basic resources

adequately. Relative poverty places poverty within the context of inequality within the societies. The notion of the incapacity to meet certain needs or more broadly participation in the society is relative poverty. Poverty as defined by Townsend (1992) is, Poverty as income insufficient to enable individuals to 'play the role', participate in the relationship and follow the customary behavior which is expected by them by virtue of their membership of society (p-10). Poverty is observable and is articulated by those who are stressed by their advent. Poverty affects the people of all ages; however, the youngest and oldest members of societies suffer desperately. People from poor developing countries have tough life due to poverty. They need to struggle with several social and economic factors for survival. According to Gifford (2009), people in extreme poverty face a daily fight for survival. They can rarely afford enough to eat, basic healthcare, shelter and schooling. As a result of which they have few opportunities to improve their lives. Poverty also connotes to non-material inadequacy because it prohibits people from socio-economic, political and cultural activities of own social problems. Poverty is the root cause of multiple social problems like family disintegration, crime, corruption, divorce and suicide. Therefore, poverty is a social problem affecting the significant numbers of people in several undesirable ways. Poverty however is not only measurable by economic deprivation rather it connotes political, cultural and social aspects of a society. Moreover, it is a complex multidimensional problem which cannot be always represented through statistics. Poverty is the reflection of dynamism in society.

Poverty has many faces. What is regarded as poverty is not absolute but depends on the interpretation of what constitutes poverty on the value system of a particular society (Thomas 2000: 21)). A person can be poor in term of his income or incapability to afford basic requirements. In Nepal, there is a wide range of poverty variation based on rural-urban location, ethnic groups, tribes and occupational castes. I will elaborate more on poverty in Nepal in chapter 4.

#### 1.4.2 Childhood

Basically, childhood is the stage between infancy and puberty. Childhood is often viewed as the stage of innocence because they are not guided by envy, evils and hatred. According to (Jenkins and Pigram: 2003), Childhood is a time of precious innocence, during which children are pure and uncontaminated by adult society. This life stage is generally described with reference to growth metaphor such as; becoming, taking on, and growing up, developing, preparation, shaping and malleability. Childhood is the important stage for

learning responsibilities, socializing, playing and developing. Children are the imitators of the elders in families and societies. They must be taught good character and moral principles by keeping aside from bad things. This stage is a precious time of life because the well-being of a person in life depends upon the quality food, environment and education one achieves. Children should live free from fear, safe from violence, abuse and exploitation in order to grow physically and mentally fit. Childhood is not only a natural phenomenon or fixed stage of life, but a historically and culturally variable social construct (Hutchby and Moran Ellis 1998:6). Children are the property of the parents. It is the responsibility of parents and other duty bearers by children to fulfill their needs and safe guard their rights.

#### 1.4.3 Well-being

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines well-being as ‘the state of being happy, healthy or prosperous’. Well-being is closely tied to success and happiness in life. Well-being measures the multidimensional aspects of an individual. According to Gidley and Inayatullah(2002) personal well-being is influenced by the several domains of life such as family, school, friends and leisure. Family structure, education and health condition strongly influence an individual’s state of future well-being. In this study, how poverty affects children’s future well-being is discussed and analyzed.

### 1.5 Organization of the Thesis

This research has seven chapters in total. First chapter includes the in-depth description of the purpose and objectives of research. Also brief sketch on key terms like poverty, Childhood and social exclusion are included in it. Chapter two is about methodology. It explains each of the procedures undertaken to conduct the research. Field work site, research instrument, data collection and analysis method, research ethics are discussed in this chapter. Chapter Three is literature review and enables to understand the terms and theories like child development, child labour and social problem. Relevant researches and texts have been reviewed in order to enrich this research with ample ideas. Chapter four introduces the cause and poverty impacts in Nepal. Chapter five includes data analysis and presentation from field work. Chapter six describes and analyses the research findings that forms the main thrust of this paper. Finally, Chapter seven covers the concluding remarks with recommendation and possibilities for further research.

## **CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Towards a Comprehensive Qualitative study of Children in Poverty: Approach and Method: Introduction**

This chapter includes the details about several methods used by the researcher in the study process from the time of collecting data, analyzing it and finally writing of the thesis by respecting ethical codes. Primary and secondary data have been employed in the process of writing this thesis. Primary data was collected during a field work in Tanahun district of Nepal. Books, journals, internet materials and articles are used as secondary sources.

### **2.2 Research Design**

Research design enhances the framework for collection and analysis of data. It is mainly useful to make the research process structural and convenient. Beside it, it shows how the major parts of research project like- participants, methodology, measures, and treatments etc. work together to address the central research questions. This research has adopted qualitative research methodology because it is appropriate for descriptive and explorative studies which capture a social world of 'lived experience'. This research addresses children's experiences, perspectives and expectations to answer research question rather than quantifiable data collected through statically surveys. Twelve children between ages 12-16 were interviewed in order to investigate the details about their lives in poverty. Semi- structured interviews were conducted to facilitate the data collection procedures. Interviews were transcribed and further translated into English from native language in order to compose data sources for the current study.

In order to grasp an in-depth understanding of children's attitudes towards poverty and their expectations, data collected through interviews are analysed employing qualitative research techniques.

### **2.3 Justifying Qualitative Methods**

Research in social science is the process of gathering data, analyzing them for the advancement of knowledge. Basically, there are two popular research methods- qualitative and quantitative. I prefer to do qualitative research rather than quantitative method because the main target of my research is to probe social phenomenon and subject's experience of the context. Qualitative method is more suitable to study about people's behaviour, belief, culture and society. Qualitative method helps to understand the meaning of social phenomenon or generate hypothesis. It offers different prisms through which to view the world, different

perspectives on reality and different ways in which to organize chaos (Janice M. Morse and Lyn Richards, 2002:5). Qualitative method investigates the “why” and “how” questions of decision making. They are concerned with how people think and act in their everyday lives. Interviewing, observation and analysis of journals and other materials are central to this method. Sharan B. Merriam opines ‘Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meanings they attribute to their experiences (2009:5). Qualitative research is socially concerned and cosmopolitan. ‘Qualitative inquiry deals with human lived experience. It is the life world as it is lived, felt undergone, made sense of and accomplished by human beings that is the objects of study (Schwandt, 2001: 84). Qualitative method take account of particular characteristics of human experiences and do investigation of it. Studying human experiences is a complex task since it is multilayered and intermingled. Jerome Kirk and Marc L. Miller affirms the implication of qualitative method as, “Qualitative research is particular tradition in social science that fundamentally depends on watching people in their own territory and interacting them in their own language on their own terms. It has been seen to be “naturalistic”, “ethnographic” and “participatory” (1986:7).

Considering all the implications and usefulness of qualitative research, I have employed this method as a basic tool for primary data collection. Among the several methods approved for data collection in qualitative method I have employed semi-structured interviews and observation as the prime source of data collection. Qualitative methods are more flexible. Participants of this research process had the opportunity to respond more elaborately and in greater detail due to the nature of questions asked. Interviews were held in more informal setting. It helped to establish informal relationship between the researcher and the participants.

#### **2.4 The Field Work Process and Location**

Having received an approval letter from NSD in November 2012, I began to sketch the overall plan of field work. Due to some personal reasons I had to complete the field work in around 20 days only. I have had selected Tanahun District of Nepal as a spot of data collection. Tanahun is one of the districts in Nepal with thousands of poor children. It is also the place where I grew up and later worked as a High school teacher before coming to Norway. I had established contact and relation of trust with the people belonging to different ethnicity and socio-economic status. Knowledge on many things like location, people, culture

etc. helped me to conduct the interviews and observation more efficiently. Since my early childhood, I had witnessed and heard many things about the challenging and strenuous lives of the poor children. Many children from extremely poor families in this area are engaged in hard work for survival instead of joining school. Lack of employment, illiteracy and inflation are the major factors that have affected the rights of poor children. Basically, problems like childhood poverty and social exclusion are discussed and highlighted in this study.

*Figure: 1*



*Map of Nepal indicating Tanahun District*

*Source- Google Map*

Prior to conducting the research, I sought formal approval to access and acceptance to carry out the research from the Vyas Municipality office. After doing so, I visited district development office in Damauli. They provided me explicit ideas on the demographic distribution of Tanahun. Beside this, they suggested me the appropriate research site where many poor families from different ethnicity reside. Next important thing for me to accomplish was to identify the poor children and contact their parents. Finding it tough and time consuming to identify and contact poor children cum their parents, I sought help from the secretary of the specific area. He contributed a lot by arranging my meetings to the parents and introducing them. Almost all the people of the designated area were poor and illiterate. They were unaware of any types of academic research. Some of them have shared me their experiences regarding the census of 2010, Nepal when the representative of



government came to their hut and asked them their details. After knowing that I had been in Europe, some of the parents came to me and asked to note their children's name at top, thinking that their children will be benefited. They also asked me how the life stories of poor children from a remote area can be advantageous for my research. At the moment I clarified the purpose of my research, its outcomes and the usefulness of their children's opinions.

There is no definite rule for conducting the qualitative field work. Nevertheless, the crucial role played by the researcher during the fieldwork and thesis writing process can make a great significance academically and socially. The fieldwork was held in Tanahun, Nepal. Notebooks, pen, paper and tape-recorded were used to record the subjects' responses to my questions. The interviews were conducted in different contexts like at school premises, at children's homes, at a park and so on. All the interviews were completed in a single sitting. Though I had allocated one hour time for interviewing each child, it lasted till one and half hour or more than that in many of the cases. Many of the children I interviewed showed much curiosity and interest in my research project. All of them stated me that it was their new and first experience in the life. I found the male participants much frank, bold in nature than the female participants. I assured all my participants about the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses and identities. It was also clearly mentioned in the letter of consent which was handed out to the participants and their parents.

An interview guide was developed prior to the fieldwork. It was used as the major guideline to conduct interviews. I explained the questions in simple native language in order to make them easy to understand. I always started interviewing children with simple general questions about their schools, hobbies etc. It helped me to draw their interest and prepare them to speak frankly to me.

## **2.5 Data Collection**

Qualitative methods seek to discover understanding or to achieve explanation from data instead of from (or in addition to) prior knowledge or theory (Janice and Lyn 2002:2). This method provides an insight into people's behaviours, concerns, systems, culture, lifestyles etc. Qualitative research focus on generating detailed information on subjects which are complex to be quantified. Basically, data are collected from interviews, questionnaires, observations; documents are artifacts in qualitative methods. Primarily, qualitative data are records of observation and interactions that are complex and contexted, they are not easily

reduced immediately to numbers (Lyn Richards 2005: 34). The selection of suitable data collection method depends upon the purpose of study. Data collected from field work serve as an evidence for their distilled descriptions about the context. Later, the researcher analyses the evidence to produce core description of the experience and answer the research question. Considering the motif of the research, the researcher has applied semi- structured interviews and observations as primary data collection sources.

#### 2.5.1 Semi- structured Interviews

An interview is a directed conversation; an intensive interview permits an in-depth exploration of particular topic with a person who has had the relevant experiences (Kathy Charmaz 2007: 25). I have selected interview as the prime source of data collection. Basically, a semi- structured interview is more appropriate for researchers in social sciences. Unlike structured interviews, semi structured interviews are more flexible. The researcher can utter the language and sequence of question in interview guide. The particular context, interviewee responds etc determines on what to ask. ‘Interview Guide’ was developed and used in order to collect reliable, comparable and qualitative data. Semi- structured interview often contain open ended questions that allows informants to express their views in their owns ways and terms. Therefore, semi-structured interviews enable researcher for examining and gathering new knowledge about the informant’s belief and values. About qualitative interview Steinar Kvale (1996) writes, “ the qualitative interview is sometime called an unstructured or a non-standardized interview because there are few pre structured or standardized procedures for conducting these forms of interviews, many analyses of the methodical decisions have to be made on the spot, during the interview” (P-13). The interviews are mainly based on informal conversation about the children’s opinions, views about poverty and their worries about their future. 12 children between the ages 12-16 were selected for interviews. The researcher has selected the children belonging to two different categories: children living with parents but are affected by poverty and next are children who live in the street and work as scavenger. The semi-structured interviews were conducted by asking open-ended questions listed in interview guide. The questions were prepared cautiously and pre- arranged from general to complex and explorative one.

#### 2.5.2 Observation

Qualitative data are in the form of discourse which is significantly different from the numerical quantitative data. Data are the array of information which acts as an evidence to

answer research questions. The researcher has also played role of active participant in order to collect data by watching people in their territory. Observation is the inductive method of data collection. Data collected through observation are useful to supplement and clarify data from interviews. In order to develop rapport and familiarity with the participants and their family members, researcher has done intensive involvement and informal talks in their own cultural environment. According to Howell (1972), the four stages that most participant observation research studies are- establishing rapport, immersing oneself in the field, recording data and observations and consolidating the information gathered (392-403). The researcher has played the role of moderate participation by maintain close affinity with the people in the community and participants by remaining objective. Ginsberg and Mertens (2009) write, ‘the more closely researchers are involved with the researched, the more likely it is that they can be responsive and adoptable, close relationship with the local community can ensure that the appropriate people will be supportive and able to provide expertise, endorsement and guidance for the research’ (p-596).

In this study, the researcher conducted visits to the participants’ community in order to observe their activities, in their own natural settings and collect qualitative data. Regularly visiting the site fostered the intimacy with the participants, their parents and other people also. This relation made the process of interviewing easier. Although the research is about poor children, their parents’ occupation, daily activities, experiences narratives also enriched the research process. The researcher found it necessary to know about their parents because the young children between ages 12-16 live together and depend on parents. The researcher has also used the knowledge based on experiences and perception before coming Norway for further studies.

## **2.6 Secondary Data Sources**

Secondary data are the information collected by someone other than the person using data. Qualitative Secondary data could be obtained from various sources that include newspaper, novels, diaries, reports, televisions, existing statistical data, relevant policy documents and many others. Secondary data are more useful to provide deeper insight about how people view certain subjects matter. In this research, secondary data are employed to obtain explicit information about poverty in Nepal, Child Labour, government policies etc. Beside this, previous relevant researches and documents are reviewed in order to get better understanding

of methodological and theoretical concepts. Maps, tables and pictures relevant to this research are taken from internet sources and previous research.

## **2.7 Reliability and Validity of Research**

A qualitative researcher must always pay attention to two inseparable entities of research project which are- validity and reliability. Sarantakos has rightly asserted that validity is “a methodological element not only of the quantitative but also of qualitative research” (1994:76). Kvale and Brinkmann have defined these terms as, ‘Validity refers to the truth, the correctness and the strength of the statement while reliability refers to the consistency and trustworthiness of research findings (2009, 241-243). For valid and reliable outcome of research of the project, a researcher must present himself/herself must objectively and pay attention to authenticity of data. Hammersley affirms, ‘by validity I mean the extent to which an account accurately presents the social phenomenon to which it refers’ (1990:57). The correlation between data and conclusion must be maintained for noble achievement of research project. In fact, qualitative data are closely related to reality since opinions and views of research subjects are collected, transcribed and reinterpreted. Hammersley points out, ‘reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or by the same observer on the different occasions (1992:67). A qualitative study can be checked for its reliability by how or to what extend consistent methods and procedures are used. Likewise its validity can be checked by examining the things it communicate and the pragmatic usefulness and the quality of craftsmanship. Validity is ascertained by examining the source of invalidity. The stronger of falsification attempts a proposition has survived, the more valid, the more trustworthy of knowledge (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009:247). The interdependency between reliability and validity is, ‘there can be no validity without reliability; a demonstration of the former is sufficient to establish the later’ (Lincoln and Guba 1985:316). They further state that four elements like credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability must be considered to make the study trustworthy.

In this study, the researcher has manipulated all the four elements mentioned above in order to minimize the risk of getting deviated from the purpose of the project and to yield appropriate and consistent findings of the study. The researcher has maintained the degrees of neutrality in order to assure that the research outcome are shaped by respondents' opinions rather than researcher's biasness, motivation and interest. Nevertheless, researcher has

developed affinity with the fellow participants in order to collect appropriate and authentic data from the field work. Data from interviews, observations, government website and the other journals have been used to support and check one another's validity. The researcher has accurately recorded the interviewee's experiences and opinions and later transcribed them along with their gestures and facial expressions. Researcher has played significant role to entail the findings are consistent, transferable and authentic. Finally, I would guarantee that the data and information about the subjects will not be publicized or used for any other purposes.

## **2.8 Research Ethics**

Research ethics helps to establish moral standard for the conduct of research. Researchers have the moral obligations and responsibilities to the research subjects. Research ethics must be followed in order to explore the truth, avoid errors, build public support, provide reliable and valid data, and maintain social responsibility and honour human rights and values. Qualitative researcher interacts with the individuals in communities in order to collect primary data through several ways. This process provides fertile ground for the emergence of ethical dilemmas. A researcher must establish trust with public in order to collect valid and ample data. Therefore, acquiring knowledge on research strategies is inevitable. Considering research ethics prevents the researcher to deviate from the norms. Basically research ethics helps to promote the aim of research, build public support and to grant credit to the contributors.

Before interviewing I gave complete and clear information about the purpose and procedure of the interview. A written agreement was done in the preliminary stage. Since the participants were young children, I asked for permission with the parents as well as the children. The letter of consent including the detail about confidentiality, freedom of participants, researcher's right to publish the whole or parts of interviews, interviewee's rights etc. In the case of street children I didn't have to get permission from their parents. However, I clarified the purpose and usefulness of interviewing in simple words considering their level of understanding. To my surprise, street children begged for money to sit for interview.

Respecting the anonymity of research participants, I agreed to protect the identities of my respondents. I informed them that their names will be replaced by pseudonyms. However,

their biographical details like age, gender and family background will be included in thesis. I also assured them that inclusion of such detail will not make their identity explicit.

Similarly, I assured my interviewee's that the data and responses will be stored only in my private computer. No one else will have access to the data. All the data will be anonymised after the completion of project work in December, 2013. I highly respected their feelings and desire at the time of interview. The participants were also informed about their rights and freedom. They were free to withdraw from the interview or this research work whenever they find uneasy.

## **2.9 Data Analysis**

“Analysis is a breaking up, separating, or disassembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements, or units. With facts broken down into manageable pieces, the researcher sorts and sifts them, searching for types, classes, sequences, processes, patterns or wholes. The aim of this process is to assemble or reconstruct the data in a meaningful or comprehensible fashion” (Jorgensen, 1989: 107). Analyzing qualitative data comprehends different procedures like going through the interview transcripts or other sources, developing codes, coding data and drawing connections between discrete pieces to synthesize the research findings.

The data collected from the interviews were transcribed and further translated by the researcher one by one attentively. At the first step, the transcribed data were read several times and reviewed in order to assure about the clarity and completeness. As an initial step of the data analysis, data were coded under several headings like poverty, pessimism, future predicament, health, mistreatments etc. Repeated codes in different sources were marked. In order to identify and manage setting of codes, researcher had overviewed literature. Data analysis requires hard labour, creativity and discipline of the researcher. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), “analysis of data involves interpretation of meanings, functions and consequences of human actions and institutional practices, and how these are implicated in local and perhaps also in wider contexts” (p-3). The researcher has to identify the patterns and their interconnectedness in order to avoid overlapping and miscommunication. Acting more objectively, I tried to present findings based on the interviews and critical investigation. The analysis of data is included as the summaries in the thesis in order to explore and convey the general overview of the research project.

## **2.10 My Role as a Researcher**

In qualitative research, a researcher plays the role of an “Instrument” because s/he interacts and collaborates with the participants. The quality and outcome of the research is connected directly with the role played by the researcher. The role of the researcher can be defined by the relationship s/he plays with the subjects in the field. A researcher cannot exclude himself from the context though he must be as objective as possible. The issue of the researcher as an outsider or an insider to the group being studied is an important thing for social researcher. Kvale (1996) states that, “the researcher has a scientific responsibility to his profession and his subjects that research project yield knowledge worth knowing and that is as controlled and verified as possible. Researcher takes on different roles in relation to their subjects” (p-118).

I collected my research data in Tanahun district of Nepal. Though I spent around one and half decade of my life in the same district, I was an ‘outsider’ to the group I was studying about. Therefore, my relationship to the participants was very influencing factor. First of all I need to develop an ability to be open, honest, authentic and deeply interested in the experience of the research participants. I clarified them the purpose of my research to the participants. It increased the level of trust and openness in my participants. Besides doing these, I shared my personal experiences like my family status, my educational background, ethnicity, present position etc. I tried to be more frank and intimate to them because my purpose of field research is to collect more valid and reliable data.

I must admit the truth that my socio-economic status has had an influence on how I conducted the research, but I ensure that it has no negative impression in the participants. I didn’t play the role of outsider while working in the field. I was always cautious about the negative impression or misunderstanding between me and the interviewees. While working in the field I didn’t let my economic background, qualification and privileged class dominate or cause negative impression on the participants. I tried to assimilate with their way of living which was enriched by simplicity, generosity and innocence. Throughout the field work, I appreciated and embraced the differences to achieve authentic data and develop mutual relationship to the participants and their parents.

## **CHAPTER THREE: PREVIOUS RESEARCH AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

### **3.1 Previous Research-A Brief Overview**

There is an increasing body of research on childhood poverty and its impacts. The life circumstance of poor children and their parents may differ from one community to another and also from one cultural group to another. Poverty takes many forms and affects different groups in different ways. However, poor children share some commonalities for example poor housing, clothing and conflictual relationship. Most research on poverty focuses on single-parents families, inhabitants of rural areas and so-called lower-caste people. A lot of research on childhood poverty is concerned with health and schooling. Many of the studies focus on children's problems related to their educational attainment, health and relationship with family and friends. Some of the previous research is more concerned with child labour and violation of child rights. There are also some studies which explore the impact of parents' income on children's well-being.

For example, the CHIP Report (2003) argues that childhood poverty is inseparable from adult poverty, and the poverty of families and communities. Even a short period of childhood poverty can affect a person's future life as well as future generations. His research concentrates on children living in poverty and who run the risk of deprivation and harm that will affect their future lives. Similarly, Harper, Marcus and Moore (2003) discuss the effects of poverty at childhood stage. They assert that childhood a very important stage of life when a person develops mental structures which he or she use for interpreting reality and making choices later in life. Poverty affects the children's life aspiration, perceptions and even life chances.

Bruce et al. (2000) argues that chronic health problems are more prevalent among impoverished children. Human development is a multidimensional, interdependent process, the biological consequence of childhood poverty have a direct effect on brain development and thus, cognitive development and achievement (Feinstein 2003). It is obvious that poverty and well-being are correlated. Childhood poverty has adverse effects on health also. Langner and Michael (1963) show that childhood poverty can lead to severe ramifications, both physical and mental, some of which people recover from in time while other can be long lasting.



In Nepalese context, we can find many studies focusing on child labour and about street children. Basnet (2010) in her master thesis focused on the reasons of why children become street children. Likewise, she has elaborated the risks street children are facing. Doyle (2002) has discussed on the issue of how street children in Kathmandu are sexually abused. Baker (1996) in his research concluded that the street children suffer from several problems like frequent illness, dog bites, wounds, diarrhoea and hunger. Because of many such problems, street children are even having untimely death or ruined health. Doyle: 2000 and Subedi: 2002 show that street children in Nepal are sexually exploited by elder street children, foreigners and the general public. Danziger and Stern (1990) argue that children who are born into a persistently poor family are believed to be at greatest risk of poor birth outcomes and those who spend most of their childhood impoverished are expected to less often stay in school or complete their schooling, to be under- or unemployment and to more frequently experience behavioral problems.

Children are dependent on parents; therefore they enter or avoid poverty by virtue of their families' economic circumstances. Research on the effects of poverty on children has shown that poor children are at the risk for developing socio-emotional problems such as depression, internalizing and externalizing symptoms, lower sociability, and problematic peer relationship, and uneven class behaviours, pessimism. An example of internalizing is behaviour such as dependency and an externalizing behaviour is peer conflict (Brooks-Gunn and Duncan, 1997:63). Brooks-Gunn and Duncan opine that poor children are more vulnerable to emotional and behavioral problems than children from good economic background. Emotional outcomes portray the two dimensions; internalizing and externalizing behaviors. The effects of childhood poverty interrupt betterment in life. Children are more vulnerable and the effects of poverty in childhood are frequently lasting, sometimes permanently affecting children's growth and cognitive development (Grantham-Mc Gregor et.al. 2007). Beside this, poverty impinges several fundamental rights of children such as rights to nutrition, shelter and education.

Children with poor attention and concentration fail to tune into the social cues in their environment and thus don't learn social skills through experience. Those children who grow up in poverty are more likely to experience poor outcomes in later life. Children living in abject poverty without adequate food, access to education, safe water, sanitation facilities and

shelter are also denied their childhood (Hutchby and Moran Ellis: 1998). Children need special care and assistance because they are uniquely vulnerable by nature. Children are the holders of their own rights. Children have rights to survival, food, consumption, shelter, health, education, get love, and have recreation and so on. If children are deprived of basic needs, they cannot compete physically and mentally with the children from non-poor families at adulthood. Children apart from being most vulnerable sections of society, they are also the nation's future stars and citizens. Nepalese children are facing various challenges due to the social beliefs, persisting poverty, gender discrimination and illiteracy.

### **3.2 Theories of Poverty**

Theories of poverty can be classified into two categories; Cultural and structural. Culture theories examine poverty on the basis of the traits of poor themselves. In contrast, structural theories define poverty in terms of condition in which they live like- poor health, illiteracy, unemployment, helplessness etc.

Culture of Poverty is a branch of social theory. The culture of poverty theory explains why people are poor. It describes poor people's behavior differentiating from other middle as well as upper class people. The continuation of poverty is considered as a "way of life" because poverty traits have been passed down generationally among poor people. Poverty is the result of multiple factors like family status, income sources, educational attainment inclusively all modes of life. A child is poor by the virtue of the family's poverty because child has no potentiality to renovate the situation. Beside this, a child learns many things at home such as thoughts pattern, cognitive strategies during his childhood.

The theory of culture of poverty was created by an anthropologist Oscar Lewis in his book "Five Families: Mexican case Studies in the Culture of Poverty" in 1959. Lewis viewed the culture of poverty as adoptive, a way of coping with feelings of hopelessness and despair which developed from the realization of the impossibility of achieving success in terms of the values and goals of the larger society (Oscar Lewis in Katz 1993:12). The culture of poverty theory argues that "poor people share deviant cultural characteristics. The poor have life styles that differ from the rest of the society and that these characteristics perpetuate their life of poverty. The poor are qualitatively different in values and these cultural differences explain continued poverty" (Eitzen and Baca-Zinn, 1994).

Structural theories of poverty assume that the macro structure of the society produces inequality and consequently poverty. This theory challenges the assumption inherent in the 'culture of poverty' theory and suggests that poverty is a condition of society, not the consequence of individual characteristics (Easterlin, 1987). According to structural theory of poverty, deficient social structure is the main cause of perpetuating poverty because society limits the opportunities to some specific class or group. For instance, the capitalist system, where the economic system is organized in ways that encourage the accumulation of wealth at one end and creates condition of scarcity that make poverty inevitable to the others. Poor are considered as having limited economic opportunities, either because of present discrimination and labour market segmentation or because a lower-class background prevented the acquisition of education skills or credentials necessary to operate effectively in labour market (Gordon et. Al 1982). Structural theories blame that the social structure is partial towards poor population in societies.

In this research, both cultural and structural theories of poverty are used in order to provide deep insight about the poor children and their perspectives about their life. Cultural poverty theory helps in analyzing how the poverty has become a way of life and structural poverty helps to analyze the conditions that are the outcome of poverty.

### **3.3 Social exclusion**

Social exclusion is a multi-dimensional process of progressive social rupture, detaching groups and individuals from social relations and institutions and preventing them from full participation in the normal, normatively prescribed activities of the society in which they live (Silver, 2007:15). Social exclusion forbids individual or specific groups from meaningful participation in society. The problem of social exclusion is intensified by several factors like race, religion, economic status, employment, education, political affiliation and income. Especially, in poor developing countries like Nepal social exclusion is one of the major unresolved problems. Social exclusion is a paradigm on the basis of which our society becomes aware of its own dysfunction and looks, possibly through confusion and urgency, for solutions (Paugam 1996: p- 7). Socially excluded groups in Nepalese context are lower caste people who have ascribed socially defined roles, or people with deficient income and limited resources. Social exclusion promotes social inequality and relative deprivation (Runciman, 1966). Social exclusion depends on multi indicators rather than relying on poverty or material possession. Therefore, it implies in non-material level too. Social

exclusion is relational because it concerns to solidarity and cohesion, participation and discrimination etc.

Most important factors contributing social Exclusion are poverty and low income. Economically advantaged family can easily overcome the barriers and exclusion in societies than the poor. Social exclusion is often taken as the flaw in social networks experienced by group, families and individuals. According to Pierson (2010),

Social exclusion is a process over time that deprives individuals and families, groups and neighborhoods of the resources required for participation in the social, economic and political activity of society as a whole. This process is primarily a consequence of poverty and low income, but other factors such as discrimination, low educational attainment and depleted environments also underpin it. Through this process people are cut off for a significant period in their lives from institutions and services, social networks and developmental opportunities that the great majority of a society enjoys (p-12).

Social exclusion is a critical problem that is functioning in Nepalese societies. Basically the children from poor families are prominently facing social exclusion at different societal arenas. Social exclusion affects the social development of children since it generates negative impacts.

Children experience social exclusion within peer groups or elsewhere in societies when they lack the means necessary to participate in different activities. Particularly, poor children lack enough resources to buy materialistic needs. As a result, they are neglected by neighbors and friends. Therefore, the parents' income greatly influences the level of exclusion poor children experience. Children suffer from exclusion by experiencing atypical 'living pattern, customs and activities', for example, where their access to resources is significantly below the national level (Callan and Nolan: 1994). Several aspects like health, well-being, education and development of children are adversely affected if they are restricted from the full participation in the society (Fanning and Veale: 2004). Children affected by poverty are likely to face exclusion at schools, social functions, recreational activities and even health institutions because they cannot stand equal to children from privileged families. Children are citizens entitled to rights and capabilities in their own right; 'social exclusion' is the direct

violation of their rights and capabilities (UNICEF, 1989). Socially excluded children most probably lose the chances to be healthy, well-educated and cultured. Social exclusion can impress children negatively because it creates division in societies particularly as rich and poor, higher class and lower class and superior and inferior. Social exclusion has complex and multi-dimensional causes and consequences, creating deep and long lasting problems for individual families, for the economy, and for society as a whole. It can pass from generation to generation: children's life chances are strongly affected by their parents' circumstances, such as their income and the place they live (SEU: 2004, p-1).

### **3.4 Child Labour**

Child labour refers to the employment of children in any work that deprives children of their childhood, interferes with their ability to attend regular school, and that is mentally, physically, socially and morally dangerous and harmful (ILO, 2012). Due to the extreme poverty and illiteracy, child labour is prevalent in poor developing countries. Ivy George (1990) defines child labour as, child labour means the employment of child and the extraction of the productivity for the economic gain of another, with deliberating ramification on the psychological and physical development of child (p-22-23). Child Labour predominantly occurs in rural areas in comparison to urban areas. Some of the poor parents force their children to join work at an early in order to run household activities. Maximum numbers of child labour are engaged in agriculture and household chores. ILO (2008) mentions that the other causes of child labour are the lack of meaningful alternatives like affordable schools and quality education. The socio-economic condition of a family plays an important role in children's participation in work and in educational opportunities. Chris Jenks (1996) argues, childhood appears in different forms in different cultures in relation to structural variables such as mortality and life expectancy, organization of family life and structure, kinship pattern, and different ideologies of care and philosophies of need and dependency (p-69). Children being entangled in child labour have to perform a wide range of tasks and activities in working place. Some works are hazardous and tough which can increase the risks at health condition. Child labour enslaves children by parting them from their parents and schooling. The Encyclopaedia of Social science defines child labour as "when the business of wage earning or of participation in self or family supports conflicts directly or indirectly with the business of growth and education, the result is child labour". The deprivation and violation of child rights to education, emotional and physical development and proper living condition leaves lifelong psychological, emotional and physical problems.

The bitter reality about child labour is that they often experience violence and abuse. Especially, they are victims of physical, verbal, sexual and psychological abuse. ILO's Global Report on 2010 shows that 215 million children across the world are still trapped in child Labour, among them 115 million are in the worst forms. One third of them, i.e. 53 million children aged 5-14 are engaged in hazardous activities. Child labour is one of the determining factors of childhood poverty. Unicef report on The Stage of the World's Children (1997) mentions that,

In reality, Children do a variety of work in widely divergent condition. The work takes place along a continuum. At one end of the condition, the work is beneficial, promoting or enhancing a child's physical, mental, moral or social development without interfering with schooling, recreation and rest. On the other hand, it is palpably destructive and exploitative. There are vast areas of activity between these two poles, including work that need not impact negatively on child development.....But to treat all the work by children as equally unacceptable is to confuse and trivialize the issue and make it more difficult to end abuses. This is why it is important to distinguish between beneficial and intolerable work and to recognize the nature of child labour (p-24)

Child labourers are deprived of optimum resources. They are compelled to live in a challenging situation at present curving the way to uncertain future. With regard to the factors contributing child labour in Nepal, ILO pinpoints two major factors: the demand side factors and the supply side factors. The demand side factors is linked to societal indifference rather than lack of awareness, and the inadequate enforcement of legislation targeting child labour and the supply side factors are illiteracy of parents, lack of access to education and lack of subsistence livelihoods (Leiten: 2012).

In Nepal, child labour is prohibited by law. Nepal has signed Convention 138 in 1997 which obligates member states to 'pursue a national policy designed to ensure the effective abolition of child labour and to raise progressively the minimum age for admission to employment or work to a level consistent with the fullest physical and mental development of young person' (ILO 1973). Beyond this, Nepal government gives top priority in abolition of child labour by law enforcement as well as expressing international commitments in the sector of elimination of child labour. However, because of social and economic barriers child labour has not been mitigated. As said by Leiten (2012), in developing countries like Nepal, legislation is not the

driving force behind the elimination of child labour unless the socio-economic causes are identified in order to tackle underlying causes of child labour.

### **3.5 Poverty and Children's Rights**

Children are the greatest human asset and most valuable wealth. They transfer human culture and civilization, human values and ethos (Mamta et. Al 2009). Children should be cared and loved for their happy life. According to Adam (2005), child rights are not always the same as the adult's rights. Children may be entitled to greater protection than adults and may not have as much freedom- in both cases because they are more vulnerable and less experienced than adults. Child rights give adults a reason to take children's interests seriously (p:4-7). It is the responsibility of all the parents, families and societies to protect children from any types of evils and exploitation. The convention on children's right came into practice on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1990 though it was adopted by General Assembly of United Nations on 20<sup>th</sup> November 1989 (P-3). Children require prior care and guidance because they are most vulnerable. The convention in a sense is a means of empowering children, creating an environment in which all children are able to live securely and realize their full potential in life (UNICEF, 1997). The convention on rights of children includes four sets of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of children. They are:

- The rights of survival
- The rights of protection
- The rights of development
- The rights of participation

These are the inalienable rights of all the children. Violation of child rights is offensive. For the proper physical, social and mental development child rights must be preserved strictly.

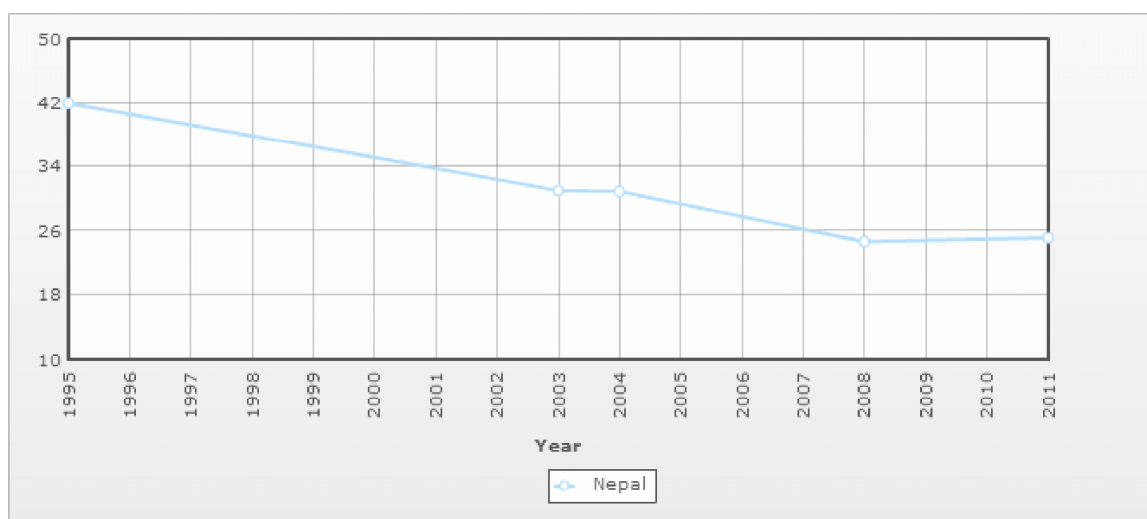
## CHAPTER FOUR: POVERTY IN NEPAL

### 4.1 Preamble to Nepal

Nepal, officially the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, is a landlocked sovereign state located between two economically budding powerful nations; China and India. Nepal is the world's 93<sup>rd</sup> largest country with an area of 147,181 sq.km. Nepal is the most beautiful and stunning Himalayan country in the world. Nepal has amazingly diverse geography, landscapes, culture and tradition. Despite the diverse culture and religious groups, Nepal has perfect cultural and religious harmony. Nepal is divided into three geographical regions; Himalayan region (North), Hilly region (Mid) and Terai region (south).

The vast majority of Nepal's population makes a living from subsistence agriculture. Around 81% of the total population depends on agriculture. Nepal is one of the least developed countries in South Asia. Nepal was ranked 157 out of 187 countries by Human Development Report 2013. Nepal's 2012 HDI of 0.4633 is below the average of 0.4666 in the low human development group and below the average of 0.0558 for countries in South Asia (UNDP, 2013). According to the CIA World Factbook, 25.2% of the total population in Nepal lies below the poverty line. Low agricultural productivity, political instability, inadequate infrastructural development, high population growth rate are the contributing factors of high poverty in Nepal. .

*Figure: 2*



Graph Showing the Poverty percentage in Nepal

Source- <http://www.indexmundi.com/g/g.aspx?c=np&v=69>



In Nepal, 25.2% % of people live under poverty with \$735 Income per annum. Basically, the illiterate people from rural areas are extremely poor. The lives of children growing up in such poor families have miserable life with diminishing health and poor educational performance. Beside this, they have to face more emotional and behavioral problems more frequently than do non poor children. Mostly poverty is higher among women, *dalits*, *especial tribes* female-headed households and agriculturists. Rural households in Nepal are more likely to be poor than urban households. According to CBS (2005), household headed by agriculture wage labourer are the poorest while the second poorest group consists of households headed by people self-employed in agriculture. Low economic-growth, weak social and economic infrastructure, political instability, relatively high population growth, limited access to non-agricultural income. Maoist insurgency for 12 years killing 13 thousand people along with vast destruction of infrastructures cannot be discounted (Seddon and Hussein, 2002). Pannushy (1999) emphasizes that the rural poor suffer not only from an insufficient level of educational and health services but also from their poor quality life and relatively higher costs. Socio-economic norms based on gender and ethnicity, on the other hand are also exacerbating poverty.

#### **4.2 Corruption and Poverty**

When government officials' abuse entrusted power for private gain, it is considered corruption. Corruption is regarded as a prime cause of poverty. Corruption can completely undermine the economic welfare and growth of a country (Jain 1998:2). Corruption is one of the major hindrances in poverty reduction. Particularly, poor people including women and children are extremely disadvantaged due to corruption because they have less power. According to report of Transparency International Nepal (2012) Nepal is ranked 139 among 176 countries in proportion to corruption. Nepal's most corrupted region is Police, Judiciary, Tax, Land Administration, Police and Customs. Corruption is contributing to disorder and lawless across in Nepal. As stated by Transparency International Nepal, "Corruption has failed successive governments, raised development costs, eroded the work ethos, and promoted a materialistic, inhuman attitude based on money. This has deepened poverty, impeded social and economic development, eroded public services and undermined democratic values".

Yearly, Nepal receives a large amount of resources from foreign aids for reconstruction and development of infrastructures but in opposition it generates greater opportunities for corruption because of corrupted governing personnel. Corruption and mismanagement of

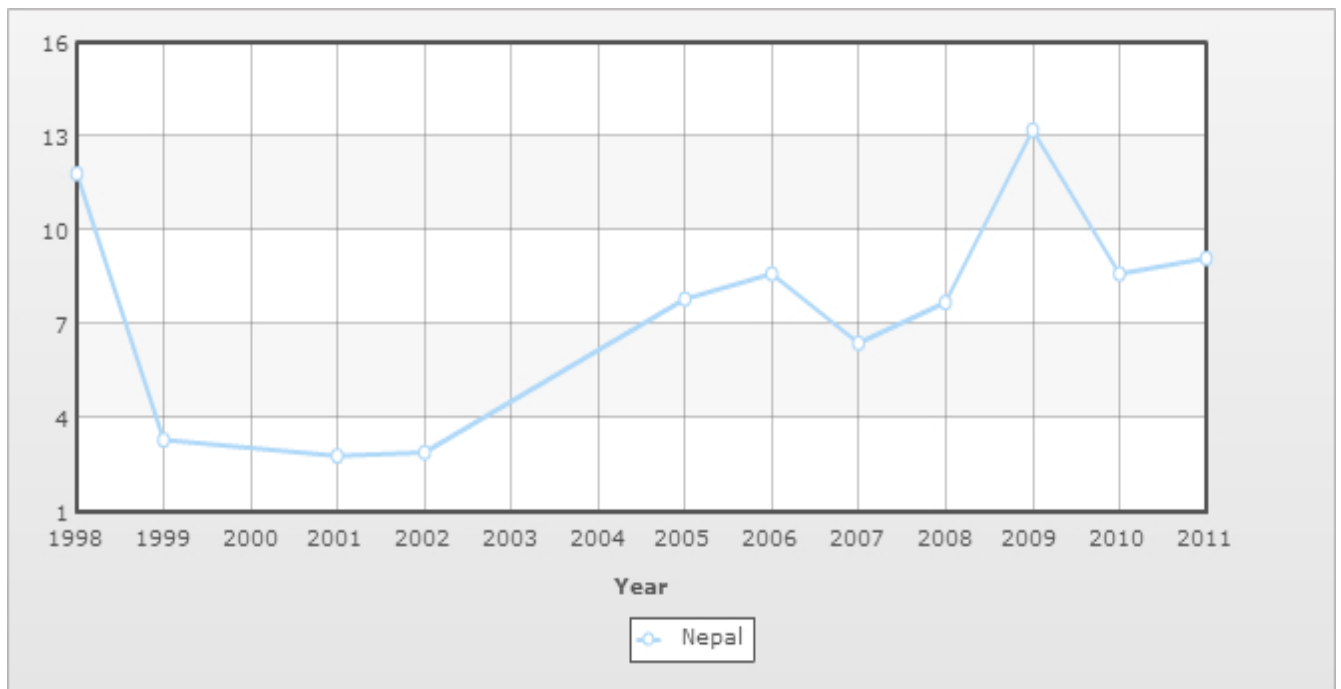
domestic funds as well as foreign aids are the key experts which exacerbate the gaps between rich and poor, from rural and urban population in Nepal.

In present, Nepal is a post-war transitional period. As a result, corruption is blooming in every sector. Corruption in Nepal is causing a systematic distortion of equality of access to public resources and free competition which hinders development. Corruption increases the cost of public services, hinders economic growth and increases inequality. Poor people are highly affected by corrupted bureaucracy in Nepal. Due to corruption, poor people lose access to public services. They are delayed in receiving services from every sector like police, tax, and government organization and even at private institution. Due to the trend of corruption, only limited numbers of people are enjoying political power, property, honor and success. The major forms of corruptions that are being practiced in Nepal are Bribe (payment of cash), Chakari (Flattering or servicing to seek favor from politically or administratively well-off people) and Afno Manche (one's own people).

#### **4.3 Inflation and Unemployment Contributing Poverty**

Because of inflation and unemployment, poverty rate is increasing in Nepal. Inflation generally means an increase in price of consumer goods. Laidler and Parkin (1975) have defined inflation as, “a process of continuously rising prices or equivalently of continuously falling value of money” (p.741). Because of inflation, the value of money declines and too much money can purchase too few goods. Bronfen Brenner and Holzmänn (1963) defined, inflation is a fall in the external value of money as measured by foreign exchange rates, by the price of gold, or indicated by excess demand for gold or foreign exchange at official rates (p.599). The income of poor people in Nepal is very limited; the inflation has constrained the purchasing power. Consequently, people with very less income cannot manage to buy basic food qualities. Ultimately, inequality, poverty distress and frustration take place. According to CIA World Fact Book (2008) 46% of total population is suffering from unemployment problem. Nepal has no job opportunities due to slow development ratio and higher population growth. Because of growing unemployment health problem in people increases as they cannot afford things like good food and proper health care. Similarly, social problems like crime rate, suicide mount which create negative impacts on socio-economic development of poor children.

*Figure: 3*



*Graph showing Inflation Rate*

*Source:* <http://www.indexmundi.com/>

#### **4.4 Child Labour in Nepal**

Child labour has been widespread in Nepal for centuries. In the rural areas children perform works in the field or at home accompanying their parents. This is regarded as the normal process of socialization. Nepal belongs to one of the poorest country in the world. Slow economic growth, a relatively high population growth rate and problems such as insufficient social and economic infrastructure contribute to poverty in Nepal (Government of Nepal, 2003:13). Due to poverty, families are destined to search any sorts of livelihood opportunities for their survival. Therefore, they migrate to big cities like Kathmandu, Pokhara, Biratnagar etc from villages in search of earning opportunities. In big cities, the children from poor migrant families work in wide scale of activities like brick kilns, restaurant, garage, houses, stone quarries and many others. Among them some simple works can be continued simultaneously with education while other causes irregular school attendance or total drop out. Maximum numbers of children working in the big cities of Nepal have come from poor families of remote areas. Some of them are sent by the parents for earning and support families while other have come by escaping from homes by being

allured to city lives and dreaming a good future. However, in realities they have very challenging life in cities.

Despite the existence of laws prohibiting child labour in Nepal, the numbers of child labour has not declined. Research by The Nepal Labour Force Survey (2008) shows that 1.60 million children fall into the category of child labour in Nepal. Among them 0.62 million children are involved in hazardous work. Poverty, illiteracy, social and cultural practices, gender discrimination, lack of child protection policies and deficiencies in education system are the major factors for growing child labour in Nepal. Unemployment has become a great misfortune for Nepal. There are less job opportunities due to high population growth, political instability and poor development of infrastructures. Child labourers in Nepal have very dreadful life under great uncertainty of their future as well as life. The child labourers are often cheated, exploited and abused at the working places. International Labour Organization has identified two factors; demand side factors and supply side factors for perpetuating child labour in Nepal. Demand side factors have been linked to societal indifference rather than lack of awareness and inadequate enforcement of legislation. Likewise, illiteracy, lack of access to education and subsistence livelihood are pointed as supply side factors. Therefore child labour problem can be defined as the symptoms of problems of poverty and inequality in Nepal. Children are the members of families, communities and nations therefore it is the responsibility of every duty bearers to provide optimum care and love for their overall development. In this research I have mentioned and analysed the perpetuating condition of poverty and inequality in Nepal in order to examine its impacts on the children.

#### **4.5 Rural Poverty in Nepal**

According to CIA World fact Book (2010), 19% of total population lives in urban areas and rest 71% live in rural areas. People in rural areas depend upon subsistence farming for their livelihood. Poor rural people in Nepal are characterized by landlessness, generational poverty, larger family, poor health and high infant mortality rate. Maximum number of rural population depends upon agriculture. But, the rugged land, poor quality soil and lack of irrigation disable them to produce enough food. The condition of landless people in rural areas is more complicated because remote places have not even single job opportunities. These regions are physically isolated due to inadequate infrastructures of development. Many rural populations live under extreme poverty, without any conditions of easy life. In terms of

different caste and ethnic groups living in rural areas, Dalit comprise the poorest population. They are illiterate and lack possession to land and power. The rural situation is further aggravated due to food insecurity, class and gender discrimination, poor governance and uneven distribution of developmental works. Regarding this, IFAD (2007a) succinctly states that;

About four fifth populations in the rural areas of Nepal depend on subsistence farming for their livelihoods. In this area, household food, security and poor nutrition are still major concern. Most households have little or no access to primary health care, education, clean drinking water and sanitation service. Rural poor people are generally illiterate, have large families and are landless or have small landholdings. The most vulnerable groups are the lowest social caste, indigenous people and women.

#### **4.6 Poverty impacts on Children's Health**

Poverty and social equalities in childhood have profound effects on the health of children, and their impact on health continues to reverberate throughout the life course into late adulthood (p.2). Poverty and material deprivation has negative consequence on children's physical well-being. Poverty affects readiness for pregnancy and foetal well-being. Infant mortality rate is 28 per 1000 live birth in Nepal. Due to the lack of awareness, proper care and proper nutrition, children are born under-weight or physically impaired.

Poor children don't get good parenting because of specific factors like debt, depression and work burden among parents. Therefore, children are abused and neglected among poor families. Poor families are bound to consume unhealthy and cheap foods due to poverty. As a result, children don't get minimum nutrients for body. They get physically weak with higher chances of physical illness. The poor families in Nepalese societies eat same sort of food every day. Especially, lentil and rice are consumed two times a day. Children don't eat food containing proteins and vitamins which affects their physical and mental growth. Likewise, economically disadvantaged young people spend maximum percentage of their income on alcohol consumption. The next notable factors contributing to health risk among poor children of Nepal is illiteracy among parents. Most of the poor adults are uneducated. Therefore, they pay less attention to sanitation, health care of children.

#### 4.7 Population Growth behind Poverty

The rapid population growth is considered as one of the major cause of poverty in Nepal. The population growth of Nepal according to World Bank Report is 1.74% in 2011.

Figure: 4



Source: World Bank Report 2011.

The standard of living declines along with the population growth. Higher population growth is not simply a problem of numbers. It is the problem of development and human welfare as well (UNESCAP: 2002). In the year 2011, the total population of Nepal is 26, 494,504 (CBS: 2011). Nepal is the 45<sup>th</sup> most populous country in the world constituting 0.37% of world's total population. Population growth rate is higher in every developing countries including Nepal.

Rapid population growth increases landlessness and reduces free bounty of the common environment and hence increases the incidence of poverty. Additionally, rapid population growth has adverse effect on child health which possibly increases poverty in next generation (Ahlburg et al 1996: 6). Larger families implied by population growth adversely effect on health, nutrition and education of children. Consequently, children are likely to suffer from material deprivation (ibid). Population growth also impact on population welfare by increasing demand for land, housing and food.

Particularly in the rural areas of Nepal, people are poor and guided by traditional beliefs. They produce a large number of children thinking that children are the boon from gods. The other reason for high population growth in rural areas of Nepal is lack of awareness and lack of availability of health services. The high population growth rate has deteriorated the lives of poor people, also by perpetuating poverty.

#### **4.8 Feminization of Poverty**

The concept ‘feminization of poverty’ was introduced in the USA in the mid-1970s, and represents a rediscovery of female poverty. Feminization of poverty relates to the concept that women are more at risk of falling into poverty than men. This study began with the recognition of the economic, social and political inequality of women is a global phenomenon. According to World Bank (2006), feminization of poverty describes a phenomenon in which women represent disproportionate percentage of the world’s poor. A small percentage of women have legal ownership of assets (house, land and Livestock) in Nepal.

Nepal is characterized by patriarchal societies. Women are the most disadvantaged segment of rural societies. Women are suppressed by males in every domain. Male hold the decision making power in family. Since the early childhood female children are taught to be sublime, loyal and dedicated in household works. The hard work and labour performed by females at homes are undermined. Women have limited freedom to participate in social activities. Chiefly, they are prioritized to remain busy in household chores. Gender inequality prevailing in Nepal can therefore be taken as one of the major hindering factor of development and high poverty.

## CHAPTER FIVE: PRESENTATION OF EMPIRICAL DATA

### 5.1 Introduction

The data utilized in this research was gathered by conducting semi-structured interviews with poor children living in Tanahun District of Nepal. Twelve children from poor background were interviewed purposively to collect data regarding their experiences, hardship, academic performance and future predicaments. Beside this, the information collected through participant observation and informal talks have been used as considerable for data analysis. The interviews transcripts are analyzed in reference to the research questions to present the research findings in the light of theoretical approaches.

All the interviewees were from extremely poor families. Children were selected from different caste and background in order to encompass wider variations of Nepalese societies. During the time of interviews, all most all children expressed their worries about their future. Additionally, they shared their problems aroused by poverty. Researcher's experiences as well as findings based on the children's homely environment and other social problems have been included in this chapter. The children whom I interviewed were between the ages 12 to 16. Excluding two street children, all the remaining ten were age groups, they have realized and faced the problems emerged due to poverty.

### 5.2 Material Deprivation

During the time of interview, children expressed their inability to access minimum requirements like cloth, food and stationery. Due to the poverty, they are facing several problems and bitter experiences. Participant P2 whose parents depend on daily labor (building construction) for survival expressed it as follows;

*My parents have no permanent job. They are involved in construction works that yield less income. When my parents don't go for work due to 'Banda' or health problem, we don't even have food to eat. That time my parents borrow from neighbors. It is very difficult for my parents to buy me new dress, stationary and favorite food.....if my basic needs were full filled, I would live so happily.*

The account of next participant P8 is also quite similar. He lived in a single-parent family. His father died in a bus accident few years ago. His mother works as a sweeper at an office in town. He shared his unpleasant memories to me as:



*I couldn't change my torn bag in time. My friends cracked jokes about it in class. Some of them (misbehaved) tried to insert old papers inside it. Their behavior made me much sad. I didn't force my mother to buy me a new bag shortly.... I know she doesn't have a single penny some of the time.*

These children perceived material disadvantage as the source of unhappiness. Especially, when they cannot stand equal along with their peers because of poverty, they evaluate themselves as unlucky and get stressed. Participant P1 responded expressed to me as:

*My father died in an accident before two years. My mother has no good income source. She is a sweeper at an office in town. It is very hard for her to maintain all the household expenditure. I don't like to give more pressure by demanding much. Sometimes, I have to wait for months when I need a new dress, school bag etc.*

In Nepal, children expect to get new dress and good food particularly in major festivals like 'Dashain' and 'Tihar'. If their wishes are not full filled by parents, they feel extremely sad. When asked about unhappy moment, participant P13 recounted;

*In last Dashain vacation, friends of my class collected 500 each and went to visit Pokhara. Unfortunately, I couldn't join my friends because my parents couldn't manage money. I felt very unhappy.*

Furthermore, children stated that living in confined housing, lacking necessary school materials, exposure to frequent illness are the indicators of childhood poverty. Poor children are perceived as inferior and often excluded by rich at school and also in societies. Many of the respondents exhibited visibly low weight with poor health. It is because of the lack of necessary nutrients in their diet.

### **5.3 Health and Disability**

Children were found to be living in houses and surrounding characterized by poor hygiene. Almost all of them were living in houses that lacked adequate water supply, sanitation and drainage. Most of their houses had traditional pit latrines. I found poor drainage, open sewage and piles of rubbish in their community. Cattles like pigs, buffaloes, goats were in the same

building they reside. Apart from their homes, children mentioned that their classrooms were untidy with dusty floors.

Children were often suffering from diseases like diarrhea, common cold, fever etc. Because of frequent health problem, children are irregular at school. Participant P7 shared about his health condition to me as;

*I am not strong physically. I am caught by several diseases frequently especially fever and skin disorder. I can't go school regularly due to poor health. My parents spend a lot of money for my medication..... my health problem has pushed my family into worst poverty situation.*

From the discussion with students, I find them much conscious about health condition. However poverty has deprived them from growing in healthy environment along with good and regular physical check-up. Participant P10 asserted in response to my question, “What kind of life do you aspire to have?” as;

*Unlike others' our family faces many health problems like getting ill frequently. It adds more problems and economic crisis to us. I would aspire to have very happy family with none of us falls ill.... Nevertheless it cannot happen because poverty (control) drives us opposite to what we expect.*

During the time of interview, participant further mentioned that his younger brother has been suffering from malaria. Particularly, dirty environment and lack of awareness spread communicable diseases in their areas. In Nepali context, ill health increases the probability of getting excluded in family or at school. Participant P4 narrated her memories of getting excluded as;

*Last month, I was caught by continuous cough for two months. During that time, my friends behaved very differently to me. No one agreed to sit at my side in class. I was excluded in every game. Some of my friends neglected me saying 'you shouldn't go close to other', I was very sad at that time. My eyes got tearful due to the distressing words of my friends.*

## 5.4 Education

Except two street children, all remaining participants are school children. A good number of interviewed children expressed the problem arose due to poverty in their schooling. They mention the value of education while talking to me. Twelve years participant P... told that education is as important as food, clothes and shelter for every human beings. I found many of the children worried about whether they could continue their education or not till university level. Most of the children were aware that education can change their life by opening doors to several opportunities in life. However, due to poverty children were tackling with many problems in relation to their educational achievements. Participant P2 shared his opinion about schooling as;

*I am not regular at school. Sometimes, I must work at home or in the field with my parents. I miss many classes by being irregular at school. I therefore, cannot do well in the exams. I even get failed in some subjects. I feel shame in front of my friends and teachers. I think I will change the school in the next academic year.*

Children need to help parents either by working together or by looking after the young siblings at homes. The poor performance in exams due to irregularity makes them feel sad and shame.

Similarly participant P 12 responded,

*Teachers and friends behave differently with me because I am poor. Teachers pay more attention to rich children in class. They take every matter of rich students positively whereas poor students are neglected and unheard. Sometimes, teachers behave rude to poor students because poor students including me are not regular at school and could not perform well in exams.*

These experiences about schooling reassemble many poor children's realities. Going school is just unnecessary pressure for them. Since the early stage, negative feelings towards education emerge in their mind. This is the major hindrance for setting good foundation for children's good and prosperous life.

Fourteen years P11 told me about his experience regarding mistreatment at school:

*The teacher used to tell me, you are from a poor and low caste family. He often scolded me at the rag I wear. During that time, friends looked at me and blustered in to laugh. Teachers and friends never loved me which made me bad at school. That is why I don't like to go school and study.*

Figure:5



*A child writing his homework at a public place*

Source: <http://www.nepal-pictures.com/>

I found most of the children feel very happy when they go to school. When I asked them, ‘what is the most important thing you want in your life’, almost the entire participant children said “education” and they all want to go to school every day. Participant P8 expressed;

*I become very happy when I go to school. At school, I and my friends learn new things and we always play together, eat together and return home together. It makes me very happy.*

Most of the children expressed that not only for study, they want to go to school for meeting friends make fun. Beside the study they want to spend time and play with friends. Participant P9 expressed;

*At school, I can meet all of my friends and we can play together. I like to be with my friends. Sometime we make fun to other friends. At home I cannot play because I never get time. I have to do work at home. I have little brother and sister so I also have to look after them. If I go to play outside home, my parents will bit me. So I never get chance to play with my friends at home. That's the main cause I want to go to school.*

*Figure-6*



*Student from poor families at government school*

*Source: Field Work*

## **5.5 Work**

I found many of the children with great hope of earning much money and redeeming their families from poverty in future. While saying so they also have worries about the uncertain future. Poverty at their childhood has affected on their educational achievement in several

ways. Unlike the children from upper class families, they have to help parents after school. Most of the children whom I interviewed shared that they couldn't be regular at school due to the work. Looking after cattle, working in the field with parents and helping at household work are their daily routines. In addition to helping parents at household work in the morning and evening, some children were doing minor jobs at leisure time. Participant P3 was a student of grade 8. Her father was a poor wood cutter. She was doing work of housekeeping at the rich man's home in order to manage her pocket money and help her father. She shared:

*Every Friday and Saturday I go for housekeeping job. I earn some money from work to spend for my schooling and buy some goods at home. I have to work around 16 hours a week. Although it is very hard, I must work to assist my father and manage my expenditure.*

Poor children are engaged in part-time works to support family economically. Participant P4 explained the problems of mixing part-time works with schooling as;

*I deliver milk to the dairy every morning. I carry the cans in my bicycle. It takes around one and half hour to finish the work. I earn Rs. 30 per day. . I want to help my parents by doing part-time work but it affects badly for my study. I cannot read in the morning time like other friends. When I finish my work, I feel very tired so I cannot concentrate on my study in class.*

Many of the children were working after schools or on holidays. Working and studying simultaneously is quite exhausting and depressing according to children. Many of the children reported that they couldn't deny working because they wanted to assist their parents economically.

### **5.6 Children's Feelings on their own Situation**

During the time of interview, many children expressed their perceptions about their contemporary life. Participant P9 replied,

*I feel sad to be born in poor family. Poverty is the root cause of all the vices in my life as well as my family. I often compare my life with the other children from rich family. They are enjoying the spirit of life. .... Life is so wonderful for them with no pain,*

*deficiency, problems and sufferings. It is just opposite to me. Life is tiring and always troublesome. What poverty has taught me is to cope with everything that happens in life as a passive receiver.*

Similarly the next participant P10 expressed his opinions as;

*I am born in a poor family. My parents are very poor. We struggle for daily food and Clean water. We don't have telephones and television at home. My parents work very hard every day. I feel sad to see them struggling throughout their life. Sometimes, I imagine how happy we could be in life, if we were not too poor.*

I found the life of poor children very difficult in many ways. Children perceive poverty as the cause of problems. Almost all of them reported that they are sad to be born in poor family. Many of their desires are unfulfilled and life is hard due to poverty. Participant P1 expressed his feelings regarding the contemporary life as;

*I can't express my feelings in words how I feel to be a poor. Life is not easy for poor people like us. I think only the rich people can enjoy the spirit of life. Poverty has taught me to walk bare foot, smile in pain and work for other's ease.....I think god will listen my prayer and bless my family with riches one day.*

## **5.7 Relationship and Mistreatment**

Maximum number of interviewed children opined that negative relationship and mistreatment are the major causes of unhappiness, distress and worry in their life. Participant P3 revealed that frequent conflict between parents and their indifference nature toward her worried more than other problems she faced personally. Participant P7, fourteen years old girl, was a student of grade 7. She lived in a two- parent's family along with her two younger brothers. She shared her parents in response to my question, 'what makes you unhappy?' she expressed;

*I get very sad when my parents quarrel at home. My father always returns home drinking alcohol after work. He begins disputing in every minor issue. He quarrels with mother and shouts at me and my brother. He never listens to my words. I always*



*feel sad by seeing the poor relationship between my parents and disintegrated family situation.*

Similarly, next participant P1 a boy aged 12 years lived in a single parent family. In response to my question he said;

*My mother works whole day and returns home late in the evening by getting much tired. She behaves very rude to me. She beats me in my minor mistakes. She never pays any attention to my needs and happiness. I feel much lonely at home due to her treatment.*

Beside this, most of the participants said that negative peer experience is the major cause of their sadness. They have very less friends because of their poverty. The children of their neighbor do not want to play with them. Rich parents also do not let their children to play with them. Participant P12 expressed;

*In my neighborhood, many children play football. I also want to play with them but they do not include me in their team because I don't have sports shoes and money to spend. I become very sad when they say that they do not like to play with me because I am poor and my clothes are dirty. I made one plastic ball (a ball made of discarded plastic bags) to play like a football. The rich boys in my neighbors laughed at me and said that 'your ball is worse than a toy'. Their behaviors hurt me a lot.*

In this way, poor children are excluded by other rich children. Rich children do not like to be a good friend with them. It may impacts bad in children's mind. Because of the bad relationship with their peers, they could behave bad at home and school. Participant P3 stated that;

*If we have lots of pocket money and nice tiffin, everybody wants to be our good friend. I am poor and I do not have pocket money as well as any good tiffin at school. That's why nobody wants to be my friend. Because of poverty I cannot invite my friends in any occasions like in festival and birthday. I do not celebrate my birthday. I do not have pocket money to buy things for friends when they invite me so they do not like me. They always laugh at me saying that I never celebrate my birthday. It makes me very sad and angry.*



Poor children are often treated as ‘other’ by teachers and peers; as a result they feel isolated in societies and schools. Less participation in social activities with peer groups decrease children’s caliber of social interaction and maintaining peer relations. One of the participants P11 responded to my question “How is your relationship with your classmates?” as:

*I have few close friends. I don’t like to set friendship with many of them because I am not rich enough to share and get involved with them....If I don’t agree to my friends and participate in all their activities, they may feel sad or get hurt.*

### **5.8 Expectation in Life**

In response to my question, “what is your aim in life?” many of them expressed to be driver, soldier or simply mentioned that they have no aim in life. It is because studying good subjects costs a lot of money in Nepal. Likewise, they must work hard for long time to achieve the goal of life. Since their parents couldn’t afford for their schooling, they don’t have dream to attain university and be a reputed professional in future. Despite the several hurdles arouse due to poverty, the young interviewees expressed to overcome them and improve family status economically. Participant P10 said:

*Poverty makes me paranoid about the uncertainties about the future. I always wonder whether I could remove the load of poverty or not. I therefore, determined to be a mechanic by taking trainings after my SLC. I want to be independent and uplift my family from this hard life.*

His future plan clarify that he has no intention to continue his study after completion of secondary level. Poverty is the barrier for continuing education. Most of the participants expressed worries about the uncertain future. They are much familiar with the hard life due to poverty. I asked their aim of life during the time of interview. Many of them had simple aim in life like to be a mechanic, driver, shopkeeper and a farmer. Children were not expecting higher dreams in life because; they cannot be easily fulfilled. Poor children mayn’t continue study till higher level due to enough income sources in family. As soon as schooling is over, they are obliged to join work for family support.

Participant P7 said:

*I want to be a nurse in my life. I don't think I am lucky enough to be a nurse in future. That is a dream which I cannot full fill. I decided that I don't want to think my aim of life any more. My family is very poor. They can't afford the expenses of my education. I have heard that studying nursing course require a lot of money. My parents have planned to marry me after my grade 8 examination. I always fear my life will be more panic than my parents.*

Some of the participants mention that they want to be a good person in future and make their parents proud. Regarding this, participant P10 said;

*In my future, I want to be a good educated person and make my parents proud. I want to reach in good position through my education. My parents also want the same but we are very poor, I don't know how to achieve all these. I am doing very hard work now. I do part-time work and go to school. I am not sure by doing this I can achieve my goal or not. If I can do well, my parents will be proud of me and this is the dream of my life.*

The life of poor people is getting more difficult day by day in Nepal. The gap between rich and poor in societies is getting wider because of inflation and nominal change in income rates. People who are engaged in minor works have very less income. From beginning to last stage, they work hard for surviving only. Providing good education and daily needs is like to be very difficult things for poor family. Poverty stricken children grow pessimistic and lack confidence because they are always suppressed by generational poverty.

### **5.9 Street Children**

The social, cultural, political, economic and religious domains of Nepal have significantly influenced the phenomenon of street children. Most of the children are affected by caste system. Furthermore, because of the poverty, children's misconceptions about urban areas having much resources and opportunities influence them to migrate cities areas. As a lack of guidance, hardships and deprivations, they become street children.

Among twelve children, I interviewed to two street children. They engage in different types of street-based work for survival and joy of freedom. They said that sometimes they work

like rag-picking, begging, street vending or illegal activities. They even don't know what their aim of life is. Participant P5 responded to my question, what is the aim of your life?

*I don't have any aim of my life. My life is very miserable and everybody called me "Kathe"<sup>1</sup>. Being "Kathe" how could I imagine about my future. I just want to eat two times in a day and enjoy my life freely.*

In response to the same question another participant P6 said:

*I want the same life like other children. Because of poverty, I came here to earn money for my family but I became "Kathe". Now I don't have anything. People hate me. Nobody give me good work and good payment. I want to be a good man in my future but it is impossible. So, I don't dream about my easy and happy life.*

Nepalese societies are insensitive toward street children. Sometimes, the police also seem insensitive towards these children. Most often people violate them physically and abuse them morally. The societies lack insight about the issues which cause children to become street children and force them into illegal activities.

Many of the street children lived on the street or at temples. They are spending their significant part of their life on the street. My participant P5 expressed his feeling about being street children:

*I came here from neighbor district. I ran away from my house because of poverty. I live in groups and sleep in street. I beg in the streets and temples; and eat food thrown away from people. Sometimes, people give me work but they pay very less. It is very difficult to live like this. But I have no other option.*

Both participants responded that poverty is the main cause for living on street. Participant P6 said about other street children:

*All street children in this area are my friends and they also work on the street to earn money for themselves while some children need to work to support their families due*

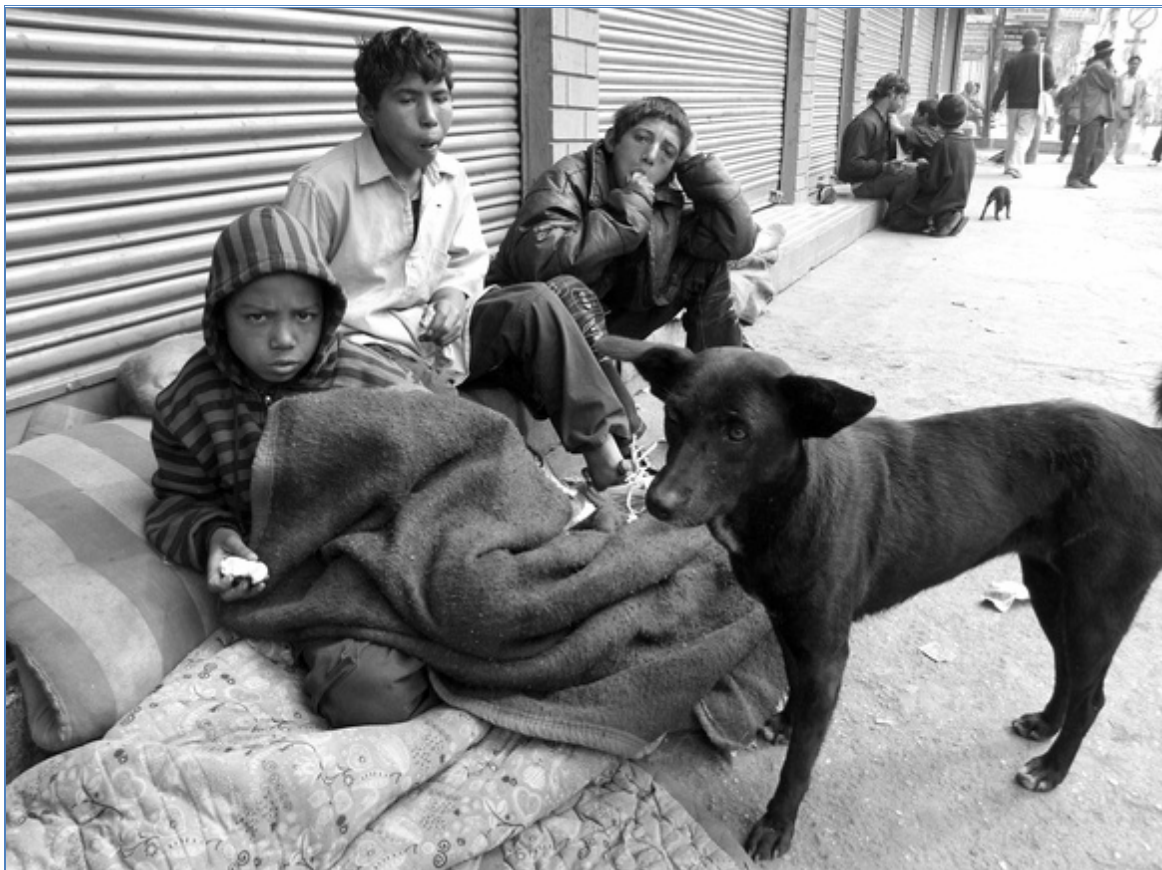
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<sup>1</sup> Kathe is a derogative term used against street children to portray them as individuals who are "bad".

*to some sort of tragedy like death of father, natural calamities, and political conflict and so on.*

In Tanahun district, there are many street children who are suffering from family tragedy. A decade long civil war was also the main cause. Some children left home to take care of themselves when their parents die due to the war. There is nobody to take care of them and their remaining relatives do not want to take on the burden of taking care of them. The relatives are either not interested or they are not financially strong and have their children to look after. One of the most important things is that during the civil war, children were raised by a single parent after the other parent's death. When the surviving parent remarries, the step-parent and new family neglected the child and so they are compelled to run away from home.

*Figure: 7*



*Street Children in Nepal*

Source: [http://awanainternational.org/car/missionproject/streetchildren\\_nepal.htm](http://awanainternational.org/car/missionproject/streetchildren_nepal.htm)

## **CHAPTER SIX: IMPACTS OF CHILDHOOD POVERTY: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter analyses and discusses the findings of the study based on the empirical data presented in chapter 5. I have divided this chapter into six major themes in order to highlight the findings of this study explicitly. The impacts of childhood poverty like limited educational possibilities, social relationship, violation of child rights, hopelessness, bearing responsibility and social exclusion are discussed in the light of previous research and theoretical perspectives presented in chapter 3 and 4. I have included a separate section of social relationship and social exclusion although they could have been merged into one. Under social relationship, I have presented poverty effects on children's relationship to family, teachers and peers. Likewise, social exclusion section presents how poor children are excluded by peers and teachers due to material deprivation and health problems.

### **6.1 Limited Educational Possibilities**

My investigation has shown that the children's schooling is greatly affected by the poverty. Research on poverty and childhood poverty shows that education is one of the vital tools to get rid of poverty in longer run. Undoubtedly, education can release economically disadvantaged people or groups by opening door to several opportunities that can elevate economic status. Educational attainment is therefore, well recognized as the powerful predictors of experience in the future life. Despite this great significance of educational attainment, children from poor families are either deprived from rights to get educated or receive less educational support at homes. Most of the participants pointed poverty as a hindering factor for well performance at schools. Particularly family stress, work burden, level of participation and lack of resources can be taken as barrier to educational achievement from interviewees' accounts. Previous research related to childhood poverty by Zorn and Noga (2004) shows that poverty negatively impacts school success, school achievement, and social-emotional functioning. The higher the family's income, the better children will do on ability measures and achievement scores and the more likely that child is to finish high school. They further mention that:

- Poor children are twice as likely to repeat a grade and are more likely to move frequently than their more advantaged peers, primary risk factors for dropping out of school.
- Schools serving low-income students have fewer resources, are located in lower-quality facilities, face greater challenges recruiting highly qualified teachers, face many more

challenges in addressing and meeting students' needs, and experience lower levels of parent involvement.

- Health issues associated with poverty put children in poor families at greater risk for school absence than children in more advantaged families, thus making it even more difficult to close any learning gaps that may exist. (Zorn and Noga 2004: p-ii)

Childhood poverty has immense effects on schooling. As mentioned by children, they rarely receive stimulation and other social skills to join schools from parents. Poor and illiterate parents have much worry about hand-to mouth problem rather than the schooling of their children. Consequently, children from disadvantaged background lack self-confidence and learning skills in comparison to children from good economic background.

Social and economic background influence the way children feel about school. They give several reasons behind this. For instance, some of the interviewees expressed that they suffer from negative experiences at schools by friends and teachers for being poor. Since poor children don't have enough resources to stand equal with friends, they feel shamed and inferior. Poor results and mistreatments by friends and teachers have led to less interest towards schooling. Some of the participants mentioned that they are unable to perform well at schools due to work. I didn't find the children hopeful to continue their study till university level because they want to be independent soon after they complete their schooling. The reason behind their interest to join work is to support family economically. The children's account support Hirsch (2007) statement, the cumulative effect of poverty grows throughout schooling, with the gap continuing to widen- even children from low-income families who start out well have reduced chances of progressing. Therefore, poverty is the major barrier for continuing education or to achieve good school performance.

From the children's account and existing materials, it can be argued that the poor children from Tanahun, Nepal are adversely affected by poverty which is likely to affect their schooling. The poor children are unable to attend school regularly. As a result, they cannot perform well in the exams. I found them less interested towards education due to the family background and poverty pressure.

## **6.2 Social Relationship**

My investigation has shown that poverty impacts the children's different social relations, both within the family, in relation to teachers and with regard to their peers. Many of the children mentioned that they do not receive proper care from their parents. The parents of children remain outside the homes most of the time due to the work. Some children's parents return home late getting drunk. The conflict between father and mother has made negative impression among some children. Poverty and deprivation are the major cause of conflictual family relationship. The conflictual relationship with family increases the risk of children's negative adjustment outcomes. These findings reflect and support past research of Conger et al (1994). According to Conger, poverty creates financial pressure or stress on parents, poverty leads to material conflict which in turn, affects children negatively by decreasing their parent's parenting capacity. Similarly, a number of developmentally oriented child poverty studies argued that parents who experience economic hardship tend to have problematic relationship with their children because poverty negatively affects parenting capacity (Aber et al, 1997).

Although the children's account doesn't provide enough evidence that link the parenting with poverty, it is justifiable to mention that economic hardship causes emotional distress and rage within parents. Consequently, children don't receive proper care and love which are extremely necessary for proper development. Most of the interviewed children's parents were engaged in low paid works like construction laborers, porters, farm etc. they work from morning to evening as result, children don't get guidance, care and interaction as other children from rich family deserve.

Negative relationship with peers and friends is considered as greater source of worries, distress and loneliness by interviewed children. Most of the children expressed that their friends didn't allow them to play or participate in recreational activities for being poor. The children's account clarify that due to the lack of enough resources, they had limited number of friends. This deprives them from working in groups, interaction and developing other skills. Poor children are found to be treated differently even by teachers at school. Teachers pay less attention to the poor children's problems. It is because students from rich families are regular at schools and comparatively active in class activities. Moreover, the parents of rich students pay much concern on their children's studies and visit the school administration frequently. Being excluded affect children negatively mainly because they couldn't play and

share things with friends. Consequently, the poor children are losing coping power and self-esteem. The negative friendship affect increase the risk like behavioural deficiency, passiveness and depression.

The negative peer experience mentioned by children are exclusion, abuse, teasing and ragging. This argument supports Patterson et al (1990) statement that poor children are more likely to experience peer rejection, lower popularity and conflictual peer relation than are non-poor children. Poverty affects the degree to which children can affects in societal activities. The children's account shows that they couldn't play with friends and join several occasions due to the lack of important childhood possessions like toys, sports materials, and dress and so on. Their experience co-relates with Welbourne (2012) argument, "poverty restrict children's chances to make and sustain friendships, and reduced their opportunities for shared social activities due to the cost of attending social events, inadequate and expensive transport provision and the expense of hosting social occasions within their homes" (p.92).

### **6.3 Violation of Rights**

Children have the right to a childhood in which they can safely learn, play, enjoy full health and develop to their potential. If a child is deprived of one of its rights, it is likely to affect a child's ability to exercise other rights. Therefore, all child rights must be considered equally important because each of them, individually or together influence the child's well-being (UNICEF, 2010; P-17). Access to good housing, health care and adequate balanced diet are very essential to stimulate children's proper physical and mental growth as well as development. Only the families with good income can make rational consumption choices of food, clothing and fulfil the needs of their children. Children from rich families receive proper care, support and guidance in every step of life. In turn, children from such families become more creative and productive. Unlike this, children born in poor families are at greater risk of becoming malnourished, suffering of poor health and being unable to afford on education. In this sense, the inalienable rights of children are violated (UNICEF 1989).

Almost all of the interviewed children were from poor families. Many of them were engaged in works like selling milk, housekeeping and work in the field with parents in order to support their family economically. Parents are found to be inspiring their children to do work due to poverty and lack of awareness. Children expressed that they could not perform well in



the exams due to work burden and stress. Child rights to play, study, recreate and grow well are found to be completely violated among interviewed children. Even children were not getting opportunity to have wholesome meal twice a day. One of the most difficult things reported by children living in poverty is having everything decided by money. Due to the lack of enough parental income, the interviewed children were suffering from basic requirements like proper food, clothing, stationery etc. What we can generalize from children's experience is material deprivation has increased stress and problems in their lives. Children are facing discrimination, exploitation and abuse due to the problem of material deprivation. Material deprivation affects physical development in poor children. Basically, children are lacking balanced diet and hygienic housing environment to live due to poverty. I found that the polluted environment, old latrines, lack of awareness and preventive measures can easily spread diseases in their families. Consequently, children are suffering from frequent health problem which effects on their educational attainment and future well-being. Many respondents in this study reported that they don't have enough money to spend at the time of illness. Material deprivation is closely associated with poverty. Poverty disables people to full fill nominal requirements and enjoy a standard of living. People can be classified as 'deprived' if their life goes without some of the 'basic necessities'.

The next factor contributing to violation of child right is child labour. Poverty can be considered as one of the major cause of child labour. Poor parents of interviewed children are found prioritizing work to education due to the lack of awareness and economic pressure of children's schooling. Although engagement in some minor physical works can be beneficial for physical growth, this study observes child labour as one of the interfering factor to educational progress and future well-being. From the children's responses and participants observations, it can be generalized that child labour is deteriorating factor of children's proper development. Child labour restricts children from their rights to play and grow happily. Children talked about the compulsion of being engaged in income generating activities unlike their friends from rich family as major cause of distress. I found them more serious while talking about the difficulties in completing homework and doing well in exams due to work. This findings correlates with Edmonds et.al (2010), child labour affects the future wealth of a child because it directly reduces future earning as an adult or increases the adverse impact on life time health. Child labour can be taken as one of cause of negative cognition among poor children regarding future.

#### **6.4 Hopelessness, Vicious Circle of Poverty**

My investigation shows that poor children bear pessimistic vision regarding their future. The main reason behind this is poverty and suffering. To my surprise, street children are found to be less worried about their future life. They are just worried about two time's wholesome meal day. One of the participants mentioned that he doesn't hope of prosperity in life. According to him, poverty deprives from higher education and opportunities in life. The feelings hopelessness can impact on the children's perception in regard to schooling and life in general. Children who are extremely affected by vicious circle of poverty may lose strength to cope with challenging situations. Different factors like school culture, social relationship and series of unfulfilled desires can contribute to hopelessness in one's life. Children struggling with school or finding humiliated due to friends and teachers activities can develop less interest toward studies. Many of the participants expressed that they are pessimistic mainly because of poverty. Some of the children opined that they don't hope better to happen in life because their life is quite challenging.

It is obvious to state that lack of hope in life can lead life to failure and frustration. Poor children are likely to be more hopeless in comparison to children from economically well families. Poverty can surpass their willingness of continuing their study and become a successful person in life. At schools, children are excluded and treated differently by teachers. Negative (behaviours) relationship, teachers' indifferent nature and lack of self-esteem are all contributing towards poor performance at school. Similarly, emotional distress and pessimistic vision developing within children as a result of poverty are contributing to poor performance and generational poverty. The children's account shows that they are pessimistic about their future well-being. Suffering from material deprivation, poor health and conflictual social relationship has increased the stress and frustration among the children. The children mentioned that they feel inferior and lose their self-esteem when they could not assimilate with their friends due to poverty. In relation to future well-being of poor children (Margo and Dixon: 2006 and Hirsh: 2008) write, children who grow up in low-income households are more likely to be unemployed, to work in low or unskilled jobs, and to be poorly paid in adult life because many of today's jobs require a range of 'soft skills' that children from deprived families often lack. Poor children can hardly continue their study after completion of school level due to the difficulties in managing costs. While talking about the future aim, many of the respondents opined that they will learn some training after school level education for family support and livelihood. Children from poor families lack proper

guidance and inspirations from parents which increase the risk of getting misled. From the rhetoric above, it is concluded that childhood poverty increases the chances of perpetuating poverty.

### **6.5 Growing up faster, no time to be Children**

The children's accounts presented in chapter five shows that poor children need to bear several responsibilities since early childhood. As mentioned by children, many of them need to look after siblings, cook food, and help parents at work and support parents economically by doing part-time work. To my surprise, I found them more matured in expressions and thinking despite their immature age. Poor children's parents are found to be unable to fulfil their responsibilities of good parenting. Because of stress, work load and economic pressure parents are indifferent towards the needs of their children. Parents living in poverty are much more likely than more affluent parents to be facing a range of issues other than material deprivation which can affect their parenting. These include low level of education and few qualifications, lack of access to jobs and services, isolation, mental and physical ill-health and domestic violence (Katz et.al 2007; p-1). Poverty affect parenting, parenting may have an effect on poverty, resulting in so-called 'cycles of disadvantage' (Rutter and Madge 1978).

"I didn't force my mother to buy me a new bag shortly ...I know she does not have a single penny some of the time". This child's account shows that parents are unable to fulfill his minor requisite due to severe poverty. Children don't have access to very important things like sport materials, stationery and clothing. Some of the children's parents are found to be ignoring children's sentiments due to the burden of whole day work. Moore and Vandivere (2000) argue that the means by which parents cope with stressful circumstance, such as poverty and ill health influence children's experience of a stressful environment. For instance, poor parents are less likely to provide optimal home circumstance and more likely to use coercive method of discipline or remain indifferent to children's wants and demands.

### **6.6 Social Exclusion**

Poverty and social exclusion have great impacts on children's own perception of their lives. Children are the future resource, as a form of human capital, to be protected and developed. The effects of poverty and social exclusion reverberate from childhood into adulthood; children experience social exclusion within the immediacy of childhood, among their peers (Ridge 2002). Poor children suffer from social exclusion mainly due to the inability to stand equal to their friends. Due to the limited resources, they cannot assimilate with their friends

in most of the activities. In Nepalese context, poor children do not get their demands fulfilled in time. Though children expect to get new dress and good food particularly in major festivals like 'Dashain' and 'Tihar', some of the parents may not be able to manage expenses for it. As a result children feel sad and stressed and also get excluded in many social functions.

Many respondents in this study reported that they are excluded by peers or by teachers for being poor. Children belonging to affluent families don't like to set relationship with poor as they cannot spend money in recreational activities like picnic, sports and birthday. Some of the children mentioned that they had limited number of friends because of poverty. Limited friendship most probably deprives the poor children from social interaction, gaining physical and mental strength. Poor children are often excluded by teachers at schools. As stated by some children, teachers pay more attention to children from rich families. One of the main reasons behind this is, poor children aren't well dressed and active in class activities. Many of them are irregular at school and achieve poor results in exams. The children's account show supports Fanning and Veale (2002) argument that the social exclusion affects several aspects like health, well-being, education and development of children.

## **6.7 Summary**

Poor children have limited educational possibilities due to the lack of resources. Their parents are found to be less interested in children's schooling because of the economic pressure and illiteracy. Poor children suffer from problems like social exclusion and negative relationship with peers particularly because of inability to stand equal in every matter. Children from poor families have fewer friends. Their inalienable rights are not fulfilled. Poor children must bear much responsibility at early age. They are more likely to view life as meaningless because of sufferings.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION**

The main objective of this research is to identify some of the important factors related to childhood poverty. This thesis presents and analyzes the multi-dimensional impacts of childhood poverty on children's well-being. Poverty and social exclusion problems are examined both theoretically and empirically. Theories related to poverty are better supported with primary data collected through fieldwork in Tanahun, Nepal. Poor children's experiences, perspectives and future predicaments are presented in order to identify how poverty affects children's socio-emotional development.

As presented throughout this research, poverty is one of the major social problems. Many factors like family size, parent's income, number and age of children, ethnic and spatial variations are closely associated with childhood poverty. Poverty is not simply an economic problem of a family or the state rather it is an influencing factor that contributes to social and physical problem with regard to social, cultural and health aspects. Another important aspect is poverty raises inequality, social exclusion and distress among children. As a result, children from economically disadvantaged family are likely to suffer from humiliation, inferiority and frustration.

Childhood poverty is the reflection of parental poverty. In the context of Nepal, lower pay of women and gender segregation of jobs contribute in intensifying childhood poverty rate. This research has argued that social circumstances have a determinable effect on children's future well-being. There are several factors that come out from this research as hindering children's future well-being. Among them are material deprivation, poor parenting, unequal distribution of resources and limited opportunities. Poor Nepali children are deprived from the basic needs like food, clothing, shelter etc. a child who grows up in a less economically favored environment will be at risk of poor school achievement along with behavioral problems. Since children suffering from poverty are more likely to have parents with low level of education, they don't get positive learning environment at home. Children need to supplement education with work. Consequently, poor children hardly receive opportunities to develop positive self-esteem and resiliency which leads to weak performance in adulthood.

This descriptive research has employed semi-structured interviews as the primary qualitative data sources. Data were collected through fieldwork in Tanahun, Nepal. 12 poor children including two street children were interviewed in order to probe poverty effects on children's life views. Similarly, theoretical and conceptual approaches related to poverty, child labour and socio-emotional development are applied in order to analyze data from field work and contribute succinct ideas on effects of childhood poverty.

Based on the study result, it is concluded that childhood poverty is the key driving factor that estrange children from fundamental rights like education, good parenting and proper physical growth. Due to poverty, children are likely to suffer from material deprivation, limited educational possibilities, violation of rights, social exclusion and multiple health problems. These factors affect the socio-emotional development of children. Likewise, poor physical and mental strength due to material deprivation and poor parenting can possibly affect the future well-being. Poor children are also found to be involved in child labour in order to assist parents economically. Most probably, they cannot perform well in their study due to family's indifference toward education, irregular attendance and lack of support from teachers and friends. Children from poor families are also found to be possessing poor health due to the lack of balanced diet and poor living conditions. They are less active in class and often excluded by teachers and friends. Consequently, children from poor families have fewer opportunities to get high payable jobs in future due to the condition of poor health and low educational achievement which increase the risk of perpetuating generational poverty.

Based on this study the following measures are recommended:

- Income generating programmes for the poor and marginalized adults must be conducted, so there are alternatives to sending children to work in the time of economic crisis.
- Necessary measures must be undertaken in order to provide quality and access to educational system till higher level in order to reduce drop-out rates in rural areas.
- Child rights awareness among every community must be done in order to reduce child labour and child rights violation.
- Encourage greater political empowerment of marginalized families in rural areas in order to increase their access to information, amenities and decision making power.

- NGOs and INGOs working for children's welfare must provide education and good parenting for street children in order to secure their prosperous future.
- Government must implement effective policies to reduce overall poverty through developing infrastructures equally throughout the nation.

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