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Bricks in the wall: A review of the issues that affect children of in-country seasonal migrant workers in the brick kilns of Nepal

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Abstract

This paper explores experiences of Nepalese children of seasonal migrant workers in brick kilns and the particular vulnerabilities they face, as child labourers, as unpaid workers engaging informally in brick production or household work to the support family economy, or as children left behind in poor communities with varying support. The review provides a thematic analysis from child labour and migration literature from Nepal and South Asia from 2010–2020 to explore issues that affect children of families who internally migrate within Nepal to work in brick kilns. Two key themes and eight subthemes consistently emerged across the papers: *Seasonal in-country migration to brick kilns and impacts on children (reasons for children to enter into migrant work; left-behind children; remittances; the role of gender on work and education) and the situation of children working in Nepalese brick kilns (living conditions; working conditions and occupational ill-health; psychosocial distress; child protection)*. The review found that literature on Nepalese children from brick kiln working families is subsumed into wider studies on migration with impacts on children's lives often reported as outcomes of findings rather than a main focus of studies. Furthermore, there is minimal recent

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empirical research with such families and children. This may be due to ethical dilemmas of doing research with children and difficulties in maintaining contact with families that move frequently.

KEYWORDS

brick kilns, child labour, education, migration, Nepal

1 | INTRODUCTION

This study is about children of Nepalese seasonal migrant workers in brick kilns and the particular vulnerabilities they face, as child labourers, as unpaid workers engaging informally in brick production or household work to the support family economy, or as children left behind in poor communities with varying support. After the 2015 earthquakes, the construction industry in Nepal expanded rapidly to meet the demand for reconstruction, road building, housing and increased urbanisation (Sharma & Dangal, 2019). Household poverty and limited work opportunities are push factors in seasonal work migration patterns of poor and lower caste groups, with lower-skilled workers tending to remain within the country (Bailey, Hallad, & James, 2018).

The review found a significant gap in the literature with very little empirical research conducted with children themselves; however, this study provides a thematic analysis from child labour and migration literature from Nepal and South Asia to explore issues that affect children of families who internally migrate within Nepal to work in brick kilns.

The Government of Nepal has identified internal migration by the poorest families as a child rights and education policy priority (Ministry of Education, UNESCO and UNICEF, 2016). Additionally, a small number of recent studies by international/national non-governmental organisations (I/N NGOs) report on interventions to improve conditions for children of migrant workers to brick kilns who are at risk of, or engaged in, child labour. Examples include the implementation of standards to eliminate bonded and child labour as in the case of Better Brick Nepal (Shrestha & Thygerson, 2019); promotion of 'child labour free' brick production in the Brick Kiln Project (Save the Children, 2016); development of a Code of Conduct by Terre des Hommes (2019) to encourage access to education of children of brick kiln workers and an evaluation of school scholarships in reducing child labour (Datt & Uhe, 2019).

Two international reports are important in framing the experiences of brick kiln workers' children in Nepal. Brown's (2012) report on the cycle of deprivation caused by risk of or engagement in child labour argues for a transformative role of education in mitigating impacts on children. Second, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment of the Netherlands (2010) report on the nature and intensity of child labour examines the enduring impact on children's access to education and capacity to engage.

1.1 | Child labour in Nepal

The ILO's Convention 182 (1999) defines the worst forms of child labour as conditions where children are employed in the most extreme working environments as a subcategory of hazardous forms of child labour. Child labour is a widespread problem in many sectors in Nepal, despite the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 2000 that prohibits children below the age of 14 years being employed as labourers (Government of Nepal, 2000). The 2014 Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey includes child labour figures for children aged 5–17 years of age, parameters informed by the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and the ILO Convention 182 (Edmonds & Shrestha, 2009). It indicates that 37.4% of children aged 5–17 years are involved in some form of economic activity or child labour,

with the proportion slightly higher for girls (38.3%) than boys (36.5%), with connections to low school attendance as 47% of children involved in economic activities do not fully attend school (UNICEF, 2015). However, despite co-ordinated efforts and planning by various agencies including Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security, the Police, Women and Children Directorate, Ministry of Land Reform and Management, and Monitoring Action Committees of the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, enforcement of child labour laws is weak in Nepal due to limited workplace inspectors and penalties for violations (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018).

Brick manufacturing is a labour-intensive industry that has employed children as a significant seasonal workforce. However, the exact number of child labourers is unknown, and the statistic is disputed in the literature. With increased focus and monitoring of child labour, it is suggested that the number of children working in brick kilns has decreased over the last 15 years. A report from Rijal, Shrestha, and Nepal (2016) notes that according to the organisation Child Workers in Nepal, in 2007 there were an estimated 59,000 children working in brick kilns. In 2012, a World Education and Plan Nepal report claimed almost 30,000 children aged between 5 and 17 years were employed (Gyawali, 2012). However, Lamar et al. (2017) estimate the number of child workers in Nepal to be around 130,000. More recently, Terre des Hommes (2019) suggests that of the 28,000 children working in Nepal's brick kilns 20% are under the age of 16 years. Although there are discrepancies in reporting, it is clear that child labour in this industry, despite being illegal in Nepal, continues, with many children engaged in hazardous work, leaving them at risk (Joshi, Dahal, Poudel, & Sherpa, 2013).

1.2 | Brick kilns in Nepal

Brick production in Nepal is a booming industry, with increased demand after the 2015 earthquakes in addition to 4 decades of population shifts from rural to urban areas (Suwal, 2014). By 2018 there were over 750 registered brick kilns in Kathmandu Valley increased from 258 brick kilns a decade ago (Sharma & Dangal, 2019). Brick kilns are situated close to suburban areas and are mainly concentrated in the Kathmandu Valley, the conurbation around Pokhara city and in the Terai, the southern plains of Nepal (General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions, 2007). Brick making is a seasonal industry that starts in October (in the Nepali month of *Kartik*), after the paddy crop has been harvested, and ends before arrival of the monsoon rains in July (Joshi et al., 2013). People migrate from the northern mountains every year to the lower plains and Kathmandu Valley to undertake low-skilled work in intensive agriculture, commercial services and the construction industry (Acharya & Yoshino, 2010). The majority of families working in brick kilns are predominantly from poor communities (Institute for Research on Working Children, 2010; Save the Children, 2019; Sharma & Dangal, 2019).

The process of seasonal migration is mediated by agents or as known by the Nepali term, '*naike*', who work on behalf of brick kilns owners to engage families. They provide up front monetary advances and guarantees of work, known as '*peski*', often with unfavourable terms and conditions that are not widely understood thereby entangling families in a form of bonded labour with unpayable loans (Murray, Themimulle, Dharel, Shrestha, & Jespersen, 2019; Save the Children, 2019; Sharma & Dangal, 2019). The *peski*-system also entraps many children as paid or unpaid labourers in brick kilns. Because the payment of workers in the brick kiln industry is on a piece rate basis, children often work informally without pay as brick carriers in order to increase their household's required quota of brick production (Institute for Research on Working Children, 2010; Sharma & Dangal, 2019).

2 | METHODOLOGY

The review was carried out from January to May 2020 by a research team of four (two UK based and two Nepal based). The researchers conducted an in-depth scoping review using a university library database and the online SCOPUS database. The team discussed the search strategy identifying key terms associated with 'migrant', 'work',

TABLE 1 Database search

Keyword	Variation	Search terms
Migrant	Seasonal; migratory; refugee; traveller	Migrant* OR season* OR migrat* OR refugee OR traveler
Work	Labor; labour; employment; industry; job	Work* OR labor OR labour OR employ OR industry OR job
Child	Youth; young people; adolescent; kid; juvenile	Child* OR youth OR young people OR adolescent OR kid OR juvenile
Education	Teaching; learning; school; training	Educat* OR teach* OR learn* OR school*
Nepal	Bangladesh; India	Nepal* OR Bangladesh OR India

(work* OR labor OR labour OR employ OR industry OR job) AND (educat* OR teach* OR learn* OR school*) AND (migrant* OR season* OR migrat* OR refugee OR traveller) AND (child* OR youth OR young OR adolescent OR kid OR juvenile)) AND Nepal
 Run on SCOPUS 04/05/2020 14:09. Limited by year (2010–2020); English language; territory (Nepal); subject area; document type. Same search ran for Bangladesh and India

'child' and 'education'. See Table 1 for complete database search terms. An additional search was also conducted to filter the search to Nepal, Bangladesh and India, as the latter two countries experience similar forms of child labour in construction industries. The database search results were further filtered by year (2010–2020); English language; territory; subject area and document type.

A total of 237 papers and reports were generated from the database search and underwent title and abstract screening. Eighty-two papers had full-text screening, leading to 36 papers included in the review.

In addition, hand searches were conducted through Google scholar, reference lists, and organisation, country specific and charity websites and Nepalese databases for research published in English from 2010 to 2020. Combining all search strategies, the total number of publications reached 65.

The 65 final publications included peer-journal articles ($n = 41$), organisational research reports for example from international agencies and international or national NGOs ($n = 21$) and analysis of national data in reports by Nepalese academics and Research Centres ($n = 3$).

A thematic analysis was used to review the literature. Two key themes and eight subthemes consistently emerged across the papers: *Seasonal in-country migration to brick kilns and impacts on children (reasons for children to enter into migrant work; left-behind children; remittances; the role of gender on work and education) and the situation of children working in Nepalese brick kilns (living conditions; working conditions and occupational ill-health; psychosocial distress; child protection)*.

The search found that extant literature on Nepalese children from brick kiln working families is subsumed into wider studies on migration with impacts on children's lives only reported as outcomes of findings rather than a main focus of studies. Furthermore, there is minimal recent empirical research with such families and children. This may be due to ethical dilemmas of doing research with children and difficulties in maintaining contact with families that move frequently (Alipio, Lu, & Yeoh, 2015; Edmonds & Shrestha, 2009).

3 | SEASONAL IN-COUNTRY MIGRATION TO BRICK KILNS AND IMPACTS ON CHILDREN

Children in Nepal either migrate internally with their family or are left behind in their home village, depending on the financial situation and dynamics of their family.

3.1 | Reasons for children to enter into migrant work

The review drew out numerous reasons for children to migrate, with or without their families, for work. First, it is worth noting that children's increased vulnerabilities to child labour due to internal displacement was specifically noted in Nepal during the 10-year civil war and after the 2015 earthquakes (Mu et al., 2016; Parker, Standing, & Pant, 2013; Standing, Parker, & Bista, 2016). Other factors that arose in the review include family dynamics, lack of choice, poor education system, peer pressure and aspirations provided by returning labourers. Several studies report that poverty is the major push factor for children's migration (Dhakal et al., 2019; Kamei, 2018; Rijal et al., 2016; Save the Children, 2019). Changes in family dynamics through events such as illness, disability, death or departure of one or both parents can drastically change a child's life and intensify risk of poverty (Guragain, Paudel, Lim, & Choonpradub, 2015). The rural environment from which many working children originate, provides additional factors that push children into work, such as a failing education system (Institute for Research on Working Children, 2010), the lack of opportunities for young people in villages (van de Glind, 2010), child marriage and the practice of polygamy (Save the Children, 2019), peer or family pressure, influence of 'naike' agents and lack of productive household assets including farmland (Kamei, 2018). The size of the family unit and family debts influence the probability of child labour: the more adults there are in the household, the less likely it is that a child works. But the higher the number of children in a household, the more likely it is that some children will enter a workplace (Chakrabarty, Grote, & Luchters, 2011). Children living without biological parents, grandparents, wider support networks or living with distant relatives, are particularly vulnerable to hazardous forms of child labour (Kamei, 2018). Children living with divorced, single or step-parents may be unwilling to stay at home if there is conflict and are likely to migrate for labour (Save the Children, 2019).

A lack of employment opportunities in rural areas compared to a wide range in cities, entice children to migrate to urban areas for work (Jayachandran, 2001). The '*desire to get a taste of life*' in the city is also attractive for older children, who have been influenced by portrayals of urban life in films and television (Institute for Research on Working Children 2010, p. 24). The children that return to villages after working in cities can influence others and present themselves as role models of successful engagement in child labour. They display acquisition of new styles and technology such as mobile phones. These actions inspire the poorer children that remain in local villages or remote areas, tempting new recruits for 'naike' agents of brick kilns (Save the Children, 2019).

Research from other countries found positive aspects in relation to families migrating to urban centres for work. In a study of migrant children in China, Yang and Wang (2013) suggest that the role of local and national governments is important in accommodating the educational needs of migrant workers' children by provision of flexible and alternative schooling provision. Arguably, the families that migrate to urban areas have better access to education facilities and are surrounded by educational aspirations. Therefore, the location of education facilities in relation to brick kilns, workplaces and living destinations, requires careful consideration. Larger collaborative interventions focus on access to education, for instance placing facilities closer to the workplace or creating 'mobile' schools (Larmar et al., 2017). This encourages children and parents alike to enrol in classes due to social pressure and also forces employers to support education of their worker's children (Jayachandran, 2001). However, low quality education provision leads marginalised groups to perceive education as unimportant. Parental trust in the education system is diminished due to lack of educational outcomes for their children and limited long-term contribution to the family's economic security (Daly, Parker, Sherpa, & Regmi, 2019; Sharma & Dangal, 2019).

3.2 | Left-behind children

Nepalese children's acceptance of their role as a contributor to the household's economy originates from the cultural concept of childhood that is still held dominant in South Asian society (Institute for Research on Working

Children, 2010). Some children may remain in the village for agricultural labour and/or domestic duties as their contribution is required in their family home, on their family land or rented plots.

Bailey et al. (2018) approach the subject from the perspective of the parents and focus more on the psychosocial implications of wider family members that are 'left behind' due to a number of reasons such as ill-health, poverty and immobility but also due to lack of visas and immigration policies if working internationally. Older children and adults may stay behind out of choice or due to strong bonds with their place of origin and existing social networks. The findings also revealed views of adults who leave their children behind, who were shown to '*value autonomy and independent living*' thereby indicating a choice in leaving children behind (Bailey et al., 2018, p. 6).

Of note, Fellmeth et al. (2018) conducted a systematic review on the health impacts of left-behind children and adolescents, however the majority of results included China based studies. One of the key findings in their review was the resultant mental health disorders, followed by nutrition, abuse, unintentional injury and infectious disease, experienced by left-behind children. Left-behind children also reported worse behaviour, described as '*symptoms of conduct disorder*', as well as being at slightly higher risk of substance abuse and alcohol consumption (Fellmeth et al., 2018, p. 2570). These findings were supported by Mazzucato and Schans (2011) who examined transnational family dynamics, and Aryal et al.'s (2019) study in Nepal that recommended mental health interventions for left-behind children, particularly adolescents.

One of the main detriments to being left behind by family members is lack of connection, nurture and influence from parents. In a study from the Philippines, Madianou and Miller (2011) identify the role of technology, specifically smart phones, as a means to reduce the 'distance' between family members. The idea of improving connectedness was also put forward by Fellmeth et al. (2018) who suggest mothers reassert their parenting and care practices to mitigate long-term negative consequences. However, mothers that were separated from their children when they were still young, typically under 10 years old, reported that once this gap and separation occurred, it was difficult to overcome at a later age (Madianou & Miller, 2011).

Of interest in the Nepal context is a study included in Fellmeth et al. (2018) by Wen and Lin (2012), which demonstrated the differences between childhood ages and when they are separated from their parents. Those left behind at younger ages had a significantly more detrimental impact due to absence of direct family monitoring, cohesion and support. However, the older the child when separated from their family, the more apathetic parents were to their educational potential. Although the Wen and Lin (2012) study was China-specific, Roy, Singh, and Roy (2015) found that in India, only 39% of left-behind girls' mothers wanted to educate their daughters up to secondary level whilst boys were allowed to have more control over their schooling. Raut and Tanaka (2018) more specifically discuss the Nepalese situation, suggesting that parental absence is a factor in poor school engagement with a 39% probability of low school enrolment for children whose parents have migrated for work compared with those that live with their parents. Furthermore, the average spend on annual education in families with absent parents is 91% lower than non-migrant families. The same can be said for children who accompany their parents to work, as also pointed out by Roy et al. (2015, p. 27), in that younger children who are left behind '*gradually drop out of school and enter into labour force*', with slightly older children from deprived backgrounds not attending school due to caring for siblings, preparing food and lack of access.

3.3 | Remittances

The use and purposes of remittances as a significant support to family life of those left behind is discussed throughout the literature on migration (S. Ghimire et al., 2018). Remittances were shown to provide a means to break the cycle of migrant work. Migrant workers' send remittances home for various reasons including for their children's education, so that their children have better prospects (Khatri, 2017; ILO, 2016). Interestingly, the literature highlighted that families that do not input into children's education are unable to break the cycle, with their children continuing on to be migrant workers themselves (Adhikari & Deshingkar, 2015).

Bailey et al. (2018) report how remittances, from transnational and in-country migrant workers, support children left behind when parents migrate for work. Raut and Tanaka (2018) further this point with regard to Nepal, stating that remittances increase the probability of school enrolment by 3.8%, with a 25% increase on spending towards education. However, their study also found that boys receive more educational resources than girls. It is also worth noting that for wealthier families, remittances were spent on their house as well as private education such as English boarding schools in some cases. Contrastingly in other cases, remittances reduced due to low-paid work, and when income was not even enough to maintain daily standards of living. This is predominantly the case for internal in-country migration as opposed to transnational migration (Thapa et al., 2019).

3.4 | The role of gender on work and education

As has been touched upon in the above findings, the literature described gender differences for both children's work and education, with the burden and impact of domestic work falling disproportionately on girls. When points were made in relation to gender differences of child labourers they tended to focus on girls' work-related migration; value of education for women; child marriages; value of girls' education and the '*feminisation of agriculture*' (Saha, Goswami, & Paul, 2018). Some papers identified a possible causal link between migration work and education of girls, with suggestions that the value and treatment of girls was changing as a consequence of migration work, especially in urban areas, where aspirational influences were taking effect (Adhikari & Deshingkar, 2015). Similarly, Ghimire, Zhang, and Williams (2019, p.3) stated that '*gender relations embody material and ideological meanings and are constituted within complex socioeconomic cultural contexts*'. They continued by stating that household and farming tasks are gendered in Nepal and '*women are responsible for the 'inside' work*' (D. Ghimire et al., 2019, p. 4).

Following this discourse, Acharya and Yoshino (2010) found that, depending on the migrant families' origin or home, there were variations in education levels of around 20 percent between males and females. The more rural or further away families live from urban centres or more densely populated areas, the lower the levels of education received, particularly by women and girls. As women in hill regions are required to work on the land, they are more likely to be left behind while their male counterparts migrate for work (Acharya & Yoshino, 2010). These findings were supported by details outlined in the ILO and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment of the Netherlands (2010) and Brown (2012) reports on factors that impact children's education standards. For example, division of labour in external employment or household chores at the same time as staying or living with family or non-family members, which would certainly differ by gender.

Furthermore, one of the core assertions put forward by Saha et al. (2018) is that left-behind women, and by proxy girls in a similar context, can have empowering enablers such as education, parental connections and agency. Alternatively, left-behind women experience a change in socio-sexual behaviour, producing insecurities and vulnerabilities. This, in turn, can have undesirable outcomes for the left-behind children such as poor levels of education, school drop outs, health and psychological disorders. In the situation where the males migrate for work, the left-behind women and children are compelled to perform household and societal roles that were previously dominated by the men. Although this can be empowering, it does not replace institutional education. Left-behind women may attempt home-schooling children, especially when remittances are low or infrequent (Saha et al., 2018).

4 | SITUATION OF CHILDREN WORKING IN NEPALESE BRICK KILNS

Children of seasonal brick kiln workers who migrate with their parents and family members are particularly vulnerable to child labour and often are drawn into paid and unpaid work to support household incomes (van de Glind, 2010; Sharma & Dangal, 2019).

4.1 | Living conditions

Brick kiln workers and their families live on the brick kiln premises throughout the season in cramped conditions in small self-constructed huts known as '*jhyauli*', adjoining the area where bricks are made. The land is used for growing rice outside of the brick kiln season, therefore the place where they sleep is naturally damp. Temperatures can vary from extremely warm during daytime to exceptionally cold during the evening, particularly throughout the winter months. Poor quality drinking water and pollution generated from brick production exacerbate unhealthy living and working conditions. Living close to the site of brick production, the physical environment is dangerous with equipment and deep trenches posing a risk to children (Institute for Research on Working Children, 2010).

Sharma and Dangal (2019, p. 4) describe children's everyday experiences as '*a nexus of suffering*'. Children as young as 12 years old are involved as labourers but it is often unpaid as their main role is to help parents meet their daily quota of brick production by digging, counting or transporting bricks (Institute for Research on Working Children, 2010; Sharma & Dangal, 2019). A study conducted in Bhaktapur and Sarlahi districts of Nepal reported that children worked for 7 h at the brick kilns and continued for a further 3 h with other household and agriculture-related tasks, making a total workday of 10 h (ILO, 2014). Child labour in brick kilns does not replace adult labour but complements it, either directly in the labour market or in the household, enabling adult family members to meet their employment and daily output requirements (ILO, 2014).

4.2 | Working conditions and occupational ill-health

In the brick kiln industry occupational health and safety measures remain inadequate (Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 2017; ILO, 2014). Brick manufacturing is a labour-intensive industry requiring muscular energy at most of its production stages. Workers are required to carry heavy loads, well above the recommended limit and remain in squatted posture for long periods doing repetitive tasks posing threats to an individual's musculoskeletal system (Institute for Research on Working Children, 2010). The risks to working children are more hazardous due to their growing bodies and weaker immune systems compared to adults (Joshi et al., 2013; Save the Children, 2016). Studies identify main injuries from brick kiln work such as cuts, bruises, crushing of body parts, upper and lower limbs pains and back problems (ILO, 2014; Institute for Research on Working Children 2010; Joshi et al., 2013). Children who have been working in brick factories for more than 2 years are more likely to have some type of health problem than those who have worked a shorter time (ILO, 2014).

Poor health and safety practices combined with a debilitating physical environment and poor working conditions create environments of high risk of injury, ill-health and work-related diseases in the brick kiln industry in Nepal. A study conducted in Bhaktapur and Sarlahi by Joshi et al. (2013) identified that kilns at both districts operated in open area with no shade or barrier protection provided from the chimneys exposing workers to heat, dust and pollution. The basic sanitation and hygiene practices were reported to be substandard with a lack of sanitary toilets and safe drinking water (Joshi et al., 2013). Furthermore, both child labourers and adults do not wear protective clothing and sit for many hours on hard and cold ground for the production of bricks (Institute for Research on Working Children, 2010). An ILO (2014) study in Bhaktapur district stated the most commonly reported health problems for working children included regular headache, cough, fever and stomach problems in addition to musculoskeletal, respiratory, dermatological, and auditory injury and debilitation. Nutritional deficiency disorders and stress were reported in relation to poor living conditions.

4.3 | Psychosocial distress

A report on children working in brick kilns states that children experience a high level of psychosocial distress, describing not being accepted by others, feeling unsafe or threatened, lacking confidence and feeling isolated

(ILO, 2018). Sharma and Dangal's (2019) study reported considerable stress, low self-esteem and impaired social relationships among working children in Nepal's brick kilns, leading to long-term impacts on their social participation, engagement in school and future aspirations.

Children of migrant workers have limited opportunity to engage in social activities or school and have anxieties about participating in new environments (Dhakal et al., 2019; Save the Children, 2019). Children's psychosocial distress includes traumas associated with separation from peers and wider kinship groups due to migration and difficulties in making social bonds, particularly for independent child labourers (ILO, 2018). This is supported in a study with young people in Nepal who had previously been child labourers and reported the impact of social stigma and disconnect with cultural norms, leading to anxiety disorders, panic attacks and social phobias (Dhakal et al., 2019).

4.4 | Child protection

Child protection is a key concern, with children of seasonal migrants being particularly vulnerable to exploitation (Institute for Research on Working Children, 2010). In low-economic income countries such as Nepal, high incidences of poverty push children into labour and there are limited national resources available to enforce child labour legislation (Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 2017). In Nepal, children who independently engage in brick kiln labour are more likely to engage in hazardous work, as they are attracted by better access to employment and urban areas as well as cash advances from *naike* agents and piece rate work that enables them to earn greater amounts for additional work (Kamei, 2018).

van de Glind (2010) states that children who migrate without their parents are especially vulnerable to exploitation, coercion, deception, and violence. Girls are particularly susceptible to sexual abuse during the migration process (van de Glind, 2010) and during employment with reports of abuse of power and sexual harassment by employers (Puri & Cleland, 2007). Child migrants may experience unsafe sexual experiences or be forced to marry early, placing them at high risk of negative, long-term impacts on their sexual and reproductive health. In the context of limited education, poor health and safety procedures as well as inadequate social services at brick kilns, children may have an incomplete understanding of their own protection issues leaving them vulnerable to abuse and exploitation (Terre des Hommes, 2019).

5 | CONCLUSION

Nepalese children who live in brick kilns with their families are markedly vulnerable as they are both underage persons and migrants. Many authors argue that poverty is the major push factor for children to migrate and is a risk factor in children entering the workforce in brick kilns. Yet, it is often intensified by other contextual circumstances and changes, as has been shown in this review.

Many studies focus on international rather than internal migration including the recent Nepal specific national statistical review (International Organisation for Migration, 2019). There is a need for more empirical research on internal migration and children's experiences of seasonal migration within Nepal. However, a few recent Nepal focused studies offer a critical perspective on employment in brick kilns and impacts on families and children including evaluating action to ameliorate poor conditions, ensuring 'child labour free' brick production and interventions to improve access to education for children and their parents (Datt & Uhe, 2019; Save the Children, 2016; Shrestha & Thygerson, 2019; Terre des Hommes, 2019).

Regardless of the geographical location of children, education should remain a core aspect in their daily lives. Yet, poor quality education and a lack of educational opportunities are also driving factors for children's migration for work, trapping them into the vicious circle of intergenerational poverty (Brown, 2012).

Future research agendas should engage children's participation in research to ensure their voices are heard, drawing on, for example, the methodologies of the international Children's Worlds project (Children's Worlds, 2020). More research is needed to explore young people's own understanding of their own protection and rights, and how they understand how the brick kilns impact on their physical and psychosocial health, their education and participation, as well as their future prospects. There is a need to examine the gendered patterns of engagement of Nepalese children of seasonal migrant workers in further detail. In the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic, the particular vulnerabilities of children who migrate requires investigation (International Organisation for Migration, 2020; Migration Health South Asia Network, 2020; UNICEF, 2020).

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