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Title

Children's migration to brick kilns in Nepal: a review of educational interventions and stakeholder responses to child labour

Keywords

Migration, education, child labour, brick kilns, Nepal

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Abstract

In Nepal, internal migration by the poorest families for employment, including to the brick kilns of the construction industry has been identified as a policy and research priority by the Government of Nepal (Ministry of Education, UNESCO and Unicef, 2016). While support for children's education is considered vital to reduce risk to child labour (Brown, 2012) Nepalese children's access to education is sporadic and incomplete when they travel with

their families for seasonal work. This paper offers a review of recent research on educational interventions to support children of migrating families and examines the role and responses of government, non-governmental organisations and employers to mitigating the risks to engagement in, and reducing impacts of child labour in this hazardous industry. It shows that educational interventions focus on access to schooling and non-formal education, livelihood support and child safeguarding, but suggests these need to be concomitant with an agreed local strategy for holistic child and youth development that includes parents and children perspectives. This paper will provide insights into areas for coordinated action for children of migrant workers of brick kilns and pointers for future research on migration, child labour and education.

Introduction

In Nepal, internal migration by the poorest families for employment, including to the brick kilns of the construction industry has been identified as policy and research priorities (International Organisation for Migration, 2019; Ministry of Education, Unicef and UNESCO, 2016). Brick production is seasonal and families who migrate for work tend to be low skilled and lack resources such as land or other means of subsistence (Sharma and Dangal, 2019). Bonded labour in brick kilns is akin to modern slavery, due to the use of pre-employment financial incentives to take up work and punishing schedules of daily brick production quotas required to pay back loans (Murray et al., 2019). The extent of children engaged in hazardous labour in brick kilns is estimated to be between 28,000 and 30,000 (Terre des Hommes, 2019; Gyawali 2012).

There is a spectrum of impacts on children of migrant workers to brick kilns with subsequent direct and indirect impacts on education including drop out of education (Sharma and Dangal, 2019), injury (Joshi et al., 2013), psychological and psycho-social impacts (Kamei, 2018),

increased risk of child trafficking and exploitation (Larmar et al., 2017), gendered impacts in relation to household roles and spend on education (Khatri, 2017).

This paper draws on a wider review about the lives of children living and/or working in seasonal brick kiln settlements in Nepal and offers a focus on education (Daly et al., 2020).

While this paper focuses on Nepal, it also draws on research from the region where migrant families comprise the workforce in brick kilns. Findings provide insights into areas for coordinated action for education of children of migrant workers of brick kilns and pointers for future research on migration, child labour and education.

Tackling child labour and child poverty through education

Migrant working children often experience interrupted education with low enrollment, non-completion and poor outcomes (International Labour Office and Understanding Children's Work, 2010). Longer term consequences of short school life expectancy include increased vulnerability to physical and sexual exploitation and psycho-social exclusion from peers and wider society (Sharma and Dangal, 2019). A recurring theme in the literature is how educational opportunities can break the cycle of child labour with benefits to working children noted as increased engagement through stipends to enable attendance, provision of books and uniforms, flexible schooling for older children and non-formal education for young people who have missed out on school (Brown, 2012).

There are two perspectives on educational interventions and responses by various stakeholders to child labour in the literature. While total elimination of hazardous child labour is needed, a more nuanced approach to child work is looked-for regarding its contribution to household income for extremely poor families. Interventions that support reduction in child labour include supporting household income generation, provision of cash transfers to remove children from excessive labour and working with employers on child

rights and child labour laws (Terre des Hommes, 2019; Orrnert, 2018). However, there are significant differences between other sectors and child labour in brick production since the nature of the work is extremely hazardous and the seasonal nature of work in the brick kilns creates more frequent movement of children who may not engage with education and support services in new locations.

The Constitution of Nepal enshrines a commitment to the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including Goal 4.5: to eliminate gender disparities in education and to ensure equal access to all levels of education for children in vulnerable situations (Ministry of Education, 2015). The Nepal School Sector Development Plan 2016-2022 acknowledges low school enrollment and lack of completion of education as specific development barriers facing children of in-country migrant worker families (Ministry of Education, 2015). While school provision has improved in Nepal, educational inequalities remains problematic, with girls, Dalit children, disabled children, working children and children of migrant workers are often marginalised and with variable educational outcomes (Poyck et al. 2016; Daly et al., 2019).

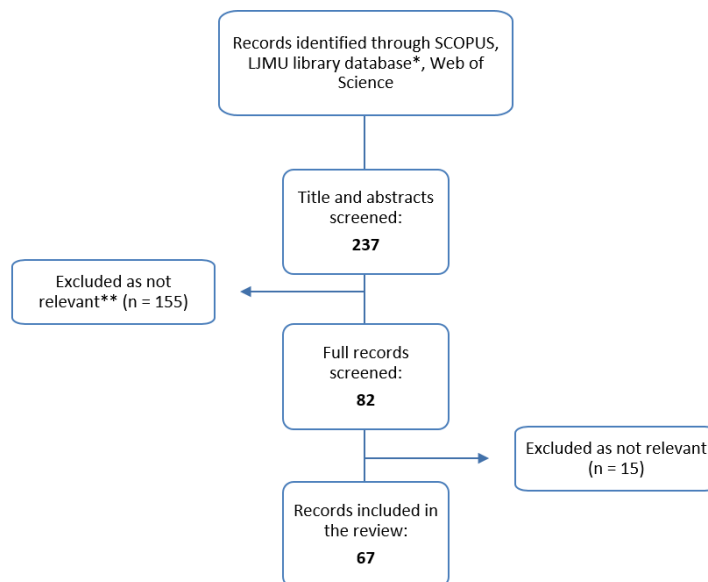
Methodology

A scoping review on child labour, children's lives and education in the context of migration to brick kilns in Nepal was carried out between January and November 2020. Table 1 demonstrates the search strategy. Figure 1 details the record selection process. The final records were charted on a spreadsheet (full reference, type of source, quality, related issues, and comments).

Table 1. Database search

Keyword	Variation	Search terms
Migrant	Seasonal; migratory; refugee; traveller	Migrant* OR season* OR migrat* OR refugee OR traveller
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*
Nepa ¹⁺	Bangladesh; India	Nepal* OR Bangladesh OR India
<p>(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.</p> <p><i>Run on SCOPUS 04/05/2020 14:09. Limited by year (2010-2020); English language; territory (Nepal and wider south Asia region to compare with other countries with high rates of child labour in brick production industries); subject area; document type. The main searches were rerun on SCOPUS and Web of Science, 01/12/20 with hand searches conducted on Google Scholar.</i></p>		

Figure 1. Study flow diagram



*LJMU library database includes but is not limited to, wider databases such as JSTOR, Medline, Oxford University Press, ProQuest and Psynfo. In addition, hand searches were conducted through google scholar, reference lists, and organisation, country specific and charity websites and specific searches through Nepalese databases from 2010 to 2020

**The relevance of the records was based on whether content related to the research question, including the following and variants of: migrant worker families and children; education and lack thereof; construction industry or seasonal employment. See Table 1 for additional information

The charted data underwent thematic analysis using inductive, iterative, manual coding techniques, whereby the team collectively generated themes and subthemes. The final publications (n=67) included peer-journal articles (n=43), organisational research reports for example from international agencies and international or national Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) (n=21) and analysis of national data in reports by Nepalese academics and Research Centres (n=3). Publications included empirical research, research on secondary sources and reports from research conferences.

The review revealed that education in migration studies tends to be limited to reporting of results rather than a primary focus of studies and there is limited empirical research on the educational experiences children of in-country seasonal migrant workers in brick kilns. However, research, namely I/NGO reports, does note the significant role of education in addressing child poverty and child labour. A thematic analysis of the papers was done inductively; this generated two themes *Interventions* and *Stakeholders* presented below.

Results

This section firstly explores interventions to holistically support children's education, and secondly, examines stakeholder views including parental and child attitudes to education and the role and responses of government, non-governmental organisations and employers.

Interventions

Educational opportunities

The imperative to remove children under-16 from hazardous work and to mitigate the impacts of other income generating and household work underpins educational interventions for children working in brick kilns. Educational opportunities vary according to age, school

history and location with interventions focussing on access to formal and non-formal education programmes through fixed or mobile learning centres near to brick kilns (Lamar et al., 2017; Jayachandran, 2001). Support includes provision of uniform, school bags and materials and if there is a break in education, youth tutoring classes on skills for life (Save the Children, 2016). However, a lack of coordination is reported with NGOs running similar projects with the same children (Institute for Research on Working Children, 2010).

Extreme social and economic exclusion of children of families working in brick kilns requires provision of supports to ensure integration in schools including psychosocial support and counselling, play based therapies and opportunities for child centred socialisation (International Labour Organisation, 2018). There is little research evidence of child-to-child socialisation and sensitisation of teachers in receiving schools. In Nepal, child clubs encourage participation and support self-actualisation and agency of children to bring about change, for example, persuading their families to send them to school (Save the Children, 2016). More research on the role of life skills education for adolescents and specific mental health and counselling services for youths previously involved in child labour is needed (International Labour Organisation, 2018; Dhakal et al., 2019). There is limited research from the perspectives of children and youth on their experiences and longer term effects of education and support services, made difficult in part, by migration to various locations (Save the Children, 2019; Dobson, 2009).

Livelihood support

Livelihood support can transform the socio-economic conditions of people living in poverty related migration (Kamei, 2018; Child Development Society, 2016). School scholarships reduce the financial burden of education on families. However, effectiveness may be temporary if scholarships are low value and conditional on school enrolment, not completion,

as children may leave school as pressures on household incomes rise (Datt and Uhe, 2019). High value scholarships are most likely to support girls' education yet may have little effect on reducing girls' household duties, impacting on engagement in studies (Datt and Uhe, 2019).

Early childhood education and care provision supports older children who are assigned child minding duties while parents are at work, however there is a tension between providing quality early childhood education and low cost to parents (International Research on Working Children, 2010).

Alternative livelihood strategies such as micro-enterprises and micro finance such as saving and emergency loans systems are emerging however a focus of these on young people who have been drawn into full time brick kiln work and have missed out on education is needed (Sharma and Dangal, 2019; Save the Children, 2016).

Awareness raising and dialogue

Education awareness raising campaigns to sensitize brick kiln communities is common among NGOs yet families and children have little power in the relationship with brick owners to address issues (Save the Children, 2016). As marginalised groups their issues are absent from debates in wider society, yet these need to be addressed by dialogue among brick producers, buyers and community leaders (Ali et al., 2017). A larger public debate on child labour enforcement, pay and working conditions of very poor in-work households needs to run alongside educational interventions.

The risks to exploitation, trafficking and effects of hazardous labour on children need to be addressed in all educational interventions by enhanced staff training in child safeguarding and child protection principles alongside action on raising awareness of law and corporate responsibility (Larmar, 2017). Practical advocacy, for example the Terre des Hommes Code

of Conduct, can pressure employers to ensure children under 16 years old access school and are not employed, and those over 16 years and working have access to youth based education programmes (Terre des Hommes, 2019).

Household decisions in supporting their child's education is supported by adult education in literacy and numeracy and livelihoods diversification (International Labour Office and Understanding Children's Work, 2010). Evidence from a Self-Employment Education Programme where 410 women working in brick kilns accessed training, resulted in 800 children not migrating for work and their families choosing to use additional income to support their children to continue with their education (Save the Children Nepal, 2016).

Stakeholders

Parent and child attitudes to education

Migrant families often report strong ties to their original places of residence and networks with continuing family dynamics and cultural influences on attitudes to education. (Acharya and Yoshino, 2010). Parents' level of education impacts on attitudes to children's education, with adults working in brick kilns more likely to be poorly educated. Deprivation impacts negatively on aspirations and, if limited resources are available at workplace destinations, educational prospects remain limited (Adhikari and Deshingkar, 2015).

Poor quality schooling is also an influence on migrant parents' choices not to send children to school, with low perceptions of the value of education to the household economy, limited value of curriculum to future employment prospects and opportunity costs associated with school attendance (Sharma and Dangal, 2019).

Children's attitudes and affiliation to education changes over the length of time the child lives with parents working in brick kilns, with older children more likely to be drawn into brick kiln labour (Sharma and Dangal, 2019). Children in external employment or those

undertaking household chores find it difficult to balance their time with education (Ornert, 2019). Aspects of engagement in education are gendered within family formations and intergenerational relations with girls more likely to do household and child minding duties (Alipio et al. 2015). Some children's agency and independence is enhanced through migration particularly to urban areas, where they may avail of alternative education and life opportunities (Save the Children, 2019; Roy et al., 2015). Girls' aspirations are beginning to look towards education, even with family migration to the construction industries in urban areas (Adhikari and Deshingkar, 2015). However, absence of social ties, including those gained from education, increases vulnerability of children (International Labour Organisation, 2014).

Government

The Government of Nepal has ratified the International Labour Organisation Conventions on the Worst Forms of Child Labour 182 and on the Minimum Age for Employment No. 138. In 2000 the minimum age for hazardous work was raised from 14 years to 16 years through the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regularization) Act, 2000 (Government of Nepal, 2000). The International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) implemented the Time-Bound Programme (TBP) with Component 2, Objective 4 to ensure children at risk and in the worst forms of child labour will have access to appropriate education and training (International Labour Organisation, 2006). Hazardous child labour in construction and transportation of bricks is identified as harmful to children's health and this has an associated impact on the reduction of children's capacity to engage in education.

A collaborative report by the Government of Nepal, Unicef and UNESCO (2016) recommended inter-Ministerial collaboration, targeted interventions and strengthening of political commitment to those marginalised from school including children of seasonal

migrant workers. With Nepal's significant experience in responding to emergencies such as natural disasters, civil strife and the current pandemic, there is potential for coordinated planning at municipality level via Education Clusters (Gautam, 2020).

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)

The role of NGOs is significant in facilitating access to formal schooling, provision of non-formal education, health services and advocacy on child labour (Chakrabarty et al., 2011).

However, the seasonal and transitory nature of family migration poses challenges for tracking children and support to families, that are compounded by limited timescales of project based NGO interventions. Without parallel harm reduction approaches, provision of formal and non-formal education may be inadequate for reducing physical and emotional consequences of hazardous labour for children.

Larmar et al. (2017) suggest NGO interventions in support of child labourers tends to focus on access to schooling or other forms of education or as part of a child's working life. What is lacking, they argue, is the incorporation of child protection principles, skilled professionals and targeted action within educational project interventions.

Employers

There is some attempt to facilitate dialogue with employers on how brick production could move away from reliance on family work groups that include children through the signing up to a Code of Conduct to ban child labour and provide educational opportunities for children and youth connected to brick kilns (Terre des Hommes, 2019). Social labelling of products as 'child labour free' or 'reliably sourced' is seen as an important persuasive factor in decreasing child labour and ensuring education (Charkrabarty et al., 2011).

The patchy adoption of occupational health and safety standards in brick production is relevant to debates on access to education as it is known children and young people

contribute to household quotas in brick production thereby putting them at high risk of non-engagement in education or missed schooling through injury and poor health (Terre des Hommes, 2019).

Attitudes of employers are crucial but there is insufficient research on their views on the education of children of migrant workers in brick kilns, or compliance with child labour laws and child rights to education.

Discussion

The findings suggest educational interventions, as a mechanism to break the cycle of child labour are important to enable children to access to education and mitigate excessive burdens of household work or informal employment to support household income. Holistic interventions that are tailored and targeted to different children's needs based on context, age and educational history appear most effective, yet knowledge of longer term impacts are often hindered by short term intervention funding. In the regions where brick kilns operate Government, NGOs and employers have a role in ensuring enforcement of laws on child labour in hazardous work, and using a Code of Conduct, such as that developed by Terre des Hommes, to support educational interventions with families and children. In addition, integration of awareness raising and monitoring of child labour laws, professional capacity building in child safeguarding, and child rights and representation by means of advocacy and direct engagement with employers is needed across all educational interventions to strengthen longer term outcomes for children.

Challenges remain and will likely to be exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic as migration flows fluctuate due to lockdown, posing further risks and disruption of educational engagement of children across formal and non-formal settings. The nature of short term interventions limits sustained holistic child development and educational inclusion while

child safeguarding is difficult when children and families are disconnected from education, health and welfare services. However potential for collaborative action, as evidenced in Nepal's emergency planning at different levels of Government can be maximised to ensure continuity. As poverty remains a key driver to migration for employment in brick kilns, poor quality and low parental perceptions of the value of education remain a barrier to ensuring children's continuity of education. Wider social acceptance of the plight of child labourers, particularly in the construction industry, prevents effective policy action and meaningful support for children's rights. Generating public dialogue and maintaining multi-agency planning and coordination between Government, NGOs and Employers is needed to continue progress on reduction of child labour in Nepal.

Arising from this review, areas for consideration in future research include: education and child labour as a priority research theme in migration studies; centrality of youth and child voice in research methodology to understand their educational experiences and perspectives; longitudinal impact studies of educational interventions on children's holistic development; and research into coordination of educational interventions by stakeholders. This research paper is limited to migration to brick kilns, however research on experiences of children of migrant families who work in the wider construction industry and attitudes to child rights to education by employers is needed to inform coordinated action on child poverty, education and migration.

Conclusion

Support for children's education is considered vital to reduce child labour (Brown 2012). However, Nepalese migrating children's access to education is likely to be partial and in multi-locations, with sporadic provision through formal schooling and non-formal education

projects. Government, NGOs, employers, parents, children and wider society have a role in changing attitudes to child labour and ultimately improving outcomes for children.

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