

Lessons Learnt on Children Census survey: A brief report based on sharing workshop with Bharatpur Metropolitan City and its stakeholders conducted in August 31, 2018

Prepared for the annex of the Survey Report and Dissemination to other Municipalities

I. The Country Context

Nepal, as a member state of United Nations, has made a number of international and regional commitments to eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor (WFCL) and all child labor gradually by ratifying various Conventions (UNCRC and ILO Conventions Nos. 138, 182, 29 and 105) and Resolutions (SAARC Convention on welfare of children). It has also made commitment of meeting Sustainable Development Goal by 2030. Nepal government being aware of the child labor's problem in Nepal and to realize its commitments, it has enacted various national laws and regulations to address the issue of child labor. In this regard, constitution of Nepal which was promulgated in September 2015, has ensured child rights along with many provisions for child labour elimination such as prohibition in use of children in factories, mines and other such hazardous works; forbids child marriage, illegal transport, kidnapping and keeping them hostage; forbids their recruitment in army, police or armed police. It also ensures the prohibition in any form of abuse, physical, mental or sexual exploitation or misuse of children for the sake of any cultural, religious or any traditional practice. Likewise, recently the **New Labour Act 2074 (2017)** was enacted in September 2017, which has strictly prohibited the employment of children in any work by any person against the prevailing laws.

The government of Nepal, finally able to endorse ten years (2018-28) National Master Plan (NMP) on 8 July 2018 through the cabinet. The main goal of the master plan is to put to an end all forms of child labor in Nepal. It has also set the target of banishing the exploitative and worst form of child labor until 2022 and all types of child labor until 2025¹. The master plan has also brought the strategy of reviewing the policy, laws and institutions related to prevention of child labor, of creating a strong and conducive environment through programs aimed at enhancing the capacity of stakeholders working in the child labor prohibition sector and of regular monitoring, search, rescue and rehabilitation of victims of child labor as well as rehabilitating them in society through targeted programs. It also has strategy of establishing collaboration, coordination and network among the stakeholders. The government is in the process of preparing national action plans to implement the NMP.

In September, on the occasion of observing 3rd Anniversary of Nepal Constitution (2015), Government enacted 16 fundamental rights bills which were at the cabinet. In this list, right to children bill along with right to social security, right to free and compulsory education and right to crime victims' protection bills, have also been passed². The right to children bill "**Children Act**

¹ <https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/govt-labels-child-labor-a-serious-crime-in-new-master-plan/>

² <https://thehimalayantimes.com/kathmandu/fundamental-rights-related-bills-passed/>

2075” has many provisions to address the issue of child labor including minimum age of labor that in compliance with international standards. The children act has addressed the various issues that were recommended for amendment by CLEAR II along with organizations working in the issue of child protection and child labor issues. The children act will be useful for implementing the NMP as well. As NMP has well stated time line for elimination of worst form of child labor and all types of child labor by 2022 and 2025, respectively, it is necessary to work at all level, specifically local level to address the issue of child labor so that the goal of NMP and SDG will be fulfilled within the given timeline.

II. Background

Bharatpur Metropolitan City (BMC) situated into Chitwan district, central terai region of Nepal that falls under Province number three, of the country. The BMC, which after merging with Ratnanagar Municipality³, extended its area but the number of wards came down into 29 from 31 before by merging a few. The BMC, with the instruction of its line Ministry-Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFGA), for adapting “Child Friendly Local Governance (CFLG) Indicators”, has to do base line survey to understand the status of children and child labour. In this regard, BMC was suggested to conduct Census Survey on Children by its stakeholders. For this, INGOs along with Local NGOs’ committed to support BMC for the technical and financial support.

In March 2018, BMC came up with the decision to form a technical committee to support the census survey. The committee composed of Nine members working in the children related issues and concerns, comprising government agencies such as district health, education, women and children offices, Social Development Division of BMC; NGOS (CWISH, Diyaloparibar, New Youth Club), UNICEF and Winrock-CLEAR II. The role of the committee was also defined as follows:

- Identifying consultant/Team leader and enumerators to conduct census survey;
- Support in drafting questionnaire for census survey;
- Orientation to the enumerators for data collection;
- Support to BMC in cash, in-kind, and/or technical assistance for the Census Survey;
- Support in drafting BMC-children census report with recommendations on social policy on child labour sector.

Bharatpur Metropolitan City conducted a Census Survey for preparation database on children and child labour covering all 29 Wards as per the indicators of CFLG Guidelines of the Government of Nepal in order to declare the Metropolitan City a child friendly one. The survey tool was designed by the consultant hired by the BMC. The survey process was started in the first week of Chaitra, 2073 B.S. (March 2017) and completed in 2075 B.S. (mid of 2018) which aimed at preparing baseline to declare the Metropolitan City a child friendly one. The survey could not be accomplished within the stipulated time due to prolonged election and flooding in 2017 along with other unavoidable circumstances. However, the process provided hands-full experiences to the Metropolitan team particularly for similar processes in future. The Social Development Section of the Metropolitan City has realized that for future surveys to succeed, more thorough planning is necessary, this includes time set to fine tune the questionnaire as well as adequate training to the enumerators.

³ In March, 2017

Additionally, the department acknowledged that more resources – both financial and human capital – need to be allocated to ensure an effective census survey.

III. Objectives

The general objective of the lessons learnt workshop was basically to share the learning from the Census on essential elements among stakeholders involved in the Census Survey that to be taken into account in data collection and to implement the lessons learnt in their future activities as well as to share with other Municipalities across the Nepal. With this objective, enumerators and supervisors involved in data collection, persons involved in data coding, entry and analysis including team leader (consultant) who developed the survey tools, BMC official and technical committee members from local NGOs were invited for the participation in the workshop. The specific objectives were:

- To identify the gaps and challenges in the children and child labor survey;
- To share adopted strategies to address the challenges encountered in the survey;
- To suggest essential elements that need to be taken into account for minimizing errors in data collection as well for quality information;

IV. Justification for the lessons learnt workshop

Winrock, CLEAR II Nepal project has been committed to supporting the BMC Census Survey of Children and child labor. However, the survey took a longer time than scheduled time due to a number of factors. This gave uncertainty of completion of census report on children and child labor of BMC and coming up with recommendation for social policy within the project period. In addition, upon review of the final survey tool, CLEAR II staff noted gaps in the tool and methodology of survey that would make it difficult to reliably report on child labor statistics for the Municipality. As such, CLEAR II proposed take an alternative option of support. CLEAR II in consensus with BMC, decided to conduct a lessons learnt workshop that help in understanding the challenges and gaps in the survey and to sensitize the stakeholders of the survey on essential elements that need to be considered for minimizing the errors in data collection as well as for quality report. This also helps BMC and other municipalities for conducting similar survey.

V. Expected outcome of the workshop

The identified gaps, challenges, lessons learnt and best practices will be shared by putting in annex of the census survey report and shared to the BMC officials as well as other Municipalities for future use in similar type of survey.

VI. The Process of Discussion

The participants were divided into five different groups and were asked to discuss on the following aspects and present the outcome in the plenary:

- Challenges of the census survey in the process of designing, data collection, data entry, data analysis, human resource management and training as well as in whole process;
- Strategies followed to mitigate the challenges and perceived changes; and
- Ways to improve the quality of the census survey in future as well as suggestions to other municipalities for similar survey;

VII. Sharing Lessons Learnt

The Enumerators and Supervisors shared that they got to learn/know about-- i) data and statistics on different aspects of Metropolitan city, ii) the sorts of responsibilities (i.e. actions/activities) of Enumerator and Supervisors, iii) preparation of Survey (questionnaires),

iv) the things that required to be considered while collecting data from the field, v) procedural and methodological aspects of Survey and/or study as well as code of ethics, and vi) dealing with issues/problems emerged during data collection by coordinating with concerned individual, groups and agencies.

Challenges Encountered and Strategies taken to address them

The survey was conducted in between election atmosphere, so the time and situation were not favourable for the Survey. The available budget was very low, still utilized properly even outsourcing some of the task of the Survey. As an accomplishment of this survey, the child labourers who were identified were rescued from the workplace and were admitted to schools. However, such achievement was not attained without any challenges. The research team faced challenges and mitigated them in their ways. Such challenges and the strategies taken in dealing with the challenges and subsequent improvements have been documented as per various phases of the study namely Survey Design, Data Collection, and Data Entry and Analysis.

○ **Survey Design**

Foremost, the Technical Committee delayed the process of the survey. As regard to survey tools, the Survey questionnaire was focused on the main objective. It was shared that some of the questions in the Survey were difficult to answer and were complex in nature.

Additionally since the survey questionnaire tried to cover all 39 indicators of CFLG guidelines, it was very long and it took approximately 30 minutes per household to fill up the questionnaire. Therefore, people hesitated to answer all the questions, especially they considered unnecessary to respond to the questions related to income in the Survey and did not answer them properly. In these cases, the respondents were asked to share their expenses and filled the detail (and assumption was made about their income later). Still, the Survey form was not completed in many cases (in some cases only 40 percent of the form was filled up). The survey instrument was designed to cover numerous areas including health, education, and child labor.

Survey questions related to child labor, skewed largely towards child domestic workers, rather than including all potential hazards and/or working conditions that could indicate that a child is in child labor or engaged in the worst forms of child labor, as per national law and international standards. As the survey had focused questions on child labor, it was inevitable that the households having domestic child labourers would be reluctant to provide actual information. In such situations, information was gathered from the representative of Ward Office and other members of the neighbourhood.

○ **Data Collection**

The data collection could not be accomplished as planned at the beginning due to not being able to appoint and train Enumerators. Some of the Enumerators did not continue their job in the ground mentioning that the remuneration was very little. The Survey was managed with limited resources which also created obstacles. The major problem with data enumeration was that, some trained Enumerators quit half-way, and to mitigate the shortfall of Enumerators, the Enumerators from the same or other Wards as well as other volunteers were also mobilized to address the situation. The task of the Enumerators was hampered due to the lack of necessary materials during the time of data collection.

As the survey was census type and efforts were made to cover each and every household of the Metropolitan city. Enumerators also found collecting data on child friendly indicators and other information in one set of questionnaires was difficult as they were not properly trained to sensitize in the issues of children. Hence, the number of child labours identified by Survey is very less than the actual number and cannot be considered as accurate. There were two main reasons, first the data collection did not cover Motor garages and industries and second, the family who have sent their children for work outside or having children domestic labour did not mentioned the same.

Also, the research team realized that, the training provided to Enumerators and Supervisors were not adequate in terms of training duration, providing subjective knowledge and skills and it affected the quality of data collection. In case of reappointed Enumerators, some of them even did not receive training on basic aspects of data collection and child rights. The knowledge and skills of Supervisor and Enumerators have been mobilized to resolve day-to-day problem in data collection. The data collection was made easy as the team solicit support and coordination with local groups (Tole Sudhar Samitis).

Also, the expansion of the geographical boundaries of the Metropolitan city also posed challenges as well as created confusion. The area of the Metropolitan City was big in geography so that it was difficult to monitor the process of data collection as anticipated. The Enumerators had to face security challenges especially in city areas. Despite such challenges faced, the Enumerators were bit disappointed as the remuneration given to them was very low and had to go through a lengthy and difficult process to claim it.

For mitigating the field level challenges, the research team coordinated with different organizations, mobilized the elected representatives of the Metropolitan City. In the situation when house-owner was not available in the family, the Enumerator visited the family repeatedly and when they denied being part of the survey, the research team visited in the community gatherings to communicate with the household head that were not found in his/her house or denied participation and persuaded them to participate in the Survey.

○ **Data Entry and Data Analysis**

The foremost challenge in this phase was faced due to delay in appointment of the software programmer as well as capable human resources for data entry and data analysis. This impacted on total timeline of the survey. There was a system failure in the software not to mention the problem in coding of the households covered in the Survey. The software would only support age ranges of 1 to 14 years, but the Survey form had collected data regarding age 1 to 18 years resulting technical problem associated to it. Also, there was a technical problem with combining the newly added hamlets of the Wards and entering the data accordingly as the geography of the municipality changed recently. For this, the experts were consulted in resolving problems such as system failure in the software as well as software not supporting the data.

VIII. Major Lessons learnt and suggestions for future survey

The most crucial lesson learnt for the survey team was that, such survey should be planned far in advance, with adequate time, resources, and human capital allocated to ensure success. Special emphases should be placed on training and monitoring enumerators, and technical expertise should be available to manage data. It is also important to form a Technical Committee with members who not only have technical knowledge and experience on research, but also have time to dedicate and provide necessary input and guidance to the research team as and when needed. The members of Technical Committee along with the research team needs to define the survey objective clearly, design the tools for the study

keeping objectives of the survey in centre. While carrying similar type of survey, children in various adverse situations can be focussed, so that comprehensive information on the situation of children in the municipality can be assessed appropriately instead of separate dedicated Survey in each issue.

The Survey team also realized that, it would be effective to carry out pilot test of the survey tools prior to field-level data collection. The participants also emphasized on the use of technology through mobile-based applications for any future studies to be conducted. Such application-based survey instead of paper-based Survey would make data collection and its analysis efficient in term of time, cost and connivance. For that, technical savvy should be consulted and be a part of research team.

As regard to human resources to be involved in the survey, there should be proper recruitment process for selecting capable human resources and have provision of adequate training to them. All the research team members should be provided with necessary aids needed to fulfil their responsibilities as a Field Enumerator, data analyst, and other crucial roles along with providing them appropriate remuneration and other facilities.

IX. Conclusion

The issues of child labor should not be limited only to child domestic laborers, which is the common understanding among general public. Instead, a complete definition of child labour is required which should be in line with national and international child labor definitions. The surveys related to child labor should explicitly collect information related to specific hazards children experience in both formal and informal workplaces. It is also essential to manage resources (manpower, budget and necessary materials) in advance prior to conduct survey. To minimize errors, pre-test and sufficient training for enumerator are required and the questionnaire should be objective oriented. A pilot survey will be useful if resources are limited and the new technology like mobile apps should be used which will be cost effective and time saving. In overall, for quality information and database, there is need of sufficient discussion, planning and support from the technical and management team along with strong political will.