

Educational Support for 200+ Child Laborers in Nepal

Background:

With the release of a new constitution in Nepal in 2016 the aspirations of the Nepalese people have grown. There is provision in the constitution that there will be inclusive development of all communities in Nepal. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Central Bureau of Statistics of Nepal (2012 report) the population of children between five and 17 years of age is 7.77 million, which is about 33% of the total population. Among working children, the report further estimates that 1.60 million children, or almost 51%, fall into the category of child labor, identified as being engaged in what is called hazardous work. This is a vicious problem in Nepal which creates a barrier to achieving UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 1, 2, 4 and 8. Child labor has been widespread in Nepal for many centuries, as part of the normal process of socialization.

In the countryside children always worked, and continue to work, long hours alongside their parents in the fields and at home. Although the participation rate for children in rural Nepal is estimated about 40.4%, there is a significant difference between that of girls (47.6%) and that of boys (36.1%). In Nepal, the majority of children are found working in the agricultural sector, followed by service, manufacturing and other sectors. They are mostly employed informally as domestic servants, porters, rag pickers or carpet factory workers, as well as in restaurants and in the transportation sector. Depending on the sector, children may have to work long hours, carry heavy loads and face the risk of sexual exploitation.

Challenge

The children exposed to hazardous working conditions often find themselves working at minimum standards with excessive workloads, jeopardizing their overall well being. The lack of safety and hygiene, poor physical conditions and the burden of repetitive jobs (in absence of any standard occupational safety and health practices) affect the physical, mental and overall development of these children. The gender differences at work, contributing to unequal pay, sexual exploitation, debt bondage and lack of access to health services, education and other opportunities are some of the tips of iceberg relating to the child labor phenomenon in Nepal. Most, regardless of their economic status, require lifelong support. Very few, if any, support services are available when families are in crisis or when parents die and services provided by the state are minimal.

Target:

Education for 200+ child laborers

Vocational training for 50 over-age children (14-17) or parents of the very poorest families

Target districts: Dang and Bardiya

Specifically:

Finding child laborers: We will conduct a baseline survey to find child laborers in the target area. In light of their individual situations, they will receive help through collaborative work of public

and private partnerships. Local government such as the municipality and Village Development Committees (VDCs), including the chamber of commerce, will also be a major player during this project implementation.

Rehabilitation center: We will provide counseling to the children and their parents. BASE will recruit trained counselors.

Bridge Classes: At first, children will be divided into different age groups and we will provide a bridge class opportunity. The over-age children (14-17) will get this opportunity for 5-6 months and will get enrolled (for formal education) at a government school. Younger school-aged children will be enrolled in government schools, but they may not need a prolonged bridging period. The project will provide materials and school uniforms.

Enrollment: Tuition cost for those children whose families cannot afford to pay will be subsidized with coordination and collaboration of school management committees and concerned municipalities and VDCs. Local government is responsible for keeping records on the economic status of families.

Parenting Education (PE): The PE session will be organized in a cluster basis for the parents when appropriate for them. BASE has already developed PE session materials and they have been useful and have made good impact in past projects. The PE session facilitators will get training on how to run the PE session.

Vocational Education (Training): Those children who may not agree to join the bridge course but whose age is from 14 to 17 will be provided opportunity for vocational skill training. This opportunity will also be given to the parents of child laborers. There are vocational training institutions in the areas where we are going to do this project. In the past BASE has organized vocational training, and the impact has been good. The beneficiaries can get long-term, sustainable benefits. The vocational training will be based on beneficiaries' interest, and market assessment will be done in close collaboration with vocational institutions.

Sustainability: The project will pioneer the best practices for the elimination of child labor in the working community. It will give respite to the families in question (thereby improving their quality of life), sensitize the wider community, and serve as a model for replication. The project will thus touch many more lives and impact a far larger number of people through a cascading effect. Through this support of both the child laborers and their parents, opportunities for these people will be increased, leading the way to a better life.