



**Exploring the Educational Status of Children of Seasonal Migrant Workers Living in
Brick Kiln
A Case Study of Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory in Bhaktapur District**

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ABSTRACT

In Nepal, the status of education of brick kiln workers' children is questionable as the brick industry is driven by seasonal migration, oftentimes pushing the children to discontinue their education. A significant gap exists in the current body of knowledge due to limited focus on exploring the direct effect of seasonal migration on education of brick kiln workers' children. The limited literatures on this matter do not shed light on this issue-specific context and therefore, this study intends to explore and examine the educational status of children of brick kiln workers and associated challenges faced by children of brick workers who experience barriers and obstacles in their education due to seasonal migration or their parents' occupation in general.

This study adopts an instrumental case study under which in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and key-informant interviews were chosen as data collection methods and thematic analysis was used for data analysis. The study found that the children who were interviewed had enrolled themselves in school nearby to the kiln and were pretty regular and participating in their respective schools. There was no evidence found regarding the existence of resources and interventions made by government or non-government agencies specifically targeted towards children of the brick workers apart from "*shishu syahar*", a child care center established by the brick kiln owners inside the kiln premises. The study found the child care center replicable to settings challenged by seasonal migration and effective in terms of child care for children under the age of 5 years as it oftentimes reduced the burden of childcare responsibility of the brick workers. In regards to barriers and challenges in education of the children, lack of proper documents such as birth certificate was seen as a barrier to enrolment; migration leading to changes in learning environment, financial constraints, child labor and shouldering household responsibility were seen as the major challenges. Along with this, it was found that those families who are more likely to migrate seasonally do not enroll their children in school after migrating to the kiln whereas those families who place high regard towards the children's education usually stay behind in the kiln even after the brickmaking season ends.

This study holds significance for its contribution to the existing body of knowledge regarding education of brick kiln workers and the associated barriers or challenges implied with the seasonal nature of work. The findings prompt future research to be guided by the sole contextual emphasis on education of workers' children, not only in brick kiln industry but also across sectors that require seasonality of work. This emphasis on context-driven research could

facilitate the creation of targeted interventions to support the educational journey of children under study.

Key words: Seasonal migration, resources and interventions, educational status, barriers, challenges, migrant workers

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List of abbreviations

BBN: Better Brick Nepal

BSP: Bridge Schools Programme

CBS: Central Bureau of Statistics

CONCERN: Concern for Children and Environment Nepal

CREATE: Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity

ECED: Early Childhood Education and Development

GoN: Government of Nepal

INSEC: Informal Sector Service Centre

ICIMOD: International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development

ILO: International Labour Organization

INGO: International Non-Governmental Organization

FCBTK: Movable/Fixed Chimney Bull's Trench Kiln

NESP: New Education System Plan

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

SESP: School Education Sector Plan

SDG: Sustainable Development Goals

UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights

VSBK: Vertical Shaft Brick Kiln

WASH: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

Access to education is a fundamental human right and all individuals are entitled to enjoy it. Education as a fundamental right has been particularly acknowledged in Article 26 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which guarantees free education at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. This further adds on to the motive of education, which is the contribution in the full development of human personality. The Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989, which was ratified by Nepal on 14th September 1990, requires the State Parties to uphold the right of the child to education. Along with many rights under Article 28 of the Convention ensuring the provision of education to all children and making education available and accessible to all, one of the provisions mentioned is to take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.

In the context of Nepal, the Article 31 of the Constitution of Nepal specifies the right relating to education, which includes the right of every citizen to have access to basic education, right to get compulsory and free education up to the basic level and free education up to the secondary level from the State. Moreover, “rights of the child” in the Article 39 of the Constitution of Nepal provides children with the right to education and the right to elementary child development and participation.

Attainment of education can allow individuals to reach their ultimate potential and uplift the quality of living. However, access to education is still a challenge for many individuals. According to the estimation by UNICEF in 2016, approximately 770,000 children between the ages of 5 and 12 are still not enrolled in school, and the attendance rate for early childhood education is still low at 51% (UNICEF, n.d.). Talking about the challenges and barriers in education, in Nepal, poverty, social exclusion, disability, migration, child labor and gender bias are some of the main barriers identified in enrollment and attendance (UNICEF, n.d.).

Migration as mentioned is the effect of poverty. In-country seasonal migration for income generation is a prevalent phenomenon in the lives of many Nepalese people. This form of migration involves working individuals and their families relocating to places other than their hometown, with the brick industry being a predominant sector of such migration. The workers and their families migrate towards the industrial hubs of the country such as Kathmandu valley itself to work in brick kilns during the winter. The Report on Employment Relationship Survey in The Brick

Industry in Nepal conducted jointly by Central Bureau of Statistics, International Labour Organization and UNICEF have revealed that around 194,949 individuals of 5 years and older are living in the brick kilns, with 15,871 of them being infants (0-4 years old). Among them, 176,373 are working in the brick kilns. Migrant workers cover a significant proportion of the working individuals among these numbers with only 22% workers belonging originally to the place where kilns are located (ILO, UNICEF, CBS, 2020).

Once the monsoon commences and brick making no longer becomes favorable, the migrant brick workers tend to return to their hometowns as the cost of living in the urban core is comparatively higher. This leaves their children more susceptible towards school drop-out and discontinuation as acquisition of education becomes uncertain due to the seasonal nature of the work. Seasonal migration is not the standalone factor that affects the education of children significantly, but the setting of the brick kilns itself is a huge factor. It has been reported that an estimated 34,593 children between the ages of 5 and 17 are living in the brick kilns, of which 17,738 of them are working, comprising approximately 10% of total workforce” (ILO, UNICEF, CBS, 2020). The data represents a large number of children unable to attain education and participate fully in the education system.

Therefore, this study was designed to examine the status of education of children of migrant brick workers and to understand the problem as put forward on a deeper level. Hence, a case study approach to research was employed. The pre-identified brick factory, Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory, was taken as the study site for the research study.

To provide a brief background about the selection of this particular topic, the inception field visit held in March 2023, revealed intriguing insights. The dire impacts of brick kiln on the students’ education were found during the visits to two public schools located near to the selected brick. According to the head teacher in one of the schools, 90-95%¹ of the total students in that particular school come from worker families residing in the brick kilns nearby. A more comprehensible data and responses were not recorded regarding the composition of students who seasonally migrate to the brick kiln. Nonetheless, it was still mentioned slightly that the students usually tend to drop out after the brick making season is over. In addition to the prevalence of dropout cases among seasonal migrant children living in brick kilns, there are other notable impacts stemming from both the brick kiln and seasonal migration. This was concurred by both the head teachers. These impacts

¹ This data may not entirely reflect the reality of that particular school as it has not been extracted directly through the official school records. The information is based on a rough estimation by the Head Teacher at the school.

mostly consisted of challenges such as delayed completion of school assignments, students experiencing fatigue during school hours due to their engagement in household chores, shouldering the responsibilities of managing the household and caring for younger siblings from a young age, mental pressure, and lack of proper sanitation and hygiene. Thus, it deemed necessary to carry out this study to assess this matter in-depth.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Brick industry in Nepal is a blooming industry having remarkable contribution on the country's economy. With the rising rate of urbanization and devastation induced by 2015 earthquake, the brick kilns in Nepal have a flourishing market with great demand for a high labor supply. As estimated in the report by ILO, UNICEF, CBS (2020), almost 1, 86,150 people are engaged in brick kilns in Nepal. The nature of the brick industry is seasonal, operational for production only during the dry season i.e., December to May. Therefore, the workers in the kilns only work for six months on average. Among all the workers and their families, the survey revealed that 32% of the sampled population of the workers come from another district of Nepal and 46% of the workers migrate for labor from India. The data provides an overview of the extreme frequency of internal migration.

Many of the workers choose to migrate along with their families, which includes their children. As the nature of the work is more suitable for seasonal migration, the families migrate back and forth to accommodate their working environment, oftentimes questioning the state of the children's education. The productive season in brick kilns start right after the major festivities in Nepal, by which time nearly half of the academic calendar has already passed. The children then move to the brick kilns during the season and when they do, they either drop out of the previous school in their hometowns or in some cases, have never been enrolled in schools to begin with. After migrating in the brick kilns, the children either do not go to school at all given their situation of discontinuation of the educational curriculum in the middle of the school year or they face heaps of challenges and barriers while accessing the schools and colleges around the kilns. The cycle then again repeats once the monsoon starts and so they drop out if they have already enrolled in schools near the kiln to follow their parents back to their hometown.

The existing body of knowledge regarding this matter is currently limited and there is a lack of interventions and resources specifically targeted and tailored for these communities. Therefore, this

particular study has been prompted by this very grave situation in which the seasonal nature of the brick industry has raised a great question mark in the education of children of brick kiln workers.

1.3 Objective of the study

The general objective of the study is to gain insight into the educational status of the children of brick kiln workers. Specifically, this study intends to:

- Assess the status of education of children in brick kiln.
- Discern the challenges and barriers in accessing education or ensuring meaningful participation in school by the children of brick workers.

1.4 Research question

The main research questions that this study aims to address are:

- What is the educational status of children living in the brick kiln?
- What are the influencing factors/ barriers in education of children of the seasonal migrant workers living in the brick kiln?

1.5 Significance of the study

Brigham Young University is implementing an exploratory project titled “Interdisciplinary investigation of social problem contexts for better solutions in the built environment: toward comprehensive sustainable development solutions” with the aim to develop a pilot framework for full problem context evaluation, before trying to find solutions in the field of international development. The purpose of the project is to evaluate constituent parts of Nepali brick kiln communities through the lens of “localized” SDGs, identify what gaps exist and explore ways these gaps can be addressed collectively to produce a sustainable community. The project looks into various small fragments or constituents that work toward sustainable community development, among which education is one domain.

This study holds its significance towards knowledge generation about the educational status of the children in the brick kiln and how seasonal migration effects their education. Within the broader project, this study contributes through identification of gaps and collection of valuable insights about the status of education by exploring the context of the brick kiln and inquiring about various aspects within the education domain in the brick kiln. This knowledge can consequently help to uplift the

lives of children living and growing up in a similar environment by addressing the gaps and need to improve access and participation in education system.

Ultimately, this study contributes to the broader discussion on achieving SDG 4 “Quality Education” which is aimed at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities by shedding light on a specific context where educational continuity is challenged by seasonal migration and where targeted efforts are emergent to align the educational goals of children with the harsh realities faced by their families.

1.6 Organization of the report

This research report is structured into eight chapters. The Chapter 1 “Introduction” includes background information about the topic under inquiry. The Chapter 2 “Literature Review” consists of insights regarding brick kilns and brick industry in Nepal, theoretical review, policy review and empirical review, all of which contribute to the development of conceptual framework. The Chapter 3 “Research Methodology” details the research design, study population and sample, study site, data collection procedure, data analysis measure and ethical considerations. The Chapter 4 “Findings” presents the thematic analysis of the results obtained from the field data collection. The most significant findings are further analyzed and discussed in the Chapter 5 “Discussion”. The Chapter 6 “Conclusion and recommendations” provides the final remarks and conclusion alongside a set of recommendations. All in-text citations made throughout the report are included in Chapter 7 “References”. The data collection tools (interview guidelines) are included in Chapter 8 “Appendix”. Each chapter is further divided into sub-headings as necessary.

1.7 Limitations

One of the major limitations of the study relates to the nature of work in brick kilns, specifically the seasonal migration of the workers. This posed a considerable challenge in gathering a substantial amount of data from sufficient samples (brick kiln workers). Hence, the respondents are not representative of the total number of individuals living and working in the brick kiln. Furthermore, the research period coincided with monsoon season, which fostered additional barriers in data collection since most of the families had already left the kiln for their hometown.

In terms of the data obtained, the study has not collected data related to various parameters of learning outcomes, such as attendance, examination marks, skills etc. which might be a limitation to analyze the educational status of the children under inquiry.

In addition, it is essential to note that this study takes a single brick kiln as a case study and hence, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to other existing brick kilns. Each brick kiln may have its unique setting and working conditions, which limits the generalizability of the study's conclusions to a larger group of brick kilns.

1.8 Potential bias

The study might be subjected to sampling bias as convenience sampling was used as sampling strategy and the participants were selected based on their availability during the data collection period in the kiln. Since the data collection coincided with monsoon, majority of the target population had already migrated after the brickmaking concluded, consequently leading to potential biases in the sample.

Along with this, the study contains possible probing bias in which the respondents' answers might be influenced how the interviewer probes the interview questions. To mitigate this, semi-structured interview guidelines were used so that the interviews would not deviate from the intended purpose and theme of the study. The interview guidelines also included certain probes within the questions to avoid leading questions aligning with the interviewer's implied expectations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This section is dedicated to understanding more deeply the pre-existing knowledge regarding the situation of children's education in brick kilns. To enhance comprehension on this matter, the section is divided into sub-sections. The conceptual framework as presented in Figure 3 has been developed through an extensive document review process, which has contributed to a more robust knowledge base on the subject.

2.1 Contextualizing brick kilns in Nepal

In Asia alone, the brick production reaches a whopping 1300 billion bricks annually, representing about 86.67% of the global brick production (ILO, 2017). Out of this, Nepal's contribution is of about 0.40%, equivalent to approximately 6 billion bricks annually. As per ICIMOD (2019), about 1349 brick kilns are responsible in producing an approximate of about 5.14 billion bricks per annum. The brick industry in Nepal is flourishing, making a remarkable share of 2% to the country's GDP as of 2018.

Bricks - the primary construction material particularly in Kathmandu Valley and in the southern plain of Terai - has increased demand in recent period within the Nepalese construction market. This can be attributed to two main reasons. Firstly, the rapid urbanization in Nepal which characterized by an urbanizing rate of over 3 percent annually. Nepal is also predicted to be one of the world's 10 fastest urbanizing countries over the next few decades by the UN (UNDESA, 2014). Secondly, the 2015 earthquakes have left the country with significant need for reconstruction efforts, requiring maximum production of bricks.

Even though there are many different types of kilns found, in Nepal, three types of brick kilns are the most prevalent: Vertical Shaft Brick Kiln (VSBK), High/induced Draught Zigzag Firing technology (Zigzag HD) and Movable/Fixed Chimney Bull's Trench Kiln (FCBTK). The Factsheets about Brick Kilns in South and South-East Asia by Greentech Knowledge Solutions (2023) provides a rough estimate about the number of different types of kilns in operation in South-East Asia.

Table 1: Types of brick kilns and the number of operational enterprises in Nepal

Type of brick kiln (most prevalent)	Number of operational enterprises (as of 2014)
Fixed Chimney Bull’s Trench Kiln (FCBTK)	450
High/Induced Draught Zigzag Firing Technology (Zigzag HD)	150
Vertical Shaft Brick Kiln Technology (VSBK)	25

Source: (Greentech Knowledge Solutions, 2023)

The brick making process requires sun for the drying process before, therefore, the kilns are operational during the dry season. In Nepal, November to May pose as a favorable seasonal for brick making. Brick workers constitute of majority of migrant workers – about 32% of the workers being in-country migrants while 46% of the workers migrate from India. Of the total 103,548 individuals identified as main workers, 54% of the Nepalese workers reported of brick making being their primary source of income, while 43% were found to rely on primarily on agriculture for livelihood (ILO, UNICEF, CBS, 2020).

During the brick-making season, the workers normally reside on-site at the kiln in temporary housing structures called “*jhyauli*”, which is almost as a hut. These structures are self-constructed and are characterized by the low ceilings, walls made from green bricks and roofs using tin or baked brick. These huts often lack fixed doors and windows, resulting in poor ventilation, as well as lack of spacious and separated rooms for different members of the household. Due to their temporary nature, the structures have limited access to electricity, water supply lines, and other housing facilities.

Figure 1: Temporary living structure "jhyauli" in brick kiln premises



Source: Field visit to Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory, March 2023

2.2. Sustainable community development and the larger picture

Global benchmarks are set in place in order to guide the activities and development of the education sector. The Sustainable Development Agenda for 2030 provides a blueprint for the development, peace and cohesion among the environment, people and economy. The SDG 4 “Quality Education” aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. This goal consists of 10 targets and 11 indicators. This study, therefore, attempts on examining the impact of seasonal migration in brick industry on children’s education to primarily contribute to the realization of SDG 4.1 which ensures free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education of all girls and boys leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes and SDG 4.5 targeted to eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations” (United Nations, n.d.).

The project “*Interdisciplinary investigation of social problem contexts for better solutions in the built environment: toward comprehensive sustainable development solutions*”, upon which this study has been built on, tries to investigate what a sustainable community development looks like in a brick kiln community. Sustainable community development is a long-term and holistic process

of enhancing the well-being of the quality of the life of people in the community and creating thriving communities while taking into account the environmental, social, economic and cultural dimensions. The ultimate goal of sustainable community development is to create communities that are resilient, inclusive, and equitable and meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the upcoming generation.

Towards achieving the goals of sustainable community development, specific emphasis is placed on community engagement, participatory decision-making, and collaborative partnerships among community members, local organizations, businesses, and government agencies. The true essence of sustainable community development is harnessed only with the joint efforts between various stakeholders.

Figure 2: Sustainable development framework of the project



Source: Project overview, “Interdisciplinary investigation of social problem contexts for better solutions in the built environment: toward comprehensive sustainable development solutions.”

As illustrated in Figure 2, the larger project investigates constituent parts of Nepali brick kiln communities (as also mentioned in Section 1.5 “Significance of the study”). This study has been conducted to explore the education component of the project, with a particular focus on access to education.

2.3. Interactionist perspective theory

Interactionist perspective theory is a micro theory that argues all social processes being derived from social interactions. It looks at social phenomena as a product of the interaction between an individual and their environment around them. The theory believes that societies are the ultimate product of millions of the social interactions between individuals and that meanings are generated in each social interaction. To understand these meanings, it's important how we see ourselves and others, who we talk to, and where we talk – these shape how we interact and change as we interact. This suggests that who we talk to and where we do it are important for how meanings and interactions develop and alter (Stryker, 2001).

The use of interactionist perspective theory is oftentimes associated with the methodology in which different social contexts are studied upon. Stryker (2001) argues that there are basically two ways in which this theory is used as a methodology to study social phenomena. For many people who follow this approach, viewing everyday life is the primary focus of research under which, observational methods, ethnography, case histories, or intensive interviewing are used as preferred instruments of gathering data and qualitative methods being the preferred analytical procedures. This indicates the preference of looking at quality (details) rather than quantity (numbers). On the other hand, some people who also believe in this approach think that this way of doing things limits us. The emphasis placed on looking at small details and talking to a few people is rejected by the latter group of interactionists as they believe big sets of data and numbers should be used to study interactions.

As this study has been set out to explore the status of education in the brick kiln by conducting in-depth inquiry of the matter, rather than quantifying the status and challenges, the interactionist perspective theory is relevant to this study in understanding how the children and parents (who are brick workers) put a meaning behind education and migration. It is particularly relevant as it helps to delve into the nuances of how these individuals develop understanding regarding education and migration. Furthermore, the theory is significantly useful in analyzing how the individuals perceive the value of education, and how these perceptions influence the decisions regarding seasonal migration or staying in the kiln. Finally, the theory is relevant to understand the social interactions that contribute to the educational and migration choices along with providing a deeper understanding of the factors which influence the decisions and behaviors regarding education and migration.

2.4. Policy review

The current major policy architecture that guides development of the education sector in Nepal is the “School Education Sector Plan 2022/23-2031/32”, which has its roots on the former plans and policies that have been implemented in Nepal since 1956 BS. The review of the historical development of public education policy in Nepal by Gurung (2012), concluded that a total of 11 educational Plans have been promulgated in Nepal from 1956 BS onwards, among which two were three-year interim plans and nine were five-year plans. These five-year plans were remarkable in terms of putting emphasis and directing efforts into establishing a strong education system in Nepal by placing education at the focal point of the nation’s development. These plans were noteworthy for their focus on universalizing education through improving access and quality of education, with particular attention given to physical facilities. Under these national Plans, various programs and projects were brought forward since 1956 BS which includes:

- New Education System Plan (NESP) 1971; developed under the Fourth Five Year Plan (1975–1980).
- Education for All: 2004–2009
- School Sector Reform Plan 2009-2015
- School Sector Development Plan 2016/17-2022/23 (BS 2073/74-2079/80)
- School Education Sector Plan 2022/23-2031/2032

The Fifteenth Plan (Fiscal Year 2019/20 – 2023/24), the ongoing five-year plan of Nepal, also sets forward optimistic goals for the development of education sector in Nepal. One of the strategies mentioned in the Plan under the section “Education” emphasizes on ensuring equitable access to school education as per the standards of compulsory and free education by making all levels of government competent and accountable. The second working policy within this strategy ensures compulsory and free education for all, as well as the creating provisions for open and alternative education to address the learning needs of the students from vulnerable, minority, endangered, and marginalized communities (National Planning Commission, 2020).

The concept paper of the Sixteenth Plan published on 6th August, 2023, has emphasized the equitable and compulsory distribution of scholarships to the financially deprived and hardworking students through the one-door system among six other strategies for structural change in education sector (National Planning Committee, 2023).

Moreover, the National Education Policy 2076 by the Ministry of Education serves as a guiding document for the development of national education sector within the federal system. This policy is necessary to implement education as a fundamental right of all persons in accordance with the principles of federal democratic republic in education, to ensure easy and equitable access to education for all and to ensure universal and quality education. The National Education Policy 2076 envisions to develop human resources in line with the competitive, technical, employment-oriented, and productive needs of the country, at all levels of education (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2019).

2.5. Empirical review

Studies about the impacts of seasonal nature and migratory movement in brick industries on the seasonal migrant children have not been much explored. A thorough literature review suggested that there remains a significant empirical gap on the relationship between seasonal migration in the brick industry and education of the workers' children. Nevertheless, with the amount of literature that has been found, it can be interpreted that there seems to be a noteworthy relationship between the seasonal nature of work in brick kilns and the education of children whose parents have migrated to work on the kilns.

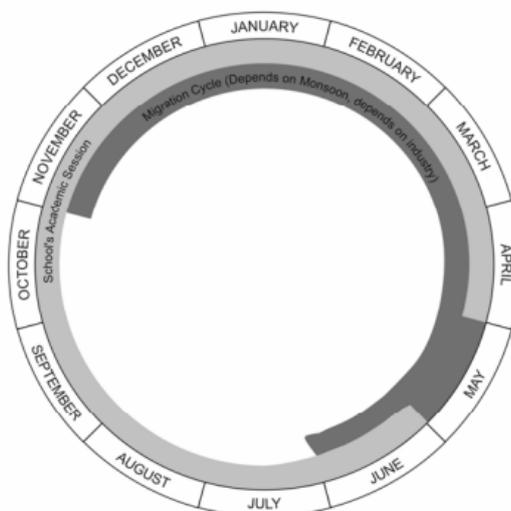
Studies have shown results about the negative impacts of seasonal migration in any working industries on the education of the children of migrant workers. In Nepal, instances of seasonal migration are highly prevalent in the construction industry, brick industry, and agricultural industry. Instances of industry specific cases which discuss the negative impacts of seasonal migration for foraging of Yarsagumba have been mentioned in the Nepal Human Rights Year Book 2023 by Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC). The report presented the significant impact on education due to closure of schools during three-month journeys to forage Yarsagumba. Children were specifically preferred to be involved in harvesting as they were more adept at detecting Yarsagumba compared to adults. As the study report further states, the active participation of children to seasonally migrate and forage Yarsagumba might have notable economic benefits, however, the halt from education during the time has long-term consequences (Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC), 2023).

In brick industry, seasonal migration is one of the major factors that hinder the education of children whose parents work in the brick kiln. Bajracharya, Gurung, Mathema, Sharma, & Mishra (2021) pointed out the prevalence of lack of quality and continuity of education for children, in

the centers providing education and childcare for children and in school, as a major problem caused by seasonal migration. In such cases, children living in the brick kilns often have a hard time in getting admitted to the local government schools because the schools refuse to enroll such children who have missed a part of the curriculum. When the children normally go back to their hometown once the monsoon season begins, admission and continuation of the education year becomes tough. But according to the findings by Sharma & Dangal (2019), the friends, relatives or teachers of the child laborers normally enroll for them or sometimes the school administration accommodates the late enrolment to facilitate their continuation of education.

In order to comprehend the impacts of seasonal migration patterns in industries like the brick industry on the children’s education, it is crucial to examine the correlation between the times of year when the families usually migrate with the academic year. The knowledge regarding the seasonal migration cycle provides a clear understanding about the impacts of seasonal migration on the children’s education. The Figure 3 has been extracted from the study “Distress Seasonal Migration and its Impact on Children’s Education” by CREATE (2008) explains the overlap of the seasonal migration cycle with the school calendar. The chart suggests that the children go to school from June until November, which is the productive season and after which, they drop out during the monsoon season. This might not be entirely true in the case of Nepal, but it does help to paint a brief image on correlation between the migration period and academic school year.

Figure 3: Overlap of the migration cycle with school calendar



Source: (CREATE, 2008)

To provide further evidence and relate according to the context of Nepal, the findings from Sharma and Dangal (2019) indicate that the families (study participants in the study) typically migrate to the brick kiln (specifically in the sampled brick kiln located in Bhaktapur district) after celebrating the two major festivals i.e., Dashain and Tihar. On the Nepali calendar, Tihar usually concludes by mid-November. Therefore, it can be inferred that families generally migrate around November-December.

Moreover, Sharma and Dangal (2019) points out that the child laborers in the sampled study area typically start working in the brick kilns after the final exam in the academic session gets over i.e. from March until July, which provides information regarding when the new academic session starts in Nepal. The indication on the involvement of child laborers in the brick kiln from March to July provides an understanding of how the brick kilns affect negatively on the children's education during the first few months of the new academic year. When the monsoon starts around June-July and the weather is not favorable to accommodate the brick making that is when the study by Sharma & Dangal (2019) states that the children stop working in the kiln.

Not only do there persist negative effects on the education of the migrant children, but there also exists difficulties in providing educational interventions to them due to the uncertainty and migratory movement of the work. CREATE (2008) pointed out the exclusionary practices faced by migrant children in school and community as they are often viewed as outsiders. Moreover, the study also specified that due to the nature of the parents' labor patterns and constant mobility, the children become untraceable and as a result, the study further suggested the failure and inability of the alternative schools (innovative and flexible schooling) in such situations.

The significance of educational interventions extends beyond. Besides being a fundamental human right, education is also a key contributor to eliminating child labor. Many interventions that have been designed and implemented for the welfare of children in the brick kilns place educational programs at its core (Larmar, O'Leary , Chui, Benfer, & Zug, 2017). In addition, the findings of the study by Daly, Hillis, Shrestha, & Shrestha (2021) presented that it is crucial to utilize educational interventions as a means to put an end to the cycle of child labor. Such interventions are essential in facilitating children's access to education and alleviating the excessive demands of household chores or informal employment that they undertake to assist with their family's finances.

2.5.1. Access to education and participation

Access to - and participation in education may appear to have similar connotations but they possess somewhat distinct yet coherent meanings. The School Education Sector Plan 2022/23-2031/32 explains access to education involves removing barriers that prevent school-age children from enrolling in school and participation in education as creating opportunities for enrolled children to actively engage in the social and educational aspects of the school, also comprising of providing a safe and nurturing environment where children feel secure and free from harm. Only ensuring access to education will not benefit the children and nation as whole, meaningful participation is a key factor in unlocking the potential of all children, consequently fulfilling the purpose of education.

The access to and participation of all children is one of the key activities identified and formulated in the School Education Sector Plan 2022/23-2031/32 in order to achieve its vision and goal. The activities planned are meant to be implemented nation-wide and hence, these activities are relevant to the government schools around the brick kilns too. Moreover, the key strategies in the very first objective “to ensure equitable and access to- and participation in a full school education cycle for all children, including those from social- and economically disadvantaged groups and children with disabilities”, include school mapping to ensure access to formal education for those who are not able to, such as the children living in remote areas or from seasonally migrating families.

2.5.2. Resources and interventions available for the education of migrant workers’ children

As pointed out by CREATE (2008), the nature of the parents’ labor patterns and practice of seasonal migration, the children become hard to reach and hence, are easily left behind by the standard system interventions of the education system. Nepal-based evidence of such has been provided in the study by Daly, Hillis, Shrestha, & Shrestha (2021) discussed the challenges in terms of tracking children and providing support to families because of the migratory nature of families, characterized by seasonal and transitory movement. Further challenges are mentioned regarding the time constraints of project-based interventions carried out by NGOs. However, even though the educational interventions and resources available may be limited, they still hold value compared to having no support at all. In the context of Nepal, the school education of children who seasonally migrate have been included. One of the key strategies aligned with the first objective (the same as mentioned in 2.5.1.) aims to ensure equal access and participation in a complete educational cycle for all children, including those from socially and economically disadvantaged

backgrounds and children with disabilities. This involves the provision of alternative learning programs for children who are unable to access formal education due to seasonal migration in their families.

Furthermore, the fourth objective “to strengthen alternative pathways of education and their linkage to formal education or accreditation of skills, ensuring all adolescents leave the system with life skills and able to pursue further education and lifelong learning”, also appears to address the educational issues of children who migrate seasonally and have been left out of the formal education system. The key strategies under this objective seems to have been focused and dedicated on providing the children who have not been able to access formal schooling can receive other alternatives to education. These strategies include:

1. Providing opportunities to all youth and adults to acquire basic and functional literacy skills through various means.
2. Expanding access to non-formal education and lifelong learning opportunities through the equitable distribution and capacity enhancement of community learning centers to promote income generation, social transformation, and sustainable development of local communities.
3. Establishing institutional and legal frameworks to implement a system of testing, accrediting, determining equivalence of knowledge and skills acquired from various mediums of learning (informal, non-formal and formal) as per the GoN’s National Qualifications Framework.²

These strategies can be beneficial for all children including those who are especially out of formal education, for instance, children from brick kilns who have not been enrolled in school due to the nature of their parents’ work and seasonal migration.

The School Education Sector Plan 2022/23-2031/32 is part of the Government’s plan to incorporate all children, irrespective of their socio-economic backgrounds, into the education system which ultimately contributes to the long-term goal of ensuring inclusive access to quality education for all children in Nepal.

Apart from this, the non-governmental sector also has been actively engaged to uplift the educational condition of children living (and working) in the brick kilns of Nepal. The study by

² The strategies mentioned have been extracted directly from the School Education Sector Plan 2022/23-2031/32

Larmar, O'Leary , Chui, Benfer, & Zug (2017) used the method that included the review of the literatures outlining intervention for children working in brick kilns in Nepal. A total of 16 interventions were identified which target children working in the brick kilns in Nepal or South Asia. Out of 16, 5 interventions were identified for children working in brick kilns in Nepal and 6 interventions targeted towards addressing other forms of hazardous labor in Nepal. The brick kiln interventions in Nepal as identified in the study include CONCERN (n = 1500 – 5 brick kilns), Non-Formal Education Classes ran by NGOs (n = 43 – 5 brick kilns), Brighter Futures by World Education (n = 1000), Naya Bato Naya Paila by World Education (n = 1879) and Child Development Program by Care and Development Organization (n = 7 factories). In addition to this, interventions addressing other forms of hazardous labor in Nepal are Strengthening Systems Approach by UNICEF, Out of School Program by UNICEF, Sustainable Elimination of Child Bonded Labour in Nepal by International Labour Organisation, The Time Bound Programs by International Labour Organisation, the School Incentives for Carpet Factory Workers (n = 660) and Non-Formal Primary Education Program by Nepal Ministry of Education (Larmar, O'Leary , Chui, Benfer, & Zug, 2017).

All of these interventions have emphasis on educational programs at the center, through which it can be assumed that educational programs are of utmost significance in order to uplift the lives of children in scenarios such as in the brick industry itself.

Besides these aforementioned interventions, a three-year program “Protection of the children working in brick kilns in Nepal 2013-2016” funded by Save the Children and Comic Relief has also provided outstanding education support to children. A total of 647 children (319 girls) in the brick kilns premises of Bhaktapur have benefitted from daycare centers, where they receive nutritious food, access to learning opportunities, and a safe and protected environment. These daycare centers have benefitted 15 brick kilns, providing valuable support to the children and their families. Apart from these, other interventions such as Better Brick Nepal (BBN) and Bridge Schools Programme (BSP) by Global Fairness Initiative Nepal and Samrakshan (Protection of Children in Dangerous and Exploitative Child Labor) by Terre des Homme have been completed on time that particularly targeted the children in brick kilns.

Further evidences of educational interventions and resources have been included in the study by Sharma & Dangal (2019). The findings of the study discovered the existence of NGO-operated daycare centres catering to children under the age of 5 and specialized classes in subjects like math, science and English for older child laborers enrolled in school.

Considering that the interventions and resources mentioned above primarily target child laborers in brick kilns or other seasonal informal work, it is crucial to acknowledge that the current scenarios and circumstances may have resulted in notable changes in the nature of available interventions and resources. Therefore, this theme of the study is dedicated towards examining the actual interventions and resources that exist which cater the children of the selected brick kiln, working or otherwise.

2.5.3. Barriers and challenges to education faced by brick workers' children

Very few literatures exist that presents the challenges and barriers associated to education of children of brick kiln workers. In the study by Daly, Hillis, Shrestha, & Shrestha (2021), it has been noted that a prominent challenge concerning the continuity of children's education across formal and non-formal settings is the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition to this, the authors highlight poverty as a significant factor driving migration for employment in brick kilns while the major barrier to ensuring continuation of children's education is the poor quality and low parental perceptions of the value of education.

Furthermore, the Report on Employment Relationship Survey in the Brick Industry in Nepal by ILO, UNICEF, CBS (2020) presents a striking portrayal of the state of education of working children (in brick industry) in Nepal. The survey discovered that mere one in 10 working children (11.1%) attends school or kindergarten whereas 34.3% of non-working children go to school³. This helps to interpret that child labor is one of the most significant challenges to education of children, persisting even to this day and age. Additionally, the report mentions family's financial status as a major factor in children's education, which deprive the children of buying books or other educational materials.

These factors have substantial effects on the enrolment, academic performance, retention and drop-out in education of seasonal migrant children. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and barriers in education, this theme will attempt to explore on the mentioned aspects in detail.

³ The total sample population of working children in the survey in Report on Employment Relationship Survey in the Brick Industry in Nepal, n= 17,738

2.5.4. Children’s perception and understanding

The voices of children and youth normally go unnoticed and unheard in research methodologies, as pointed out in the study by Daly, Hillis, Shrestha, & Shrestha (2021). It was also agreed upon in the study “Bricks in the Wall: A Review of the Issues That Affect Children of In-Country Seasonal Migrant Workers in the Brick Kilns of Nepal”. The study emphasized that there is a strong need to delve into the perspectives of young individuals concerning their own protection, rights, and their understanding of the impacts of brick kilns on their physical and psychosocial well-being, education, and participation and future prospects. Hence, engaging children under the age of 18 remains important so as to bring in their perspectives into the mainstream research methodology which can eventually contribute to the larger goal of sustainable community education. In an effort to address these gaps, the research framework for this study has made an attempt to involve children below 18 years.

The major gap in existing literature is the lack of enough studies that focus primarily on the educational impact of migration in brick kilns. The impacts of brick kilns on education have mostly been included as part of the research findings. The article “Bricks in the Wall: A Review of the Issues that Affect Children of In-country Seasonal Migrant Workers in the Brick Kilns of Nepal” points out 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” (Daly, Hillis, Shrestha, & Shrestha, 2020). Many other studies have mentioned the gaps in the current scientific knowledge regarding the isolation of children living in brick kilns from the research methodology and therefore, to address this matter, the study namely “Children’s Migration to Brick Kilns in Nepal: A Review of Educational Interventions and Stakeholder Responses to Child Labour” suggests that for future research, centrality of youth and child voice in research methodology to understand their educational experiences and perspectives (Daly, Hillis, Shrestha, & Shrestha, 2021).

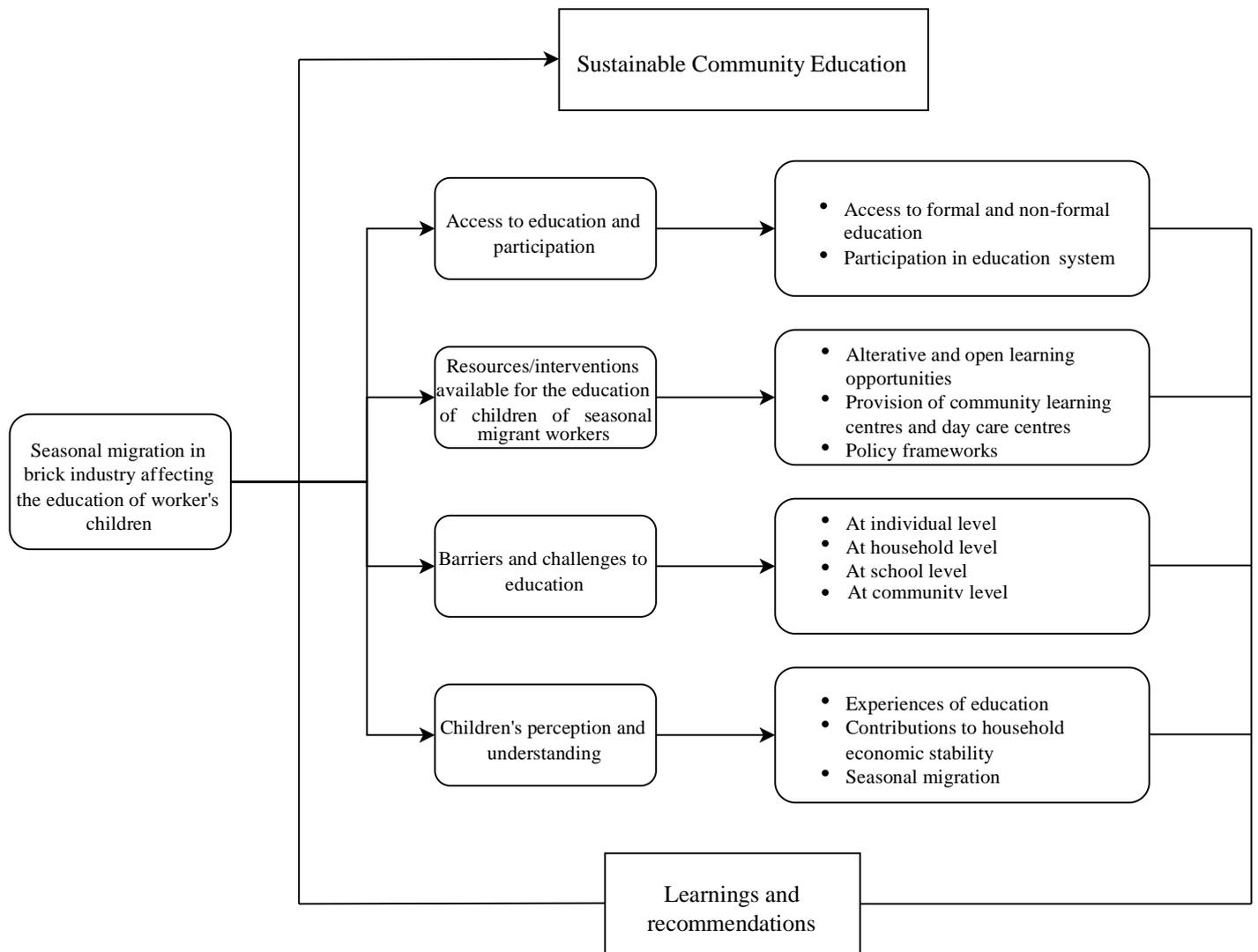
2.6. Conceptual framework

The Figure 4 presents the conceptual framework for the study which summarizes the primary idea given forward by the literature review. The four main themes that help to gain understanding on the problem of the effect of seasonal migration in brick industry on the education of worker’s children are: access to- and participation in education, interventions/resources available for the education of children of seasonal migrant workers, barriers and challenges to education and

children's perception and understanding. These variables/themes have been sought and considered through desk review, which are further divided into sub-themes to specify areas of inquiry for the study.

The understanding and findings obtained around these themes and sub-themes will later generate lessons learned and recommendations, which will ultimately contribute to the building greater knowledge about the larger picture i.e., sustainable community education.

Figure 4: Conceptual framework of the study



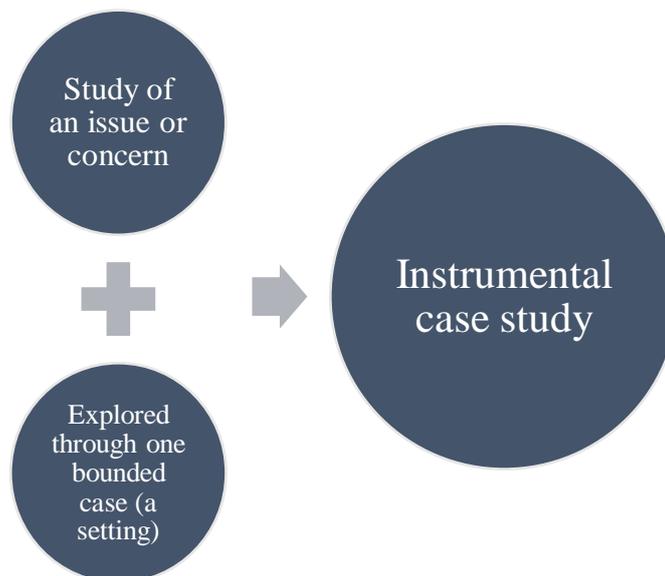
Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The approach undertaken by this study was aimed at generating in-depth understanding regarding the educational status of the children of migrant brick workers. It also intended to study the relationship between seasonal migration and the education of the workers' children.

3.1 Research design

This study employed a qualitative case study research design to ensure robust understanding of the subject matter. Case study research consists of the study of an issue within a bounded system, which can be a setting, a context, or an event. Case study approach was adopted as a strategy of inquiry to explore a specific issue and location through detailed and in-depth collection of data. To further specify, an instrumental case study was opted as a research strategy for inquiry which emphasizes on a single issue or concern through the selection of one bounded case (study site) to explore the issue. The instrumental case study research design is especially well-suited for this study due to its ability to generate data that allows and ensure a comprehensive and in-depth investigation, aligning perfectly with the study's objectives.

Figure 5: Design of the study



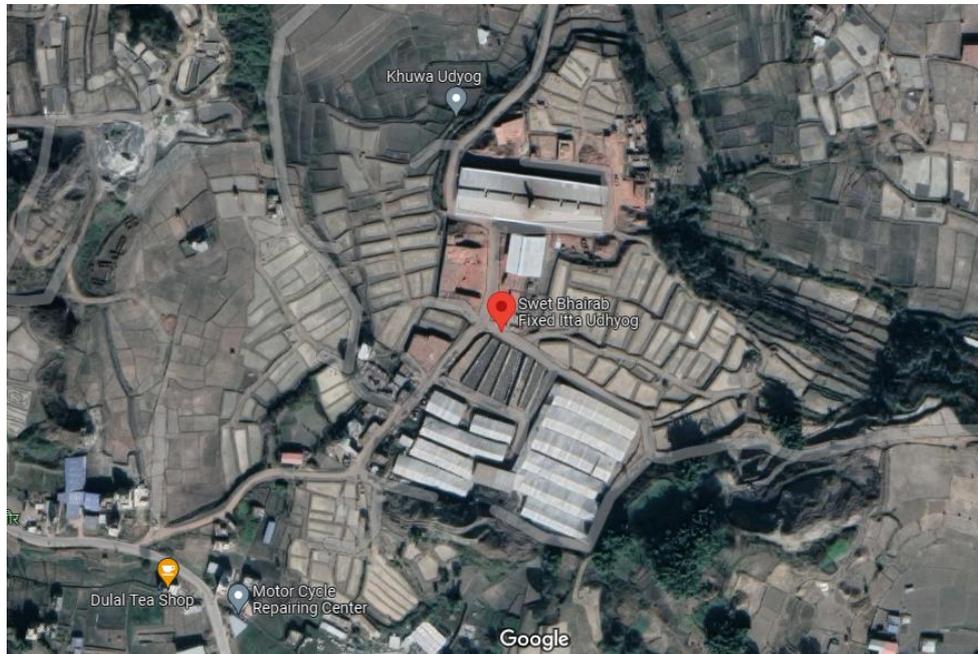
Furthermore, the study used the triangulation method through the collection of data from various primary sources to ensure validity and reliability of the findings obtained.

3.2 Study site

For the study, the pre-identified site in the study “*Interdisciplinary investigation of social problem contexts for better solutions in the built environment: toward comprehensive sustainable*

development solutions” i.e., Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory in Bhaktapur district was chosen as the study site.

Figure 6: Geographical area of the selected brick kiln



Source: Google Maps

3.2.1. Background of the study site

Located in Tathali, Bhaktapur, about 3.6 kilometers from Arniko Highway in Jagati, Shwet Bhairav Brick Kiln is one of the most significant kilns among 63 registered brick factories in Bhaktapur district. Owned by five people who are related, the brick kiln expands in a staggering 24.42-25.44 hectare (480-500 ropani) of land. Out of the total land covered, around 4.07-4.58 hectare (80-90 ropani) of land is ancestral land, owned by the shareholders i.e. the owners themselves. The remaining land is either leased for a full year or for 6 months, depending on the type of land. The land where roads lie is leased for the whole year whereas other land which are not of great utilization value during off-season is usually leased for half a year. These lands are then used for agricultural purposes by the landlords themselves.

During the dry season, this particular kiln has the capacity to produce approximately 100,000 – 125,000 bricks daily due to its expansive land area. The kiln produces two types of bricks, labeled as number 1 and number 2, which are characterized by the level of strength. The bricks produced by this kiln primarily cater to customers in Bhaktapur and Kathmandu, while Lalitpur district is

not much served because of the distance and presence of substantial number of kilns in Lalitpur. The manufacturing operation every year normally gets shut by Jestha 10, as prescribed by Bhaktapur Brick Industry Association.

Similar to other kilns, the productive season in this kiln also begins around November, after the main festivities in Nepal are over, and continues until May, just before the onset of monsoon season. This is usually the case, however, if work is available, some workers and their families choose to remain throughout the year. During on-season, this brick kiln accommodates 800-1000 workers and their families from around Nepal. Almost everyone working and living in the brick kilns are migrants and typically, the nature of the migration is seasonal.

3.3 Study population and sample

3.3.1. Study population

The study population for this research consisted of parents and children living in the brick kiln and teachers/head teachers from the public schools in close proximity to the selected kiln. Workers residing in the kiln without their families, especially children, were not included in the study population. According to a rough estimate based on observation, the brick kiln accommodates around 800-1000 workers and their families, among which approximately 700 of them are married and have children. The primary focus was on children of migrant workers working and residing in the brick kiln. However, by including participants from different groups such as parents and teachers/head teachers from nearby schools, the study intended on gathering a diverse perspective on the educational status of the children of migrant brick workers.

3.3.2. Eligibility criteria for each respondent group

The eligibility criteria in this study to be included as the study population, the respondents had to:

1. Children:
 - Either going or not going to educational institution, mostly schools
 - Living in the selected brick kiln with their parents for at least one brick making season
 - Be in-country migrants (seasonal or otherwise)
 - Be of age cohort 5-18 years old
2. Parents:

- Be working or non-working, living in the brick kiln for at least one brick making season
 - Be in-country migrants (seasonal or otherwise)
 - Have children of primary school starting age (5 years)⁴ and older until 18 years old
3. Teachers/ head teachers:
1. Be employed at the public schools attended by the children from the brick kiln

3.3.3. Sampling procedure

Each individual participants from the study population were considered as a sampling unit, which included children, parents and teachers/head teachers from the public school. The consideration of each individual as separate sampling unit was necessary for the sake of inclusion of those individuals in the study and gather a concrete set of data required to deepen understanding on the educational status and challenges of children of migrant brick workers in the selected brick kiln.

Convenience sampling was employed as the sampling strategy for this study. Readily accessible individuals (children and parents) in the selected brick kiln who met the aforementioned eligibility criteria for the study were included in the convenience sample. Due to the nature of the sampling type, the sample size was not predetermined. However, saturation point acted as a determinant for the final sample size; denoting that the data collection would continue until saturation point is reached. Saturation point as a factor for final sample size is relevant to this study because the two respondents' groups (parents and children) possess similar living and working conditions. Certain criteria were used to determine whether the data has been saturated, which are listed below:

- i. If the dataset yields recurring themes
- ii. If there is redundancy of information
- iii. If there is theoretical saturation of data, meaning that no new significant insights can be obtained and does not contribute to the development of new themes or theories

The final sample size for the study has been presented in the Table 2 below, which represents a conceptual saturation point reached during the data collection process.

⁴ World Bank Open Data. (2023). Retrieved July 2, 2023, from <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.AGES?locations=NP>

Table 2: Final sample size

S.N.	Respondents	Sample
1.	In-depth interviews with parents	5
2.	Focus group discussions with children	2 FGDs with 13 participants in total
3.	Key informant interviews with head teachers/teachers	2

3.3.4. Sampling rationale

Convenience sampling type was deemed as a suitable sampling technique for this study for the following reasons:

1. Random selection of the sample was not feasible because of the seasonal nature of work in the brick kiln. The unpredictability of the stay of the workers and their families in the kiln made it difficult to track down the number of the possible respondents who would be living in the kiln during the intended data collection period.
2. Since the data collection period was expected to overlap rainy season, it became utterly tough to pre-identify the potential respondents.
3. Provided that the study consisted of limited resources, time constraints and weather constraints, choosing readily available individuals as a sample was a more cost-effective approach.

3.4 Data collection procedure

3.4.1. Development of data collection tools

The study included qualitative data collection methods such as in-depth interviews (IDIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KIIs) and case stories. Appropriate data collection tools were developed based on the desk review. These tools comprised of guides for IDIs, FGDs and KIIs and probing questions for case story. Along with these, informed consent and assent forms were also developed to ensure consent was received before each interview and case story. Following are the data collection tools explained. All the tools were translated to Nepali language to ease the process of the interviews and to avoid language barrier.

- a) In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide consisting of open-ended questions and divided into sections representing the four themes identified in the conceptual framework. The use of semi-structured open-ended questions were important to yield data answering “what”, “how” and “why” questions. The guide was differentiated into five sections - demographic information, access to – and participation in education, resources and interventions available for children of seasonal migrant workers and families living in brick kiln, barriers and challenges to education of children of seasonal migrant brick workers and families and recommendations. The IDI guide was designed according to the target respondents i.e. working or non-working parents of the brick kiln in order to gather their perspectives and insights regarding their children’s educational status.

b) Focus-group discussion

Focus-group discussions used a pre-designed FGD guide with probing questions in 4 sections – access to - and participation in education, resources and interventions available for children of seasonal migrant workers living in brick kiln, barriers and challenges to education faced by children of seasonal migrant workers and recommendations. The FGD guide was specifically developed targeting the children of the brick kilns, and hence, used questions that were suitable for their understanding and participation. The guide was designed to create an environment for the children to fully express their diverse experiences and perception of education while residing in the brick kiln. FGD was used as a data collection method to gather information from children because one-to-one interviews generally lead the children to feel intimidated or hesitant.

c) Key informant interviews

For key informant interviews, a semi-structured interview guide consisting of questions in each theme identified in the conceptual framework was developed. This guide also used open ended questions and was distinguished into six sections – demographic information, background information of the school, access to – and participation in education, resources and interventions available for children of seasonal migrant workers living in brick kiln, barriers and challenges to education faced by children of seasonal migrant workers and recommendations.

The KII, IDI and FGD guidelines have been attached in the Section 8 Appendix later in the document.

d) Case stories

A brief set of probing questions were designed to collect relevant information from the respondents. No rigid guidelines were developed, instead, the questions were designed to be straightforward, encouraging the respondents (children) to openly share their information and insights.

3.4.2. Inception site visit and pre-test

Inception site visit was done prior to data collection which also intended to pre-test the data collection tools to be used in the brick kiln. This visit was also deemed necessary to gather important information for the data collection. This information includes the tentative number of remaining families at the kiln and the background and context on the kiln. The visit was also essential to familiarize with the people who could be potential respondents in the study and get acquainted with the people in the kiln.

Pre-testing was conducted to test the data collection instruments whereas the piloting was done to check for any challenges and hindrances during the entire data collection process. On the site visit, the IDI guide for parents was pre-tested with a non-working parent, which provided insights regarding the reliability and usefulness of the tool. The flow of the questions, the comprehensibility of the questions, number of questions, etc. were checked and any modifications to the tool was made after the pre-test. The ability to answer the open-ended questions were checked during the pre-test.

The piloting of the entire data collection process was conducted on the same day to test the data collection procedures, selection of the possible respondents and logistics. Piloting helped to identify any operational challenges that may arise during the actual data collection period. The pre-testing and piloting were effective in strengthening and refining the data collection instruments and the entire process.

3.4.3. Fieldwork for data collection

The data collection field work was carried out during the second week of June. The fieldwork encompassed two settings – the selected brick kiln and the schools attended by the children of the brick kiln. This was done in two stages: initially, IDIs and FGDs were conducted at the brick kiln and based on the responses of the parents and children during the first stage, the second stage involved conducting KIIs at the schools attended by the children. The schools were not pre-identified since the specific schools attended by the children were not known beforehand. Thus,

the schools were selected for KIIs with head teachers based on the information collected from the parents and children during the first stage of data collection.

Prior to the data collection process at the brick kiln, permission was sought from one of the owners of Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory to ensure seamless data collection process. The permission aided to conveniently visit the site at any time during the scheduled data collection dates without any interruptions from the employees stationed at the gate of the brick kiln.

Since convenience sampling was used for data collection, respondents were identified based on their eligibility and availability. Individuals who were readily available at the time of interviews were initially communicated informally to determine their eligibility for the study. The individuals were considered available if they were not working at the time of the interviews, was not engaged with any work-related or household-related chores or were not employed at the kiln. For focus group discussions, the parents who were interviewed previously were asked if their children can participate in the discussion. Besides that, children for FGDs were also assembled with the help of one of the owners, who instructed and requested the workers and their families to convince their children to participate.

Only when eligibility was confirmed, the respondents were briefed about the study, its background, significance and objectives. The IDIs were conducted using the IDI guides developed prior. Informed consent was sought from the respondents. The in-depth interviews were recorded on a cell phone only after receiving the consent from the respondents for the recording. The interview time were on average of 16 minutes. Handwritten notes were also taken as much as possible in case the recordings went missing or did not work. The notes were taken for important and relevant points and non-audible occurrences. A total of 5 in-depth interviews were conducted with working or non-working parents of the children at the brick kiln. The details of the respondents in in-depth interviews are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Respondents in In-Depth Interviews

S.N.	Respondents for IDIs identified using convenience sampling	Sample
1.	Male	3
2.	Female	2
	Total	5

Focus-group discussions were conducted among the children of the eligible age group using a pre-designed FGD guide with probing questions in 4 sections. A total of 2 FGDs were carried out, an

average of 35 minutes. Both FGDs were given codes as FGD 01 and FGD 02. The FGDs were conducted in the common space between the temporary housing units of the families. Their participation was confirmed after their parents provided verbal consent. The children were briefed about the study in simple language without incomprehensible details. The consent for the recording was also sought from the parents of the children. Each participant in the FGD was assigned a respective code name (P1, P2...) to ensure confidentiality and the handwritten notes were taken for each of the participant who responded. Nevertheless, their necessary attributes were also recorded in a separate participation sheet, which the participants were asked to fill themselves and sign, confirming their voluntary participation in the study.

It is important to note that the facilitator also had the role of taking handwritten notes which occasionally resulted in brief pauses and interruptions in the flow of the discussions. The details of the participants in the FGD are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Respondents in Focus Group Discussions

S.N.	Participants in FGDs	Male	Female
1.	FGD 01	7	2
2.	FGD 02	-	4
	Total	7	6

One of the FGDs only included female respondents to explore gender-specific experiences and challenges and to ensure diversity and inclusion of girls living in the brick kiln. This allowed to capture a more comprehensive understanding of their unique experiences in accessing and participating in education.

The FGDs were also crucial to select the protagonists for the case stories. One participant from each FGD was selected on their ability to respond to questions, openly share their stories and experiences and conceptualize their understanding. A total of 2 case stories were covered, featuring one adolescent girl and one adolescent boy, both under the age of 18. Informed consent was sought through written consent forms. The case stories were recorded with consent and handwritten notes were taken. The set of predesigned probing questions was used to explore their understanding, perception and experiences of education.

The IDIs with parents and FGDs with children revealed the schools the children attended to, and therefore, key informant interviews were scheduled to be conducted on the following day. The two schools were located 700 meters and 1.8 kilometers from Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory respectively. Before visiting the schools, appointment was made with the head teachers through phone calls during when a brief background of the study was also provided. In case the head teachers were not present on the interview day, the alternative plan was to get interviews with the teachers. Nonetheless, the head teachers from both schools were pre-informed about the visit and their available time for the interview was noted.

The KIIs with both the head teachers were conducted on the same day using the semi-structured interview guide prepared beforehand. They head teachers were given a briefing about the study before being asked to confirm their voluntary participation. They were provided with a participation sheet and requested to fill in their details and sign it as a form of informed consent. The interviews were only recorded after receiving their consent. Along with this, handwritten notes were also kept. The average interview time was 50 minutes.

3.5 Data analysis

The in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were recorded digitally. Each recording was organized and stored on a personal Google Drive to restrict access to anyone else besides the researcher and to maintain safety and confidentiality of the data, and later transcribed and translated to produce raw set of data. The data was analyzed manually using thematic analysis. During the first phase of analysis, the raw data from each respondent group was categorized thematically as per required and similar responses were kept under the same subheading. In the second phase of analysis, the responses from each respondent group were compiled and the similar subheadings were combined to further integrate two or more subheadings into one major subhead.

The validity and reliability of the results were ensured through triangulation of the data gathered from in-depth interviews with parents, focus group discussions with children and key-informant interviews with the principals of the schools attended by the children.

The data were interpreted based on the themes of the subheadings categorized. Appropriate verbatim/quotes from the respondents were incorporated in the findings as per required.

3.6 Ethical considerations

The study adhered to the following ethical considerations to ensure the protection and well-being of the participation:

1. Informed consent

Informed consent was sought from the respondents of the study which requires them to be well informed and have understood about the study so that they can make an informed decision whether they want to participant in the study. Before the interviews, the parents and teachers were explained about the objectives and background of the study. They were informed that they would not have any direct benefits after their participation. They were informed about their right to not answer or withdraw their consent at any time. It was ensured that the information was given to them in Nepali language and in comprehensible manner to those who did not understand research jargons. Participants were provided with the chance to seek clarification and ask for concerns regarding the study.

In case of the children, their parents were asked for the permission for their participation and assent was sought for their anticipation by signing a participation sheet, depending on their respective age and maturity level.

2. Voluntary participation

The participants were provided with the autonomy to withdraw from the study at any point without any negative consequences. They were not subjected to any sort of pressure or coercion to participate in the study and were given the choice to make their own decision about participating. They were provided with the choice to opt out of the study whenever they want to without any repercussions.

3. Respect and dignity

The respect and dignity of all participants were ensured throughout the study. Their autonomy to participate or not to participate in the study was respected. Use of language choices during the interviews intended to uphold their respect and dignity, while the use of degrading and disrespectful language was strictly avoided. Their opinions and experiences were valued and they were acknowledged without judgment and discrimination.

4. Anonymity and confidentiality

Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained. The attributes of participants were linked to certain code names to protect their privacy. The data was stored securely and was not shared to anyone except the researcher. The recordings of the interviews were kept until the final report was submitted. Any identifying trait of the participants were not used to reveal their identity.

5. No harm

The participants were not submitted to any harm whatsoever during the study – the harm include psychological harm, social harm, and physical harm. It was also ensured that their participation in the study did not interrupt with their work, which could result in social harm.

6. Protection of vulnerable participants

Since the study also included children, utmost priority was given to protect the well-being of the children. Hence, their informed assent along with parent consent was obtained. While conducting FGDs with the children, they were assured that the information they provided would not be used outside of the interview setting as they were concerned that the information would be used against them in school. They were assured that they were in a safe environment to put forward their opinions and experiences and their responses would not result in any negative consequences at their home, the brick kiln and their school.

7. Results communication

To maintain ethical integrity of the study, plagiarism and research misconducts were strictly avoided. This included strict adherence to the academic research integrity guidelines and ethical research practices. The research misconduct includes of fabricating, exaggerating, falsifying, manipulating or misrepresenting results in the research report. To ensure credibility, integrity and reliability of the research, intellectual honesty and transparency was upheld to the highest standards possible.

Chapter 4: Findings

Summary of findings

Migration status

Previous studies suggested that brick workers in the selected kiln were typically seasonal migrants. However, the data collected from the parents and children revealed that not all of them strictly fit this definition. While some of the families opted to stay in the kiln post-brickmaking season, whereas others permanently returned to their hometowns with no intention of returning to the same kiln for the next season. In addition, some families demonstrated uncertainty regarding their migratory status and were unsure of where they would end up.

The parents reported visiting their hometowns during festivals like Dashain and Tihar or after receiving their wages at the end of the brickmaking season. The focus group discussants confirmed that they did not migrate seasonally but only visited their hometowns during festivals. The reasons for not returning during the off-season varied, with some children mentioning the need to continue their studies, while others cited financial constraints and lack of work opportunities in their villages. Despite the challenges and increased cost of living in the city, one child emphasized the importance of staying to pursue their education.

Seasonal migration and dis/continuation of education

The findings suggest that due to the uncertainty surrounding families' migratory status, there is uncertainty regarding the children's education. A notable correlation was observed between seasonal migration and school enrollment, with families who migrated seasonally tending to not send their children to school, while those with enrolled children usually stayed during the off-season. Notably, migration itself may not be the major reason in disrupting children's education, but rather the clear tendency of seasonal migration could be a factor leading to discontinuation or interruptions in education.

Additionally, the principals reported that children from usual brick kilns generally returned to their hometowns after the brickmaking season, leading to dropouts from schools. However, in the case of Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory, where families did not return to their village after the season, the children continued their education throughout the academic year with comparatively lower dropout rates. Finally, the quality of education in Kathmandu valley was cited as a reason for families to stay behind during off-season, as they believed it provided better opportunities for their children's education.

Availability of educational institutions, school enrollment and accessibility

While the parents expressed their limited awareness of educational institutions beyond schools near the kiln area, the principal of one school mentioned the two options for academic pursuits: government-funded public schools and privately-owned schools. Notably, the economically stable long-term migrants opted for privately-owned schools, while economically disadvantaged families chose government-owned public schools. Efforts towards development of vocational education was further shared by the principal. In terms of school enrollment, fortunately, most parents found it to be accessible and convenient and not a significant issue.

Some children during focus group discussion expressed to have faced challenges during enrollment due to the lack of proper documentation, especially birth certificates. However, once they obtained their necessary documents, enrollment did not pose as an issue. On the same matter, the principals stated that children from brick kilns can enroll without much hassle, but the lack of proper documents can cause issues.

Children from brick kilns predominantly enroll in government-funded public schools due to economic reasons. The data suggests that public schools are the primary means of education access for these children. To ensure equal educational opportunities, it is essential to optimize existing resources and strengthen government schools.

Children's participation in school

Overall, the findings suggests that the children who were enrolled in the public schools near the kiln were very regular and participating in their respective school. The children were seen to attend school regularly, perform well in their studies, and show interest in learning as well. Moreover, one of the principals even pointed out that the children from the brick kilns are more regular in the school than those who were living as tenants in other areas.

Facilities promoting regularity and meaningful participation of children in school

The parents expressed satisfaction with the facilities provided by the school. During the in-depth interviews, they mentioned various aspects such as books, uniform, midday meal, scholarship, sports and proper class schedule. Along with this, a respondent added the punctuality of the teachers to be a factor in determining the meaningful participation of children in school. The focus group discussions revealed both positive aspects as well as areas for improvement regarding the

facilities and experiences in the schools where the participants attended. While tap availability was reported, concerns were raised about the quality of drinking water. One school had an underutilized library, and additional charges were applied for lunches above grade 6. The children mentioned availability of scholarships, especially for economically disadvantaged and academically talented students. Moreover, various Extra-Curricular Activities (ECAs) such as sports like kabaddi, volleyball, football, taekwondo, running, scout and dance were reported to be available along with field visits.

One of the participants appreciated the teachers' effective teaching methods. Furthermore, it was reported that the schools were conscious of providing girl-friendly facilities. Separate toilets were available for girls and were equipped with proper WASH amenities.

Both principals noted the importance of mid-day meals, sharing that one school provided free midday meal from pre-primary to Grade 6, the other respondent clarified that all students from pre-primary to Grade 7 received midday meals. Other facilities mentioned by the principals included provision of government-issued books, scholarships, qualified teachers, ECA, field visits, emphasis on practical learning, computer labs, and earthquake-resilient buildings.

Contrast between urban and rural schools

Some parents reported that their children found the schools in the village and city to be different, with one parent stating that the quality of education in the current school in Bhaktapur was better than the one in their previous school in the village. On the other hand, another parent mentioned the preference to the school in village. However, the majority of the children reported on preferring the school near the kiln in which they are currently attending, citing reasons such as close proximity to the kiln and better quality of education. This data indicates that the higher quality of education provided in the schools is a significant motivating factor for families to continue staying at the selected kiln even after the brick-making season concludes. While this observation appears to apply to this specific kiln in Kathmandu Valley, it should not be generalized to other kilns in different regions of the country, as the quality of education may vary.

Resources and interventions available for educational improvement of children

While most of the parents stated that there were no resources available or known to them for the educational improvement of the children of brick workers, one of the respondents mentioned that there is a childcare center named as "*shishu syahar*" established by the brick kiln owners for the

children of the brick workers. In this regard, the principals responded that there are no targeted resources for the educational improvement of the children of the brick workers, with one of them indicating uncertainty about the existence of “*shishu syahar*” and the other principal replying that the community hall has also been providing learning opportunities to the children of the brick kiln. Apart from these, it was reported that no other resources and interventions were currently in implementation

Additional support or packages provided

The parents mostly reported that no additional support or packages were provided to them except for relief food items distributed during COVID-19 lockdown, which was confirmed by the children during focus group discussions and one of the key informants. The principals highlighted that support specifically designated to children of brick workers did not exist, but both the schools had their own separate mechanism to provide scholarships to the children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Gender impact on education

The focus group discussants asserted that their parents are supportive of their education and did not impose any gender-related restrictions in their education.

Perception of parents regarding education

The children during focus group discussions concurred that their parents placed high value on their education even though they reported their parents not being educated as much, which illustrated a positive perception towards education.

Barriers and challenges

➤ Migration as a challenge to children’s education

While most of the parents reported that their children might have difficulties in coping with the frequent changes in the learning environment and teaching method, one respondent shared that migrating along with the whole family made it convenient for everyone and therefore, they did not have challenges caused due to migration. Initially the children during the focus group discussions did not recall any challenges caused by migration, however, later they reported that they faced language leading to difficulties in understanding the subjects taught in English medium. Moreover, they reported difficulty in understanding English and Math along with issues of fast-paced teaching

methods and the use of corporal punishment. In regards to the living conditions, the children implied experiencing backaches while sitting on the floor to do homework, negatively affecting their handwriting and having headaches during summer due to the tin roof.

➤ **Barriers and challenges: the principals' perspective**

While one of the principals highlighted weak economic status, the misuse of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and child marriage as significant challenges, the other principal reported that parental negligence, lack of importance placed on children's education, and substance/alcohol abuse as major obstacles. The former principal mentioned that families migrating to the city generally come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds which often lead to failure in prioritizing their children's education despite their children's efforts. Child marriage was also pointed as one of the challenges, often creating a barrier for girls. The latter respondent emphasized that labor migrants, including teenagers who arrive at the kiln on their own, get involved in substance/alcohol abuse often influencing the children already present at the kiln. In addition, the respondent emphasized challenges in parental responsibilities due to difficulty in balancing work and taking care of children. At the school level, negative language was a concern, but it was not reported as discrimination. In the community, one respondent pointed out that discrimination is correlated with the financial status of people.

➤ **Child labor and direct impact of brickmaking on academic performance and physical well-being**

Although the parents did not directly disclose the matter of child labor in the selected kiln, the principals from the schools in which the children attended to offered insights to the matter. Both principals confirmed witnessing child labor in the brick kilns, even though not specifically in Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory. Negative impacts were pointed out by the principals, which included hindrances in academics, physical turmoil, sleep deprivation, laziness and reduced concentration in the classroom, irregular attendance, and in some cases, complete disengagement of children from school.

One principal pointed out the involvement of children studying in Grade 9 and 10 in bricklaying activities. On the other hand, the other respondent cited that the earliest age at which involvement of children in assisting their parent starts is at 2 years old, although their involvement is limited to assisting their parents to carry the bricks around.

Not all children explicitly mentioned child labor, with only one participant sharing their own involvement in brickmaking. The participant reported being involved in laying the bricks before and after school hours during brickmaking season to assist the father in his work. The participant responded that their primary motivation for engaging in bricklaying is to earn money, and they often sacrifice their sleep and study time to help their parents with the labor.

➤ **Involvement in household chores and its impact on academic performance and physical well-being**

The children interviewed during the focus group discussions revealed on contributing their time towards household responsibilities, which reported on affecting their study time as some of the children stated on completing their homework only after helping with household chores. This was later confirmed as one of the significant challenges hindering the children's academic performance by the principals. They reported that children's responsibility of taking care of their siblings is an obligation stemming from their parents' occupation at the kiln. Other negative implications reported were lack of physical rest, lack of consumption of nutritious food, lack of sleep, laziness, reduced concentration in class, sickness, and irregular attendance and so on.

➤ **Reasons for involvement of children in brickmaking and household chores**

Both principals asserted that carelessness and ignorance of the parents are significant problems. One of the principals ascribed the reason of involvement of children in brickmaking to be the illiteracy of parents, demotivation caused by the unemployment rate in the country and the environmental factors of their hometowns.

➤ **Impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the children's education**

During the COVID-19 lockdown, the lack of access to resources such as ICT of the parents and children made it difficult to continue the online teaching pursuit. To address this, the school had to adapt to face-to-face approach by conducting classes with social distancing, distributing worksheets to the students, and at some times, even deliver those worksheets to the children at home. The participants during the focus group discussions mentioned that during the lockdown, schools were closed and online classes were conducted but lack of access to phones or other devices to attend online classes disrupted their studies. The children pointed out that there was no internet access in their home and at the kiln, further hindering their ability to continue their education during the lockdown period.

➤ **Barriers and challenges faced by the parents**

Most parents participating in the in-depth interviews pointed out that their children face no challenges or barriers due to their work and living conditions. Their opinions varied regarding their economic situation and its potential impact. One parent believed their income was sufficient and didn't hinder their children's education, while another expressed concerns that their children's involvement in brickmaking due to economic hardship negatively affects them. When questioned about their children's involvement in household chores affecting their education, one respondent explained that their children don't assist with chores due to their incapability.

Conversely, when parents were asked to share their children's perspectives on individual-level challenges, most either believed their children faced no issues or were unaware of them. However, a single parent acknowledged the difficulty of balancing work and childcare responsibilities. While many parents were unaware of their children's barriers, one respondent pinpointed household-level challenges stemming from inadequate school supplies such as stationeries, uniform, etc.

Regarding community-level barriers, most parents reported no challenges or differential treatment due to their work at the kiln. Some mentioned the negligible impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

➤ **Deprivation of opportunities**

The parents were of the belief that there are not any deprivations caused by their work in the kiln as some reported their work being an obligation and compulsion and therefore, deprivation is out of equation. One parent connected their children's education continuity with their work at the kiln and so there are no deprivation of opportunities because they chose to stay in the kiln even after the season ended for the sake of their children's learning continuity.

Efforts towards improving the lives of the children

The principals noted that there were efforts dedicated towards improving the lives of the children in Changunarayan municipality. These efforts include research conducted about the children working in brick kilns, meetings conducted for the working children and migrant out-of-school children, awareness provided to the parents working in brick kilns and financial assistance provided to the girls of the municipality. However, a principal pointed out that the efforts are mostly targeted towards children who are originally from Changunarayan municipality. Efforts

targeted towards children of brick workers included of arrangement for childcare and learning opportunities for the children of the brick workers; the arrangement being “*shishu syahar*”.

Resolving challenges and barriers

The parents provided several suggestions, which included offering scholarships, making lunch free of cost in school and providing transportation facilities for the children to commute to school in order to resolve the challenges and barriers. One parent pointed out that establishment of the “*shishu syahar*” (childcare center) within the kiln premises was already in implementation which helped to alleviate the burden of childcare. One of the participants from the focus group discussion stated that education must be made free to ensure more children could get enrolled. Other solutions to the challenges in the education system, as cited by the principals, include proper equitable distribution of resources and investments, maximum distribution of scholarships, merging of schools, updated legal frameworks and increased trust amongst the community members towards government schools, establishing conducive environment for people to do their own business in their hometown to reduce temporary migration, regular monitoring of the educational status of the children by the municipalities, considering the changing demands and interests of the children to attract more children to government schools, shifting the traditional approach which focuses on conventional teaching methods to a more practical approach to earn trust from the community members towards government schools, and so on.

4.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

The study included three respondent groups: children, parents and principals. Among the parents, three were male and two were female aged between 25-34 years. Majority (n=3) of the parents who had either migrated for brickmaking or migrated along with the families and majority (n=8) of the children came from Dang, but there were participants coming from Rolpa, Sindhuli and Sindhupalkchowk.

Table 5: Characteristics of parents and children interviewed

Characteristics of parents interviewed	
Characteristics	Number of parents
Sex	
Female	2
Male	3
Caste/ethnicity	
Brahmin	0
Chettri	0
Janajati	2
Dalit	3
Religious minority	0
Place of origin	
Sindhupalchowk	1
Rolpa	1
Dang	3
Number of members in household	
≤ 3	1
> 3	4
Number of children	
1	1
2	4
More than 2	0
Literacy	
Completed till SLC	0
Not completed SLC	5
Completed till +2	0
Completed till Bachelors/Masters	0
Illiterate	0
Others	0
Employment status	
Full-time employed	4
Part-time employed	0
Seasonally employed	0
Not employed	1
Total number of parents interviewed	5
Characteristics of children interviewed	
Age	
5-10	8
11-18	5
Sex	
Female	6
Male	7
Caste/ethnicity	
Brahmin	0
Chettri	0
Janajati	10

Dalit	3
Religious minority	0
Place of origin	
Dang	8
Sindhuli	3
Rolpa	2
School	
Shree Phaidhokha Basic School	10
Devi Secondary School	3
Grade	
In/Under Grade 5	9
Above Grade 6	4
Total number of children interviewed	13

4.1.1. Profile of principals interviewed

The two principals interviewed were originally from Bhaktapur district. One, aged 59 years old, possessed 34 years of experience in teaching including 15 years of being a principal. The second principal, aged 42, had 16 years of teaching experience, 3 years of which were as the principal. Both were permanently employed as principals in government funded public schools.

4.2 Migration status

All of the parents (n=5) stated that they were uncertain about their migratory status, indicating that they were unsure of whether they were returning to their hometown or staying behind in the kiln after the season got over. Few of the participants further specified that if they decide to go return to their hometown, they do not come to the kiln next season. Otherwise, if they decide to stay at the kiln then they do not consider returning to their hometown.

“There is back and forth movement. It is not certain when we go and come back. We can stay for about 6 months here and then we go back. We come during Poush, and until Jestha.” - R4, Female, 25 years, unemployed, Sindhupalchowk

“There are kilns which operates for 6 months and are closed for another 6 months. But the work continues all year long in this kiln. Here we can send our daughters to school and both my wife and I can work, so we came here. Now, we are thinking of going back to village. We might not come back again. - R1, male, 34 years, employed, Rolpa

Moreover, most of the parents replied they visited their village for few days during festivals like Dashain and Tihar or after their wages are calculated once the brick making season is over.

“When the exams get over in Chaitra and the wages are calculated, all of us go to the village for few days. Most of us the workers go their village once the wages are calculated

and come back before school starts again.” - R4, Female, 25 years, unemployed, Sindhupalchowk –

“We frequently go to visit our village, for about a week or 10 days. Mostly during Dashain and Tihar. It has been 4 years that we have been living here.” - R2, male, 29 years old, employed, Dang

The focus group discussants when inquired about their frequency of migration, seasonal or otherwise, they replied that they did not migrate seasonally. Instead, they only visited their hometowns during festivals. They were further asked about their reason for not returning to their village during off-season, few participants (n=2) implied they have to study here and hence, could not return to their village whereas one participant from the FGD revealed that they did lack the financial means and work to return home.

“We do not migrate every season. It has been 4 years since I came here. We only go home during Dashain. We have not returned to our village because our studies might get disturbed.” – P3, 11 years, Male, Dang, Grade 5, FGD 01

“Only during festivals and when we have some work in the village.” – P1, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

“We do not return because of lack of money and work opportunities.” - P2, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

One of the children replied with the reason to stay back despite the increased cost of living in the city:

“It is costly to stay but we have to study here.” – P1, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

4.3 Seasonal migration and dis/continuation of education

The migratory status of the families creates uncertainty about the education status of the children. When asked about what would happen to the children’s education if the parents decide to return to their village, some of the parents responded that they would permanently return to the village if they decided they want to go back for the sake of the children’s education.

“If we go back then they will study there otherwise if we stay here then they study here. If we go back then we go thinking that we will stay there, for the children’s education. If we decide to stay here, then we do accordingly. I don’t think we will go back. If we decide to go to our village, we will go permanently, otherwise we have to stay back here until the children’s education gets completed. It has been 1 year since we came here. It will be 2 years in Poush.”- R4, Female, 25 years, unemployed, Sindhupalchowk

“The children are studying here. Their studies might be affected so we did not return. We just went to the village for a short 4-5 day visit. If we return back then to the village, their studies might be missed.”- R5, female, 26 years old, employed, Dang

One of the parents who had already decided on returning to the village was asked what the education continuation process looked like. The respondent was certain about continuing his children’s education after returning and informed that there would not be much of a problem for their children to continue their studies.

“The schools ask for the latest academic certificates. They take interviews to know what the level of their learning. Getting certificates are not really a problem. So, there are not such issues to continue their education. I have already called a teacher from the school back in our village. He had informed me that admission is possible because the curriculum has not been much covered.” - R1, male, 34 years, employed, Rolpa

Furthermore, the parents were also asked what the case was for other families that had already left for their hometown. Most of the respondents’ replies indicated that there is a strong relation between the decision to stay at the kiln or return home with the decision to enroll their children to school. A respondent pointed out that those who seasonally migrate tend to not send their children to school and those who have enrolled their children to school do not migrate seasonally.

“Those families who do not send their children to school and often migrate seasonally, they go back to their village. And those families whose children have been enrolled in school here, they go to their village for only about 1 week to 10 days. Some families have already come back from their village after they received their wages.” - R4, Female, 25 years, unemployed, Sindhupalchowk However, in some cases, two of the respondents also mentioned that there are few other parents who had enrolled their children to school when they were at the kiln during season, but the respondents were unsure regarding whether the children continue their studies after returning.

“I do not know for sure. Some might have been enrolled and some might have not. Those who stay in village do not stay here. They usually stay in village so all of them have returned. The children have become spoiled as a result of frequent migration. So, we are staying here for our children’s education.” - R5, female, 26 years old, employed, Dang

“Some families stay here for 6 months during season and enroll their children to school, and they return back after the season is over. We do not know much about what they do in regard to their children’s education.” - R2, male, 29 years old, employed, Dang

To further articulate this matter, the principals were inquired about what their education completion looked like in response to seasonal migration of the children and their families. Both principals pointed out that the children from usual brick kilns generally return to their hometowns once the brickmaking season is over. These children when they drop out from the schools do not enroll in the same school in the next academic year. Amongst the two schools under inquiry, the principal of one school mentioned that there are not many children from Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory in the school and hence their status of migration and education is not entirely known. This respondent provided a brief overview regarding how the children from brick kilns usually tend to drop out once the brickmaking season is over.

“They stay until the end of the academic calendar. They finish their final term examination. And after that, they return. In this school, those students do not continue in the new academic year. Some take the mark sheet while some do not even take the mark sheet with them. I do not think we have children from the brick kiln in this school.” - Principal, 59 years, Tathali

While this is the case for most kilns, the other principal pinpointed that in Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory, many families do not return to their village after the season is over and thus, the children keep on continuing their education throughout the academic year. Along with this, the cases of drop-out and discontinuation of education of children coming from Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory is comparatively low than other brick kilns. This understanding is made by the principal because majority of the children from Shwet Bhairav attended his school.

“Usually who seek admissions, they are new. In Shwet Bhairav brick factory, the families mostly do not return to their village once the season is over. The kiln has a policy that they have to work and stay there for a whole year. They are provided with work throughout the entire year. In other kilns, only few families stay in the kiln to work for a whole year. The

chances of families returning back from Shwet Bhairav is very minimal. So, the children coming from Shwet Bhairav brick factory is regular in school throughout the year. The drop-out rate of children from Shwet Bhairav is very low in comparison to children from other brick kilns. From other kilns, those who usually drop-out do not return for the next academic year. Only few return in the next academic year, but mostly once they drop-out to go to their hometown, they do not return to the school anymore.”

The principal further pointed out an interesting insight regarding the status of education in Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory. As per his understanding, majority of the children attended his school. By the time of the interviews, many families had already left for their village. However, the number of students from Shwet Bhairav remained as it is. The fact that there are not any other schools near the selected kiln where the children could have enrolled and as stated by the principal too, it was indicated that those who had returned to their hometowns had not enrolled their children to any schools.

“The children from Shwet Bhairav who drop-out are the ones who permanently move back to their hometowns. The number of children from Shwet Bhairav the school has right now is the same as before. This means that their parents are still staying in Shwet Bhairav. Those who have returned to their village now, it means that they did not enroll their children to the school. We do not have any cases of children who have left the school at this point.” – Principal, Male, 42 years, Tathali

The principal was also asked about the reason for many families to stay behind in the kiln during off-season, upon which he replied that the quality of education is better in Kathmandu valley.

“They stay behind during off-season because the education is good here in Kathmandu valley. They rent rooms and work other jobs during off-season to make a livelihood. They stay here so that their children can become educated.” - Principal, 42 years, Tathali

4.4 Availability of educational institutions, school enrollment and accessibility

Upon asking the parents about the availability of different types of educational institutions located near the kiln area, they expressed their lack of awareness regarding any other educational institutions, apart from schools.

One of the principals, when asked about availability of educational institutions in the area for children of the community, whether migrants or otherwise, informed that they usually have to choose between two options. These options include of accessing government-owned educational institutes such as public schools or privately-owned educational institutions. The principal indicated that the long-term migrants who work in brick kilns opt for the latter option while those who come from economically weak families choose government schools.

“Families who come for brickmaking usually have two options. Most of them focus on accessing government institutions due to their economic status. Few of them who have migrated here for a longer period of time and have stable jobs, they show interest towards boarding (private) educational institutions. Boarding schools as in where certain fees have to be paid. But these families who opt for private institutions are less. Usually families who come here for brickmaking and have migrated here for a long time, they show interest towards private schools. These families work in the kilns during season, and once the season is over, they work in other jobs to generate extra income.” - Principal, 42 years, Tathali

Moreover, the principal elaborated on the school’s efforts towards expanding the teaching methodology to include vocational education:

“This school does not have any non-formal classes. There are no such informal/vocational classes in this municipality. Last year, we had a tour of principals of different schools where we went to school visits in 4 schools outside the district. Vocational education was given in those schools. According to that, since we have appropriate space here, we are currently planning towards providing vocational classes. It is not fixed up to which Grade it will be given. After managing the space here, we are thinking of not taking any classes on Friday, skills development will be focused. I have thought about two skills which can be given – carpentry and agriculture. We have rooms now, so we have been discussing about buying few things related to carpentry.” - Principal, 42 years, Tathali

Majority (n=4) of the parents stated that school enrollment of children was not a significant problem for them. They informed that the schools were easily accessible, which allowed them to enroll their children without any difficulties. Not only that, but a respondent pointed out that along with the schools being accessible and convenient for enrollment, the quality of education in the school was better than the one their children attended in the village.

“Accessing school was not very difficult. My children are studying in the same school they first enrolled in after we came here.” - R2, male, 29 years old, employed, Dang

“It was easy, to get admission. The studies are better here than the village too. - R5, female, 26 years old, employed, Dang

“It was not difficult to enroll my son to the school here.” - R3, male, 28 years old, employed, Dang

In addition to this, a respondent even shared how the teachers from the school would visit the brick kiln to ensure that the children were enrolled in school. The teachers not only convinced the parents to enroll the children, but they also conducted monitoring visits to the kiln to inspect what the children were doing when they were not in school.

“No, accessing the school was not difficult. The teachers from the school had come here in the kiln to tell us that we have to send our children to school. They come here often to see if the children are studying. This might be because the school is near. Sometimes the children come home from school and leave their bags at home and go to play. And so, the teachers come to observe them, usually after 4:00 PM or on holidays.” - R1, male, 34 years, employed, Rolpa

When asked about school enrollment and accessibility to the focus group discussants while some children (n=3) replied they did not encounter any difficulty in accessing and enrolling in the schools, few participants (n=2) expressed facing challenges during enrollment. Upon further questioning, these participants revealed that the lack of a birth certificate caused significant hindrance. One participant even pointed out their mother’s lack of citizenship was the reason for their birth certificate not being made. Additionally, another participant mentioned that the lack of citizenship was not an issue until they migrated to the kiln because it was not deemed necessary in their previous school.

“Yes, it was a bit difficult, because I did not have birth certificate. It was not made before because it was not necessary before. But now, I have birth certificate. My mother did not have citizenship, so my birth certificate was not made.” – P3, 11 years, Male, Dang, Grade 5, FGD 01

“I did not have birth certificate too, now I have. It was not needed in our old school.” – P1, 10 years, Female, Dang, Grade 3, FGD 01

Furthermore, a participant added that because they did not have their birth certificate, they had to go to “*shishu shyahar*” (childcare center) established in the kiln.

“It was difficult to enroll in schools when we came here. Since I did not have birth certificate I went to “shishu shyahar” for 2-3 years. The “shishu shyahar” is a place where the children of the kiln can go and play.” – P1, 10 years, Female, Dang, Grade 3, FGD 01

Nonetheless, the participants assured that they did not face any difficulty while enrolling after they received their birth certificate.

The principals from the selected schools were asked about the state of school enrollment in their respective schools from the children coming from brick kilns. Both respondents stated that children from the brick kilns could get enrolled in their school without much hassle. However, they pointed out that lack of proper documents such as birth certificates and mark sheets of previous schools could cause some issues during the admission process. While one the respondent replied that admission could not be given to those children who do not possess proper documents in their school while the principal of other school informed that the children could still be given admission when their parents become signatories to certain school document. On the case of the former principal, he mentioned that if all the necessary criteria are not fulfilled then the children are referred to other schools nearby.

Both the respondents mentioned informed that an examination would be conducted in the school prior to giving admission to those who have brought their documents with them. This examination is required to check the children’s level of understanding and then they are enrolled in the Grade they fit in.

“The children from brick factories join after Dashain only, so the class (curriculum) do not match. Firstly, they do not bring their birth certificates. They come after Dashain to stay for only about 5-6 months. Our school has three sets of uniform, 1 uniform for 2 days. They are not in the state to afford it..... Some children bring their mark sheets too when they try to enroll. First term examination would have already been over by then. But some do not even bring mark sheet. Only 1-2 books are government books,

rest are all private books. So, books also do not match. Some do not bring birth certificate; they say that they haven't had it made. And therefore, we cannot provide them admission. Only when they have the required documents and after conducting an exam to check for their educational level, they get admission. In some cases, the age of the children would be higher than their expected academic level, so we have to put them in lower classes. But the students of those classes would not accept it. For example, a child would be studying in grade 3 in their village, and after taking the exam and checking for their academic level, the child would be fit only in Grade 1. In such cases, I refer them to other schools near here.” - Principal, 59 years, Tathali

“We ask for the mark sheets of the previous exam they gave. Otherwise, we conduct an examination here. There are issues regarding absence of birth certificates. But we make the parents sign on the document stating their children's date of birth and their overall information about the place of origin, etc. We either require medical vaccination card or the birth certificate.” - Principal, 42 years, Tathali

4.5 Children's participation in school

In addition to ensuring access to educational institutions spanning early childhood development to secondary level education, the children's participation is also paramount as it has been provisioned in the Constitution of Nepal, policies and law as well as SDG 4 “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”.

Upon inquiring the parents about the children's participation in school, all of the respondents mentioned that the children's participation in school is good. They stated that their children attended school regularly and performed well in their studies.

“According to the opinion of children and as far as I know, they say that the studies is good and the teachers are good too. My daughter goes to the scout training in school, on Fridays and even on holidays too.” - R1, male, 34 years, employed, Rolpa

“Their participation is good up till now. The teachers have also said so too.” - R2, male, 29 years old, employed, Dang

“His studies is going good. He goes to school regularly.” - R3, male, 28 years old, employed, Dang

A respondent further stated that their children showed interest in their studies and that the current teaching methodology is significantly better than what was used during her schooling period. She highlighted that the change in teaching method has improved the children's learning abilities too.

“He shows interest in his studies. The school is good. My son does all homework the teacher give him. He has been doing well since the year he joined school. In our times, students of grade 4, 5 could even write and recognize “ka, kha”, “1, 2...” Even when we used to study, the teachers used to pass us from classes when we did not even recognize the letters. The teachers used to promote us to grade 1, 2 even when we did not recognize the letters. But now, the children study well.” - R4, Female, 25 years, unemployed, Sindhupalchowk

The children during the focus group discussions shared that they were very much regular in their school and that their participation is good. Some of the participants mentioned that they only got absent from school when they are sick.

“We do not get absent.” – P1, 10 years, Female, Dang, Grade 3, FGD 01

*“Only times when we get sick we do not attend school but otherwise we are pretty regular.”
– P1, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02*

“Yes, I go to school daily.” – P2, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

In addition, when asked about the reasons for their regularity in school, all the participants in one discussion replied that it is more fun to go to school while in the second discussion, the participants shared that going to school allows them to play with their friends instead of doing household chores.

“When I am at home, I have to do household chores like washing dishes. But when I go to school, I can play with my friends.” – P1, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

“I can play with my friends.” – P2, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

To triangulate the data received from the children and parents, the principals were asked to report on the participation of students from brick kilns, particularly from Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory in particular, in their respective school. As per the information provided by both the principals, Shree

Phaidhokha Basic School had a higher number of students from Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory while Devi Secondary School had fewer than 10 students from the same kiln.

The principal of Shree Phaidhokha Basic School responded that the students from the kiln were more regular compared to those who were migrants and staying as tenants. He attributed the cause of the regular participation to two main factors: frequent parent-teacher meetings and efforts to raise awareness among the owners about the importance of education which eventually led to better productivity of the workers and increased motivation of the parents to send their children to school.

“The students coming from brick kilns are pretty regular to school. Rather, those who are living as tenants after migrating here are not as regular. They are regular because firstly, we frequently call the parents for meetings. Secondly, we oftentimes go to the kiln and talk to the owners to send the children to school instead of keeping them at the kiln. The owners then usually do not let the school-going aged children to stay at the kiln. They motivate the parents to send their children to school. We tell the owners that if there are any children, they should be sent to school. They are aware about it. They know that it affects them too since the parents might not be able to fully dedicate their time to work if their children are around. If they send their children to school then they are free for about 7-8 hours in a day.” - Principal, 42 years, Tathali

“I think we do not have more than 8 students coming from brick kilns in the whole school.” - Principal, 59 years, Tathali

The presented data obtained from the children, parents and principals of the schools attended by the children indicates that the children are in fact regular and participating in the school. The positive participation of children from brick kilns in education exemplifies the progress towards the national goals and aims and consequently to the SDG 4. The finding also highlights the significance of accessible educational institutions for early childhood development and secondary level education. It is also important to note that children’s participation in school is also driven by the motivation to skip their daily routine of contributing to the household chore in the kiln.

4.6 Facilities promoting regularity and meaningful participation of children in school

The parents’ opinion on the facilities provided by school were found to be somewhat satisfactory. The facilities that the respondents mentioned of during the in-depth interviews were provision of books, uniform, midday meal, scholarship, sports and proper class schedule. Most of the parents

mentioned that only 2-3 books were given by the school while the remaining number of books had to be bought by themselves along with uniform.

In terms of midday meal, two of the respondents mentioned that the meal was given in exchange to no charge while one of them stated that the midday meal was provided until Grade 6 for free and the school charged Rs.250 for Grade 7. Along with these provisions, some of the respondents (n=2) were not satisfactory regarding the scholarships not being given to the children.

“The school is good. Here, there is midday meal till grade 7 too but certain fee is allocated monthly. Back in our village, I think there was midday meal provision only until grade 3. Here, the lunch fee is given to us on a monthly bill. There are not much expenses related to studies but there are lunch expenses only. Education is free. The midday meal is given but the charge is Rs. 250. Three of the books are given by school and others we have to buy on our own. We have to buy the uniform too. Tracksuit has to be bought from school. But, scholarships are not given. - R1, male, 34 years, employed, Rolpa

“The school has sports activities. There is no scholarship.” - R3, male, 28 years old, employed, Dang

The responses related to the educational expenses varied among the respondents. While one respondent replied that the monthly fee is Rs.400, two of the respondents mentioned that only exam fee needs to be paid to the school.

“Facilities provided by school is somewhat fine, I think. We had to buy all books before, but now two books are given by the school. The facilities are fine. Lunch is free from Grade 1 to 6. There are other expenses. We have to pay exam fee but not monthly fee. Exam fee depends, it can be Rs. 250, Rs. 200, Rs.150.” - R2, male, 29 years old, employed, Dang

“School fee is Rs.400 per month, and along with lunch it is Rs.500.” - R4, Female, 25 years, unemployed, Sindhupalchowk

Furthermore, a respondent even added the punctuality of the teachers to be a factor in determining the meaningful participation of children in school.

“The students stay in queue from 9:45 AM. If they are late to the class even by 1-2 minutes, all the teachers would have already reached to the classes. I think this is very good. When

we used to study, the bell would ring at 10:30 but the class would not start until 11 AM. - R4, Female, 25 years, unemployed, Sindhupalchowk

The focus group discussions revealed both positive aspects as well as areas for improvement regarding the facilities and experiences in the schools where the participants attended. In terms of the school infrastructure, the participants mentioned the availability of taps for water in the school, but the drinking water quality was a concern, leading some to bring water from home.

“There are taps but the drinking water is dirty. We take water to drink from home.” – P3, 11 years, Male, Dang, Grade 5, FGD 01

Separate toilets for boys and girls were reported, but the school faced challenges with water supply in the toilets. While the school had a computer lab, the number of computers was insufficient for all students, resulting in 5-6 students sharing one computer in turns.

“There is no water in toilet. We have computer labs but the computers are not enough for everyone. 5-6 students have to use one computer turn wise. Whichever grade it is, but everyone gets to use computer lab once a week. – P3, 11 years, Male, Dang, Grade 5, FGD 01

Similarly, though schools had libraries, they were underutilized. Lunch was provided to students up to Grade 6, but for higher grades, students were required to pay additional.

“The school provides lunch only up to Grade 6, it is free. But for Grade 7, we have to pay lunch fees.” – P3, 11 years, Male, Dang, Grade 5, FGD 01

“We have to take lunch from home. But it is given to students until Grade 6.” – P2, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

On a positive note, the participants reported that scholarships were available, especially for economically disadvantaged and academically talented students. Moreover, the schools offered various Extra-Curricular Activities (ECAs) such as sports like kabaddi, volleyball, football, taekwondo, running, and scout, as well as dance. Field visits and trips were conducted, although additional charges were required for participation.

“Scholarships are given to those who are economically weak. They are given uniforms as well when they cannot afford. And scholarship is also given to those who are talented in

their studies. We have ECAs too. We have kabaddi, volleyball, football, taekwondo,” - P1, 14 Years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

“We have kabaddi, running, scout as well.” – P2, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

“We have to pay extra charge for the field trips. If it is nearer like in Bhaktapur and Changunarayan then it is Rs.200, and if it is further, then the amount depends.” – P1, P2, FGD 02

One of the participants expressed positive experiences with teachers, noting that they taught in an understandable manner and treated students well, fostering a favorable attitude towards attending school. Moreover, one participant mentioned that they received 6 books from school while they had to buy 4 books on their own.

“The way the teachers teach is understandable. The teachers treat us nicely too. Friends are also friendly. That’s why I like going to school.” - P1, 14 Years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

“6 books we get from school. 4 books we have to buy on our own.” - P3, 11 years, Male, Dang, Grade 5, FGD 01

Furthermore, the schools were conscious of providing girl-friendly facilities. Separate toilets were available for girls and were equipped with proper WASH amenities, including dustbins for sanitary pads, soap, and lockable doors, making it convenient for female students. Along with this, the children reported having vaccination camps during COVID-19 pandemic.

“We have everything that is required in a girl’s toilet. We have dustbins to dispose the sanitary pads as well. We have soap, lock in doors, and water. It is easy for the girl students.” – P1, 14 Years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

“Sometimes we have vaccination camps, like for COVID-19.” - P3, 11 years, Male, Dang, Grade 5, FGD 01

However, few concerns were made by the participants in the second discussion regarding teaching quality and safety issues in the playground:

“Some teachers do not teach properly, it is not clear sometimes. And some teachers come to classes a bit late. The teachers do come to class but they do not teach on a regular basis. Sometimes, they let us do homework of other subjects too. And sometimes, the way the teachers teach are not very understandable. – P1, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

“The playground is there but it is not very safe to play.” – P2, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

The principals were inquired about the facilities provided by their schools to ensure regular participation of children. Both the respondents mentioned the provision of midday meal as a key factor. While one of the respondents shared that the school provided free midday meal from pre-primary to Grade 6, the other respondent clarified that since their school was a basic school with classes only up to Grade 7, and all students from pre-primary to Grade 7 received midday meals. However, the latter school charged an extra amount of Rs.250 for mid-day meal for Grade 7 only.

The amount received by the both the schools for midday meal was mentioned to be Rs.15 per student from the central government and additional Rs.10 per student from Changanarayan municipality. Notably, both principals highlighted the government’s inability to provide free midday meal up to Grade 8 despite having it as one of the goals in the School Education Sector plan.

“Midday meal is provided to the students from pre-primary to Grade 6. This year, the government had to provide mid-day meal until Grade 7. Providing midday meal until Grade 8 is the aim. It should have been until Grade 7 this year but it has not been announced by the government as such.

The midday meal is Rs.15 for student. But our municipality has provided Rs.10 extra per student, so in total, the midday meal cost for one student is Rs.25. We receive the total sum and prepare the lunch here at the school for about 300-400 students. The budget has not been allocated for mid-day meal until Grade 8, as it should be according to the School Education Sector Plan.” - Principal, 59 years, Tathali

“Midday meal is also given. It is actually supposed to be given until Grade 6, but here since we have classes until Grade 7, we provide mid-day meal up to Grade 7. But for Grade 7, we have not given for free because when observation is done, there might be certain

implications. So, we have charged the students Rs.250 per student. Up to Grade 6, the government funds mid-day meal, it is Rs.15 per person per day and the municipality has provided additional Rs.10. Midday meal is supposed to be given up to Grade 8 but it has not been implemented here. It has already been implemented in Kathmandu through the support of the government to fund the meal up to Grade 6 and the municipality further funds up to Grade 8. This started from last year. This year's budget speech has not allocated budget to provide midday meal up to Grade 8" - Principal, 42 years, Tathali

Along with midday meal, other facilities provided by the schools as shared by the principals include provision of government-issued books, scholarships, qualified teachers, ECA, field visits, emphasis on practical learning, computer labs, etc. One of the principals mentioned that about 3-4 government-issued books were used and distributed to the students and the rest of the books had to be bought by the students themselves. He further added that scholarships were provided to female students from Grade 1 to 8 and Dalit quota scholarships were given to Dalit students from Grade 1 to 12. Regarding teachers, he added that apart from government-employed teachers, the school had also employed external qualified teachers.

"In the school, we receive books from government which we give to the students. We provide the students scholarships received from the government. Those books which are not government-issued, we provide a list of books and the students procure the books accordingly by their own. Other government-issued books are given by the school. According to the government policy, all students from Grade 1 -12 receive books. Female students from Grade 1 to 8 receive scholarship. Dalit students from Grade 1 – 12 receive scholarship. We have employed private teachers as well. In Nepali medium, we only have government-employed teachers. In English medium, few of the teachers are government-employed. The government-employed teachers in the English medium are qualified. We have reduced the number of holidays in Poush and Asadh and other government holidays. Only 3-4 subjects use Government-issued books. Science, account, optional math, math, do not have government-issued books. - Principal, 59 years, Tathali

"I think other reasons can be the increased number of activities such as ECA, field visits. We have started to focus more on practical aspects of the science and other subjects. Library is not used after earthquake. It is going under reconstruction. All other activities including computer lab is sufficient for the students"- Principal, 42 years, Tathali

In addition to this, one of the respondents also pointed out that the school buildings are earthquake-resilient, adding to the list of factors influencing children participation.

“The school has 5 buildings in total. Retrofitting has been done in one building recently to make it earthquake-resistant; the building was built after 2065 BS only. Now all buildings have gone through retrofitting. So all the buildings are earthquake resistant.”

4.7 Contrast between urban and rural schools

Few of the parents responded that their children found the schools in their village and in the city different. One of them even stated that their children found the quality of education in the current school in Bhaktapur to be better than the school the children previously attended in village.

“I think the school is better in comparison to the village. In our village, there was no studies but here, the studies is good. The learning is good.” - R2, male, 29 years old, employed, Dang

In contrast, one of the parents pointed out that their children liked the school in their village better than the one they are currently attending.

“My children tell me they like the school in village better.” - R1, male, 34 years, employed, Rolpa,

The children, when asked about their school preference, expressed that they preferred the school they are currently attending near the kiln. One participant from the first discussion mentioned close proximity to the school to be the reason for their preference:

“School is better here than the village. In our village, only two schools were there, both of which were located far and had difficult roads to reach there. It used to take an hour to reach the school.” – P3, 11 years, Male, Dang, Grade 5, FGD 01

On a similar note, a participant during another discussion highlighted the number of students in class, low quality of education and dress code to be the reasons for their preference.

“The studies is better here in comparison to the school I used to go. In the school back in village, there were any dress code, we could wear anything. The number of students were also high and the studies was not good. Since the number of students is high in classes,

nothing could be understood properly in class as there used to be too much noise. The dress is also good in the school here.” – P1, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

4.8 Resources and interventions available for educational improvement of children

Almost all of the parents (n=4) asserted that there were no resources available or known to them for the educational improvement of the children of brick workers.

“No there are not any resources available.” - R1, male, 34 years, employed, Rolpa

“There are no resources as such.” - R3, male, 28 years old, employed, Dang

Nonetheless, one of the respondent mentioned that there is a child care center named as “*shishu syahar*” established by the brick kiln owners for the children of the brick workers.

“Shishu syahar” operates during season. The owners operate this for children under 5 years old to prevent them from going to the street. I think children under 5 years old go there. – R5, female, 26 years old, employed, Dang

While being asked about the availability of resources for children of brick workers, both principals responded that no targeted resources are in place for the educational improvement of the children of the brick workers. Nonetheless, a respondent stated the existence of a community hall which provides learning opportunities for the children of the brick workers along with other children in need, among many activities undertaken by the institution.

“Nothing separate has been done for the children of migrant workers. Only scholarships are provided for Dalits. There is one in Tathali, there is a community hall which also provides educational opportunities and teaches the children from the brick kilns. They have the budget allocated for it. It is called Tathali Community Hall (Learning Centre). They teach the children coming from economically weak families. I know that they have taught the children from the brick kilns. This institution still operates.” - Principal, 59 years, Tathali

“As of this time, there are any separate resources catering to the children living in brick kilns. No other alternative learning system is available.” - Principal, 42 years, Tathali

Nevertheless, the principal of one school expressed uncertainty of the presence of “*shishu syahar*” (childcare center) in the particular brick kiln under study. He respondent that the schools served as

the main option for child care, and that there were no other resources targeted towards child care of brick workers' children.

“No, there are not any. I think the “shishu shyahar” is closed now. I know there was one in the other brick kiln, not Shwet Bhairav..... In case of child care, they bring the children in the school. We enroll children from the age of 2 years old.” - Principal, 42 years, Tathali

Most of the parents (n=3) informed that there were no specific interventions available for educational improvement of the children of brick workers. However, one of the parents mentioned that although it may not be a targeted intervention for the children of brick workers, the school where their children were enrolled conducted parent-teacher meetings to discuss about the children's academic performance.

“No there are not anything as such. Sometimes there are meetings in the school to discuss in which areas are the children weak in. Before the exams, there are unit tests and based on the results, teachers inform us about our children's performance. They provide suggestions on areas that require more attention and concentration. These meetings are conducted for all the parents of the children studying in the school.” - R1, male, 34 years, employed, Rolpa

The principals also believed that there are no specific interventions available for the educational improvement of children of brick workers. Regardless, one of the respondent informed that a program namely Early Grade Reading Program (EGRP), supported by USAID, was implemented in the area with the aim to promote the use of Nepali language. Although this program did not directly benefit the children of the brick workers, it was still a significant intervention undertaken in the municipality for the betterment of the education sector.

“A program named Early Grade Reading Program (EGRP) supported by USAID was started here. This program is related to education in which it also aimed at promoting Nepali language since many students were not good in Nepali language despite being a Nepali student. The program also had provided training to the teachers from different schools. Along with this, it also worked at the community level with the parents. The main aim was to promote the use of Nepali language. Now, the program has ended.” - Principal, 59 years, Tathali

4.9 Additional support or packages provided

The parents were asked if any sort of additional support or packages specifically targeting the brick workers and their children were provided to them, few of the parents (n=2) responded that there was no support provided specifically to them. However, during COVID-19 lockdown, they said that relief materials including food items were distributed to everyone.

“Nothing as such has been given. But there were some support given during lockdown. Relief materials including food were given to everyone.” - R2, male, 29 years old, employed, Dang

“There was distribution of oil and rice, twice, during lockdown. But nothing for now. It was given to the all students, one package for one household.” - R5, female, 26 years old, employed, Dang

The children during the focus group discussions were asked if any sort of additional support or packages were provided to them. They pointed out that although special support was not provided to them from the kiln or other agencies, they were once provided with relief materials consisting of food essentials during the COVID-19 lockdown.

“Once, we were given relief materials from school. There are not any special support provided to children like us.” - P2, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

“From the school we received relief materials like rice, salt, lentils, etc. it was one time during COVID-19 lockdown. We do not receive anything from the brick kiln.” – P1, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

Apart from the universal provisions facilitated or provided by the government to the schools and children, the principals of each school were asked whether their respective schools or other organizations have made additional contributions, not exclusively limited to children of the brick workers. The respondents highlighted that the schools have established systems and mechanisms to fund additional scholarships or discount in fees to the students.

In one school, the scholarships were funded by the school itself and provided to students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. These scholarships were not exclusively reserved for children of brick workers but were intended for all economically weak students.

While in the other school, a unique approach to collecting fund for scholarships was adopted. The scholarships for deserving students were sponsored by pooling one-day worth of salary from all teachers of the school. Approximately 50% of the collected funds were utilized for providing scholarships to the students, while the remaining amount was further accumulated for future use. The respondent added that the selection of deserving students for the scholarships were based on certain criteria.

“The system we have here is that we provide individuals with weak economic status with certain discount in admission fee. To those whose economic status is extremely weak, we provide them discounts in the monthly fee as well. This is for everyone who is economically weak, and not just the seasonal migrant children. They just have to write an application and sometimes the recommendation provided by the ward is necessary. This support is not funded by anyone, the school provides on its own. These children also include children coming from families migrating seasonally for construction purposes. We have provided support to these children as well. We had around 20-25 children from those families this year. They had migrated here temporarily and they return to different places once their work here in Tathali is over. Some even have returned to their villages. These children have been provided with the support.” - Principal, 59 years, Tathali

“What we have done here is, we collect funds amongst ourselves to provide scholarships to other students besides the scholarship provided by the government to girl students from Grade 1. The fund is collected from the teachers of the school. One day worth of salary is collected for fund and then 50% of that fund is provided to the students as scholarship. The government provides Rs.400 yearly as scholarship to girl students from Grade 1-7. And there is Dalit scholarship, for both boys and girls. From this fund, we provide scholarships to 4-5 students and award them the scholarships on the annual program. Certain criteria are in place to select deserving students. Only 50% of the fund is used for scholarship and the remaining fund keeps increasing overtime. Students have to buy about 3-5 books and uniform on their own. From our side, we provide scholarships on the annual program along with our school tracksuits as well. The scholarships that we provide through the fund collected by us, I do not know if other schools do that too.” - Principal, 42 years, Tathali

Furthermore, one of the respondents shared about the assistance provided by an NGO during the COVID-19 lockdown, which involved distributing food materials to families.

“Once an organization named Buddha Tara distributed food relief to families during COVID-19 lockdown.” - Principal, 42 years, Tathali

4.10 Gender impact on education

The focus group discussants reported that there are not any barriers or differences between girls and boys when it comes to accessing education. They mentioned that their parents are supportive of their education and do not impose any gender-based limitations on their education. The children in both FGDs expressed that they are encouraged to study as much as they want, regardless of their gender.

“No there are not any difference.” – P1, 10 years, Female, Dang, Grade 3, FGD 01

“No I do not feel there are any barriers being a girl.” – P2, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

“Parents do not tell us anything like you are a daughter, you should study till a certain grade.” P1 and P2, FGD 02

“They tell me to study as much as I can, till whatever grade I want. They tell me that they will try as much as they can to properly educate me.”- P2, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

“They tell me that they will educate me as much as they can.”- P1, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

4.11 Perception of parents regarding education

The focus group discussions with the children revealed that the parents place a high importance on their children’s education, despite their own educational status. Most of the children expressed that their parents value education and encourage them to study diligently. They further mentioned that their parents support their education and even scold them if they do not focus on their studies, indicating a positive perception towards education.

“Our parents have not even completed Grade 8. They scold us if we do not study. They give importance and that’s why we have not gone to village.” – P3, 11 years, Male, Dang, Grade 5, FGD 01

“They give importance. Since they are not educated themselves, they give importance to our studies.” – P5, 12 years, Male, Sindhuli, Grade 7, FGD 01

“They give importance. They scold if I do not study.” – P1, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

4.12 Barriers and challenges

4.12.1. Migration as a challenge to children’s education

When the parents were inquired about whether migration/seasonal migration caused any separate challenges to their children’s education in terms of school admission, everyday learning, improved learning outcomes and school retention, one of the respondents stated that difficulty in coping with the frequent changes in the learning environment and teaching method was one of the problems faced by the children due to migration.

“When we migrate a lot, the teaching method will not be same everywhere. The method is different here and it is different in village. This might affect the children. It would not affect us in any matter because wherever we go, we go to earn and provide education to the children. When we migrate frequently, they might feel the education is different and that something is lacking in one school than the other.” - R1, male, 34 years, employed, Rolpa

On the contrary, a respondent shared that migration did not lead to any major problems as they migrated together with their family, allowing their children to conveniently pursue education.

“Since I migrate along with my family, there are not much problems. All of us come here so that it would be easier on our children’s education.” - R2, male, 29 years old, employed, Dang

The focus group discussions with the children revealed that migration, whether seasonal or otherwise, was one of the significant challenges that led to series of other challenges and impacts. While initially responding that they cannot recall any such challenges because they migrated at a young age, later, the children mentioned they faced difficulties in coping with the different and changing teaching methods between their previous schools in the village and after migrating to the kiln.

One of the participants emphasized that studying in different educational environments and dealing with the language barrier, especially in English medium schools, negatively affected their academic performance, leading to difficulties in understanding the subjects and even failing exams at times.

“The studies get affected negatively. In the village, the teaching is different and in Kathmandu it is different. It becomes difficult to understand. Sometimes we fail the subjects too when we keep on changing schools. When we come from village to here, learning becomes difficult to us because on village everything is taught in Nepali except English. And in Kathmandu, we cannot understand what is being taught at the beginning because English is used more. And thus, we fail in exams at the start too.” – P1, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

The participants from the focus group discussions also mentioned that they faced difficulties understanding English and Math subjects. Additionally, some children expressed concerns about the fast-paced teaching methods and the use of corporal punishment when they struggle to keep up with the lessons.

“English subject is difficult and Math too.” – P6, 10 years, Male, Dang, Grade 3, FGD 01

“The teacher teaches very fast. We cannot understand. When we say we cannot understand then they hit us with duster.” - P1, 10 years, Female, Dang, Grade 3, FGD 01

A participant pointed out missing their exam while visiting their village to make birth certificate:

“Once I missed my exam while visiting our village. I went to make birth certificate. I went to the village for 1 month.” – P1, 10 years, Female, Dang, Grade 3, FGD 01

Furthermore, the children were probed further to report on how the living conditions after migrating to the kiln have affected their studies. Some of the children during the first discussion reported experiencing backaches while sitting on the floor to do homework. They also shared sitting on the floor to do homework negatively affected their handwriting, while having proper seating arrangement in school made it easier to write and maintain better handwriting. In addition, the children also expressed having headaches during summer.

“No there are not such problems about back ache while doing homework by sitting on the floor. But during summer, it is difficult to live here due to the tin roof. We get headaches. This affects our studies as well.” – P1, 10 years, Female, Dang, Grade 3, FGD 01

“I have backaches while sitting on the floor to do homework. In school we have tall desks and we can sit properly. This makes it easy to write.” – P6, 10 years, Male, Dang, Grade 3, FGD 01

“I do homework by sitting on the floor. It ruins my handwriting. Even when we sit in our bed to do homework, it still ruins the handwriting.” – P3, 11 years, Male, Dang, Grade 5, FGD 01

4.12.2. Child labor and direct impact of brickmaking on academic performance and physical well-being

As suggested by the existing literatures on the matter, child labor in brick kilns has significant impacts on the lives of children. In this study, particularly, educational impact of child labor and brick making has been inquired. Although the parents did not directly disclose the matter of child labor in the selected kiln, the principals from the schools in which the children attended to provided key insights to the matter.

Both principals indicated to have made observations and witnesses to child labor in the brick kilns, even though not specifically in Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory. The respondents pinpointed that some children living in brick kilns do get involved in brick making, resulting in a terrain of negative consequences and impacts. Moreover, one respondent even mentioned the involvement of children coming from the local community in brickmaking.

The negative impacts encompass of hindrances in academics, physical turmoil, sleep deprivation, laziness and reduced concentration in the classroom, irregular attendance, and in some cases, complete disengagement of children from school.

Further, one of the respondents added that children who are engaged in brick making are bound to wake up as early as 4:00 AM and then attend their school at the regular time. Those children then again request to return back home when the school time is over.

“When the children get engaged in brickmaking, there are impacts. Not just migrant children, but even children from here in Changunarayan -9, Tathali go to make bricks after

waking up at 4 am in the morning and come to school at 10 am. The children coming from weak economic families who are originally from Tathali are involved too. So when they wake up at 4:00 AM to do that, they do not get enough sleep, they have increased physical exertion, and they yawn during classes and become lazy too. This hampers in their studies obviously. We have such children in this school too. They do not get absent much often, only a few times though. In regards to completing the homework, not all children involved in brickmaking do their homework, few of them still do their homework nicely despite their involvement in brickmaking.” - Principal, 59 years, Tathali

The principal of another school was stated the following regarding disengagement of children from school:

“Oftentimes, we tell the parents to send their children to school as it is their school-going age. They agree but do not send their children to school. They tell us that they are only here for few months and they return back.” - Principal, 42 years, Tathali

In addition, both principals affirmed that they have witnessed child labor in the brick kilns. One of the respondents pointed out the involvement of children studying in Grade 9 and 10 in bricklaying activities. On the other hand, the other respondent cited that the earliest age at which involvement of children in assisting their parents starts is at 2 years old but during this age, their involvement is limited to assisting their parents to carry the bricks around.

“I have also seen the children working in the kilns myself last year. When we visit their homes, we do not see the children. We then find out that they have gone to make bricks. Local people are also involved in brickmaking. The whole family goes to live in the kilns during season along with their cattle too. It is very difficult for those children involved in the kiln. They wake up early, come to school and then request to go to their home early. And then they lay the bricks. The children studying in Grade 9, 10 can easily lay the bricks.” - Principal, 59 years, Tathali

“Yes I have witnessed. There were notable amount of kids who were involved. Their work usually is during school time. During the summer, they are in their huts. But during the winter, the children get involved in carrying the bricks. The children's involvement in helping their parents make bricks can start as early as 2 years old. At this age, they are not engaged in brick-making itself, but rather, they assist by carrying bricks around.”

The instances of child labor in the kiln were not reported explicitly by all children, except for one participant who was involved in brickmaking. The participant reported being involved in laying the bricks before and after school hours during brickmaking season to assist the father in his work. She revealed that children of her age are often involved in brickmaking. Despite being advised against such involvement by the kiln owners, the participant willingly helped to contribute to their households. The participant responded that their primary motivation for engaging in bricklaying is to earn money, and they often sacrifice their sleep and study time to help their parents with the labor.

“When it is brick making season, we have to lay the bricks. I go to school and after returning, I lay the bricks. People lay the bricks in the morning, afternoon and night. Some even do it at 1 in midnight. I do it along with my father at 1 or 2 AM in the midnight. Small children do not do so. But children of our age does this. I am 14 years old. In my case, my father is only one who makes brick from our family. My mother does not do it. I have a younger brother. My father wakes up at night to lay the bricks and it is difficult for him. So I wake up at midnight to assist him.” – P1, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

The participant was probed further to understand what their daily routine looked during brickmaking season, to which she responded:

“I play taekwondo in the morning. So, I lay the bricks until 5 AM and then I get ready to go to school and come back from school at around 4:30 – 5:00 PM after which I again help to lay bricks. I then do my homework. And again at midnight, I wake up to help lay the bricks.” – P1, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

When asked about what their involvement in brickmaking meant for their studies, the participant mentioned that their involvement in bricklaying does not significantly affect their studies on regular days. They acknowledged that it can pose challenges during exams and lead to reduced concentration in class due to lack of proper rest. However, their parents are supportive during exam times and allow them to focus on their studies.

“During exams, my parents let me study. They do not let me do any work. They give me time to study. Only few times, I do not get to complete my homework. Maybe because of lack of sleep, sometimes in class I do not get to study properly. It is difficult. Eventually we can become weak in studies. But now the brick season is over, so I do not any problems at the moment.” – P1, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

Although the children do not receive separate payment for their work, they receive allowances from their parents for assisting in bricklaying.

“My father gets paid. I do not get paid separately but my father gives me allowance. I do not get paid because I just assist my father and I am not employed in the kiln.” – P1, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

4.12.3. Involvement in household chores and its impact on academic performance and physical well-being

Almost all of the participants from the focus group discussions asserted that they contributed to doing household chores, such as cooking, washing dishes, and other tasks. Some of the children mentioned that this engagement in household responsibilities affects their study time and availability, as they must allocate time for their chores in addition to their academic commitments. Some of the children replied that they do their homework at night after helping with the household chores. One of the participants further implied that it becomes challenging to do homework at night due to the lack of sufficient light.

“I help in doing household chores by waking up at 6 am, cooking food. I don’t have to prepare food at night. I do homework then. On Saturday, I wake up at 7 am and help doing dishes.” – P7, 10 years, Male, Dang, Grade 3, FGD 01

“I do my homework until around 9 pm. It is a bit difficult to do homework at night because there is not enough light.” – P5, 12 years, Male, Sindhuli, Grade 7, FGD 01

“Yes it does affect our studies. Cannot give enough time to studies because of household chores.” – P3, 11 years, Male, Dang, Grade 5, FGD 01

“I do my homework at night and if it is not completed then in the morning.” – P7, 10 years, Male, Dang, Grade 3, FGD 01

The children’s involvement in household chores was also pinpointed by one of the principals as being a significant challenge, in terms of impact in education and in physical well-being of the children. It was implied by the respondent that children in brick kilns have to bear the household responsibility which also consists of shouldering their siblings’ responsibility. Their involvement in household chores is due to their parents being involved in brick making.

Although household chores might seem to look like a small assistance for the parents, it has tremendous negative implications for the children. According to the one of the principals, these implications include of lack of physical rest, lack of consumption of nutritious food, lack of sleep, laziness, reduced concentration in class, sickness, and irregular attendance and so on. The impacts then extend to degrading academic performance in school as they prioritize more on household chores instead of dedicating their time towards their studies.

“The children are also involved in household chores and taking care of their younger sibling. We have students here who completes the household chores before coming to school as their parents go to work. The impact this has on the children is lack of physical rest. They do not receive the amount of rest that is needed. They do not get to eat sufficient food. And even if they eat, they do not receive the nutrition that is required. If a child gets to sleep for 5 hours instead of 10 hours as needed, it will be very difficult for the child the next day. And on the next day in class, they feel sleepy, lazy and do not concentrate much on the class. Their learning becomes slow. And after returning home from school, they again have to bear responsibilities of the household. They have responsibility to do homework and also do their household chores. But instead of doing their homework, they prioritize to do household chores because they depend on their parents for financial help later. So the children spend only little time in their studies. Not the amount of time it had to be given. Those children get sick often as they are involved in household chores and so, they are frequently absent too. And sometimes, they do not eat before coming to school because they are in a rush. They say that they are dizzy and nauseous after coming to school.”- Principal, 42 years, Tathali

Moreover, the involvement in household chores also negatively affects their performance during examination. On this note, the respondent had the following to say:

“They try to do their best during exams but in comparison to other students, the performance during exams is not still satisfactory. It is not that they cannot perform as well as others during exams, but due to their problems they cannot do.”- Principal, 42 years, Tathali

4.12.4. Reasons for involvement of children in brickmaking and household chores

When asked about the reasons for involvement of children in brickmaking and household chores, both principals asserted that carelessness and ignorance of the parents are significant problems. It

was indicated that the parents have the prime role in ascertaining the involvement of their children in brickmaking and household chores. One of the respondents even mentioned that a child from the brick kiln had drowned in a pond when the parents were at work.

“The parents have the responsibility to educate their children. But when they come here to work in the kilns, they themselves get their children to work. Some children have even died in the kilns few years back in this ward. In one case, the parents had gone to work. There was a pond nearby and the child drowned in the pond. There were protests in this area. Later, the parents were given compensation. This is carelessness. I do not whose carelessness it is, the parents or the kiln. This was also one case.” - Principal, 59 years, Tathali

“The families might not care about their children. Mostly in Shwet Bhairav, it is prioritized for the children to enroll in school. It might be because of the parents’ carelessness that the children did not enroll in school. Few children are also involved in brick making, we have seen it too.” - Principal, 42 years, Tathali

One of the principals ascribed the reason of involvement of children in brickmaking to be the illiteracy of parents, demotivation caused by the unemployment rate in the country and the environmental factors of their hometowns. He pointed out that some of the parents who migrate to the kilns have the perception regarding childbearing being their primary responsibility and for the sake of survival, even the children have to work.

“The parents also are not educated. They have lost interest in education. The country’s situation also demotivates them. I think it is because of the unemployment rate of the country that creates negative perception towards education, thinking what would happen if the children were sent to school. The environment in their hometowns also affects this mindset. They think that their responsibility is over once they have children. If they want to survive, then they can come to work. Those who understand the importance of education, send their children to school.” - Principal, 42 years, Tathali

Regarding this prominent issue, the principal further responded that local level efforts were being made to stop child labor, which included of the ward conducting various campaigns against child labor.

*“For this not to happen, the ward had also implemented programs to take actions against those parents who involve the children in brick making. The ward had also conducted campaigns against child labor. In the municipality, every ward has a children’s network through which the campaigns run. There are various clubs in schools and in every “tole”.
- Principal, 42 years, Tathali*

4.12.5. Impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the children’s education

The principals were also asked to explain the challenges faced during COVID-19 pandemic and how it affected the children’s educational attainment. One of the principals noted that the classes were supposed to be taken through online medium; however, the lack of access to resources such as ICT of the parents and children made it difficult to continue the online teaching pursuit. To tackle with this issue, the school had to adapt to face-to-face approach by conducting classes with social distancing, distributing worksheets to the students, and at some times, even deliver those worksheets to the children at home.

“All the schools started going online. In our school, even when the students were interested to study via online medium, they could not because of their parents’ limited access to resources, mainly technological resources. We also tried making online Messenger groups but the participants were very less. So, we did not do online. Instead, we moved forward by face-to-face approach. We did not invite all the classes at the same time. We provided everyone with worksheets. Those who did not understand the worksheet were kept in class maintaining social distance. Then the students completed their worksheets at home. We had some level of assistance from the government as well. Along with this, we even went to the students’ home to distribute the worksheets which the children accepted more than the online classes.” - Principal, 42 years, Tathali

The participants during the focus group discussions mentioned that during the lockdown, schools were closed and online classes were conducted. However, many children did not have access to phones or other devices to attend online classes, which disrupted their studies. The children pointed out that there was no internet access in their home and at the kiln, further hindering their ability to continue their education during the lockdown period.

“During lockdown, online classes were conducted but we had no phones.” – P3, 11 years, Male, Dang, Grade 5, FGD 01

“Online class would have worked. But in some of the families, there were no TVs, phones, Wi-Fi. During this time, our studies got worse. Only the office has Wi-Fi. But there is Wi-Fi in the store inside the kiln. Every child goes there in the store with phones to use Wi-Fi.” – P1, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

4.12.6. Deprivation of opportunities

When the parents were questioned about whether there is any deprivation of opportunities caused by their nature of work, the parents did not report of any such deprivations caused to their children. Rather, one parent stated that their work is an obligation and compulsion, implying that there cannot be deprivation in that context. Since their children refuse to stay at the hometown when they come to work in the kiln, the respondent has to bring them along. The parent further explained that wherever the children stayed, there were no deprivations because the hometown had family members present, and in the kiln, the parent themselves would be present. Therefore, the respondent firmly denied any instances of opportunities being withheld from their children.

“We cannot say deprived because this is our obligation. I have four brothers. We have a house and we have agricultural field. Our parents stay with me. My daughters used to stay with them but they refused to stay there so I brought them along here. Even if I decide to come here to work again, I will come alone. There will not be any challenges because my children will be with family in the village.” - R1, male, 34 years, employed, Rolpa

Moreover, one parent linked their children’s education continuity with their work at the kiln. The respondent stated that there are no deprivation of opportunities because they chose to stay in the kiln even after the season ended, solely to enable their children continue their education. This implies that their work has provided an opportunity for their children to receive education. In addition, the respondent explained how their living condition looked like after the season needed.

“No I do not think there are deprivation as such. Children’s education is important and that is why we are staying here even though we have no work to do here. There are not much work here at the kiln. We do not work outside of the kiln. Only loading and unloading work is left now. Making of Chinese bricks will start in a month or so. Whatever we earn is enough for us. After staying idle for few days, again there will be work in a few days. This is how we stay here.” - R2, male, 29 years old, employed, Dang

4.12.7. Barriers and challenges: the principals' perspective

The principals of the schools were asked about the existing barriers and challenges faced by children, parents or themselves. One of the respondents mentioned weak economic status, misuse of ICT, and child marriage to be the major barriers and challenges. He was of the opinion that in general, families migrating to the city have weak economic backgrounds and that these families typically do not tend to act according to their children's educational needs despite their children's interest. Along with this, the respondent added that child marriage was also a great challenge especially for girls, of which the respondent implied that certain efforts were made to address it.

"I see that many families who have migrated here and been living as tenants, their economic status is very weak. Only few have sound financial status. The children of weak economic background have continued their education but it is not according to their needs due to their financial problems. In some cases, children have to go to extra tuition classes, but they cannot afford it. The children shows interest to study extra classes, but their family cannot afford to send them. We have seen such cases. Economic factor is a huge barrier.

I also think the children are misusing ICT since almost every household has internet facilities..... I have even heard in some families that send their children, especially girls, to school until Grade 7, 8 and get them married after that. We then tell them that they should study until 20 years, they have the right to do so. We tell them that education is wealth. They agree but they say that they have problems and they cannot do anything about that." - Principal, 59 years, Tathali

On a similar note, the other respondent believed carelessness of parents, lack of importance given to the children's education by the parents and substance/alcohol abuse to be the major barriers and challenges.

"After looking at the condition in the kiln, rather than the children, it is the carelessness of the parents. Because at this time, it is not very difficult to educate 1-2 children, especially in government schools where the maximum amount of fees to be paid is Rs.1000-1200. More problem is there in terms of consumption of alcohol and tobacco among parents. So mainly, carelessness and not giving importance are the issues." - Principal, 42 years, Tathali

When it comes to consumption of alcohol and tobacco, the respondent stated that individuals who come to the kilns for labor purposes are heavily indulged in alcohol and tobacco. These individuals oftentimes comprise of teenagers who have come to the kiln without their families. This makes

them prone to such activities. Furthermore, the children who are already in the kiln are easily influenced and they get involved too.

“After coming here, the children who come here for labor, the children are teenagers, seem to get another sense of freedom.....Every worker in the kiln gets one day off. On that day off, the workers comprising of teenagers and adult, they get involved in consumption of alcohol and tobacco. Looking at this, the children get influenced and get involved in such activities too. There are children smoking cigarettes too. The brick kilns do not care about such issues after their work has been done.” - Principal, 42 years, Tathali

Moreover, the principal also believed that migration and changes in the environment makes it tougher for children who accompany their parents. The respondent further stated that the parents might face challenges in terms of balancing their work and childcare responsibilities, oftentimes resulting in neglect of the children.

“The children find it difficult to cope with the new environment. Some families come with their children and some even give birth to their child after coming here. When they have children after coming here, it becomes difficult for the families to balance their work and take care after the children. And therefore, in many cases, the children are neglected.”- Principal, 42 years, Tathali

The principals were also asked to elaborate the barriers and challenges faced by children on a school and community level. On the school level, one of the principals stated that in the classroom, the children from brick kilns are often subjected to complaints from their fellow classmates because of their use of negative language but are not the subjects to any sort of discrimination from the teachers.

“Amongst the school friend circle, the children might feel a bit of discrimination. The families that come to work in the brick kilns are normally from a certain similar background. Their way of speaking is rough. And so, amongst the friend circle, few students complain about their fellow classmates who are from brick kilns, that they use negative language. But the teachers do not discrimination against the children from the brick kilns.” - Principal, 42 years, Tathali

In regards to discrimination faced by the children and their families in the community, the principal further elaborated that the discrimination in community is not directed towards individuals living in brick kilns. Rather the discrimination is correlated with financial status of people.

“The discrimination is based on the economic status. Those who are economically strong, they do not face any problems. Those who are financially weak, they are dominated against.” Principal, 42 years, Tathali

4.12.8. Barriers and challenges faced by the parents

Most of the parents who participated as in-depth discussants shared that there are no challenges and barriers that their children face because of their work and living conditions. They believe the education of their children is not hampered, their children go to school and do their homework.

“Our work and living condition do not cause any problem. We go to work on time and come on time. We have our lunch together. So, there are not any problem. Their studies are not disturbed. Buying them uniform and other things are not really a problem because we buy them after we receive our wages from our “sauji”. - R1, male, 34 years, employed, Rolpa

When asked about their economic status and the barriers and challenges it might have been impacting, one of the parents is of the opinion that their income is sufficient for them, and is not hampering their children’s education pursuit. On the other hand, a parent expressed that the children’s involvement in brickmaking due to economic weakness and to support the family’s income has had negative impacts on the children.

“Until now, everything is sufficient, also in terms of economic status.” - R2, male, 29 years old, employed, Dang

“Other problem can be due to economic weakness. As the children have to support their parents in brickmaking to generate extra income for the family, the children can face negative impacts.” - R1, male, 34 years, employed, Rolpa

The respondents were also asked if their children’s education is being hampered because of their responsibilities in household chores, a respondent said that their children do not assist in household chores because they are not capable of doing so.

On the other hand, when asked to share their children's perspective about the barriers and challenges that they might be facing on their individual levels, most of the parents either believe that there is no such problem faced by their children or they are not informed about this.

"We have not faced any problems as such."—R2, male, 29 years old, employed, Dang

"I do not know. My children tell me that they understand what the teachers teach them but I don't know for sure."—R5, female, 26 years old, employed, Dang

However, a respondent, who was a single parent, shared about the challenges faced on an individual level. The respondent mentioned that the balancing his/her work and taking care of the child is difficult.

"I am single handedly taking care of my child. I am alone so, I have to cook, send my kid to school, and do laundry. I go to work at 6 AM, and it continues until 11:00 AM to sometimes 1:00 PM. I have to manage time and go home. When I am at work, he will just be here at the kiln, playing. There is no one in particular person who will look after him. I prepare lunch for him in the morning and he eats by himself later." - R3, male, 28 years old, employed, Dang

While most parents are not informed about the challenges and barriers that their children are facing, a respondent pinpointed a few of the challenges and barriers that she was facing on a household level. Because she had an operation and the school in which her child currently attended did not provide stationeries, uniform, etc. like the school in her home town, it was challenging for the respondent to fulfil her/his children's needs, such as notebooks, books, shoes, uniform, bag etc.

"My son has been insisting me to buy him shoes after the school asked him to wear a pair, but we couldn't fulfill the need. All our money was spent on my operation. We just bought two pairs of uniform and that's it. Like the schools in Sindhupalchowk, schools here do not provide facilities like free books, uniform, free lunch, yearly scholarships. School in Sindhupalchowk reimburse food allowance if children takes lunch with him, but schools here do not provide such facilities."—R4, Female, 25 years, unemployed, Sindhupalchowk

When asked to the parents about the barriers and challenges faced by the children on a community level, most of the parents did not have or were not aware about their challenges. They mentioned they were not treated any differently because they worked at the kiln. Along with this, one respondent pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic did not have much impact on them.

“There are not any discrimination and stigma. The Covid-19 pandemic did not impact much except for a few. Only few individuals had health problems which were treated by the rural municipality.” - R1, male, 34 years, employed, Rolpa

“As of now, we have not faced much challenges regarding discrimination.” - R2, male, 29 years old, employed, Dang

One parent also replied that there are not any problems at the community level here in comparison to his hometown.

“In Dang, the schools used to very far. It was dangerous. But this is not the case here.” - R3, male, 28 years old, employed, Dang

4.13 Efforts towards improving the lives of the children

Apart from targeted support towards children of brick workers, there are other efforts made towards improving the lives of the children of Changunarayan municipality in general. One of the principals noted few of the efforts that are in implementation phase, which includes the declaration of Changunarayan municipality as child-friendly municipality under which various works are undertaken, such as research conducted about the children working in brick kilns, meetings conducted for the working children and migrant out-of-school children, awareness provided to the parents working in brick kilns and financial assistance provided to the girls of the municipality.

Moreover, the respondent further pointed out the arrangements made by the brick kiln owners themselves to provide child care and learning opportunities for the children of the brick workers; the arrangement being “*shishu syahar*”.

“Changunarayan municipality was announced as a child-friendly municipality. In this regard, there was research conducted about the children working in brick kilns. It was done last year. I was a member in this ward’s committee. There are many brick factories in this ward, Changunarayan Ward no 9. There are about 18 kilns. In some of these kilns, the factory owners themselves arrange for the children of migrant workers to study and has even managed to run classes within the kiln factory. I think those are “shishu shyahar”. I have known the factories do this. But in other cases, they have sent the children to schools as well. For the sake of girls who study from Grade 1 to Grade 12 in community schools and are originally from Changunarayan, the municipality provides annually Rs.4000 to

them. So, each girl student from Grade 1 to Grade 12 studying in community schools will receive Rs.48, 000 in total. They receive the interest on this amount too. They can only withdraw when they are 20 years old. The account is on their personal name, they can further save their money and withdraw their saved amount only after receiving a recommendation from the municipality. But the amount saved by the municipality cannot be withdrawn until they are 20 years of age.” - Principal, 59 years, Tathali

On the contrary, the respondent further mentioned that the efforts are more so directed towards the children who are originally from Changunarayan municipality, and that the efforts almost leave out migrant children. In this regard, he elaborated that the meetings conducted are not always in the favor of helping the out-of-school migrant children directly.

“If the children from the kilns are out-of-school then we direct efforts towards not allowing them to work in the kilns to make child-friendly. For this, we provide awareness to the parents or even give them punishments. But to the parents who are not from this place originally, it is a bit difficult. Despite these efforts, some children help their parents to make bricks because of their families’ weak economic status. We have also seen few children carry the bricks instead of going to school. When we were talking about this matter in last year’s meeting, since we call the schools child-friendly and advocates towards not depriving the children of education, we put forward the told during the meeting that the children of migrant families are out-of-school. The committee replied that they do not belong from here but will inform their municipality/rural municipality about the matter. They said that they will contact in their respective village about the families coming here to work in the kilns and that the children from those families are deprived of education and it is not child-friendly.” - Principal, 59 years, Tathali

The principal of the other school mentioned that the school offers financial assistance to students who come from less economically privileged families, which also aims at improving the lives of children.

“Children of families facing financial hardship do not need to pay any fees, including exam fees. Only the cost of uniforms is their responsibility. We also offer free books and stationery items to these students. However, we require information about their financial condition, and in case of medical reasons, proper medical documents need to be provided.” - Principal, 42 years, Tathali

4.14 Resolving challenges and barriers

When asked about ways to resolve and address the existing challenges and barriers, the parents provided several suggestions, which included offering scholarships, making lunch free of cost in school and providing transportation facilities for the children to commute to school. The respondents emphasized that these measures were to be taken into consideration for the overall betterment of the education and well-being of the children.

“We should earn and educate the children as much as we can even if we are not really educated. Back in our village, we had scholarships for “Dalit” quota, but there are no such provision here. There were talks about providing scholarships but we do not know if it is being provided. In our village school, if the children decide not to eat lunch provided in school, they would receive certain amount from school from which they would take lunch. I think it was Rs. 800-900. Even during lockdown, the school provided the amount.”
- R1, male, 34 years, employed, Rolpa

“Since the children have to go by themselves to school, there should be transportation facilities. This would be easier for us and the children. Now, the children go by themselves. Only those whose children are very young go to drop the children at school. So this is why, there should be transportation facilities.” - R2, male, 29 years old, employed, Dang

Nonetheless, a parent pinpointed that certain solutions were already in motion which helped to alleviate the burden of brick workers and address the issue of childcare. The respondent shared that the establishment of the “*shishu syahar*” (childcare center) within the kiln premises was done by the owners of the kiln themselves. This initiative was a crucial step allowing the brick workers to work in the kiln without worrying about their children under the age of 5 years.

“The owners of this kiln care about the children’s education. Children under 16 years are not allowed to work here. In this kiln, they have also established “Shishu Shyahar” where there are female caretakers. It is located next to the office. It is free, I think. There are toys, they teach a bit too. They feed the children too. It operates from 10 am – 3 pm during season only. There are two female caretakers, who have been employed by the owners themselves.” - R2, male, 29 years old, employed, Dang

One of the children during the focus group discussion emphasized on making education free so that more children could enroll in school as many families do not have the means to send their children to school.

“There are few children here who do not go to school. They work too. There are small children who come along with their families during brick making season. They are also not sent to school, instead they are meant to work by their parents. They do not go to school. If the education is free in school, maybe they will go to school. Not everyone can educate their children. Those children who do not go to school are of 13-14 years old and some are younger than us, like 9-10 years old. There are children who are 6-7 years old too.”- P1, 14 years, Female, Sindhuli, Grade 8, FGD 02

One of the principals of the schools had a generic response to when being asked about the solutions to the existing challenges. He was of the opinion that outdated legal frameworks, disproportional distribution of teachers and other investments, distrust amongst the community members regarding government schools were the challenges and he mentioned the solutions to these challenges to be proper equitable distribution of resources and investments, maximum distribution of scholarships, merging of schools, updated legal frameworks and increased trust amongst the community members towards government schools.

“All schools do not have the same quality and quantity of students. Some schools have more and some schools have less students. I say that the government policy is not good. The Education Act was formulated in 2028 BS. We still follow this Act, which is outdated.....And other thing of the government which is not fine is allocation of teachers. Some schools having 12 students in total let's say, have 4 teachers and other schools having 150 students in Grade 6, 7 and 8 also have 4 teachers. How can our educational quality be increased then? This is government's weakness. Schools can be merged too. If we look from an investment point of view, if one teacher is earning Rs.40,000, 4 teachers are earning Rs.160,000 and if a school only has 12 students, then look at the investment amount for the school. For 12 students, there will now be an investment of Rs.160,000 per month. This is expensive. The government will then say that the education in community schools is like throwing water into the sand. This is how it is running now. The investment that is not being fruitful can be used in some other things where it is necessary. The government should give scholarships to as much students as possible. The community members also have a fault. They do not seem to have trust in schools where the

school fee is not taken or nominal. They do not trust free education. Hence, the community should extend support in this matter. People do not go to receive education in other schools where the fee is not then at all. We have kept a nominal fee here, but the people still choose this school over other schools where education is free. They assume that since the schools do not take any fees then the studies must not be of quality. This is the concept from a long time.” - Principal, 59 years, Tathali

The other principal was provided suggestions for the betterment of the lives of brick workers and their children’s education. This included establishing conducive environment for people to do their own business in their hometown to reduce temporary migration, regular monitoring of the educational status of the children by the municipalities, considering the changing demands and interests of the children to attract more children to government schools, shifting the traditional approach which focuses on conventional teaching methods to a more practical approach to earn trust from the community members towards government schools, and so on.

“First of all, to reduce the temporary migration, businesses must be established in the places of origin. And for those who establish business in their own place, whether the business is related to agriculture, security and protection must be provided so that the people become more interested and motivated towards their own business. It would be very good if employment opportunities were created in the hometowns of the people. And in those employment opportunities, there should be protection as well. This is the main thing that the government can do. And the municipalities, children’s networks, clubs should be regularly monitoring the children’s educational status. They should record if they are temporarily migrating or permanently migrated, their duration of stay, etc. In reality, the students in government schools now do not have children originally from that particular locality. Government schools from basic level until high school, everywhere, the students are not from the same locality. Does this mean that we have not focused in providing quality education? We have to progress and change our education system according to the need of time. It is fine to follow the government-issued books. But we should move forward considering the children’s interests and the time’s demand too. Only then the children and the local people can be interested towards government schools. Our education system is more focused in students getting good marks and doing homework. Unless we emphasize less on copies and pencils and more on other practical aspects, we cannot provide improve the quality of our education system. If we start providing facilities that are of children’s

interests such as computers, or even games, mobiles, then may be the children's flow in government schools can increase. Just focusing on copies and pencils are not enough. For this, we cannot just blame the budget or the government. It is our fault too since we are a member of the community. We might have a small responsibility too. We focus too much on infrastructure and the number of students in school.....To earn the trust from the community members, we have some responsibility. We have not been able to change according to the need of time. Previously we focused on copy and pencil and still we are doing so. If there are certain changes in the school then it sends the parents the message that the education system is changing. Nothing much has to be done to improve government schools. Just 1-2 new programs can be added annually.” - Principal, 42 years, Tathali

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Understanding the nexus between seasonal migration and children's education

This study was primarily aimed at exploring the impacts of seasonal migration in brick industry on the education of the brick workers' children as mentioned in Section 2.5 Empirical Review. The assumption that the brick workers in the selected kiln were all seasonal migrants was based on previous studies.

In August and September, before the festival season, brick kiln contractors travel to villages to recruit laborers for the seasons from October/November to June/July (Sharma & Dangal, 2019). However, from the data received from the parents and children sampled found that they did not strictly fit the definition of seasonal migrants. Instead, some families stayed behind in the kiln despite the brickmaking season being over, while some families permanently moved back to their hometown with no possibility of them returning to the same kiln during the next brickmaking season. Additionally, there were families who were uncertain about their future migratory patterns and were unsure of where they would end up.

It has been pointed out in the previous studies that seasonal migration has a significant negative impact in the education of brick workers' children. The relationship between seasonal migration and children's education has also been cited in Section 2.5 Empirical Review. This case study research found that due to the uncertainty of the migratory status of the families, there is uncertainty regarding the status of the children's education.

The data suggests that families staying in the kiln prioritize their children's education, ensuring it remains uninterrupted. On the other hand, families who planned to return to their village made arrangements for their children's education there. As per observations made by the parents and the principals, families migrating seasonally often didn't send their children to school, while those with enrolled children tended to stay during off-season. This indicates that migration itself may not be the issue causing interruptions in children's education, but the clear tendency of seasonal migration could be a factor leading to discontinuation of education.

It has been indicated by the data in Section 4.7 "Contrast between urban and rural school" that the higher quality of education provided in the schools is a significant motivating factor for families to continue staying in the selected kiln even after the brick-making season concludes. As suggested by this data, the public schools in Kathmandu valley provide better quality of education, which

thereby encourage the families to stay in the kiln. However, it is important to note that this observation may only apply to this specific kiln and should not be generalized to other kilns in different regions of the country. The decision of families to remain at the kiln in Bhaktapur district could be attributed to the improved quality of education available there, which might not be the case in other areas.

It can be inferred that those families who actually prioritize education and perceive education as an integral part of the children's lives stay behind in the kiln to further provide the children of the opportunity to continue their education. And those families who essentially do not view education as important usually tend to return to their hometowns and are more likely to migrate seasonally.

5.2 Preference of schools

From the data received, one significant commonality that can be inferred is that those children from brick kilns usually get enrolled to government-funded public schools when they try to get into the education system. Despite the principal saying that there are rather two options from which the children can typically opt to select, the options being privately-owned schools and government-owned public schools, the data can be used to infer that most children of the brick workers tend to go for government-funded public schools as it is a more economical option for them. While this may be positive that these children are contributing to strengthening of the public schools, it might also go to show that the only school that are accessible for reach to these children are public schools and not privately-owned schools. Had there been no government schools within the vicinity of the brick kiln, the children from the brick kilns would not really have the means to enroll themselves to a private accredited school and the rate of drop-outs and discontinuation of education would further lower than the current state.

While the data presented is just a limited projection of the context based on one kiln, it underscores importance of public schools. In order to further bring out of school children of the brick kilns and ensure that no children despite their family's economic and occupational background are left behind from the education structure, the government schools must be strengthened. Along with this, as pointed out in the School Education Sector Plan, there is a strong need to optimize the current investments in the public education sector, both equitably and efficiently, to maximize student output although additional investment is required to bring all school-age children into and retain them in school (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2022, p. 147). Hence, it is crucial to make the most of existing resources so that there are schools that are accessible to all

children of the brick kilns. This can be done through school mapping as proposed in School Education Sector Plan.

5.3 Facilities provided by public schools: Are they enough to ensure access and participation?

The School Education Sector Plan (2022, p. xii) outlines various activities identified and formulated aimed to ensure access and participation of all children from early childhood development to secondary level education. It has been listed that the government will continue to provide free textbooks to all students, midday meal in schools from ECED to Grade 8 in areas with low enrolment, health care services, adequate water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, access to clean drinking water and strengthening the distribution and management mechanism of need-based allocation of scholarships.

In this regard, the study found areas of improvement within provision of midday meals, need-based scholarships, health care services and adequate WASH facilities with access to clean drinking water. The SESP (2022, p. 92) has envisioned the provision of midday meal in all community school students from ECED to Grade 8 as an output. However, currently the provision of midday meal is limited to Grade 6 only in the schools the child participants were attending at the time. This gap has also been pinpointed by one of the principals in Section 4.6 “Facilities promoting regularity and meaningful participation of children in school.”

Furthermore, all three respondent groups had deflecting knowledge about the need-based scholarships. The parents found the distribution of scholarships somewhat satisfactory, while only few children said there were scholarships provided to economically disadvantaged and academically talented students. The principals then clarified that there were scholarships provided for female and Dalit students. It appears that parents and children are largely unaware of the scholarship provisions by both the school and the government. Due to the limited data collected, the true extent of the situation remains uncertain, necessitating further research with a larger sample of students to triangulate the information.

Regarding need-based scholarships for children from brick kilns, no such scholarships were reported to have been allocated specifically for them, and the children themselves did not recall receiving any scholarships or having a clear understanding of it. Therefore, the schools are responsible in disseminating proper information to the parents and the children regarding need-based scholarships.

In addition, WASH facilities in the schools attended by the children were inadequate, and therefore, should be addressed to promote meaningful participation of children as envisioned by the SESP.

5.4 Targeted resources and interventions: a necessity to uplifting the lives of children in brick kilns

As cited in the Sharma and Dangal (2019), specific targeted resources are in operation to uplift the lives of children living in the brick kiln, especially for child laborers. These targeted resources consists of NGO/INGO–run classes near the brick kiln and NGO-run daycare centers for children under the age of five established, particularly aimed at protecting the children from hazardous work in the kiln and assisting the parents to take care of their children. A similar concept called “*shishu shyahar*” (childcare center) was mentioned by the parents and principals. The respondents clarified that this is rather a kiln-operated initiative for children of the brick workers under the age of five years during brickmaking season. The prevalence of this child care center is not widely known, but it has the potential to be replicated in other settings and kilns. This can be instrumental in changing the lives of the children and brick workers for the better by providing an environment to safeguard the children.

Apart from this, no other governmental or non-governmental initiative was recorded despite clear indicated output in the School Education Sector Plan (2022, p. 40), in which it has been mentioned that the government is to provide need-based alternative learning to ensure access and learning continuity for the children who seasonally migrate. This is a significant gap which needs to be addressed to ensure that no child is left behind of the education system.

5.5 Parents’ perception and its role in children’s education

The data indicates that the parents’ perception of education is an influential factor in the learning continuity of the children. The information received from some of the parents and a principal provided can be implied that those parents who view education of high regards prioritize their children’s education and henceforth decide upon not migrating for the sake of their learning continuity. In contrast, those parents who were demotivated and possessed little value for the children’s education were involved in seasonal migration which ultimately promoted learning discontinuity. Daly , Hillis, Shrestha, & Shrestha (2021) also suggests that poor quality education and low parental perception of the value of education hinder the continuity of children’s education.

Along with this, the study also found that the parents' education does not necessarily have significant impacts on their children's education. Despite all the parents interviewed for the study having not completed the tenth grade, their perception of their children's education was still intact with high value. This contradicts with the findings by Sharma and Dangal (2019), which suggest that parents who were more educated and aware had optimistic views towards the future financial return of education, while less educated and less aware parents were pessimistic and prioritize immediate economic return.

5.6 Child labor and education nexus

Although the cases of child labor were not extensively documented, one case was recorded during the focus group discussion and there were also observations made by the principals. It was evident that child labor persists in the kiln despite the prohibition made by the kiln owners. This shows that it is the families own compulsion and need that push the children to get involved in brickmaking. Child labor does not happen independently, rather it is done to support the adult labor either directly in the labor market or the household economy, to ensure that the adult labor can perform their job and meet their daily output requirements (ILO, 2017, p. 30). The data received from the study complements this statement. While direct participation of children in brickmaking might not be always evident, the children's involvement in household duties one way or another will always negatively impact their education.

Past studies including a study by ILO (2014, p. 31) suggests that the time when the children enter the labor force is when they are disengaged from formal education or schooling. In contrast to this, the respondent from the child labor case recorded in this study continued schooling despite being engaged in brickmaking. There are definite negative consequences to this, however, total disengagement from schooling was not documented during the field study. This provides an explanation about the significant influence of the children's and parents' perception on the value of education.

5.7 Migration to the kiln: a gateway towards educational attainment

Bajracharya, Gurung, Mathema, Sharma, & Mishra (2021) suggests that seasonal migration is a major barrier to learning continuity of the children whose parents work in the brick kilns. However, when it is not seasonal, migration can be a gateway towards educational opportunities for some despite few challenges reported on the section "migration as a challenge to children's education". The two case stories collected during data collection provide real-life examples:

Renuka (female; name changed for anonymity) is a 14-year-old eighth grade student in Devi Secondary School, located about 1.8 km from the kiln. Originally from Sindhuli, she had migrated to the kiln with her parents and two younger brothers six years ago. While most families in the kiln migrate seasonally, she stays in the kiln along with her family even during the off-season for the sake of her education and only visits her hometown during festivals.

Renuka is academically sound. She often ranks first in her class. Unlike her previous school in her village, apart from studies, Renuka plays Taekwondo and frequently participates in various competitions. She even made it to the National level competition of Taekwondo. She has been balancing her time in her studies and Taekwondo by going to school from 9:00 AM and catching up Taekwondo practice from 6:00 AM to 7:30 AM before going to school. Along with Taekwondo, she receives chance to take part in dance.

Living in the kiln does have shortcomings. Occasionally, Renuka takes on household responsibilities when her mother is sick and often, she assists her father in brickmaking during the season. Besides this, financial hurdles cause strain in her educational pursuit. In addition, delay in payment of wage from the kiln sometimes makes it difficult for her family to fulfill educational needs such as uniform or books.

Despite these barriers and challenges, Renuka believes that she would not have got the opportunity to take part in Taekwondo or dance if she had been studying in her village. The school that she is currently studying in, she praises that the curriculum is taught in English unlike her previous school in village, and so it has enhanced her language proficiency.

For Renuka the access to educational opportunities have been the result of migration to the kiln with her family, providing her the hope to continue on her journey towards educational attainment. Despite challenges and obstacles, Renuka's story illustrates how the opportunities she received outweighed the challenges that she and her family have faced along the way.

Kiran (male, named changed for anonymity), 11 years old, is a fifth-grade student in Devi School located 700 meters from Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory. Eldest amongst the siblings, he currently lives in the kiln with his parents and a younger brother and a younger sister. He had moved to the kiln around 4 years ago from Dang with his family as both of his parents are brick workers. Now, they only visit their hometown during festivals and when they have work there.

Kiran's educational pursuit after migrating to the kiln had a rough beginning. Due to lack of birth certificate, he was unable to enroll to the school in which he is currently attending. Till then, he had attended "shishu shyahar" (childcare center) established by the kiln itself. Only after acquiring his birth certificate, he was able to get admission in the school.

Kiran recalls his previous school in the village being located afar and was pretty irregular on attendance. His studies have improved after attending the school nearby to the kiln in Bhaktapur.

Prior to all of his family migrating to the kiln, only his father used to migrate which oftentimes created problems in his studies at the village. He reminisces the financial difficulty they would face sometimes to afford educational expenses. But ever since his family moved to the kiln, it has become easier because they are all together. And now, he often ranks amongst the top three during examinations in the school.

Kiran believes that his studies have improved, although not significantly enough. He finds the teachers are satisfactory and appreciates the friendship he has developed among his current classmates, which he believes is better than those in his previous school in village. Unfortunately, the decision of his family to return to the village again have questioned his learning continuity.

These stories are just a glimpse of how the children migrating to the kiln for their parents' work can benefit the children's education in terms of acquiring better quality of the education and more opportunities apart from studies. However, it is important to note that the decision to migrate to the kiln and staying there during off-season for the children's education essentially goes back to the parents' perception of the value of education amongst many other factors. Besides these two stories are the stories of many other families and children who migrate seasonally, almost always casting an uncertainty on the children's education.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

The study was able to address the research questions through an application of qualitative methodology using In-Depth Interviews with the parents, Key Informant Interviews with the principals and Focus Group Discussions with the children. The uniqueness of this study lies in the contextual specificity as the study delved deep into the lives of children in the brick kiln, not only understanding their educational status but also capturing the relationship between migration, education and parental perceptions. It was discovered that those families with a prior intention to return back to their hometown (with clear tendency of seasonal migration) in arrival to the kiln were more likely to not enroll their children in school, while those families possessing positive perception of the value of education remained behind at the kiln during off-season to ensure learning continuity of the children. Overall, the perception of the parents towards education of the children was found to be directly proportional to their decision to migrate or not to migrate. While this valuable insight provides contribution to the existing body of knowledge, it also contributes to providing evidence to tailor targeted policies and interventions that address the unique challenges faced by children in the face of seasonal migration.

Despite many pre-defined challenges and negative impacts of the brick kilns on the environment, labor market and the lives of the workers, the brick kilns in Nepal have provided a unique window of opportunity for the poor and marginalized communities to migrate, seasonal or otherwise, to enable and explore pathways for their next generation to end the vicious cycle of poverty and illiteracy by providing access to education. And for that matter, the study suggests further research to be conducted with a mere focus on the intricate interplay between seasonal migration and education.

6.1 Recommendations

As suggested by the literature review, very few studies have primarily addressed to answer the education status of the brick workers' children. Upon conducting this study, the following recommendations are made:

➤ For the government agencies

- i. Prioritize implementation of non-formal schooling and alternative learning opportunities for children of seasonal migrant workers, not just in brick industry but in overall seasonal work sector, by making budgetary provisions and developing policies that incentive and support the migrant workers' families to ensure continuity of the children's education.

- ii. Regular monitoring by the local government should be encouraged to keep updates on the status of children's education within their local constituent, keeping track of their migration status (if applicable), their duration of migration, access to education, and continuity of education and so on.
- iii. Establishment of social protection schemes for the brick workers (and other informal sector workers) that provide financial incentives to families for sending their children to school regularly, thereby reducing the economic pressures that contribute to child labor.
- iv. Formulation of targeted interventions that improve access to equitable quality education and prioritize children have consistent access to education regardless of their migratory patterns.

➤ **For brick kilns**

- i. Establishment and expansion of childcare centers to promote childcare facility for the workers' children along with provision of basic learning opportunities for the children until the age of 18, through the support from local government.
- ii. If formal schooling is not possible, implementation of non-formal classes in the kiln premises or within the proximity of the kilns is encouraged through collaborations with government and non-government agencies.
- iii. Creation of conducive environment in the kiln by installing basic amenities such as internet access, proper living conditions for the families so that the children of the brick workers can learn and perform academically well.
- iv. Stricter implementation and internalization of the legal frameworks that forbid the employment of children under working age, ensuring compliance with child labor laws.
- v. Provision of legal support and resources to families in brick kilns to ensure that they are aware of their rights and can take appropriate action if they witness child labor or exploitation of rights.

➤ **For community members**

- i. Fostering stronger collaboration and relationship amongst the schools and community members including the parents to address any existing issues regarding child labor and education of vulnerable children such as the children of brick workers.

➤ **For future research**

- i. Research emphasizing the educational status of brick kiln workers' children across different regions to examine variations in challenges and opportunities and identify region-specific interventions.

- ii. Research examining the trajectory of migration throughout the year and the implications to children’s education due to the constant movement.
- iii. Research emphasizing the status and challenges in education of left-behind children in the hometowns of brick workers who have left for work in the kilns.
- iv. Longitudinal study to assess the long-term impact of migration and brickmaking on children’s education and their future socioeconomic status.
- v. Comparative study between the children of brick kilns who attend school with those who do not, along with examining its associated consequences.

➤ **For the project**

For the project, this study makes the recommendations in Table 6 below along with envisioning each of its projected outcomes.

Table 6: Project-level recommendations and outcomes

Themes	Project-level recommendations	Projected outcomes
Access to - and participation in education	Encourage non-formal classes or alternative learning near kilns through collaborations with government and NGOs if formal schooling is not feasible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased access to education ● Reduced child labor ● Improved literacy and developed skills
Targeted resources and interventions	Expand child care centers to promote child care facility for the workers’ children along with provision of basic learning opportunities for the children until the age of 18.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improved child development and child care ● Reduced child labor ● Reduced burden of parents resulting in more productive work
Barriers and challenges to education	Conduct nationally representative research to identify barriers and challenges among children of seasonal workers, identify areas with low indicators on educational outcomes and devise interventions and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Evidence-based interventions and approach leading to improved educational outcomes of children

	project strategy ensuring constructive government and citizen engagement.	whose education is challenged by seasonal migration
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Appendix

Appendix A: Consent form

Exploring the educational status of children of seasonal migrant workers living in brick kiln: A case study of Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory in Bhaktapur district

Respondent: Head Teachers/Parents

Informed consent,

Namaste, my name is Phobe Barahi. I am an undergraduate student pursuing my Bachelors in Community Development in Kathmandu University School of Arts. As part of my final year thesis, I am conducting an individual research study titled “Exploring the educational status of seasonal migrant children living in brick kiln: a case study of Shwet Bhairab Brick Factory in Bhaktapur district”.

Your involvement in this study is entirely voluntary. You have the freedom to choose whether to answer any or all of the questions based on your preference. Participating in this study does not offer any direct advantages or disadvantages to you. However, the information you provide will play a vital role in making recommendations and suggestions to educational institutions, government, non-government organization, aiding them in shaping, designing, and implementing policies and interventions to improve the lives of children residing in brick kilns.

The information collected from you will be kept confidential and your identity will not be revealed in the final report. You will not be subjected to any harm whatsoever, physical or otherwise. This will be used for study purposes only.

Would you like to participate in this study?

1. I want to
2. I do not want to.

(If the answer is 2, then the interview is over.)

Can I record this discussion?

1. Yes
2. No

Interview date: date/month/year

Starting time:

Location:

Appendix B: Assent form

Exploring the educational status of children of seasonal migrant workers living in brick kiln: A case study of Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory in Bhaktapur district

Respondent: Children

Assent Form,

Hello, I am Phobe Barahi, currently pursuing my degree in Bachelor in Community Development at Kathmandu University School of Arts.

I require your assistance for my project I am conducting as part of my final year assignment. Your participation in this study is totally your choice. You can decide if you want to answer some or all of the questions. You have the right to opt out of the discussion at any time.

What you say will be kept private. Nobody will know it was you who said it. Your safety and well-being are really important, and nothing you say will cause any harm.

Would you like to join this study?

1. Yes, I want to.
2. No, I don't want to.

(If you pick 2, then the discussion is over.)

Is it okay if I record our talk?

1. Yes.
2. No.

Interview date: date/month/year

Starting time:

Location:

Appendix C: IDI Guideline

Exploring the educational status of children of seasonal migrant workers living in brick kiln: A case study of Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory in Bhaktapur district

Respondent: Parents

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Name of the respondent
2. Age:
3. Sex:
4. Caste/Ethnicity:
5. Permanent Address:
6. Temporary Address:
7. Place of origin:
8. Number of members in household (only for Parents):
9. Number of children (only for Parents):
10. Migratory status:
11. Frequency of migration, if seasonal:
12. Literacy:
 - Completed till SLC
 - Not completed SLC:
 - Completed till +2
 - Completed till Bachelor/Masters
 - Illiterate
 - Others:
13. Employment status:
 - Full-time employed
 - Part-time employed
 - Seasonally employed
 - Not employed (if this option is selected, skip 9 and 10)
14. Place of working:
15. Designation:

Section 2: Access to – and participation in education

1. Are there educational institutions near the brick kiln? How convenient is to access to educational institutions around the community?

Probe: access to formal institutions like schools and colleges and access to non-formal institutions like technical, skills, vocational classes

2. How do the children living in brick kilns participate in their schools? Are there facilities which ensures meaningful participation of children? (According to what their children have talked to them about and their own observation)

Probe: such as provision of textbooks (free of cost), need-based allocation of scholarship, mid-day meal from ECED to Grade 8, health-care services (periodic check-ups, availability of first aid kits and deworming), WASH facilities, child-friendly environment including gender-responsive and disability-friendly environment, disaster-resilient physical infrastructure?

Additional questions:

3. What kinds of additional support or packages are provided to your children? [Instruction: Probe for mid-day meal, scholarships, and other facilities].
4. How supportive is the school in supporting your child to continue education and improve learning outcomes? What kinds of facilities have their provided?
5. What shall school administration do to support your children in improving their learning outcomes?

Section 3: Resources and interventions available for seasonal migrant children living in brick kiln

6. What kind of resources are in place specifically catering to the children living in brick kilns, especially those who migrate seasonally?

Probe: Alternative and open learning, Provision of community learning centers and day care centers, Policy frameworks

7. Are there any interventions implemented that is dedicated towards serving the seasonal migrant children living in the kiln in terms of education? If yes, what are those?

Probe: interventions, programs, projects, implemented by Government, NGOs, INGOs

Section 4: Barriers and challenges to education of seasonal migrant children

➤ At individual level

8. What barriers and challenges do the children face on an individual level?

➤ At household level

9. What barriers and challenges do the children face on a household level?

Probe Household responsibility, economic status, living condition, perception and value towards education of family, gender

➤ At school level

10. What barriers and challenges do the children face on a school level?

Probe: Impact on attendance, completion of curriculum, completion of assignments, discrimination, stigmatization

➤ At community level

11. What kind of barriers and challenges do the children face on a community level?

Probe: Community perception, support, social stigmas or discrimination, Covid-19 pandemic

Additional questions:

12. Just because you are seasonal migrant workers, what challenges do you face in supporting your children in their education? In terms of school admission, everyday learning, improved learning outcomes, school retention.

13. What types of challenges do you think your children face in acquiring education and improved learning outcomes? In terms of everyday learning, doing homework, improved learning outcomes, school retention.

14. What opportunities do you think your children have been deprived of just because you are seasonal migrant workers?

Section 5: Recommendations

15. What should be done to resolve the challenges and remove barriers for children living in brick kilns?

Probe: in school level, in household level, in community level, by the government, etc

Is there anything else you'd like to say to me that you think is important to share?

Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts and opinions.

Appendix D: KII Guideline

Exploring the educational status of children of seasonal migrant workers living in brick kiln: A case study of Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory in Bhaktapur district

Respondent: Principals

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Name of the respondent
2. Age:
3. Sex:
4. Caste/Ethnicity:
5. Permanent Address:
6. Temporary Address:
7. Place of origin:
8. Migratory status (if required):
9. Literacy:
 - Completed till SLC
 - Not completed SLC:
 - Completed till +2
 - Completed till Bachelor/Masters
 - Illiterate
 - Others:
10. Employment status:
 - Permanently employed
 - Temporarily employed
11. Designation:
12. Duration of the employment:

Section 2: Background Information of the School

13. Name of school:
14. Total number of students:
15. Total number of girl students:
16. Total number of boy students:
17. Total number of teachers:

18. Tentative number of children from Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory

Section 3: Access to – and participation in education

1. Are there other educational institutions near the brick kiln? How convenient is for the children of the brick kilns to access to educational institutions around the community?

Probe: access to formal institutions like schools and colleges and access to non-formal institutions like technical, skills, vocational classes

2. How do the children living in brick kilns participate in their schools? Are there facilities which ensures meaningful participation of children?

Probe: such as provision of textbooks (free of cost), need-based allocation of scholarship, mid-day meal from ECED to Grade 8, health-care services (periodic check-ups, availability of first aid kits and deworming), WASH facilities, child-friendly environment including gender-responsive and disability-friendly environment, disaster-resilient physical infrastructure?

Section 4: Resources and interventions available for children of seasonal migrant children living in brick kiln

3. What kind of resources are in place specifically catering to children living in brick kilns, especially those who migrate seasonally?

Probe: Alternative and open learning, Provision of community learning centres and day care centres, Policy frameworks

4. Are there any interventions implemented (in school and community) that is dedicated towards serving the children of seasonal migrant workers living in the kiln in terms of education? If yes, what are those?

Probe: interventions, programs, projects, implemented by Government, NGOs, INGOs

5. What kind of policies guide the educational practices of the seasonal migrant children residing in the kiln?

Probe: SESP, Brick Sector in Nepal National Policy Framework

Section 5: Barriers and challenges to education of children of seasonal migrant workers in brick industry

➤ At individual level

6. What barriers and challenges do the children face on an individual level?

➤ At household level

7. What barriers and challenges do the children face on a household level?
Probe: Household responsibility, economic status, living condition, perception and value towards education of family, gender
 - At school level
8. What barriers and challenges do the children face on a school level?
Probe: Impact on attendance, completion of curriculum, completion of assignments, discrimination, stigmatization
 - At community level
9. What kind of barriers and challenges do the children face on a community level?
Probe: Community perception, support, social stigmas or discrimination, Covid-19 pandemic

Section 6: Recommendations

10. What should be done to resolve the challenges and remove barriers for children living in brick kilns?

Probe: in school level, in household level, in community level, by the government, etc.

Is there anything else you'd like to say to me that you think is important to share?

Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts and opinions.

Appendix E: FGD Guideline

Exploring the educational status of children of seasonal migrant workers living in brick kiln: A case study of Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory in Bhaktapur district

Respondent: Children

Section I: Access to – and participation in education

1. Do/did you have access to education? If yes, in which institutions (formal or non-formal)?
2. How difficult is it to get access to those institutions being the children seasonal migrant?
3. How is your participation in education?
4. What type of facilities are there to ensure meaningful participation in school?
Probe: such as provision of textbooks (free of cost), need-based allocation of scholarship, mid-day meal from ECED to Grade 8, health-care services (periodic check-ups, availability of first aid kits and deworming), WASH facilities, child-friendly environment including gender-responsive and disability-friendly environment, disaster-resilient physical infrastructure?

Section II: Resources and interventions available for seasonal migrant children living in brick kiln

5. Do you have access to any specialized educational programs or interventions designed for children living in brick kilns and migrating seasonally? If so, how have these resources supported your education?
6. What type of assistance or guidance from educational institutions or organizations are present that specifically target children living in brick kilns and migrating seasonally (like yourself)? If so, please share your experiences.
7. What type of resources are there specifically catering to children (like yourself) in brick kiln who migrate seasonally contributed to your educational development and academic achievements? Can you provide any examples?
8. To what extent do you feel that the existing resources and support systems for children living in brick kilns, especially those who migrate seasonally, are adequate to meet your educational needs?

Section III: Barriers and challenges to education faced by children of seasonal migrant workers in Shwet Bhairav Brick Factory

➤ Individual level

9. As children living in a brick kiln (and migrating seasonally), what challenges do you personally face in accessing education?
10. What type of specific difficulties you encounter as an individual when adapting to different educational environments during seasonal migration?

➤ Household level

11. To what extent do you have to look after the household and siblings? If yes, how does it affect your studies?
12. How does your involvement in household chores or other responsibilities affect your studies as a seasonal migrant child living in a brick kiln?
13. What type of barriers and challenges regarding the living condition in the kiln impact on your studies?
Probe: no table, no proper lighting,
14. What type of barriers and challenges regarding economic status impact on you studies?
Probe: difficulty in paying fees, buying textbooks, uniform
15. How often do you get involved in earning extra income for the household? How does the responsibilities of earning extra income for the household impact on your studies?
16. How is the perception of your parents regarding your education? How do they value it?
17. How does being a girl or a boy in your household affect your education?

➤ School level

18. How does seasonal migration and living in the brick kiln impact your ability to attend school regularly and engage in your studies?
19. What type of specific challenges related to curriculum or educational environment that you face as a seasonal migrant child at school?
20. What are the obstacles you face in terms of completing your school assignments and keeping up with the curriculum while living in a brick kiln and migrating seasonally?
21. To what extent do you experience discrimination or stigmatization at school or in the community due to being a seasonal migrant child living in a brick kiln? If yes, can you elaborate on those experiences?

➤ Community level

22. How does the community perceive and support the education of seasonal migrant children living in brick kilns?
23. To what extent do the children from brick kilns within the community face social stigmas or discrimination?
24. How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected on your studies?

Section IV: Recommendations

25. What can be done to resolve these challenges and remove the barriers?

Probe: in household level, in school, in the brick kiln, in the community by the government (local/provincial/federal)

Is there anything else you'd like to say to me that you think is important to share?

Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts and opinions.