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Child Labour in Bhutan: The Challenges of Implementing Child Rights in Bhutan

By

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Declaration

The work I have submitted is my own effort. I certify that all the material in the Dissertation which is not my own has been identified and acknowledged. No materials are included for which a degree has been previously conferred upon me.

Date 29 May, 2011

Signed: *Kishore Kumar CHHETRI*

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Dedication

I dedicate my work to all the children of Bhutan who landed up working at an early age in their lives instead of going to school for no reasons of their own. To Nitra Ghalley and Suk Maya Gurung who inspired me to decide on this dissertation. You are always part of my family!

Abstract

This dissertation attempts to contextualize the practice of child labour in Bhutan by examining various socio-economic and cultural aspects. By reviewing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, this dissertation looks into the policies, Acts and strategies adopted by the Royal Government of Bhutan in reducing child labour. It describes various characteristics of child labour in Bhutan. It also provides an analysis of domestic child labour in the country.

The study is mostly based on pragmatic observations and explanatory narrative approach in which children have expressed their real life experiences while at work. Findings are also based on interviews conducted with other actors from both the government sectors and NGOs who work to promote and protect child rights in Bhutan. Few theoretical assumptions have been considered to understand the underpinning causes of child labour.

Key works: child, childhood, child labour, child rights, child work, CRC, domestic child labour, poverty, education.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ECCD	:	Early Childhood Care and Development
FYP	:	Five Year Plan
GNH	:	Gross National Happiness
NCWC	:	National Commission for Women and Children
NPPF	:	National Pension and Provident Fund
NSB	:	National Statistical Bureau
MLHR	:	Ministry of Labour and Human Resources
MOE	:	Ministry of Education
RENEW	:	Respect, Nurture and Empower Women
RGOB	:	Royal Government of Bhutan
RICB	:	Royal Insurance Corporation of Bhutan
SAARC	:	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
UPE	:	Universal Primary Education
YDF	:	Youth Development Fund

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In the rural Bhutanese context where small families depend on all members to the contribution of labour, ‘child work’ is perhaps seen as a natural part of life. Children are engaged in carrying out household chores, agricultural works, maintenance of livestock and other activities. Children as young as six to seven years of age form part of this labour force (Black *et al.* 2006). This has been continuing for generations and is naturally accepted by society. Payment for such labour contribution within a family is usually not the norm. This, in a way, contributes positively to the overall development of the children as they acquire essential skills: learn to work, cooperate with others and become contributory citizens and help build communities and societies. Therefore, work which comes within the legal limits is not targeted for elimination. However, parents need to become aware that children should not be engaged in tasks that hinder their emotional, intellectual and physical development which otherwise is categorized as ‘child labour’.

Child labour is significant in Bhutan (National Commission for Women and Children, 2009). Because not many concrete studies¹ have been conducted on this issue, it is difficult to say how many children are working and to what extent. It is even more difficult to assess the extent to which children are subjected to child labour. Many of these children are unnoticed and often remain unheard of their plight. Children are involved in agriculture works. They are seen working in the fields, performing household chores and looking after younger ones. Children are also found working in the restaurants, shops, hotels, assistants to truck drivers and as street vendors usually sent by their parents to sell snacks. Domestic child labour², a hidden profession of the children is also an area where many children work. It is in the urban areas where most children are employed as domestic child labourer. And “the number of informal

¹ According to National Commission for Women and Children, there are only a few reports on domestic work and case studies of certain activities undertaken by children in Bhutan.

² The word ‘labour’ will be used in this study instead of worker as most of these children work away from their homes and most of them get paid for their work.

domestic babysitters, who are literally known as *alu-tami* is constantly on rise in urban centers” (Lham, 2005). These children often work in difficult conditions where they are paid too less, they have to work long hours and the girls are subjected to sexual exploitation (Black *et al.* 2006).

It is evident from the above descriptions that there are serious concerns on the practices of child labour in Bhutan and the urgency to sensitize the issue openly and finally adopt policies to reduce and eliminate them.

The Royal Government of Bhutan (RGOB) committed itself to defend the rights of the child when it became one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 23 May 1990 (UNICEF, undated). However, Bhutan is not a member of ILO and thus not a party to any of the conventions on working children such as Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment - C 138, and Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the worst forms of Child Labour - C 182 (National Commission for Women and Children, 2009).

1.2 History of Labour in Bhutan

The traditional labour system comprised of compulsory labour forces from all sections of the society. They were mostly engaged in the construction and renovation of Dzongs and temples, footpaths and water canals. Labour was also a form of tax that individuals between 18 and 60 years old had to contribute to the government (Lham, 2008). “The ordinary men used to carry *sarim woola* or conveyance of the official loads from one village to another while women wove clothes (*toethag benthag*) for the government officials” (ibid: 40). In the traditional context, children played a very important role by contributing their labour towards their family in household tasks. They were customarily engaged in different household chores or to carry out minor tasks in the fields. Some older children also took part in woola.

With the advent of modernization the labour system has undergone series of changes. The most prominent was the recruitment of labourers for the construction of first motorable roads in the country. Recruitment of labourers between the ages of 17-55

years was approved by the National Assembly, during its 16th Session. In addition to this, it entailed the import of a large number of workers from India and Nepal to meet the acute shortage of national work force. Even children between 15-16 years were considered depending on their abilities (NCWC, 2009). It can therefore be concluded that some form of child labour existed in Bhutan.

1.3 Argument and Problem Area

Bhutan's developmental plans began in early 1960s and progressed very cautiously not copying everything that developed countries had in place. Today, with the rise in living standard, Bhutanese are enjoying better life; being healthier and living longer. However, a significant number of the population has been left behind comprising of children who are found working in both rural and urban settlements. While a majority of these children work within their family and at home, a significant number of children leave their homes to work and primarily to earn. These children have not received much attention from the state as most of them remain unnoticed though they work in agricultural sectors, industry sectors and domestic sectors. Except for some coverage in the media there is no reliable data or information on child labour in Bhutan (ibid).

Although there are policies to protect children's rights such as the Labour Act 2007 and free basic education, there are many children who are engaged in child labour (Kuensel, 2009). As there is no outright ban on child labour, there continues to be a high demand for children as hired help in the home. According to Bhutan Living Standards Survey 2003, an estimated one-quarter of children aged between 10–14 years were working and that the proportion for girls is higher (22.3%) than boys (15.9%). This further confirms that the number of girls studying is less when compared to boys (Wangmo, 2010).

Child labour problem in Bhutan persists covertly or overtly. The study on the situation of Bhutanese Youth found out that 39.2% of school students were working part time (MoE, 2006). For those who were uneducated, the situation was worse as they worked in industrial sectors and in restaurants. The authorities also know that domestic child labour, babysitting in particular is rampant especially where both husband and wife

are employed. Babysitters are not only deprived of their rights to education, they are at times exploited by the employers. Unfortunately the monitoring officers from the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources (MoLHR) have not been able to unearth the reality and have remained incapable or reluctant to intrude into any private house.

The absence of distinction between child labour and child work is a big puzzle. Internationally, there is no convincing definition on child labor. The dilemma is whether to distinguish a child's engagement in various works as *economic or non-economic activities* or whether both categories of activities are to be treated as child labour. Such situation as above goes in favour of the employers of children who resort to unduly treatment on children.

This study will examine certain factors that lead to the prevalence of child labour. Therefore it is critical to seek answers to questions such as; why is child labour still prevalent despite government's claim to fight it? Is child labour related to socio-cultural factors? Or, does it result from income of the family?

1.4 Objective of the Research

This research examines the effectiveness of the attempts of RGOB in fighting child labour, particularly in the implementation of its policies. It also looks at how the social structural settings of rural Bhutan make child work an acceptable practice. A theoretical explanation of the practice of the factors and elements that underpin the cause of child labour is discussed. Strategies to reduce child labour and use their potentials productively will be suggested in tune with the Gross National Happiness (GNH), the guiding development philosophy of the Bhutanese government.

The findings of this research will help the policy makers to reflect on the existing policies and refine it and eventually design programs and plan resource allocation to address child labour in Bhutan.

This study will be founded on the following fundamental questions:

- What are the child labour issues and challenges that confront the Bhutanese government?

- How successful has the government been in implementing strategies and measures to curb child labour?
- What is the external perspectives³ on child labour policies and implementation progress?

1.5 Delimitation

The intention of this study is not to portray children as helpless victims of the labour market. It is also not within the range of this research to cover every aspect of child labour. Therefore domestic child labour is the focus of this study and emphasis is made to identify the working conditions of these children deranged by present-day dilemma which is worrying to the international community and to Bhutan in particular. Domestic child labour is one of the most common⁴ forms of child labour in Bhutan which has received very little and is against the guiding principles of CRC. Other scholars have also argued that “All countries that permit domestic child labour, either explicitly or implicitly, are violating this basic principle by ignoring the best interests of the child in favour of the economic interests of their employer” (Donnellan, 2005: 4).

The role of the RGOB and its social welfare schemes will be discussed to find out its response in addressing the issue of child labour in general. National policies, strategies and laws will be discussed and wherever applicable references will be made in correspondence to International conventions concerning the protection of rights of the child both inside home and outside. This is also in line with the state’s responsibility to implement human rights laws. Finally, the findings and recommendations of this research can be useful and applicable in addressing other aspects of child labour issues.

³ For the purpose of this study, external refers to other stakeholders such as NGOs, CSOs, general Bhutanese public, media, etc. as opposed to internal (government and civil service).

⁴ Child labourers are common across agriculture, industry and services sectors (NCWC, 2009).

1.6 Rationale for the study

In 2007 in Paro ⁵ I happened to encounter with an 8 year old girl from Dhapar ⁶ who was on her way to begin her babysitting job. She was staying with her brother. Her parents were too poor to support their large family. There was no school in her village so no one in her family had been to a school. After I was able to convince her brother I took the girl with me and got her admitted in the school. This was exactly a replication of what I did to a boy in 2000 in Chargarey ⁷. My interest in child labour developed during the early phase of my present study at Gothenburg, Sweden in 2009 when I was getting more and more exposed to issues related to violation of human rights. The issue of young children working around the world and in particular, domestic labourers in Bhutan ignited me to think more on the plight of these children. Domestic child labour has received very little attention from the government as it has not been discussed widely in policy plans or national forums (NCWC, 2009). There are programs to address issues on the rights of children but is mostly focused on school going children. The problem of domestic child labour is one of the issues affecting the lives of children in Bhutan.

Given the fact that Bhutan opened up to the outer world just few decades ago, child labour did not draw much attention from the international organizations as it is doing today. Another reason probably could have been the high concentration of child labourers in some of the neighbouring countries of India, Bangladesh and Nepal which captured international attention and thus ignoring the magnitude of children working in Bhutan. Yet under any circumstances the acceptance of child labour violates several rights approved in CRC such as “to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development” as per Article 32 in it (Ghandhi, 2008:103). It also violates their right “to just and favourable conditions of work” as covered in Article 23.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (ibid: 12). Therefore, it is important to study the practice of child labour in Bhutan by exploring the causes that influence the practice and the impact it has on the rights of every child.

⁵ Paro is a tourist destination in western Bhutan.

⁶ Dhapar is a village under Dagana district in central Bhutan.

⁷ Chargarey is a village under Samtse district in the southern part of Bhutan.

1.7 Summary of Chapters

This research has six chapters. Chapter 1 gives introduction to the problem of child labour Bhutan. It provides an understanding to how child labour is an accepted phenomenon among the Bhutanese society. Chapter 2 is literature review and enables to help understand terms like *child*, *childhood* and *child labour*. Child labour theory is explained in this chapter. It also provides information on the situation of child labour in Bhutan after a description of child labour pattern in the Under Developed Countries (UDC). Chapter 3 is on methodology. It explains each of the procedures undertaken to conduct the research. Various research instruments, the participants, data collection and method to analyze the data are also explained in this chapter. Chapter 4 looks into the government policies and discusses both practicality and impracticality of implementing these instruments. Chapter 5 describes and analyzes research finding which forms the main thrust of this paper. Chapter 6 provides recommendations for further research and policy change.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by defining childhood and work. It also discusses theories and concepts that explain child labour and its continuity in the present world. A section on child labour in the developing countries is included in this chapter which forms a base to understand the situation of child labour in Bhutan that is discussed under separate heading.

Child labour, today has become a focus for research in various academic disciplines such as history, economic history, psychology, social policy, sociology and politics (Lavalette, 1999). Although Bhutan ratified the CRC in 1990, there are no specific academic studies carried out that tend to describe the conditions, issues and requirement of the *children* in the country. Therefore, international conventions, particularly the CRC and the ILO Conventions will be considered in this work. National instruments such as the Constitution of Bhutan, Labour Act of 2007, Bhutanese law structure, education policy and various other regulations pertaining to protect the rights of children will also be referred to in broader spectrum. Related literatures on child labour are taken into account to give a clear conclusion on the condition of the working children. Narrations as told by the informants⁸ are also included in the study wherever relevant and as far as possible they have been kept to their originality. This information is very crucial given the limited data available as mentioned above.

2.2 “Child” and the Invention of “Childhood”

CRC Article 1 states that a child ‘means every human being below age of eighteen years unless, under the law applicable to the child majority is attained earlier’

⁸ They include employers of children, civil servants, NGO staff and child labourers.

(Ghandhi, 2009: 96). But different states apply their own definition of child often ignoring the above conception. Article 171 of the Bhutan Labour and Employment Act categorizes any working individual below the age 17 as a child (Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, 2007). Article 114 of the Penal Code of Bhutan defines that a child of 10 years and below shall not be held liable for any offence committed by him/her (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2004). Though the above two factors may not be taken as a definition of child, such interpretations often create a room for the varying perceptions that the general public may hold, particularly the employers of children.

The definition of 'Child' and 'Childhood' is not consistent among societies across the world as it is fundamentally based on the values held by different cultures. Haider (2008) confirms that such differences lead to a variety of conceptualizations of childhood. However, as commonly understood childhood is a progression towards adulthood. This is justified by Cunningham's (1995) remark that childhood is a process in human life. Every child has the right to be an individual and not be proscribed by others to decide his or her freedom. Unprecedented restrictions that are imposed on a child can kill the very basic right of being a human being. According to Cunningham (2005), for young children 'the active recreations of childhood and youth are necessary to the growth, the vigor and the right conformation of the human body' (ibid: 141).

A general vague perception that children were insignificant or were not sentimentalized by their families and even by the society in Middle Ages, is refuted by Snell (2011). According to her, what led to such a conclusion was the lack of representation of medieval culture in recordable forms such as literature or artwork. Mayall (2002) however argues that children comprise as a minority social group. Therefore, social setting is crucial in how childhood is understood by both adults and children as a time of dependency and subordination.

By the end of the eighteenth century a new construction of childhood had evolved. The conception of employing a child was no longer considered to be the norm. Instead childhood was now seen as constituting a separate and distinct set of

characteristics requiring protection and fostering through school education (Hendrick, 1997).

2.3 Perception and Attitude Towards Child Labour

Horn (1994), confirms that the history of children working as early as pre-industrial era was probably greater than during the Industrial Revolution. Children mostly worked in agricultural societies then (Shahrokhi, 1996). They were exposed to harsh and brutal treatment by the employers and to some extent by their own parents. In non-agricultural employment they were made to work for long hours in unhealthy, dank and often cramped work places (Pettitt, 1998). When the Industrial Revolution broke out in Britain, production was brought out of individual homes into the public domain and 'the employment of children on a vast scale became the most important social feature of English life' (Horn, 1994:7). The spread of factory production was reasonably accountable for the problem of child labour. It soon became a tendency within the labour market, in some sectors, to substitute expensive adult male labour for cheaper female and/or child labour. This resulted in longer working hours for less money which only benefitted the employers (Pettitt, 1998). At that time, children were commonly employed in factories, mines and mills. Young girls were mostly engaged in sewing, knitting, spinning and straw plaiting. Boys as young as 5 to 7 had tougher jobs to perform such as chimney sweeping, leather softening, coal mining and agriculture related work. It was deemed essential by farmers that children begin work at an early age to become efficient adult labourers besides being a source of cheap labour (Horn, 1994). Therefore the attitudes of the employers greatly affected deciding the working age of children.

The history of child labor in United States of America (USA) is equally unsavory. Children were highly chosen for work as the owners found them easy to manage, cheaper and less likely to strike (Child Labour Public Education Project, undated). They were mostly employed in the street trades, industrial homework, the textile mills and glass factories. Child workers were very much viewed as an additional source of low-wage labor. In a way, they were forced to compete with their parents and other adults for employment often risking their own health and education (William, 2005).

The problem of children working is very complex. Child labour is generally seen as a challenge faced only by developing countries or mostly by third-world countries. This can happen when the employers are not aware that it is against the law to employ children. But usually children are hired because they are cheaper than adults. While the number of working children in developing countries is relatively high, it moderately exists in industrialized and transition countries (ILO, undated). Today, the most widely rejected forms of child labour are the military use of children and trafficking of children for various economic gains.

2.4 Movement against Child Labour

The 19th century also saw the beginning of opposition to child labour in many of the Western countries. Horn (1994) asserts that The 1802 Health and Morals of Apprentices Act was the first indication of labour legislation in Britain. This legislation limited the working hours of pauper children, though in reality it remained largely ineffective. Similarly, acute concerns about destitute children became prominent in 1830s and 1840s which resulted out of the findings of the newly established statistical societies. The English parliament in 1830 ordered the formation of Factory Inquiry Commission to begin a full investigation into the issues of child labour. Subsequently, in 1833 the Factory Act was applied which recognized the need to protect working children and promoted them to attend school. Further, the endorsement of English Education Acts of 1870, 1880 and 1918 made education compulsory for children that drastically reduced the number of child labour (Pettitt, 1998).

Since the founding of the country, the issue of child labour has been of serious concern in USA and at the concern peaked during the industrialization era. The employment of children largely reflected the graded socioeconomic class. Almost all the children of working-class families were engaged in some form of work even when they were very young. Parents regarded child labour as an extra source of income to the household economy.

A law passed in 1836 in Massachusetts was the first effort that provided measures for the provision of education for children (Challis *et al.* 1979). It however did not

endeavor to directly end child labour. It was not until 1869 that Edgar Murphy, an Episcopal clergyman founded the first child labour organization - Alabama Child Labour Committee in USA. Consequently, in 1902-1903 fifteen states recognized and passed child labour laws. Thereafter, in 1906 child labour first became a federal legislative issue under which the Beveridge proposal for regulation of different types of work for children was covered (Whittaker, 2005). Although the legislation was not adopted, in principle it proved to be an area for further study of the position under which children were working or allowed to work. This also led to a series of legislative proposals. And with adoption of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, the modern federal responsibility in child labor regulation came into place. Nevertheless, the situation of child labour in USA remains unresolved. The state is also yet to ratify the CRC.

By the end of 19th century, many societies engaged themselves to fight child labour. Through their efforts 'regulation of child labour was accepted as a legitimate state activity and clearly had some impact on the child labour market' (Pettitt, 1998: 31).

2.5 Human Rights Instruments Specific to the Rights of the Child

The fact that children represent a category which does not have the capability to defend itself was recognized by the global community long time back. One of the significant documents that can be traced back as early as 1924 is the Declaration on the Rights of the Child by the League of Nations relating to children who were severely affected during the First World War (Geach *et al.* 1983). Its overall goal was to provide fundamental needs for their normal development, both materially and spiritually in order to lead a meaningful life. This included shelter for children who lost their parents in the war, care for the handicapped, food, nursing for the sick and protection against every form of child exploitation.

Child labour is generally considered exploitative by international organizations. Bueren (1998) claims that two NGOs viz. Save the Children Fund- a British NGO and the International Council of Women were in operation at the time of the First World War. Since both the organizations strived to support destitute children in war

devastated locations, they shared common ideas and responsibilities. The combination of various activities carried out by these two organizations along with the formation of a Charter on the Rights of the Child initiated by the International Council of Women, led to the adoption of the 1924 Declaration of the Rights of the Child by the Fifth Assembly of League of Nations commonly known as the Declaration of Geneva (ibid).

However, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 did not exclusively address children (Geach *et al.* 1983). The possibility of a second Declaration on the Rights of the Child, after the dissolution of League of Nations was initiated under the auspices of UN and finally on 20th November 1959 the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on the Rights of the Child. However, it is significant that the majority of the members of the UN refused to accept the call for a binding treaty of this declaration (Bueren, 1998). In principle, the Declaration requires parents, voluntary organizations, local authorities and the governments to recognize and defend these rights (Challis *et al.* 1979).

One of the most recent international treaties in protecting the rights of the child and also relevant to child labour is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that was adopted in 1989 and entered into force on 2nd September 1990 (International Labour Office, 1998). This has enormously created awareness among many societies and children today are in better position if not the best. Through such documents the crusade against child labour has become legitimate globally (James *et. al* 2004). Except for Somalia and the US all member countries have ratified the CRC. The CRC covers all aspects that lead to protecting children such as civil, political, economic, and social and their cultural rights. It has special emphasis on the issue with the regulation of armed conflicts. In arguing that children are fighting as soldiers both in the developed and underdeveloped countries, The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (CSUCS) asserts that while the magnitude of children employed in armed forces is most serious in Asia and Africa, many children have been found to be used as soldiers by government and armed groups in Americas, Europe and Middle East (CSUCS, Global Report on Child Soldiers in Donnellan, 2005).

2.6 Child Labour in the Developing Countries

The ILO has estimated that 218 million children work in developing countries. The immensity of these children who are between five and seventeen years under prevailing economic conditions are confined to developing countries in Asia-Pacific region- 122.3 million, the Sub-Saharan Africa- 49.3 million and in the Latin America and the Caribbean- 5.7 million (Copperwiki, 2011).

Over the years, changes in people's lifestyle, demographic pattern and migration have interfered in family life. Nuclear families have become very common. In such cases, the poor depend on every family member to contribute to household economy irrespective of gender and age. Across the developing countries, children are involved in a wide range of work such as in agriculture, industries, plantations and service sectors. Agriculture to a great extent remains the source of employment for children who live in poor countries (Tuttle, 2006).

Exploitation of children in developing countries has been a serious concern. Despite many countries having committed to protect children as obligated by the CRC, child labour is a pertinent issue of the poor countries. Due to the recent developments in the capitalist system around the world the Third World countries are economically motivated to employ the cheapest sources of labour (Gulrajani, 2002). As pointed earlier in chapter 2 that during the industrial revolution in the West children could be abundantly employed since the employers paid them less. So is the case today in the Third World countries- meaning child labourers are high in demand. Further, millions of children in these least developed and poorer countries are also engaged for exploitative purposes such as prostitution, trafficking and child soldiers. Donnellan (2002) asserts that the employment of child soldiers in Americas and Europe and the Middle East are in practice, the problem is more critical in Africa and Asia.

While child labour among girls and among children in hazardous work is declining in these poor countries, the progress towards the goals set by ILO is comparatively slow (ILO, 2010). ILO's target of eliminating all worst forms of child labour by 2016 is at a critical juncture. 'In sub-Saharan Africa progress has stalled – this is disappointing.

Africa had been identified as a region needing particular attention in our last Report' (ibid: ix).

2.7 Situation of Children Working in Bhutan

Regardless of many international instruments and treaties on the rights of the child coupled with distinct country specific - national instruments, the problem of child labour still remains a prominent issue. In a real sense it has been growing. It is widespread across the world, predominantly in developing countries. India, with whom Bhutan shares its borders, has the largest population of child workers in the world (NCWC, 2009). Until recently, many children from India were illegally employed as domestic servants and baby sitters in Bhutan. This clearly shows that there is a high demand for child workers in Bhutan.

Factors associated to political, cultural, ideological and social aspects can be considered as main contributors for the distinctiveness of child labour in any setting.

Bhutanese children enter the labor market because of three main reasons; *poverty, broken families and lack of farm hands* (NCWC, 2009). The general feeling is that economic pressure of social living in poor economies, particularly in rural locations often encourages parents to send their children to work (Lavalette, 1999). Other minimal factors are census problems for some children in a few southern districts⁹. The status of their citizenship has prevented them to gain admission in schools. If this is correct then the RGOB, despite having ratified the CRC has violated Article 28.1 (a) which requires states parties to “make primary education compulsory and available free to all” (Ghandhi, 2008).

Increasing rate of school drop outs has become a challenge to the MoE. This only allows the number of child labour to increase (NCWC, 2009). A significant number of children come from broken families. In lack of parental guidance these children go unattended and often misguided by the concept that future has nothing in store for them. Of late, rural- urban migration has become a major concern to the government. Moving at an alarming rate, the flow of children into urban hubs in search of better life only opens to them the doors to employment in undesirable places.

⁹ Some areas in southern districts of Samtse, Sarpang, Samdrupjongkhar and Chukha are inhabited by communities of Nepalese origin. “Those families who were not registered as citizens could not enroll their children in school” (NCWC, 2009: 58).

2.8 Theories of child labour

Many different writers have presented analysis utilizing various theoretical paradigms to assess the causes and consequences of child labour. Despite the apparent variations in theoretical perspective however they posit a number of common claims which have almost become common sense of child labour theorists. Three linked assertions about child labour according to Challis and Elliman (1979) are that firstly, historically children have always worked and they continue to work even today. Second, according to Challis and Elliman child labour is caused by poverty which is highly prominent in third world countries. Mendelievich (1979) also argues that child labour persists in inverse relation to the degree of economic advancement of a society, country or region. According to Mendelievich the only solution and the only way to break the circle is to adopt standards set by ILO and to address poverty in the first place. But given the severe economic and debt problems of many industrializing societies, how are these provisions to be implemented? The priority among these societies may not be to strive for the health and well being of its citizen. Their priorities have often been to make their economy more efficient and attractive to inward investment. The third, Mendelievich argues that there are two linked reasons for the extensive exploitation of child labour in the underdeveloped countries: the distorted economic framework and the poverty face by the child's family. By distorted economics it means to use labour provided by children to keep the production cost low. While the poverty faced by most families is basically caused by lack of social welfare systems, there aren't on the other hand many attractive schemes put forward by the states for the poorer section.

The theory of poverty can be applied to the Bhutanese context while studying child labour. Most Bhutanese families live in rural areas and are poverty struck which in turn forces them to send their children to work. Another theory which is also argued by Lavalette is that "Child labour only becomes problematic when it takes place outwith parental control" (ibid, 1994: 34).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes various methods undertaken to conduct the research and there are five different sections in it. The first section outlines the research design. The second section deals with research instruments. The participants are explained in the third section. The fourth section is on data collection. Method to analyze the data is explained in the last section.

3.2 Research Design

After reviewing the literature I was involved in gathering primary data. In light of limited published literature in the market on child labour in Bhutan, it was imperative that sufficient data be collected to complete the study. Out of so many research methods approved on primary data, I adopted questionnaire, interview, field observation and narrative analysis for my survey.

Although both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used, this study is mostly qualitative. Qualitative method has allowed to investigate the *why* and *how* of decision making and decision taking, not just *what*, *where*, *when*. It is also one of the most widely used research methods. The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods is called *mixed methods* (Bryman, 2008). It used to understand the meanings, to describe and understand experience, ideas, beliefs and values. Mixed method has allowed comprehensive analysis as views and opinions derived from the qualitative study is complemented by quantitative data.

As mentioned earlier, doing this dissertation was a real challenge given that limited data on child labour in Bhutan. Therefore I had to use variety of sources to seek answers to the research questions. I had to rely on primary data which was key source of materials gathered through interviews, questionnaires, contact tracing/snow balling, and observations.

3.3 Research Instruments

Four research instruments were used in this study; background information, questionnaires, interview questions and narrative technique.

Questionnaire is one of the most popular methods and a reliable form of primary data. Questionnaires reduce bias as the respondents can freely express their opinions and complete it at the speed that they want to go. It is also quicker to administer questionnaire as compared to interviewing. One of the advantages of questionnaire is that it can be conducted without any prior arrangements when compared to face-to-face interviews. The best part of questionnaires is the “absence of interviewer effects” (Bryman, 2008: 218). Research has proved that the use of questionnaires allow free and fair responses even on sensitive topics which could otherwise remain unreported if the interviewer was present (Sudman and Bradburn, 1982 in Bryman, 2008).

Questionnaires were appropriate for this study as they are cost effective and time saving (ibid, 2008). In this study, the questionnaire consisted of two parts; Part A- Background information and Part B- Child labour. There were 5 questions in Part A regarding personal information and professional information. Part B consisted of 18 questions in which the respondents were required to give their views and observation. The questions were easy to understand. The questionnaires took around 10- 15 minutes to be completed. The questionnaires were distributed to civil servants, staffs from NGOs, business community, news reporters and private sector employees. I identified contact points such as Ministry of Labour’s office, Ministry of Education’s office, media’s office and other offices of the NGOs where I could send in my questionnaire for further distribution to concerned individuals. In consultation with the above offices I also developed mechanisms to ensure that all questionnaires were returned and collected on the stipulated date.

Next, interview questions were used in this study mainly to supplement the questionnaires. Interviews were used to capture opinions, feelings, practice, experience and the kind of atmosphere and context in which the individuals acted and respond in this study. Interviews were the dominant method for this research. Two types of interviews were conducted as suggested by Berg (1998: 59-62): *Standardized (formal or structured) interview* and *Un-standardized (informal or non-directive)*

interview. Predetermined set of questions were used for the standardized interview. The interviewees were asked systematic and consistent questions which also allowed me to probe far beyond the answers to my prepared questions. *The un-standardized interview* was used to augment field observations through which I was able to gain further information about various incidences that I came across. By way of being able to establish rapport, unstructured interview allowed me to be familiar with the respondents' life styles, customs and culture (Douglas, 1985). This further enabled me to generate questions and follow up probes that were appropriate and essential for my survey.

Another important instrument was the narrative technique or oral form of interview. Narrative technique uses different approaches to look for personal stories or analyzing narratives that allows having a clear understanding of the surroundings where people interact with one another (Fraser 2004). Narrative expressions can be in the form of oral, written or through films. Through narrative expressions I could see that children were able to express themselves in a free/open manner and as much as they wanted to express. I found narratives particularly advantageous to other instruments as suggested by Smith (2000) and Fraser (2008) because it allowed the children to express through their body language which was very effective and prominent. To use this technique I first identified some child labourers and invited them to reflect upon specific events related to their work and their lives through story telling. I found that this particular approach was relevant to children as they took great interest in expressing themselves. When they are allowed to communicate freely as “young people are able to flag up the issues which are central to their own stories without being given too much of a ‘steer’ by the researcher” (Heath, Brooks, Cleaver and Ireland, 2009: 85). Besides children, I also identified some of the employers and civil servants who shared their views on the subject matter.

3.4 Participants

One of the reasons for the perpetuation of child labour could be that the relevant laws and the implementation of the laws are in their early stage. For example the Labour and Employment Act of Bhutan came into effect only in 2007 (NCWC, 2008). In order to find out this I interviewed officials in from MoLHR and NCWC. Since UNICEF plays a significant role in children's welfare and education in Bhutan I also

took the opportunity to interview its official in the Child Protection Unit. Officials from Respect, Educate, Nurture, and Empower Women¹⁰ (RENEW) were also included in the interview. People who employed children are crucial part of child labour and they were also included in the study. They were useful for me to get information on the type of children's work, their wages and to find out why parents send their children to work. Another group of participants were the parents. Conducting interviews were appropriate for non-literate parents when compared to questionnaire. Since most parents of child labourers come from rural background and are generally poverty struck, my interaction with them supplemented my research in identifying understanding the theories related to child labour that was explained in chapter 2. Last but not the least, children were vital information providers. I was able to interview 47 children: 31 boys and 16 girls working in various sectors but mostly as domestic child labourers. It was not difficult for me to locate these children. I also used 'snow balling' tactic to locate the child labourers, meaning one child gave information of the other and so forth. After indentifying these children I got in touch with their employers, some of the parents and guardians so that I could interview the children. Almost all of these children cooperated with my work and gave me their views.

3.5 Data Collection

The collection of data was carried out from end of January to mid of February, 2011. It was done in three phases, covering three districts of Thimphu, Paro and Sarpang. There was no specific starting point for the survey to locate children working. Hence places were randomly selected and after observing children at work they were enquired about their age and the work they performed. Many of these children helped me to locate other children since they were familiar each other.

Prior to conducting my research, I sought formal approval to access and acceptance to carry out the research. Especially the employers were informed and convinced on the purposes of the research in order to avoid them being suspicious of the study. Participants were assured of their privacy and confidentiality so as not to be identified in the final research (Seale, 2008).

¹⁰ Renew was established in 2004 as an NGO. It is dedicated to the relief and empowerment of disadvantaged women and young girls in Bhutan.

3.6 Data Analysis

After the data was collected it was analyzed to provide insight of child labour situation in Bhutan, perception of its prevalence and the challenges to implement child rights in Bhutan. The questionnaire data were analyzed by using calculating frequencies and percentages and were presented in graphs. Analysis of the interviews was based on the contents which were supplemented by qualitative analysis (Bryman, 2008). Narrative analysis has enabled to make comparisons between the similarities and differences of each major concept after they were identified. Every sentence, phrase or word relevant to the particular question formed a unit of analysis. Finally, similar concepts or events were then grouped into themes.

CHAPTER 4

POLICIES AND REALITIES

4.1 Introduction

Landlocked and sandwiched between two giant nations – China in the north and India in the south, east and west, Bhutan cautiously began to open up to outsiders in 1970s. It is roughly the size of Switzerland and has remained an independent country since times immemorial. According to the Labour Force survey 2010 the nation's population is estimated at 696,500 with 338,400 males and 358,200 females. Out of the total estimated population, 69.2% resides in the rural areas and 30.8% of the population are settled in urban areas (Ministry of Labour and Human resources 2011). Although Bhutan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is growing at 7.5% annually and has made tremendous improvements in raising the living standards of its people, there are sections of population who still suffer in poverty (NCWC, 2009). Among them, children comprise a significant number who enter the domain of *labour* either in homes or in the industries often at a disadvantage with regards to their education and health. One of the main reasons for children entering the work force is family poverty and the need to supplement family income.

This chapter looks into the policies of the royal government and institutional frameworks that not only protect children's rights in Bhutan but also its efforts to eliminate child labour in the global context. At the same time, this chapter will provide insights into what specific child works and working conditions prevail in Bhutan. Identification of these works will validate how far the children in Bhutan enjoy their rights as enshrined in the CRC.

4.2 Prevalence of child labour in Bhutan

According to Bhutan's National Statistical Bureau (NSB) Bhutan's total population of children 0-18 years as of 2005 was 271,607 (Black *et al.* 2006). Estimates of child labour prevalence in Bhutan vary to some extent for because of how the surveys define child work and the type of methodologies used in the survey. The diverse definitions, survey methodologies and lack of a proper statistics on child labour in

Bhutan makes it relatively difficult to figure out the magnitude of child labour. Experts concur that the problem “is prevalent, more so in the rural areas” (Bhutan Broadcasting Service 2010). The NCWC survey of 2008 also validates that a proxy prevalence of 28% of children 5-14 years are engaged in some forms of work and that they were not enrolled in primary schools (NCWC, 2009).

From the study on The Situation of Bhutanese Youth 2005-2006 by MoE and YDF it can be confirmed that many children work in conditions that go against the guiding principles of CRC. For example many children were traced working for 12 hours a day and seven days a week (Ministry of Education and Youth Development Fund, 2006). Although Section 9 (d) of Labour and Employment Act of Bhutan prohibits children to work for long hours, such unmonitored incidences are clear signs of breaching Article 32.2.(b) of the CRC. The above study further confirmed that some of the uneducated girls were subjected to verbal, physical, sexual exploitation and paid less for their work. “This is compounded further by a general lack of awareness on the labour laws by employers, employees and the public at large” (NCWC, 2009: 62).

Another statistical indication of child work, the 2004 National Labour Force Survey suggests that 24% of children in the 10-14 age groups are economically active. In the rural areas the proportions are around 27% for boys and 32 % for girls and it is 8% in urban for both boys and girls (MoLHR, 2004). As compared to 2003 statistics this is significantly low as domestic workers are probably excluded in this, the reason that will be discussed in the following chapters. Although the results are not consistent, it can nevertheless be concluded that at least one-quarter of the children aged 10-14 are working.

4.3 Domestic Child Labour

The exact number of child domestic workers in the world is not known. According to UNICEF (2004) girls are the majority of such workers and it is estimated that in South Asia alone there are five million child workers. It is a hidden form of child labour under which children often work in harsh conditions such as working for long hours, working for less pay and often abused and exploited by their employers.

There has been a growing phenomenon of employing domestic workers in urban areas in Bhutan over the recent years. One of the main reasons for the growth of this occupation is that more married women have joined the world of work outside the home (Black *et al.* 2006). Normally it operates informally. This also means it is generally ignored by the society and remains unnoticed in the eyes of the authorities. Such lapses only keep encouraging young girls to migrate to urban areas where it is easy to find work. Customarily girls are preferred as domestic workers and most of them fall in the age range of 11-20 (ibid). While some of these domestic workers remain happy for their own reasons, there are stories in which some have expressed their experiences of vulnerability and helplessness. Dechen was brought to Paro by her maternal uncle to work for a working couple. She reflected on her experience,

“My uncle and aunty are good. But aunty mostly hits me on my head when she is angry with me. One time I broke a cup and she hit me on my forehead and she pushed me against the wall. I said sorry but she hit me again on my head. I cried and wished my parents were here to take me home”.

4.4 Education Policy

For a very long time child labour somehow failed to gain attention of the policy makers and therefore could not be addressed adequately. Even, the standing education policy on *free education* cannot be taken as a guarantee to prevent children from working. The state’s education policy is to provide “free education to all children of school going age up to the tenth standard” (RGoB, 2001: 15). The government, however does not explicitly state that the above policy is intended to prevent child labour. But the recent announcement by MoE calling all parents, guardians, local authorities and anybody having employed children between the ages of 6 and 12 to immediately enroll them in the nearest schools implies its objective to curb child labour in the country (MOE, 2011). Also during one of the FYP review meetings the Bhutanese prime minister emphasized on the education of all children. He “warned all parents, who send their children to baby-sit for a wage, and employers, who keep them, of dire consequences”. This comes under the penal code of Bhutan chapter 15 clauses 221 and 223. Clause 221 states, “A defendant shall be guilty of the offence of a child abuse, if the defendant subjects a child to an economic exploitation or any

work that is likely to be hazardous” (Royal Court of Justice, 2004: 30). Clause 223 states, “A defendant shall be guilty of the offence of endangerment of a child, if the defendant engages in a conduct that would injure the physical or mental condition of a child” (ibid: 30). The Prime Minister went on to say that families who were economically unable to educate their children would receive education welfare grant from His Majesty the King. Many schools in remote places also raise funds to help underprivileged children to buy clothes and stationery. Finally all 205 gewogs¹¹ in the country are trying for 100% enrollment by 2013. Basic education has been raised to class 10 standard and automatic promotion for repeaters is encouraged to leave is no drop out from schools.

In line with the above policy, a preliminary survey on school enrollment was conducted by the one of the district education offices in 2010. The survey found that about 30 percent of school-going children in the district census were not in school and most of these children were not living in the district either (Dema, 2010). The aim was to trace these children by involving the local leaders. If these children were not attending schools in other districts the parents were supposed to bring them back and enroll in village schools. However, it is not known whether the plan has been implemented or not as the girl that I mentioned in chapter 1 who is now going to school has not been contacted so far, who is also from this particular district.

In addition to this, the draft 10th plan document clearly sets objectives to fulfill education policies and strategies that are aimed for achieving Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 2015 and these are:

- To provide support mechanisms to promote good practices for early childhood care and development for children between 0-6 years of age.
- To enhance primary net enrolment to near 100% by 2013.
- To establish a program of inclusive education to enable all children to participate in and benefit from the education process (GNH commission 2008:9).

¹¹ A gewog comprises of many sub villages.

Yet, there are children who are not able to go to schools for the fact that education costs money in the forms fees and contribution for boarding facilities. Distance to school and the dangers on the way where boarding facilities are lacking are other factors that have prevented parents to enroll their children in schools. Besides, parents also had reservations in the value of education that children received at schools (Black *et al.* 2006). However the government has not placed any legal obligations to compulsory education given the myriad of problems such as access, affordability and quality.

4.5 Financial Assistance and Schemes

There are some schemes offered by banks, corporations and NGOs to parents to support the education of their children. These are; Millennium Education Plan and Education Annuity Plan by the Royal Insurance Corporation of Bhutan (RICB), Education Loan by the National Pension and Provident Fund (NPPF), Scholarship for the poor students by the Youth Development Fund (YDF), and Tarayana Foundation's Scholarship Program (Dorji, 2005). Although these schemes are beneficial most of them have failed to capture a larger part of the society. For example the NPPF scheme covers only its members who are mainly civil servants and this makes the rural population and those with lower income ineligible for it. The RICB's Millennium Education Plan is not encouraging for the poor as its objective is laid for long term return unless in case of death of parents or guardians then the child starts receiving financial support. The YDF scholarship¹² is solely meant for bright students representing the poorer section of the society while the Tarayana Foundation's scholarship¹³ covers children mostly coming from poor families and those who lack care and support. It basically covers school fees, uniforms, supplementary meal contributions and other associated expenses.

¹² Youth Development Fund (YDF) was established in 1998 in order to sustain the youth related programmes. YDF scholarship is provided to students from poor family backgrounds with more aptitude for higher education. (Dorji, 2005). In 2011, 10 students received the scholarship. [http://www.education.gov.bt/DAHE/SD/Final%20Selected%20UG%20%202011\(Final\).pdf](http://www.education.gov.bt/DAHE/SD/Final%20Selected%20UG%20%202011(Final).pdf). (Accessed 14/4/2011)

¹³ Tarayana Foundation was established in 2003. It provides maintenance grants for school going students hailing from less privileged background. The endowment fund set up through grants from Save the Children-USA, Lotus Outreach, Elysium Foundation and generous personal donors, such as Mrs. Serena Chopra is the source for the project. <http://www.tarayanafoundation.org/program.php>. (Accessed on 14/4/2011)

4.6 The Legal Framework

Bhutan is not a member of the ILO which clearly means that it does not qualify to ratify the ILO Conventions 138, Article 1¹⁴(minimum age) and 182¹⁵ (worst forms of child labour). However the cabinet has now approved Bhutan's proposal to join the ILO (Rinzin, 2010). At the regional level, Bhutan has ratified two SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) conventions: one on preventing and combating the trafficking in women and children for prostitution and the other on regional arrangements for the promotion of child welfare in south Asia (NCWC, 2009). Both the above conventions are aimed at redeeming and fulfilling the promises made in Article 34 of CRC which delineates the state's responsibility "to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse" (Ghandhi, 2008).

In addition to this, Bhutan has legal jurisdictions in place to protect the rights of children. The constitution confirms children's rights and protects them from all sorts of exploitation (ibid). The Labour and Employment Act of Bhutan, 2007 clearly prohibits a child below the age of 13 years to work in an employer-employee relation. Various occupations, jobs and tasks including situations that are prohibited for all children between the ages of 13 and 17 years are covered under section 9 of the Acceptable forms of child labour (Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, 2007). The government's provision for permitting children 13-17 for employment is because of Bhutan's present socio-economic conditions as a Least Developed Country (LDC).

Contrary to the above frameworks, certain legal gaps can be identified pertaining mainly to the Labour Act. Since most of the Articles are related to service and industry sectors, children working in agriculture sector remain hidden or even unmonitored. A big lapse in the Labour Act in relation to Article 2.3 of the ILO Convention 138 is the minimum age factor. The government allows children between

¹⁴ The minimum age specified in pursuance of paragraph 1 of this Article shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and, in any case, shall not be less than 15 years. <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C138>. (Accessed 06/02/2011).

¹⁵ The Article requires that each Member which ratifies this Convention shall take immediate and effective measures to secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour as a matter of urgency <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/cgi-lex/convde.pl?C182>. (Accessed 06/02/2011).

13-17 years to work in certain areas contrary to the ILO Convention. The Convention clearly states that the minimum age for employment is 18 (NCWC, 2009). NCWC however argues that with such restriction in force, it only adds up to the miserable situation of the poor families who are dependent on their children for income. Further, lack of distinction between light work and hazardous work in Bhutan makes the situation worse for young children who are engaged in long hours at work.

Another striking variation is the need to define the lower age limit for inclusion in child labour statistics. While ILO statistics include 5 years as the minimum, Bhutan has not been able to decide on this. Generally, in Bhutan a child is entitled for enrollment in school at the age of 6 years (Ministry of Education, 2006).

Bhutan also realized the need of a National Law specifically focusing on children as a commitment to the CRC. In 2010 the parliament of Bhutan endorsed the Child Protection Bill (Kuensel, 2010). According to this Act, children who encounter conflict with the law can opt to undergo a diversion program, instead of going through the judicial proceedings. It is also worth mentioning that children can always appeal to the King “when they feel they have suffered an injustice” (Black *et al.* 2006: 65). An exclusive section on offences against children is included in the above Act. Offences such as assault, battery, the invasion of a child’s privacy, prostitution, pornography, trafficking of children are highlighted in it. In addition, The Police Act, 1980 and Prison Act, 1982 does not allow handcuffing of children under the age of 13 (ibid). According to the Prison Act, minors are to be treated separately from other prisoners, provide a separate place to stay and not to be burdened with prison works “beyond their capabilities” (ibid: 75).

4.7 Partnership for effective policy implementation,

Enforcement and Monitoring

NCWC is the lead government agency working to promote and protect children and women in Bhutan. It has been instrumental in framing policy, developing legislations and strategies to combat exploitation of children in all forms. Although an autonomous agency, in principle NCWC mostly works under the influence and guidance of the government (Rinzin, 2010).

Several other organizations are involved in curbing child labour. UNICEF has been a driving force in the implementation of the CRC in Bhutan. According to UN (2006) most violence against children at workplace may be inflicted by employers. The enforcement of Labour Act, 2007 therefore is very crucial. Women and Child Protection Unit (WCPU) of the Royal Bhutan Police handles all cases of children who come in conflict with the law and make sure that minors are treated justly.

Bhutan has shown its commitment by including Article 9, Section 18 in the constitution which mandates the state, to 'take appropriate measures to ensure that children are protected against all forms of discrimination and exploitation including trafficking, prostitution, abuse, violence, degrading treatment and economic exploitation' (RGOB, 2007: 15)

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents some of the findings from the research carried out on the situations of the children working in Bhutan. Having examined the activities performed by children at various work settings, this chapter discusses what makes the Bhutanese society to accept child labour. In chapter 4, a comprehensive range of national legal framework and policies concerning rights of the children were discussed. Besides having these tools in place, extend to which child labour is visible is quite alarming if not severe.

5.2 Cultural and social factors

Children irrespective of their sex are a joy and welcome to Bhutanese families. The government has strong policies on health and education for children. Beginning from the head of the state, the children in Bhutan are accorded high significance. ‘The future of the nation lies in the hands of our children’ as expressed by the Fourth King of Bhutan is a prominent indicator of love and concern towards children in Bhutan (NCWC 2009).

Employment of children and especially the girls in homes is a common phenomenon in Bhutan. Minor household chores are considered as part of daily Bhutanese culture. Girls in most cases bear the responsibility of doing the household chores while boys are engaged in outdoor tasks. Works from which children do not earn a living are categorized as ‘child work’ as per the 2007 Labour and Employment Act of Bhutan. Child labour as highlighted in the Act is a condition where a child misses school and that he or she is exposed to extreme physical or mental stress.

Different communities have their own ideology in making children work at homes and farms. These cultural traditions help children prepare for their lives in the future. I will explain some of the principles upheld by three different communities. The

*Lhotsham*¹⁶ parents commonly regard that a young girl performing regular household chores will enable her to garner her domestic skills as a preparatory measure to be a good bride in her future. Hence, the possibilities for paid work outside the family are constrained among the girls when compared to boys (Mizen 1995). Likewise, a boy is expected to work in the field and farm to acquaint himself with various farming methods to be a successful family man in future besides shouldering the responsibility to look after his old parents.

The *Ngalong*¹⁷ consider that keeping a girl at home means imparting skills that will empower her to run the house when she inherits family property later in her life. In most cases, girls remain under the control of parents 'just as their leisure activities are policed in ways not experienced by any brothers' (Frith 1983).

The *Brokpa*¹⁸ community considers children as a great source of assistance to the family. While girls remain attached to the mothers engaging themselves in the art of weaving and knitting besides household chores, boys mostly perform outdoors activities such as animal husbandry and collecting timber. In some communities, the eldest child is taken for granted as an example setter and given to bear extra responsibilities both farm works and helping parents at home. Many rural children are also engaged in various seasonal works during the school breaks such as fruit picking/transportation, house/building construction and breaking stones at roadsides. "All were doing so to earn enough to be able to pay for stationery, uniforms and food" (Black *et al.* 2006: 69).

Although national legislation has paved its way in defending children's rights, the government requires the parents in particular to realize their responsibilities in upbringing their children in the most harmonious approach. Similar was the situation in Britain in the last quarter of the twentieth century where parents were called upon to pay extra attention to the welfare of their children (Cunningham 2005). A social policy like this is deemed to make future bright for the children.

¹⁶ Communities of Nepalese origin living in the southern part of Bhutan.

¹⁷ Communities living in the western part of Bhutan.

¹⁸ Communities living in highlands of north-eastern part of Bhutan whose main occupation is raising animals.

Social acceptance of child labour is not uncommon in Bhutan. When traditional practices are attached strongly to cultural values and social norms it only makes sense to adapt changes in a manner that the social ethics are not wiped off completely.

Lham (2005: 122) argues that “the issue of child rights and working age limit cannot be relevant in Bhutanese traditional context at least for sometime because working children are considered as additional family asset rather than violation of their rights to develop both physically and emotionally”. It is an excepted norm that children undertake specific farm activities to be able to perform better in life. Besides, children who are sent away from home to work normally turn out to be learning skills for life.

5.3 Main findings

Although child labour is common in Bhutan where cultural values are strong and where poverty is prevalent, there is very little awareness amongst the general society of the prevalence of child labour and its harmful consequences on children.

5.3.1 Characteristics of the children

Family background numbering

A total of 47 children, 31 boys and 16 girls who were found working were included in the interview and most of them came from rural background. 8 of them were orphans while 6 had no father and another 9 had no mother. There were about 4 to 6 family members in each case. There were 34 children between the age of 13 and 18 and the remaining 13 were below 12 years. In most cases it was the eldest child from the family who was working. There was however no incidence of bounded child labour. These children were engaged in domestic works¹⁹, agriculture sector and industry sector.

Working condition

Most children lived away from their family. All the girls covered during the interview were living in their employer’s house and some of them were not happy the way they were treated by their employers. All of them expressed of having to work for full time which is contradictory to the work limits prescribed by the Labour and Employment

¹⁹ All domestic workers who were contacted and interviewed were girls.

Act. Their work comprised of babysitting, washing dishes, cleaning and sweeping floors, reaching/fetching children to/from schools. Bunu is 14 years old and she never went to a school because her mother wanted her to help in the house. Now Bunu lives in Thimphu and she said,

“I feel happy when I go to reach Cheche²⁰ to her school. There are many children of my age whom I see going to school. They have good clothes and they all carry their own lunch boxes. I wish my parents could send my younger brother to school. He is 5 now. Next year he will be ready for school”.

Many of these children were not allowed to go home by their employers for the fear that they would not return. I met Maya who was 12 years old. She had not been to her home for almost three years. But her mother kept visiting her. Dema is another girl who works in Thimphu. She has neither been home nor do her parents come to meet her. She said,

“It is now more than a year that I have not seen my parents or anyone from my family and I cannot go home on my own. I miss my family.”

Income

Poverty seems to be a strong cause for many parents who send their children to work. Many of the children who were interviewed mentioned that their parents were poor. Many employers also mentioned poverty as one of the main cause for the parents who were sending their children to work. Tashi and her husband are both office goers and they have a 16 year old babysitter to look after their 2 children. She stated that,

“My husband and I were in dire need of a babysitter. We went to our village looking for one. There we met Kanchi’s mother and asked her if she was willing to let her daughter work for us. She had 4 children but she had no money to support her family. Kanchi looks after our children now and we send her mother money every month.”

While many children were happy with the payment they received. 11 girls did not receive any money as it was paid directly to their parents.

Some parents even received payments in advance owing to their poverty. Children who worked in industry sector were paid cash. The saddest thing was the rate of wages. Children were not paid according to the standard-minimum wages set by the government. These children could never complain against their employers. They

²⁰ Cheche was the name of her employer’s daughter.

hardly knew of their legal rights and also for the fear that they would lose their job. In addition to it, they were they not aware about their employer's legal responsibilities towards them. 'Hence, child labour laws are often breached', (Pettitt, 1998: 88). The wages also greatly varied and depended on the age of the children. If we are to go by the national poverty line which is set at Nu 1,096.94 then majority of the children fall under the category of poor (NCWC, 2009). Also, children who worked in their own homes were not paid any money.

Health and Education

Almost all children covered during the interview looked healthy. During sickness they were given medical treatment. While 14 of these children were school dropouts 21 of them never had the opportunity to go to a school. Poverty as most mentioned was the main cause that forced them to work. 18 of them said that either there were no schools in their villages or the schools were too far. Remaining 12 children who were going to school mentioned that household work was hampering their study.

Attitude to work

Although some of these children expressed their interest of going to school many were convinced that they could not afford to go to school. 10 of the school dropouts regretted for not being able to continue their studies. While boys especially in the industry sector were contented with their present job the ones working in agriculture sector viewed jobs in other sectors as green pastures. This 16 year old boy, Dhanu from Gelephu said,

"I don't like to look after the cattle. I start my work at 7 in the morning and end at 4 in the evening. I have been doing this routine and monotonous job since I was eight. Now I want to go to Phunentsholing (another town in the border of India) and live with my sister. I want to work in biscuit factory."

Information such as above

Legal framework

Bhutan is just set to become a member of the ILO. Nonetheless, the country has ratified the SAARC convention on regional arrangements for the promotion of child welfare in South Asia; which is articulated in CRC. The constitution reaffirms children's rights and protects them from being exploited. Institutions that work to

promote and protect child rights are the judiciary, through the penal code; the Child Protection unit of the police. The MLHR has incorporated most of the articles of the ILO conventions that concern work related to children. It is also the monitoring body to ensure that Labour and Employment Act are complied. However, NCWC is the lead agency that is responsible to promote and protect children in Bhutan. It has significantly contributed to developing policies and designed strategies to combat exploitation in all forms of children. The 2010 Child Protection Bill adopted by the parliament is one of its efforts in strengthening the protection of vulnerable children.

5.4 Causes of child labour

5.4.1 Poverty

The study has found out that child labour in Bhutan is related to poverty. The reasons children work can be linked to both supply and demand factors. These factors need further in-depth study so that appropriate measures to tackle child labour can be designed and applied. On the supply front, poverty was found to be the over riding reason for child labour. Economic needs were the main motivating factor for large and poor families that had limited resources who could not afford to send every child to school. Many popular perceptions, societal customs and traditions regarding the work of children, lack of farm hands and school dropouts were other reasons. Most children who were interviewed were compelled to work while few were motivated by the needs and the desire to help their family. Zangmo's parents could not afford to send their daughter to school.

"I don't know how much I am paid for my work. My mother comes²¹ here and takes the money. She does not leave any money for me and I don't need also. Last time my mother said that she needs money to buy shoes for my brother".

Another reason why children worked was their readiness to accept lower wages despite conditions that are dangerous and damaging. These children see *work* as 'a chance for self-determination and responsibilities' Seabrook (2001: 48).

While most researches are likely to be based on the supply factors, the demand factors are equally critical in determining the involvement of children in the labour market

²¹ This child is 9 years old and does not remember how often her mother comes to get the money.

(ILO 1996). On the demand side, the findings showed that domestic helpers were highly required in urban areas by the educated. Employers, especially in the industry sector preferred to hire children who were paid lower than the minimum wages set by the government; in addition children were easy to handle than adults.

5.4.2 Rural-Urban Migration/lack of farm hands

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the trend of children moving into towns from villages is gaining popularity mainly among the school drop outs. There were 3 children who were employed by their relatives to work in the restaurant. 2 of them had come on their own will from their villages to work at the present location. The other one was brought by his relatives. The reason that one of them gave was,

“I always wanted to work in a town that is why I came here. There are many things here which we don’t have in our villages. I don’t think I will go back to work in my village. I am like this place.”

In the last one decade, in Bhutan it became common among many rural families to move to urban areas in search of better facilities like schools, hospitals and job opportunities. Unfortunately, some of these families were unsuccessful in their mission and some of their children became victims to child labour. Passang is 17 years old and he was located in Paro. He lives with his family and his father is a caretaker in an apple orchard. They migrated some 6 years ago as there was no school in their village. His view was that,

“I went to school for 4 years. I could not do well in my studies because I had to help my parents at home and also work in the orchard. Now I go to work with my father.”

With the increasing rate of unemployment, farmers are concerned about the value of education. They rather prefer to impart farming and rural skills to their children at an early age before it is late and children refuse to work. Otherwise children leave their villages in search of jobs that they feel are comfortable with.

5.4.3 Broken families

In Bhutan it is not surprising or uncommon to come across children working as a result of broken families. When either of the parents died, children are required to work for the family. Girls in particular take the responsibility of doing domestic

chores when mother passes away. Orphans are mostly adopted by their close relatives for using their labour. It was also found out that family disruption was seriously affecting the lives of children. Intolerable situation at homes that the children were subjected to often forced them to take up this occupation in order to sustain themselves without having to depend much on their parents. Most of them had expressed their experience at home as difficult, often having to bear the neglect and mal-treatment by their parent-in-laws. Durga, a 17 year old girl expressed:

“After my parents died I was left with no other options but to come to Gelephu to live with my brother and his family. My sister-in-law was never happy with my work. She would always find faults in me and this made my brother hate me soon. My life was becoming miserable and one I left their house. Although I am a babysitter today, I am happy here.”

5.4.4 Non-enrollment and Schools dropouts

Although the underlying causes of non-enrollment and school dropouts are difficult to understand, the factors given in the following paragraphs are expected to provide basis for further study of cause of these problems. From the questionnaire survey it is clear that there is some relation between children’s education and their socio-economic background.

Many parents in rural Bhutan do not consider that sending their children to school is an option. MoE (2010) confirms that 7% of children of primary school-age are not enrolled in schools. I would like to point out two main reasons for non-enrolment of children in schools. First, the schools are too far away to travel and also pose dangers to the children. Especially young girls who are away from home have been vulnerable to sexual exploitation as frequently covered by the media (Kuenselonline 2009). Second, as mentioned in chapter 4, it is the issue of affordability. Families from low income group find it extremely difficult to support the education of their children. The situation becomes unbearable when children have to leave home to continue education beyond primary schools which is normally located out of their villages. In many cases parents are forced to borrow money or sell their family belongings.

The majority of the Bhutan’s population is concentrated in the rural areas. Therefore, agriculture remains the main activity of work. However, with increasing development activities around the country and the drift of rural–urban migration, farmers in

particular are suffering from labour shortages. Even the traditional management of labour mobilization among the farmers has been severely affected. Hence, the farmers are left with no option other than to hold their children back to assist them in the farm. On the positive note, it meant curbing expenses when a child from a poor family has to go school (Lham, 2005).

According to Byrk & Thum (1989), Russel W. Rumberger (2001) in Lham, (2005), socio-economic status of the parents has a direct bearing on the school achievement and dropout behaviour of their children. Children who drop out of schools before the completion of basic education can bear significant problems in their later lives. They neither do well in agricultural sectors nor are they able to find a successful employment. The other risk is that increasing urbanization highly encourages rural-urban migration that led to protection issues among the children such as anti-social behaviour, substance abuse and others (Kuensel Online, 2010).

Many children are also affected in their studies when they are required to attend to household work. The amount of time spent in work at their homes, as found from the survey, de-motivated their interest in studies resulting in eventual withdrawal from schools.

As observed, the leading crisis engulfing *child labour* in Bhutan today is so much the shortage of technical resources, drawing up strategies and source of management skills with lack of proper executing bodies. This is where actors like the CSOs and NGOs need to step in. Hence, the task of achieving universal education, reducing poverty and abolishing child labour lies in making legislation, interventions and education efforts to work collectively by mobilizing local, household resources and national resources.

5.5 Determinants of Domestic Child Labour

The two main determinants of domestic child labour were age and gender. A total of 16 girls were included in the sample. 13 of them were between the age range of 13 – 18 while 3 were under 13. Child labour in this study was defined as any child less than 18 years, engaged in any of the three sectors; agriculture, industry or service

sectors. There were no boys covered in this sample. However this does not mean boys did not work as domestic labourers. Due to the nature of the job such as babysitting and doing domestic tasks girls are involved in this profession. It may be argued that unlike in the past where children as young as 5 years were engaged in domestic work, these days the number of children in this age range is quite rare. Anita narrated her experience of employing a 6 year child to look after her baby. She recalled,

“It was difficult to find an adult babysitter to look after my 4 month baby. My maternity leave was over and I had to return to work. So I had no option but to employ a 6 year old girl”.

From simple percent evaluation of the data it showed that social economic condition determined the involvement of the girls as domestic child labourers. While most reported that they belonged to poor parents, 6 disclosed about intolerable situation faced from their broken families. The data also revealed that poverty was main factor that pushed children into the labor market. From the movement of these girls it can be understood that the rural-urban migration is a major concern in Bhutan.

The sample also showed that many girls were working because they were uneducated. They were all aware that because of lack of education they could not fit into other jobs. As also seen from the data, these girls were mostly sent to work by their parents. Only 3 girls expressed who came to work on their own interest. 10 of them were picked up from their homes by the employees while 6 of them travelled with their parents or relatives. The future of these girls as narrated by each of them had different opinions. Many were uncertain what they would do in future. 3 girls said that they wanted to return to their villages. 11 of the girls desired to change their job. 2 of them were interested in hairdressing. From the sample above it can be concluded that these domestic child labourers had their own aspiration and dreams. Deki, 16 reported that

“I want to give up my job as a domestic worker. I am now big and I don't think I have to continue to be a babysitter. I would like to work in an office canteen. My friend who works there gets more wages than me. She has time for leisure. I have no time for rest”.

5.6 Overall Implications

When farm jobs are no more attractive many children migrate to urban towns for better comforts. The study has found that there is negative as well positive impact of child labour on children, the society and the country. As a result of socioeconomic conditions, opportunities for education and employment for poor rural youth get limited even when government efforts are applied. This is because the support provided by the state may not be accessible to all the rural communities in the sense that distribution of resources may not be even due to sparsely or unbalanced distribution of population. In such situations, the poor farmers will always remain poor. At the same time it may be argued that when children are provided with jobs in the urban areas their earnings benefit their families back in the villages. Since they are considered an asset of the family, “young people’s earnings might be used to assist in improving family living standards” (Middleton and Loumidis, 2001 in Mizen *et al.* 2006: 31). However, the facts that these children are unequipped with the required skills result in getting casual jobs which provide fewer wages.

The ability and the opportunity to earn their living is also an indication of independence among the children. Besides, many children also contribute their earning to their parents. This supports the family economy. Some good employers are also concerned about the children’s family and provide all help when needed. One civil servant who employed a domestic worker mentioned,

“Though I always used to wonder as to why people entertain child labor, I have in fact employed one boy of barely about twelve in the recent past as my domestic helper. At that particular moment, it was more about saving a helpless child’s life than taking him for employment. We got so attached to each other that I even extend support to his family back in his village”.

As is evident from above narration, child labor should not be treated totally as against the law. In some cases, the intensions involved are purely to help the children live a decent life or rescue them from an extremely desperate situation as in the case of the boy above. It may be said that not all the people are cruel as those who keep children at their homes as captives.

The rising demand for babysitters in Thimphu is likely to bear so much on the overall trend of rural-urban migration, but it has failed to capture our attention partly because it operates informally and partly because we fail to look at this issue critically. In the same way, other forms of child labour which are harmful to children for their overall development must be looked upon. In this respect, this study has attempted to shed some light on this issue so that it becomes a public concern. Some measures to fight child labour are recommended in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

6.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, this dissertation has attempted to contextualize the practice of child labour in Bhutan by examining various socio-economic and cultural aspects and found that child labourers are common across agriculture, industry and service sectors. It also aimed at examining the impact of the practice on the human rights of the girl child. As mentioned chapter 3, narrative analysis of the personal account stories told by child labourers constituted one of the major research methods. In addition, interviews with actors involved in protecting and promoting child rights such as government officials, UNICEF staff, NGO staff and media personnel were conducted to answer the research questions.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on my study, I would like to make the following modest recommendations:

6.2.1 *Differentiate child labour from child work*

While the ILO has clearly defined 14-15 years as the minimum age for employment, most of the world's nations regard 12 as the minimum age for light work (BIT 1987: 69-70 in Stella, 2000, in Schlemmer, 2000). International disagreement on what constitutes child labour often weakens and marginalizes the importance of this group of workers. The Labour and Employment Act of Bhutan does not distinguish child labour from child work. The lack of a clear definition on child labour and differentiating it from child work makes it rather difficult to understand and interpret child labour. Therefore, it is necessary to reach a consensus to clearly define age criteria that will be acceptable to all which will also ensure accurate depiction of facts and statistics on child labour.

6.2.2 Education and related programmes

Make Primary education compulsory

While discussing child rights, it is important to deal with the quality of the schooling system. Schools need to be more accessible for rural children. It should be convincing to their families who would like to see that education becomes functional to their children with the needs of the labour market. The present study found that 25% of the children currently enrolled in schools were engaged in some sort of work at homes for more than 10 hours per week. Three of them indicated a negative impact of work on their educational performance as they had failed in their studies. Although there was no indication from anyone of them to leave school, such long work of hours if not monitored could have a bearing on child's performance at school. One of the most effective instruments to prevent children from taking up child labour is to enroll them in schools and ensure that they at least complete primary education. Studies world wide have shown that 'children who are not obliged to attend school or who realistically do not have access to education have little alternative to working or falling into begging, delinquency or worse' (ILO 1996: 35). Provisions to support the poor who are unable to educate their children must be strengthened through the involvement of NGOs along with the government's determination. To ensure full school enrollment of children, the government should initiate compulsory education law which is interdependent to minimum age law. ILO Convention 138 thus links the minimum age for employment with the age of completion of compulsory schooling (ILO 1996).

Expansion of Day Care Centers around urban areas

Although no significant research has been carried out on babysitters, the general perception is that demand for children to work as babysitters has been on the rise over recent years. The rising demand for babysitters especially in the urban areas is responsible for the overall trend of rural-urban migration. Apart from the practice of being operated informally, there is also no available literature or a research dealing with domestic child workers in Bhutan. Such lapses pose challenge to the government in coming up with both preventive and protective strategies for these children. Establishing more day-care centers around the country is one of the best possible

ways to curb babysitting jobs for children. With just 25²² day-care centers spread across the country, working parents have limited access to these facilities and decide on to employ others children to care their own. Hence, with the establishment of additional day-care centers many children could be freed from babysitting jobs and they can be reunited with their families and also could be enrolled in schools. However, the government needs to make sure that these day-care are inexpensive for a middle or lower income bracket.

Youth related programmes

So far the government has initiated several youth-related programmes. These programmes are mostly focused to address the needs of school dropouts and educated youth who migrate to urban centers looking for jobs and seen as vulnerable groups. Therefore, there is an urgent need to initiate programmes that will benefit these children and teach them effective marketable skills. The state's responsibility to provide vocational education and training opportunities to individuals who are seeking employment below 18 years old is clearly articulated in Article 173 of the Labour and Employment Act (MoLHR 2007).

6.2.3 Awareness on child labour

Bhutanese society needs to be realistic when dealing with the issue of child labour and be aware of that it cannot be eliminated quickly owing to its complexity and structural causes. The nature of child labour problem involves the need for various government approaches. Apart from having legal instruments and sound education policy the government needs to give more emphasis in welfare and advocacy of children's rights. Dissemination of programs on Labour and Employment Act with particular emphasis on child labour should be made through television, radio, posters and also distribute in printed media. Public sensitization on child labour should begin at the soonest since the majority of public are not aware of the issue. Another important category of addressees are the civil servants or the employers of child labourers. This will enable them to be familiar with their own rights with regards to employing children.

²² Annual Education Statistics, 2010, Ministry of Education, Thimphu Bhutan.

In order to enforce the legislation there is a need to conduct seminars and workshops for the labour inspectors, police personals, local community leaders and the judiciary officials.

Another effective way to advocate the issue is through the celebration of *World Day against Child Labour*. Themes covering the rights of the child can be developed and events should be organized throughout the country to highlight the issue.

6.2.4 Establishment of NGOs and CSOs

Today, with changing lifestyle and desires, Bhutan is witnessing rapid increase in child labour activity which has drawn attention of many social workers. It is therefore very crucial that the government recognizes, supports and encourages establishment of new NGOs and CSOs. Bifurcation of programs to uphold the rights of children among these organizations will ensure the prevention of children who are at the risk of becoming child labourers and protect those children who are currently engaged in the workforce.

6.2.5 Strengthen monitoring mechanism

In Bhutan, the current Labour and Employment Act even though is in synchronization with many international conventions has been inadequately put into practice mainly with reference to workplace monitoring. MoLHR should empower its labour inspectors to go beyond the formal sector to identify and prevent children from being exploited and also ensure that prevailing practices related to child labour are in accordance with the Labour and Employment Act. In addition to dealing with supply factors of child labor as discussed earlier, special attention needs to be given to demand factors such as through effective enforcement of existing laws and legislation that put pressure on the employers so as not to employ child labour.

6.2.6 Strong unions are an important protection against child labour.

Bhutan is in the process of becoming a member to ILO. This event can be foreseen as a turning point in the labour market. Strong labour unions should be established to uphold the rights of workers irrespective of age and gender.

6.3. Conclusion

Today, child labour is so widespread that it is impossible to eliminate it in a short term. The conditions of most families in many UDC are so poor that they simply need children's labour. Child labour is prevalent in Bhutan though not very rampant. Many children think that 'working is surviving' (Kelland *et al.* 2006). Bhutanese children, similar to many other communities across the world are expected to contribute to their family income. 'The issue of child rights and working age limit cannot be relevant in Bhutanese traditional context at least for sometime because working children are considered as additional family asset rather than violation of their rights to develop both physically and emotionally' (Lham 2005: 122). This is linked to CRC Article 5 which requires states to respect the rights and duties of the parents who would guide the child based on his or her evolving capabilities (Ghandhi 2008). However, this does not mean that the works undertaken by children in Bhutan are totally free from being exploited. Some worst forms of child labour have been traced such as physical abuse, making children carry heavy loads beyond their capacity, sexual molestation and imposing excessive punishment (NCWC 2009). In the midst of the debate, it must not be forgotten that no matter where children work- home or outside, their basic right to childhood should be accorded with respect and humanity.

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Appendix 1

QUESTIONNAIRE ON CHILD LABOUR

I am conducting a study on prevalence of child labour in Bhutan. The purpose of this study is to write my Masters' dissertation. However, the findings will enable the relevant stakeholders to use it for designing policies and strategies to help our children enjoy and experience a happy childhood. Thus, I would like to request you to kindly help me by responding to the questions below.

Please answer the questions honestly. Your confidentiality will be respected. Thank You for your support and cooperation.

PART A: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This section is on your background. It covers your personal and professional details. Kindly underline the one that is the most appropriate for you.

1. **Sex:** Male Female

2. **Age:** Below 20 years 20 to 30 31 to 45 46 years and over

3. **Nationality:** Non Bhutanese Bhutanese

4. **Education (highest):**
 - Class X pass and below
 - Class XII pass and below
 - Bachelors degree
 - Masters degree or above
 - Did not go to school
 - Religious practitioner

5. **Residence:** Rural Urban

PART B: Child Labor

This section is on child labour. It covers your views and observations. Kindly respond.

1. Do you think child labour is an issue in Bhutan?
Yes No

2. Do you think that it's okay for child laborers to work if their parents can't afford to feed or clothe them?
Yes No

3. Are there policies that protect children from child labour?
Yes No

4. Is there child labour in Bhutan?

Yes No

5. The causes of child labour are: (Rate the causes. Number 1 is the main cause followed by 2 as the second main cause)

Cause	Rating
Poverty	
Illiteracy of parents	
Difficulty of access to education	
Low social status	
Big family	
School dropout	
No alternatives for school dropouts	
Others (write and rate)	

6. Where do you see the child labour the most. (Rate the presence. Number 1 is the area where child labour is seen the most followed by 2 as the second main cause)

Area	Rating
Hotel to wash dishes and as waiters	
Home for babysitting	
Home as domestic help	
Sales person in shops	
Selling edible items for the family	
Others (write and rate)	
Others (write and rate)	
Others (write and rate)	

7. Have you ever employed a child?

Yes No

8. Are child laborers treated with dignity?

Yes No

9. The most common form of child abuse is: Tick only one and which you feel is the most common form of abuse.

Form of abuse	Tick one
Slapping/beating	
Not giving enough to eat	
Bad place to sleep	
Verbal abuse	
Sexual harassment	
Others (write and rate)	
Others (write and rate)	
Others (write and rate)	

10. Is there any monitoring mechanism made by the government to protect children from child labour.

Yes

No

11. The main difficulty in protecting children against child labour is: (Rate .Number 1 is the main difficulty followed by 2 as the second).

Difficulty	Rating
Poverty of parents	
Illiteracy of parents	
Difficulty of access to education	
Low social status	
Big family and difficulty of rearing children	
No legal backing to take action on employers of child	
No budget in the government	
Others (write and rate)	
Others (write and rate)	

12. What should the government do to protect children against child labour? Name one measure.
13. Name one contribution that you can make to protect children against child labour.
14. Do you think the number of child labourers are increasing or decreasing?
15. Which organizations/agencies are responsible for addressing child labour?
16. Who are the main employers of child labourers?
17. Where would/should children go for assistance or help if they are abused (badly treated) by employers?
18. Have you ever heard of a legal case or incidents regarding child labour or domestic worker? State briefly.

Appendix 2

Interview questions

Interview questions for government officials

How has the state of Bhutan analyzed the problem of child labour in the country? Is it a failure or achievement? Is it because of wrong diagnosis or because of execution bottlenecks?

Does Bhutan have legal definition of age of minority?

Does the definition include at when and what kind of work they can perform?

What happens if an adult is found to have flaunted those rules?

Does the state monitor that the rules of work by children are adhered to?

What kinds of work do children do in this town?

Are there any others? Any those are more common.

Can you tell me something about a baby sitter/a child working in a restaurant/a house maid/a child working in an auto garage/a child working in a construction site?

In what ways do you think a working child can help the family economically?

Is child labour popular in your town?

How do you feel when you see children working?

How do you feel about the treatment the children get at their work places?

Why do you think there are more children working in your town?

When you see children working, do you think it could affect their future life?

What do you think happens to a child when s/he begins to work at an early age?

Do you think that these children can still go to school?

How do you distinguish between child worker and child labour?

Can you mention some specific projects that the government has taken to address child labour?

How effective is the Labour Act in curbing child labour?

Are NGOs/parents aware of the state programme on child labour? What do they (NGO/parents) think about it?

For the employer

Why do you employ children?

What wages do you pay them?

When was the first time that you employed a child worker to work for you?

What work do you assign him/her?

What else do you make him/her do?

What work do you like him/her to do the most?

Why did you choose to keep a child for your work and not an adult?

Is the child helpful or does s/he meet your expectations in doing the work?

Do the child's parents have any debt?

Are you aware of the law and regulations protecting the rights of a child?

For children

Where do you work?

When (age) did you start working?

Who sent you to work?

Do you know the reason why you were sent to work?

Did you find the work yourself?

Did your family know that you are going to work?

Did you have support from your family to work?

How were you treated in your village/community?

What is your responsibility at work? What do you do here?

Did you get some training to work?

How long do you work (from morning to evening)?

Are you paid for your work? If not, who takes your money?

Where are you living and with whom?

Are you happy with your work?

What will you do when you do when you grow up?

Why didn't you go to a school?

Would you like to go to a school?

For parents

Does your child(ren) go to school?

Does any of your child(ren) work?

Why did you send your child to work?

How long has your child been working?

Why didn't you send your child to school?

Did you benefit from your child's work? How much?

Are you happy that your child is working?

Are you aware of the state programme on child labour? What do you think about it?

Appendix 3

Interview questions

1. Can you tell me something about your work in your organization?
2. Does your organization look into child labour issues in Bhutan?
3. Is child labour popular in Bhutan?
4. How does your organization support/guide the government to reduce/fight child labour?
5. Do you know if Bhutan has a legal definition of age of minority?
6. Does the definition include at when and what kind of work they can perform?
7. What happens if an adult is found to have flaunted those rules?
8. Does the state monitor that the rules of work by children are adhered to?
9. What kinds of work do children in Bhutan do?
10. Are children allowed to work legally in as domestic maids?
11. Have you been to places where children work? Where?
12. How do you feel about the treatment the children get at their work places?
13. Why do you think there are (more) children working in Bhutan?
14. When you see children working, do you think it could affect their future life? How?
15. What do you think happens to a child when s/he begins to work at an early age?
16. Do you think that these children can still go to a school?
17. How do you distinguish between child worker and child labour?
18. Can you mention some projects/programmes that the government has taken to address child labour in collaboration with your organization?
19. How effective do you think is Bhutan's Labour Act in curbing child labour?
20. Do you think that child labour is a serious issue in Bhutan?

21. Do you receive any complaints from child labourers about their employers or their parents?
22. How should the government tackle domestic child labour?
23. In what other ways can your organization assist the government in curbing child labour?
24. How has the state of Bhutan analysed the problem of child labour?
(Serious/minor, failure or achievement) Is it because of wrong diagnosis or because of execution bottlenecks?
25. Do you think the general public is aware of child labour issues?
26. What has been the role of media in creating awareness on child labour issues or the Labour Act?
27. What is your views on domestic child labour ?