Key Messages for Policy and Practice

The earthquake has left families displaced and unable to rebuild their homes

Many young people are displaced after their houses were destroyed in the earthquake, living on other people’s land. Many of the young people are struggling to reconstruct their houses, as government support is insufficient, leaving them vulnerable to financial exploitation and recurrent landslides. Youth recommendations: Address the problem of displacement due to earthquake and enhance the support system for people to reconstruct their houses.

Difficulty in accessing and continuing primary education

Marginalised young people drop out from school before completing primary education due to a combination of poverty and distance to school. Young people from poor households have to work from a very young age to support their family, especially those affected by parental migration. Long distance to school presents a further barrier. Youth recommendations: Address gender discrimination through campaigns emphasising the value of educating girls, and develop an education policy that addresses gender and support for girls to continue education.

Young women need support to continue education of their choice

Marginalised young women’s education is particularly at risk, as parents prioritise sons’ education over daughters’. A combination of tradition and gender discrimination leaves many young women with limited or no schooling. Youth recommendations: Address gender discrimination through action on women’s safety and security in domestic, community and workplaces so that young women can feel respected and safe.

Develop employment plan focused on skills development

Many young people question the value of formal education, seeing skills development as a much better route to being able to make a living. Many say they prefer to migrate because they do not have employment opportunities in the village or access to capital to start a business. Youth recommendations: Promote apprenticeships and skills-oriented education and create employment opportunities in the villages. Establish provision of small loans for young entrepreneurs.

Young people lack access to information about legal migration

Youth are migrating to different countries without proper information about safe and legal routes. As a result, many are being cheated and young women in particular are at risk of human trafficking and labour exploitation. Youth recommendations: Establish information services about legal migration that is accessible to all.

There is a significant problem of alcohol abuse in Sindhupalchowk

The problem of alcoholism is high in Sindhupalchowk. This has significantly affected the lives of young people. Their relationship with family members is also affected by this problem which leaves them feeling helpless. Young women in particular experience abuse and harassment due to alcoholism. Youth recommendations: Address the problem of alcoholism and its outcomes, including support for change and provision for associated domestic violence, financial, and other problems.

Youth Uncertainty Rights (YOUR) World Research has worked with some of the most marginalised young people across eight fragile environments in Ethiopia and Nepal. The research has generated new knowledge about how marginalised youth perceive, navigate, negotiate and respond to uncertainty, and how this may affect their rights and pathways out of poverty in impoverished fragile and conflict affected communities, which may be prone to environmental disasters.

Youth are facing increasing unemployment, more fragile and unpredictable environments and, in many places, the effects of religious, ethnic and political conflict. YOUR World research shows that, when we include youth by listening to their views, a picture emerges of creativity and innovative ideas in the face of significant challenges.

This site summary provides an overview of the main findings from the research activities carried out in Sindhupalchowk, Nepal. Sindhupalchowk was one of the worst affected districts from the earthquake that took place on the 28th April, 2015. Detailed research was carried out with 70 young men and women.

Team and Partners

The research was carried out in the rural areas of Sindhupalchowk, Nepal in partnership with local organisation—Community Self Reliance Centre (CSRC) that have demonstrated their local expertise in working with the most marginalised children and youth on poverty, rights and participation.

Partners in Nepal

ActionAid Nepal
Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID), Tribhuvan University, Nepal
Local Partner in Sindhupalchowk
Community Self Reliance Centre (CSRC)

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Main Findings

The uncertainty of marginalised young people in Sindhupalchowk is influenced not just by environmental fragility, but also family poverty, poor parental relationships, neglect in childhood, domestic violence, and family separation which leaves young people responsible for the household economy from a very early age.

- **Poverty** leaves young people struggling to pursue education. Young people have to work from a very young age and young women in particular struggle to find the time to study due to a heavy workload at home and long distance to school. They find uncertainty in the education system and question its relevance in the pursuit of employment opportunities.

- Many families do not have land for farming, which leads to parental migration in search of employment opportunities. Young people with family members in foreign employment speak of poor family relations, and of being unable to seek opportunities outside of the home due to household responsibilities in the absence of other members of the family.

- Some young men have migrated to Kathmandu to learn skills in silver/handicraft works from relatives. They have given you an example; Dhungana sir, who teaches social studies in our school, will not eat with Dalit students” (Bir Bahadur, young man, aged 20, 267)

- **Living with alcoholic parents** significantly affects the lives of some young people. Alcohol abuse is often associated with domestic violence and neglect.

  “My father is alcoholic. When he is drunk, he starts shouting at people sitting by the road. No one likes him. I feel very sad when this happens” (Lax, young woman, aged 18, 142)

- Young women feel frustrated by the way they are treated. Most young women face harassment, verbal abuse and violence when they move outside the home, particularly from young men who drink alcohol.

- Many houses were destroyed in the earthquake. Unable to construct new houses, as they lack the financial resources, many marginalised young people are living in shelters. Most houses are built on steep slopes, vulnerable to landslides experienced over many years.

  “I always feel insecurity here since all the houses in my village are on steep slopes. A couple of years back a landslide swept away all our houses. The earthquake caused more destruction. I cannot sleep a whole night during the rainy time. The place is vulnerable to landslide. The roads are not safe to go to the market or the forests. They are not well built and are vulnerable to landslide.” (Sentila, young woman, aged 16, 348)

- In response to crises such as the earthquake, many young people choose to migrate to get the funds needed to support their families to rebuild their houses. Most worry about the loan that they take from different sources in order to reconstruct their houses. The support provided by government for reconstruction is insufficient.

  “All the money that I have earned has been used for my father’s treatment and to construct my house. Half of the construction work has been completed though I have taken loan. It takes two years for me to pay back those loans, which makes me feel uncertain about my future. I do not have money now. I am waiting for support from the government” (Vupal, young man, aged 19, 351)

- Some young people have opted for early marriage at the age of 18/19, before completion of school education. The responsibility of marriage leads them to search for income generating opportunities.

  “I feel some traditional values and customs are good but not all. I do not like the tradition of keeping women separate for 7 days during menstruation. But I like the old cultures.” (Suna, young woman, aged 20, 256)

- Some young Dalit men have migrated to Kathmandu to learn skills in silver/handicraft works from relatives. They have dropped out of primary school before completion voluntarily and feel happy that they have learnt skills which helped them earn a living.

What we did

**Methodology**

The methodology was co-constructed with marginalised young people, exploring their perceptions of uncertainty, place and space, mobility and migration, transition and growing up, self/others, autonomy and relationships, and conflict and environmental crisis. Two cross cutting themes - strategies and interventions, what helps and doesn’t help in times of uncertainty – help provide insight for policy makers. Participatory, creative and moving methods were used, and data was drawn from multiple sources including direct observations, interviews, physical artifacts, and audio-visual materials. Researchers spent time on-site interacting with the people studied.

**Locations**

Sindhupalchowk district has been affected by conflict in the past, and was one of the areas most affected by the 2015 earthquake. Research was carried out in Kiul, Timbuk Ichowk, Gyalthum and Chitre community of Helambu rural municipality and Talamarang, Chapabot, Kolecha and Melamchi of Melamchi municipality in Sindhupalchowk. The sites were chosen as they are particularly impoverished and are diverse in terms of ethnicity.

**Participants**

Researchers have worked with marginalised young people aged 15 to 24 living in Sindhupalchowk, taking care to reach gender balance in the sampling. The participant sample and criteria of marginalisation and vulnerability were developed through the inception and piloting phase of the research project. Snowballing was used to reach the most marginalised and a coding system was developed to monitor and report on the diversity of young people in the case studies. Guiding questions were developed and used to collect information from the young participants.

**Research**

The research was conducted in five phases, using qualitative methods and applied creative and engaging participatory and visual methods, such as mapping, rivers of life, photo narrative, timeline, seasonal map, youth led walk, network and support diagrams to reveal youth perspectives on the complexities of their lives.

These methods enabled in-depth investigation of how uncertainty affects the lives and contexts of young people, and how in turn young people seek strategies to shape their rights and change their contexts. The research engaged with 70 young people including 40 detailed case studies collected from Sindhupalchowk. Small group discussions with young people were organised prior to extended individual case studies, to familiarise participants with the research. The case studies provided stories from young men and women who helped to understand how marginalised youth experience intersecting aspects poverty, ethnicity, caste, religion, disability, education and socio-economic status, and provide insight into the strategies employed by young people in the face of uncertainty. The findings were cross checked with adults and stakeholders from the research site.