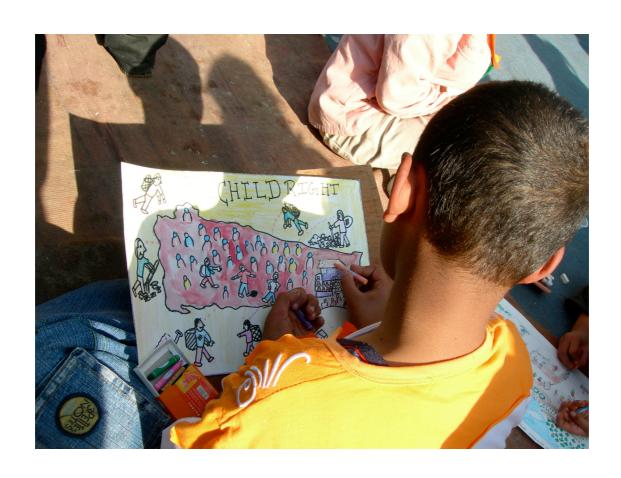# Children as Agents of Change

A Case Study of Working Children's Clubs in Kathmandu

Children as Agents of Change

A Case Study of Working Children's Clubs in Kathmandu

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDB	Children's Development Bank
CONCERN	Concern for Working Children and Environment Nepal
CPC	Child Protection Committee
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CWISH	Children – Women in Social Service and Human Rights
FDC	Forest Development Committee
GEFONT	General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ILO-IPEC	International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour
MOLTM	Ministry of Labour and Transport Management
NACRO	National Alliance of Child Rights Organisations
NDC	National Development Council
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NLA	National Labour Academy
NPC	The National Planning Commission
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
SMC	School Management Committee
VDC	Village Development Committee
UN	United Nations

MAP OF NEPAL

Source: Google Maps

MAP OF KATHMANDU

Source: Google Maps

CHAPTER 1.0 INTRODUCTION

> We worry what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget he/she is someone today (Stacia Staucher, in O'Kane 2003).

Across South and Central Asia we have in the last decades seen a growing number of children organising themselves in Child Clubs or other Children's Organisations, as a positive force for social change. With children's rights as a tool, they are raising their voices not only in the local community, but also nationally, bringing about positive changes for themselves and children and adults around them (O'Kane 2003). The objective of this thesis is to explain the impact of participation in Child Clubs on working children in Kathmandu, and thereby shed further light on children's voice in the debate concerning their lives and their future.

Children are social actors. However, too often they tend to be looked upon as the citizens of tomorrow. Giving children the opportunity to come together to discuss, and to listen to their views, is important for three reasons. First of all, it is their right. The article 12 in the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) states: "The child has the right to express his or her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child." Second, no one knows the children's situation better than themselves. Children's own perspectives differ from those of adults. This makes them more capable of understanding other children's problems and issues. An approach that includes participation from the people affected, by making them a part of the decision-making processes, has a greater potential of being effective and sustainable. Third, the experience the children gain by participating may give them valuable life skills, which in turn may increase their opportunity to take part in society as responsible and caring citizens.

1.1 Research Questions

This thesis seeks to answer the following research question:

- *In what ways do Working Children's Clubs in Kathmandu contribute to change for the children themselves, their local community and nationally, and what can explain these changes?*

I have chosen to use the empowerment approach as my theoretical framework, in order to explain the role of the Clubs for creating changes in the lives of working children. I will employ Friedman's (1992) concepts of *social, political* and *psychological empowerment* as analytical concepts. Petesch et al. (2005) argue that relational inequalities serve to disempower the poor, making it more difficult for them to influence the world to further their interests. Children are in a subordinate position vis-à-vis adults, and working children can thus be seen as marginalised twice as they are both children and poor. In combination with the empowerment approach, I will discuss the Nepalese context in order to explain how the Clubs can contribute to change. This requires a qualitative approach and I have carried out interviews with working children, their parents, teachers, Child Club facilitators and others having an opinion on the topic. I have posted three minor research questions concerning the context of Working Children's Clubs:

- *What is the Nepalese perception of childhood?*
- *How is the perception of child work in the Nepalese society?*
- *How do the working children perceive their work?*

Discussing the main theme, I will focus mostly on the impacts on the individuals who are part of the Club. While dealing with the Clubs' impacts on the national level, I will touch upon how the Clubs by cooperating with other foreign Children's Organisations, may strengthen the Working Children's Movement, as well as influencing the international discourse on child work. In order to analyse the Clubs' impacts on the children's lives I have found it useful to make three sub-questions:

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- *How does being part of a Club affect the children's ability to cope with their working situation?*
- *How does being part of a Club affect the children's education?*
- *How does being part of a Club affect the children's family life?*

1.2 The background and relevance of the thesis

Children make up over 40 percent of the world's population. About 350 million of the children in the world are working. 60 percent of these children live in Asia or the Pacific regions. Child work is difficult to measure as it is not always visible. It has been estimated that in South Asia about half the child population is engaged in some kind of work (Save the Children 2006).

The economic exploitation of children is one of the worst forms of child abuse in the world today. The public perception of child work in the global north is that it is degrading, and that child workers are helpless victims. This position has created an understanding of child work as merely negative. However, child work covers a wide spectrum from beneficial to intolerable. Another position is that child work and child rights exclude each other. Governments and international organisations that stand up for children's rights, often tend to support the elimination of child work. Paradoxically, many child workers want the right to work, as their lives, and those of their families, depend on their income (Swift 1999). Child work is rooted in poverty. It is a complex problem, which needs to be understood and acted upon in all its complexities. Issues such as environment, gender and migration need to be taken into consideration, as well as the children's chance to express themselves.

Nepal has a very high proportion of working children. The Nepal Labour Force Survey from 1998/1999 claims that about 41 percent of the Nepalese children aged five to fourteen, were working (MOLTM 2004). In this thesis I refer to children as everyone below the age of eighteen, which makes the percentage of children engaged in work even greater. The social and economic circumstances in Nepal make the issue of child work challenging. Nepal is one of the least developed countries in the world. About 90 percent of its population live in rural areas, while half of the adult population is illiterate. With this in mind, the fact that children are working to support their families, is not something that will or can change overnight (MOLTM

2004). Since the 1990s, Nepal has experienced an increase in Child Clubs. These Clubs are forums for children's participation, where children come together to discuss important aspects of their lives. They arrange different activities, some just for fun and others with the purpose of learning. The Clubs organise awareness campaigns in order to inform the local community about children's rights. Many Clubs concentrate on one main theme. As the children in my study had been working from an early age, their Clubs were concerned with the welfare and situation of working children.

The academic study of childhood can be compared to the one on gender. Just as feminists have claimed that gender is an important construct, which needs to be recognised in order to understand how society works, many academics working on children's issues, argue that childhood is an equally important construct. Children are perceived as a distinct social group. They are looked upon as less competent, and in need of direction from adults. Even though we have accepted that adults control children's lives, little is done to understand how children perceive and live within these constraints (Penn 1999). In the introduction to a series of National Reports on childhood as a social phenomenon, Qvortrup (1991) argues that children should be studied as a separate category, and not be subsumed under the family. Just as women, children are social actors who contribute to the economy, participate in decision-making, and shape their own lives. By studying the family as one unit, we too often fail to see the interaction between the family members, and how the different members perceive their reality.

This thesis focuses on children's agency. By agency I base my understanding on Castree et al. (2004) and define it as the capacity of taking action for one's own self-interest and the interest of others. There is lots of research on working children, but very few take into consideration the point of view of the children themselves. I believe that the participation of children is crucial to understand their situation. By inviting children to have a say, they can become agents of change both for themselves and their community. All this being said about the agency and participation of working children, it is however important that one has in mind the rather unbalanced relationship, by nature and by tradition, between adults and children in terms of development, experience, power and influence. Another aspect is that even though children have the right to get organised and participate, it does not mean that they have all the answers. Nor does it mean that we as adults are exempted from our responsibilities towards children (Reddy 2000).

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1.3 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is structured in six chapters. The introductory chapter presents the theme of the thesis, the research objective and the research questions. In the second chapter the analytical framework will be presented. The chapter starts with a discussion of the essential conceptions, namely *childhood, children*, *work* and *labour*. Then follows the theoretical perspectives of empowerment, on which this thesis has been based. In chapter three I discuss methodology. There I account for how the data was collected, challenges concerning research on children, and ethical dilemmas I met during the research process. The fourth chapter provides context for the research. I discuss the Nepalese perception of childhood, child work and child rights, both by using my own empirical data and secondary literature. The fifth chapter constitutes the core of the thesis. This is where I discuss the analytical findings regarding my main research question. The sixth and final chapter draws on insights from the other chapters in order to summarise my findings.

CHAPTER 2.0 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to explore how Working Children's Clubs can contribute to change for the children themselves and their community I will apply the *empowerment approach* as my theoretical perspective. The central concepts for this thesis are *childhood*, *children*, *work* and *labour*. These need to be examined before I can start a discussion about working children in Nepal.

The empowerment approach has been applied by a number of development researchers, but the focus has nearly always been on the household, or particularly on women. Few have paid attention to children's empowerment. However the empowerment of women has often been linked to the welfare of children. For example the topic of UNICEF's *The State of the World's Children 2007* was women's empowerment. The reason for this was that they saw women as an important catalyst for change. The main argument was that an investment in women's rights would lead to an advance in the rights of women as well as children. Furthermore, women's groups were used as examples of an important arena for fighting discriminatory attitudes in the community (UNICEF 2006).

In the late 1990s, Working Children's Organisations started to assert themselves by participating in conferences and discussions on child labour issues. Many of these organisations came into being in the 1970s, and tens of thousands of child workers in Africa, Asia and Latin America have since then fought for their rights at the local, national and international level (Swift 1999). Many books and reports have been written about children's participation in particular, but a broader focus on children's empowerment has yet to come to the forefront of development discourse. Just as women and women's groups are seen as important catalysts of change, so can children and children's groups be seen in a similar light. Friedman's (1992) conceptualisation of empowerment is a good starting point to discuss this further.

2.1 The Discourse on Childhood

Foucault was one of the critics of modernity, which he saw as a repressive, totalising mode of thought. For him modernity grounds its ideas on an image of universal humanity on traits that are culturally specific for the Europeans. The ideals of the Enlightment, such as autonomy, freedom and human rights, contribute to a normalising discipline that imposes an "appropriate" identity on people (Young 1990, in Peet 1998). In this way the discourses shape the "taken-for-granted world" as they contribute to naturalise and universalise a particular view of the world and how we position subjects differently within it (Blomley 1994, in Johnston et al. 2000). Modernistic ideals of rationality and reason become mere elements used to dominate and usurp social control. Foucault forms part of the post-modernist and post-structuralist movement, which is critical towards the power relationship behind the construction of concepts and the production of knowledge. Power and knowledge must be understood in the same context, as knowledge never can be said to be neutral. The production of knowledge is not an objective reflection of the world, but must be understood as a set of discourses. A discourse can be seen as a part of a bigger, self-producing whole, like a network of statements, customs and institutions that contribute to make the prevailing situation to appear valid (Schaanning 1997).

As a discourse childhood is a mental idea that organises and defines a limited phase in human life (Schrumpf 2007). As time goes by society will change, some discourses will be weakened and disappear, and others will gain ground as the new prevailing discourses. There are however some discourses that are so firmly established that we forget their contingency, and conceive them as a matter of course. These are called *objective discourses* (Jørgensen and Phillips 1999). Children and childhood are often used as an example of such an objective discourse. Still, this does not mean that everyone agrees on the same definition of childhood, or that it has been like this at all times. According to Ariès (1962, in Jørgensen and Phillips 1999), in medieval society childhood did not exist. Children were perceived to be "small adults" because the awareness of childhood as a distinctive social status was lacking.

To use discourse theory on childhood is however not without problems. Is it possible to understand childhood as a concept without taking into consideration childhood as a stage of biological growth? Most of us see childhood as both

biological and social, but what weight should be given to each factor? Prout and James (1997) discuss the challenges of either focusing on the cultural variability of childhood, or deciding that there are some biological facts that are the same for all children which may be used in the fight against abuse and exploitation. The fact that children and childhood for many are conceived to be an objective discourse makes it difficult for other conceptions of childhood to gain ground. The only reason why many in the global north see childhood as an objective discourse is that they believe firmly in their perception as the only one that is valid. Different societies have different notions when it comes to what they see as a "normal childhood". There exist thousands of contradictory conceptions of childhood, comprising who should be characterised as children, as well as what "being a child" should imply. The question is; who is entitled to define what constitutes a childhood of full value? This debate has prompted me to include attention to the Nepalese context as regards the perception of working children.

2.1.1 The Universal Childhood

The increasing reach of international law has led to changes in the discursive construction of childhood (James and James 2004). The prevailing discourse sees children as a group in need of special protection, and therefore their own rights. Despite the fact that children's participation is one of the core principles of the CRC, it was shaped and written by adults (Ennew 2000). The global north has always dominated the international discourse on child rights, which has lead to certain ideas and values being institutionalised through the CRC (Boyden 1997). For example the majority of the countries in the global south showed little interest in the drafting process of the CRC because they felt it represented a "normal" childhood that was foreign to them (Fyfe 1989). We should be conscious of the dangers of imposing notions of "normal" childhood and child development on other societies. On the other hand Van Bueren (1993) notes that even though a universal definition of childhood would be inflexible and simplistic, a more coherent approach is needed to be able to make use of the rights.

In one respect childhood can be said to be universal. As a stage in life, childhood is characterised by a rapid and common physiological and psychological

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development (James and James 2004). Even though we may agree on some developmental similarities, it is important to recognise that our beliefs about what is best for children are cultural constructions. This means that even though we consider some aspects of childhood to be biological "facts", the way we interpret these "facts" into *children's needs* will vary considerably between different cultures. At one end you find the "basic" or "fundamental" needs that can be universally agreed upon, such as the need for food and water. At the other end are the "socially constructed" needs, which are related to culture. These needs are not determined by the fundamental similarities of all children, but by the culture and society in which the child lives (Woodhead 1996).

Time after time, international child rights activists ignore the fact that the perception of child rights is linked to thoughts in the global north, and therefore often can be in conflict with other societies' cultural and social values. The cultural bias in the CRC weakens the universality of the child rights, and some would even criticise child rights lobbyists of being part of a bigger project of the "westernisation" of the world. As I explore the world of child workers in Nepal it is important to have this in mind.

2.1.2 Childhood in time and place

In all places at all times people have named the different parts of the aging process. Childhood is, as I have discussed, a conception constructed within a social and cultural context (Schrumpf 2007). One example is the use of birthdates in global northern societies. If I were asked to identify myself, I would probably say my name and my age. In Ethiopia you would answer this question with the name of your grandfather and his ethnic group (Melaku 2000, in Liebel 2004). Our precise chronologisation of the aging process is a relatively new phenomenon of modernity. James and James (2004) argue that this can be seen as a by-product of the industrialisation process, which brought with it a rationalisation and categorisation of all aspects of life. The categorical stages of adulthood and childhood are fixed by the social practices of custom and the practices of law, and are therefore susceptible to change through time.

Different societies fix different thresholds for demarcating childhood and adulthood. In traditional societies the integration of children into socioeconomic life begins quite early compared to the global north. This makes the transition from childhood to adulthood more gradual, and the different phases of life difficult to identify (Ghosh 1998). In many societies in the global south the various stages in life are not based on age, but on the ability to fulfil certain responsibilities and perform certain tasks (Liebel 2004). For example is the social status of the child among the Gamo in Southern Ethiopia closely connected with the economic tasks the child performs. Children up to the age of about five are not given any tasks and are called *Gesho Noyta*. Children from five to ten years are called *Não* because they at this age begin to help their parents with their work. When the children are more than ten years old they are given full responsibility in domestic and agricultural activities and are called *Wet'te Não* (Melaku 2000, in Liebel 2004).

In other societies people are classified according to their physical condition, mobility, and cognitive and social competence. Among the Baining in Papua New Guinea motion is used to describe the child's physical age. To answer the question "how old is your child?" parents of a newborn baby would answer, "we carry him/her". After the age of five to six months the parents have started to carry their child on their shoulders and would answer, "he/she sits on the shoulders". When the child gets older they would say, "he/she walks". A child of about seven to nine years old would be identified with the phrase "he/she goes fully" because the parents now consider the child to be responsible enough to go for water and firewood (Fajans 1997, in Liebel 2004). Another example is from Bangladesh. In Bengali there are no words that correspond with the word child. The word that is being used in translations is *shishu*, a term that is linked with economic responsibilities. A *shishu* is an innocent, protected and dependent child who 'do not understand'. Whereas a responsible child who can look after itself is no longer considered a *shishu*. A child may remain a *shishu* up to the age of twelve, but this would be used negatively as children are supposed to be responsible at this age (Aziz and Maloney 1985, in Blanchet 1996).

In childhood studies it is common to make a distinction between a traditional and a modern model of childhood. The former sees children as having a working role on family farms and businesses, while the latter tends to see children as dependent on others, and therefore in the need of protection. According to Baker and Hinton (2001) broad social and economic changes have blurred the distinction between the two

models. Many children in today's developing countries have a foot in both camps. While they are working they fit the model of the traditional childhood where there is a greater recognition of children's capacity to perform a working role and look after themselves. However while at school they are in a typical "children's place" and fit into the modern childhood. Baker and Hinton (2001) claim that the polarity between the two models of childhood is no longer helpful in order to understand the different childhoods of the world. There is a growing acceptance that the perception of childhood cannot be distinguished from criteria such as class, gender and ethnicity. James and James (2004) argue that childhood is best understood in terms of its local diverse context. However, one has to be aware of the inherent danger in overemphasising local diversity and cultural differences. According to them childhood must be seen both as something that is common to all children, a developmental stage of the life course, and at the same time something that varies considerably across and between cultures and generations. I share James and James' perception of childhood, and will, in this thesis, discuss childhood in the light of both biological and social factors. With my Norwegian background I will tend to consider anyone under the age of eighteen as a child. My aim is to try to understand the concept of children in the context of Nepal.

Abernethie (1998) notes that any attempt to agree on a universal definition of a child will be problematic as the phenomenon is exceptionally complex. With so many different discourses on childhood, it is not surprising that it is challenging, or maybe impossible to agree on universal children's rights or a framework for child labour. It is nevertheless important to make an attempt to agree on the aspects where this is possible. Children's immaturity is for example universally recognised. The way this immaturity is understood and structured, is however a cultural process that varies considerably from place to place. The tension between these two principles is what causes debates about how children should be cared for, trained and socialised. Children do not develop in a physical, social, mental and moral vacuum. For example children's "evolving capacities" will be determined and structured by social contexts and relationships, as well as mediated by cultural goals and practices (Woodhead 2000).

2.1.3 Children as social agents

Central to the understanding of the production and reproduction of childhood, is the relationship between structure and agency. When it comes to the central characters, the children, one usually forgets the aspect of agency. Most of us conceive the roles of children to be either victims or beneficiaries, shaped by the structures. Few social theorists have taken into consideration children's status and position, and even fewer have further examined children's potential as agents of social change (James and James 2004).

The particular nature of children is used as a reason to separate them from the world of adults. They are considered to be apolitical, with no political rights of citizenship. In the past children's interests were assumed to be the same as those of their families (Qvortrup 1990, in James and James 2004). Today however, there is a broader understanding of the fact that children can have their own agency and political will. Nevertheless, simply the way we talk about children curbs their agency. James and James (2004:14) argue that: "childhood is the *structural* site occupied by children as a *collectivity*." Within this collective space of childhood the *individual* child uses his or her unique agency. The term "the child" is often used uncritically, and is therefore somewhat misleading used to represent the entire category of children. According to James and James (2004) this would never occur in relation to adults. To use "the adult" as a concept would contradict the individuality which is embedded in the very notion of adulthood. To use a singular umbrella term for children is however seen as unproblematic. By talking about children in this collectivising way we contribute to a rejection of children's uniqueness, and furthermore reduce their significance as individual agents with individual contributions.

Since the late 1970s, with the emergence of the new paradigm in childhood studies, children as social agents and the diversity of childhoods have been in focus. Children are no longer seen as passive objects, but are increasingly perceived as active participants in their own social world and those of adults (James and James 2004). In this thesis I will explore the children's individual and collective agency.

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2. 2 The concept of child labour

During the last decades we have witnessed a rising global concern about child labour. This has brought forward new values, actors and ideas, and lead to a more nuanced debate regarding the nature of the phenomenon, and how we should respond to it (Myers 1999). While academics and researchers such as Boyden, Woodhead, Myers, and Ennew, have had great impact on NGOs and their programmes concerning working children, politicians and international initiatives seek legitimacy in another school of thought. This leads to an unfavourable gap between international politics and civil society. The public discourse on children's work is highly moral, and a debate about the definition is important because this could be the start of changes in people's attitudes. *Child labour* and *child work* represent different perceptions of the phenomenon, and defining them is essentially political. The debate represents fundamental differences of opinion, from those who perceive the term as unproblematic, to those who would like to see it scrapped all together because they think it makes us focus on the wrong aspects (Myers 1999). I will go deeper into this debate later in the chapter. First I will give an account of different views of what constitutes children's work, and then discuss whether it is a problem that children are working. Here I will use the same concepts as have been used by the different authors I have referred to in the text.

2.2.1 What is child labour?

There is no universally accepted definition of child labour. Ennew et al. (2005) argue that there are so many different and vague concepts and definitions, that the term has no longer any technical usefulness. The definitions vary from all work carried out by children, economic participation by children, work that prevents children from attending school, full-time work performed by children, waged employment, work that exploits or is detrimental for children, to work that violates national laws or international standards. Wage is often used as a criterion. All of the economic activity that happens within a household does not necessarily get labelled "work", even though it may contribute to the family's income. Like women's unpaid work, the work done by children is often rendered invisible by the definitions (Levison 2007).

Nieuwenhuys (1994) questions our understanding of children's work within the context of the family as morally neutral and unproblematic. Why is it acceptable for a child to work in the family business, and not acceptable if under the supervision of other adults outside the family? One possible answer is that we have accepted that working with farming, in the family business or with domestic chores is part of children's socialisation, while remunerated work has been seen as exploitation. The reasoning is the public perception that household work more easily is combined with school attendance and play. Boyden et al. (1998) criticise the assumption that there is an automatic correlation between children's work and low school attendance. They claim that this is a simplification, and that we rather should look at the problems within the school system. Other research shows that children working within the context of the family can also be exploited. Green (1998) argues that street children have often run away from home because of violence in the family. Other case studies show that children in some cases prefer to work outside of home (Levison 2007).

Child workers who get paid are more visible, and it is thus far easier for international society to have a say about them. There are especially two aspects that have been focused on in defining something as "child labour". The first is minimum age. In 1973 the International Labour Organisation (ILO) launched "the ILO Minimum Age Convention" (No. 138). The Convention prohibits children from engaging in economic activity below certain specified minimum ages. A general minimum age for working is set at fifteen. However the Convention made some exceptions for poorer countries, for example that children as young as twelve years may do light part-time work (Myers 2001).

The second aspect is whether work is light or heavy. During the 1990s, the ILO decided to develop a new Convention. After the adoption of the CRC in 1989, children's protection was brought into focus, and in 1999 the ILO launched "the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention" (No. 182). The child's age was no longer in focus, but whether the work was harmful to the child or not (Myers 2001). Different usages of the term have led to confusion since people talking about "eliminating child labour" often perceive the term very differently (Ennew et al. 2005).

2.2.2 Is child labour a problem?

The most common perception of child labour is that it is a problem that needs to be removed. The debate about how to define it is due to different opinions concerning why children have to work. Child labour has long been perceived within a labour market framework. Top-down programming has sought quick-fix solutions to complex problems, ending up criminalising children's work. The fact is that child labour often is a symptom of other and greater problems in society. It should therefore be regarded as an attempt at the individual level to cope with the problems of poverty (Bourdillon 2000). To remove the remedy of a problem is seldom advisable, and policies working to eradicate child labour regardless, would in most cases create even bigger problems for the children (Myers 2001).

It is the idea of a universal child and our perception of a "happy childhood", that allows us to criticise and feel angry about the childhoods of the poor (James and James 2004). Boyden (1997) notes that the use of a universal standard for children can result in penalising, or even criminalising, the childhoods of the poor because poor families are unable to reach the standard. In addition to difficult circumstances such as poverty and ill health, the goals are often contradictory to traditional values, which make them undesirable to reach. Many talk unreflectively about the need to abolish child labour without thinking of the alternatives for children or its role in the socialisation of children in many societies (Bourdillon 2000). Even measures that are intended to resolve children's problems can in themselves be harmful. One often-used example is protective bans on the employment of children which in the end turns out to make them even more vulnerable because they have to engage in prostitution or criminal activities to earn their money as a result of such bans (Boyden 1997).

Work of some kind has always been a part of children's everyday life. When parents include their children in their work, and gradually teach them what they need to know, work has a socialising value, and becomes a natural part of society (Nieuwenhuys 1996). However, capitalism brought with it a new working structure into today's poorer countries. Factories were established which divided the process of production into different parts. Children were used as labour because they were used to working. The difference from previous work was that they only learnt one thing. Being cheap labour they were easily exposed to exploitation.

The problem with child labour is not necessarily that children are working. More and more research on the topic concludes that working can be both beneficial and harmful for children. The problem becomes obvious when children's ability to work is exploited. In these cases it is not the work in itself that is the main problem, but rather the working conditions, and how many hours the children have to work. It is in this sense that the "problem of child labour" should be understood (White 1999).

2.2.3 The fight against child labour – the fight against whom?

There are two main reasons for opposing child labour. The first, and perhaps the most obvious, is concern for the welfare of the working children. Some workplaces involve contact with harmful chemicals or the use of dangerous equipment. This may have consequences for children's physical health as well as their social development. The second reason derives from a concern that children, with their cheap labour, steal jobs from the adult population. The argument is that in the long run it would be better for children if the work were given to their parents, who most likely would get a better remuneration. Other reasons for fighting child labour do also exist. A more hidden reason is the fear that this will give children too much independence. Children have less life experience than adults, and independent children may become an easy prey for violent gangs, which in turn will be harmful for society. A more cynical reason for efforts to ban child labour is industry owners in rich countries who see their industries threatened by cheap products made by children (Bourdillon 2000).

According to Reddy (2000) the prevailing approaches to child labour have proved inadequate because they have worked from a top-down perspective, and have been based on a perception of children and childhood from the global north. To reach an understanding of child labour as a symptom of greater problems, and not as a problem in itself, participation from the children is important. Child workers need to be incorporated into the problem analyses, not in order to give them our account of their situation, but to allow them to have a say. As Reddy (2000:2) states "we have assumed we know what is best for children and never thought of consulting them." After all, there is no one that knows their situation better than children themselves. Children's participation in the fight against exploitative child labour will help by

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placing the working children at the centre, and ensure that the different interventions are locally rooted and relevant to the context (van den Berge 2006).

2.2.4 Child labour or child work?

The way we use different concepts to describe children's work clearly shows that the production of discourses is not neutral. Choosing to use one concept rather than another reveals to a certain degree one's attitude towards the phenomenon. The term *child labour* will for most of us bring with it certain negative associations such as work for long hours under hazardous conditions or even coercion. Domestic work and care work is generally ignored because the term is used almost exclusively for industrial child labour (Hungerland et al. 2007). The need for specifying what kind of "labour", by whom, and under what conditions it is carried out, is important before we jump to conclusions as to whether children's work is positive or negative (Miljeteig 2000). These are important questions I will incorporate in the further discussion of my empirical data.

In the literature concerning child work one usually distinguish between four different positions on child work. The first is *the labour market perspective*, which is supported by the ILO and Trade Unions. Their main concern is the exploitation of workers. They believe that working children reduce the power and wages of adult workers, and by international and national laws they fight for a world without working children. The second approach is *the human capital perspective*. This approach is about building human capacity to fight poverty. Their main argument is that if children are working, their potential as a working adult may be reduced. We should therefore promote health and education for children so they can develop important skills for the future. An adherent of this view is the World Bank. The third approach is called *the social development perspective*. This is a perspective held by many human rights and community organisations. Their thought is that the best way to help working children and their families, is to fight for their social justice, and thereby ensure that the services in society support them. The fourth approach is called *the child centred perspective*, and is applied by UNICEF, and child advocacy NGOs such as Save the Children. They see children as competent, resilient, and active agents. Therefore children are best protected when they get to speak up for

themselves and participate either together with adults or other children (Myers 2000). The fourth approach is the one that provides the best basis to explain the empirical data of this thesis.

Many researches (Boyden et al 1998, Myers 1999, and White 1999) prefer to use the term *child work* rather than *child labour*. To them child work is a more neutral term, and does not carry the same negative associations. They perceive work to be one out of many categories of activities children are involved in, such as playing, sleeping, and going to school (Miljeteig 2000). Another way to make a distinction is to say that child labour is bad while child work is good. The problem with this approach is that people stop thinking and simply classify something as good or bad without looking deeper into which activities the children actually are performing (Bourdillon 2000).

The approach to children's work merges with the approach to children's development in general. A clear distinction is made between those who perceive children as dependents and those who see them as social actors. The former believe that childhood is universal while the latter see childhood as something socially and culturally constructed, and that therefore many different "childhoods" exist. For the adherents of a universal childhood, child development is ideally free of work. They see children's work from a top-down perspective, and believe child labour should be abolished. The socio-cultural perception of childhood does not merely see work as a bad thing. Adherents of this perspective seek bottom-up solutions, and try to be context-sensitive, culture-appropriate, and child-centred (Woodhead 2000). In my analysis of working children in Nepal I will apply the second approach, and thus use the concept of *child work,* as this gives me the opportunity to highlight different aspects of children's work.

2.3 Empowerment perspectives

There has been a shift in the mainstream thinking on child work from a "top-down" to a more "rights-based/child-centred" approach. This can, to a certain point, be compared to the trends we have seen in development practice in general. When it comes to development theories, we have since the 1950s seen a trend moving from a technocratic, top-down approach to a more participatory approach seeking to build

capacity at the local level. The new paradigm that came in the 1970s was called Alternative Development, and aimed at putting civil society and local people at the centre of development. In the 1990s this approach gained speed, and development projects have since then focused more on how to directly empower impoverished groups. In 2001 the World Bank published its millennium *World Development Report* where empowerment was emphasised as one of the primary forces for poverty reduction (Petesch et al 2005).

The term *empowerment* is used in a variety of settings with a variety of meanings. In its broadest sense it means the expansion of freedom of choice and action. Many speak of its instrumental value; that it is a means of achieving other outcomes. However empowerment has also intrinsic value, which makes it an end in itself (Narayan 2005). Julian Rappaport, often referred to as the founder of the empowerment approach, defines empowerment as:

> …identifying, facilitating or creating contexts in which heretofore silent and "outsiders" in various settings, organisations and communities, gain understanding, voice, and influence over decisions that affect their lives (Rappaport 1990:52).

Any social group can be empowered, but in this context we are concerned with poorer, excluded or subordinate groups. One could go as far as to say that the "empowerment of the poor" in many ways has become a new synonym for development. Poor people experience inequalities when it comes to economic resources as well as to social, cultural and political factors. The inequalities serve to disempower them, and make it even more difficult for them to influence the world to further their interests (Petesch et al. 2005). Friedman (1992) argues that the poverty of the poor is a "historical process of systematic disempowerment".

Most definitions of empowerment include words such as options, choice, control or power. According to Petesch et al. (2005:40) empowerment means "increasing both the capacity of individuals or groups to make purposeful choices and their capacity to transform these choices into desired actions and outcomes." Kabeer (2001) is also concerned with the ability to choose, and sees this as a form of power. Her understanding of being disempowered is in fact to be denied choice. Empowerment is further defined as "the expansion in people's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them"

(Kabeer 2001:19). In this way empowerment also involves a process of change. People who have the possibility of choosing between many options may be powerful, but they are not necessarily empowered. In order to become empowered you need to be disempowered in the first place (Kabeer 2001). The definition refers both to people's own ability and the context where they are able to make these choices. Another definition, which stresses both the individual's abilities and the role of formal and informal institutions, is Narayan's (2005:5) definition of empowerment as "the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives."

One way of conceptualising empowerment is to distinguish between an individual and a structural aspect. Petesch et al. (2005) call this the *agency* of poor citizens and the *opportunity structure* of a society. Either you can have a change in the capacity of the people to take purposeful actions, or you can have social, political or institutional changes which makes it possible for the people to pursue their interests. In order to act as agents, people must be able to picture alternative paths of action, decide among them, and take action to follow the chosen path. Petesch et al. (2005) call this economic and human capital, capacity to aspire, and organisational capacity. The opportunity structure can be understood as a product of the openness of institutions, the unity and behaviour of dominant groups, and the state's implementation capacity. Together these set the context for people and organisations' ability to participate, influence, negotiate, and hold institutions accountable. Empowerment can thus be understood as a product of the interaction between the agency of poorer social groups and the opportunity structure that makes this agency possible (Petesch et al. 2005).

Kabeer (2001) also distinguishes between levels of empowerment. She claims that empowerment can happen at the immediate level, which is the level of individual and groups, such as change in their identity and selfhood, and how they perceive their interest and ability to act. Then there can be empowerment at the intermediate level, which is a change in the rules and relationships in the personal, social, economic or political spheres of life. At last empowerment can reflect change at a "deeper" level where structural relations of for example class, gender or caste change, and thereby reshape the distribution of power and resources in the society. She emphasises that for a sustainable empowerment the change must encompass both individual and structural levels (Kabeer 2001).

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For Friedman (1992) empowerment is about increasing access to power for marginalised groups. He distinguishes between three kinds of powers: *social power, political power, and psychological power*. The three are deeply interlinked which means that people are often empowered in more than one way. For example, in order to become politically empowered, a prior process of social empowerment may be required to enable effective participation in politics. In the further sections I will use these concepts as a basis for the discussion.

2.3.1 Social Empowerment

The empowerment model starts with the assumption that poor people lack the social power to improve their own lives. The main goal for an Alternative Development is to fight poverty, which according to Friedman (1992) depends on the household's ability to gain social power. He places the household economy at the centre, and assumes that the household's members lack the social power to improve their conditions. Then he distinguish between eight distinct yet interdependent bases of social power: defensible life space, surplus time, knowledge and skills, appropriate information, social organisation, social networks, instruments of work and livelihood, and financial resources. The access to these eight bases say something about to what extent the households control the resources that are shaping their *individual* members' lives.

Social power is the power associated with civil society. Narayan (2005) focuses on different social capabilities that enable us to gain social power. They include social belonging, leadership, relations of trust, a sense of identity, values that give meaning to life, and the capacity to organise. She emphasises that in order to overcome problems of marginalisation in society, poor people depend on their *collective* capability to organise. Aspects such as collective identity, solidarity and recognition are important to break out of a difficult situation. People often tend to justify or construct explanations of why they are being exploited or marginalised. It is not until they meet others with the same kind of problems that they start to see that they have been exploited. One example is women who have been exposed to domestic violence, and who first start to question the violence against them when they join women's solidarity groups (Narayan 2005).

Narayan (2005) uses the word social capital for the norms and networks that enable collective action. According to her poor people are high in "bonding" social capital, to make close ties with others like themselves, and thereby cope with their poverty. But "bonding" social capital is not enough. In order to escape poverty it must be accompanied by "bridging" social capital. This means that small groups of poor people federate and thereby gain strength in numbers, or establish ties with other more powerful actors in society (Tarrow 1994, in Narayan 2005). In the case of Working Children's Clubs this is a central point because it may lead to the empowerment of both the individual child and children as a group. I will discuss this further in the analysis. "Bridging" can happen with other civil society groups, organisations of the state, or the private sector. One example is poor people working through representative organisations that have legitimacy. Friedman (1992) also emphasises the importance of external agents for people's empowerment, even though one must keep in mind that genuine empowerment never can be conferred from outside. The poorest and most marginalised may have difficulties helping themselves. Collective self-empowerment is rare within most layers of society, and usually people are supported by other institutions or groups such as religious or labour organisations (Friedman 1992).

2.3.2 Political Empowerment

Political power is the power of voice and collective action. According to Friedman (1992) it is the household members' access to decision-making processes that affect their own future. At the micro level one could also speak of political power of individual members of a family, of women and men, or children and the elderly. Political power is not only the power to vote. Through parties, social movements and other types of political action communities, people obtain the power to raise their voices. In order to come so far, political capabilities such as the capacity to represent oneself or others, access information, form associations, and participate in the political life of a community or country, are necessary (Narayan 2005).

Petesch et al. (2005) argue that participation in formal or informal organisations is important for poor people's access to ideas and information. As a part of a larger group they improve their ability for decision-making, problem-solving,

collective action, and conflict negotiation, and hence learn the praxis of a real democracy. In community organisations people gain knowledge of how to defend one position and listen to another, to divide the work to be done, to set objectives, and to make decisions together (Palma 1988, in Friedman 1992). Friedman (1992) claims that it is necessary to convert social power into political power in order to become a responsible member in a political community. The (dis)empowerment model is thus closely tied to the concept of citizenship. Disempowered people lack the social power which is necessary to make use of their political rights. Poor people who are economically excluded are therefore also politically excluded, according to Friedman (1992).

At all times, in almost every society some groups have been excluded from the practice of full citizenship. In some places, historical struggles have been fought, which have given, for example, women the same rights as men, and thus made them politically empowered. In democratic states every citizen enjoys the same rights, and one cannot be half a citizen. Everyone that can rightfully claim to be a member in a political community has the same rights and duties of citizenship. There are, however, two groups that normally are excluded from citizen rights, namely children and future generations (Friedman 1992).

With the emergence of the Working Children's Organisations, children have come to be recognised as key social actors (Swift 1999). Yet there are no descriptions of democracy or citizenship that offer a natural place for children. Children's participation in democracy and their recognition as citizens will only be meaningful when there are mechanisms for including children in democratic processes (Miljeteig 2000). Cockburn (1998) suggests that we need a new theory of citizenship. This theory has to accept that we are all socially interdependent. The fact that young children may be more dependent upon adults should not necessarily exclude them from citizenship, since all people in some sense or another are dependent upon others. He feels it is time for a normative and ideological shift in the way we perceive childhood. It should not be seen as a "preparatory stage" but more as a central component in society that plays an important and legitimate role in the continuation of that society (Cockburn 1998). O'Kane (2002) emphasises that when it comes to children it is best to adopt a feminist perspective on citizenship. This means letting the silenced and marginalised group getting the opportunity to have a voice and

participate in society. Adopting this perspective means children's citizenship is more about promoting children's participation, than for example the right to vote.

It is not only people's political power, which depends on their social power; it is also the other way around. As mentioned earlier empowerment is gained through either a change in people's agency, the opportunity structure, or a mix of both. Despite the focus on grass-roots politics in the empowerment approach, a strong state is required. With this Friedman (1992) means a responsive state, accountable to its citizens. In order to help people become socially empowered, advocating for their political empowerment is also necessary.

2.3.3 Psychological Empowerment

The psychological dimension of empowerment has for a long time been neglected. Empowerment research has focused mainly on economic factors, and then the social and political dimension have followed. However the fact that people with the same resources and abilities differ when it comes to acting on their own behalf, has lead to more interest in the psychological dimension (Narayan 2005). Friedman (1992) defines psychological power as an individual sense of potency, which you can see in self-confident behaviour. Psychological empowerment can be both the cause and the effect of becoming socially or politically empowered. According to Narayan (2005) psychological capabilities include self-confidence, self-esteem, and the ability to envision and aspire to a better future. If you increase your own personal potency this will have positive effects on your social and political power, because self-confidence is an important precursor to action. At the same time, success in political or social domains often gives you more self-confidence, and thus more psychological power (Friedman 1992).

For Diener and Biswas-Diener (2005) psychological empowerment is one aspect of subjective well-being, namely people's belief in themselves, and their belief that they have the resources and competence necessary to accomplish important goals. Just as Petesch et al. (2005) conceptualise empowerment into agency and opportunity structure, Diener and Biswas-Diener (2005) divide empowerment into external and internal empowerment. The former is people's actual ability to control one's environment, while the latter is the feeling that one can do so. External conditions can

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be necessary for empowerment, but they are not sufficient. For true empowerment, people's internal feelings of competence, energy, and the desire to act, must be present. Narayan (2005) states that the extreme opposite of empowerment is fear. At all times fear has been used by dominant groups to control less powerful groups in society. Fear keeps labourers working for less than minimum wage, women silent about domestic violence, and people quiet about corruption. She claims that nothing is more disempowering than fear.

Subjective well-being, such as positive moods and emotions, strengthen people's feeling of empowerment, in the same way as the feeling of empowerment can influence your subjective well-being. In studies of Lyubomirsky, King, and Diener (2004) and Keltner, Gruenfeld, and Anderson (2003) (mentioned in Diener and Biswas-Diener 2005), one has found that there is a self-reinforcing loop between empowered feelings and successful action. Positive emotions make people feel confident, sociable, active and full of energy, just as success gives people positive emotions. People that have been successful in the past, and feel they have the resources to meet their goals, are much more likely to pursue new goals. The fact that people have objective power will not necessarily make them feel empowered or give them the strength to act. Hence the *feeling* of power is much more important than objective power in itself (Diener and Biswas-Diener 2005).

2.4 Applying the Empowerment Approach to working children

I use the empowerment approach in this thesis in order to conceptualise how participating in a Working Children's Club may provide access to resources and capabilities, which in turn may contribute to positive changes in the lives of working children. Applying Friedman's (1992) three concepts of *social*, *political* and *psychological power* enables and enhances the understanding of how the Clubs may improve the lives of the children in a number of different ways. Friedman applies these concepts in the context of households. He argues that households dispose social, political and psychological power, and thus see them as his starting point. In this thesis I will not focus on households, but employ the concepts on children, as I find them useful also in the context of working children.

CHAPTER 3.0 METHOD

When doing research in social science one has to choose a methodological strategy. How the research question is framed, and what we are seeking to understand with our research will influence which method we choose to employ (Dwyer and Limb 2001). It is not the methodological strategy in itself that is important but to choose a method that best helps us answer the research questions we have chosen. As a Human Geographer with an agenda to understand the processes and practises underlying working children's lives and participation in society, I have chosen a qualitative approach and applied the case study research strategy. There is not such a thing as a perfect research strategy, and all strategies will have advantages and disadvantages (Yin 2003). In this chapter I will account for the methodological choices I have made during the research process.

3.1 Qualitative methodology

Dwyer and Limb (2001) claim that researchers employing qualitative methodologies share the same philosophical starting point, namely that knowledge is partial, circumstantial and socially constructed. We all interpret the social world we are a part of in different ways, and that is the essence of what the qualitative research is trying to capture. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of the phenomenon being studied, the researcher tries to understand people's everyday social worlds by engaging in-depth with the lives and experiences of others. In quantitative methods there is a focus on variables unconditioned from the social context with the aim of drawing general tendencies. A qualitative approach is characterised by its closeness to the informants, with the aim of understanding the lived experience of people, and how the informants *themselves* understand the social phenomenon of which they are a part (Thagaard 2003).

Smith (2001) argues that choosing a qualitative method for ones research is as much a political choice as it is a philosophical issue. For her it is about challenging the way the world is structured. As the social world is made up of competing social constructions, knowledge is always circumstantial and fought over. Deciding what to study will therefore always be political as the researcher is "giving a voice" to someone that otherwise might not be heard. Researchers in Human Geography tend to

place non-dominant, neglected knowledge at the research agenda, sending a message to the world that all knowledge does not come from the top layers of society (Smith 2001). For me, choosing to write about Working Children's Clubs was definitely politically motivated. I had several agendas for writing this thesis. First, I was deeply interested in children's participation, and I wanted a broader focus on the consequences this can have for children's lives. Second, I wanted to challenge thoughts in the global north that considers child work as merely negative. Third, and maybe most importantly, I wanted to give the working children of Nepal a voice. I have based my study on their voices, because I believe that studying a phenomenon should involve a dialogue with the people affected.

Dwyer and Limb (2001) emphasise that the researcher's motivation for undertaking research is of personal or political concerns, and that the research therefore will be shaped by the actions and values of the researcher. In social science it is difficult to imagine a researcher that does not influence the data he or she collects. None of us have the same starting point, and everything we have experienced will influence how we interpret things we read, people we meet, and situations that occur. We interpret everything that is said and done, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously. This interpretation will affect our findings. Transparency in the communication between researcher and readers is important so the readers gain insight into the research process. For qualitative research the relationship between researcher and informant is of special importance because it shapes the data. This means that both researcher and informant influence the research process (Thagaard 2003). It is obvious that my understanding of child work, as a Norwegian girl in my mid-twenties, definitely will differ from that of a twelve-year-old boy working in Nepal. To be self-reflective about our role, to have a conscious attitude towards the decisions made, and to discuss our own positioning within the research is therefore crucial (Dwyer and Limb 2001).

As a research strategy, a qualitative approach seeks to obtain a comprehension of social phenomena by studying persons and situations in depth, and thereby gather extensive data material. The collection of data material covers a variety of different kinds of techniques. First, you have the in-depth open-ended interview, which can be carried out in a number of different ways. You can choose to conduct interviews with individuals or groups, and they may be conducted once or in a series of meetings depending on what kind of data material you need. Second, you have group

discussions, either single-meeting focus groups or several discussion groups with the same people. Third, you have participant observation, which can be active or passive, and where the informants can be asked to do interactive exercises such as completing diaries. Fourth, you have the analysis of different kinds of texts like literature, maps, diaries and letters, or visual materials like pictures, films, dramatic performances and advertisements. Finally, most researchers also keep personal diaries where they can keep track of their own interpretations of the research process (Dwyer and Limb 2001). My data collection spans a variety of different techniques. In addition to conducting interviews, I obtained an insight into the field by doing semi-participant observation with the children, having small chats with staff at Concern for Working Children and Environment Nepal (CONCERN), Save the Children, with my translator and my Nepali teacher, in addition to my daily observations of the Nepalese society. I found a lot of secondary literature on child work, child rights, and child participation while I was in Nepal, which has been useful, and I have kept a personal diary for my own reflections.

3.2 Case Study Research

In addition of choosing a qualitative approach I have chosen a case study as a research method. My choice to do a case study has to do with what questions I am trying to answer. In order to illustrate potential changes in children's lives I needed an example, or a case. Since I also wanted to challenge the discourse on child work held by many in the global north, I chose the Working Children's Clubs in Kathmandu as my case.

According to Yin (2009) applying a case study method is the preferred strategy when *how* and *why* questions are being posed, when we deal with a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context and therefore have little control over the events. The case is the opportunity to study the phenomenon, and it is investigated in considerable depth. As opposed to experiments in laboratories where the researchers create the case(s) they study, case study researchers have to construct their cases out of naturally occurring social processes (Hammersley and Gomm 2000). In real life, social processes and phenomena are not distinguishable from their contexts. Case study research therefore deliberately considers the contextual

conditions because of the belief that they might be highly relevant to the phenomenon of study (Yin 2009). With my case, the historical, cultural, social, economical and political context might all be of interest regarding how participation in Working Children's Clubs affects the lives of working children.

It can be helpful to make a distinction between three different kinds of case studies, which all serve different purposes. First, there is the exploratory case study, which often is a preliminary study used to define research questions or hypotheses of a subsequent study. Second, there is the descriptive case study, which serves as a way of presenting a complete description of a phenomenon and its context. Third, there is the explanatory case study, which aims at explaining how events happen by searching for the causal relationship inherent in the case (Yin 2003). In addition you can make a distinction between single and multiple case studies. The rationale for multiple case studies can either be that the researcher is looking for two or more cases that are literal replications, or that the researcher wants to cover several similar phenomena with different outcomes (Yin 2009).

Since I want to uncover causal mechanisms between being a Child Club member and changes in the life of working children, my case is of an explanatory nature. Even though I am covering three different areas it is based on a single case, namely the case of the Working Children's Clubs in Kathmandu. The reason for interviewing children from different areas was because the children have different types of jobs according to where they live, and I wanted to cover as much as possible the reality of the members in the Clubs.

3.2.1 Analytical Generalisation

The Only Generalization is: There is No Generalization is the headline of a chapter written by Lincoln and Guba (2000) in the book *Case Study Method* by Gomm et al. (2000). They discuss the problems with the concept of generalisation and different alternatives for social science. Many scientists are so focused on producing generalisations that they see no point in getting knowledge about the particular. They often claim that you cannot generalise from a single case, and that case study research is not a scientific method since social science is about making generalisations (Flyvbjerg 2006). Flyvbjerg (2006) challenges this idea by saying that there cannot

exist predictive theory in social science. In studies of human affairs you will only get context-dependent knowledge, and that is why social science has not produced any general, context-independent theory. Even if all other conditions were exactly the same, you will never be able to "test" your research because time will elapse and cause change. However, this does not mean that you cannot use case studies to make generalisations. According to Flyvbjerg (2006) you can in fact generalise from a single case – it all depends on the case you are speaking of and how it was chosen.

Yin (2009) states that case studies can be generalised to theoretic propositions. It is true that they provide little basis for statistical generalisation, but the purpose of case studies is not to numerate frequencies. The goal is rather to expand and generalise theories, which Yin calls *analytic generalisation*. The way to do this is to compare your empirical results with a previously developed theory, and thus be able to say something more beyond your own empirical findings. Flyvbjerg (2006) strongly refutes the criticism that case studies cannot provide scientific knowledge in his article *Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research*. According to him "the force of example" is underestimated. Social science needs both large samples that cover the breadth, and case studies that explore in depth. He concludes by stating that social science will benefit from a greater number of good case studies, and refers to Kuhn, saying:

> that a discipline without a large number of thoroughly executed case studies is a discipline without systematic production of exemplars, and that a discipline without exemplars is an ineffective one (Flyvbjerg 2006:242).

3.2.2 The Case: Working Children's Clubs in Kathmandu

The case of Working Children's Clubs in Kathmandu aims at providing insight into potential outcomes of working children's participation in Child Clubs. The Child Club phenomenon has the last two decades emerged in different parts of the developing world. In Nepal the first Child Clubs were established in the early 1990s. According to Hart and Khatiwada (2003), club-type activities had existed for years prior to this, but these new Clubs were different in the way that they were generally run by the children and young people themselves. Theis and O'Kane (2005) claim that the emergence of Child Clubs was driven by a growing acknowledgement of

children's roles in society. The Clubs were often started on child-to-child initiatives aiming at involving children in decision-making, out of initiatives focusing on child rights education, monitoring and reporting, or as a part of a project with children's groups for participatory research on children. In some places, Clubs have been started because the children themselves have asked for a Club after hearing about other Clubs in the neighbouring villages. The Clubs are supported and facilitated by different local organisations such as CONCERN, which again are supported by larger NGOs like PLAN International, ActionAid and Save the Children.

According to the research on Child Clubs conducted by Theis and O'Kane (2005), there are about 3000 Clubs in Nepal. These Clubs operate in both rural and urban areas, and tens of thousands of children from different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds are active Club members. In some areas with many Clubs they may have different Clubs according to the age of the children or how much time they can spend in the Club. According to Hart and Rajbhandary (2003) the age limit is usually sixteen years old, which corresponds with the Nepalese perception of when children reach their majority. However this seems to be changing. My impression was that the children continued until they were eighteen as many of my informants were sixteen and seventeen years old.

The Clubs have regular meetings where they share their thoughts, and plan and prepare activities. Normally they have one adult facilitator from the supporting organisation that can help explain difficulties in society, train them and help them organise the activities. A variety of different participatory methods and exercises are used, such as drawing, social mapping, and acting. The Clubs' main focus depends on what the children find most important to them. Many Clubs have a broad focus while others focus on particular issues, such as protection of the environment or discrimination against girls (Theis and O'Kane 2005). I refer to the Clubs in this study as *Working Children's Clubs*, because all the members were working children, and the Clubs focused specifically on issues concerning their situation. In everyday speech the Clubs are referred to as Child Clubs. I will therefore use both Child Club and Working Children's Club throughout the thesis when I refer to the Clubs in my study. This is partly done to save space and partly out of consideration to the fluency of the language.

Despite being diverse the Clubs share some of the same objectives. One is to create a forum where the children get the opportunity to discuss issues that are

important to them. Another is to raise the children's awareness about their rights. After having been trained on the CRC by their facilitator, they promote children's rights through street theatres, publication of wall magazines, and other kinds of awareness programs. A third objective is to develop the children's leadership and life skills. And lastly the Clubs create opportunities for the children to discover and develop their potentials and talents. The Clubs organise quizzes, song contests, and poetry, speech and drawing competitions (Theis and O'Kane 2005). The activities the Clubs in my study were most interested in, were street plays, rallies, cleaning campaigns, home visits, organising parents' meetings, training and interaction programmes with other Clubs, as well as various competitions. The Clubs often cooperate with each other or with various other groups, institutions and organisations at the local level, such as the Village Development Committee (VDC), School Management Committees (SMCs), and local civil society organisations working on environmental or health issues. These networks can have a great impact on the achievements of the Child Club and on the empowerment of the Club members.

One distinction that can influence the focus of the Club is whether it is school-based or community-based. The school-based Clubs tend to focus more on improving the school environment while the community-based Clubs, which are open to children both in and out of school, focus more on the child rights situation in the local community. There are often several Clubs in one area. I conducted interviews with children from three different areas, and in two of the areas there were three Clubs or more. The Clubs in my study were both school-based and community-based. However since they were all facilitated by CONCERN, and their main focus was on working children, the fact that they were community or school-based did not appear to make much of a difference. All the Clubs had adult facilitators from CONCERN. Some of the facilitators were former Child Club members. They were about twenty children in each Club, except the Club in Kalimati, which had fifty members. Some of the Clubs met weekly, other monthly or as often as necessary.

Two of the areas in my study were situated in the city centre of Kathmandu, and the third was just outside of the city border. The children have different jobs according to where they live, and by visiting different places I aimed to get a deeper insight and understanding of several working children's reality and everyday life. I do not compare the Clubs, but use examples from the different areas to illustrate different aspects and outcomes of Club activity.

Table 1: Overview over the children's work

Area	Location	Children's work
Balaju	Urban	Domestic work, stone quarry, porter, dishwasher, work at home.
Chobhar	Rural	Stone quarry, porter, work in small shop.
Kalimati	Urban	Selling vegetables in the market, domestic work, stitching,

All the children in my study attend school as well as work. Many did not go to school before they joined the Child Club and some have had dropout periods because of hard times when they have had to work more. Work is, as I have already discussed in the analytical framework, very hard to define. The children in my study have very different jobs: some work for an employer, other work with their family at the roadside, in the stone quarry or at the vegetable market, and others again have an employer but are carrying out the work at home, for example stitching. In addition to having a paid job many also have heavy responsibilities at home with cooking, cleaning, taking care of siblings, and feeding animals among other things. A couple of my informants did in fact "only" work at home with household chores. However these girls had to work so many hours both before and after school that I counted it as work. Their family situation made it their responsibility to do almost everything in the house because their fathers were either dead or in prison, and their mothers therefore had to work double shifts in order to make a living.

In each area I conducted interviews with children, parents, teachers, Child Club facilitators, former Child Club members and employers if this was possible. My interviews in the field are presented by an informant overview in Table 2 in the appendix. Besides the data collected in Balaju, Chobhar and Kalimati, my case includes interviews and informal conversations with representatives from different organisations, politics and research institutes in Nepal, which provided me with valuable background information about the Child Clubs.

3.3 Child-friendly Research

Is research with children the same or different from research with adults? Many researchers have posed this question, and the tendency was for a long time either to perceive it as just the same or entirely different. As Punch (2002:321) puts it "If children are competent social actors, why are special 'child-friendly' methods needed to communicate with them?" There are three broad areas of explanation why research with children potentially is different than research with adults, namely the position of childhood in adult society, adults' attitudes towards children, and the children themselves. Children are marginalised in adult-centred society. They are normally controlled and limited by adults, and are not used to being treated as equals. Adults perceive children to be different, and their assumptions about the position of children affect the interpretation of the data (Punch 2002). There are also some inherent differences between children and adults. The children have often a shorter attention span, limited and different use of vocabulary, and relatively less general experience (Boyden and Ennew 1997, in Punch 2002).

From the literature (Punch 2002, Christensen and James 2000) I had gained insight into different ways of doing research with children. Ideas such as letting them write diaries, draw pictures, or giving them the opportunity to take photographs, were tempting as research methods. Such techniques can facilitate children in their thinking, and will therefore help the researcher to get a better understanding of how children think and feel about their everyday life (Christensen and James 2000b). Making them write diaries would in this case mean more work since the diaries would have to be in Nepali, and I would have to have them translated. A drawing can be a good way to discover what children consider as important aspects in their lives. It is a tool that gives full control to the child, by avoiding researchers' tendency to impose adult-centred concerns (Sapkota and Sharma 1996).

One of the reasons for considering such tools was my fear that the children would be very shy and not communicative. This turned out to be a minimal problem. I chose in the end not to make use of neither diaries nor drawings, and the main reason for this was time. The children I interviewed had very little leisure time as they were working, going to school, and doing activities in the Club. I did not want them to feel that they "had" to do this as well. Another reason was that the members of the Clubs

are used to working with drawings and other visual images in order to express themselves. Because I was going to conduct interviews with the most active members I did not feel that this was necessary. Most of them are very aware of their own opinions, and are not afraid to express these, after years of training in the Child Club.

Punch (2002) concludes that it is too simplistic to consider research with children either as the same or different from adults. She emphasises that the research context is equally important as the research subject's age when it comes to the suitability of particular methods. Innovative methods should therefore be referred to as *research-friendly* or *person-friendly* techniques rather than *child-friendly*. Not all children prefer to draw. It is important to remember that children are not one homogenous group, and that preferences and competences vary from child to child just as they vary from adult to adult. Doing research with children does not have to mean that you have to adopt a different or particular method (Christensen and James 2000a).

3.4 Data Collection

As a volunteer for Save the Children in Norway I had in June 2007 the opportunity to visit Nepal and some projects there. This made me interested in the Child Clubs. My fieldwork lasted for three months, from mid September to mid December 2008. The fact that I had been in Nepal the year before helped me a lot. I had already made contacts at Save the Children's office, and even met some representatives from their partner organisations involved with working children. I decided quite early that I would focus on working children in Kathmandu. The first weeks I met with representatives for different organisations trying to get an overview over Kathmandu's Working Children's Clubs. In the beginning I had an idea of looking at several organisations, but because of the time limit I decided to focus on one organisation and some of their Clubs, and my choice fell on CONCERN. This seemed more expedient in order to get a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of Working Children's Clubs.

The qualitative techniques I used included semi-participant observation and structured interviews. I also relied on secondary data, both gathered in Nepal and in Norway. According to Yin (2003) one of the major strengths of case study data

collection is the opportunity the researcher has to use many different sources of evidence. This process where you draw on different sources or perspectives for your research is called *data triangulation*. By employing this, the events or facts of the case study will be supported by more than one single source of data (Yin 2003). This way of using different sources of information is desirable because it helps us to maximize our understanding of the research question (Valentine 2001). Examining the interviews, my reflections from the semi-participant observation, and other documentation with the aim of corroborating the same phenomenon, helps me to gain a better insight into my case study of Working Children's Clubs in Kathmandu.

3.4.1 Selecting Informants

With the help of CONCERN I was put in contact with Clubs in Balaju, Chobhar and Kalimati. My initial idea was to interview working children and people from the local community about child work, children's participation and the Child Club's impact on society. Conducting interviews with a "local community" is difficult, especially in a city where there are no clear boundaries distinguishing one local community from another. I also discovered that some of the parents did not know much about the Child Club's activities. Realising this, I could not expect that random people in the local community would be able to answer my questions. I therefore decided not to try to talk to "the local community", and instead interview the teachers, the Child Club facilitators and the parents. They would give me valuable knowledge about the relationship between the Child Club and the local community.

Qualitative research is based on *strategic samples*. This means that the researcher chooses the informants that have specific qualifications or characteristics, which is of a strategic value for his or her research question (Thagaard 2003). To do research on child work, or other rather personal or sensitive issues, you are simply obliged to take the informants that are willing to participate. This is called a *convenience sample*. My way of selecting informants can be characterised as both a strategic and a convenience sample. Before I started my interviews I made some predefined categories, which guided my selection of informants. This is called *quota sampling* (Thagaard 2003). In my case I operated with seven different categories: child workers, parents, teachers, Child Club facilitators, present or former Child Club

members that had participated at national or international meetings, employers, and lastly politicians, NGO workers and scholars in the field of child work.

Getting in touch with the children was fairly easy. One strategy I used was to go to their school and talk to them in their lunch break or after class. My translator explained who I was and why I wanted to talk to them. Then we made appointments with the children that wanted to participate. Quite often the children already knew who I was since I took part in different activities at CONCERN's centres or they had seen me hang around in the area. Another strategy we employed was to go through the facilitator. He or she would tell us which children that would be of most interest to talk to, and then we went straight to them and asked if we could get an interview. Occasionally we started out with a couple of children, they spoke to their friends, and then their friends came to us and said that they also wanted to participate. It also happened that some of the children in the study said, "you should definitely talk to him or her" because of something that had happened to this particular Child Club member. These last examples of recruitment method can be called the *snowball method.* This method refers to an approach where you first get in contact with people exhibiting the desired qualifications and characteristics for the study, and then let them help you find more persons with similar characteristics (Thagaard 2003).

One needs to be careful when one uses this approach. First, one can end up getting only informants from the same network. Second, the result could be that one only picks "the best ones" from the group being studied. I reflected a lot on this. Even though I cannot draw generalisations from my study of Child Clubs to other Child Clubs in the world, I wanted to get an extensive data material for my study of these three areas. Only talking to the most active members would not give me all the information I would need in order to draw a picture as real as possible. However, focusing on the most active members was necessary for answering whether being a Child Club member would have empowering effects on the children. By using different methods in recruiting informants, and by participating at several Child Club activities observing all the members, I feel that this bias is eliminated in my study.

I did not want to interview children younger than twelve years old because I thought that they would have difficulties in understanding some of my questions. As the leaders and the most active in the Child Club are mainly above fourteen, it was natural for me to focus on this age group. The majority of my informants are about fourteen to sixteen years old. However, age is not always the best measure. I met very

confident and mature twelve year olds and less mature fifteen year olds. Some of my oldest informants would not have been characterised as child workers in the Nepalese society as people tend to look at children above sixteen years old as adults. I did however choose to interview them because according to the ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the worst forms of child labour, any person under the age of eighteen years is considered a child. In their report about domestic child labourers in Kathmandu, Sharma et al. (2001) also use this definition of children. Moreover, all of my informants had been working from an early age, so even though they may not be considered child workers at present, they have been in the past.

I wanted to talk to the parents to hear what they thought of the Child Club, and if they thought their children had changed after having joined the Club. Usually I asked the children if they thought their parents would agree to be interviewed. Some of the children would not ask their parents because the parents had no knowledge of the Club or were negative towards it. Others had single parents that worked practically all day, which made it difficult to find time for an interview. In Balaju I only interviewed one mother. The reason for this was that there had been another researcher in the area quite recently, making a report about Nepalese parents' perception of child work. I did not want to intrude myself upon them unnecessarily. Besides, as I talked to more parents in the other two places, I felt I had sufficient information about how the parents responded to the Clubs. Some of the children lived with their relatives because their parents were either dead or had migrated for work. I chose to regard these caregivers as parental equivalents since they were the ones caring for the child.

Talking to the facilitators of the Clubs gave me a lot of detailed information about Club activities, which has been invaluable for understanding how the Child Clubs work in practice. The teachers were also very informative. Often they could tell me about changes in the children that the parents did not mention. One reason for this might be that the teachers know the children in another way than the parents. They often spend much more time with them, and saw how they developed their talking skills and became increasingly confident. The fact that the teachers are well-educated made it easier to communicate as we shared more of the same comprehension of concepts. At the schools where they had a school-based Child Club, the teachers were very involved in the Club and were eager to tell me all about the impacts of the Club.

Getting to know the Clubs' impact on the local community through speaking to the teachers also proved successful.

I wanted to talk to people that employ children, but this turned out to be rather difficult. Some of the children did not have any employers as they worked in the family business or they had a different "employer" each day. The children working as, for example, porters, are often "hanging around" in the market or at the roadside, and wait for people to ask them to carry things. Others did not want me to ask their employer for an interview. I did however manage to talk to two, one stone quarry employer and one that employs a domestic child worker. The stone quarry employer was not eager to talk at all, and was almost angered because of some of my questions. He claimed that he did not hire children, which was not the answer I was hoping for, since I knew that he did. Nevertheless, his difficulty in admitting that he hired children, revealed something about him. The other employer was quite opposite, clearly feeling that he was doing society a favour, and wanting to share as much as possible. These two examples cannot tell me about how Nepalese employers in general feel about hiring children, but they are both interesting as they give us some background information in addition to the literature.

3.4.2 Semi-participant observation

I wanted to spend some time with the children before I conducted interviews with them in order for them to get to know me. One of my fears was that they would be scared of the idea of talking to me, or agreeing to talk to me but not opening up for me. I spent a lot of time in the beginning "hanging around" at different activities at CONCERN's centres, participating at Child Club Interaction Programmes, or joining activities or meetings held at the school. Many of the children I met were more confident than I had expected, probably because of years with Child Club activities. I do think that this kind of semi-participant observer role is wise and useful, both as a method to get to know the children, and to understand more of their daily lives. The term *semi-participant* is used because, as Punch (2001) argues, adults will never be able to participate on the same terms as the children in their activities. Three months is not a sufficient amount of time, but nevertheless spending almost all of my time

with them, I felt that I came closer to their lives. This in turn made me come closer to a better understanding of their culture and lifestyle.

Punch (2002) points out that adults may lack experience of building rapport with children. To build up a relationship of trust ultimately depends on the skill of the researcher. The last five years I have done voluntary work with refugee children and youth in Norway, and this experience was priceless. I know that there are ways of communicating even when we neither share the same language nor culture. Having a semi-participant observer role is suitable when you are doing research with children because this to some degree enables the researcher to participate in children's activities. There are however limits to such participation as adults always will be a "different" player (Punch 2001). I did, on many occasions, take the role as the *amusingly inept adult* (Ennew and Morrow 1994, in Punch 2001) because I tried to do the same as them with varying success. One example was during the festival Tihar when I went with the girls from door to door playing *Deoshi Bhailo*, a game much like carol singing. This was definitely not a game white adults usually took part in, and they were laughing so much that they nearly could not sing.

Punch (2001) argues that in order to get a broader view, it helps to accompany the children on their daily tasks, play with them, and observe what jobs they do. Particularly in Chobhar, I "hung around" a lot, both with my translator and alone. I drank tea with the children, plaited the girls' hair, and even spent the night at one girl's house. All this made me feel that they thought of me as one of their friends. Being only ten years older than most of them did have a positive effect. The fact that I was a woman also mattered, as I do not think a male in his fifties would gain the same trust as I did.

The role as a friend is however challenging. As much as it felt good that some of them looked at me as their friend, it was problematic as they were also my informants. Punch (2001) emphasises that it is ethically uncomfortable as this feels like you are manipulating a friendship in order to get good data. One of the characteristics of qualitative data is that the researcher is in direct contact with the persons being studied (Thagaard 2003). In order to gain a better understanding of social phenomena like child participation and child work, you need to spend a lot of time with your informants. For me not to become fond of these children was in many ways next to impossible. Their friendship made it possible for me to participate in their activities. Because I was foreigner and an adult our friendship was special from

the beginning, and it did not feel very odd to keep asking them questions about the Child Club and their work. Everyone knew why I was there, and in many ways I think they wanted to "teach" me about their world.

Even though I had tried to make my questions as easy as possible to understand, I realised that the children and I had very different frames of reference. One example is the meaning of the word *work*, which is essential for this thesis. When I asked them what kind of work they did I got one answer, for example working in the stone quarry. After spending time with some of them, I realised that they did much more than just work there. They also helped the parents in their shop, besides doing their chores at home. Punch (2001) explains this with children thinking differently from adults, one example being that they do not consider much of what they do as *work*. This example shows that to rely only on interviews can be misleading, and that in this context semi-participant observation can be very fruitful.

3.4.3 The Interviews

My main focus was on the Child Clubs' impact on the children's lives and the local community, but I was also eager to find out more about if and how the Child Clubs work politically with their rights, in order to influence the national and international level. I therefore conducted interviews with two present and four former members that had participated in national and international meetings about child work and Child Rights. To get a better understanding of the situation of working children in Nepal I contacted representatives from different fields within labour and politics. I interviewed an employee at the International Labour Organisation (ILO), a representative from the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT), a researcher at the National Labour Academy (NLA) in Kathmandu, the leader of the NGO Children – Women in Social Service and Human Rights (CWISH), and a politician at The National Planning Comission (NPC).[1] I also spoke with a professor from the Central Department of Population Studies at Tribhuvan University, who helped me find literature about child work in the Nepalese context.

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[1] NPC is the advisory body for formulating development plans and policies of the country under the directives of the National Development Council (NDC).

The gathering of data from my informants was based on structured interviews with open-ended questions. The questions were premade, which made it easier to remember the different factors that were important in different contexts. This provided a good starting point for the interview session where I was free to skip any questions or to add follow-up questions. The use of open-ended questions left the informants with room to elaborate on the answers they found of special interest. I used a different interview guide for each category of informants, and all of them are presented in the appendix. They are detailed and have the form of questionnaires, though I have chosen to refer to them as interview guides.

I spent a lot of time preparing my questions, both in Norway and during my first weeks in Nepal. I read documents especially about Child Clubs, and Save the Children handbooks in order to make my questions as clear as possible. In order not to impose my own perceptions on the children, I always started each interview asking them to tell me a little about their work, their Child Club and themselves. I also asked if they had anything to add at the end. Several of the questions were made as easy as possible such as "what is the best/worst thing about working" or "what is the best/worst thing about adults". The concept of "work" was rather challenging. This was however usually related to my understanding of the term. In the beginning, I was expecting them to have one job, which was the exception rather than the rule. The fact that many changed their work quite often, did not have a fixed employer, or worked with different things on different days, made many of my questions difficult to answer. Often I felt that the parents were facing more difficulties with my questions than the children. This might be because the parents are illiterate and do not have formal education, and therefore lack comprehension of concepts. In this aspect, Punch's (2002) suggestion of calling innovative techniques for *research-friendly* or *person-friendly* rather than *child-friendly* is quite meaningful.

I wanted to interview the children without the parents being present. If we came to their house this could be problematic. Most of them had only one room, and if the parents were preparing food or it was after sunset, it did not feel appropriate to ask them to leave. If the children had time during the day I interviewed them at school, at CONCERN's centre or outside their home so we could be alone. At one house I asked if it was possible that the mother could leave the room. She said ok but was curious and stopped outside the window to eavesdrop. Her son understood this and when we came to the question asking if his parents had been positive towards him

joining the Child Club he suddenly started to speak English. With a little help from my translator he was able to express himself in English. This emphasises that the parents' presence may influence the quality of the data. However it also shows that the children often were being very honest about their situation. Several of the children told me things about their parents or caregivers that they did not like, which I take as a sign that we had built up a relationship of trust.

I thought about using focus groups, but doing one-to-one interviews turned out to work very well. Besides, getting the children to gather at the same time seemed challenging since most of them were busy with work after school. However a couple of times I ended up interviewing two persons at the same time. I managed to interview most of the children and parents separately, but sometimes this was impossible. Another challenge was that I often had to interview the parents while they were working. This could be quite disturbing as we were interrupted by customers, and I had to deal with parents that obviously found it difficult to talk about their personal life in the middle of the market, or were stressed because they had work waiting for them. The situation with the teachers and Child Club facilitators was much easier as we nearly always could do the interviews at the school or at CONCERN's centre.

In order to avoid losing valuable information, I decided to use a tape recorder for my interviews. Before each interview I asked my informants if they were comfortable with me taping what they said. Most of them did not seem to mind, but some of them were sceptical and said no. The use of tape recorders can be both advantageous and disadvantageous. Thagaard (2003) says that this can seem disturbing for many, however when most people are engaged in the conversation, they often tend to forget about it. My informants did not seem to censor themselves as a consequence of the recorder. Neither did the ones that were hesitant towards it. For me it was definitely beneficial as this freed time, and I could think about follow-up questions.

Hesselberg (1998) lists up several important aspects one needs to take into consideration during an interview. First of all, do the informants have access to the information we ask for? Other questions are: Do they have the opportunity to answer, or do they remember the answer? In a different cultural context there might be reasons for people to hide their answer that we do not understand. Another reason can be that they understand the question differently. The informants may give the wrong

answer on purpose because they do not want to reveal the truth, or they may answer according to what they think the researcher would like to hear. During one interview one father claimed that his children never had worked even though I had already interviewed his children and knew they had been working for many years in the stone quarry. I found this behaviour very weird, especially since I had been to his house a couple of days earlier asking specifically if I could interview him about the Child Club and his children's work. I spent a lot of time wondering why this had happened. Most likely he did not want me to know that his children had been working in the stone quarry, or he simply regretted saying yes to the interview and wanted to do something else instead. Half way into the interview I had to cut it off since there was no use getting his answers when I knew he was lying. Some of the children answered ambiguously when it came to whether they liked their work or not. In Bhattarai's study (2006), he discusses that the children might have described their work as voluntary in order to illustrate their responsibility and that they respect their elders. Interpreting the data material one always has to have in mind that much can be hidden in a single answer.

In the quotes from my informants, I have abbreviated their category and area into different letters and numbers. For example are C-P1 and C-P2 parents or caretakers from Chobhar, K-C1 and K-C2 are children from Kalimati, and B-T1 and B-T2 are teachers from Balaju. The former or present Child Club members that had participated at national and international meetings have been given codes such as B-Nat1 and C-Int1. I have not used quotes from all my fifty-five interviews, but all of them have served as background information and made the case of Working Children's Clubs clearer to me.

3.4.4 Language

I decided quite early that I wanted to take Nepali lessons while I was in Nepal. My main reason for this was that it would make me come closer to the children I was going to interview. I wanted to show the children that I was interested in them and their country. Personally I am profoundly interested in languages, and I like to make myself understood when I am travelling. I also had a small ambition of roughly being able to supervise my translator's translation. Before I left Norway I tried to learn the

basics, but it was difficult without a teacher. During my first week I found a private teacher with whom I had classes throughout my stay. Each week I had three to four classes, two hours each time.

Learning a new language with a different alphabet is hard, but I am glad I made myself take Nepali lessons. Being able to communicate with the children was invaluable, and it definitely helped me come closer to my informants. It also made me less dependent on my translator as I could "hang around" doing semi-participant observation without her, and being able to communicate a little bit on my own. Another good thing about taking Nepali lessons was that I got some cultural knowledge from my teacher. The classes took place in her house, and we discussed cultural issues as well as grammar. She was interested in my research, and shared her and her friends' experience with children as employees. Our many small chats helped me to get a deeper understanding of the complexity of Nepalese society.

Almost all interviews with children, parents, teachers and Child Club facilitators were conducted in Nepali with my translator. The interviews with the persons from ILO, GEFONT, CWISH, NLA and NPC were conducted in English. My ambition of using my Nepali knowledge as a control mechanism worked in the end. A couple of times I caught my translator omitting information given in the interview. "What about *adhikar*[2]?" I cried out one time after she had finished translating a statement without mentioning the word rights. Both she and the girl I was interviewing burst out in laughter and were clearly surprised over how much I understood. As much as I appreciated that I had shown my translator that I was actually able to supervise her work, I could not help thinking about how many times this had probably happened without me noticing.

My translator was a Nepalese English student in her twenties. She had worked for CONCERN for a period, but was for the moment a volunteer. I got in touch with her through another researcher that had used her as a translator. In the beginning I was worried about her connection with CONCERN. The fact that my informants could see her as a CONCERN staff member instead of as my translator could be problematic. However, I was not going to evaluate CONCERN but to study the Child Clubs and the children, and CONCERN was just a starting point for this. Her experience in the field also made her quite suitable for the job. In addition to knowing a lot about the

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[2] *Adhikar* is Nepali and means rights.

Child Clubs and the situation for working children in Nepal, she also knew the children in one of the areas.

According to Hesselberg (1998) one of the most important characteristics of a translator is that he or she is sociable, and is liked by the informants. Doing research with children this is of utmost importance. My translator had a lot of experience with children, and very good contact with them. Establishing trust between the children and us was essential if they were to tell me the truth. As well as being great with people, she was also a kind of cultural translator for me. Before each new interview we discussed the questions first of all for me to be sure that she had understood the meaning of them all, but also so I could ask her if there were any questions that I should not ask, or maybe ask in a different way. Everyone that has studied something in depth knows that the more you get to know about a phenomenon, the more questions will emerge. Being with my translator all day long, I not only got my interviews translated, but I also gained an invaluable conversation partner with whom I could discuss my research.

3.4.5 Ethical Dilemmas

Doing research with children implies other ethical concerns than research with adults. Children live in an adult-centred society, which makes them occupy a subordinate and marginal position vis-à-vis adults (Punch 2002). As an adult researcher I need to take this into consideration both ethically and practically throughout the research process. This means awareness in fighting the common assumption that adults' knowledge is superior of that of children (Alderson and Goodey 1996, in Punch 2002).

The ideal of *informed consent* is the basis of every ethically sound research project. This means that the informant is aware of what he or she is agreeing to, when saying yes to participate in the study, and that the researcher has made it clear that they have the right to withdraw from the project at any time (Thagaard 2003). When it comes to children, gaining informed consent is challenging. Morrow and Richards (1996, in James et al. 1998) say that in practice this means gaining consent from adult gatekeepers such as parents or teachers. After having discussed this with my translator and people in Save the Children and CONCERN, I decided not to ask the parents specifically since all the children I was going to interview were more than twelve

years old and very mature. When I was searching for informants I made it very clear that participation in the project was voluntary. I always started each interview by explaining why I was there, why I wanted to talk to them, and if it was something they wanted to ask me about.

Another principle of ethically sound research is *confidentiality*. First of all this means that the researcher must make the informants anonymous in the research results. Second, he or she must prevent other people from getting access to the data material. The reason is that this can lead to a use of the material that can harm the informants. As mentioned, I have made different codes for all my informants in the three areas. However, I decided to use the names of my informants from civil society, politics and research institutions, as they were well known and did not mind.

Many will expect something in return for participating in research projects. Since my translator had worked voluntarily for CONCERN, I was afraid that some of the parents might consider me as a part of CONCERN, and not as an independent researcher. The children from the poorest families got support from CONCERN to pay their school fee and school uniform. I was aware of the possibility that some of the parents might see this as an opportunity to talk about their problems and thus receive more. Before we started the interview, I always told them that I was a student, and that I could not help them in any other way than to listen to their stories. I did not experience anyone asking directly for support, but a couple of times the parents started to praise CONCERN during the interview. Having as little as many of these families have, it is understandable if they used the situation in order to try to get more support. Nevertheless, I do think most of the praising was merely deep gratitude from parents in an extremely difficult situation. The fact that my translator did have connections to CONCERN was also reassuring. If we were to discover that some of the children were living under extremely difficult conditions, she could pass this on to CONCERN.

Doing research on marginalised groups requires more ethical considerations. Above all there is the question whether your project can contribute to the improvement of the conditions for the group being studied. The research process may lead to a consciousness-raising for the group, or result in making their conditions even worse. As my study is about a group of children that want to be heard, I feel quite safe that my research will lead to the betterment, rather than an aggravation, of their situation. The children have chosen to get involved in the Child Club, and are

therefore already aware of their situation. The main aim of the thesis is to make space for their voices, and by carrying out my research ethically I can actually help them gain access to channels of communication from which they are normally excluded.

3.5 The Quality of the Data

According to Thagaard (2003), the criteria of *credibility*, *confirmability* and *transferability*, are meaningful when it comes to evaluate qualitative research projects. The *credibility* of the data relates to whether the researcher gives an account of how the data has been developed. This implies transparency in the research process. In this chapter I have reflected upon different factors that can have influenced the quality of the data. Such factors can be the context of the research, the setting of the interviews, or my relationship with my informants. I have throughout the thesis tried to distinguish between the data found during fieldwork and my own interpretations. By explaining the considerations and choices I have made during the research process, the credibility of the data has been increased. The *confirmability* of the data deals with the basis for the interpretation of results and findings. The researcher's own interpretations, and positionality within the area of research, should be subjected to critical reflection. I have thus elaborated on the steps taken during the research process, my starting point, as well as the relationships in the field. The study's confirmability also relates to whether the study's results are supported by other research and theory. The *transferability* of the data is tied to whether the findings of my study also could have relevance in other settings. This implies a recontextualisation, by applying the theoretical understanding from one project and insert it in a wider context (Thagaard 2003), much like Yin's (2009) analytical generalisation. I will come back to the thesis' relevance and transferability in chapter six.

CHAPTER 4.0 WORKING CHILDHOOD

In this chapter I will go deeper into the Nepalese context in order to discuss the "Nepalese childhood", the perception of child work and the perception of child rights in Nepal. I will narrate my adult informants' descriptions of children's work with the intention of creating a picture of how Nepalese society looks at work done by children. The children's view of their own working situation has also been given space so we better can understand their reasons for working, and their feeling about their working situation. As discussed earlier, the social construction of childhood varies from place to place. It was important for me to understand as far as possible how the Nepalese people perceive children, as I wanted a discussion about child work that was not entirely dominated by the discourse in the global north. In my analysis of the situation of working children in Nepal, I will use my own empirical data as a basis, and I will contrast or support this with secondary documentation and literature about the Nepalese context in general, and the rights and working situation of children in Nepal.

4.1 The Nepalese context

Nepal is a landlocked country with 28.5 million people.[3] About half of the Nepalese population are less than eighteen years old (NACRO 2002). The economy has, over the decades, been in transition from feudalism to a more sector-oriented, market and state-organised structure (Mishra 2007). This happens, however, at such a slow pace that the economy can still be characterised as predominantly agrarian. Tourism and handicraft exports are other important sources of income (Bhattarai 2006). Seasonal and permanent labour migration, both within Nepal and to India has been common since the 1950s. Recently more and more Nepalese find their way to East and West Asia in the search for work, which has lead to an expansion of the remittance economy (Seddon et al. 1998, in Mishra 2007). In the long run this can lead to changes in Nepal's demographic structure, which will also have impact on children's work. Despite the idea that migrant workers will better their families' economy, I got

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[3] https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/np.html

the impression that several children actually had to start working because they did not always receive the remittances in time, or because of increased household chores after their parents left. Nepal is considered to be one of the least developed countries in the world, with illiteracy, poverty, unemployment and poor health being the everyday reality for many of its inhabitants (KC et al. 2001).

Nepal is known for its many different ethnic groups. Across the ethnic groups you find the caste system, which determines the social structures in society, and has laid the basis for the country's feudalistic economic structure (Savada 1991). The caste system was formally abolished in 1962, but is still a salient feature of society and a cause of social exclusion for lower castes (Mishra 2007). Another trait of the society is its gender discrimination. In the ideology of the Hindu religion women have a subordinate position, and women continue to be held in low esteem (Malla 2000, in Karki 2002). At the household level they bear the major burden of domestic and agricultural work. They work more hours than men, in addition to being given less food, suffer from social harassment, and receive less attention if they get ill. In society they have less access to political and bureaucratic positions, limited decision-making roles, a lower literacy rate, and lack equal property rights and asset ownership (Upreti 1994, in Upreti 2004). Men's status on the other hand is shaped by their wealth, education, ethnicity and contacts with the bureaucracy. These are the factors that influence whether one has any social bargaining power (Lama and Buchy 2002). The caste structure, ethnic exclusion and issues of gender are all traits of Nepalese society which contribute to the economic and social situation of children and youth.

The "people's war" which started in 1996 and lasted a decade has had a big impact on the country's young population. The conflict was between the government forces and the Maoists, which fought with the aim of abolishing the monarchy and establishing the People's Republic of Nepal. In addition to claiming more than a hundred lives of children, it has left thousands with single or no parents. The conflict has increased rural-urban migration. Many children have left their homes because of the fear of being recruited as soldiers; others have migrated to the cities in search of better opportunities. With the loss of parents comes economic responsibility, which has lead to more children having to work (Upadhyay and Nogami 2007).

4.2 Perception of children

In Nepal the Children's Act from 1992 defines a child as a person who has not completed his sixteenth year (Nepal Gazette 1992). This is also the traditional Hindu view, and is accepted by many people in villages and agencies (Johnson et al. 1995). Kabeer et al. (2003) emphasise that uniformity does not exist in the perception of children in the region of South Asia. Their study is mainly from India and Bangladesh, but it is likely that many of their findings are also true for Nepal. They argue that class, caste, religion and geographic location are the most important factors shaping attitudes to children and childhood.

Among Nepal's many ethnic groups there do exist different perceptions of children. One example is among the Tamang where the girls usually get married at the age of ten. Ten is also the age when many start to go for paid work, and can therefore be considered as a threshold. Others identify the age of six to seven as important because below this age children are seen as unable to carry a basket of fodder, take care of themselves or even "understand the world around them" (Johnson et al. 1995). During the interview with the stone quarry employer I asked how many of his employees were children. He persistently denied that there were any children working there, even though I had seen some girls when I arrived. After telling him what I had seen he answered: "There are lots of girls here under eighteen, but they are already married and have babies, how can they be children?" (B-Employer). This clearly illustrates that the two of us had rather different perceptions of what it means to be a child. Since the Maoists won the elections in 2008, a process for writing a new constitution was initiated. There have been discussions on the definition of a "child" and on child rights, and it is quite probable that in the new constitution a child *will* be defined as anyone under the age of eighteen, as in the CRC. However, even though politics change, traditional beliefs and perceptions usually remain.

As in many other countries in the global south, parents in Nepal tend to see their children as generating income rather than being an expense. "The riches of the poor are their children" is a Nepalese proverb that illustrates this (MOLTM 2004). In his study of child participation in Cambodia, Laos and Nepal, Bhattarai (2006) discusses children's role in Nepalese society. The social expectations of children are many. They should be obedient to elders, devoted to god, studious from the very beginning of their childhood, and laborious. All in all, children are seen as an

investment, mainly because of the family system in Nepal where boys are expected to support their parents when they get old. Children are supposed to work because they have a parental debt to pay, one of many cultural expectations of the child (Bhattarai 2006).

The cultural and social expectations make real and meaningful child participation difficult as children are primarily supposed to do everything as defined within the culture without question. Children are seen as immature, vulnerable, and deserving parental care. Even though many Nepalese also look at children as "future hope", "fortune carrier" or even a "form of god", there is an underlying notion of the inability of children to act as responsible citizens (Bhattarai 2006). Bhattarai (2006) concludes that Nepalese culture does not promote child participation. Because of the country's feudalistic tradition and its hierarchical value system, there is little space for women, children and other marginalised groups to take part in decision-making. As Johnson et al. (1995:43) put it: "Children are not officially viewed as people entitled to make decisions until they have themselves got married – if they are boys." Within the dominant patriarchal system, women's lives are almost always influenced by their fathers, husbands or sons. However, when their children grow up or if their husbands are absent, women also participate in decision-making. Children are often involved in both productive and reproductive work, and therefore have to make decisions like how much fuel wood to collect or where to find the best fodder. In general children in Nepal have far more responsibilities than decision-making rights (Johnson et al. 1995).

Bhattarai (2006) claims that even though Nepalese children have few possibilities to participate in a real sense in decision-making, the fact that education is highly valued can in the end enable them to participate by means of enhanced knowledge and skills. This is also my impression from my study of Working Children's Clubs. Gaining knowledge is one of the key factors for empowering children in Nepal. In chapter five I will discuss this further.

4.3 Perception of children's working situation

> Some of the [work] done by the children of our rural society [is] religiously, historically and traditionally derived and they are the [subjects] of children's responsibility (Khanal 1998:15).

In Nepal children are accustomed to helping their families either by doing certain daily work in the household, working for money or both. Khanal (1998) points out that a family in Nepal often has multiple occupations depending upon the caste. This can be farming of seasonal products, keeping cows, buffalos, goats or chicken, or performing traditional works as carpentry, sacred works, sewing and handicraft. Traditionally the children have been helping their parents with easy and light work because the adults in the family are not able to discharge all the work without assistance. This way of perceiving children's work is in great contrast to the view in the global north where the ideal childhood is one free of responsibilities (Baker and Hinton 2001).

Differences of opinion exist even among the different actors trying to improve the lives of the working children in Nepal. One main disagreement is whether the children have a "right to work". At the first World Meeting of Working Children in Kundapur in India in 1996, the children stated that they were "against the exploitation at work but for work with dignity." The children went against the international view of child work as something exclusively negative, speaking up for their right to work with dignity and their right to be protected from exploitation at work (Liebel et al. 2001). CONCERN and the Working Children's Clubs share this view. This is in strong contrast to the standpoint of ILO-IPEC (the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour). In my interview with the ILO office in Kathmandu I was told that in the Nepalese culture the child is god, but obstacles created by society, for example caste hierarchy, has stolen their childhood. It is therefore the duty of the ILO to take away these obstacles. The representative from the ILO office stated that the ILO has a different view than CONCERN, which they saw as an advocate of letting children work. "We in the ILO are against that!" (Interview Uddhav Poudyal).

Bhattarai (2006) emphasises that the notion of filial duty is strong in Nepal; children's personal comfort and opinions are secondary to their duty towards their parents and other elder persons in society. However the fact that children are working

is not always out of filial duty. For poor families it is an economic imperative. If children were not to work, the production and income of many families would be reduced, which would mean starvation. As a poor country with a predominantly agrarian economy one can to some extent say that the rural child labour is a necessity in Nepalese society (Khanal 1998).

4.3.1 Work as socialisation

One way of looking at children's work is to understand it as *a part of their socialisation or maturation process*. I find this explanation descriptive of the Nepalese society. One mother emphasised that it was important for her that her daughters both worked and got education. She explained further that it was necessary to teach them how to do household work because girls move to their husband's house when they get married, and if they do not know how to work their father or mother-in-law may scold them (C-P3).

It was a commonly agreed among all adults I talked to that only simple work is alright for children. However what this simple work consists of varied. The teachers and the Child Club facilitators mainly saw simple work as working in the children's own house or in the family business. The Child Club facilitators were especially negative towards working for others. One teacher in Balaju gave the example of a father owning a small shop. He could not see the problem of the children working there before and after school as long as the work was according to their age (B-T2). The representative from GEFONT also stated that he was not against child work. "Work is good because it will create a working culture with them, and working culture is necessary from the childhood." He also mentioned that children's work is necessary for the cooperation in a family (Interview Umesh Upadhaya). Another teacher stressed that children's work is ok when the children are following the elders in their work, without the elders forcing them (C-T2). Deciding the degree of voluntariness in a hierarchical society like Nepal's is difficult. It is hard to know the difference between working voluntarily and working as a part of obeying the elders and follow the social and cultural expectations prescribed to children. One teacher in Kalimati expressed it differently:

> Children shouldn't work, not with any kind, but if they don't feel that they are working, if it's in their own interest, it's ok (K-T2).

She gave the example of a mother fetching water. If the mother is carrying a bucket of water and the child wants to help, he or she can carry a small bucket of water as long as this does not feel like it is work. She emphasised the need for experience. Childhood is the time for learning, not only in school, as many in the global northern part of the world tend to see it, but also in society. One teacher in Chobhar looked at working as a process of "learning by doing". He saw it as a positive aspect that the children met obstacles while they were working with elder persons they knew, and hence learned from the situation (C-T2). Many share this understanding. As the Child Club facilitator in Chobhar expressed it, "work helps the children to develop physically and mentally" (C-Facilitator). Several teachers also mentioned that you become more practical and independent if you work as a child. "Children who aren't involved in work only know theory, but the students in this school also know more practical things" (K-T1). Another went as far as to say that "those who don't work don't learn anything" (C-T1a). This is very far from the common position in the global north. In their study of approaches to children's work and rights in Nepal, Baker and Hinton (2001) also find work to be a part of the Nepalese children's maturation process. They stress the point that in Nepal the capacity to work does not necessarily coincide with the move into the adult generation. Marriage and childbearing are factors that mark the end of childhood. Work on the other hand plays a part of most Nepalese's childhood and adulthood.

When it comes to the parents, the definition of "simple work" was even broader. Most of the parents found it ok that their children were working for others. There are different reasons for this. The majority of the families I interviewed were living in very difficult economic conditions. Parents often stated that they did not want their children to work, but that it was necessary because of their poverty. On my question of what kind of work is ok for children, one father in Kalimati answered that it was ok if the children were working in their own house or in their own shop. However if they did not own a shop, it was also ok to work for others. He continued saying that children should work with something that is fit for them both mentally and physically, but because all children do not get light work many end up working with heavy things as well (K-P3). Sanjay Khanal from the NPC stressed the point that even

within the family children's rights may be violated. Many parents are not aware of the rights of children, and may therefore make them do hard work. "The lack of awareness among parents about the consequences of child work is a major problem in our country" (Interview Sanjay Khanal). The fact that children can also be exploited within the family is something we need to keep in mind. As I pointed out in the analytical framework with Green (1998) and Levison (2007) as examples, it is not always a correlation between good work at home, and exploitative work outside the home.

Two of my child informants were brothers and lived with their elder brother and sister-in-law because their parents were dead. For their sister-in-law there was no difference in working in their own shop or working for someone else. She explained it like this: "If any person cannot get food, and if he wants to work, he should be given the chance to work" (K-P2). Many parents or caretakers answered in the same way, which illustrates the necessity of children's work for poor families. The parents' ambiguous answers regarding what work is ok for children could be part of their reconciliation with the situation. Just as a common answer to the question whether they liked their own work was: "It's necessary so I like it" or "yes, because we don't get food without work." Many needed to explain the situation, or justify that their children had to work. The aspect of socialisation was, however, important to them all. One example is the boys' sister-in-law who, like the teachers, mentioned the importance of experience from childhood. If the children did not work they would not know the value of work and money. She explained that she felt good about the boys working. "They are following, they are working, and they are good. It feels good" (K-P2).

4.3.2 Work as access to schooling

A second way of perceiving children's work is to see it *as access to schooling*. Work and school are often understood as being contradictory, while the opposite is actually the reality in many places. To hire live-in persons to do household work is a part of South Asian tradition, and the use of domestic child workers is common in Nepal. In Kathmandu one in five households employs children (Sharma et al. 2001). Shiva Sharma, a researcher at the NLA, alleged that no parent would like their child to work

rather than go to school. This is also a conclusion that can be drawn from my data. All the parents I talked to wanted their children to attend school. They were all illiterate with the exception of a couple, and it was obvious that they wanted their own children to be educated so that their grandchildren would not end up facing the same problems as their children. This, as well as some outbursts such as "an illiterate person is like a blind person" (C-P3), illustrates the importance of education for working children's parents.

Sharma divided parents of working children into two groups. One group does not have any options. They are too poor to send their children to school, so they have to work instead. The other group is really looking for a better future for their children. In their village there is a lack of education facilities, and they are somehow tricked to believe that there are more opportunities in the urban areas, so they send their children to Kathmandu to work in a home and simultaneously receive education (Interview Shiva Sharma). According to Venkateswar (2007), one of the primary motives for Nepalese parents to let their children become domestic workers, is in fact the chance this will give them to attend school. Having one less mouth to feed and someone else that is covering school expenses is seen as a tempting opportunity for many poor parents. It is interesting to note that more and more Nepalese parents see the value of education. However, this may get out of hand when the consequences are that the children have to work even more. Sometimes the good intentions of giving their children the chance to go to school result in an unwanted situation where the children end up as domestic servants in the urban areas. Sending children to work in the city can thus be seen as both a migration and a modernity phenomenon.

Stories of parents sending their children to the city are many. I interviewed a retired government official who had employed many domestic child workers. He could tell me about a particular incident when he had been in the Western part of Nepal working in local development. A mother had approached him with her son, asking him to bring her son with him to Kathmandu and provide education for him (K-Employer). Some of the parents in my study also mentioned it as a positive aspect of work if the employer could provide education for the children. The most important factor was not necessarily that the child got paid, but that they got the opportunity to go to school. As Venekateswar (2007) pointed out, this is a common perception.

It is interesting to note that the man I interviewed had been working for the government. Sharma did in fact emphasise that the people hiring domestic child

workers are from the up-coming middle class such as government officials, teachers, policemen and judges. I met several people who were employing children as domestic servants, many of them teachers. Sharma explained that because the employers are some of the most powerful members of society, it is very hard to enforce the law against hiring children. Keeping in mind that there is a tradition of employing domestic workers in Nepal, the fact that people earn more in urban areas will create an even greater demand for child workers (Interview Shiva Sharma).

> Generally some help is necessary in the house. If we have to go outside of the house, he remains at home. We need some people to help us, sometimes to clean the rooms or to bring things from the market. It's easy. It's an opportunity to help him, we think. We're proud of this because he is getting education and some facilities. If he had lived in the village he would have to herd cows, and he would not get enough food or nice clothes (K-Employer).

The retired government official was proud of hiring children. This is a very different perception of child work compared to the one in the global north. He told me about all the children that had worked in his house, and how many of them had passed the School Leaving Certificate (SLC).[4] They did not get any salary, but they got schooling, food, clothes and some pocket money. If he had time he also tried to help them with their homework. He repeatedly said that his employee was like a member of the family, and that they ate the same food (K-Employer). In his opinion he was helping the children while outsiders may perceive it as exploitation. The *National Master Plan on Child Labour* published by the Ministry of Labour and Transport Management (MOLTM) in 2004, states that the underlying perception of children's work as a necessity removes the focus from people's social responsibility. According to the Master Plan, some employers may hire children as a way of showing their affluence because of the already existing Nepalese perception that child work is a necessity. The employers argue, like the retired government official, that they are providing protection and helping poor children, while the Master Plan insists on the opposite (MOLTM 2004).

Many domestic child workers are not paid. In stead they are fed, sheltered, clothed and sometimes sent to school. A majority of the children interviewed in the ILO report written by Sharma et al (2001), reported that their employers fed them better, and that their sleeping facilities were better than at home. Giving someone the

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[4] SLC is received after passing grade 10 national exam.

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opportunity to get education or one extra meal per day can be a blessing. However the emotional deprivation, psychological violence, and lack of parental love and care that these children experience is often detrimental. The majority of the children in my study answered that a good employer is one that treats the working child as a family member. Trying to treat your employees as family members is good, but the one serving tea to his "brothers" and "sisters" would hardly feel like a member on the same level as the others. Another fact that needs to be considered is that many parents believe that their children will get education in the city while this is often not the case. According to Sharma et al. (2001) one third of the domestic child workers in their study were sent to school. More than two thirds worked more than fourteen hours a day, which can serve as an explanation of why there is no time for school.

There are not only domestic child workers that work for their education. On the question of why children in Nepal are working, the answer from parents, teachers, Child Club facilitators as well as the children, was often to support their daily needs and their education. One teacher in Balaju said that since the government is not able to provide enough for the children, they have to provide for themselves. By this they become independent, which is good, despite the fact that it should be the government that provides education for the children (B-T1). A father in Chobhar said that because families in Nepal are poor and have economic problems, parents are not able to give education to their children. The only way of going to school for the children is thereby to work (C-P1). Even though education is supposed to be free in Nepal children still have to pay a school fee, and for their own uniform and stationery items like pens and notebooks. Generally the parents felt happy about the children working for their education. "My son is working for his own study so I am satisfied" said a mother in Chobhar (C-P5). She was clearly proud of her son who went to school unlike herself.

According to Baker and Hinton (2001), a distinction between the traditional and the modern childhood is no longer useful. Their research shows that Nepalese parents have adopted elements of the modern childhood, such as the wish to give their children formal education, at the same time as they maintain the values and practices that they themselves experienced during their childhood. In her study of internal and external factors influencing children's work in Nepal, Tjomsland (2009) claims the same. She points out that most parents in her study wanted their children to go to

school. The working children's parents stated "the times are changing now, and that this is the age where everyone should be educated" (Tjomsland 2009:36).

In their book, *What Works for Working Children,* Boyden et al. (1998) criticise the uncontested assumption that children should be at school and not at work. They alleged that the incompatibility of combining school and work has been overstated. According to them a large number of children in the world appear to combine school and work quite effectively. This is also a conclusion I can draw from my data. The children, their teachers and the Child Club facilitators, all express that the children want to go to school as well as working. Boyden et al. (1998:251) state that school serves "as a cause of work rather than as solution to it." The expectation many policy-makers may have that school will remove children from work is therefore not reasonable. In stead they should argue that school is a way of keeping children out of the worst forms of child work rather than stopping them from working all together. This is the real protective power of education. If children come to school regularly they are kept out of the most intolerable forms of child work, like working from sunrise to sunset or bonded labour (Boyden et al. 1998).

Another aspect, which I also became aware of in Nepal, is that child work can be beneficial to the children's education. Some of the teachers were of the opinion that the working children are actually doing better than the other children at school. One example is from Chobhar where two working children had topped the results at the school exams in the last few years. Boyden et al. (1998) point out that children may be better off with a combination of work and school as it is increasingly recognised that an exposure to a diversity of learning environments is most beneficial. Nevertheless, the fact that working children often have less time for school, and that work can make them too weary to concentrate in class or do their homework, must be taken into consideration. However if it is true that work is actually beneficial to many working children, the prevailing discourse on childhood, that it is a time for play and not work, needs to be challenged. To be able to draw any conclusion of this kind, more research is needed.

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4.3.3 Work instead of bad activity

A third way of perceiving children's work, that mostly parents kept mentioning, was *work as an activity instead of joining bad activity* or "following the wrong track" as many put it. Explanations were that if the children did not work they would only hang around, and then they might get involved in a bad gang.

> If children are working from around twelve to four they don't get time to go with bad people. If they work, it's better because they don't get the time to think about bad things, like for example stealing, taking drugs, and smoking (B-Employer).

Even though the stone quarry employer held on to his assertion that there were no children working in his stone quarry, he stated that it was better for children to work than to steal. He also said that there were no negative aspects of working, and he never said anything about education. According to his statement (that children should "work from around twelve to four"), he probably did not think much about children's right to education either. In a poor country like Nepal with lots of unemployment, the fact that their children could meet the wrong people was seen as a threat to many parents. However the parents were not all in agreement that work kept the children from joining a bad group of people. One father in Kalimati stated the opposite. He said that the negative aspect of working was that the children could listen to other people at work and thereby start "following the wrong track" (K-P3). His children were therefore working with stitching at home while he worked in the store. One mother in Chobhar said that one negative aspect of girls working was that people spoke ill of them. Even though there is nothing bad about the work they do, the village people still talked badly about girls working outside the home (C-P3). This and the previous example illustrate the perception many Nepalese parents have, namely that girls should work at home or in closed environments supervised by either relatives or trusted neighbours (Baker and Hinton 2001).

4.3.4 Children's perception of their own working situation

The reasons for working stated by children in Bhattarai's study (2006) were many. Some worked to support their parents or their family's survival. Others were working because they were afraid of retribution, of being scolded, or even of violence from parents if they did not work. Others again worked because they wanted to do good deeds or wanted to gain merit. Many also stated that working helped them build their skills. The majority of the children in my study did find both positive and negative aspects of working. One common answer was that the best thing about working is that they got paid. Many also mentioned independence. One girl in Kalimati said that by working she became independent and was able to fulfil her needs (K-C6). The children did not like the idea of depending on others. One boy in Chobhar stated, "It is better to work than to ask for bread from others. Being dependent on others is not good" (C-Int2). Some of the boys saw the activity aspect as positive. "The best thing about working is that I will not be lazy. Work makes us active, it makes you physically strong" (C-C8). The children emphasised the aspect of learning and experience they gained through work. One boy in Kalimati told me that of all the jobs he had had, he liked selling vegetables the most. Through this job he learned about profit and how to run a business. When I asked him what he wanted to do in ten years time, he said he wanted to be a businessman (K-C1).

Many of the children were clearly proud of what they had achieved by working. One boy in Chobhar who had been working in the stone quarry since he was six years old told me about how he had started school. In the beginning he had worked all day long, but then one day CONCERN came to the area and started to run flexible classes for the working children. After a year he was admitted to school. He told me how happy he had felt when he finally could buy his first school uniform for his own money (C-C8). According to his mother he had not eaten for three days, he had only been breaking stones and saving money for his uniform (C-P5). I would claim that the feeling of mastery is of utmost importance for many child workers. The fact that they work in order to pay for their education is what makes their job meaningful.

The children had a strong sense of responsibility. One girl answered that she worked to help her parents. Her parents were working with stitching in another man's

shop. They had lots of clothes to make, so she explained that she and her brother were sewing the easy ones at home (K-C3). Another girl explained that her mother was working in a carpet factory and was away from four in the morning to seven at night. Her father was in jail, and her elder brother was working with transportation. "My younger brothers are not able to cook food so I have to do it." She liked to make the house clean because this made her mother happy, and the situation easier for her (B-C6). It was clear that the fourteen-year-old girl felt a huge responsibility.

In their book about child labour and the right to education in South Asia, Kabeer et al. (2003) emphasise that children in South Asia see work as an integral part of their lives. Reasons for this are both that they want to help their parents who are struggling to make ends meet, and because they want to meet their own needs, which often consist of paying for some of the direct costs of attending school. Many of my informants said they gave some of the money to their parents and kept some for buying stationery things. However, not everyone had this kind of freedom. One girl in Kalimati stated that her father would not send her to school unless she was working (K-C5). Another girl said she had to work for her own study, her younger sister's study and the household expenses. She explained that her parents were not well, and in order to help them pay the land rent she had to work. The family was very poor, and she had been working since the age of five. Her elder brother and sister had left home, so she was in many ways the main breadwinner of the family (K-C6).

The negative aspects of working were also many. Even though some of the working children topped the result lists at school, many mentioned that work hampered their study. Some of the children, especially the ones that worked in the stone quarry, were clearly involved in various tasks heavier than their capacity. They described how they have to bring stones from a far distance away. During summer when it is wet from the monsoon, they slip in the mud and fall down (C-C5 and C-C8). They also complained about how they got wounded at work. "I get bits of stones in my eyes and small stones in my hands" one boy in Balaju explained (B-C2). One girl in Kalimati explained how she, in her old job where she packed spices, got small dust from the spices in her nose, which affected her health (K-C3). One boy working as a porter in Balaju said that they often had to walk barefoot, which hurts, because sweat in the shoes makes it difficult to walk (B-C3b). The children were not only complaining about the physical pain they suffered during work, many were even more concerned about the psychological pain.

> If we make a mistake and the employer beats us a little bit, that is ok because we forget this. But if he scolds me, that is like verbally torture, and it remains forever (C-C8).

I was a bit shocked by this answer at first, but then I realised that Nepalese children are used to physical punishment from elders. Many of my informants complained about their employers scolding them, and how this made them feel. The worst aspect of working mentioned by some of the children was definitely the risk of being abused. One girl in Balaju told me that she had been working in a hotel[5] for one and half years. The employers kept her there by force and she was not getting paid. Sometimes the people who came to eat there tried to abuse her (B-C8). Another girl in Kalimati working as a domestic worker told me about how she was abused by the family in one of the houses she used to work. They had made her watch them having sex, and one time they had even asked her to eat a piece of a cigarette. When her parents came to visit her, they behaved very well, but the minute they left, they started treating her badly again (K-C6). Another domestic child worker stated, "when I start in all houses they are good, but then they start to behave badly" (K-C5). The boy who works in the house of the domestic work employer I interviewed, said that his employer was "not good, not bad" (K-C4). This is in contrast to the employer's answer that he treated the boy as a member of the family.

Many felt discriminated against because of their status as working children. Venkateswar (2007) points out that domestic child workers often have to cope with the strains of taunts or ridicule from others. Many of my informants working as domestic child workers felt this way. One girl in Balaju told me that people often tell her that her work is not good (B-C7). Another girl said that she would like to change her work because "the society doesn't like domestic work, and the people don't like domestic workers" (B-C1). However, it was not only the children working as domestic servants who felt discriminated. The girl in Kalimati who worked with stitching told me that people in the local community treated her family as "lower cast people" because of their job (K-C3).

Not all the children thought it was ok that children were working. This was especially the case for the children living in very difficult conditions. A girl in

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[5] A Nepalese hotel is like a small snack bar.

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Chobhar told me that her father had two wives. Her family had migrated from their village because the other wife did not allow them to stay there. She was now living with her mother and brothers, while the father was living both places. According to the girl the father made them work so he could send nearly all the money to the other wife in the village. "My father takes the money from all the family members. If we don't give it to him he starts a fight" she told me. The girl was clearly upset about this. When I asked her where she saw herself in ten years she said, "we're the poor people, we don't have any ambitions" (C-C5). This reflects my point earlier that the Nepalese children who feel some sort of mastery in their work find it ok or sometimes even enjoy it, while this is not the case for the children that merely work because they are forced to do so.

One boy in Chobhar emphasised that child work should be minimised. The children have to work because of their country's situation. Lots of adults are jobless. The government should provide work for them, so the children do not have to work (C-C8). In Balaju, one boy told me that his father was not earning enough, so he and his mother had to go and ask for work in the stone quarry. He said that it was his father that had decided that he should start working, and that the work was very hard (B-C2). Another girl in Balaju explained that she worked because her father was dead, and her mother's income was not sufficient. She told me that her mother had said, "all your sisters have ran away, so you have to work", and then found her a job washing dishes in a hotel (B-C4). The girl did not go into detail about what she meant by "ran away", but most likely they migrated for work, which is very common among young Nepalese. Both the boy and the girl did however state that they liked to work because they got money, and without money they would not be able to buy food and clothes.

Bhattarai (2006) concludes that children in Nepal voluntarily take up work if the work seems interesting in nature, is immediately rewarding, and can be done collectively. However, most of the children work out of necessity. This is consistent with my findings. It is often difficult to know if the children work because it is demanded of them, or because they have a desire to help their parents. For many children I believe it is a mix of both feelings. The children in my study explained that work that is fruitful for their future, or easy work like sweeping, washing dishes, or carrying things, is ok for children as long as it is not too heavy. Some told me they liked working; others did not like to work. However, variations of one answer repeated itself. "I don't like it, but it's necessary to work, so I have to like it." One

boy in Chobhar said that he could not say whether he was happy or not. "By fortune or misfortune I had to work. Whether you're rich or poor you have to work according to the situation." For him there had never been an option not to work. He did in the end say that he was satisfied with the situation, which like many parents' answers can be a way of reconciling himself with the situation (C-Int2).

4.4 Perception of Children's rights

In the first issue of *Nepal Law Journal* from 1998, the editor stated that the majority of the Nepalese people are not aware of children's rights. He pointed out that for too long the rights of children have been ignored, violated and not enforced in Nepal. After the shift to multi-party democracy in 1990, legal infrastructure was introduced, and policy guidelines made. However, it happened without laws being effectively implemented or plans of actions formulated (Gautam 1998). In 2002 the National Alliance of Child Rights Organisations (NACRO) made an alternative report about the rather bleak situation of children's rights in Nepal. In the report it became known that NGOs working for children's rights believed that there were so many loopholes in the Children's Act of 1992 that they had suggested an amendment of the Act to the government. However, even though the government did agree that the Act should be amended, according to the NGOs, little was done in this field (NACRO 2002).

The *National Master Plan on Child Labour* from 2004 touches upon the fact that government policies to address children's work are not effective enough, and that a more comprehensive and clearer mechanism for implementation and monitoring is needed. It gives an account of the problem, and admits that children's work is a rather difficult and complex issue in Nepal given the country's social and economic situation. Nevertheless, "it aims to identify and eliminate the worst forms of child labour by 2009, (…) [and] to eliminate all forms of child labour by 2014" (MOLTM 2004:2). According to the Plan, the implementation of international and national legal instruments has been a difficult process because of limited institutional and human resources. Their recommendations are therefore first to make the *system* more rational, committed, and adequately sensitive to the issues, and second to make the *society* more responsible, to eliminate prejudices, and to enable all concerned to use legal avenues and provisions (MOLTM 2004).

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According to Khanal at the NPC, who used to work for the Ministry, the problem is that the government does not have enough resources to implement the Master Plan. They allocate some money but the labour offices are not well equipped to carry out the monitoring and inspection job. However, civil society groups are quite active. Because of their massive awareness campaigns in the last years, policy makers are more aware of child labour issues. Even within the households you can notice a change. Khanal explained that people used to be proud of having servants but now you would not find anyone saying that openly. They will instead say that they brought a relative or a needy boy or girl who they now are supporting with education and better facilities (Interview Sanjay Khanal). This is also what I experienced in my interview with the domestic work employer in Kalimati.

Sharma on the other hand did not share Khanal's positive view of the recent development. He thought there were two reasons for the missing enforcement of the law against hiring child workers. First, when it comes to domestic child workers, it is often government officials *themselves* that keep children as domestic servants. Second, the law does not cover all the working children because it is not clear enough when it comes to informal labour (Interview Shiva Sharma). On this point Khanal seems to agree. He stated that the government had too much focus on the formal sector, which only covers 5 percent of the country's economy. Instead they ought to focus more on the informal sector where most of the children are working (Interview Sanjay Khanal). Sharma explained that there have been examples of people being punished after having abused their child servants but nobody has been punished simply because they have hired children. At one time the government issued a circular to government officials about not keeping domestic child workers in their houses, but because of the mentality and the missing enforcement these initiatives hardly work. Sharma also brought up another example from the carpet industry. There was a big UN-led outcry about the use of child workers in the carpet industry in the 1990s, which led to a fall in the market and less export. The industry had to do something, and since carpet making is a chain of activities they could simply outsource the activities to the household level. This way there were no children in the factories, but instead a lot at the household level (Interview Shiva Sharma).

One factor is probably to have a legal framework, but you also need to have a huge source of pressure against child labour. So long as this social pressure is not in place, it is not going to work given the size of the problem (Interview Shiva Sharma).

Just as the child workers in the carpet industry have become "invisible" so are the domestic child workers. Sharma was clear about the need for social pressure against the exploitation of children. If three people are having child servants in their homes, and only two of them are sending their child to school, those two should make the third one feel bad about himself. "We need to bring those kinds of feelings into society." Clearly he did not share Khanal's optimistic thoughts about these "feelings" already being deeply rooted in society. Sharma also mentioned that people should have the courage to stand in front of child employers' houses, and say that they would stay there until the people start sending the children to school.

Another approach is to start teaching children's rights in school. This way the children in houses where they employ children as domestic workers will start asking their parents about the servant's rights, and then hopefully they will send him or her to school (Interview Shiva Sharma). It was interesting that Sharma should mention this last strategy of advocating children's rights. My Nepali teacher, like so many other Nepalese, employed domestic workers. She told me that she once had hired a child to do the same job, but that her children had been so upset about this that she had to hire an adult instead. The idea of incorporating children's rights education in the school curriculum was also mentioned in the NACRO report. They were criticising the government for not allocating money for child rights training for schoolteachers, and saw this as a hindrance for the child rights awareness campaign in Nepal (NACRO 2002). There are several parallels between the strategies mentioned by Sharma and the ways many Child Clubs work. The social pressure he firmly believes in, as well as the child rights training, are part of the Clubs' strategy in the fight against the exploitation of children. I will explore this further in the next chapter about the empowering role of Working Children's Clubs.

4.5 Concluding remarks

For a great number of children in Nepal, a working childhood is what is normal to them. Most of them work out of necessity. They are from poor families, and letting

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the children work is often the only way the parents are able to ensure their family's survival. The children listed both positive and negative aspects of working. Most of them thought it was ok that children were working as long as the work was not too heavy, or took too much of their time. The work they liked gave them a good feeling, as they felt responsible, proud and independent.

I have listed three explanations of why children are working given by the informants in my study. For many parents, teaching the children to work is part of their socialisation or maturation process. Another reason for sending their children to work is that by this, they can gain access to school. This can either happen by working as a domestic worker in someone's house, where the employer pay the school expenses, or the children can work in order to pay for school expenses themselves. A third explanation given by the parents was that they looked at work as an alternative for their children joining in "bad activity".

Even though Nepal has ratified the CRC, and there exist several laws concerning children's rights not to work, the exploitation of working children continues. The fact that there is a tradition of employing children, and that government officials, teachers, police officers and lawyers are the ones that employ most children, makes it hard to monitor the system. Nepalese culture does not make it easy for children to participate. Children are supposed to obey their elders, and to do everything as defined within their social and cultural role without question. However, a growing number of Nepalese children now attend school, and thus obtain enhanced knowledge and skills compared to their illiterate parents. This makes it somehow easier for them to participate in decision-making.

CHAPTER 5.0 THE CHILD CLUBS' EMPOWERING EFFECT

> After joining the Child Club I became able to speak in front of people.
> Previously I was not able to ask for money where I work, but in the Child Club I
> have learnt about my rights, and now I am not afraid to claim my rights (B-
> C3a).

> These meetings have an indirect effect, by making us become aware of our
> rights and raising our voice to the government level. The government
> implements rules and regulations. If the rules and regulations are only in written
> form, we can help the government make these known. If the government is
> sleeping after making rules and regulations, then we can help awake them (C-
> Int2).

In this chapter I will discuss the Working Children's Clubs' empowering effects. The chapter is divided into three parts. First I present the consequences a Child Club membership can have on the children themselves, and how being a member can empower them to cope with the problems they may have as working children, affect their family situation and their education. The second part is about the impacts the Child Clubs can have on the local community, and how these changes in turn affect the working children. The third part concerns the children's efforts to influence national politics, some of the members' participation at international meetings, and the consequences this can have for the Working Children's Movement. I will narrate the children's descriptions of changes in their lives after joining the Club. My other informants will further contribute to drawing a picture of how being a member of a Child Club makes the working children politically, socially and psychologically empowered.

5.1 The Child Club and working children

There are many reasons for working children to join a Child Club. Some of the working children have joined the Club because CONCERN has provided them with equipment. In Chobhar the children explained how CONCERN first came to their area with masks and gloves they could use at their work in the stone quarry. Afterwards they helped them to start their own Club. In CONCERN's centres in

Balaju and Kalimati, I was introduced to the *Children's Development Bank* (CDB). Since children are not supposed to work, to open a bank account for a child is practically impossible. This means that the working children have no real chance to save their money, and are often afraid of being robbed. After CONCERN started the CDB, several of the working children in the area have started to save in the bank. They have seen how this has affected their lives, been introduced to CONCERN, and met other active children from the Working Children's Club. Experiencing all this, they have decided to join the Club themselves.

Equipment and the chance to save money are physical and financial assets, which enable people to expand their horizon of choices. In order to become empowered they also have to make use of their capabilities, which will enable them to use their assets in ways that will increase their well-being. Being a member of a Child Club may benefit the working children in a number of ways. In this section I will mainly focus on the personal gains the children obtain from joining a Club.

5.1.1 Gaining new skills

The Child Clubs have various activities aiming to increase the skills of their members. Some of the Clubs have been very successful in empowering their members. First the facilitator trains the members in, for example, children's rights, and then they discuss in groups how they can use this information to improve their own situation. This has made them empowered to find solutions to their own problems. Nearly all the children in my study mentioned one major change after having joined the Club, namely their new ability to talk in front of other people without fear. One reason for this is the speech competitions they organise, which according to one boy in Chobhar "increase our talking skills" (C-C7). Another reason is that in the Club they get used to discussing different issues with their friends, and thus gain confidence. As a result they do not find it frightening to argue with their parents, teachers or employers. Both teachers and parents confirmed that the children have become more active. The teachers described more energetic students, and one mother told me about her son who used to be so afraid that he often trembled when he had to speak in front of others, "and now he is very active and makes many people laugh" (C-P5).

One consequence of being able to talk freely is that the children can bargain with their employer. In Kalimati one girl explained how she previously did not get money on time, but after joining the Club she was able to talk to the employer, who would give her money promptly (K-C3). Other examples are the children who mentioned that their employers used to ask them to do work they did not want to do. While they before did not say anything, they are now capable of saying no. The facilitators confirmed this:

> The children are able to work more effectively than before. They are able to do calculations. An example is one boy that was working in a hotel for 10 hours a day and only got 500 rupees a month. After becoming a Club member he said "this salary is not sufficient for me", he bargained with the employer (B-Facilitator).

Having access to their rights, knowing what is fair work for children and what is not, and being able to stand up for themselves, the children have been empowered in many ways. Access to appropriate information will lead to increased social power. Believing that they have the resources and competence to do something about their own situation empowers them psychologically, and as a result they gain confidence to raise their voices, which is a sign of political empowerment.

It is not just conditions at the workplace that have improved because of this empowerment. Being able to speak without fear has also led to better outcomes at school. In the beginning many children were afraid of their teachers, but after gaining more confidence they dare to ask questions in class, and as a result feel more comfortable and perform better at school. In Balaju, one teacher even told me how the children had organised a student-teacher interaction program where they had told their teachers not to stay in the office till after the bell had rung. They wanted their teachers to enter the class on time so they would not miss out on their teaching. After this the teachers did in fact become more active (B-T2). In a country like Nepal where the children are supposed to be obedient to their elders this is quite a triumph for the Child Club.

Narayan (2005) emphasises that in order to become political empowered you need political capabilities such as, for example, the capacity to represent oneself or others. As explained above, several children have gained the ability to represent themselves, but many have also used this confidence to stand up for others. In Chobhar, a mother told me how her daughter had stood up for a little girl that was

working in their relatives' house. They had met their relatives during a festival, and her daughter had told them: "You're not allowed to let her work with things that damage her. If you are giving her work you must also give her education. If not she will not develop mentally." According to the mother the little girl is ok now, even though their relatives still have not sent her to school. She was clearly proud of her daughter who had become confident enough to talk like this (C-P2).

The list of what these children have accomplished is long. Several of the children answered, "I am now able to talk in front of *everyone*", and at one point I was curious if this was true or just something they said. However, after having interviewed a boy in Chobhar, I was convinced. A couple of years ago he had been selected to participate at a launching program of the UN Study on Violence against Children in New York. He was there together with other children from different countries as the representative for Nepalese working children. During the meeting the children agreed on four points regarding what should be done to stop violence against children, and together with a boy from the Maldives the boy presented these points to Kofi Annan and other UN officials (C-Int1).

According to Petesch et al. (2005) participation in an organisation strengthens people's capacity for decision-making, problem-solving and collective action. This is not only the case for adults but also for children. In her study of Child Clubs and Child Unions in South Asia, O'Kane (2002) emphasises the same fact:

> Through the process of organizing, children are being encouraged to recognize differences amongst them, to challenge discrimination and to work together cooperatively and democratically, in a manner that transforms and challenges much of their existing experiences of exploitative relations (O'Kane 2002:706).

The Child Clubs in Nepal have often got the same structure as adult organisations, with a board of seven to nine persons, including a chairperson, vice-chairperson, treasurer, secretary, and a sometimes a joint secretary (Rajbhandary et al. 1999). They are very democratic in the way they are organised, and I would claim that being an active member of a Child Club is one step in the direction of learning the praxis of a real democracy. This also brings children closer to becoming active citizens, adopting the feminist perspective on citizenship, which is about marginalised groups getting to participate and having a voice in society. Gaining new skills makes it easier for the children to participate more actively. Being a member of a Child Club gives them an

understanding and feeling for democracy, which in the longer run results in a more participatory and inclusive society (O'Kane 2003).

In all three areas the children told me similar stories about how the Club decided what to focus on. Usually they first have a group discussion where they listen to all the views, and then the majority decides. Some of the children explained in detail how they would make a decision through the chairperson or the person that is hosting the meeting (K-C2b), or how they decide through the voting system. "We discuss first, and then we vote by hand" (C-C5). Several also mentioned that if some of the children have a serious problem, then that would be the focus of the meeting. This is in line with Palma (1988, in Friedman 1992) who claims that people learn the praxis of a real democracy by taking part in community organisations. My study shows how the children obtain political capabilities in the Club, as they are learning to defend one position and to listen to another, set objectives and make decisions together. This makes them politically empowered.

These decision-making skills help them in many ways. In Kalimati one boy explained how he earlier used to fight with his friends, but now if they have a problem they sit down and talk instead (K-C1). According to one teacher in Chobhar the best thing about the Club is that the children learn how to work in groups, and as a result of this, develop good leadership skills (C-T2). All the teachers I interviewed said that the Child Club members were of great help to them. If the schools are organising something, they will always participate, or if the teacher is absent they will help with the teaching. They create an environment for the other children to join school, for example by going and telling the children that are absent that they should come to school (B-T2).

Some of the Child Club members join Youth Clubs or Youth Forums when they grow too old for the Club. These Youth Clubs work closely with the Child Clubs, often with one of its members as either a Non-Formal Education facilitator or a Child Club facilitator. Two of the facilitators in my study were in fact old Child Club members. It is, however, more likely for the boys in the Child Club to continue in the Youth Club because the girls often get married after finishing school, and then have to move to their husband's village. In Kathmandu there is one Youth Forum affiliated with CONCERN. This is centred in Kalimati, and consists of former Child Club members from different areas in Kathmandu. The experience of participating in a Child Club has, for some, led to involvement in even bigger organisations as adults.

Both Dharel from CWISH and Upadhaya from GEFONT told me how Child Club members working as domestic child workers have become active members of the Domestic Worker's Union after turning eighteen. This is in line with Rajbhandary et al. (1999) who believe that there is a great chance that children will continue to have active roles in civil society after leaving the Club. This is an example of how being member in a Working Children's Club can have long-term consequences both for children personally and for Nepalese society.

Several of the children in my study mentioned that they had become better at problem solving. "Before if we faced any problems we left the job, now we go to solve it" (K-C1). In Balaju one girl explained how she learned how to solve her problems in the Club. "Many people hate the poor people. If someone is dominating us, we learn how to get rid of the problem, we become more self-reliant" she expressed proudly (B-C1). There are many advantages of discussing your problems in a group. In Balaju, the facilitator emphasised that one of the most important achievements of the Club is that the children become aware of the value of collective action. If one child is not able to do something, they do it in a group. One example is if one or two members are not able to convince their parents of something, all the children go together (B-Facilitator).

However, not all the processes in the Nepalese Child Clubs are as democratic and inclusive as they may appear. Giving the children equal opportunities to participate in meetings, trainings and workshops outside their community is desirable, but unfortunately seldom possible. Leadership may be monopolised by a little group of children, excluding the majority from the opportunity to acquire knowledge, develop skills, and make decisions (Theis and O'Kane 2005). The Clubs in my study faced these challenges. In Kalimati they were especially aware of this. One girl explained that the weakness of the Club was that the members that got training were not always good at sharing this information with the other members (K-C5). One boy complained that the elder members would not give the younger members the chance to take an active part in the activities (K-C1), while another boy saw it as a problem that only the active and confident children were asked by the facilitator to go in front, thereby not giving the chance to the others to fully participate (K-C2b).

5.1.2 Access to information

Several of the children answered that they joined the Club because they wanted to learn new things. In many ways the Clubs' main aim is to be a tool for the children to become aware of, and claim, their rights. Access to relevant information is a prerequisite for empowerment. One example is from Balaju where one girl explained how they were given information about sexual abuse. "First we watched a cartoon movie about sexual abuse, and then we discussed, the girls in a separate room" (B-C5). The facilitator for the Club later confirmed my comprehension of the empowering effect of these theme workshops. Before, the children were loitering in the streets, she explained. After joining the Club, and having learned about, for example, sexual abuse, they know what is abuse and what is love, and they do not want to loiter in the streets anymore (B-Facilitator). Information about sexual abuse is especially important for the children working as domestic workers. According to CWISH, these children are more vulnerable and at a greater risk of being exposed to sexual abuse, as they are often separated from their family. In a conversation with Milan Dharel, the head of CWISH, during my initial stay in Nepal in June 2007, he claimed that as many as 50 percent of the child domestic workers were exposed to some form of sexual abuse at their workplace.

Gaining knowledge about children's rights or how they can get help if they are being abused, the children become more aware of the situation they are in, and how they can deal with their daily challenges. The children get information from different workshops and programs organised by the facilitator or CONCERN's Youth Forum. Often CONCERN or the Youth Forum arranges interaction programmes with different Child Clubs participating. During my time in Nepal I was present at two of these interaction programmes concerning "sexual abuse" and "children's rights and duties". According to O'Kane (2002) having the opportunity to meet and build networks with children from other Clubs or organisations is very positive, as it enhances learning and organisational development. These meetings are empowering in many ways. The children learn new things, discuss these in groups, and present for each other. At the interaction programs, many Child Clubs are present, and the children get the opportunity to meet children from other parts of the city. They share their experiences and gain insight into other children's everyday life.

Many children expressed satisfaction at knowing their rights. "I know that children have the right to food, shelter and clothes" (B-C6). One girl in Chobhar said that knowing her rights had made her stronger. "Before, my father was dominating us and asked for money all the time. Now I tell him that we have rights and he sits quietly" (C-C5). I find Bhattarai's (2006) point that Nepalese children are enabled to participate because they are more educated than their parents very interesting. In the previous example it is clear that the girl is more powerful compared to her father because she has knowledge of her rights. According to O'Kane (2003), children and young people in Child Clubs and Child Organisations across South and Central Asia have become increasingly powerful, as they have started to use the CRC as a tool to raise issues concerning them. Another example is from the school, where a teacher explained how some children, being threatened by their teacher, had said: "We have our rights, your picture will come in a magazine if you beat us" (B-T1). Being more educated than their parents and knowing their rights clearly empowers the children.

In the Child Club, children also get information about other important issues, such as health matters. In Chobhar many of the children used to work, or were still working, in the stone quarry. The facilitator explained that when they got injured, the children used to put mud on their wounds to stop them bleeding. He made a health presentation for the children, and they talked about how to solve this problem (C-Facilitator). Appropriate information about, for example, standard health practices is mentioned by Friedman (1992) as one of the bases of gaining social power. Once you know what to do with a problem it gets easier, but with health problems you sometimes need more resources to overcome the problem. CONCERN has therefore provided the stone quarry children with masks so they can protect themselves from the dust. On some occasions they have also put up a mobile health camp so the children can get medically examined (C-C5).

The children do not only get information from the facilitator or other arranged programs. In the Club, they also share information with their friends. One example is information about their work. In Balaju, one girl explained how she got to know of other types of work from her friends in the Club. Learning that she also could work with other things gave her the chance to change her work (B-C8). As Kabeer (2001) emphasises, one of the core features of empowerment is to have a choice, and one of the prerequisites of choosing is to know that there are other options available. In the Club the children share their working experiences, and learn from each other. Several

of the children said that the Club had a positive influence on their working situation. "I learn from my friends' experience how to work faster and to make the work easier" one boy in Balaju stated (B-C3a). By learning how to do their job faster they get surplus time, which according to Friedman (1992) is another of the eight bases of social power. One girl in Balaju working with dishwashing in a hotel explained how her work had become easier after joining the Club. The fact that she had learnt how to manage her work better had helped her, though the actual reason for the concrete improvement had been that someone from CONCERN had visited her employer and told him that children cannot work all day, and should not be given difficult work (B-C4). As Friedman (1992) points out, external agents often play a vital role in the empowerment of marginalised groups.

5.1.3 Helping other working children directly

The children treasured the fact that the Club members help each other. "The best thing about the Club is that if friends are in need of help, every member helps each other" (K-C5). Besides obtaining new skills and gaining knowledge, the members of the Clubs are also busy helping other children in the same situation. Theis and O'Kane (2005) emphasise how Child Clubs in Nepal have worked actively to enrol working children into school, monitor school dropout, and preventing early marriage, child trafficking and other forms of exploitation. The children in my study were proud of how they were able to admit poor children into school, and their teachers were touched by their efforts. If children from working families do not get education due to lack of money or because of their economic situation, the Club members coordinate with the school, talk to the children, and admit the children into school using their Club money (K-T2). In Balaju the children told me how they would collect money. Sometimes when organising a cleaning campaign they also ask people for money, or they have gone to different private schools and colleges and asked the students there for donations. One teacher explained how the Child Club had visited a college, informed the students that many working children could not afford to go to school, and convinced them to fund some of the Club members' education (B-T1). This is positive in many ways. Not only will more children get the possibility to start or

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continue their study, but Nepal's more affluent children also gain a better understanding of their peers' daily challenges.

According to the study of Theis and O'Kane (2005), many Child Clubs in Nepal have taken action in order to secure justice for child workers and other marginalised children. The facilitator in Balaju could tell me about some serious incidents where the children had acted very courageously. One example was a father who was beating his children badly. When the Child Club became aware of this they went to the father and talked to him. They said that if he did not stop they would call the police. This is yet another example of how the children can challenge discrimination and prevent abuse, using child rights as a tool.

Another example of children taking action occurred when a girl went missing. The Child Club gathered, went searching for her, and found out that she was staying in a hotel. Then they informed her mother who was very worried. While the girl had been away she had been given a telephone, and the Club members managed to get hold of her number. They gave this to her mother, and both her friends and mother called the girl, and were in the end able to persuade her to come home (B-Facilitator). Trafficking of young girls is a huge problem in Nepal, and it is probable that this was what awaited the young girl. The children in Kalimati were aware of what they could do if they knew that children were being exploited at work. "If the employer is giving problems to the children, then we can go to his home and tell him that he is exploiting them", one boy stated. "If he is not convinced, and the children are in a bad condition we can bring them to CONCERN's Emergency Shelter", he explained further. The boy told me that they had never brought anyone to the Shelter before (K-C1). However, the fact that the children know what to do in a situation like this, that they know they have different choices and do not have to be passive is a sign of empowerment.

The Club members also help other working children by passing on information about child work, child exploitation and child rights. "In the Club we get information about different issues from the facilitator, and then afterwards we give this information to others" (B-C7). Several children also mentioned that they could help other working children by inviting them to become a part of their Club, or helping them start their own Club. In Chobhar one girl explained how the Club members are going from house to house to tell children that do not go to school about the advantages of going to school and joining the Club (C-C5). The facilitator in

Balaju made a point of the children being messengers. She emphasised that in many ways it is easier for children to make contact and spread information to other children in the same situation. "Children attract children. They talk about the advantages of the Club to their friends and their friends join" (B-Facilitator). According to her, the children were already doing a lot for other working children simply by being role models.

5.1.4 Self-esteem, identity and a feeling of belonging

There can be many advantages of becoming a member of a Child Club. All the children in my study seem to have profited at an individual level after joining the Clubs. The membership has an empowering function because it helps increase their self-esteem and resilience. One aspect is that when they meet children in the same situation, they see that they are not alone with their troubles. This creates a sense of solidarity and belonging.

> The best thing about the Club is that we don't have to solve our problems on our own. We come together and discuss them (B-C3a).

Several of the children emphasised that being in a group with other children facing the same problems was of great help to them. One girl said that this had changed her life. She used to think she was the only one in trouble. Not only did she learn that was not true, but she also got help from her friends to solve the problems. She stated: "When one member is in trouble, all the Club members think that the trouble is theirs" (C-C5). In Chobhar the children had visited different hotels and restaurants telling the owners that they should treat the children working there decently. The boy telling me this revealed how some of the employers had scolded them, but that the Club members were not afraid because they were together and because they knew that children also have rights (C-Int1).

Narayan (2005) claims that marginalised people depend on their *collective* capability to organise in order to overcome problems of marginalisation. As with her example of women joining women's solidarity groups and then realising that their husbands are mistreating them, this is often the case with child workers in Working Children's Clubs. Often they know nothing about their rights, and therefore do not

question the right their employers have to make them do work they do not want to do. In the Club they meet others like themselves, and together they build a collective identity. In Balaju one girl explained how she and her friends would gather in the Club and talk about abuse, for example how in one situation you should fight, and in another you should run away (B-C4). The fact that the children do not have to solve their problems individually but can do this in a group teaches them about the benefits of cooperation. According to Upadhaya from GEFONT, this is one of the greatest advantages of being part of a Child Club. In the Club they can think about their rights collectively. They can share their struggles, their problems, and their feelings with each other, and collectively search for a way out. The Club does not only have a positive impact on their thinking, their activities, and their organised lives, but also on their personal development (Interview Umesh Upadhaya). Realising that they are not alone, having the information to help them resolve their problems, and the possibility of consulting their friends, the members of the Clubs gain confidence and more self-esteem.

The children also gain confidence from the many competitions they organise. Sometimes these contests have a theme and are of a more serious character, such as a poetry competition on child rights, or a drawing competition about child abuse. But often they are simply for fun. The extra activities are examples of how one can learn through creative methods. To express their thoughts with the help of a drawing or to make a song about a special topic makes the children more aware. Many children have improved in their studies after joining the Child Club. The facilitators told me that the children often use their own schoolbooks when they participate in quizzes, and in this way learn even more. Several children expressed their sheer enjoyment when they talked about how they got to "practice their talents" in the Club. The chance to show that they were actually good at something, or to practice something they did not know before, gave them self-confidence.

The children were clearly proud of their certificates and prizes from different competitions, as they often showed them to me during the interviews. Both teachers and facilitators were clear about how the Club helped the children to develop. As the facilitator in Kalimati put it: "The most important achievement of the Club is the fact that they get experience, build up confidence, and develop personally" (K-Facilitator). Being good at something helps shape their identity.

> Before I joined the Club I didn't know who I was or what I could do. I did not know my identity. After being a Club member I started to think "what can I do, how can I show my talent?" (B-C8)

The extra activities organised by the Club are important to the children. Here they get inspiration, time to think about something else other than work, and a place to show their different talents and get feedback from their friends. As Diener and Biswas-Diener (2005) point out, subjective well-being and the feeling of being successful is likely to have a knock-on effect on other aspects of a person's life. Hence for children to practice their talent in a Child Club will most likely increase their psychological capacity to meet other challenges.

According to GEFONT, the Child Clubs are especially important for the domestic child workers that live with their employers. They easily become isolated because they live in their employer's house and often have little or no relations with others. Becoming a member of a Child Club gives them a break from their isolation, and sees a consequent rise in their confidence. The inferiority complex that troubles them in their isolation diminishes (Interview Umesh Upadhaya). However, the problem is that the child domestic workers living in total isolation do not go to school, and are therefore difficult to reach. Several of the children in my study who worked as domestic workers felt that people looked down on them. For them, the Club is important for their feeling of subjective well-being. As one girl in Kalimati put it: "When we are tired and we join the Club, we feel that the Club is in another world. We forget our problems" (K-C6). According to Diener and Biswas-Diener (2005) this is one aspect of psychological empowerment. In order to overcome discrimination in society, and to convince people in general that poor people also have the right to a life lived with dignity, the discriminated have to start believing in themselves.

The majority of the children tell their parents about the Club. However, some of the children said that their parents would not have let them participate if they knew they were members. Others explained that their parents thought they spent too much time in the Club. For these children the strong bond between the members in the Club, and the support they get from their friends is of special importance. In the Club they can feel included, be part of something bigger, and feel solidarity with other children in similar situations. One of the boys that had not told his parents about the Club explained how his friends would come and get him when they were having Club

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activities. "My friends visit my house, and I tell my parents that I am going out to play" (B-C2). It was obvious that he appreciated his friends' secrecy and efforts to keep him in the Club. The children have started to believe in each other in different way than they used to. The facilitator in Balaju was clear about the positive change. "Before the children only thought about themselves, but after joining the Club they also think about their friends." She explained how the children encourage and praise each other (B-Facilitator). Social belonging and relations of trust are important social capabilities. I would claim that the feeling of belonging is one of the most important outcomes of joining a Working Children's Club. The fact that the Club members share their feelings and problems make them better prepared to meet difficulties. As a boy in Chobhar stated: "In the Club we become close, like a relationship between the nail and the skin" (C-C8).

5.1.5 Making parents aware

One of the consequences of the children gaining new knowledge is that they teach their family what they have learnt. When I interviewed the parents, several told me that they knew about the Club program because their children would come home saying, "today we've done this, and next time we will do that." The children often get access to information that is not known by their parents. In Balaju one teacher explained the importance of informing children on various subjects such as sexual abuse. "When the children receive information, they pass it on to their parents" (B-T1). When the children become more confident, they also become more frank with their parents about their troubles. One girl in Balaju said that her mother did not use to care about her working all day. Now she sees the girl's difficult situation. The girl explained that this was a result of her ability to talk to her mother about her problems. She did not possess this ability before she joined the Club (B-C4).

The greatest changes have been in the parents' view on children's work and education. One example is a girl in Balaju whose parents used to think that she should only work. The girl is very talented, and after joining the Club and winning different prizes, her mother started to give importance to the girl's education. Now she even says, "you have to study more," the girl stated enthusiastically (B-C8). In Chobhar the parents only used to ask the children to go to school, but never gave them time to do

their homework. If the children failed the parents scolded them. After the children joined the Club, the parents learnt that the children also need time to study and to do other things (C-C4). Because of the children the parents have become aware of the importance of education, and the skills they can get from participation in extra activities. Many parents have also changed their view on what kind of work is acceptable for children to do. They have either minimised the children's work, or like in Chobhar where many children worked in the stone quarry, they have started to search for alternative jobs. Many have opened a shop instead or started with road cleaning. Several of the children that used to work in the stone quarry are now either working only at home or engaged in their parents' new job (C-Facilitator).

The children also have active strategies to make their parents aware of the working children's situation. They have organised parents' meetings with the help of teachers or the Child Club facilitator. One girl in Balaju explained how they discuss issues with the parents in these meetings, and how they try to make the parents see their problems (B-C8). In Kalimati one boy emphasised that since most of the children at his school are from working families, they are in danger of dropping out of school. The parents' meetings are important to make the parents understand the importance of giving their children education. Knowing that many working children never even start school, the boy's Club had been discussing whether they should try to do more to convince the parents of these children. However until now there has not been time to do this (K-C2b).

Another active strategy is to go on door-to-door visits. Sometimes they visit houses of non-Club members because they know that the children living there are being exploited, and they want to tell the parents that their children are not at the right age for working. However, members in need of help initiate most of the door-to-door visits. One example is a boy whose father was a drunkard. He brought this up at a meeting so all the members could discuss what ought to be done. After this about ten members went to his house and talked to his father and mother. His father promised that he should quit, but unfortunately he started again later (B-C7). This is a good example of how being a Child Club member can empower children. When the others see that one of their friends has problems and dares to do something about them, this may contribute to they themselves being able to start doing something about their own situation. One girl in Kalimati told me how they in the beginning wanted to seek out

employers like they seek out parents, but that they only had done this once because the employer was so angry and scolded them (K-C5).

The greatest frustration of many children is that their parents drink. Some mentioned that they did not get the chance to do their homework or get a good education because of this. The parents spend a lot of money on *raksi*, a Nepalese liqueur, which results in less money for food or stationery things for school, as well as the parents becoming less capable of working when they are drinking. Especially in Chobhar this issue has been discussed at many Club meetings. The facilitator told me how the children had decided to do a drama in order to get people's attention. They showed the play in the stone quarry area, and according to the facilitator most of the parents have changed. "They do not drink as much as they used to. I think they saw the play and felt guilty" (C-Facilitator).

> We try to convince the parents by telling them that if they don't send their children to school, and only send them to work in the stone quarry, their children will face the same problems as they faced. We tell them that it's better to invest their money in children's education instead of drinking alcohol (C-C2).

The Child Club has also been conducting home visits in order to convince the parents. They selected four houses, which they considered to be the worst cases because both the father and mother were drinking. There they told the parents that if they continued to drink they would get sick, and that they should think about their children's future if they continued like this. The children know that it takes time to convince the parents. Therefore they sometimes pass by the houses and encourage them if they are doing well. They also hope that other people will see this and learn from it (C-C4). In Balaju one girl told me how there has been a positive change in the local community after similar activities. Before their activities it was common that both fathers and mothers used to drink a lot. The fathers have not changed but the mothers have. According to the girl the mothers have started to spend more money on the education of their children (B-C8).

The Clubs employ different strategies to put children's rights on the agenda. In Chobhar the Child Club organised a speech competition near the temple. At events like these it is common to have a chief guest, and the children called the father of one of the boys to be the chief guest, and made him sit on the stage. While he was sitting there his son held a speech about all the problems he was facing, that his father

scolded him if he went outside, and that he did not give him permission to talk or take part in the Child Club's activities. The boy talked about his real problems in front of all the people, and in the end his father ran away from the stage. After this he did not scold him anymore (C-C1). Another example from Balaju is about a street play concerning trafficking. Prior to the play the children did home visits to relatives and people they knew, to tell them that they were going to put on a play in the school ground. After the play they asked their parents for feedback. They even asked some of them to come up in front and tell everyone what they thought about the drama. The play was written by one of the boys, and the story was his mother's life history. He had not got his mother's permission to use her story, but after watching the drama she was happy her son had decided to do it anyway. She even became so positive that she became a member of the school's Child Protection Committee (CPC) (B-Facilitator).

Another positive factor is that the parents also talk among themselves and bring other parents to watch with them. In this way the parents help to make the Clubs' issues known in the local community, as well as letting other parents see the value of being a Club member. One girl in Balaju explained how other parents, after having watched their programs, say that they will send their own children to the Club because they also want their children to be able to organise programs in the future (B-C7).

5.2 The Child Club and the local community

The Working Children's Clubs also do many activities designed to benefit the local community. They organise activities aimed directly at addressing problems in society, as well as acting as an awareness-raising group on community and environmental issues. According to the report *The Children's Clubs of Nepal: A Democratic Experiment* written by Rajbhandary et al. (1999), the Child Club members are able to improve their livelihoods and their communities because of the knowledge and skills they gain in the Club.

When I asked the children what they saw as the main problems for children in their local community, I got answers such as poverty, illiterate parents, parents' drinking problem, discrimination against girls, discrimination against the poor and landless, and conservative thinking. One girl in Balaju explained how the rich people

cheat poor people without education. They make the poor people sell their land, and when they sign the contract they give the poor less money than they had agreed upon (B-C1). Several of the children were concerned about the landless. The majority of my informants' families did not own any land. Many had migrated either due to the conflict or due to poverty in their home villages, and now had to pay a high rent for their houses. This has not only resulted in increased poverty but also discrimination against the landless and their children. But as one boy bravely stated: "The rich people have no right to behave this way towards the poor children" (C-C7). Another issue that causes problems for the children of Nepal is conservative thinking. When the parents are poor and uneducated they are often conservative, one boy explained. This leads to discrimination against girls. If their parents were educated, the children would not face problems like these (C-C8).

According to O'Kane (2002), the cause of Nepal's many child rights violations is discrimination. She blames the cultural beliefs and prejudices against girls, as well as against lower castes, tribal children, street children and children with disabilities. Even though laws exist mandating equality and justice for all, discrimination happens every day. Petesch et al. (2005) perceive empowerment as a product of interaction between agency and opportunity structure. People operate as agents within a broader social and political system, and in order for people to be empowered both the agency of subordinate groups and the conditions for this agency in society must be strengthened. The Child Clubs become a vital factor for shaping the opportunity structure with their efforts to improve their communities, and with awareness campaigns and other activities aiming at changing power relations in society.

5.2.1 Helping the local community directly

There are many ways of helping the local community directly. One common activity organised by many Child Clubs is to conduct cleaning campaigns. In Kalimati both children and the facilitator talked favourably about this. The facilitator explained how such campaigns bring about positive change as the local people become more positive towards the Club. "They even praise and encourage the children when they are cleaning the streets" (K-facilitator). The children would tell me about how the local

people had stopped throwing garbage in front of their school after their campaign. "We went with a banner in the streets around the school, and also cleaned the streets ourselves" one boy explained (K-C1). In organising this, the children are setting a good example and raising awareness about ways to improve the cleanliness and environment of the neighbourhood at the same time. However one teacher was not so positive. According to her, many people do not pay attention and continue to throw their garbage at the same place (K-T1).

In Balaju the river was flooded during the summer of 2008. It was a dangerous situation because the river came close to the school. The members in the Club decided quickly that they had to do something about this. After the meeting they went from door-to-door collecting sacs, which they filled with sand and put them on the riverbanks. According to their teacher the local people praised the children for their efforts to protect their school and local community (B-T1). However it is not always easy to help. The facilitator in Balaju told how she had once encouraged the children to do fundraising for their Club. The idea was that the children would collect plastic together, and thereby earn money for their activities. Their parents did not approve of this. They came to the facilitator and told her that they did not want their children to be like street children or rag pickers. Because of their parents' attitude the children did not want to participate. The facilitator therefore called a meeting with the parents where she told them the reason for the activity, that collecting plastic is not street children's work, and that they instead should be proud of their children being active and wanting to do something positive for the local community (B-facilitator).

5.2.2 Making the local community aware

Through street plays they aim to make the whole local community aware of the working children's situation, and that children should not be treated badly. They put on their plays where there are many people, for example at the school or college, at the marketplace, or near the roadside. On my question of whom they wanted to address with their activities, many answered that they wanted to address the local community people, their family and friends, as well as their employers and government people. Some were more specific though, as this girl in Balaju:

> The people we want to address are the poor people. I faced many problems, and I don't want other children to face the same problems. Children can work morning and evening, but should go to school during the day. Therefore are the poor people our audience (B-C4).

She had also thought about the possibility that the poor people are uneducated and therefore may not understand their drama. She thought that maybe they should start going from door-to-door after the play, so they can explain it in detail and convince them to do the right thing (B-C4). The children were not sure if the street plays had had any impact on the employers. According to another girl in Balaju the children got less punishment from their employers now. She did not know if the employers had actually been watching the plays, but she thought that the reason might be that they had heard of the drama (B-C6).

In Chobhar one father talked about how he had changed his view about what his daughter could participate in. His daughter is very talented, and she had been given the opportunity by CONCERN to go abroad to a big conference to talk about child rights as a representative for the working children in Nepal. Neighbours were criticising how he could let his daughter go abroad. They did not like it, he said, but he did not mind them talking because he wanted do this for his daughter (C-P1). This is an example of how the Child Clubs' efforts to change people's attitudes actually work. Theis and O'Kane (2005) emphasise how Child Clubs in Nepal have contributed to an increased acceptance of participation by girls. Over time, the number of girls in leadership positions in the Clubs has increased. This is also true for the Clubs in my study. There was no overrepresentation of boys in the Clubs, and girls often held positions as chairpersons and vice chairpersons.

The Clubs are involved in different matters in the local community. They often perform street plays during the time of festivals, so as many people as possible will watch them. One example is from Chobhar where they showed a play about the need to see a real doctor, not a witchdoctor, if you get sick. This was played during Dashain, one of the biggest festivals in Nepal, with almost the entire local community present (C-C4). During Tihar, another annual festival with the traditional use of firecrackers, the Child Club in Kalimati decided to do something about this dangerous tradition. They made a play about the damage these firecrackers can cause, and according to one girl the people actually minimised their use of firecrackers the next year (K-C5).

The Child Clubs' activities have also improved the relationship between the rich and the poor. In Chobhar one mother explained how the rich people used to treat them badly. They obstructed their work in the stone quarry in different ways, by telling them to get away from the area or not letting vehicles stop to buy the stones (C-P5). The rich children were also harassing the poor children saying that they were poor and no good. After CONCERN came to the area and the children of the poor started school, the situation changed. The poor children have joined the Working Children's Club, and have arranged different activities in the local area. One girl stated that she thought the situation has changed because the poor children have got more active (C-C4). The rich have seen what the working children are capable of, they have seen them winning prizes in competitions, and they have even seen them topping the result lists at school. All this has lead to a change of attitudes towards the poor in Chobhar. The rich now treat the poor on more equal terms, and some are even providing loans to poorer families (C-P5).

To my question of whether the children felt that their Club made a difference in the local community, many answered confidently. One boy in Chobhar proudly stated: "I do not only feel, we *have* made a difference in the local community. Just look at our drama, many stopped drinking" (C-C7). Even though I got some ambiguous answers about their influence from some of the children, most of them clearly felt that they made a difference. According to Diener and Biswas-Diener (2005) it is this *feeling* of power that really matters. It is this feeling that gives the children confidence and strength to pursue their goals, and in the end makes them feel more empowered.

5.2.3 Stronger together - cooperating with other local bodies

> Because of the poverty, the social, conservative thinking, and the caste hierarchy, all these feudal types of attitudes, abrupt elimination of child labour is impossible in our context. Therefore we will have to go gradually, step by step. We should work together with other partners in society, like teachers, judicial officials, social activists, and politicians, to create a higher level of awareness against the use of child labour (Interview Umesh Upadhaya).

This statement from the representative from GEFONT gives a good impression of how challenging it is to work on child labour issues in the Nepalese context. When

many government officials, teachers and judges keep domestic child workers themselves, there is a long way to go to fight this tradition. As Upadhaya states, one needs to reach out to as many groups as possible, and cooperation between the different groups is essential. O'Kane (2002) emphasises how Child Club members have seen the importance of cooperating with a range of different stakeholders in order to achieve their goals. In different parts of Nepal they have cooperated with their parents, teachers, community members, religious leaders, employers, rich people in their community, police, lawyers and judges. In the empowerment literature this is called "bonding" and "bridging".

According to Narayan (2005) there are different social capabilities that can enable us to gain social power. One of these is the capability to organise, and even more important the *collective* capability to organise. For an individual child to become a member of a Child Club, he or she is "bonding" social capital. In the beginning of this chapter I have given many examples of how the children gain individually from the close ties and high levels of trust that come with being part of a Club. However, in order to bring about structural change "bonding" social capital is not enough. Poor and weak groups in society, even with extensive ties among themselves, will have small chances of real influence since they are excluded from networks of powerful actors. This is why it is important that the Child Clubs are "bridging" social capital as well, and work with and through other civil society groups, organisations and institutions of the state, and the private sector.

The Clubs in my study all cooperate with a range of different actors in their local community. When asked who their Club usually cooperates with, the majority of the children mentioned schools. Most schools in Nepal have established different committees, such as the SMCs and CPCs, with the purpose of enabling people to have a say when it comes to the school's management or the protection of the students. For a long time these committees consisted of teachers, parents and other people of higher rank from the local community. Because of the growing number of Child Clubs it has become quite normal to invite some representatives from the Child Club to become members of these committees. There are lots of good examples of how this relationship has been beneficial for the Child Club and the school. Students as well as teachers told me how the Child Club members would help the teachers if they were to organise some program at school, in the same way teachers would support the Child Club if they needed help with their different activities. One example is from Balaju

where the cooperation with the SMC led to the organisation of a meeting with parents, teachers and students. At this meeting the Child Club made the teachers and the parents discuss the students' problems, how the teachers are teaching, and how they could deal with these issues in the future (B-C8). This is a good example of how being part of a Child Club makes the children bond their social capital, which in turn gives them enough confidence to speak up for themselves. Subsequently they "bridge" this social capital with other actors, thus making a difference for working children and other students struggling at school.

In Kalimati these committees have worked as a place for the Child Club to establish contacts with more powerful actors in society, thereby "bridging" their social capital. The schools often invite different people, like police officers and ward members, to become members of the CPC. One of the members in the CPC in Kalimati is a man working on health issues on the radio. Some of the Child Club members seized the opportunity and went to talk to him about what they could achieve if they got the chance to be on the radio talking about children's rights. The man took them seriously and brought their idea to his office. After some time he managed to organise a child led radio program, broadcast every Friday, and run by three of the Child Club members in Kalimati (K-C5).

Another example of cooperation between the Child Club and local bodies, is from Chobhar where the Club and the Forest Development Committee (FDC) joined forces. In one project, the Child Club and the FDC worked together to show the local community the disadvantages of cutting too much wood. The Child Club made a drama with the support from the FDC, and on the day of the performance the two groups planted trees together (C-C4). In Balaju the facilitator told me how the Child Club had invited the Ward Committee because they wanted to inform them that they were planning a rally. During the meeting the Ward Committee admitted that they knew very little about what the Child Club was actually doing. After having received information, they became very positive and said that if the children needed some help in the future they would be glad to help (B-Facilitator). According to the facilitator, having contacts in the Ward Committee can be helpful for the children. Many poor people in Nepal do not have papers saying that they are Nepalese citizens. When the children reach 16 years old they can obtain this – all they need is money to pay for it and permission from the Ward Committee.

Narayan (2005) also emphasises that one way of "bridging" social power is for poor people to work through representative organisations that have legitimacy. CONCERN is one of the leading organisations working for underprivileged children and working children in Nepal. It supports more than seventy Working Children's Clubs (Sainju 2006). There is no doubt that it is beneficial for a Club to be connected to CONCERN rather than trying to fight the unfair and exploitative system alone. I have illustrated the "bridging" of social capital with a pyramid:
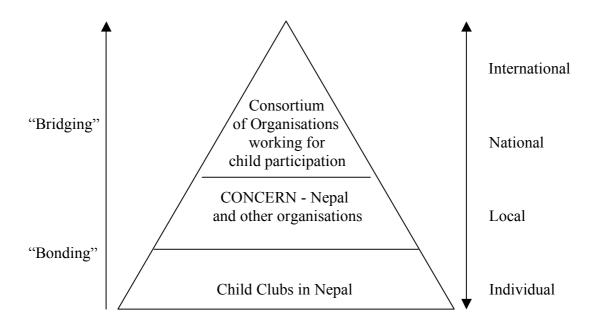
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"Bridging"                         ↑                                    ↑   International

                            Consortium
                           of Organisations
                            working for                                     National
                           child participation

                         CONCERN - Nepal
                        and other organisations                            Local

"Bonding"

                        Child Clubs in Nepal                               Individual
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Figure 1: How the Child Clubs are "bridging" their social capital

Just as the Child Clubs are affiliated with CONCERN and thereby gain in strength and number, so is CONCERN affiliated with the *Consortium of Organisations working for child participation*. The Consortium was established in 1999 when ten NGOs joined forces to promote children's citizenship rights and strengthen and extend the Child Club movement. To form network like this makes the organisations' voice more powerful, and they are more likely to be listened to. According to Dharel from CWISH, it has been positive for the organisations to work together in the Consortium. The aim has been to institutionalise children's participation in practice. The Consortium works at both the grassroots and the political level. Working at the latter means trying to make a national framework for the participation of children in government, the NGO sector and in development plans. It has also been working for the protection of children's rights in the new constitution (Interview Milan Dharel). In

2002 the Consortium was supporting 1,868 Child Clubs and 63,200 children (Theis and O'Kane 2005). Today the Consortium is a national network of 57 organisations.[6]

5.2.4 New perceptions of children

According to Theis and O'Kane (2005), many Child Clubs have transformed the power relations between children and adults. They have had far-reaching effects on the authoritarian structures that exist in Nepal, and on children's capacity to influence their own lives. The facilitator in Kalimati said this about the changing perception of children:

> Many parents come and watch their activities, and their reactions are positive. Because of this the mentality will change. Before, the parents used to think that my son and daughter are small and cannot do anything. Now they think that if we teach them, they are able to do things (K-Facilitator).

Both parents and children confirmed that in the beginning most parents were negative towards the Child Clubs. Many parents did not see the point of their children spending time there when the time could have been spent on working. But after seeing how their children benefited from joining a Club, many parents became positive. In particular, the Clubs' positive effect on the children's learning environment, and the progress made by the children in their studies, changed their attitudes. Other parents have started to believe in the Club after having been enlightened by the Club's awareness programs. One mother admitted that she used to be negative because she did not know anything about the Club (B-P1). After seeing what the Clubs have achieved at both the local and national level people's attitudes have changed. The fact that some of the children have even travelled abroad to attend international meetings is something that really makes the Club important for many parents. However, there are still many people who do not believe in the abilities and potential of children. The children are used to meeting obstacles in their work for children's rights, and one boy in Kalimati clearly had this in mind as he gave me his definition of participation. For him participation is when children are given the chance to take part in society without people saying, "these are children, they cannot do anything" (K-C2b).

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[6] http://www.consortium.org.np/category/2/about-us.html

In one area in Chobhar the roles had completely changed. One of the Child Club members told me how he had become the spokesman for his community. The boy's family lives in an area of illegal houses. The majority of the people living there are poor and illiterate. When he started in the Club he was shy and could not express himself, but now he is confident and everyone listens to him. "Even the elder people listen to me, and follow my words" (C-Int2). Theis and O'Kane (2005) claim that Child Clubs create a culture of listening to children in Nepal. The participation of young boys and girls can be seen as a democratising force that contributes to greater equality and tolerance in communities. As I have discussed earlier, culturally, children in Nepal are supposed to obey their elders and are not encouraged to express their views. However, after being trained, gaining new skills, and having received information about a just society and children's rights, Child Club members often become a resource for their family or local community. Gradually the status of children is changing. This can be seen in light of Bhattarai's (2006) focus on education, and how it can play a vital role for the participation of Nepalese children, as it gives them knowledge and skills that their parents do not possess.

According to Theis and O'Kane (2005) many adults have accepted children and young people's participation and involvement in society for example in local governance. The strongest indicator of this is the high degree of participation by children. This clearly shows that most parents support their children in spending time in the Club. In my study only a couple of children were hiding their membership from their parents. The majority of the parents knew about the Club, and many had watched some of their activities. One example is a mother in Kalimati who explained how neighbours have come to her after watching the Club's activities telling her that her son will be a good person in the future. The mother was proud of her son, and saw the Club as very positive (K-P1). In their study of the Nepalese Child Club movement, Rajbhandary et al. (1999) claim that families are gradually coming to recognise children as capable of being more fully participating members of their communities. In Chobhar both parents and the facilitator of the Club confirmed how people have started to believe in the children after seeing the things they have accomplished.

According to the study by Hart and Rajbhandary (2003), the children receive more encouragement and recognition as decision-makers and social actors in the Club than they do anywhere else. To be recognised as a social actor increases the children's

capacity to understand the social environment around them, and to act upon it. Diversi (1998, in O'Kane 2002) emphasises how the empowerment and mobilisation of marginalised children can challenge the dominant narratives about these children, and transform their personal troubles into public issues. This happens because the children themselves are playing an active role in sharing their narratives about their lived experience. One of the consequences of this has been that adults have started to see children in another light. One girl says it quite clearly: "The most important achievement of our Club is that our parents listen and understand more than before, and they give us more love and care" (C-C2). The Child Clubs are challenging adults to accept children as social actors. The children have gained recognition for their contributions, and more and more adults have accepted their responsibilities for children's rights (Theis and O'Kane 2005). Nevertheless, as Sharma pointed out during the interview, unfortunately there are not Child Clubs everywhere in Nepal. Even though many Child Clubs have a big impact on the children, their families, and the local community, the Child Club members only cover a small percentage of Nepal's huge child population (Interview Shiva Sharma).

5.3 The Child Club, national politics and international linkages

When asked who is responsible for the main problems of children in their community, many children answered the government. As one of the girls in Balaju said: "Those people at the high level don't think about poor people" (B-C8). She was aware that illiterate parents are part of the problem, because due their lack of education they do not see the point of sending their children to school. However the government is also greatly responsible and should spend more time visiting rural areas and getting to know the problems of the poor. By doing this she was sure the government would focus more on education, and raise people's awareness about the importance of sending their children to school (B-C8).

With the Child Club movement growing in strength and numbers, it has become common to organise interaction programmes between the Clubs. According to Feinstein and O'Kane (2008) these interaction programmes are opportunities to undertake joint advocacy at the national level. Meeting other active Child Club members gives the children the feeling of being part of something bigger, and that

together they can achieve great things. As one of the teachers expressed it: "They might learn that due to unity they can do other big, positive activities" (C-T1b).

Another factor that has contributed to the Child Clubs' increasing attempt at influencing national politics can be seen as a consequence of a shift in international attitudes towards children's participation. It is not only the Child Club movement that has grown, many organisations working with child rights and child participation have become more powerful over the decades. Over the last ten-fifteen years a number of national and international organisations have been working to involve children in consultations and workshops at the local, national and regional level. In Nepal the organisations have benefited from coordinating their fight for children's rights through the Consortium. With the help of more powerful actors it has become easier for the Child Clubs to reach up to the national level. Among other things this has led to an increased opportunity for children and young people to participate in national and international meetings (O'Kane 2002).

5.3.1 Making the people of Nepal aware

For many Child Clubs the aim is no longer only to shape their own community, but to contribute to changing Nepalese society in its entirety. In Balaju the facilitator explained how the Clubs participate in different rallies organised by CONCERN. For example, in April 2008 they held a rally where they demanded "education for all". CONCERN had gathered many children from different parts of Kathmandu, and there were about 250 children from Balaju. The rally ended up at the Ministry of Education where they got the chance to talk to the Minister of Education (B-Facilitator). Holding such a rally sent a message to the government and the Minister, as well as making people in Kathmandu more aware of the importance of education as the children passed by with their slogans and banners. One teacher told me how the children are trying to fight the government's policy of banning child labour. They have organised different rallies where they are protesting. With their banners they are trying to tell the government that they both need the opportunity to work and to be protected from exploitative employers (B-T1).

The organisations supporting the Child Clubs are now well established in Nepalese society, and this has positive consequences for the Child Clubs' awareness

work. As already mentioned, some of the Child Club members in Kalimati are running a radio programme. This is a good example of how they are able to reach more people than before. Some of the big activities organised by CONCERN over the last few years have also been filmed and broadcast on regional and national television. The local organisations supporting the Child Clubs often cooperate with other organisations around the world. For example, a Brazilian organisation came to Kalimati to teach the children how to organise a play and make advertisements. This was filmed and shown on the news. When I asked the children who they want to address with their activities a common answer was "first our parents, then the government, and then the employers who hire children." Knowing that their activities had been shown on television, the children hoped that the government officials had watched them in the programme (K-C6). In Balaju the children also saw it as positive when the newspapers covered their activities or participation at meetings. One boy participating at a meeting concerning the realities and challenges of the immediate eradication of child labour, mentioned the fact that there were journalists present as important. He believed that they could spread important information and thereby help the working children's situation (B-Nat2).

In May 2008 a couple of my informants were guests at a show hosted by the BBC World Trust. There were about hundred children present to talk about what the role of children should be in the New Nepal.[7] There were people there from different government bodies and other organisations listening to the children. This was shown on national television and radio, and had a great potential for spreading the children's thoughts to people that normally do not socialise with working children. One of the participants was a bit sceptical as to whether the politicians really would listen to the children and do something about their problems. However, he was very positive regarding the effect such a programme could have on the people of Nepal, in raising their awareness about the politics concerning children (B-Nat1). According to Theis and O'Kane (2005), Child Club members have highlighted a range of children's rights violations through their awareness work, and made media, government officials and institutions take notice of their views. Being able to change the attitude of dominant groups, they are in the process of influencing the opportunity structure of their

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[7] "New Nepal" refers to the period after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2006.

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society, and thereby the context for their empowerment and their own possibility for agency.

5.3.2 Influencing national politics

In November 2004, CONCERN together with other organisations collaboratively launched the *National Convergence of Working Children* in Kathmandu. The Convergence was the first of its kind in the history of the child rights movement in Nepal. The idea was to create a *National Forum of Working Children,* which could work on the issues affecting them at the national level. The organisers wanted to give working children the opportunity to have an influence on national-level plans and policy reforms, as they believed that the Working Children's Clubs were scattered at the local level, and therefore lacked the means to reach and influence the national level. Mr. Urba Datta Panta, the State Minister for Labour and Transport was present, as well as forty children from fourteen different working sectors representing their Child Club or organisation (CONCERN 2004).

At the meeting the children discussed several issues related to child work. They specifically discussed how the laws in Nepal worked, how the laws were implemented, and which laws were needed. One of my informants present at the Convergence explained how the ILO holds that child work is bad while many of the children want to work. "Our demand was: we need our work, but it must not be harmful" (K-Int1). The Convergence actually influenced the national politics, with the children managing to change a law:

> We changed a law that was made in 2046[8] about banning child labour in Nepal. We were against that law, and thought that children should be able to work but without exploitation. We, the participants at the Convergence, suggested some changes for the law. We said that the working children shouldn't stop working; if they stop then there would be trouble. After the meeting the government changed some of the words in the law according to our suggestion. (C-Int2).

After having discussed which rules and regulations were good and bad for working children, they came up with some suggestions for the government. For example, they emphasised that if children below fourteen years were denied work, good jobs must

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[8] Nepali Calendar 2046 = 1989/1990

be given to their parents, and they also did not want any restrictions on the sectors children could work in. "If we are not able to work in different sectors, we will have to go to the street" was the argument (K-Int2). After the meeting they issued a press release where they conveyed their opinions. This is a great example of the empowering effect of Child Clubs.

Just as participation in activities in the local community gives many Child Club members more confidence and self-esteem, so does participation in activities aimed at the national level. Learning to handle politicians, who might be of a different caste, or to talk in front of powerful people in their own country or abroad, gives the children a feeling of mastery that is quite extraordinary. In my study I have several examples of children that started in the Club not knowing their rights, or how to express their views, and who have ended up speaking freely to politicians or other powerful people. There is a self-reinforcing loop between empowered feelings and successful action. The children that have participated on television or in important conferences feel successful. The feeling of success and of being someone important creates positive emotions, which makes it more likely that they will achieve even more in the future.

After the Convergence, the National Forum of Working Children was officially established. The meeting led to the children knowing more about the situation of other working children, as they were able to express their views, and talk to working children from different working sectors and from other parts of the country. This made the working children movement in Nepal stronger. Since its establishment, the National Forum has organised regional and district gatherings of working children. They aim at organising the working children in networks, and want to strengthen their collective voice at all levels. They act as an advocate for the Nepalese working children, and if they find out about children being badly treated, they try to make press conferences or press releases about this. Regional branches of the Forum have also been established.

Another example of victory for the Child Club movement came in August 2001, when the Supreme Court of Nepal granted Child Clubs the right to register. After a long struggle for the recognition of Child Clubs, the Supreme Court set a historic precedent when they based their decision on the right to association, namely Article 15 of the CRC. This has meant a lot both nationally and globally for the children's rights movement (O'Kane 2003). Obtaining this right can be seen as a way

the Child Clubs are changing the opportunity structure of the society. The Nepalese authorities are broadening the Clubs' opportunities for real participation by granting them the right to association. Despite this, many of my informants complained that it is still too difficult for them to register their Clubs. This illustrates the point that Nepal is experiencing positive developments when it comes to children's participation at the national level, however too many of these changes remain in written form only.

All of the factors listed above have led to it being easier to participate at the national level for children in Nepal. Theis and O'Kane (2005) emphasise how Save the Children together with the government of Nepal have supported workshops and other inclusive processes to give children the opportunity to contribute to Nepal's five-year plans and the country's CRC report. My informants were positive towards the new government. "In New Nepal the government involves children", one of the boys from CONCERN's Youth Forum stated. He explained that the government had invited children to participate in making laws and the new constitution (K-Int1). One can always debate how much influence the children actually have. Being present or getting the chance to express their views does not necessarily mean that the politicians take them seriously or consider their views. In his essay, *Children's participation: from tokenism to citizenship,* Hart (1992) discusses this. According to him, adults have a tendency to underestimate the competence of children. This can lead to adults believing they are letting children participate, when in fact they are using them in a tokenistic way in order to promote their own agenda, which has a patronising effect. There is a big difference between the politicians inviting children to discuss the new constitution merely as a way of feigning interest in their views, and inviting them because they are genuinely interested in their views and want to consider them before they make any decisions.

However, after speaking to Khanal at the NPC I got the impression that many politicians actually have noticed the important role Child Clubs play in Nepalese society. He thought the Clubs have been instrumental in the development and protection of children in Nepal, and saw them as an important resource one should make more use of in the future (Interview Sanjay Khanal). Being present both at the local and national level, the Child Clubs are being noticed. At the national level this does not necessarily lead to major changes right away, but in the longer run the children's presence may contribute to change. The fact that they have been present in the process towards building a new constitution is a big step for the Child Club

movement, and a step in the direction of a more inclusive and democratic Nepal, considering that about half of the population is less than eighteen years old.

5.3.3 To cooperate internationally – exchange of ideas and a collective voice

Since the 1980s, the Working Children's Movement has gradually come into being. The first worldwide meeting in Kundapur in India marked the start of the international movement, and since 1996 several regional and international meetings have been held (Liebel et al. 2001). In August 2005 the National Forum of Working Children in Nepal hosted a big meeting called the *South and Central Asia Convergence of Working Children*. The Nepalese children brought together forty children representing national, regional and local Working Children's Organisations in South and Central Asia. The children came from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Tajikistan in addition to Nepal. Unfortunately children from Afghanistan and Mongolia were not able to come. The most important outcome of the meeting was that the Asian movement was strengthened. Sri Lanka and Tajikistan joined the Working Children's Movement in the region, making it even stronger. After three days of discussions and interactions, the children had identified common challenges and opportunities, defined their views on child work, and exchanged ideas on the fight for their rights. On the final day, a *Secretariat for the South and Central Asia Working Children's Movement* was established at the request of the children. Two representatives were chosen from each country, and Save the Children Sweden decided to support the Secretariat by establishing its office in Nepal (Save the Children 2006).

The feelings of solidarity and belonging which empower the children who become members of Child Clubs, is also important for the international movement. Meeting children from different countries and listening to what they have achieved and what they are struggling with, gives them a sense of solidarity across the world. Knowing that children in another country have achieved something that seems impossible in their own country can give the children the strength they need to continue their fight. Empowerment is much about having the opportunity to choose. When working children learn from the experiences of their friends in neighbouring countries, they become aware of their political power and influence. The children realise that they have options, including when it comes to national politics. One

example is the quote in the beginning of this chapter from one of the boys who was present at the Convergence. He said that the meeting had made him aware of his rights, and that the children have the possibility to "wake" the government if they are not following their own rules and regulations.

One of the outcomes of the South and Central Asia Convergence of Working Children was that the children from the other countries gained insight into Nepal's National Forum of Working Children, and decided to make Forums in their own countries when they returned. According to one of my informants, these actions, and the chance to network with other children from neighbouring countries, were the most important achievements of the meeting (C-Int2). The report after the meeting also called attention to how meetings like this give children new enthusiasm to form their own organisations. They gain from listening to their peers and mentors from different countries and working sectors talk about how Child Clubs and children's organisations can bring about change (Save the Children 2006). This is also an example of what Narayan (2005) calls collective capability, and how the different national Working Children's Movements are "bridging" their social capital. Asking one of my informants if he thinks international meetings help the working children of the world, the answer was clear: "Obviously meetings like this help the working children's situation. When we meet children from different countries our voice will raise collectively" (K-Int2). The Secretariat for the South and Central Asia Working Children's Movement is a good example of this.

Going abroad to participate in an international workshop has given some of the children status as an important person in their local community. In Chobhar, several of the children had been chosen to represent the working children of Nepal in conferences in Brazil, Pakistan, Italy and the US. The boy who had become a spokesman for his community is a good example. He had been representing Nepal in the South and Central Asia Convergence of Working Children (C-Int2). It is clear that to be given such a chance gives the children more power in society as they achieve a higher status among both children and adults.

The boy who went to the meetings in Pakistan and the US explained how he was selected to go to the meetings. First they had a workshop in Nepal where they talked about violence against children in the Nepalese context, followed by one speech and one writing competition. He was at the workshop as a representative for his Child Club. At the workshop he won first place in the speech competition and

second place in the writing competition, and was then chosen as Nepal's representative. When I asked him if he got any training beforehand, he said no, and explained that he had obtained his skills in talking and writing from the activities in the Child Club (C-Int1). According to Narayan (2005) one of the political capabilities that can enable and enhance political empowerment is the capacity to represent yourself or others. This is yet another example of how the activities in the Child Clubs lead to the political empowerment of Nepal's children. Later during the interview he exclaimed: "violence against children can only be solved by the children's voice because if only adults are talking it will never be effective" (C-Int1). Such an utterance in front of two adults (my translator and me) is also a good example of the boy having faith in himself. If he had not been part of the Child Club and become empowered through new skills, training and a feeling of solidarity and belonging with the other working children, I doubt that he would be able to make such a statement.

5.4 Concluding remarks

Participating in a Working Children's Club leads to benefits in several important aspects of the children's lives. At the individual level the children develop higher self-esteem, meet new friends, and get the chance just to play and not think about either school or work. Through games and meetings they gain new knowledge, which they can also teach to their parents and friends. They learn organisational skills such as decision-making, problem-solving and collective action, which they continue to use in their daily lives after having left the Club. These changes fit in with Friedman's (1992) conceptualisation of empowerment as psychological, social or political.

My empirical findings are also transferable to Kabeer's (2001) levels of empowerment. The fact that the children experience changes in their identity and selfhood can be connected with empowerment at the immediate level. The children felt that the Club had a positive impact on their relationship with their family, at school and in their work place. This can be seen as empowerment at the intermediate level. Empowerment at a "deeper" level concerning the structural relations, and distribution of power in society, is harder to point out. However, one can claim that gradually being able to change the perception of children is the start of this process of empowerment.

I would claim that one of the greater effects of the Clubs is that they foster a way of thinking that the children carry with them into their adult lives. Having more active citizens that know their rights, and are not afraid to claim them, is very positive for Nepalese society and democracy. In many ways one can describe the Child Clubs as "democratic training grounds". As a result the children's agency to make choices in matters that affect them, increases.

CHAPTER 6.0 CONCLUSION

> We cannot always build the ideal future for our children, but we can build our children for the future (F.D. Roosewelt).

This thesis has tried to capture how being part of a Working Children's Club changes the lives of children, and the people around them. I have applied the empowerment approach as the theoretical framework, in order to map out and analyse how the Clubs affect the children socially, politically and psychologically, and the impact of this on various aspects of the children's lives, as well as their personal development.

6.1 Children as Agents of Change

The question of whether the Child Clubs can empower the children in a way that will lead to broader changes in the Nepalese society is the core motivation of this thesis. Membership in a Child Club can change the children's lives in a number of ways. Individually, they gain confidence and more self-esteem. The Club's different recreational activities often result in the children experiencing new aspects of themselves. By "discovering their talents" they are seen by others in a different light. All this leads to the children starting to believe in themselves in other ways than they did previously. To master something often has extended effects on other aspects of their lives. They are *empowered psychologically*, which in turn broadens the possibilities of other types of empowerment. The solidarity, faith in each other, and sense of identity and belonging which the Clubs give the children, are important social capabilities that leads to *social empowerment*, and help them meet and challenge difficult situations. Through activities and interaction programmes, they get appropriate information, which enhance their knowledge and skills. There is generally a growing understanding that children do not suddenly become "responsible" citizens overnight when they reach adulthood. Looking at citizenship as participation in society, one can claim that children in fact already *are* small citizens. The confidence and competence they need to become an active citizen is something that is acquired through time and practice. In the Clubs the children discover that they have a choice

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when it comes to their own lives. They learn good habits, and how to take care of each other and their surroundings. They become *politically empowered*, as they learn the rules of democracy, gain experience from forming their own organisation, and get used to representing themselves and others.

The Clubs have a great impact on the children's *working situation*. In the Club they get to know about their rights, and that the employers are not allowed to exploit children. They know that they can bring children to the emergency shelter if they are being badly abused by their employer. At some occasions staff from CONCERN have visited the employers and told them what work is acceptable for children and what is not acceptable. By talking to other members in the Club, the children learn from each other's experiences, both in dealing with employers and how to work more effectively. They get to know of other types of jobs, which make them aware of the possibility of changing their job. From the Club activities they gain new skills, such as how to defend and represent themselves. This has made them capable of bargaining with their employers or other people in the work place. Other results have been that they are trying to solve the problems occurring at work, instead of leaving the job. The feeling of solidarity they get in the Club is important for the children's subjective well-being. Many felt that people looked down upon them. Knowing their rights as working children, and that they are many in the same situation, made it easier.

Children in Nepal work for many reasons. Two of the explanations given in this case study are that work is part of their socialisation process, and their way of gaining access to school. As part of large, and often poor, families the children have far more responsibilities than children in countries in the global north. This can be both positive and negative. Many work with their families or relatives, and thus get working experience in a safe environment. In global northern societies children are protected from having to work and childhood is merely play and leisure. Some would however claim that attending school is an obligation for children, as work is for adults. There is a question though whether some actors in the global north have gone too far, in trying to protect the children against everything, even life skills that might be of value to them. A childhood without some kind of work and responsibilities may lead to a lack of identity, belonging and meaning. My study shows that the children often were proud to contribute to the welfare of their family. Many were also proud of the fact that they had been able to start school *because* of the money they earned

while working. This gave them a feeling of well-being, which can empower them psychologically.

The fact that many children work in order to receive education is rather intriguing, especially as the common position in the global north is that all children should be in school and not work for a living. If the only way for many Nepalese children to go to school is in fact to work, is it not then time to reconsider this position? Work does not necessarily hamper studies, as the example of the working children topping the school results illustrates. However, this example should not obscure the fact that lots of children have concentration problems due to too much and too heavy work. As with so many other issues in the world, child work can be both beneficial and detrimental. There is a limit to everything, and maybe the best childhood is one with school and play, as well as responsibilities.

My study shows that a Club membership can have great impact on the children's *education*. Several of the children are from very poor families, and occasionally have to drop out of school because of the need to make more money. Starting in the Clubs they get to know about CONCERN, which supports the poorest children paying their school fee or stationery things, and thus ensure a more stable education. Because of the training in the Club the children become more confident, and as a result dare to ask questions in class, or even oppose the teachers if they are not treating the children well. Several of the children are now doing better at school. The teachers mentioned more energetic students, and that the Club members are of great help to them, creating a good environment at school, and helping them during class or arrangements such as parents' day. The children are proud of what they are achieving at school, and that they, with their Club money, even are able to admit other poor children into school.

The Clubs also seem to have a positive impact on the children's *family life*. Many parents are proud of what their children have achieved in the Club. The confidence and talking skills the children gain from Club activity, have led to many becoming more frank with their parents. This leads to a better relationship where the children are more open about their problems, and the parents more attentive. The children's relationship with their brothers and sisters has also improved. When they used to fight, they now sit down and talk. Bhattarai (2006) argues that even though the Nepalese culture has a hierarchical value system and a focus on filial duty, the fact that parents are susceptible to learning from their children, enhance the possibility of

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meaningful child participation. This is consistent with my findings. The children possess valuable information gained from school and Club activities. Sharing this information with their families has in many cases led to positive changes for them all. Some of the parents have even become involved in the CPC after seeing the children's involvement in the Club. My study shows that many parents have changed their view on children's work and education. While they used to think that the children should go to school until they had learnt how to read, they now see the value of studying more. Many have started to search for alternative jobs, after learning about what kind of work that can be detrimental for children. In the cases where a Club member is having problems at home, the other children have reacted collectively, by for example going as a group to the house telling the parents that they must stop beating their children or spend all their money on alcohol. According to the children, the fact that they knew about their rights made them strong enough to oppose elders in society.

With their different awareness programs they contribute to changes in their *local community*. As a result of their street plays, more people have heard about child rights. Conservative thinking that discriminates girls is being challenged, as many girls have taken leadership positions in the Clubs. The children are "bridging" their social capital with other organisations in civil society, making it more likely that they will succeed. The perception of children is changing as people see what the Child Club is capable of. Instead of looking down upon working children, they are beginning to be seen as resources and role models. The Clubs' activities and fund-raising at private schools may lead to a broader understanding of the working children's challenges in the more affluent part of the population. One of the greatest advantages of Child Club activity is that the children bring with them good values and a positive view on child participation into the adult world. The children's political engagement can have long-term consequences, as some active members have continued to have active roles in civil society, for example in Youth Forums, Ward Committees, or Trade Unions, when they have reached adulthood. In a rather new democracy like Nepal's, the Child Clubs should be encouraged as they give the children opportunities to gradually participate in politics.

Even though there is a long way until the politicians take the children seriously, it is a start that they invite them to join the discussions about the new constitution. The fact that the Clubs cooperate with a range of different actors in civil

society might lead to children's participation gradually being incorporated into agency thinking and approaches. The last years' National, and South and Central Asia, Convergences of Working Children, have given children the opportunity to raise their voices at the *national level*. With working children participating at international meetings, and expressing their thoughts, the international discourse on child work may even be challenged. This will bring us one step closer to a more sound and sustainable approach to child work. As they grow up, the children may even become politicians themselves and be able to implement child rights directly through politics.

This case study provides specific and detailed information on how being part of a Working Children's Club has contributed to positive changes for my informants. As the case is context-specific it cannot be used to predict the impacts that other Child Cubs might have in other parts of the world. Nevertheless, giving marginalised groups the opportunity to have a say in matters that concern them has proved empowering in a number of other cases. There are millions of working children in the world that are living under similar conditions as the informants in this case study. Flyvbjerg (2006) claims that "the force of example" is underestimated as a source of scientific development. Combining general knowledge with the specific knowledge from this case study can thus contribute to an increased understanding of how children's participation can bring about positive change.

This thesis relates to the bigger issue of how marginalised children can be empowered through meaningful participation. The focus on people's empowerment has gradually come into the centre of the development discourse. However, relatively little attention has been given the psychological aspect of empowerment. According to Diener and Biswas-Diener (2005), external conditions are not sufficient for real empowerment. In order to become truly empowered, people first need to believe in themselves. My findings also indicate that it is of utmost importance to focus more on the psycological aspect. It is not the objective power, but the *feeling* of power that gives the children the strength and confidence they need to cope with their challenges and pursue their goals. Further research on the empowerment of children, as well as other marginalised groups, should therefore take this into consideration.

I would claim that the Clubs are of specific importance to the children in my study given the Nepalese context. First, because of the hierarchical culture and the many social and cultural expectations of the child, which makes child participation challenging. Second, because of the ten-year-old people's war which ended in 2006.

The majority of the children in my study have no memory of the time before the war. For them the Club is a haven, a place where the future is bright despite a difficult life in poverty. The Nepalese context may limit the degree of empowerment the children obtain in the Clubs. However, the fact that the Clubs continue to create changes for children every day indicates that the Nepalese society is about to change. According to the studies of Theis and O'Kane (2005) and Rajbhandary et al. (1999), the Clubs are gradually creating a culture for recognising children as social actors. This is also consistent with my findings.

One can draw many parallels between the debate on gender and the debate on children. The idea that men and women are equal and should have equal rights to participate in society is, for most of us, obvious. However, not so long ago this was a radical idea. Gender issues are now taken into account in almost every field of development work. It is no longer only the feminist organisations that have women on the agenda. Projects focusing on women can have major impacts on society. However, children's issues are still reserved for child-focused organisations. Whether in the future children's voices will be given the space they deserve, remains to be seen.

The findings of this case study have shown how empowering a membership in a Working Children's Club can be. By participating in the Club, the children are bringing about positive changes for themselves, their families, their local community and nationally. In the Clubs they develop their *individual* as well as their *collective agency.* They gain control over their own lives, and can aspire to a better future. The Child Clubs' democratic structure and political empowerment of its members can be seen as a torch in building a New Nepal on inclusive values and democratic practices. The Child Club members are about to become responsible and active citizens, demonstrating that children are often able to decide what is relevant for them and their situation. Given the opportunity, children are political and social actors with their own important perspectives and opinions. Therefore efforts should be made to give them the space and opportunity they need to influence the world they are a part of, and their own future.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1: Interview Overview

Table 2: Interview Overview

Informant	Type of informant	Location	Date
B-C1	Child	Balaju	21.10.08
B-C2	Child	Balaju	21.10.08
B-C3a[9]	Child	Balaju	21.10.08
B-C3b	Child	Balaju	21.10.08
B-C4	Child	Balaju	22.10.08
B-C5	Child	Balaju	24.10.08
B-C6	Child	Balaju	26.10.08
B-C7	Child	Balaju	03.11.08
B-C8	Child	Balaju	04.11.08
B-Nat1	Participant national meeting	Balaju	09.12.08
B-Nat2	Participant national meeting	Balaju	09.12.08
B-P1	Parent	Balaju	24.10.08
B-Employer	Facilitator	Balaju	04.11.08
B-Facilitator	Employer	Balaju	05.11.08
B-T1	Teacher	Balaju	06.11.08
B-T2	Teacher	Balaju	07.11.08
C-C1	Child	Chobhar	16.10.08
C-C2	Child	Chobhar	16.10.08
C-C3	Child	Chobhar	10.11.08
C-C4	Child	Chobhar	10.11.08
C-C5	Child	Chobhar	13.11.08
C-C6	Child	Chobhar	13.11.08
C-C7	Child	Chobhar	22.11.08
C-C8	Child	Chobhar	22.11.08
C-Int1	Participant international meeting	Chobhar	23.11.08
C-Int2	Participant international meeting	Chobhar	08.12.08
C-P1	Parent	Chobhar	12.11.08
C-P2	Parent	Chobhar	11.11.08
C-P3	Parent	Chobhar	22.11.08
C-P4	Parent	Chobhar	24.11.08
C-P5	Parent	Chobhar	24.11.08
C-Facilitator	Facilitator	Chobhar	12.11.08
C-T1a	Teacher	Chobhar	01.12.08
C-T1b	Teacher	Chobhar	01.12.08
C-T2	Teacher	Chobhar	02.12.08
K-C1	Child	Kalimati	02.12.08

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[9] Two times I ended up interviewing two people at the same time. I have solved this by writing "a" and "b" after the letter code, as both of them did not answer all the questions.

K-C2	Child	Kalimati	03.12.08
K-C3	Child	Kalimati	04.12.08
K-C4	Child	Kalimati	05.12.08
K-C5	Child	Kalimati	09.12.08
K-C6	Child	Kalimati	11.12.08
K-Int1	Participant international meeting	Kalimati	29.09.08
K-Int2	Participant international meeting	Kalimati	04.12.08
K-P1	Parent	Kalimati	05.12.08
K-P2	Parent	Kalimati	08.12.08
K-P3	Parent	Kalimati	06.12.08
K-Employer	Employer	Kalimati	07.12.08
K-Facilitator	Facilitator	Kalimati	04.12.08
K-T1	Teacher	Kalimati	06.12.08
K-T2	Teacher	Kalimati	07.12.08
Milan Dharel	CWISH	Kathmandu	22.09.09
Uddhav Poudyal	ILO	Kathmandu	03.11.08
Shiva Sharma	Researcher (NLA)	Kathmandu	09.11.08
Umesh Upadhaya	GEFONT	Kathmandu	24.11.08
Sanjay Khanal	Politician (NPC)	Kathmandu	10.12.08

APPENDIX 2: Interview guide 1

Interview guide for children

Work
- Could you tell me a little about your work? What kind of work do you do? What is a typical day for you, could you describe it for me?

1) Why are you working?
2) Who decided that you should start working?
3) How did you get your job?
4) How often do you work? Each day? How many hours do you work each day?

5) At what age did you start to work?
6) Have you been working ever since?
7) Have you had many different jobs?
- If yes, which one did you like the most? And why?
- And which one was the worst? And why?

8) How would you characterise a good employer?
9) How would you characterise a bad employer?
10) And how would you describe your own employer(s)?

11) How much do you earn a typical day/week?
- What about a good day/week?
- And a bad day/week?
12) Do you also get paid in other things?
- Do you get paid each day, each week, pr unit?
13) What do you do with the money that you earn?

14) Do you like to work?
15) What is the best thing about working?
16) What is the worst thing about working?
17) If you could change your job, would you do that?
- If yes, what would you rather work with?
-If no, why not?
18) Is it ok that children are working?
19) What kind of work is ok for children?

Being a part of a Child Club
- Could you tell me a little about your Child Club?
- What does participation mean to you?

1) How did you get to know the Club?
2) Why did you join the Club?
3) For how long have you been part of the Club?

4) What is the best thing about the Club?
5) What is the worst thing about the Club?/Does the Club have any weaknesses?

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6) What are the main problems of children in your community?
7) Why do children face these problems?
8) Who is responsible?
9) Who can help to solve these problems?

10) Which issues/matters are the most important for your Child Club?
11) What kind of activities have you organised to do something about this issues?
12) Where do you do your activities?
13) Who do you want to address with your activities?/Who is the audience?
14) What is the most important achievement of your Club?

15) Do you feel that your Club makes a difference in the local community? How?
16) Does your Club cooperate with any other groups in the local community, like School Management Committee, Village Development Committee, Ward Committee, Women's Group or Youth Group?
17) Has the Club faced any challenges from adults or people in the local community?
18) In what ways do you think the Child Club can help the working children's situation?

19) How often does your Child Club meet?
20) How do you decide which issues you will focus on?
21) How do you recruit new members to your Club?
22) What kind of support do you need to be able to organise your activities?
23) What kind of help do you get from the facilitator or other adults?
- Has the help been sufficient?

24) What is the best thing about adults?
25) What is the worst thing about adults?
26) Do you feel that the adults take you seriously?
27) Do your parents know that you are a member of the Child Club?
- If no, why haven't you told them?
28) Were your parents positive to the idea of joining the Club?
- If yes, why do you think they were?
- If no, do you have any ideas why not?

29) Have being a member of the Club changed your life in any ways?
- If yes, how?
30) Have being a member of the Child Club had positive or negative influence on your working situation (relationship with your employer)?
- If yes, in what way?
- If no, why not?
31) Have being a member of the Child Club had positive or negative influence on your relationship with your family?
- If yes, in what way?
- If no, why not?
32) Have being a member of the Child Club had positive or negative influence on your relationship with your peers?
- If yes, in what way?
- If no, why not?

School
1) Do you attend school?
- If yes, how many years have you attended school?
2) When do you attend school?
3) What grade are you in?
4) What is the best thing about going to school?
5) What is the worst thing about going to school?
6) What do your parents feel about school, did they want you to go?

Background
1) What is your name?
2) How old are you?
3) Where are you from originally?
- If you are not from here, what was the reason for migrating?
4) Do you live with your parents?
- If yes, what kind of work do your parents do?
- If no, with whom do you live? And what kind of work do they do?
5) Do you have any sisters or brothers?
- If yes, are they working, going to school, or both?
6) How many live in your house?
7) Who helps with the expenses of the household?

The future
- Where do you see yourself in ten years?

- Is there anything important you think I have forgotten to ask you, or something you want to add? Is there something you want to ask me?

APPENDIX 3: Interview guide 2

Interview guide for participants at national and international meetings

- Which meetings at the national and regional level have you attended?
- How were you selected to go to these meetings?

The National Convergence of Working Children (November Kathmandu 2004)
- Could you tell me little about the National Convergence of Working Children?
1) Why do you think meetings like this are organised?
2) What was the best thing about the meeting?
3) What was the most important achievement of the meeting?
4) Do you think that meetings like this help the working children's situation? How?
5) Do you know what happened after this meeting?

The South and Central Asia Convergence of Working Children (August Kathmandu 2005)
- Could you tell me little about the South and Central Asia Convergence of Working Children?
1) Why do you think meetings like this are organised?
2) What was the best thing about the meeting?
3) What was the most important achievement of the meeting?
4) Do you think that meetings like this help the working children's situation? How?
5) Do you know what happened after this meeting?

Your own work experience
1) When did you start to work?
2) What kind of work did you do?
3) How often did you work?
4) Did you like to work? If yes, why? If not, why not?
5) What are the positive aspects of child work?
6) What are the negative aspects of child work?
7) What kind of work is ok for children?

Your Child Club
1) What are the main problems of children in your society?
2) Why do children face these problems?
3) Who is responsible?
4) Who can help solving these problems?
5) What is the name of your (old) Child Club?
6) At what age did you become a member?
7) Why did you become a member?
8) What do you think is the most important achievement of your Child Club?
9) Does (did) your Child Club make a difference in the local community?
10) Have being a member of the Club changed your life in any ways? How?

Background
1) When did you start school?
2) How old are you?

APPENDIX 4: Interview guide 3

Interview guide for parents and caregivers

Working children
1) What do you think is the main reason why children in Nepal are working?
2) Should children be working?
3) What kind of work is ok for children?
4) What are the positive aspects of child work?
5) What are the negative aspects of child work?

6) How many children do you have?
7) Are they working, going to school, or both?
- If they are working, what types of work do they have?
8) What do you feel about your children being working?
9) Do you want your children to attend school?
- If yes, why?
- If no, why not?

Participation in the Child Club
1) What do you feel about your child participating in the Child Club?
2) Had you heard about the Child Club before your child started?
- If yes, what did you know about the Club?
3) Were you positive or negative to the idea of your child joining the Child Club? And why?
4) Have your child changed in any ways after joining the Child Club?
- If yes, how?
- And why do you think that is?

5) Do you know what kind of activities they do in the Child Club?
6) Have you ever seen any of their activities?
7) What do you think are the results of their activities?
8) What is the most important achievement of the Child Club?
9) Do you think people's perception of children will change because of the work of the Child Club?
- If yes, why and what kind of changes will there be?
10) What do you think people in the local community think about the Child Club?
11) Do you think the Child Club makes a difference in your local community?
- If yes, why?
- If no, why not?

The Household
1) Who does your household consist of?
2) Who helps with the expenses of the household?
3) In what ways does your family provide yourselves with food and money?

Background: the individual level
1) What kind of work do you do?
2) Do you like your work?

- If yes, why?
- If no, why not?

3) How much do you earn a typical day/week?
- What about a good day/week?
- And a bad day/week?
4) Do you also get paid in other things?
- Do you get paid each day, each week, pr unit?
5) How would you characterise your economic situation?

6) Do you remember at what age you started to work?
7) Did you attend school?
- If yes, how many years?
8) Do you know how to read and write?
9) Where are you from originally?
- If you are not from here, what was the reason for migrating?

- Is there anything important you think I have forgotten to ask you, or something you want to add? Is there something you want to ask me?

APPENDIX 5: Interview guide 4

Interview guide for Child Club Facilitators

Working children
1) What do you think is the main reason why children in Nepal are working?
2) Should children be working?
3) What kind of work is ok for children?
4) What are the positive aspects of child work?
5) What are the negative aspects of child work?

Child Club
1) What is the Child Club's name?
2) For how long have you been the facilitator for this Club?
3) What does participation mean to you?

4) How old do you have to be to become a member of the Club?
5) How many members does the Club have?
- How many boys/girls, what ages, and what kind of work do they do?
6) For how long have the children been members?
7) How does the Child Club recruit new members?

8) What kind of activities have the Club organised the last year?
9) How often does the Child Club meet?
10) How do the children decide which issues they are going to work with?
11) What kind of support does the Club need to be able to organise the activities?

12) What do you think is the best thing about the Child Club?
13) Does the Club have any weaknesses?

14) What are the main problems of children in this community?
15) Why do children face these problems?
16) Who is responsible?
17) Who can help to solve these problems?

18) Which issues/matters are the most important for the Child Club?
19) What kind of activities have the Child Club organised to do something about this issues?
20) Where do they organise these activities?
21) Who do they want to address with these activities?/Who is the audience?
22) What do you think are the results of their activities? Do they achieve anything?
23) What do you think is the most important achievement of the Club?
24) In what ways do you think the Child Club can help the working children's situation?

Local Community

1) Do you think people's perception of children will change because of the work of the Child Club?
- If yes, why and what kind of changes will there be?
2) What do you think people in the local community think about the Child Club?
3) Do you feel that the Club makes a difference in the local community?
-If yes, how?
- If no, why not?
4) Does your Club cooperate with any other groups in the local community, like for example School Management Committee, Village Development Committee, Ward Committee, Women's Group or Youth Group?
5) What kind of obstacles do you see for children's participation?
6) Has the Club faced any challenges from adults or people in the local community?
7) Have the Child Club or this CONCERN centre worked politically, towards the local government or other decision-making persons, to do something about the working children's situation?

Parents

1) Do all parents know that their children are member of the Child Club?
- If no, why do you think the children don't tell their parents?
2) What do you think the parents feel about their children participating in the Child Club?
3) Are most parents positive or negative towards the idea of their children joining the Child Club?
- Why do you think they are positive/negative?
4) Have many parents or other relatives come to watch some of the Child Club's activities?
- If yes, what have been their reactions?

Children

1) Do you think that being a member of the Club can influence the children's working situation (relationship with your employer)?
- If yes, in what way?
- If no, why not?
2) Do you think that being a member of the Club can influence the children's relationship with their family?
- If yes, in what way?
- If no, why not?
3) Do you think that being a member of the Club can influence the children's relationship with their peers?
- If yes, in what way?
- If no, why not?
4) Have you seen any changes in the children's behaviour after joining the Club?
- If yes, how?
- And why do you think that is?

APPENDIX 6: Interview guide 5

Interview guide for teachers

Working children
1) What do you think is the main reason why children in Nepal are working?
2) Should children be working?
3) What kind of work is ok for children?
4) What are the positive aspects of child work?
5) What are the negative aspects of child work?

6) What are the main problems of children in this community?
7) Why do children face these problems?
8) Who is responsible?
9) Who can help to solve these problems?

Child Club
1) What does participation mean to you?
2) What is the relationship between the school and the Child Club? Does the Child Club cooperate with the school in any ways?
- If yes, how?
3) What do you think is the best thing about the Child Club?
4) Do you think the Child Club has any weaknesses?

5) Do you know what kind of activities they organise in the Child Club?
6) Have you ever seen any of their activities?
7) What do you think are the most important issues/matters for the Child Club?
8) Do you know if the Child Club has organised any activities to do something about these issues?
- If yes, where do they organise these activities?
 - And whom do you think they want to address with these activities?

9) What do you think are the results of their activities? Do they achieve anything?
10) What do you think is the most important achievement of the Child Club?
11) In what ways do you think the Child Club can help the working children's situation?

Local Community
1) Do you think people's perception of children will change because of the work of the Child Club?
- If yes, why and what kind of changes will there be?
2) What do you think people in the local community think about the Child Club?
3) What kind of obstacles do you see for children's participation?
4) Do you think that the Club has faced any challenges from adults or people in the local community?
- If yes, what kind of obstacles, and why do you think that is?
5) Do you think the Child Club makes a difference in the local community?
- If yes, how?
- If no, why not?

Parents

1) What do you think the parents feel about their children participating in the Child Club?

2) Do you know if most parents are positive or negative towards the idea of their children joining the Child Club?

- Why do you think they are positive/negative?

3) Do you know if many parents or other relatives have come to watch some of the Child Club's activities?

- If yes, what have been their reactions?

Children

1) Do you think that being a member of the Club can influence the children's working situation (relationship with your employer)?

- If yes, in what way?

- If no, why not?

2) Do you think that being a member of the Club can influence the children's relationship with their family?

- If yes, in what way?

- If no, why not?

3) Do you think that being a member of the Club can influence the children's relationship with their peers?

- If yes, in what way?

- If no, why not?

4) Have you seen any changes in the children's behaviour after joining the Club?

- If yes, how?

- And why do you think that is?

- Is there anything important you think I have forgotten to ask you, or something you want to add? Is there something you want to ask me?