3F CRISIS: IMPACT ON EDUCATION

QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT, JULY–SEPTEMBER 2009

Jointly produced by:
UNICEF
Department of Education
Research Input and Development Action (RIDA)

A monitoring mechanism has been developed to analyse the possible impacts of the food, fuel and financial (3F) crisis on children's education in Nepal. The mechanism is facilitated by RIDA with support from UNICEF and in coordination with the Department of Education, District Education Offices, and schools. Monitoring takes place at three levels: (i) community (through focus group discussions (FGDs) with mothers, children and teachers); (ii) household (based on quarterly household survey data from 40 districts made available by WFP Nepal)[1]; and (iii) school (through monthly information collected from a sample of 22 schools in 11 districts[2]). This is the second situational analysis report covering the period of mid-June to mid-September 2009.

Highlights

- In the 3rd quarter of 2009, rising food prices are still a key issue of concern for communities; but a slight recovery in terms of foreign employment can be observed, with an increase of remittances compared to 2nd quarter of 2009.
- Several coping mechanisms which negatively impact upon children's education have seen a rate of decline between the 2nd and 3rd quarter of 2009, in particular the practice of parents reducing their children's attendance in school for the purpose of working.
- Nevertheless, many households affected by the 3F crisis still cope by increasing the burden of work for children (mainly household work) and reducing education related expenses.
- Dalit households, households in the Karnali region, households who experienced food price increases in the last three months, large households, poverty-stricken households, and households using kerosene as a source for light are more likely to use education-related coping mechanisms.

VULNERABILITY PROFILE OF HOUSEHOLDS

Households that have experienced food price increases over the last three months were most likely to use education-related coping mechanisms. All households who reduced their children's attendance to send them for work have experienced food price increase over the last three months. Around 14 per cent of households experiencing an increase in food prices took their children out of school for work and 19 per cent shifted their children to a less expensive school (Table 1); none of the other households adopted these coping mechanisms. As household expenditure on food increases, households are more likely to reduce educational expenses and move their children to a less expensive school.

Table 1: Coping score (households perceiving food price rises)
Source: Household-level monitoring

Coping mechanism	Households experiencing food price rises (%)	Households not experiencing food price rises (%)
Taking children (aged 5–12 years) out of school for work	14	0
Reducing educational expenses	30	22
Shifting children to a less expensive school	19	0
Sending children to school for incentives	23	6

[1] For June–September 2009, there were 477 households involved in the vulnerability analysis and mapping (VAM) survey of WFP Nepal. Survey data were analysed using various statistical models such as regression analysis, cross-tabulation, chi-square test, etc.
[2] In this quarter, school-level monitoring was conducted in 15 schools of eight districts.

Economic condition of household: Poverty-stricken households are highly likely to adopt education-related coping mechanisms because of both economic hardship and low awareness about the importance of education[3]. **Households stricken by poverty are more likely than other households to adopt all coping mechanisms, except shifting children to a less expensive school**, probably because children from poor households are already enrolled in the cheapest schools (Table 2). Only one coping mechanism is adopted by the richest households: sending children to school for incentives. By tracking the influence of water- and sanitation-related proxy indicators of wealth on the adoption of education-related coping mechanisms, it was found that households without toilets have a significantly higher probability of shifting their children to a less expensive school and households with no access to safe drinking water tend to resort to child labour as a coping mechanism.

Table 2: Coping score by wealth category
Source: Household-level monitoring

Coping mechanism	% of poor	% of middle	% of rich
Taking children (aged 5–12 years) out of school for work	19	9	0
Reducing educational expenses	34	26	0
Shifting children to less expensive school	13	24	0
Sending children to school for incentives	23	18	9

Social background of household: Household-level data found that Dalit households are more likely than other households to use all education-related coping mechanisms. For example, **32 per cent of Dalit households took their children temporarily out of school for work** (Table 3). Mothers in Amargadhi (Dadeldhura District) also mentioned that Dalit households were more vulnerable to the effects of the crisis since they possess only a little agricultural land. *Janajati*[4] were less vulnerable than Dalits but more likely to take education-related coping mechanisms than other social groups[5] (except for sending children to school for incentives).

Table 3: Coping score by caste/ethnicity
Source: Household-level monitoring

Coping mechanism	% of Dalit	% of Janajati	% of Others
Taking children (aged 5–12 years) out of school for work	32	10	9
Reducing educational expenses	41	31.5	24
Shifting children to less expensive school	24	20	13
Sending children to school for incentives	34	14	18

Households in Karnali region: The nature, severity and pathways of impact differ by geographic location and socio-economic development level: for instance, **households in the Karnali region were more likely than other households to take education-related coping mechanisms** (Table 4). The Karnali region (Mid- and Far Western Nepal) is especially vulnerable to the food crisis because of its extreme remoteness, low agricultural productivity, and limited access to basic services. Most of districts in the Karnali region are chronically food-insecure.

Table 4: Coping score by region
Source: Household-level monitoring

Coping mechanism	Households in Karnali region (%)	Households in other regions (%)
Taking children (aged 5–12 years) out of school for work	17	12
Reducing educational expenses	31	28
Shifting children to less expensive school	24	14
Sending children to school for incentives	18	23

Size of household: As during the first monitoring cycle, households with greater numbers of children aged less than 12 years are most likely than other households to take all education-related coping mechanisms (Table 5). In addition, household size also influenced the adoption of coping mechanisms. This phenomenon was also observed during community-level monitoring: for instance, in Phidim (Panchthar district), parents of larger households reported that they sent their elder children to work and their younger children to school.

[3] Children in Amargadhi (Dadeldhura district) reported that while their family struggles to buy stationeries, older members of their household continue to gamble.
[4] *Janajati* is defined as a community having its 'own mother tongue and traditional culture, but not belonging to the Hindu caste system', and is generally 'socially backward in comparison to other caste groups'.
[5] Brahman/Chhetri, *terai* middle caste, Newar and Muslim.

Table 5: Coping score by number of children below 12 years and household size

Source: Household-level monitoring

	Number of children below 12 years (%)			Household size (%)		
Coping mechanism	**Less than 3**	**3**	**More than 3**	**1 to 4**	**5 to 7**	**8 or more**
Taking children (aged 5–12 years) out of school for work	11	16	19	3	13	21
Reducing educational expenses	23	35	39	16	32	29
Shifting children to less expensive school	13	13	30	11	16	22
Sending children to school for incentives	13	21	34	11	22	22

Source of light used by household: The combination of unavailability of electricity and the increasing price of kerosene also represents an issue for education. Households using kerosene as a source for light are more likely than other households to take education-related coping mechanisms[6] (Table 6). In three of the four communities visited, mothers reported that they use kerosene for lighting purposes. According to these mothers, the price of kerosene has increased compared to last year[7]. Owing to this price increase, students in households without access to electricity are unable to study during the evening [8] . Household-level monitoring also found that the source used for light is linked to the share of education expenses in the household budget. Households using kerosene spent US$ 4 (NRs 300) less on education than other households in September.

Table 6: Coping score by source of light

Source: Household-level monitoring

Coping mechanism	Kerosene (%)	Other (%)	Electricity (%)
Taking children (aged 5–12 years) out of school for work	21	16	5
Reducing educational expenses	30	30	25
Shifting children to less expensive school	12	25	8
Sending children to school for incentives	23	22	18

IMPACT OF THE CRISIS ON EDUCATION

As in the first quarter of monitoring, direct effects of the crisis, especially the increase in food prices, as well as indirect impacts linked to various education-related coping strategies taken by households were noted.

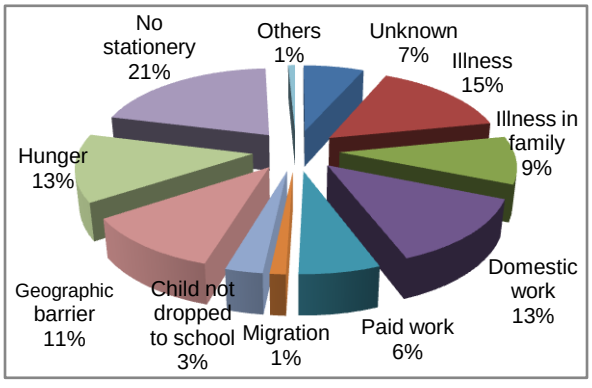
IRREGULAR ATTENDANCE

The attendance rate remained stable during this quarter compared to the last quarter. However, compared to a year ago, the attendance rate has decreased from 79 per cent to 66 per cent (a 13-percentage-point decrease). Girls have more regular attendance than boys. During July to September, the average monthly attendance for girls was 18 days, while for boys it was 11 days.

Community-level monitoring in Panchthar and Dadeldhura districts found that the major reason for students' irregular attendance was household work (mentioned in nine of 12 FGDs), followed by responsibility for looking after younger siblings at home (six FGDs), inability to purchase stationeries (notebooks, pencils) (five FGDs), and illness, lack of food, and inability to complete homework (three FGDs).

Chart 1: Reasons behind absences

Source: School-level monitoring



[6] Except shifting the children to a less expensive school
[7] According to mothers in Dandaban (Dadeldhura District), kerosene is now NRs 70 per litre compared to NRs 50 per litre last year.
[8] Even households with access to electricity might experience a similar situation during winter months when there is load-shedding.

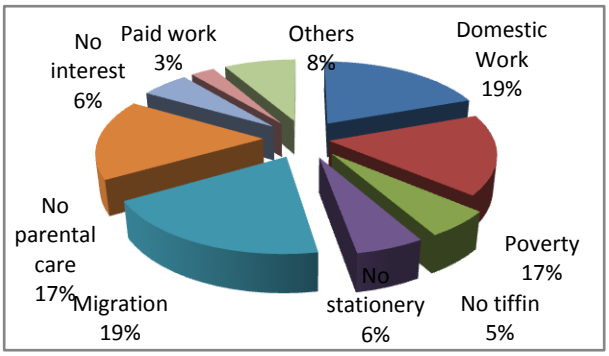
Data collected at the school level show a similar picture: the major reasons for student irregularity were inability to purchase stationeries, illness, and household work and hunger (Chart 1). This quarter, hunger was reported as a prominent reason for student irregularity (13 per cent compared to one per cent in the first quarter). Students' absences because of an inability to purchase stationeries increased greatly to 21 per cent from seven per cent in the first quarter. In both quarters, household work as well as paid child labour were mentioned as reasons behind absences, but these reasons were much more prevalent in the second quarter.

DROPOUT

The proportion of households that resorted to this more desperate coping mechanism decreased during this quarter. Only 1.1 per cent of households said that their children dropped out of school, compared to 3 per cent in the previous quarter.

From school-level data collected in five schools, it was found that, of 18 students who dropped out, 12 were boys. Most of these students were Dalits (61 per cent) and overage (73 per cent). Key reasons reported by teachers and students for dropping out were: (i) increasing opportunity cost, especially for overage students; (ii) influence of peer group; (iii) poor economic condition of household; (iv) migration of a family member to India; and (v) child marriage.

Chart 2: Reasons for dropout
Source: School-level monitoring



The main reasons behind student dropout as reported by schools were household work and migration: 19 per cent of students dropped out because of household work and 19 per cent because of migration (Chart 2). Poverty and lack of parental care were secondary reasons (17 per cent each). According to teachers and mothers in Gumbadada (Panchthar district), overage children studying at primary level are at higher risk of dropping out because of the increased opportunity cost and higher demand for recreational expenses.

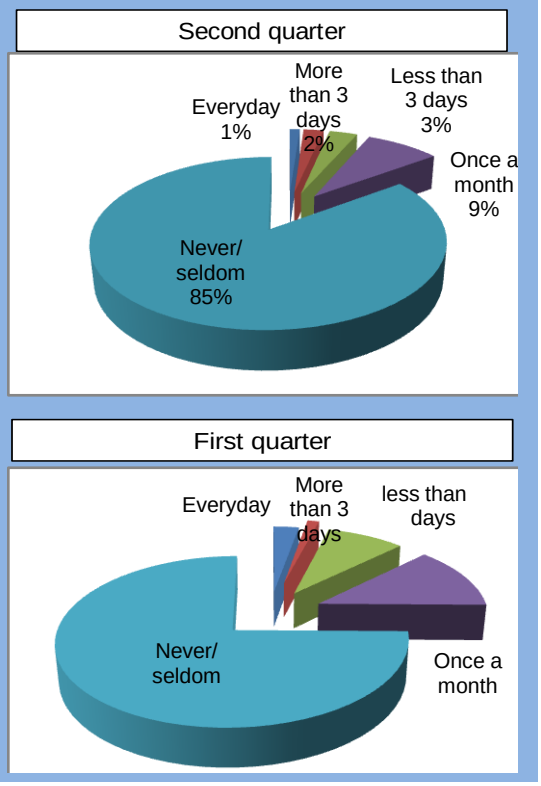
CHILD LABOUR

As seen above, child labour represents a major cause of low attendance and dropout for students. In the two districts (Panchthar and Dadeldhura) where FGDs were conducted during this monitoring cycle, parents coped with the effects of the crisis by increasing their workload; this contributes to an increased incidence of child labour because parents rely to a greater extent on their children's help with household chores including looking after siblings.

Moreover, increases in consumer prices increased the opportunity cost[9] of sending children to school. Involvement of children in household work as well as paid child labour was reported in all 12 FGDs conducted with all categories of respondents in this quarter. Cases of full-time child labour leading to school dropout were also reported in all four communities monitored in this cycle. Nevertheless, household-level monitoring data demonstrate that the **proportion of households reducing their children's attendance at school in order to send them to work fell in this quarter compared to the previous quarter**. In this quarter, of 444 respondents, 14 per cent resorted to this coping mechanism compared to 22 per cent in the first quarter (Chart 3).

Out of 51 households who took their children out of school for work in this quarter, 74 per cent reported that their children are working at home without a wage compared to 50 per cent in the last quarter. The proportion of children working outside the household (with or without a wage) has decreased from 33 per cent to 20 per cent. Respondents in 6 of the 12 FGDs mentioned that girls are more involved in household work than boys.

Chart 3: Households taking their children (aged 5-12) out of school for work
Source: Household-level monitoring



[9] According to mothers in Panchthar and Dadeldhura districts, the daily opportunity cost of sending a child to school is NRs 50–100.

Households with higher amounts of loans have a lower probability of reducing their children's attendance at school in order to send them to work. This might point to the fact that households become indebted in order to safeguard their children's education. It was also noticed that households with higher food expenses are more likely to temporarily send their children to work. **Incidence of child labour was found to be higher in households depending on daily wages than other households**[10].

Heavier workloads for children are a major learning barrier for students. Household work—which was a major reason behind students' irregular attendance at school—was mentioned as a learning barrier in four of eight FGDs by students and teachers. Lack of notebooks and pencils, ineffective teaching methods, and parental unawareness were given as other reasons.

REDUCED EDUCATIONAL EXPENSES

According to mothers in Phidim (Panchthar district), parents spend NRs 4,000–5,000 per year on purchasing educational materials for a child. As a result of rising prices, this has become increasingly difficult and has led some parents to decrease the money they invest in their children[11]. The **proportion of households coping with the crisis by reducing expenditure on educational materials is still alarming:** 29 per cent of households mentioned that they decreased expenditure on educational materials in this quarter, as compared to 30 per cent last quarter.

Mothers, teachers and children have perceived a rise in the prices of educational materials along with an increase in commodity prices. The price of a notebook has increased from NRs 10 to NRs 15 over the last year[12]. Mothers also reported an increase in the price of school uniforms compared to last year[13]. Mothers in Dandaban (Dadeldhura district) mentioned that it is hard for them to provide educational materials for their children. Mothers in Phidim (Panchthar district) mentioned that they reduced the number of notebooks they buy in order to cope with increased prices.

Children of parents affected by job losses in the garment industry drop out of school

Republica National Daily (October 2009) reported that around 75,000 garment workers in Nepal lost their job as a result of reduced demand for garments in USA triggered by the global economic slowdown. A rapid assessment conducted in the catchment area of a school in the Kathmandu valley found that 13% of students had dropped out during this academic year because their parents had lost their job in the nearby garment factory. Some 75 per cent of children enrolled in this school come from households depending on the garment factory (where 450 of 500 employees had lost their job). According to teachers, students left the school because their parents moved away in search of new employment: they went back to their villages, joined work at brick factories, or shifted to other daily-wage-based work.

School-feeding programmes and other incentives are attracting children to school and increasing their regularity[14]. In this quarter, 15 per cent of households sent their children to school to benefit from incentives such as food, oil, etc. Similarly, **efforts by schools and communities are instrumental in reducing the effects of the crisis on children's education**. Children studying in schools benefiting from a high level of community participation and with teachers committed to school improvement are less vulnerable. In Panchamrit Primary School (Dandaban, Panchthar district), school efforts (regular monitoring of student attendance, regular visits by parents to the school where teachers inform them about the status of their children, etc.) have been instrumental in reducing school dropout, improving student regularity, and reducing child labour, despite the stronger barriers to attendance arising from the crisis.

In this quarter, households displayed a higher tendency to transfer their children to a less expensive school. Around 12 per cent of respondents moved their children to a less expensive school to cope with economic shocks compared to 3 per cent in the last quarter (where households were asked whether they had transferred their children from a private to a public school).

[10] According to mothers in Maurada (Dadeldhura) and teachers in Gumbadada (Panchthar district).
[11] According to teachers in Phidim (Panchthar district).
[12] According to mothers in Dandaban (Dadeldhura district), Phidim (Panchthar district), and Gumbadada (Panchthar district).
[13] From NRs 225 to NRs 300 in Amargadhi (Dadeldhura district) and from NRs 350 to NRs 500 in Gumbadada (Panchthar district).
[14] According to mothers and teachers in Dandaban (Dadeldhura district). In addition, children from Dandaban said that in schools without a school meal programme, students from families who cannot afford to provide them with midday snacks tend to leave school after morning classes.