

# 3F CRISIS: IMPACT ON EDUCATION IN NEPAL

QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORT, JANUARY – MARCH, 2010

With special focus on School Attendance

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The monitoring mechanism assessing the impacts of the food, fuel and financial (3F) crisis on children's education in Nepal is facilitated by RIDA<sup>1</sup> 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 WFP Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping quarterly household survey data from 52 districts)<sup>2</sup>; and (iii) school (through monthly information collected from a sample of 22 schools in 11 districts)<sup>3</sup>. This monitoring report covers the first quarter of 2010 (January – March) and its main theme is the 3F crisis impact on student attendance.

## Highlights

- ☞ In 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2010, the food security situation has worsened due to low agricultural yields and food price increases. While fuel prices have increased, the remittance growth rate is low.
- ☞ Several coping mechanisms that have negative impacts upon children's education, recorded in previous quarters are present also in this quarter but their severity has decreased.
- ☞ The main coping mechanisms adopted by households affected by the 3F crisis are: increasing the workload for parents, reducing the children's attendance to make them work, reducing educational expenses.
- ☞ Dalit households, households in the Terai region, households experiencing food price rises, large households, poverty-stricken households, and households using kerosene as a source of light are more likely to take education-related coping mechanisms.

## OVERALL SCENARIO

The future course of remittance flows into the country is still uncertain due to the lack of a clear indication of economic recovery in most of the labor destinations for Nepali workers. The number of workers leaving for foreign employment during last five months of the current fiscal year declined to 100,051 compared to 102,852 recorded during the same period last year<sup>4</sup>.

National food price inflation still remains very high. Staple food prices, including rice and wheat prices, rose slightly over the past month. Year on year food price inflation is 18 per cent in this quarter which led to an overall inflation rate of 12.6 per cent (11.3 in last quarter of 2009).

In March, Nepal Oil Corporation raised the price of fuel twice in response to increased international oil prices. The increase was NRs. 2.5 per liter of petrol (now 80.25/l), and NRs. 2 per liter of diesel as well as kerosene (now 61.4/l). This has led to increases in the transportation cost and this is likely to continue to raise prices of food and other consumables in the coming months<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The core team consists of Dr. Yagya Raj Pant, Mr. Uttam Prasad Upadhyay, Mr. Resham Thapa and Mr. Jeevan Raj Lohani.

<sup>2</sup> Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) survey data for this quarter was collected from 774 households of 52 districts.

<sup>3</sup> In this quarter, school-level monitoring was conducted in 20 schools from ten districts.

<sup>4</sup> Republica National daily, January 12, 2010

<sup>5</sup> WFP Market Watch 23 (March, 2010).

## IMPACT OF 3F CRISIS ON STUDENT ATTENDANCE

The 3F crisis has affected children's' education through the coping mechanisms that households take to overcome the crisis. This monitoring report focuses on the impact of the crisis on student attendance. After four quarters of monitoring (from April 2009 to March 2010), there are clear indications that the crisis, through its main effects (food price rise, increasing price of educational materials due to increased transportation cost, and loss of employment) has affected student attendance through: (i) increase in incidences of child labour, especially household work, (ii) hunger, (iii) decrease in educational expenses (especially notebooks, pencils, school dress etc.), and (iv) work related outmigration<sup>6</sup>.

### **Student attendance fluctuates by quarters and seasons.**

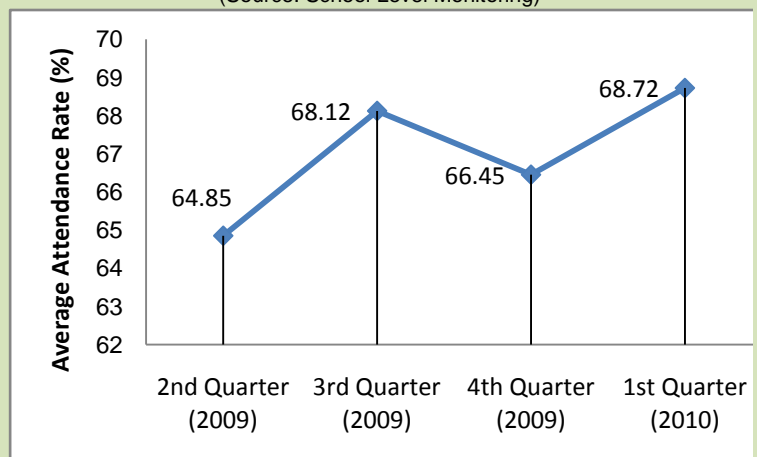
The average rate of student attendance for the academic year 2066 (2009/10) was 67 per cent<sup>7</sup>. The average attendance rate increased from 65 per cent (second quarter, 2009) to 68 per cent (third quarter, 2009) and again decreased to 66 per cent in fourth quarter of 2009 (see Chart – 1).

The average attendance was highest (69 per cent) in the first quarter of 2010, probably because of (i) final examinations starting in the last week of March, (ii) reduced opportunity for migration to India<sup>8</sup>, and (ii) increasing parental awareness<sup>9</sup>.

Trends in attendance seem to be linked to agricultural seasons: student attendance is lower in the planting season (second quarter) and the harvesting season (fourth quarter) since a large number of households in Nepal depend on subsistence agriculture<sup>10</sup>. In all quarters except this one, the majority of student absences were due to household work. Compared to boys, girls are more likely to be absent because of household work (27% for girls against 25% for boys) and sickness of family members (13% for girls against 10% for boys). The number of students being absent due to hunger increased from 1 per cent in the second quarter of 2009 to 4.4 per cent in the first quarter of 2010 (see Chart – 2).

**Chart – 1: Trends of student attendance rate by quarters**

(Source: School Level Monitoring)



**Chart – 2: Division of reasons behind student absences by quarter<sup>11</sup>**

Source: School Level Monitoring

Quarters	Sick	Household work	Paid work	Hunger	No stationary
Second Quarter (2009)	26.2%	29.2%	3.9%	1.0%	10.7%
Third Quarter (2009)	21.0%	25.6%	8.7%	1.6%	13.2%
Fourth Quarter (2009)	25.8%	29.7%	9.7%	3.6%	9.6%
First quarter (2010)	29.4%	23.3%	6.0%	4.4%	7.2%

This quarter's community-level monitoring points towards similar conclusions: in all eight FGDs asked about barriers to attendance, household work was reported to be the most common reason. Other important reasons were unavailability of notebooks and pencils (7 FGDs), unavailability of uniform (6 FGDs) and inability to pay school fees<sup>12</sup> (3 FGDs).

<sup>6</sup> Reported by mothers and teachers in Bogatigaun and Sanfebagar, Achham district.

<sup>7</sup> With standard deviation of 36 units

<sup>8</sup> According to teachers in Janakalyan SS, Sanfebagar, Achham district.

<sup>9</sup> According to teachers in Janakalyan SS, Sanfebagar, Achham district.

<sup>10</sup> Reported by mothers in Bargadawa, Kapilbastu district.

<sup>11</sup> This table is constructed based on school level data compiled till March, 2010 since the time of receiving school data was different for different districts and schools. The figures in percentage given in chart – 6 may differ from that mentioned in quarterly reports.

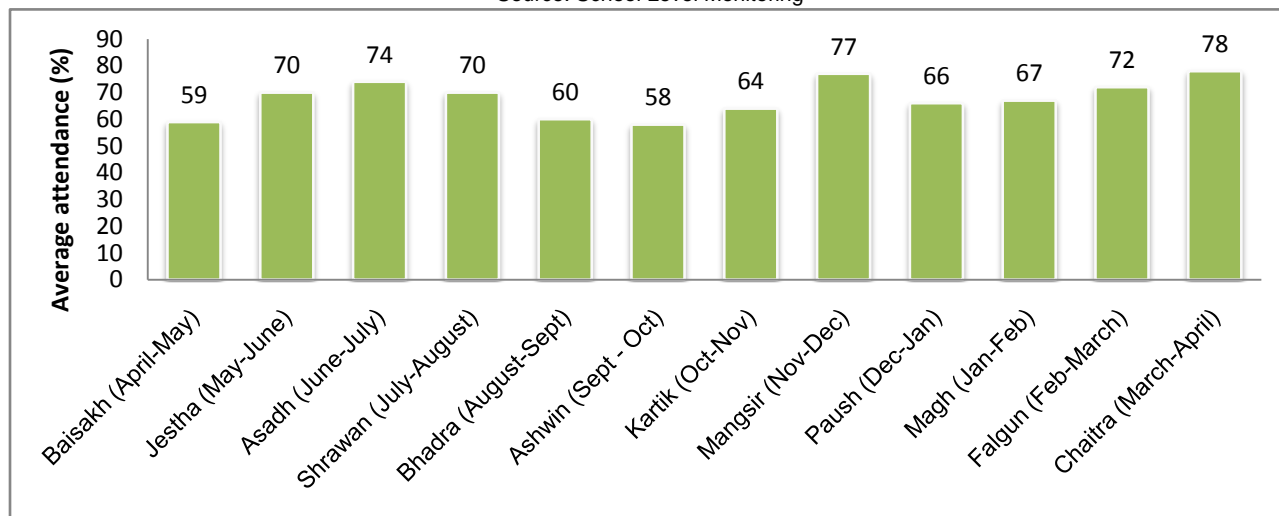
<sup>12</sup> In the locations visited in Achham, schools charge monthly fee ranging from Rs. 10-100. Poor students need to submit applications to waive fees.

Scarcity of food at home and inability to have meal on time has also forced students to be irregular in school<sup>13</sup>. In this regard and similarly to the findings from previous quarters, the introduction of the school Tiffin program has helped immensely to improve school attendance<sup>14</sup>.

The school-level monitoring found that the monthly attendance rate was highest (78%) in Chaitra (March-April, 2010) and lowest (59%) in Ashwin (Sept-Oct) (see Chart 3). Community level monitoring shows a similar trend: the months with higher attendance were reported to be Falgun and Chaitra while months with lower attendance were reported to be Baishakh, Jestha<sup>15</sup>.

**Chart – 3: Average Attendance Rate (%) by months (2009-2010)**

Source: School Level Monitoring



**The levels of attendance as well as barriers to attendance differ by geographic regions, caste of students, sex of students, urban or rural locality of school etc.** The summary of average student attendance by different categories of students is presented in Chart – 4.

**Chart – 4: Summary of Average Attendance (April 2009-March 2010)**

Source: School Level Monitoring

Category	Average Attendance (%)	Category	Average Attendance (%)
Mountain students	76	Boys	66
Hill Students	77	Girls	69
Terai Students	55	Dalits	68
Rural	64	Janajatis	67
Urban	72	Others	68

As shown in Chart – 4, though girls are more involved in household work, they are more regular in school compared to boys<sup>16</sup>. In this quarter for instance, the average attendance rate for girls was 71 per cent compared to only 66 per cent for boys.

**The pathways through which the crisis affects attendance differ by district.** In districts where work is available for parents (especially Dadeldhura, Panchthar, Saptari, Achham and Tanahun), parents are increasing their work load which in turn leads to increased household work load for children and higher absenteeism of children. In other districts (especially in the Terai) parent send their children for paid labor making them irregular in school<sup>17</sup>. This quarter's community level monitoring in Achham and Kapilbastu found that in areas presenting working opportunities for parents,

<sup>13</sup> As reported by teachers in Bhagbandas LSS, Kapilbastu district.

<sup>14</sup> As reported by HT in Mahendra PS, Kapilbastu district.

<sup>15</sup> As reported by teachers in Taulihawa, mothers in Sanfe and teachers in Bogatigaun, Achham district.

<sup>16</sup> As reported by mothers in both communities of Achham district.

<sup>17</sup> As reported by mothers in Rupnagar Saptari district and Bargadawa, Kapilbastu district.

parents perform daily wage-based work while children stay at home and perform household chores<sup>18</sup> like looking after cattle, collecting firewood, harvesting and plantation, and looking after siblings<sup>19</sup>. Children from poorer households get involved in paid labor and miss school<sup>20</sup> although they try to reduce the incidence of absences by working during holidays<sup>21</sup>.

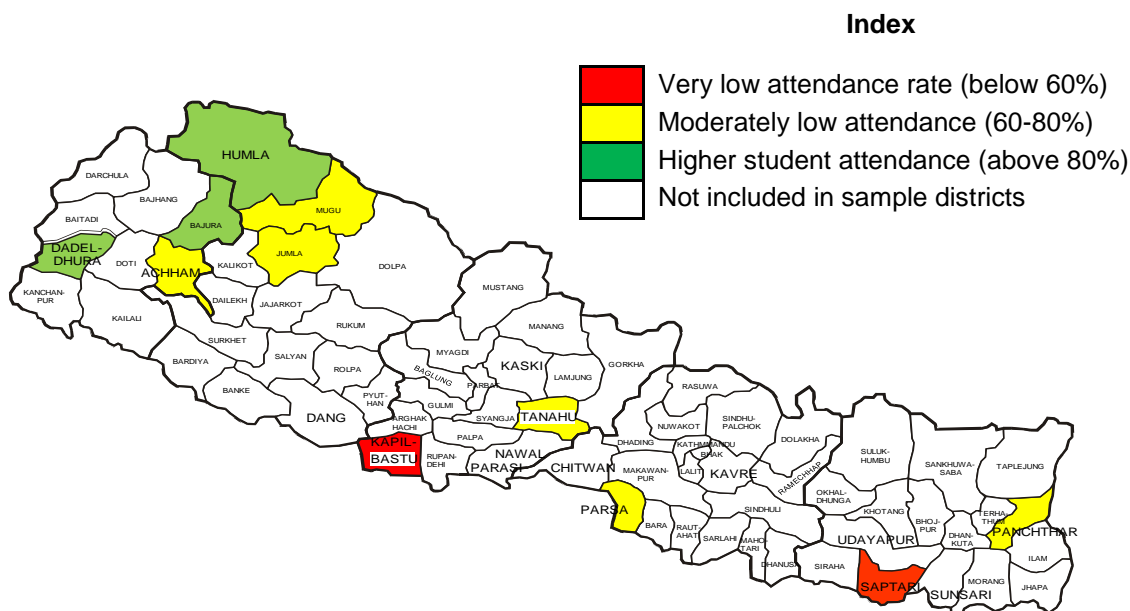
In almost all districts, the four major reasons for student absences throughout the first year of monitoring were:

1. household work, accounting for up to 50% of the absences (Kapilbastu),
2. sickness, accounting for up to 44% of the absences (Panchthar),
3. inability to bring along stationery, accounting for up to 19% of the absences (Jumla)
4. paid work, accounting for up to 20% of the absences (Saptari)

Community level monitoring also found that hunger was one of the key reasons for students' irregularity in school, especially in Humla and Kapilbastu.

The map below presents student attendance rates in the academic year 2066 (2009-2010) in the 11 sample districts. Mountain and Hill districts were found to have a higher attendance rate (more than 60 per cent) than those in Terai (Kapilbastu and Saptari).

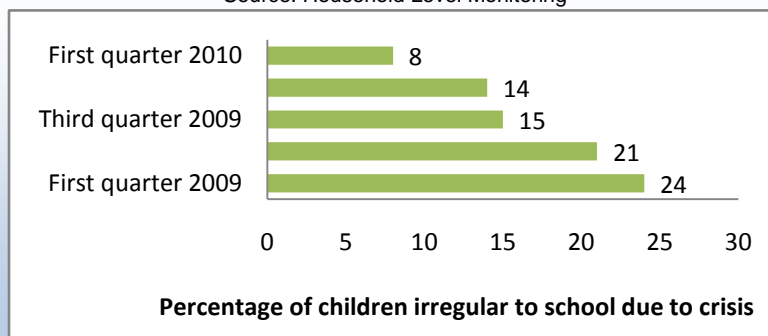
Map – 1: Attendance Rates in 11 sample districts  
Source: School Level Monitoring



### Child Labor

To cope with food price rises, parents continue to send their children to work, thus reducing their regularity in school, but the proportion of households reducing attendance of their children has decreased since April 2009 and is at 8% this quarter (see Chart – 5). The involvement of children in paid work and household work depends on availability of work

Chart – 5: Households making their children irregular in school  
Source: Household Level Monitoring



<sup>18</sup> According to mothers in Bargadawa, Kapilbastu district.

<sup>19</sup> As reported by children in Bogatigaun, Achham district.

<sup>20</sup> As reported by children in Sanfebagar, Achham district.

<sup>21</sup> As reported by teachers and mothers in both school of Achham district.

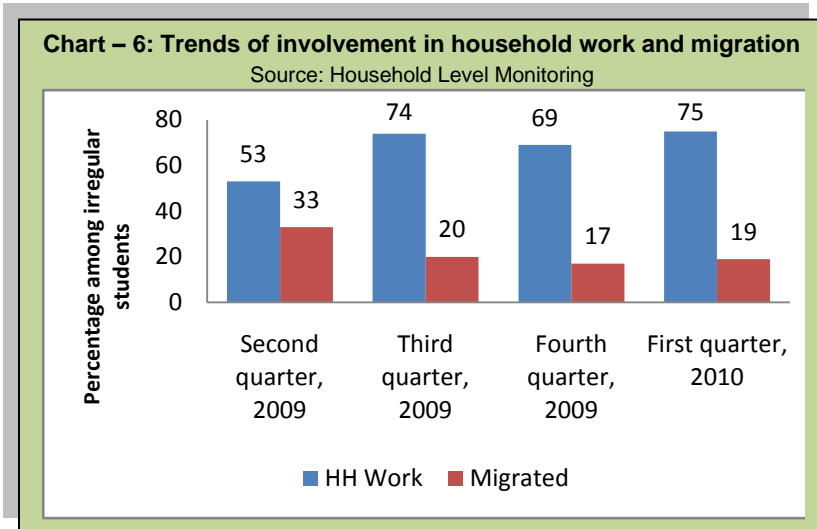
opportunities<sup>22</sup>. In Achham, recent availability of construction work has increased the likelihood of parents and children being involved in paid work<sup>23</sup>. The involvement of children in paid work directly forces them to be irregular in school while the involvement of parents in paid work puts an additional household work burden on children.

**This quarter, 75% of the children temporarily taken out of school were involved in household work:** this finding is consistent with findings from all previous quarters of monitoring. The proportion of children engaged in paid child labor while staying at home is 6 per cent and the proportion of children having migrated away from their home, being involved in paid as well as non-paid work, is 19 per cent (see Chart – 6).

Generally, boys and children of age group 14-15 are more likely to be involved in paid labor<sup>24</sup>. By working for a day, children earn money ranging from Rs. 125 to Rs. 200 per day<sup>25</sup>. Children work to meet both personal and family needs for income<sup>26</sup> and utilize such earning to buy food / Tiffin and purchase stationery.

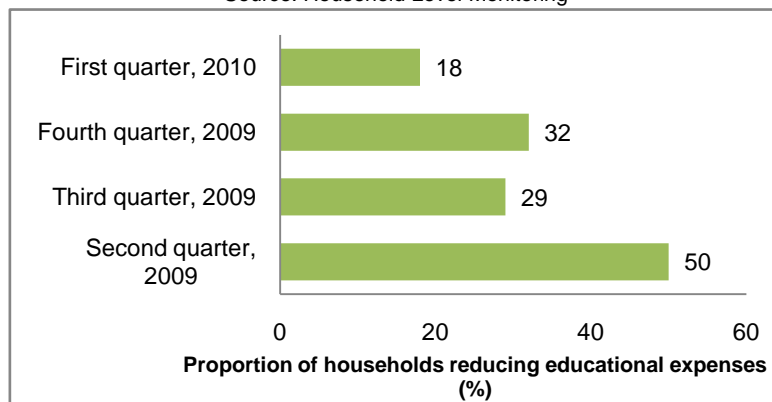
### Reduced educational expenses

Educational expenses of households generally include expenses on: (i) stationery (notebook, pen, pencil and other requirements), (ii) school fee, (iii) school uniform and (iv) Tiffin / afternoon meal. In this quarter, the average monthly educational expenditure for a household was NRs. 670 ranging from NRs. 237 for poor households and NRs. 1706 for richer households. Though generally parents do not monitor educational expenses in a systematic manner<sup>27</sup>, they mentioned that the average monthly educational expenses range from NRs. 100 to 500 per month. Some children also take pocket money for Tiffin (around Rs. 5 per day)<sup>28</sup>.



**Chart- 7: Trends of households reducing educational expenses**

Source: Household Level Monitoring



**The proportion of households coping by reducing expenses on educational material seems to be decreasing over the quarters** (see Chart – 7). Larger proportions of Dalit households, households using kerosene, poor households and female headed households reduced educational expenses in this quarter (see Chart – 8). The proportion of income a household spends on food as opposed to non food items has a direct implication on how its expenditure on education items is affected. In this quarter, households decreased their educational expenses by NRs. 75 for every unit rise in the proportion of food to non-food expenses: this shows that poorer households,

typically spending a larger proportion of their earnings on food, are also less able to reserve sufficient money for educational expenses.

<sup>22</sup> Reported by mothers in Taulihawa, Kapilbastu district.

<sup>23</sup> According to mothers in Bogatigaun and Sanfebagar, Achham district.

<sup>24</sup> Reported by children in Bogatigaun, Achham district and mothers in Bargadawa, Kapilbastu district.

<sup>25</sup> As reported by children in Sanfebagar and Bogatigaun, Achham district.

<sup>26</sup> Reported by teachers in Sanfebagar, Achham district and Taulihawa, Kapilbastu district, and by children in Bargadawa, Kapilbastu district and Bogatigaun, Achham district.

<sup>27</sup> According to mothers in Sanfebagar, Achham district.

<sup>28</sup> According to mothers in Sanfebagar, Achham district.

**Chart – 8: Households reducing educational expenses**

Source: Household Level Monitoring

Category	Percentage (%)
Total households	18
<i>Dalit</i> households	29
Household using kerosene	21
Poor households	24
Female headed households	21

Parents said that even with an increase in their regular earnings, they cannot spend much on education due to increases in the price of food and other commodities<sup>29</sup>. Parents in Achham and Kapilbastu have not perceived much difference in the price of educational material (copy, pen, and dress) compared to last year<sup>30</sup>. However, some of them struggle to purchase educational material for their children. As a mother in Bargadawa, Kapilbastu district, mentioned: “Sometimes, we do

not have money to buy stationery and in those days, we do not send children to school”.

**The tendency of households to transfer their children to less expensive school was confirmed but reduced in the first quarter of 2010.** Around 8 per cent of households (15 per cent in third quarter and 14 per cent in fourth quarter of 2009) reported that they shifted their children to a less expensive school to cope with the shocks. Households of middle income categories (10%) displayed a higher tendency to send their children to a less expensive school than other income groups. **The proportion of households sending children to school to benefits from incentives like food, oil etc. reduced to 10 per cent from 15 per cent in previous quarter** (see Chart – 9). Female headed households, large households, households in Terai, households belonging to minorities and the Muslims community, poor households, and households perceiving high food price rises in the last 3 months are more likely to send their children to school to benefit from incentives.

### **Impact on learning**

Reduced attendance has a direct linkage to learning achievements. From the school level data collected since April 2009, it was found that with a 10 per cent decrease in attendance rates, the learning achievements (examination marks) also decreases by 2 per cent. In this quarter, two major barriers to learning reported during community level monitoring were student irregularity (5 FGDs) and lack of textbooks (5 FGDs) followed by lack of parental awareness, household work, school environment etc. Schools as well as teachers do not monitor student’s learning levels on a regular basis and parents are mostly unaware about the learning status of their children<sup>31</sup>.

### **Drop out**

Though the cases of drop out are decreasing in number with increased levels of parental awareness (according to parents themselves) and decreasing employment opportunities in India<sup>32</sup>, few incidences of drop out linked to increasing price index were reported during community level monitoring. Boys are more likely to drop out of school than girls to cope with increasing economic pressures on households<sup>33</sup>. However, some girls also drop out of school because of early marriages<sup>34</sup>. Some general reasons for drop out noted during community level monitoring in this quarter were: (i) failing in examinations, (ii) migrating to India for household earning, (iii) not being able to pay fees and purchase necessary learning materials, (iv) being overage (increasing opportunity cost of education), and (iv) peer pressure<sup>35</sup>. Teachers in Bogatigaun, Achham district, reported a case of drop-out linked to increasing economic hardship. A student dropped out of school and went to India in search of work since his grandmother could not afford costs associated with their living and the grandson’s education although he scored the highest marks in his class in grade-8 examination.

<sup>29</sup> As reported in Bargadawa, Kapilbastu district.

<sup>30</sup> As reported by mothers in Bargadawa, Kapilbastu district. They report the price of copy to be around NRs. 10-20, pen NRs. 10, dress NRs. 400-500, and shoes NRs. 150.

<sup>31</sup> According to mothers and teachers in Bogatigaun, Achham district.

<sup>32</sup> As reported mothers in Bogatigaun, Achham district.

<sup>33</sup> According to children in Bogatigaun, Achham district.

<sup>34</sup> According to teachers in Bogatigaun, Achham district.

<sup>35</sup> Based on reporting by children in Bogatigaun (Achham), Sanfebagar (Achham) and Bargadawa (Kapilbastu).

## VULNERABILITY PROFILE OF HOUSEHOLDS

**Female headed households** have higher chances of experiencing all education related coping mechanisms: 18 per cent of the female headed households reduced their children's attendance to make them work while only 7 per cent of male headed household did the same. The average monthly educational expenditure of male headed households was NRs. 675 compared to NRs. 630 for female headed households. The same phenomenon was observed in community level monitoring: in Achham, work related migration of male household members to India has left mothers as solely responsible for the household. The earnings from India rarely reach households (as reported by mothers of Bogatigaun and teachers of Sanfebagar, Achham district). Since mothers' work load is heavy and their payment level lower<sup>36</sup>, children from these households have to work in order to support their mothers, especially in peak agricultural seasons.

**Large households:** like in previous quarters, household size and number of children below 12 years of age was found to have an influence over household decisions on education related issues, especially in student attendance and sending children to school to benefit from incentives. Children from large families are also more involved in paid and household work<sup>37</sup>. Households with more children below 12 years were found more vulnerable to take educational related coping measures (see Chart – 10).

**Chart – 10: Coping Score by Family Size**

Source: Household Level Monitoring

	Household size		Children below 12 years of age	
	Less than 6	6 or more	Less than 3	3 or more
Sending children of age (5-12) from school to work	7	10	7	16
Reducing educational expenses	18	19	18	27
Shifting children to less expensive school	8	10	8	15
Sending children to school for incentives	10	7	12	6
Dropping their children out of school	2	2	2	4

**Households in Terai:** Geographic locations of the household (Mountain, hill or Terai) had an influence over the coping mechanisms adopted at the household level. Households in Terai have adopted more educational related coping mechanisms compared to households in Hill and Mountain: 12 per cent of households from Terai (only 5 per cent of mountain households) made their children irregular in school and 5 percent of Terai households took their children out of school (see Chart – 11). In this quarter, there was no significant difference observed in coping mechanisms adopted between households in the Karnali Zone, suffering from the food crisis and other households<sup>38</sup>.

**Chart – 11: Coping by Geographic Regions**

(Source: Household Level Monitoring)

	Mountain	Hill	Terai
1. Sending children of age (5-12) from school to work	5	7	12
2. Reducing educational expenses	11	21	19
3. Shifting children to less expensive school	26	9	2
4. Sending children to school for incentives	2	7	13
5. Taking their children out of school	0	0	5

**Dalit households:** Like in previous quarters, Dalits were found vulnerable to take educational related coping measures. 14 per cent of Dalit households made their children irregular in school, 3 per cent had their child drop out of school and 29 per cent reduced educational expenses in taking education related coping mechanisms (see Chart – 12<sup>39</sup>). In this quarter, Dalit households spent four times less on education (NRs. 159 per month) compared to other castes (NRs. 865 per month). Average monthly educational expenses for Janajatis (NRs. 595) were higher than for Dalits but lower than for other groups.

<sup>36</sup> Daily wage being only 125 for female compared to Rs. 200 for male in Sanfebagar and 100 for female compared to Rs. 150 for male in Bogatigaun, Achham district.

<sup>37</sup> According to mothers in Bogatigaun, Achham district.

<sup>38</sup> This might be due to the fact that since January 2010, WFP is using a revised sampling design for VAM with enhanced representativeness of all geographic and development regions. In this quarter, the proportion of surveyed households from Karnali zone is lower than in previous quarters (30 out of 770 households).

<sup>39</sup> Other groups include Brahmin, Chhetri, Terai Middle Caste and Muslims.

**Chart - 12: Coping Score by Caste/Ethnicity**

Source: Household Level Monitoring

Coping	Dalit	Janajati	Others
1. Sending children of age (5-12) from school to work	14	7	8
2. Reducing educational expenses	29	13	18
3. Shifting children to less expensive school	14	6	11
4. Sending children to school for incentives	8	8	9
5. Dropping their children out of school	3	1	2

**Poor households:** as observed consistently in previous quarters, the poverty level of households has an influence over the coping mechanisms used by households (see Chart – 13). Similarly to previous quarters, households from middle economic condition are shifting their children to less expensive schools, while poor households may already have their children in the cheapest schools. Proxy indicators of poverty like

availability of toilets in the household were found to have an impact over the household decisions related to coping. 11 per cent of households not having toilet (only 4% of those having toilets) made their children irregular to school and 24 per cent of households not having toilets (only 10% of those having toilets) reduced educational expenses. Households having no proper drinking water facilities were also found more likely to take education related coping mechanisms. This quarter's household level monitoring also found that households dependent on daily wage income<sup>40</sup> have higher chances to take education related coping measures.

**Source of Light:** Like in the fourth quarter of 2009, households using kerosene as a source

of light were more likely to take education related coping mechanisms, especially to make their children irregular in school: 16 per cent made their children irregular in school and 6 per cent took their children out of school (see Chart – 13). In recent days, load shedding has forced households to use kerosene (Rs. 70/l and often unavailable in local market<sup>41</sup>) or wax candles<sup>42</sup> as a source of light which are very expensive compared to electricity. Due to this, students are getting fewer hours of study during evening time.

**Illiterate households:** Unlike previous quarters, the literacy status of parents was found to have an influence on households' decisions related to education coping measures in this quarter. Illiterate parents are more likely to make their children work by leaving school<sup>43</sup>: around 13 per cent of illiterate households (only 7% of literate households) made their children irregular in school and 5 per cent of illiterate households took their children out of school (see Chart – 14). On a monthly average, literate households spent four times more (NRs. 865) than illiterate households (NRs. 263) in first quarter of 2010. Similarly, the increasing education level of household heads decreases the vulnerability of households to take educational coping measures.

**Chart – 13: Coping by Wealth Category**

Source: Household Level Monitoring

Coping	Poor	Middle	Rich
1. Sending children of age (5-12) from school to work	12	5	2
2. Reducing educational expenses	24	16	0
3. Shifting children to less expensive school	12	8	0
4. Sending children to school for incentives	8	10	0
5. Drop out of school	3	1	1

**Chart – 14: Coping by literacy level of households**

(Source: Household Level Monitoring)

	Literate	Illiterate
Sending children of age (5-12) from school to work	7	13
Reducing educational expenses	17	21
Shifting children to less expensive school	7	13
Sending children to school for incentives	8	9
Dropping their children out of school	1	5

<sup>40</sup> Share of wage based earning to household earning

<sup>41</sup> Reported by mothers in Sanfebagar, Accham district

<sup>42</sup> Reported by mothers in Bogatigaun, Accham district

<sup>43</sup> According to teachers in Sanfebagar, Achham district