

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS OF ARMED CONFLICT VICTIMS: A STUDY OF KALIKOT DISTRICT

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Abstract

This study examines the socio-economic and cultural impacts of the armed conflict in Kalikot District, Nepal, and evaluates the effectiveness of post-conflict recovery efforts. The research focuses on the experiences of displaced populations, including changes in their socio-economic status, educational outcomes, and cultural practices. Data collected from 115 respondents reveals that 47% attribute their hardships to both Maoist insurgents and state forces, with 42% specifically blaming the state's actions. Despite significant disruptions, 45% of respondents believe their social status has improved especially among those who supported or aligned with the Maoists. Educational status showed a decline, with only 22.6% rating it as "Good" after displacement, compared to 80% before. Cultural practices also suffered, with only 22.6% viewing them as "Good" post-displacement, down from 80% previously. Support from local NGOs, INGOs, and government agencies has been vital in addressing immediate needs through projects in peace-building, human rights, education and infrastructure development. However, while short-term recovery efforts have been impactful, there is a need for sustained, long-term strategies to fully address the complex and enduring effects of the conflict. This study underscores the importance of integrating both immediate relief and comprehensive development plans to support lasting recovery and resilience in post-conflict communities. There is a big challenges to uplift the socio-economic status and to enhance the livelihood of the armed conflict victim peoples in Kalikot district. Dialogues are necessary among the stakeholders in order to create the lasting peace. The real victimized people are need to be identified properly and there is need to have psycho-socio and economic support to create the lasting peace in order to create social harmony.

Keywords: Armed conflict, displacement, economic crisis, Maoist insurgency, resilience

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Introduction

Armed conflict has long-lasting impacts on the socio-economic fabric of affected communities. In regions where conflicts have occurred, the consequences can be severe and multifaceted, affecting individuals and communities long after the violence has ceased. Kalikot District, located in the mid-western region of Nepal, has experienced significant disruption due to armed conflict, particularly during the Maoist insurgency that lasted from the late 1990s to the early 2000s. This study aims to explore the socio-economic status of victims in Kalikot District, providing insights into their current conditions and the enduring impacts of the conflict (Pyakurel, (2007).

Kalikot District is characterized by its rugged terrain and limited infrastructure, which complicates access to resources and services. The area has a history of socio-economic challenges, including poverty, limited educational opportunities, and inadequate healthcare facilities. The armed conflict exacerbated these issues, disrupting local economies, displacing populations, and causing widespread trauma.

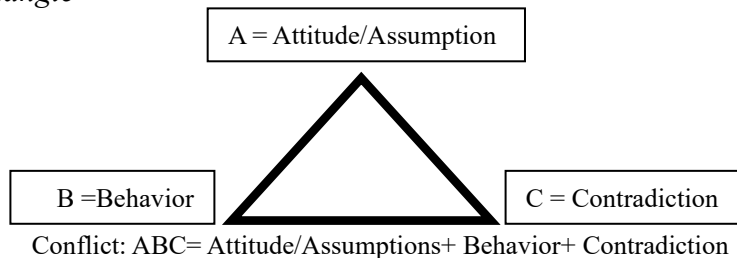
The Maoist insurgency, which sought to overthrow the monarchy and establish a people's republic, deeply affected Kalikot District. The conflict led to violence, property destruction, and displacement, leaving many individuals and families in precarious situations. Despite the official end of the conflict in 2006, its impact on the socio-economic conditions of the population remains a pressing issue. Policy Development: Accurate data on the conditions of conflict victims can inform government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in designing effective rehabilitation and support programs. Resource Allocation: Insights from the study can help in the equitable distribution of resources and aid, ensuring that those most affected receive the necessary support. Long-Term Recovery: Assessing current socio-economic conditions can help in evaluating the long-term recovery and resilience of conflict-affected populations, guiding future interventions.

This violence is one of not most important obstacle to development in Nepal. It destroys human, physical, social, and natural, capital, making it difficult to create wealth and compromising the quality of life. There is to come out a clear definition of internally victim's more peoples by the government of Nepal other organization agencies. However, UN guidance principal on conflict victim's is taken as working definition conflict victims in their place internally displace person are person or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged threat to flee to leaves their homes or place of habitual residence in particular as a result of or in order to avoid conflict situation of generalized violence.

The armed conflict in Kalikot District, Nepal, has left a profound impact on its victims, particularly among displaced families, children, and women. Displaced families, often moving from rural to urban areas, face dire living conditions marked by unsanitary environments and inadequate access to resources. Children in these situations suffer from severe educational barriers, with many unable to attend school due to

financial constraints. Those who end up living on the streets are at high risk of exploitation, including sexual abuse and child labor, and frequently experience malnutrition and psychological trauma from witnessing violence. Women, especially in rural areas, face heightened vulnerability, with many being driven into prostitution and struggling with limited economic opportunities and low literacy rates. The conflict has exacerbated these challenges, deepening existing socio-economic disparities and impeding the long-term recovery and development of these affected populations. Understanding these issues is crucial for designing effective interventions and support systems to address the ongoing needs of these vulnerable groups (INSEC, 2004). “Conflict happens when two or more people or groups have, or think they have, incompatible goals”. According to Galtung, the conflict structure consists of three parts: Attitudes, behavior and situations that interact and create conflicts between actors.

Figure 1:
The conflict triangle



Conflict has many meanings in everyday life. To some it refers to behavior or action. There is conflict when a trade union goes on strike or an employer locks out its employees. It is also conflict when two states are at war with one another and where battlefield events determine their relations. The actions constitute the conflict. If this were all however, it would mean that a conflict would end once this behavior ended. Few would agree to this. A cease-fire is not the end of a conflict. Even verbal statements, non-violent actions, the mobilization of petitions, demonstrations, boycotts and sanctions may only indicate that there is an interlude in the conflict. Actions may resume at some later stage. There may still be dissatisfaction. Obviously, conflict is more than the behavior of the parties alone (Upadhyay, 2006).

Armed conflict in Kalikot District, significant changes have occurred in the region's socio-economic structure. Many victims, displaced from their homes, sought refuge in safer areas with the aid of local governance, NGOs, and INGOs. As these individuals began returning to their original homes, they faced considerable challenges in rebuilding their lives. The study will explore the current status of these returnees, assessing how many have successfully resettled and examining their post-conflict daily lives. The conflict's aftermath left a legacy of violence, including looting and family disruptions, which continues to impact their recovery. Socio-economic stability is

crucial for human well-being, and the conflict's impact has had a ripple effect on national economic stability. Despite the importance of understanding these impacts, there is limited research on the socio-economic and cultural effects on victims. This research aims to investigate the ongoing negative effects on the livelihoods of these individuals, identify unresolved issues, and explore solutions for their resettlement and sustainable livelihood, with cooperation from both local and national authorities.

Objectives

This study aims to assess the socio-economic situation of victims' people due to ongoing political turmoil that led to the people in the path of critical situation.

Methods

The basic purpose of this study is to explore the reality and nature of socio-economic conditions of victim's people. Therefore, both exploratory and descriptive research designs are used to the real facts of the current issue of victims. As mentioned in the proposal, District Headquarter is selected the highly effect the conflict party of research site. The other research site is the place named Malkot, Chhapra, Daha, and Sukatiua of Kalikot.

The study is based on both qualitative and quantitative information data collected from both primary as well as secondary sources. The primary data were based on information gained through interaction in the selected sites whereas the secondary source will be based on different articles, journals in daily newspapers, books, reports and articles published by different researchers, various INGO's and NGO's.

Primary data are collected from household/individual survey, observation methods, unstructured interviews, group discussions and questionnaire. A collected through the major people in the Headquarter like Maoist area political leader, CDO, DSP, LPC local reporters, teachers and workers of NGOS, INGOS conflict report in Karnali and human right organization.

For this study a well- knitted questionnaire had been developing for the studies. Most of the questions were pre-coded and the questionnaire was also pre-tested and then required modifications were made before the fieldwork.

The secondary data are collected from articles, books, journals, magazines, newspapers, reports prepared by different organization. All the related document, reports, and articles, strategy papers, books were reviewed in order to gain better and effective information about the topic of the study.

Both quantitative and qualitative analysis is conducted on the basis of reviewing of existing rules and regulations, available documents and related studies of victim people. Similarly, socio-economic changes and reason for being a victim's people has been analyzed. Finally, discussions and suggestions are made on the basis of existing policies and program to protect these people from victim. The quantitative data obtained from structured questionnaires has been processed through validation, editing and

coding. After that, these data are presented in the tabular form and then interpretation is made. The analyzed data were interpreted in order to establish relationships between the variables of the study.

Results and Discussion

Demographic and Socio-Economic Status of the Respondent

The demographic and socio-economic status of respondents reflects the profound impact of the armed conflict on their lives. According to the study, 47% of respondents feel that their socio-economic structure was severely disrupted by the conflict. They report that the Maoist insurgency and military actions devastated their livelihood patterns, leading to a significant decline in their quality of life. The threat and insecurity during the conflict prevented them from living peacefully and hindered their freedom of movement for social and economic activities. Consequently, many were forced to relocate from their original homes, which further diminished their livelihood opportunities. In contrast, 38% of respondents believe that their social and economic conditions have remained unchanged since before the conflict, while 15% feel that their situation has improved. This data highlights the varied experiences of conflict-affected individuals with a significant portion experiencing considerable setbacks and a smaller segment perceiving some degree of improvement in their socio-economic status.

Caste/Ethnicity

In the place of origin there was dominance of particular caste/ethnicity in particular area but in the place of destination it is found that people are bound to live in different mix-up caste/ethnicity environment area.

Table 1

Distribution of respondents by caste/ethnicity

Caste/ Ethnicity	Male	Female	Total	
	%	%	No	%
Thakuri	26.5	6.7	38	33.2
Chhetri	22.3	4.3	31	26.9
Brahmin	15.5	3.6	22	19.13
Dalit	10.7	1.4	14	12.1
Other	7.2	1.8	10	8.6
Total	95	20	115	-

Source: Field survey, 2023

Table 1 shows that, the demographic distribution of respondents by caste and ethnicity reveals notable variations. Among the 115 respondents, Thakuri individuals

constitute the largest group, representing 33.2% of the total, with 26.5% being male and 6.7% female. Chhetri respondents follow, making up 26.9% of the total, including 22.3% males and 4.3% females. Brahmin respondents account for 19.13%, with 15.5% males and 3.6% females. Dalit respondents represent 12.1% of the total, with 10.7% males and 1.4% females. Lastly, individuals from other caste or ethnic groups make up 8.6%, comprising 7.2% males and 1.8% females. This distribution highlights the diverse caste and ethnic composition among the respondents, reflecting the broader demographic landscape in the study area.

Education Status

Education is one of the main necessities of present people basically for children and young. This study shows a peculiar impact of the conflict on education. Education percentage of the people increases after victims is presented in flowing table.

Table 2

Educational status before and after situation of victims

Educational Status	Before displacement		After displacement	
	No.	%	No.	%
Good	28	24.3	33	28.6
Normal	42	36.5	57	49.5
Bad	45	39.1	25	21.7
Total	115	100	115	100

Source: Field survey, 2023

Above table shows that, the educational status of the respondent's family members before conflict period is found the educational status of respondents before and after displacement shows significant changes. Before displacement, 24.3% of respondents rated their educational status as "Good," while 36.5% considered it "Normal," and 39.1% rated it as "Bad." After displacement, there is a noticeable shift: 28.6% of respondents now describe their educational status as "Good," and 49.5% view it as "Normal." However, the proportion of those rating their status as "Bad" has decreased to 21.7%. This shift indicates an overall improvement in educational status following displacement, with more respondents now reporting better or average conditions compared to before.

Effects of Conflict in the research area

The study reveals that in Kalikot District, the impact of the armed conflict is perceived differently among respondents. According to the findings, 30% of respondents believe they were most affected by both the Maoist insurgents and the army. A significant 42% attribute their hardships primarily to the state, which includes

the army, armed police forces, and local police. Additionally, 38% of respondents feel that the Maoists were the main source of their suffering. This data indicates that the state's actions had a substantial influence on the population, contributing to ongoing feelings of insecurity and fear. The high percentage of respondents attributing their difficulties to the behaviors of the army, Maoists, and general threats underscores the complex nature of the conflict's impact, which has been a major driver of migration in the area.

Effect on Social Status

The impact of the conflict on social status in Kalikot District shows a divided perception among respondents. According to the study, 55% of respondents believe that the conflict has not improved their social status, while 45% feel that their social standing has been enhanced to some extent due to the conflict. This close divide indicates that opinions on the conflict's impact are nearly balanced. Those who perceive an improvement in their social status are often individuals who either became affiliated with the Maoists or supported their cause. For these respondents, the conflict has led to a sense of political empowerment and increased social awareness, which they attribute to their elevated social status. Consequently, the significant minority who believe their social status has been positively impacted reflects how the conflict has benefited certain groups, highlighting a complex and nuanced view of its effects on social structures.

Effect on Cultural Practices

Nepal is a place where we can find variety of culture and religion. Every single people celebrate their own culture and religion. When the conflict victims have compelled to displace them to leave their place of origin, so to find out the differences in their culture and tradition in comparison to before and after change the social norms and value of culture in the victims people, this sector cultural and traditional practices status is studied. The cultural and traditional practices status is presented in flowing table.

Table 3

Cultural and traditional status before and after of victims

Cultural & traditional practices status	Before displacement		After displacement	
	No.	%	No.	%
Good	92	80	26	22.6
Normal	20	17.3	66	57.3
Bad	3	2.6	23	20
Total	115	100.0	115	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2023

Table shows that, the status of cultural and traditional practices in Kalikot District shows a notable shift before and after displacement. Before displacement, 80% of respondents rated their cultural and traditional practices as "Good," reflecting a strong adherence and positive perception of these practices. However, after displacement, only 22.6% of respondents view these practices as "Good," indicating a significant decline. In contrast, the percentage of respondents who consider their cultural and traditional practices as "Normal" has increased from 17.3% before displacement to 57.3% afterward. Additionally, those rating their practices as "Bad" rose from 2.6% before displacement to 20% after displacement. This data illustrates that while cultural and traditional practices were largely valued before displacement, the upheaval has led to a deterioration in their perceived quality and adherence, with more respondents now viewing them as either normal or problematic.

Support to NGO/ INGOS, GOV and other group

In the aftermath of the conflict in Kalikot District, various actors have played crucial roles in post-conflict peace-building efforts. Humanitarian interventions have traditionally prioritized meeting the immediate biological and material needs of conflict-affected populations. However, local NGOs and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) have also been actively involved through a range of project interventions aimed at sustaining peace and improving living conditions. These projects include initiatives focused on human rights, education, health and sanitation, food security, livelihoods, and physical infrastructure development, benefiting numerous impoverished and vulnerable rural communities.

Specifically, some NGOs have implemented Peace Building and Accountability Promotion initiatives in Kalikot, striving to enhance local awareness and encourage active participation in human rights and peace-building processes. These efforts aim to foster long-term peace and community resilience. While these initiatives contribute to immediate recovery, many focus on short-term development goals. The involvement of these various actors highlights the multifaceted approach required to address the diverse needs of post-conflict communities, encompassing both immediate relief and longer-term development and policy reforms.

Conclusions

The aftermath of the armed conflict in Kalikot District has had deep and multifaceted impacts on its socio-economic and cultural landscape. This study has provided a comprehensive examination of how the conflict has shaped the lives of the affected populations, revealing a complex interplay between the destruction caused by the conflict and the ongoing efforts to rebuild and recover.

The findings indicate that a substantial proportion of respondents 47% believe they were most affected by both the Maoist insurgents and the state, with 42% attributing their hardships primarily to the state's actions, including those of the army

and police. This perception underscores the profound influence of state and insurgent actions on the lives of individuals in the district, contributing to ongoing feelings of insecurity and mistrust. Despite this, a significant 45% of respondents feel that their social status has improved to some extent due to the conflict, particularly among those who supported or became involved with the Maoists. This improvement reflects a sense of political empowerment and social awareness experienced by some individuals, highlighting the varied impacts of the conflict on different segments of the population.

In terms of educational outcomes, the study reveals a notable shift from before to after displacement. While 80% of respondents initially rated their educational status as "Good," this figure dropped significantly to 22.6% post-displacement. Conversely, the percentage of those rating their educational status as "Normal" increased markedly, indicating that while educational conditions have generally improved, they have not fully recovered to pre-conflict levels. The rise in those considering their educational status as "Bad" post-displacement further reflects ongoing challenges in this area.

Cultural and traditional practices have also suffered as a result of displacement. Prior to displacement, 80% of respondents viewed their cultural practices as "Good," but this figure plummeted to 22.6% afterward. The increase in those considering these practices as "Normal" and "Bad" highlights the erosion of traditional practices and the challenges of maintaining cultural continuity in the wake of conflict and displacement.

Support from local NGOs, INGOs, and government bodies has been crucial in addressing the immediate needs of conflict-affected populations. Various projects aimed at sustaining peace, promoting human rights, improving education, health, and sanitation, and enhancing food security and livelihoods have made a significant impact. These initiatives have been instrumental in supporting the recovery and development of the region. However, while short-term relief efforts have been beneficial, there is a critical need for sustained focus on long-term development and policy reform to ensure comprehensive recovery.

The study highlights that the post-conflict environment in Kalikot District remains fraught with challenges, despite the efforts of various support organizations. The conflict's long-lasting effects on socio-economic conditions and cultural practices emphasize the need for ongoing and multifaceted support strategies. Future interventions should aim to address both immediate humanitarian needs and long-term development goals to foster resilience and sustainable recovery. By balancing short-term relief with long-term planning, stakeholders can better support the affected communities in their journey toward recovery and stability.

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