

**Social and Economic Status of Squatters of Samintara
Settlement of Pokhara**

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

The general objective of this study is to trace the socio-economic status of squatters of Samintara settlement of Pokhara. Through a scrutiny of socio-economic status of 50 households of squatter settlements of Samintara settlements of Pokhara, this study explore(s) and derive(s) some lessons and challenges related to socio-economic status and the consequent tribulations and implications. Squatter are those types of people, who have no land of their own or any other properties with their ownership. Poor people gathering from different places and different castes and ethnicity who form a settlement are known as squatter's settlement. The squatter settlement of Samintara is an unplanned settlement, having simple houses and low Socio-economic status of the people.

This study deduced that there exists a complex anecdote behind living the life of a squatter. Some people migrated here for seeking jobs or work, as they did not get the opportunity to work in their previous villages. More people came here because of landslide and flooding in their previous habitat. Some people had other causes e.g. easy access to roads, city life and good education in city area etc of Pokhara which acted as a pull factor for their migration to this region. This study deduce(s) that the main causes of becoming squatter and leading the life of a squatter were pull factors (job opportunity, education facility and transportation, communication etc. of the Pokhara valley) and push factors (landslide and flooding, poverty, etc.) of their place of origin.

Social indicators encompassing a wide range of aspects are crucial for generating their consequences on development. Measures to indicate social progress, "social indicators," have been conversed in this study, and the importance of economic indicators considered undeniable. Empirical measures of cultural states in comparison also remain vital. This study traced how an integrated framework combining social and cultural indicators of development may be applied to measure social status of the squatters of Samintara. Embedded with social status, the religious practice of the settlement is simple. More people used to celebrate their festivals in simple forms. They celebrate their festivals from religious perspective. It has been comprehended that there are different religions and different castes people in the study area. However, they are helpful to each other and

*there has been not much conflict with other but some caste conflict has been seen here. There has been a rise to **culture of poverty**—influencing all aspects of dalit squatters life*

In the context of health, squatter visit health service centers for health check up when they get sick. Some people go to regional hospital, some go to private clinic, and some others go to pharmacy and purchase medicines from the medicine seller without a physician's prescription and this tendency is dangerous as it can create dangerous health consequences in future. The patient may die of wrong or date expired medicines. Family planning has also been practiced in the Samintara squatter's area among the married couples. It has been deduced that permanent family planning was adopted more than the temporary measures of family planning. Women have been found to participate actively, more than male in family planning practices. This shows the rising consciousness of women despite the prevailing socio-economic and education related disparities in the study area. Among the sampled respondents in Samintara adult illiteracy rate is high because absence of adult literacy program in that area. However the school attendance of new generation is higher than old generation and this shows the progressive attitude of the squatters and their optimism for a better future lying ahead of them.

This study has construed that women are partners for sustainable development. Thus, they have prominent role to play in development along with males but it is not so in authenticity as different sorts of gender inequalities curtail their roles in the society. Many women are involved in wage earning labor work along with males but they are bound to do household works also thus they face the dichotomy of dual role – household chore vs. wage earning labor works. Women also face discriminations in wages even for the same work. In reality the plight of female and gender equalities in Samintara has underwent through tough tribulations related to social, cultural and economic matters.

Regarding the economic status, the maximum numbers of squatters are engaged in daily wages works and many people are engaged in Mistri (labor) work. Few people are pursuing businesses in the study area. Many people depend on labor work in Samintara settlement. The main source of household income is labor wages whose percentage is twenty-nine. The income sources of households are more than one occupation in some houses but many houses have only one source of income—that is wage labor.

Comparatively squatter's income is lower than other people's but within the settlement, those squatters' households which have more than one people engaged in some earnings, have definitely better income than others do. Nowadays, many people have gone to foreign countries, as a result some household's income is raising due to their remittance but in general, average income in squatters is low in Samintara settlement. Poverty is rampant to such an extent that not all squatters could buy their wearing clothes. Some squatters buy themselves; some used to get from their relatives, whereas some received their clothes from others. The majority of households do not have toilet facilities available in that settlement. They used to go to open land for defecation. This clarifies that squatter's awareness towards sanitation is low and there exists no any organizations to make them aware. This is owing to poverty that squatters are unable to construct toilet. This which may create serious health and sanitation problem related consequences in future.

Housing opportunities are very closely related to economic status of a family. Better housing means sound economic status. In Samintara significant numbers of households have only one room available in their houses. It is understandable that many people live in small houses in squatter settlements and this presents the worst economic conditions of the squatters in Samintara. Embedded to economic status, the availability of commodities, amenities of life and entertainment is vital. In Samintara more families used to listen to radio for entertainment. In total, 59% households use radio and 33% people have TV and only 8% households have VCD/DVD. Therefore, the people in squatter settlement have a comparatively improving access to the means of entertainment despite their grim economic conditions. This shows the jolly and warm-hearted nature of the squatters despite problems.

Of the total 50 households, the landline phone is not available in any household; however, 21% people had cell phone (mobile phone). Most of the households have used electricity in their houses and 19% households used gas stove for cooking. However, few people possessed cupboard and sofa. Squatter people had different tribulations, which they are facing in present. They are addicted to different types of infatuation. As a whole,

squatter people were used to drink Alcohol more commonly. Among 50 household respondents, only 11 people did not have any types of addiction. Therefore, addiction-----may be alcoholism, smoking, using tobacco, marijuana are the major problems of squatters, which is at appalling rate deteriorating their socio-economic status. Based on the Marxist approach it is summarized at the end that the squatter of Samintara faced many social and economic problems in the settlement; even the problem of **proletarianisation** may be the possible consequences in future. Since squatters came there from different places having different cultures, they have some sort of difficulties to interact with each other initially and there may be the lack of class-consciousness, class solidarity and the polarization of these squatters for more rights. Thus, their problems remain intact.

Social, economic and political divergences or conflict are the core of change as a general process and essential law of development occurring amidst scarcity. Unequal distribution of resources, political power and centuries old feudalistic elites exploitations amidst the rhetoric of **Samabesi** (inclusiveness) lead to the rise of crisis and instability, ultimately leading to conflict and violence and when politicized got a political color even in the form of political violence. People socio-economic and the related tribulations, inclusiveness and all genuine issues ought to be addressed in time. However, it has not been so in Samintara owing to the apathy of the government, negligence and lack of political commitment. Due to this reason, the socio-economic status of the poor squatter has not been upgraded even after 20 years old history of Samintara settlement.

Likewise, the more imbalanced the regional development efforts especially urban mainland versus squatters settlement and allotment of limited resources; the wider will be the inconsistency of interest between foremost and secondary segments for receiving the power on possessions and resources. It is deduced that more the squatters sentiment is ignored, more stress will be created in the society. It is construed that owing to low social and economic status, squatters are generally seen more as "problem creators" in Pokhara than as a group of people who are poor with low socio-economic status and have genuine rights to live a dignified life of human in their restricted area.

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ACRONYMS

B.S.	:	Bikram Sambat
CBS	:	Central Bureau of Statistics
DDC	:	District Development Committee
FAO	:	Food and Agriculture Organization
FGD	:	Focused Group Discussion
GoN	:	Government of Nepal
GSE	:	Gender and Social Equity
Ha	:	Hectares
HH	:	Household
HMG/N	:	His Majesties Government of Nepal
INGO	:	International Non-Government Organization
NGO	:	Non-Government Organization
SAARC	:	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
UN	:	United Nation
VDC	:	Village Development Committee

NEPALI WORDS USED IN THE STUDY

Akadasi	:	Consecrated and holy day of Hindus
Ama Samuh	:	Mothers group
Bahun	:	Brahmin
Bari	:	Unirrigated land area
Basti	:	Settlement
Basanta Panchami	:	Also called Saraswati Puja, a festival of goddess Saraswati observed during the month of February. This festival also marks the advent of spring season.
Bista	:	High caste elites contributing to poor <i>dalits</i> through patron-client relationship.
Brahmin, Chettri	:	Castes of Nepal
Chaudikar	:	Guard
Dalits	:	So called low caste untouchables
Dashain, Tihar, Teej	:	Festivals of Nepal
Janajati	:	Ethnic group
Jharfuk	:	Traditional beliefs of treatment based on sorceries
Khet	:	Irrigated land
Lalpurja	:	Land ownership certificate
Loktantrik	:	Democratic
Mistri	:	laborer for house construction.
Pakho	:	Terraced unirrigated land area in hills
Ropanies	:	Unit of land measurement
Sadasaya	:	Member
Samabesi	:	Inclusive. A much discussed word in Nepal especially during and after the people's movement of April 2006. Samabesi envisions of the inclusion of all—poor, Dalits,

females, ethnic groups, sukumbasi etc under the stream state and Nepali nationality. In this study Samabesi denotes the inclusion of every one in development process.

Samiti	:	Committee
Sarkar	:	Government
Sivaratri-	:	Special day related to Lord Shiva the Hindu god.
Sukumbasi	:	Squatters or the landless people
Tamang	:	Ethnic group of Nepal
Thalus	:	Elites
Tole	:	Hamlet
Tole Sudhar Samiti	:	Committee for lawn or hamlet improvement