

Voices of Bhutanese Youth:
Through Their Dreams, Experiences,
Struggles and Achievements

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Note

The voices of the Bhutanese youths have not been ever recorded- this publication, therefore, contains individual stories and views of young people on wide-ranging issues pertaining to them. The Centre Bhutan Studies conducted unstructured interviews of 209 young people across twelve Dzongkhags, focusing on the individual experiences, problems and perceptions about life. This document is intended to provide the interested groups and organizations with thoughts and views of young people on a range of issues related to youth.

In some cases, the names of these young people have been modified as to avoid any blame against them for sharing their feelings with us.

Part A contains the youth narratives that cover various themes on youth: education, employment, family-related problems, dreams and other challenges. These narratives are recorded as related to the interviewers by the respondents. I would like to thank Tshering C. Dorji for editing this report.

Part B includes the analysis of the narrative report. It mainly focuses on problems faced by the children of poor families in relation to education and employment. I am thankful to Yeshi Dema for doing this analysis.

Part C contains a report based on the questionnaires survey of 942 young people in 12 Dzongkhags by Dorji Penjore. This report contains the issue of youth and their relations with the families.

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The outcome of the Youth Study Project is a monograph series No. 13, titled “**Youth in Bhutan: Education, Employment and Development**” and this Narrative. While the monograph will be distributed widely, the Narrative is printed in limited copies intending to make it available only for the interest groups dealing with the youth development.

Lham Dorji

PART A

Narratives

BUMTHANG DZONGKHAG

I was late for school!

When I was young, my parents tried to send me to school but I did not get admission. A year later, my parents tried to get an admission but the headmaster told my parents that I was too old to join school.

I am the only daughter in the family, and am the youngest of all. I have two brothers and both of them are married. I have never been away from my parents and neither do I want to do so. My brother's family too lives with us so we have quite a large family. All in total there are 10 family members. Five of them work.

With a large family like mine, it becomes difficult to lead a normal life. I am working on the road and though my department provides us with ration it is never enough. Some families are given more rations in a month. I do not know why but I cannot complain as well.

When our ration food falls short, we are forced to buy from our pocket money, or sometimes on credit. The payment we get finishes in paying the debts. While working near town areas, we do not worry much about food insufficiency. But when work is in isolated places with no shops around, food is a big problem.

As we work on menial labor on the roads, people take us for granted. Once I was clearing the drains by the road with my friend when two drunken boys came and started inviting us to come with them. When we refused the boys began to pull us. Luckily, we got ourselves free from their clutches and ran home.

The circle of friends that I met till date was not so good except for one called Dan Maya. One of my friends created a misunderstanding between my parents and me that I was involved in an affair with a man.

I was interested in studying but I did not get a chance to go to school. I have now joined non-formal education classes. It has been a week now. When I was young my parents tried to put me in school but I did not get admission since the seats were already full. A year later, my parents tried to get an admission but the headmaster told my parents that I was too old to join school.

S. ZANGMO (female)

I studied up to class IV and dropped out

I studied up to class IV and dropped out, as I was very dull in studies.

I failed in every class. I am the third eldest among six children. I have three younger siblings who are studying. Though my parents could well support me, I was reluctant to study as I felt that I did not have the intelligence to do well in studies. Once I went to Paro to weave and sell traditional clothes. But I had to come back as my house rent was more than what I could earn. Right now, I am helping my parents at home. I am weaving *yathra* as well.

Before I used to sell my goods to the foreigners who used to pay me generously. The price that I get from local shopkeepers is much less than the price I used to get from foreigners. I am forced to sell it to them as I was told that selling *yathra* on the road would give a bad impression to the foreigners and that the government might charge me for that. I stay indoors most of the time, thus I have only a little idea about the world outside and I do not have any aspirations.

W. LHAMO (female)

My friends forced me to smoke

I am a student of Chumey High School. I am an adopted son of an old man and woman from Kurje.

My foster parents took me from my real parents when I was four years old. My foster parents are actually my uncle and aunty. They took me because they did not have any child of their own and they treat me as their own son. Till now I have not faced any financial problem as such. I feel happy to have been adopted by them. I sometimes feel that if I had been with my real parents I would not have reached this stage.

Till date my foster parents have done all that they could for me. They give me proper guidance and advice.

Once in school when I was in class VII, under the pressure of my friends I took up smoking. My friends actually forced me to take a puff or two. The world was spinning. It was a very dreadful experience. I felt very guilty for having smoked a cigarette. I still regret for having taken it. After that incident I swore never to take any substance of such kind.

T. WANGCHU (male)

My father was irresponsible

When I was in class IV, my mother and father had a dreadful fight. My mother was frustrated at my father's drunken behavior.

I am a married woman. I have been married for the last one year. I studied till class VI and was forced to drop out. My father was a drunkard and we had a lot of financial difficulties at home.

When I was in school, I did not have enough pens and pencils and used to borrow from my friends. Once one of my friends lost her pencil and started accusing me. But later on it was found that one boy had taken it.

For one month, we did not talk to each other. But again she came to say sorry and we became friends once again.

When I was in class IV, my mother and father had a dreadful fight. My mother was frustrated at my father's drunken behavior. He always used to spend his money on his drinks and the family had to face financial problems.

It all started like this. My mother nagged about my father's behaviour, and he hit my mother so hard that she started to bleed. Small fights were a daily routine for them. Studying at home was thus difficult.

At the age of 16, I met my husband and got married. I found no point in studying because my father was a very irresponsible person and was least bothered about my education.

P. L (17 years, female)

No health card, No education

When reaching the school for admission, the headmaster did not accept me, as I could not present my health card because it was burnt down along with my house. So, that day ended my hopes for getting educated.

I am Rinzin Norbu from Bardo, Zhemgang. Though I am just 10 years old right now, many misfortunes have befallen upon me in this short period. I can clearly remember each and every bad experience that I have encountered.

When I was five years old, my two-storied house in Zhemgang was burnt down by a fire accident. I was there with my mother at home. My father was on his duty. My mother and I were in the kitchen preparing our lunch. Suddenly, a strong gust of wind blew, which made the fire in the kitchen ignite some dry firewood beside the oven. We tried to extinguish the fire but could not do so. Slowly, the fire spread and

engulfed the whole house in flames. We escaped the fire but our house and property were lost.

I could not even speak a word but just stared at my mother's blank face. We did not have a shelter to stay. So we went to our grandpa's place.

But the worst thing that happened to me was the loss of my father. My mother took him to the hospital but it was already late. He died of a disease. Now it's just my mother, younger brother and me. But at least we had our grandpa to help us through all these hard times.

After a few years, my mother got remarried. Two girls were born from our step-father, who was also not good to us. He always differentiated us from his daughter and used to shout at us, and occasionally cane us for no reason. I, being the eldest was made to do every work at home, but even then he was not satisfied. He even used to beat our mother if she supported us.

Once my mother and grandpa decided to send me to the school. I was so excited but on reaching the school for admission, the headmaster did not accept me, as I could not present my health card. My health card got burnt down along with my house. That day onwards, I gave up the hope for getting educated.

My mother sent me here in Bumthang to work as a babysitter. Here at least, I am free from the stepfather's cruel treatment. Now, I am quite happy here.

R. N (10 years, male)

I was chalked out from school

Because of my involvement in a fight, I was chalked out from the school and now I am a jobless school drop out.

When I was in class V in Bikhar, I was a house captain. One day we had an inter-house football tournament. The house captain of the opponent team was my childhood rival. The match became so wild that my opponent captain came with the ball towards me and intentionally kicked my right leg hard enough to make me fall down on the ground. My friends took me to the hospital where I was admitted for almost a month.

I was considered a sincere student in my school days. When I reached class VI, I was given the post of the school captain. I was also selected as the best student, due to which I was appointed as the school vice captain in Tashigang Junior High School. Though I had a good relation with teachers, my relation with other co-leaders was bad. One day, a fight broke out between captains in the hostel and the next day we were asked to report to the office. Meetings were conducted among the teachers on this issue and they decided to expel two of us from school and suspend others for a month. This is the reason why I had to drop out of school.

I can remember one of the bad experiences. When I was in the school, during mid-term break, seven of us went to visit Rongzhikhar Rinpoche, who was known to be a great lama. We did not take any packed lunch, but just took some cold drinks and snacks. Being our first visit, we had to struggle to reach the monastery. Unfortunately, when we reached there, we found out that Rinpoche had already entered into meditation. We had to return heavy-hearted. On our journey back, we lost the track and wandered in the forest till 2 am in the morning when we somehow reached back the school.

T. PHUNTSHO (20 years, male)

I was naughty in my childhood days

I am from Bumthang Sombrang. I have no such memorable incidents in my life except for the few naughty things that I have done during my childhood.

I was never interested in studying though my father wanted me to go to school. A fear that teachers might punish me kept me away from class for most of the days. When I was in class II, I always used to bunk from the classes and go swimming or fishing with my friends. Our teachers came to know about these, and they had informed my father who caned me severely. Despite this punishment, I still refused to go to school, and missed the whole year. My father again sent me to school the following year, after which I became a good student.

NORBU (male)

I fought with my brother and ran away

I studied class PP and I in Wangduecholing Primary School. After class II mid-term examinations, we were all sent to Zangtherpo Community School, where we had a difficult time. There weren't any proper school buildings. Classrooms were built of bamboo. Mosquitoes bit us and never let us sleep well.

I have many bad experiences during my childhood. In fact, I was one of the naughty students in the school. During one of the mid-term vacations (in class III), I went to Thimphu to my brother's place in Lungtenphu. I could not enjoy my short break because I fought with my brother during which, I caught hold of a knife from the table and stabbed him on his right arm. Then I ran away from there and stayed with my cousin sister for the rest of my holidays.

At the end of class III, I started smoking and drinking and even took tobacco with my friends, Tenzin and Sonam. Our teacher caught us and

we were punished in the morning assembly. We were made to apologies in the assembly. In fact, I was the naughty boy in the school.

I was interested in girls and was not at all interested in studies. My old habit of drinking and smoking came back to me. I failed in my class quite a number of times. Finally, I dropped out of school.

S. TOBGAY (male)

No guidance, Became used to bad things

It is here that I started taking even dendrite with my friends. It is really good for a person like me who do not have any one to care and bother about.

My father died a long time ago from TB infection. We took him to the Mongar hospital but he could not survive. He was taken back and his body was cremated in his village.

I was really interested to go to school. Had my father been alive I am sure I will be studying this time, but unfortunately he died and my mother was too poor to support me. My mother did not bother about me at all. She kept me with my grandfather while she went roaming here and there. She got remarried and took me with her but my stepfather punished me. He made me work for the whole day all the time- to look after the maize field and the cattle.

My grandfather saw me suffering and felt pity on me. He admitted me in the monastery as a monk. I wanted to go to school but nobody bothered about my education. I started bunking and drinking heavily with my friends, so that I could at least relieve myself from unhappy thoughts. Due to my misconduct, I was expelled from the monastery as well.

My grandfather again admitted me as a *Gomchen* (lay religious person) in Dramitsi, Mongar where I did the same bad things. By that time I lost

my hope of going to school, as I was too old for admission. One day, I heard from my friends about the vacancy in painting apprenticeship at Bumthang. I escaped for Bumthang. It is here that I started taking even dendrite with my friends. It is really good especially for a person like me who do not have any one to care and bother about.

K. K (male)

I was a cowboy

My father always promised that he would send me to school but he never did that. When he got a work here in Bumthang, he bought me school uniform, to admit me in Wanduecholing School, but by that time I was considered too old to study.

When I was about seven, I was in the village looking after the cattle. Those were the most difficult part of my life. I had to walk in the forests without any slippers looking after the cattle.

I have one memorable incident in my life. Once, my brother and I were guarding the maize field against the animals. We were trying to light a fire to prepare a lunch, but because the wood was moist we could not prepare the fire. Two of us went to fetch some dry wood from the forest. We spotted a log on the ground and were trying to cut it into pieces when the axe hit my right leg. I suffered from intense bleeding and worst of all there was no one to help me except for my little brother who could not do any thing. My brother could not even go to inform my parents as we were much away from our place. I tried to stop bleeding using rags and leaves and then we moved slowly towards home. My parents immediately took me to the BHU but we could not meet any health worker. I was taken back home and cured using our traditional methods. I suffered the pain for almost a year.

My father always promised me that he would send me to school but he never did that. When he got a work in Bumthang, he even bought me school uniform to get admitted in Wanduecholing School, but by that time I was considered too old for the school.

T. JAMTSHO (male)

Forgotten Promises

My parents said, 'You should work to earn something and next year if you are still interested in studying we will admit you in the school.' But this promise was forgotten the next year.

I studied up to class III in my village. Although I was very interested in studying, my parents being farmers could not afford the cost of my education. I was forced to work on the fields by my parents who promised me 'You should work to earn something and next year if you are still interested in studying we will admit you in the school.' But this promise was forgotten the next year.

We did not have any land in the village because we lost it due to some problems. So we joined the National Work Force (NWF) to work on the roads.

T.B.GURUNG (male)

Grandma-Headmaster conflict

My parents have a few cattle, which have to be moved from Bumthang to Mongar in winter. I had to really suffer during those days particularly when migrating our cattle between these two places. I could not continue my studies because my grandma was not in good terms with the headmaster. The headmaster avenged us by intentionally failing me from class VI and I was not able to continue my studies.

T. TI (male)

Series of family misfortunes, failed in exams

Although, I was interested to study, the death of my uncle forced me to stay at home for a month or so. As the eldest child, I was forced to take many responsibilities at home. When I reached class VI, my grandmother died and I had to stay home to help my parents for almost a month. Again in class VII, death of my grand father kept me at home for a month due to which I failed in my exams.

LHATU (male)

Stole foods from school kitchen

In boarding school, we hardly got enough food. Although we were at our growing stage, most of the time we had to go hungry and unnourished.

I am a fun-loving person and was always surrounded by friends, good and bad. In class IV, we used to steal foods from the school kitchen, as we hardly got enough food. Although we were at our growing stage, most of the time we went hungry and unnourished.

In class X, my friend's girlfriend broke relationship with him. We drank beer and shared our feelings; I expressed feelings of sorry to him. That's when I started to drink beer. The next year, I could not qualify for class eleven. My parents could not afford to send me to private school.

I am a good painter. So I joined the National Institute of Zorig Chhoesum.

K. T (Male)

My friends forced me to take drugs

In class X, I was appointed as a house captain. As a captain we had a lot of privileges. Once we stole hens from a neighbour and feasted

ourselves. The owner had reported the case to the headmaster. Fortunately, we were not caught but the school was warned. We also went to steal oranges, but that time we were caught and punished.

My friends forced me to take drugs. If I refused, I was treated as the odd person. My parents always advised me to do good things, but my friends influenced me to bad behaviors.

G. TG (Male)

School days and torn shoes

I am 14 years old and am the eldest among my siblings. My parents were quite poor. My father retired from the army when I was 10 years old and became a carpenter.

I remember how my mother used to drink quarrel with father. She had the habit of beating us when she was drunk. She used to go to her friends' house and get drunk. Whatever it is, I am happy that my mother does not drink any more now.

I had to walk all the way from Tekarshong to Wangdicholing School. I used leave the house early in the morning and often used to be late for the classes. One day, my shoes got torn off on the way. I could not go home out of fear that my mother would scold me. When I walked through the town, I always had the feelings that people were looking at my torn shoes. My friends would look at my torn shoes and make fun of me. This made me feel sad and frustrated.

My aspiration is to become a doctor. I want to save the lives of others.

K. P (male)

I am saving money for funeral of my mother

I am the only bread-earner in the family. I am the second eldest. I have three siblings. The youngest one is studying.

My father died when I was too young.

As I grew up, I realized that working in the farm did not provide much monetary benefit. I went in search of a job in Bumthang with my cousin and became a road worker.

I send some money to my mother at home. I also deposit Nu. 500 in a recurring bank account. I am saving money for the funeral ritual of my mother.

J. DORJI (male)

He spoilt me

I failed in class X because I had a relationship with a boy in my class. I thought he was my true lover and wasted my time thinking about him and going around with him.

I am the second daughter of a single parent. I am now staying at home after dropping out from class X. My mother died when I was only ten years old. I live with my father who is a clerk.

I failed in class X because I had a relationship with a boy in my class. I thought he was my true lover and wasted my time going around with him and thinking about him. I could not concentrate on studies. I even brought him home. My father advised me to study hard, and when he saw that I was not doing that, it made him cry. Later, my boyfriend forsook me and married another girl. He spoilt my life and I regret that he cheated me. My dream is to do something great so that my father would feel proud of me.

S. W (female)

Job competitions discouraged me to study

I was loved and cared by every member of the family for being the youngest child. I refused to study after class X because I thought I was

not going to get a job anyway due to competition in the job market. I want to become a computer operator.

SL (female)

I failed as a monk

I am the eldest son. I grew up with my grandpa. He admitted me to a monastery as a monk when I was seven. Later I dropped out due to financial problems.

JAMYANG

Trapped in circle of bad friends

I failed in class IX because a bad circle of friends influenced me to do so many bad things. I managed to pass in my second year in the same class. But I failed in class X, as a result of which I had to leave school. My parents also could not afford the cost of my education.

T.DORJI

Family disruption determined my life

My father died when I was too young. My saddest incident started after my mother re-married for the third time. My life then became difficult as she stopped supporting me. I went to live with my brother in Thimphu.

One year later my brother arranged a marriage for me. I was happy for the first few years, as I was able to escape the mean treatment of my stepfather. But my husband too treated me badly as soon as I got pregnant. I opted for a divorce and went back home. I got married for the second time.

My school life is not a good memory for me. I had to go to school with torn clothes, torn shoes and without proper books and pencil. My friends used to tease me for being in such a wretched girl.

T. DEMA

I have to manage the family

My father supported my education till class IX by doing all kinds of menial labour, but, he died soon and my mother found it difficult to manage the family.

As the eldest son, I had to take the family responsibilities and therefore, I decided to leave the school. Now I want to become a driver and help my brothers and sisters get educated.

P. ZEPA (male)

Death of father disturbed my studies

I dropped out from class XII. I am now working in a printing press for a monthly salary of Nu. 3000.

When I was in class XI my father died. This terrible experience disturbed me in my studies and I could not do well in my examinations.

C. ZANGMO (female)

My parents considered education not worthy

I studied up to class III and I am the eldest. I come from a poor family because of which my parents could not afford school expenses. Education, as they thought it, was not considered worthy of making any investment and then they decided to keep me back at home. I was not a brilliant student after all. I failed in class I and II.

My parents suggested that I should do something to make means meet ends. In view of this, I am working as an apprentice to a chef in a hotel and I am happy with what I am today.

SONAM (male)

CHUKHA DZONGKHAG

I opened the saloon

Fortunately, one of my customers encouraged me to open my own saloon. So, I obtained a trade license and opened my own saloon and named it 'National Saloon'.

I am 22 years old. I passed class X from Sarpang High School. I have many family members and I am the youngest among all.

I came to Thimphu with few friends to look for better economic opportunities. I stayed with a friend's family in Thimphu as I had no close relatives living here. I kept on looking for jobs but in vain.

As days passed by, I met a friend running a saloon. I got inspired to work like him. I worked as his assistant. But things did not go as I had thought. Like my friends, I spent all my earnings on drinks, smoking and gambling.

Fortunately, one of my customers encouraged me to open my own saloon. I obtained a trade license and opened my own saloon and named it 'National Saloon'.

Many of my friends work with me, but they do not stay long as they are after quick money without much patience to work.

A SINGH TAMANG (22 years, male)

My earning is low

I came from Daifam looking for a job in Thimphu. Now I work as a helper in a private office.

I am 24 years old. I came to Thimphu in 2002. I was sick with malaria when I first came to Thimphu. I studied up to class VIII and stayed at home helping my parents in the farms for almost five years. My parents

insisted that I should go to Thimphu and settle there so that I would know about government offices and people.

At first I stayed at Chang Jiji with my uncle, but I could not really adjust with his family.

I got employed in a private company in Thimphu. I am assigned to collect bills and computer parts. I also attend to banking works and others.

I like my work, but I do not feel secure because I have to sacrifice even holidays. My earning is hard enough to meet my own expenses. I live with my distant relatives to save on living costs.

PEMA DORJI TAMANG (24 years, male)

Fortunate to be born in Bhutan, but not in this family

Presently, I am in class IX, but I wish to be free from the harsh treatment of my uncle and aunt.

I am 16 years old. I am fortunate to be born in Bhutan, but not to such a family.

I loved my father very much but he died. I still miss him every now and then. I still remember the day he died in 1995. Late at night, the lamas were performing rituals and my father was seriously ill, lying on his deathbed. My mother was weeping. I had fallen asleep, as it was late at night. When I woke up, I realized that my father had passed away. I could not control myself and cried profusely with my mother.

My mother then could not afford my education any more. My uncle and aunt had been kind enough to support my studies but living with them is to work hard daily. I have to collect manure for the garden and, sometimes I feel embarrassed when my friends see me carrying a bag of manure on my back.

Presently, I am studying in class IX and I wish to be free from harsh treatment given by my uncle and aunt in any case.

T. TS (16 years, female)

No matter what I am

I am 15 years old. I am the shortest girl in the class and I feel sad about it. I console myself by my firm belief that it's not the appearance that matters but in who I am and what I do to achieve my dreams.

Being a girl I had to stay at home even during holidays while my two brothers were allowed to do temporary jobs. I attend my mother at home.

Recently, I realized that I have no dreams while all my friends have one or two. No matter whatever it is, I want to be a good person when I grow up.

Y. CHODEN (15 years, female)

Work and Study-difficult

Attending to games and sports in the school have been my excuse because I have to reach home early to attend to household chores. But despite my immense taste in games and sports, I do not have money to buy sports dress and shoes. Because I have to reach home early, I miss activities like picnic, trekking and others.

I am 16 years old and I come from Trashigang. I came to live with my sister to lessen the burden on my poor parents. I am not good in studies, but I find myself interesting and hard working.

I feel very sad that I am staying away from my mother. But then I remain firm that I will study hard and help my mother later.

S. YANGDEN (16 years, female)

I am repaying the money I borrowed to study

I struggled a lot to get education till class XII, and now I am working as a geology and mines site inspector. I am still repaying the money I borrowed to study in a private school.

I am 24 years old. When I was small, my village school closed down due to security problems. Luckily my brother was at Thimphu undergoing training. He supported my education with his stipend. I continued my studies, though it was hard to make both ends meet.

My brother got a job, only to lose it after two years. This forced me to stay with my sister and continue my studies. After class X, I could not qualify for class XI in a government school. I studied in a private school till class XII by borrowing money from relatives. I am still paying them the loan along with the interest.

I am now the geology and mines site inspector. I have to go to the site at Trongsa for two to three weeks in a month regularly. I have rented two houses one at Thimphu and another at Trongsa for my accommodation.

P. SINGH NESOR (24 years, male)

I visited Japan

I was one of the students selected to visit Japan as a junior ambassador in 2000. It was the happiest incident in my life so far.

I would like to relate a happy incident in my life. It is about the opportunity I got to visit Japan as a junior ambassador in 2000. I was studying in class V in Phuntsholing Junior High School. My teacher informed me that I was selected for a selection interview and that I had to go to Chhukha to attend the interview. Although, there were many students attending the selection, two boys and two girls were selected.

In the interview, I felt bit nervous. Interview questions included questions on Bhutan and its culture. Singing also formed a part interview questions. We stayed for a day in Bangkok for some shopping. When we arrived in Japan, we were received at the Airport and taken to Marina House to meet many other Junior Ambassadors from all over the Asia Pacific region. In the camp we participated in orientation, cultural exchange and sports programmes. We also had a wonderful opportunity of visiting many beautiful places including beaches. Finally before I knew it, it was a sad time for me to return to Bhutan.

TSHERING CHOKEY (female)

Harsh Aunty

I used to stay with my aunty and study. But she was quite harsh. So I decided not to study and left for the village. But my mother insisted that I should study and so I went to India and studied up to class VI.

I am 18 years old. I was born on 3 April 1986 in Samtse. I am the eldest daughter of the family.

I was admitted to a school at the age of nine. I was caught up with leg pain that I missed my school for a year and then I came to stay with my aunt at Gedu to continue my studies.

Life with aunty was not so good as I expected because she had to bring up another five children on her own. I had no other option than to help her in the household chores.

Once, when I was washing the clothes, my aunt asked me to turn off the water heater and I didn't know how to do it. I asked my cousin to do it, but he unknowingly immersed his hand into water in the bucket. He was electrocuted, that I ran to my aunty to seek her help. In the end, I was blamed for this and beaten many times though the cousin did not die.

These made me decide to discontinue my studies and leave for home in the village. My mother, however, insisted that I continue my studies. I studied up to class VI in India.

S. GG (18 years, female)

Parents divorced; discontinued studies

I was happy in school, but it did not last long as my parents got divorced. I had no other option than to discontinue my studies.

I am 16 years old. I was so happy going to school. But this good day did not last long. My parents got divorced, thus compelling me to discontinue my studies.

My mother works hard to keep me happy but I find my life empty when I see my friends talking about their fathers.

My stepfather is good and caring. But I cannot call him my father because deep inside there is always a feeling that I am not his daughter.

C. WANGMO (16 years, female)

I have a good persuasive power

I am a good mediator and have good persuasive power, with which I help my friends.

In my life, I have done many good deeds as well as bad deeds. I saved many friends from being punished by their parents as well as getting addicted to drugs. Once my friends were playing football with another team, and one of my friends almost got into a fight with the other team captain. I interfered between the two and settled the misunderstanding.

Likewise, I persuaded my friends to refrain from smoking and taking drugs. I like doing it and I believe I have a talent to mediate.

PHURPA WANGDI (male)

I regret to see friends going to school

I regret a lot when I see my friends going to school. My parents were very poor that my uncle brought me to stay with him at a very tender age. He promised to admit me in school, but to my surprise he made me work at home while his children went to school.

Now my uncle is planning to buy a new vehicle soon for which he wants me to be his driver. I will accept this offer, as I have no other jobs.

R. BAHADUR

My employer treats me badly

Since my family is poor, I look after the cows of a rich man in Gedu. Sometime when a cow gets lost, I get beaten up and to escape from further beatings I have to go in search of the lost cow in the jungles even in the midst of the night knowing that people fear moving around at night.

I come from a place called Dungna. My mother brought me to Thimphu to earn my own bread. My father died a long time ago. I work as a cow-herder with a rich family in Gedu.

I call my employer Dasho and he treats me well but his wife beats me if anything goes wrong. Besides looking after the cows, I have to collect two bundles of firewood from a nearby forest and prepare feeds for the cows.

Sometimes when a cow gets lost, I get beaten up and I have to look for the lost cow in the jungles, even at night.

I regret not being able to attend school. Tending to the cows, I feel sad when I see many children going to school.

I am planning to escape to my village where my mother and sister live, and then go to school. My mother does not even bother to meet me when she comes here to collect my salary from Dasho. I think she is afraid that I will insist on going home with her.

DA (10 years, male)

My lazy Step-mother forced me to work hard

My nightmare days started when my father remarried a woman having kids from her previous husband. I was made to work very hard as she was a very lazy woman.

My mother died when I was in class III studying at Gedu Primary School in 1993.

We built a wooden house at Jumja and settled there. I had to collect firewood, study, cook and sometimes play with my other friends. I had requested my father many times that I leave school and work to help him as I felt I was a burden on him to which he always refused. My days of nightmare started when my father married a woman having kids from her previous husband. I was made to work very hard as she was a very lazy woman.

One day, I complained my father about his newfound step-wife. He scolded her, but she made it a daily routine to beat me when my father was away for work. Not being able to withstand such harsh treatment, I hit her on the forehead with a stone and ran away.

I have been arrested once by the police for being too rude with the officials at a forestry check post. It took place when I was traveling with my friends and my father in a truck. They stopped us at the check post and told us to wait for three hours. I went inside their official chamber and requested the official on duty to let us leave, but he started to insult

my father. In rage, I caught hold of his neck for which I was taken to the police station.

HRM A (18 YEAR)

Tragic death of my friend left me empty

The day I met my friend Serena, it turned out to be a happy and joyous incident in my life but her tragic death in front of my very eyes left me shattered to this day.

I am currently studying in Class IX at Phuentsholing Higher Secondary School.

My memory is sharp that I can recollect the day I met my best friend 'Serena'. It was six years ago then studying in class III in Samtse. I was staying alone since I did not have any close friends. I had nobody around except my parents. It was a blessing in disguise that I came across a new friend from Darjeeling named 'Serena'. She joined the school on the day that coincided by my birthday. I distributed sweets to everyone in the class. I felt so impressed that she wished me 'Happy Birthday'.

Slowly, we became best of the best friends. Even my parents were so happy that I found a true friend at last. The days and months passed by and everywhere I went, I went along with my best friend. On the request put up by her, I visited her place in Darjeeling.

Then it was one 9th December that she wrote her last annual examinations on the day which coincided her birthday. Before I called to wish her happy birthday she phoned me to inform that she, urgently, had to go to her hometown to attend to her grandpa, who was seriously ill. So thunder struck was I that I had to stop talking to her half way, as her grief was mine too. But I promised her that I would meet her before she leaves to Darjeeling. She requested me to come to the bus station.

I reached at the bus station when the bus she was destined to was about to leave. Seeing her, I called to her 'Serena'. She came out of the bus. She came running to me without knowing that a truck was heading towards her direction from the other side. She was hit and crushed to the ground. It was so tragic.

People around were screaming. She was taken to hospital, but she died. I was left weeping, crying and helpless with everlasting memories of pain and anguish. I love her and missed her so much that I still pray for her soul to rest in peace.

ESHITA GURUNG (13 years, female)

I can't forget the incidence

I feel embarrassed even now, when I recollect what happened to me. I was to deliver a speech on one fine morning assembly. But I shivered with fright right from the time I came to know that I was to deliver a speech one morning.

Before reaching the podium, I fell down the step so embarrassing that my nose touched the ground and got injured. I could hear laughter from the student crowds. The students made fun of this incident not only once but every time they saw me.

I have a brother who is suffering from epilepsy and I have to look after him at school and home. I fear that he might fall down in the crowd or other place and get injured. This is my biggest worry.

Y.TSHEWANG (13 years, male)

I was a very naughty boy since my childhood. I was taking cigarettes, alcohol and light drugs like marijuana from a very young age.

PHURBA WANGDI

I am changed boy

I was one of the most talkative boys in the class. I always used to get beating for it.

I came across a maths teacher who was not only clever but tricky too. I used to live next to his house and he used to call me for any work including fetching water, washing and cooking.

As time passed I was appointed as the captain of class. But because of my circle of friends I picked up smoking, chewing doma and even drinking alcohol quite openly because of which I started missing classes more often.

But now I am not what I was before. I am a changed boy as I have quit everything that I am not supposed to do.

TSHEWANG

Unfortunate turn of life

I was a topper in my class right since my admission into school. My parents got divorced which affected my studies for a while. But now, I have learnt to forget this thinking that separation, in one way or the other, is sure to come. I felt more concerned in my studies for this is everything for me than anything else.

I am studying at Gedu Middle Secondary School. My naughty behaviour fetched beatings from my teachers, despite the fact that they like me. I used to come first in the class since class PP when I studied at Chanzamtog Primary School in Thimphu. My mother is a tourist guide and father a forest guard. My family shifted from Thimphu to Gedu when I was in Class III.

My mother left her job while father continued to work as a forest guard at Gedu. Later my mother got employed at TAPA. Everything was going well and I was still holding the top position in the class.

But my life suddenly took an unfortunate turn as differences and severe quarrels broke down between my father and mother. Both of them refused to stay together, and at that time my three younger brothers were too small. I did not know what to do. After my parents went to the district court at Chhukha, they got divorced. This is the saddest tale of my life.

It gave me immense pain and sorrow. I did not know with whom to stay which psychologically affected me so much that I passed class VI with very low percentage of marks. This incident also affected my two brothers where one of them failed and got spoilt at a very young age.

Having under gone a lot of sufferings, I changed my mind again. I started to forget what had happened. I thought that concentrating on my studies would be more rewarding. Slowly, I regained my peace of mind and started to top the class again, as a result of which I started getting absorbed in books extending my horizon on a wide range of subjects and topics. And now I realize that I derive satisfaction and joy from reading.

S. DO (15 years, male)

Loving grandparents

My brother and I were very naughty but my grandparents used to save us from being beaten by our parents.

My grandfather and grandmother used to love me more than my parents. My brother and I were very naughty but my grandparents used to save us from being beaten by our parents.

We used to live in an extended family together with parents, grandparents, uncles, cousins etc. We used to have around 30 cows and many fruit bearing trees. We had abundant food to eat and live on, but very little cash flow. Life was happier during those days. My grandfather was a drunkard but very simple, hardworking, loving and disciplined. Every body respected and loved him but the break up in the family seemed to have awaited the death of my grandparents.

GOUTAM PRADHAN (15 years, male)

No money, no education

I was born in Getena village. My parents had 5 children making difficult for them to send all children to school. My parents migrated from Getena to Tsimalakha in search of good and greener pastures. Financial constraints forced me to leave my studies from class VII.

At the moment, I live with my parents in a hut in Alubari, Tsimalakha. I am doing contract work in planting trees. I earn money only to give it to my parents.

KUENZANG (male)

My parents could not support my education

I was born to poor parents in Getena. We migrated to Tsimalakha because we did not own land in Getena.

My parents could not support my studies which forced me to leave my school. I am doing contract work to plant trees and the earning goes to my parents.

PEMA (male)

More family members to support

My parents come from a poor background. We work as tenants on government land. Working as labourers on road constructions hardly meets the requirements of a large family size.

DOPHU (male)

I earn and give to my parents

I come from a poor family. I have younger brothers and sisters studying in school. My parents could not support my education leaving school was my first and the last option. At the moment, I am doing a temporary job to support my parents.

DORJI (male)

I work in construction project

My poor parents supported my education. At home, I fetch water and firewood from the jungle. I work in construction sites from where I earn some money. I live in a bamboo hut in Alubari, Tsimalakha, Chukha.

PENJOR (male)

Mother's income is insufficient

I have a younger brother and a sister and I am the eldest son. When I was eight years old my father died. Since then my mother has been looking after us but her income is barely sufficient to support our education.

During the vacation, I work in some construction projects which substantiates my school expenses. After the death of my father, my mother took pains in upbringing us. Had not my father died my mother would not have faced problems of such kind.

K. GYELTSHEN (male)

HAA DZONGKHAG

I refused to continue my studies

I studied up to class five in Gelephu and then I left school since I failed in an examination. My parents asked me to repeat but I refused, as I was not interested.

I am twenty-year old girl from Jigmecholing, Gelephu. Presently, I am staying in Haa with my husband and a child. I studied up to class five in Gelephu and then I left school since I failed in an examination. My parents insisted me to repeat but I ignored and told them that I was not interested. At the age of eighteen, I married to my boyfriend.

The saddest part of the incident is the death of my best friend Devi. We were like sisters and the treatment our parents gave was so wonderful that they treated us no different from their own children. But sadly, she was diagnosed as infected by TB. Despite repeated treatment, her condition worsened and one day, she left a letter addressed to me stating ' I thank you for all the good things you did for me.' Soon after, she passed away.

When I left my studies from class V, I felt very free. I spent my time by going to my friends' places, talking and going for picnic or playing. My hobby is to dance and play cards with my friends.

When I was seventeen, I stayed with my aunt and earning pocket money by weaving clothes. I could not imagine the pain when I gave birth to my child. I also faced hardship during my pregnancy but my husband always did good to me. Being a housewife I dream to lead a satisfactory life with my husband and parents.

NIMA(20 years, female)

I worked hard but failed to qualify for college

I struggled very hard to qualify for undergraduate courses when I was in class XII, but unfortunately I could not get through.

I was born on 15th June 1984 in Khaling. I have a qualification up to class XII. When I was in class X, I did not qualify for admission in a government school. My brother then admitted me in a private school. While freshly studying in a private school, my grandmother passed away leaving me depressed because of the reason that I was brought up by my grandma.

Happiest moments are when I received first and second prizes in classes III and IV. Wonderful time then was shared with my parents and family.

My friends provided me with good company. My brother also used to look after me as if he was my parent.

In class XII, I worked very hard to qualify for college but my efforts could not get through. I hope to fulfill my parent's dreams by being a responsible woman. With my parents growing old, I want to look after my younger siblings.

S. CHODEN(20 years, female)

I want to become a lecturer

I studied up to class XII. Now I am planning to go to India to pursue my graduation. I am nineteen years old.

The saddest incident in my life was when I was sent to Nganglam to study in a boarding school. I stayed as a boarder for around a year but I did not feel happy the result of which I failed in class IX.

I have three elder sisters still undergoing their study. Being the youngest among the family I enjoy good treatment from them.

My ambition is to become a lecturer and serve my country.

K. CHODEN (19 years, female)

My father died of alcohol

I am 21 years old working as a cook in Lhayul restaurant. I am from Tsirang.

My failure in class VIII as a result of the death of my father due to alcohol was the saddest incident in my life. The happiest incident was when I got this job.

My mother and my stepfather are good to me. When I was studying at Gelephu, I used to conduct to drugs. I even smoked and got involved in gang fights.

One of the good deeds I have done is when I took a lone old man to Thimphu for medical treatment when I was 19 years old.

I am planning to save money and buy a vehicle, and slowly open a restaurant of my own.

RAJU(21 years, male)

I was not good at studies

I am 21 years old. I work at home with my family. I studied up to class X and I left the school for I was not good at studies. My parents treat me very well even letting me to go for further studies but I was not at all interested in studies.

Being an educated farmer in my village, I think that good stars shine over me to get elected as a *Gup*. I am very interested to be a *Gup* and help the people. I also want to start a business, selling cheap goods, which are easily brought from across the border.

R. Dawa (21 years, male)

Discouraged to study because of long school-home distance

I am from Haa. I studied till class VI and left the school because I am the only daughter. My village is located at an hour's journey from the school that really discouraged me going to school. And being the only daughter, I used to do all the domestic works at home that hardly left with little or no time to study.

As a farmer, I collect firewood and look after the cows.

My dreams may not come true as I am a farmer but I only aspire to be a successful farmer, and if possible, to start a business.

C. ZAM (female)

Now I am looking for a job in Thimphu

I am 20 years old. I finished class XII in 2003. Now I am hunting for a job in Thimphu.

I have always tried to be and do good to others. My only regret is that I once fought with my father because he was drunk.

I aspire to get a job and help my father and sister. I wanted to be a teacher but I could not qualify for that. Now, I want to take chance of anything that comes my way.

DEKI TSHERING

I aim to become a teacher

From childhood, I aimed to become a teacher. I am studying hard for that to materialize.

I am 18 years old. I was born in Chukha. My parents are from Norbugang in Samdrupjongkhar.

When I was in class VI, my mother assured me that she would give me her gold chain if I stand first in my class. I struggled hard, which finally

paid me off when I stood first in my class. She gave me the gold chain that made me happy.

Of the three daughters and I am the eldest. Our parents treat us good.

Since my childhood, I aimed to become a teacher. I am struggling hard to making it a reality.

T. WANGMO (18 years, female)

Encountered an elephant

I was born in Gelephu in 1988. I am from Sipsu in Samtse but my family lives in Haa.

When I was in Gelephu, while on my way to the village, I encountered a big wild elephant. The elephant chased me through the forest. At last I climbed on a tree and the elephant could not trace me. That was the risky adventure in my life.

My ambition is to become a doctor and build a beautiful house after which I will serve my parents.

BISHAL RAI (18 years, male)

My parents used to fight and then got divorced

I am 21 years old. I am from Yangthang gewog in Haa. My parents got divorced. I am the only child from my divorced parents. My aunty, who lives in the same village, brought me up. I never used to visit my parents because they never cared me.

The saddest thing in my life is that whenever I see students going to school, I feel like joining them. Because my parents got divorced, when I was a child, I was deprived of such opportunity.

I, sometimes, describe myself an unfortunate girl. When I was five years old my father divorced my mother because of her drinking habits.

Despite her twenty-four hour drinking habits she used to do all the household chores. Their frequent fights paved way for their divorce.

As a farmer, I cook food and wash clothes besides agricultural works. Sometimes I look after cows. My dream is to become a businesswoman.

T. DEM (21 years, female)

As a monk I do a lot of good deeds

I am a monk running into the tenth year. I studied at Katsho till class VII after which my parents desired me to become a monk.

After joining myself as a monk, I did a lot of good deeds. I have stopped lying, killing insects and animals and quarreling and fighting with people unlike my student days where I committed a lot of bad deeds. Now that I have become a monk I wish to be a faithful and fulfilling monk.

C. DAWA(male)

I could not study because of NOC

I am 19 years old. I stay with my father and sister. I passed my class XII exams with good results but my dream to go to Sherubtse had been tattered when I did not get police clearance certificate. And my only option is to go to Kalimpong for further studies.

I am planning to undertake a course on hotel management and become a successful hotel manager.

S.P (19 years, female)

My mother died when I was too young

I am 24 years old. I am from Samtse working as a salesman. I came to Haa with my uncle as a conductor.

Narratives

At the age of thirteen, my mother left the world.

My dream is to become a driver, and lead a beautiful life. Helping my only surviving father has been the most dominating of my aspirations.

PHURPA (24 years, male)

PARO DZONGKHAG

Older people give us advice for our own good

I am in class IX at Shaba Middle Secondary School. I hope to be a doctor

in future.

I was born at Bondey in Paro in 1988. At the age of six, I was sent to a school with my elder brothers and sister. In class VI, I failed in my exams due to which I felt very sad.

I never dared listening to advice given by old people during my young age. To me it their advice seemed scornful. But now I realize that they are to be valued and treasured.

Currently, I am studying in class IX at Shaba Middle Secondary School. I am striving hard to be a doctor in future.

SANGAY DEMA (16 years, female)

I left school because I got pregnant

When I was in class seven, I got pregnant forcing me to leave school.

I was born in 1986. I am the second eldest in the family with two younger brothers and two younger sisters. I am from Gedu under Chhukha Dzongkhag. My elder sister is studying in class X at Shaba Middle Secondary School and my younger brothers and sisters are studying in Wochu Primary School in Paro.

My father is working in the forestry department in Wangdiphodrang. We could not stay with our father due to some problems. Though I was the second eldest, I got married before my elder sister due to early pregnancy. When I was in class seven, I got pregnant and this

compelled me to leave school. I was married to Mr. SRD after I left my School. At present we are working in Agriculture Machinery Centre, Paro.

Our family was beset with financial burden. I thought that after I get married this problem could be overcome but unfortunately I have to live away from my parents. Thus, my desire to help them financially did not materialize. My regret lies on two fronts; first because I could not complete my education and second for not being able to fulfill my parent's dream.

DG (18 years, female)

I want to buy my own taxi

I am 19 years old working as salesman and helper in Trongsa. Until I was 12 years old, I looked after the cows at home and then, I was admitted into a school.

My father expired when I was in class I and thereafter I continued my studies up to class IV. After that my mother faced financial problems leaving me with only one option: to give up my studies.

Then I started working as conductor for a truck. I was paid Nu. 1500 per month. It was a very tough life to live. I then worked as a helper in a workshop.

My aspiration is to buy a taxi of my own and drive it myself.

PHURBA DORJI (19 years, male)

Seeing my mother struggle, I like leaving school

Seeing my mother struggle, I feel like leaving school and helping her. But she asks me to study hard and get a good job. So I am trying to live up to her advice.

I was born in 1985 at Gedu in Chhukha. I am the eldest from my family. I have two sisters and two brothers. My second sister is married and she has a baby. The third sister and the two brothers are studying in class VIII in Wochu Lower Secondary School.

Ours is a poor family. My father is working in the Department of Forest as a driver and mother is a housewife.

At present my father is in Wangdue and we live with my mother in Paro. Our father, as a driver, gets transferred very often. So we live separately. My mother does all kinds of work to sustain the family.

Seeing my mother struggle, I feel like leaving school and helping her. But she asks me to study hard and get a good job. So I am trying to live up to her advices.

RADIKA (19 years, female)

My life was beautiful but it is now not

My life was beautiful when I was young, but now it has reached the saddest and the darkest part. I now come from a broken family. Somehow, I have completed my class XII and today, I am here at NIE, Paro undergoing my teacher-training course.

I was born on 11 November 1983. My mother is from Paro and my father from Trongsa. In those days, my father worked in the government service but presently, he works for the United Nations.

My poor mother has no education background because of which she is a farmer.

My life was beautiful when I was young, but now it has reached the saddest and the darkest part. I am now from a broken family. I still remember the day when my mother badly betrayed my father's faith and trust. It was in the year 1994 when my father was away from home.

I can't understand what happened to my mother that she chose to run away with another man who is her own relative.

Some times fate prefers a different way and may be it is my fate that makes my parents live apart from each other. Otherwise my mother was really a hard-working woman who loved her husband and children. But when time comes, anything can change and even god cannot stop it. At last when my father was back home, he immediately knew about the relationship and even caught them red-handed.

When my parents were together, everything was fine and good. I was so proud and happy with my family. Everyone appreciated us. But I did not know that this happiness was to be short-lived. I tried every bit of my effort to bring them together but all in vain. My father became so wild that he was not in a situation to listen to anybody. My parents fought in the court where divorce was the only solution. The court passed the verdict that all five of us should stay with our father.

I sit alone feeling so empty and lonely without my mother. I think of her so often and wonder where she would be and how she would be. I sit remembering about all the times and the things we have shared and cry helplessly. But my mother used to come to our school and meet us until one day my father knew about it. He beat us and told us never to meet her anymore. After that we never met and thought of her.

Years passed by, we did not even know where she is. My father soon married a woman from Drametse because it was really hard for him to look after five of us, as we were all small. Being the eldest though I was young, I had to look after everything in the family. I had to take all the responsibilities in the house and my stepmother hated me because of this. As she was not given any responsibility, she never worked hard and I had to do everything.

And soon my father became a drunkard and stopped caring us. May be its because, he was broken by his past life but I did not like it. He was always in his own world and everything came upon my head. So I had to face everything whether I liked it or not. Time passed by and my younger brothers began to grow. They began to understand everything and helped me on my way.

Now I have completed my class XII by the grace of Almighty and my father's love. My youngest brother is in his sixth standard. Now I feel that I can stand on my own feet and that I could be able to look after my old father and my brothers. Though I have come across many difficulties, I stand firm in my hope and now I can face the world like anyone else. Today I am here in NIE, Paro doing my teacher's training and all this credit goes to my dearest father. I love my father more than my life. I will always be there with him through happiness or sadness.

The composition that follows is about the history of my life.

I was born on 22nd August. My father's name is Tashi Dorji and mother Deki. I was small kid when my grand mother died and we lived with my grandfather. Few months after the death of my grandmother my grandfather married another lady (Aum Euda). I loved Aum Euda very much. She never made me feel that she was the step-grandmother of mine. Days passed and finally I reached class eight.

One day when we were going to school I saw a leather jacket in a shop, which drew my preference very much. That time my father was with me. I told my father to buy that jacket for me. He suddenly said 'No'. I was so sad. I felt that papa did not love me because a new baby was born in my house.

I was very happy with my little younger brother. On the 20th of August I was shocked to know that no one remembered my birthday. They were all playing with the baby. I felt so sad and I went to bed to sleep.

On 22nd August I got up early in the morning and watched the television for a while, after sometime I heard music 'happy birthday to you'.

My father called me. I went to take a bath and came out with my new dress, which I bought with my pocket money. I had lot of fun but again I felt something missing; the leather jacket. But now it came in the form of a present from my father. It was the very leather jacket that I'd admired and asked my father to buy it for me. He said that he had no money when I first asked for it on the way to school. But now, I realized that my father loved me.

And finally came my exams, I had prepared well and went to school to do my class eight common exams. On the 18th of December we went to get our result. I tried a lot to get a position but I only passed with the rank 8th. When my father heard this news he was happy and told us that he would take us to Phuentsholing. All of us were happy because I passed. I think that was the happiest day in my life with all my family members.

Now I am in class IX studying in Shaba Middle Secondary School. I started having a lot of problems in my life such as not having enough money to pay for the bus from Bonday to Shaba totaling to Nu. 260 per month. Our family does not have any land or a house. I promised to try hard to get a job for my family. I reminded myself that I have two brothers and one sister and their future would depend on me. My father used to get up early in the morning to earn some money by driving his taxi and doing some local rounds.

CLMO (21 years, female)

I remember the worst day in my life

*I had a very happy day in my life in the month of December in 1998.
But that day led to the worst regret of my life.*

The statement ‘do not regret your past, do not dream about your future, but live in the present’ may be universally true. But only if one could truly follow this adage.

Well I had a very happy day in my life in the month of December in 1998. But that day led to the worst regret in my life.

I went to a town and met an old school friend Tsheten. He asked me if I would like to accompany him to Kathmandu, after two days. I agreed to accompany him.

In the next morning, we went to my mother and lied to her that we were attending a religious ceremony in a friend’s house. My mother agreed to us but warned us that we should be back before dusk.

We went to Phuntsholing from where we traveled to Nepal. My friend had huge amount of money (Nu. 500 notes). Two weeks passed happily but then I was feeling homesick. Not many days later, we returned home. Upon reaching Thimphu, I learnt that my mother died because of my sudden disappearance. I was the only son among my two sisters and my mother could not bear the thought of losing me.

My life became shattered and I was like a dead man. I started smoking marijuana and taking all kinds of drugs. I now live in with one of my friends doing nothing but just roaming in the town. I will continue like this till death because that guilt will be cleared only when I am dead or when I am intoxicated.

SM (male)

My family situation made me illiterate

I did not get a chance to go to school because I was from a poor family, and my parents died when I was a young girl. My aspiration is to provide my child with better education.

I was born in 1985 at Ney village, Gangzur Gewog under Lhuntse Dzongkhag.

My father passed away when I was 9 years old. My mother died after nine months. I came to Thimphu and lived with my sister. I have five elder sisters and one younger sister. I have been living in Thimphu for over three years.

I got married to a man in Thimphu and have a four-year old baby girl. I did not get a chance to go to school because I was from a poor family and more over my parents died when I was just a young girl. My aspiration is to provide her the best education.

J. PEDAY (19 years, female)

My boyfriend refused to marry me

After my class VI, I left school because I failed in the examination. When I was 20 years old, I got pregnant, but my boyfriend refused to marry me.

I was born in 1981 in Nobgang village under Punakha Dzongkhag. I was the first child of Wangmo and Tandin Dorji.

When I was one year old, my mother gave birth to another girl and my grand parents brought me up. My parents were divorced when I was a child; our relatives supported our education.

I had to leave the school when I attended class VI; I could not do well in the exams. At the age of 20, I met my boyfriend who refused to marry me when I became pregnant. He encouraged me to abort the baby which

I refused to do so. That he refused to marry me is the greatest regret that I have today.

SC (23 years, female)

My mother sent me to work with someone

When I was 10 years old, my mother sent me to work as a servant for a rich man in Thimphu. My first job was to cook, wash clothes, clean the house and so on. Still I have to work with the same family to earn money for my parents and my family.

Our family had enough to eat and did not have many problems until my father became sick. I was 10 years old and too young to deal with the difficult family situation.

The situation forced my mother to send me to Thimphu to work as a housemaid in a rich family in Thimphu. It was a different experience for me; my daily works are to cook, wash clothes and housekeeping. I send some of my earnings to my parents. I face lot of difficulties and am not very happy about this life. At the age of 14, I heard that my father's health deteriorated. I went home only to find out that my father was already dead. I regretted terribly that I could not meet him.

Now I am 18 years old. My brothers got married and I am the only one who earns for my family.

PLmo(18 years, female)

Those were the days I didn't have to worry so much

I have finished class XII from Drugyel High School. I was born in 1983 at Paro. I am the youngest in my family. We had 15 members in the family but now we have only 14 members because my father died last year.

Narratives

Thoughts of my childhood days make me happy. Those were the days when I was free of worry and difficulties. I have finished class XII from Drugyel High School. My father was very good to me. He was not only my father but also my best friend. His death was the saddest incident in my life.

TSHERING (21 years, female)

PUNAKHA DZONGKHAG

I got married early

I wanted to be a teacher but I could not study beyond class X because I got married too early.

I am from Kurtoe in Lhuntse. I am twenty years old. At present I am living with my father, mother and my husband. I wanted to be a teacher but I could not study beyond class X because I got married too early. I met my husband when I was a student and I had to leave school. If only I had waited, I could have completed my education and I could have been employed right now.

My life as a housewife is quite challenging. I look after my kids, help my mother in cooking, cleaning and manage the household. I regret for not having completed my education. I would like to take up the Non-Formal Education classes if I get the time and the opportunity.

P. Y (20 years, female)

My mother thinks I am too old for school

When I see other children going to school, I also feel like going but my mother thinks I am too old to go to school now.

I am Tshering from Lhuntsi. I am nine years old. I was run over by a car when I was five years old.

My mother remembers that I was lying down on the road covered with blood. She took me to hospital and found out that I was suffering from internal injuries. For two years, nurses had to manually drain out my urine and faeces.

I am now nine years old and I have recovered from the injuries. When I see other children going to school, I also feel like going but my mother thinks that I am too old to go to school now. Anyhow, I am happy

because my mother says that she will try to get me admitted to a school if she can.

T. DENDUP(9 years, male)

My mother could not afford my education

My father died when I was small. I could not go to school because my mother could not afford it.

I am eighteen years old and am from Mongar Sangbi. My father died when I was small. I could not go to school because my mother could not afford it.

Life was difficult for me with a single parent. But now I supplement my mother's income by weaving and selling traditional clothes.

I want to learn how to read and write by joining a Non-Formal Education class. I want to work hard and do well in my life.

L. WANGMO(18 years, female)

Life in village was tough; I came to Thimphu

Life in the village was very difficult. We worked hard but we still did not have enough to eat. So I came to Thimphu to live with my sister.

I am sixteen years old and am from Kurtoe. I always wanted to go to school, but I had many sisters and brothers and my parents were very poor. They could not send any one of us to school.

Life in the village was very hard. We worked hard but we still did not have enough to feed ourselves with. So I came to Thimphu to live with my sister. I help her in cooking and cleaning. I want to learn to read and write by joining a Non-Formal Education class. I have also started to learn to weave and I want to become a good weaver.

T. WANGMO (16 years, female)

I am looking for a suitable job

I wanted to get enrolled in a private school, but my family could not afford it. I am looking for a suitable job at present.

I am twenty-one years old and am from Trashigang Tsangphu. I did not do well in class X and therefore failed to continue my studies in the government schools. I am the youngest of the six children in my family. My parents are farmers.

I came to Thimphu to live with my brother. I wished to enroll myself in a private school, but my family could not afford it. So I am looking for a suitable job at present. Life is very frustrating without a job.

JIGME (21 years, male)

School was far from my village

I wanted to go to school but my mother could not afford it. The school too was also very far from my village.

I am eleven years old girl from Tintala, Samtse. I work as a babysitter in Thimphu and have been employed in the present job three years ago.

My father died in an accident when I was four years old. It was difficult for my family to make ends meet after my father's death. We usually had just a meal a day. I wanted to go to school but my mother could not afford it and school too was far away from my village.

Sometimes my sister and I used to go and steal oranges from our neighbour's orchards to satisfy our hunger. I am now able to send a part of my earning to my mother. Recently my mother visited Thimphu to meet me.

D. SUBHA (11 years, female)

I was sent to work as babysitter

When I was 10 years old, my father sent me to Thimphu to work as a babysitter as we had problems at home.

I am twenty-four years old woman from Samtse. Presently I stay at Punakha with my husband and my daughter.

When I was 10 years old, my father sent me to work as a babysitter in Thimphu as we had problems at home. My father's second wife was very cruel to me. She used to beat me up and leave me without proper food and clothing. I used to look after the goats and do other chores at home. So my father thought that it would be better to send me away to work as a babysitter.

Now I am married to my husband, KN who works with me under the same employer. Our employer treats us well. We have a daughter who now goes to school.

Gp (24 years, female)

Now I want to become a driver

I could not do well in class X and did not qualify for admission in a government school. Now I want to be a driver.

I am twenty-two years old. I am from Gyum in Pemagatshel. Although they are only simple farmers, my parents sent me to school by working very hard. But I could not do well in class X and did not qualify for admission in a government school.

But I have no regrets. At present, I am staying with my uncle and aunty. I am looking for a job. I want to be a driver. I feel that the post of a driver is good enough to support myself and to help my parents to some extent.

D. WANGDI(22 years, male)

Headmaster refuse to enroll me

When my parents brought me back to school, the headmaster did not admit me as the reporting time had long passed. That is how I missed my opportunity to go to school.

I am fifteen years old girl from Radhi, Trashigang. When I was five, I was enrolled in a school in my village. The next day my parents took me home, and they brought me back to school only after a week or so. By then, the headmaster did not admit me as the reporting time had long passed. That is how I missed my opportunity to go to school. When I remember this incident, I feel very sad and frustrated.

Now, I want to join a Non-Formal Education class to learn how to read and write. I am learning how to weave as well and I want to become a successful weaver when I grow up.

P. CHODEN(15 years, female)

I went to school but became a monk later

I studied in school till class V and left school, as my parents could not afford it. Then at 13, I got enrolled as a novice monk at the Dechenphodrang Dratshang.

I am a monk in the Punakha Dzong. I am seventeen years old. I am from Dogor in Paro. My parents are farmers.

I studied in school till class V. I left school, as my parents could not afford it. At 13, I got enrolled as a novice monk at the Dechenphodrang Dratshang. I was too young then to know whether I was taking the right step for myself. But now I am convinced that my parents have made the right choice for me.

Living in the monastery, I have no financial problems or worries. My parents come to see me only once or twice a year as they are busy with

their work. Here, my teachers are like my parents and my friends are like my brothers.

My lessons at present consist of performing rituals, and studying the Dharma. When I go home for vacation, I perform rituals at home and talk to my parents about the religion and the futility of worldly pursuits like wealth and fame. Once I am old enough, I wish to go into retreat for serious meditation and uphold the doctrines of the Buddha.

P. NAMGYAL (17 years, male)

We had no monk from the family so I became a monk

We had no monk in the family and I had to be a monk because we believe that there should be at least one monk from each family.

I am sixteen years old. I am from Shar Gena in Wangdiphodrang. I am a monk in the Punakha Dzong. My parents, who are peasants, could not afford to send me to school. Besides, we had no monk in the family and I had to be a monk because we believe that there should at least be one monk from each family.

I got enrolled as a novice monk at the Dechenphodrang Dratshang at the age of seven. I seldom used to go home to meet my parents, as I do not want to miss my lessons in the monastery.

Life is impermanent like a cloud. I feel that pursuing futile goals should not waste the short period of our existence. It should be utilized for practicing the good deeds taught by the Buddha. I want to help my parents by making them understand and practice the teachings of the Buddha.

KINLEY (male)

I was needed at home to help my father

I dropped out of school as my father was poor and needed me at home to help him with his carpentry works.

I am presently learning mask dance in Zome gewog in Punakha. I was previously enrolled in a school and studied till class V in my village at Thamje. I dropped out of school as my father was poor and needed me at home to help him with his carpentry works.

A year later, I joined a monastic school where I studied for two years. I had problems catching up the lessons and following the strict monastic discipline. So I lost interest and dropped out from the monastic school as well.

At present, I am living with a cousin in Zome and learning mask dance. I get a monthly stipend of Nu. 2000 - 3000, which I send to my parents.

I deeply regret that I could not continue my education both at school and at the monastery. Today, my dream is to be a good mask dancer in future and support his family. Unlike studying, dancing is a much easier and enjoyable task for me.

DAWA (17 years, male)

I am able to read and write now

I never went to a school. But I once joined a Non-Formal Education class and studied for a year. So, I am able to read and write basic Dzongkha.

I am a sixteen-year-old girl working in a hotel in Khuruthang in Punakha. Although I am from Jamkhar in Trashiyangtse, I came here with my aunt when I was just ten years old. I have been working and living with her since then.

I do not remember seeing my mother as she had died when I was only four years old. My father is remarried to another woman.

I have no idea what my father does or how he is now. I have no links with him. He does not care about me either.

When I once lived with my father, my stepmother and her two sons treated me very badly by subjecting me to harsh scolding and beatings.

My aunt runs the hotel where I work as a waitress cum cook. I get a little pocket money whenever I need but I am not entitled to any wage or salary. She provides me with all the fooding, lodging and clothing. I am happy and satisfied with my present situation.

I never went to a school. But I once joined a Non-Formal Education class for a year. So, I am able to read and write basic Dzongkha.

Besides working in the hotel, I also weave clothes and sell them. This earns me some extra income. I want to weave more kiras and ghos of more beautiful patterns and make a lot of money. I am very thankful to my aunt who has been so generous to me. However, I am worried about my home in my village in Tashiyangtsi.

YESHEY (16 years, female)

I had to discontinue my studies due to financial problem

I studied till class IX at Tangmachu Higher Secondary School. After that, I was unable to continue my education as my mother fell sick and my family faced a lot of financial problems.

I am from Metshang in Lhuntse. My parents are farmers. I am the eldest of six children. I studied till class IX at Tangmachu Higher Secondary School. After that, I was unable to continue my education as my mother fell sick and my family faced a lot of financial problems. Being the eldest I had to remain at home to help my family.

I always remember and cherish the days I spent in school. My teachers were good to me. I loved studying although I was just an average student. I got married a year after I dropped out of school. My husband is from Punakha. So I came to live here with him.

At present, I am running a grocery shop and my husband drives a taxi. Although I regret having dropped out of school, I am happy with my present situation.

I am working hard for my children. I also send some money to my parents sometimes. I want to buy a car for myself and set up a bigger shop, most probably a wholesale shop.

S. DEMA (29 years, female)

I stay with my grandfather most of the time

My mother died when I was just over six years old. My father was unable to support me. Therefore, I stay with my grandfather most of the time.

I am from Talo, Punakha. I stay in my school hostel in Khuruthang lower secondary school. My mother died when I was just over six years old. My father was unable to support me. Therefore, I stay with my grandfather most of the time. My grandfather is a religious man and he performs religious rituals by which he earns just enough to support me.

I face financial difficulties sometimes when I have to buy school stationery and clothing. I therefore take up temporary jobs in construction works sometimes to supplement my income.

I am studying in class VIII now. I want to become a doctor. But I would run a business in farm products if I am unable to achieve my first goal.

SD (16 years, female)

Money was a big problem

Money has always been a big problem for me. I join construction works during my vacations to earn some money to buy school stationery.

I am from Guma gewog in Punakha. I live with my uncle. My mother died when I was three years old. Since then I lived with my father who was an engineer in Gelephu. At the age of eleven, my father too died of an accident. Then I came under the care of my paternal uncle. I am studying in class VIII in Khuruthang Lower secondary school.

Losing my father was a terrible experience. But I do not remember much about my mother. I am not very happy living with my uncle. He has children of his own who always get the first preferences at home.

I am never treated equally with his children even though we are of almost the same age. I am often scolded and beaten for every simple fault. I am much happier with my friends and teachers in school than at home. Most of the happy moments in my life are those times I spent with my father when he was alive.

Even though my uncle and aunt and my cousins have never treated me well, I do not hold any grudge against them. I always obey whatever I am told to do.

Money has always been a big problem for me. I join construction works during my vacations to earn some money to buy school stationery. My father always wanted me to become a Doctor. So my dream is to fulfill my father's dreams.

D.YANGZOM (15 years, female)

My step mother and her children treated me cruelly

Since my stepmother and her children always treated me cruelly, I ran away from them and now I live in Punakha with a cousin and go to school.

I am sixteen years old and presently studying in the eighth standard at the Khuruthang Lower Secondary School in Punakha. Although from Zhemgang, I have been brought to Punakha by a distant cousin to be enrolled in school.

I lost my mother when I was six years old. My father married another woman. I have lost contact with my father for a long time. I think he does not know where I am.

Till class six, I studied in Zhemgang. But my stepmother and her children always treated me cruelly. So I ran away from them. I traveled by myself in a bus till Trongsa and then a relative brought me to Punakha.

My present home is better compared to the old one. However, I still face a lot of financial difficulty. I have to do all the household chores at home before and after school. I feel inferior at school since I am not able to cope with others in terms of material wealth as well as studies. Besides, since I am from a different region, some of the local children make fun of me.

I want to be a doctor. I have no real family and deep inside, I love and miss my father a lot. Had it not been for my stepmother, he would have cared for me.

G. LHAMO (16 years, female)

Since my village is in a remote corner going to school was difficult

Since my village is located in a remote corner, going to school was out of question for me as well as for my brothers and sisters.

I am fifteen years old. I am staying in Samdenkhar village in Tewang gewog, Punakha. I am actually from Gedana in Chukha. I was brought here as a babysitter and a helper for my aunt. Both my uncle and aunt are farmers in Samdenkha. Today, I help my aunt in babysitting a one-year-old baby and in other household chores.

Back at home; I had to do a lot of hard work under harsh conditions. I am one of the six children of my parents. My parents are simple farmers. Since my village is located in a remote corner, going to school was out of question for me as well as for my brothers and sisters. I am happy here with my uncle and aunt as life here is easier than it was at home.

My journey from home is an experience I will never forget. My uncle and I walked for three days and traveled one day by bus to reach Punakha. On the way, we halted a night under the protection of trees. The leeches and the rain tortured us all through the three days and nights. Now that I have come so far, I seldom see my parents or any of my family members. In two years, my mother came to visit me once. It was the happiest moment in my life. However, departing with her was sad again.

Even though I did not get the privilege to study in schools, I want to learn to read and write by joining a Non-formal Education class someday. I want to stay here with my uncle and aunt, but if they do not want to keep me, I would like to go to a better place like Thimphu to find jobs.

NAMGAY (15 years, female)

I live in a temporary shelter

My village is 3 hours walk from school. Due to this reason, like many other students from far-off villages, I live in a temporary shelter made of bamboo near the school.

I am 12 years old. I am from Tewang gewog in Punakha. My father is a painter and mother a housewife. I am presently a student of Samdenkhar Lower Secondary School studying in class VI.

My village is a 3 hours walk from school. Due to this reason, like many other students from far-off villages, I live in a temporary shelter made of bamboo near the school. My mother has come to stay with me and cook and take care of me.

My father was previously an army-personnel in Lungtenphu, Thimphu. He resigned from there and took up painting as an occupation. My father stays in the village, but comes here once a month with rice and vegetable for my mother and me. Sometimes when there are problems at home, my mother has to leave me alone and go home. I then have to cook and wash for myself besides studies and homework.

When I grow up, I want to be an engineer and build roads and houses. I dream of building schools in all corners of Bhutan so that children in the future wouldn't have to suffer so much as I do now.

KANJUR (12 years, male)

I dropped out of school due to financial problems

I studied till class I and at the age of 13, I dropped out of school due to financial problems.

I am sixteen years old. I am a monk studying in the Punakha Dratshang. I am from Geling gewog in Chuba. I am one of the eight children. I lost my mother when I was nine years old.

My father works as a contractor in transporting fruits. I studied till class I and at the age of 13, I dropped out of school due to financial problems. I came to Thimphu and joined the Dechenphodrang monastic school.

I am happy to be a monk and pursue a religious life. I want to study well and serve the monk body, which has provided me education, food, lodging and all things necessary for survival.

D. WANGCHUK (16 years, male)

I used to be a good student

I used to be a very good student and reached class XII. After that as my parents split up, I didn't have support to study further. At present, I just spend my time roaming around with friends who are also jobless like me.

I am from Lhuntshi Mengi Geog. My father is a petty contractor. He has to move around a lot in his business. Unfortunately, my father had an extra marital affair with a girl from Mongar. The news about it spread in my village. Due to lack of attention from my father, my mother also developed an extra marital affair with a man, who is my present stepfather.

I used to be a very good student and reached class XII. After that as my parents split up I didn't have support to study further. At present, I just spend my time roaming around with friends who are also jobless like me. I know what I am doing now is bad, but I have no alternative, as I cannot get any job.

T. PENJOR (20 years, male)

I learnt the art of weaving

At Khaling Weaving Center, I learned weaving for more than three years and later; I was selected to weave for officers in Thimphu

I am from Dukha village of Shingkarlawri gewog under Samdrupjongkhar dzongkhag. I am twenty-three years old and I live with my husband who is a religious practitioner, and at present undergoing retreat in Paro.

My father passed away when I was small. My mother remarried and I have one younger brother and one younger sister from my stepfather.

At eleven, I left for Pemagatsel with my uncle to learn the art of weaving. After three and a half years there, I left for Khaling to join the Khaling weaving Centre. I learned weaving for more than three years and later; I was selected to weave for officers in Thimphu.

Now I have been in Thimphu for more than five years. I have a baby boy who is seven months old. Lately, my income has decreased because my baby does not allow me to weave.

I am still in touch with my family in the village. My younger brother visits me once a year. When he goes back, I send some money to my mother. But this year, I could not send any money to her, as I could not earn much with a baby to take care of.

T. DEMA (23 years, female)

Studying in private school was out of question

Studying in a private school was out of question as it is beyond my family's means.

I am from Wamrong under Tashigang Dzongkhag. I was born in 1981. My parents are farmers at Wamrong.

I studied till class X in Wamrong High School. I came to Thimphu to get my results and to continue my studies. But since I could not qualify for admission to a government school, I was left with no choice but be an unemployed dropout. I got only 56.8 percent in class X. Studying in

a private school was out of question as it was beyond my family's means. I could not get any other job. So I have taken up the job of a parking fee collector.

Sometimes, I drink alcohol with my friends to forget my sadness and worries for not being able to continue my studies.

T. WANGCHUK (23 years, male)

If my health become better I want to become a driver

I am a twenty-three year old man from Zobel village under Pemagatshel Dzongkhag. My father works as a Royal Body Guard and my mother is a housewife.

I studied till class VI. After that I had to leave school because I got sick so frequently. There was a time when I had to stay in the hospital for up to two years.

Even now, my health is very poor. My family is very supportive. But I feel that I am a burden to my family and the society. If my health gets better, I want to be a driver. As a driver, I will have the opportunity to visit many places inside Bhutan.

NIM DORJI (23 years, male)

I am jobless and stay at home

Just three years ago, I was a student at Motithang High School but now I am jobless and stay at home. I was born in the year 1981 at Chunday village under Paro dzongkhag. At present I live with my parents at Dechencholing. I do all the work at home. During my free time, I weave traditional clothes, which I sell and earn some extra income. I have a dream, and that is to help my brothers and sisters get educated.

D. BIDA (23 years, female)

My in-laws treat me badly

I was born in the year 1983. I live with my husband. I am from Nganglam village in Samdrupjongkhar.

My husband is a RBG (Royal Body guard) personnel. I have been married for the past 5 years and have lived in Thimphu since then. After my arrival in Thimphu, my in-laws used to treat me very badly, and once they even kicked me out of the house. At present I have high blood pressure. Yet I drink alcohol with my friends to drown my sorrow and worries.

W.O (21 years, female)

If someone is kind to me, sponsor my treatment

If some kind soul happens to have pity on me and sponsor my treatment, I would be most grateful. After that, I will study even harder and be a doctor so that I can treat people with similar diseases.

I am from Tshendegang under Dagana Dzongkhag. I was born in 1985. My parents are working as labourers at Gaselo under Wangdi Dzongkhag. I am studying in Bajo High School in class X. I live with my friends who are also studying in the same school. The reasons for living with my friends are: a) my parents earn low income, b) my parents have other children to support, and c) there is no high school where my parents are working.

My parents are economically poor and have difficulty in meeting my day-to-day schooling expenditure. But they are supportive in every possible way. But I am an unlucky chap because I suffer from "rheumatic heart disease". I suffer from the symptoms of this disease like palpitation, giddiness, joint pains and pain in the chest. Very frequently, I miss my classes because I get bed ridden.

I am very good at studies and my grades are always very good. But my main worry is that I may not live long because of my sickness. Due to my family's financial situation, I have not been able to go to other countries for treatment.

If some kind soul happens to have pity on me and sponsor my treatment, I would be most grateful. After that, I will study even harder and be a doctor so that I can treat people with similar diseases.

K. SINGH (19 years, male)

I work as a labourer

I currently work as a labourer in the hollow blocks factory. I earn a little more than a thousand Ngultrums a month.

I am thirteen years old. I was born in Wangduephodrang. My parents are farmers of Damji village under Gasa Dzongkhag. My parents had migrated to Wangdi from Gasa seeking better economic prospects. At Gasa, they had very less land and that land was not fertile. As such, they had very less income. After coming to Wangdi, my parents rented a small flat and started a kitchen garden near their house. That way they did not have to buy vegetables and the surplus product are sold in the weekly vegetable market.

I studied up to class four and left school, as I was not interested in studies. But I was only ten then and too young to understand the importance of good education. I currently work as a laborer in the hollow blocks factory. I earn a little more than a thousand Ngultrums a month. I use the money to buy my clothes and give some to my parents. I am quite satisfied with my work although I agree that my current occupation demands physical strength. I am also proud that at least I am not sitting idle like other children of my age.

I do not drink alcohol. But my mother sometimes tells me to taste it to see if the drink prepared by her is strong.

My message to other students is short and simple, "No matter what, never give up your studies".

K. TSHERING (13 years, male)

I work in hollow blocks factory

After failing in class VIII I decided to leave school. I work in the hollow blocks factory as a laborer.

I am from Taksha village under Wangdi Dzongkhag. I am seventeen years old. Before coming to Wangdi, I used to live with my mother at the village. I do not remember about my father. My mother told me that my father had left us when I was a small kid. As we did not have land and as the income was very low, I came to Wangdi in search of employment. I now stay with my friends. I work in the hollow blocks factory as a laborer. I earn about fifteen hundred Ngultrum a month. I send half of it to my mother. I have been working in the factory for the past two years. I had studied up to class VIII. After failing in class VIII I decided to leave school. Other reasons were that I was afraid that I would not get employment after studying. The fact that my parents were divorced only added salt to my wound.

If given a chance I would love to continue my education again. As a first step, I would like to enroll myself in a Non Formal Education class if possible. I find my current work physically demanding and would like to take up a job, which is less difficult. I have a dream and that is to join the NRTI (Natural Resource Training Institute). My message to the public is that parents should not fight and get divorced, as this would affect their children's life.

PEMBA (17 years, male)

I was needed at home to work

I studied up to class VI and dropped out as I failed in the examinations. I was also needed to work at home.

I am from Rinchengang, the village on the opposite side of the Wangdiphodrang Dzong. I was born in the year of the horse in 1990. My father died when I was small. It was one fine summer morning, when my father had gone to plough the paddy fields as usual. His plough had struck an underground electrical cable and electrocuted him as well as his oxen.

My mother remarried. But my stepfather also died due to a serious illness. Now, I live with my grandparents, as my family is very poor.

I studied up to class VI and dropped out as I failed in the examinations. I was also needed to work at home. At home, I help in cooking for grandparents and doing other household chores.

At present, I am temporarily working as a house cleaner in the house of one of the Austrian expatriates working at the Baschochu Hydropower Project. I get a monthly salary of one thousand Ngultrums. My employer gives me food and lodging. Sometimes I also get clothes and pocket money.

I wanted to become an engineer but I have ended up serving an engineer as his maid. Nonetheless, I am happy with what I am doing. I believe that we have to be happy in life and face the day-to-day opportunities and obstacles with a brave heart.

D. ZANGMO (14 years, female)

My stepmother was cruel to me

My father remarried, and all the good things in my life vanished as my step mother was very cruel to me. She forced me to leave my school and help at home.

I was born in the year 1989 in Chukha Dzongkhag. My parents are from Tongmi Jangsa under Tashiyangtse Dzongkhag. I have three younger sisters. My father works as a forest guard under the forestry department in Wangdi district.

Life was fun and merry until fate played a cruel part in my life. I was studying in class VI when my mother passed away. My father remarried, and all the good things in my life vanished as my step mother was very cruel to me. She forced me to leave school and made me help at home.

I am presently working as a labourer in a hollow blocks factory. I had to take up this job in order to support myself.

I have heard of drugs but never tried it. I think drugs are bad for health. However, at times I take alcohol when I am upset. I buy alcohol from my neighbour, go to the nearby forest, and drink it.

I am sometimes worried about my younger sister's welfare. I have to look after her.

K. JAMTSHO (15 years, male)

I work as a waitress

At present, I work as a waitress in one of the restaurants of Wangdi town. My mother also does the household work in other people's house for some small wage.

I was born in 1992. I live with my mother in Wangdiphodrang. They are from Tang village in Bumthang. My father who was a driver breathed

his last, a year ago. He drowned last year when the automobile he was driving fell into the river. I studied up to class II but had to leave school, as my mother could not afford it.

At present, I work as a waitress in one of the restaurants of Wangdi town. My mother also does the household work in other people's house for some small wage. As I am not aware of any other kind of other work available, I am up to a certain extent happy with my present employment. I give the money that I earn to my mother.

I feel sad when I see other children going to school. Even if I am given a chance now, I am doubtful if I can go to school now. Earlier my ambition was to become a teacher, but now I want to run a hotel of my own.

If I can have my own hotel, I will not sell liquor or cigarette. I hate them as they destroy the health of those taking them.

L. PEM (12 years, female)

My school was six-hour distance from home

I left school as I had failed in class V. Another reason why I could not continue my education was that the school in which I was studying was about six hours walking distance from my home.

I am twenty-three years old. I am from Chunkar village under Pemagatsel dzongkhag. My parents are farmers at their village in Pemagatsel.

I am presently employed at the Public Works Division's (PWD's) maintenance workshop based in Yosethangkha as an automobile driver. I earn a monthly salary of Nu. 3000. I live with my wife and a child. I send a part of my income to my parents in the village. I have been away from the village for the past four years. I had come from the rural area

to look for employment. As I had studied up to class five, I could get the job of a driver.

I left school as I had failed in class V. I wish I had not left school and tried harder especially when I see my classmates completing high school. Another reason why I could not continue my education was that the school in which I was studying was about six hours walking distance from my home.

I drink sometimes with my friends. My life is definitely not a bed of roses, but I am not complaining. You have to live with the cards that have been dealt to you. We cannot complain about not being able to afford good shoes when there are others without legs.

C. DORJI (23 years, male)

I face problems in buying notebooks

When I was small, my parents got divorced. My mother went with another man. I study in class four at Wangdi Junior High School. I face problems in buying notebooks, paying school fees and buying new uniform.

I am from Ninatal village of Changbari gewog under Samtse dzongkhag. I am fourteen years old and I live with my father who is a policeman. When I was small, my parents got divorced. My mother went with another man. For this very reason, I hate my mother.

Few years later, my father married again and has two children from his new wife. My stepmother does not treat me well. She differentiates me from her own children.

I study in class four at Wangdi Junior High School. I face problems in buying notebooks, paying school fees and buying new uniform. At home, I help my stepmother in her household chores.

During the winter vacation, I usually visit my grandparents at Samtse and they give me some pocket money to buy books and clothes. Every time I get a free moment, I try to study. My ambition is to be a successful doctor when I grow up.

P. GALAY (14 years, female)

I am living with my uncle

I study in class III in Tencholing Primary School. I am living with my uncle's family as both my parents have expired.

I am eleven years old. I am from Dagana. I do not remember the name of my village. We used to stay in Trongsa before coming to Wangdue.

I also remember that I had cried the whole day when my mother died due to serious illness. I was only six years old then. A few months after the death of my mother, my father married again. One year later, my father died in a bi-cycle accident in Trongsa where he used to work as a carpenter.

I study in class III in Tencholing Primary School. I am living with my uncle's family. I am thin and malnourished. My day starts with a scolding from my aunt in the morning and end with beatings from my uncle who normally come home late and drunk. I find solace in my school.

I wish my parents were alive today especially when I see my friends with their parents. When I grow up, I want to be a teacher. The first thing I want to do after getting the job is to help school children who have similar problems like me without parents.

S. RAI (11 years, male)

I have been selling doma

I came to Wangdue with my uncle after the death of my mother. I have been selling doma for the past two and a half years.

I am 16 years old. Because of my short height, I look far younger than my actual age. I carry a bucket full of doma and go about the town area selling doma.

My parents are from Zungkhar village in Kurtoe Gewog under Lhuntse Dzongkhag. My father had expired shortly after my birth. My mother died when I was 13 years old.

I have three elder brothers, one younger brother and one younger sister. My two elder brothers are in the armed forces and the younger brother is a monk.

I came to Wangdue with my uncle after the death of my mother. I have been selling doma for the past two and a half years. I do this work to supplement my uncle's income. Whatever I earn, I give it to my uncle and aunt. They in return give me clothing and fooding. If I get less than Nu. 100 in a day, my aunt scold me and threaten to kick me out of the house.

The greatest fear in my mind is that in the near future I may not be able to support myself. Therefore, I am willing to take up any job offers where I will be paid. I have little hope in getting help from my brothers, who have problems of their own.

T. DEMA (16 years, female)

SAMTSE DZONGKHAG

Personal problems forced me to quit my studies

My parents were always good to me. But the financial problems at home made me quit my studies.

The death of my father was the saddest incident in my life. My mother married another man. She had to work in the field of other villagers. She had to work hard to support my sisters and me. She had to carry heavy loads for a long time over long distances.

My parents were always good to me. But the financial problems at home made me quit my studies.

Getting my present job was the happiest incident for me.

I want to earn name and fame but I cannot due to lack of education. If given the chance, I would like to get into some training institute and get a better job to do something for my brother and sisters who are attending a community school in the village.

R. RAI (male)

I feel sad that I had to drop out of school

The saddest thing in my life is dropping out of school and working in the village looking after the cattle and working in the field.

School days were the happiest days when I had lots of dreams and ambitions, but due to the southern Bhutan problem of anti-nationals, I had to drop out and work in the village helping my parents. My parents also faced financial problems and I couldn't continue with my studies..

The saddest thing in my life is dropping out of school and working in the village looking after the cattle and working in the field.

At least getting my present job for the time being has helped me a lot. I have been able to buy clothes for myself and give some money to my parents. I am happy about it.

I do not have much dreams but a man without dreams is a blind man. So my dream is to get a good job, earn lots of money, keep my parents happy, have a good house and a good and caring wife.

S. KR. GURUNG

It is difficult to be a breadwinner

The death of my father made me leave my school. Now, working as a farmer has taught me how to earn and support my mother in the village. It has taught me how difficult it is to be the breadwinner of the family.

The time I was in school was the happiest time of my life.

The death of my father was the saddest day of my life. I had to leave school because of that since there was nobody to take care of the family except my mother.

Both the parents were like gods. They were always good to me.

Working as a farmer has taught me how to earn and support my mother in the village. It has taught me how hard a life is and how difficult it is to be the breadwinner of the family.

I had to go to Thimphu for my father's treatment where I had to stay in the hospital for a couple of months. Traveling to Thimphu was the hardest thing that I had to face because I did not have enough money for the journey. I had to borrow from my friends and neighbors. Staying with my father in the hospital was also very difficult because we had to take food served in the hospital which was neither good nor enough.

I aspire to become a good son of my dead father by looking after my mother, brother and sisters.

B. CHETTRI (24 years, male)

I would like to have a good job

*I dropped out after class VIII because of problems in my family.
Now as a farmer, I am having a tough time.*

My school days were the happiest days. The day I left school, I felt very bad and that is the saddest thing that has happened to me.

I never had any misunderstanding with any of friends or even with my brothers and sisters. But as a farmer I am having a tough time.

I dropped out after class VIII because of problems in my family.

I would like to have a good job with which I can support my parents and look after my family in the future.

S.RONG (20 years, male)

My mother worked hard and sent me to school

My father died when I was small. But my mother worked hard and sent me to school. I am now in class VIII and I want to be an engineer.

When I was small, I had to help my family at home. My father had died and there was nobody to help my mother. Seeing others going to school, I used to cry because I wanted to go to school. But soon, my mother started to cultivate the land and sell the products with which I was able to get admission in the school.

Now I am in class VIII. I did not fail even once. I want to become an engineer and help my mother and give her all the comforts of life.

I felt very sad when my father expired. I do not remember much, but truly I was very sad thinking that there was nobody to support my brother, sisters, mother and me.

My happiest day was the day my mother enrolled me in school. Working in the farm and looking after the cattle has taught me that a man should be hard working and dedicated in order to achieve or reap something.

KARMA (male)

I got married at the age of 14

I studied up to class V and got married at the age of 14. And now I am just helping my mother in the shop and the bar. I have two kids.

I was born in Sipsoo. I am 21 yrs old. My father died when I was very young. I had not even joined my school. I had to live with my mother. She had a small shop with which we earned our living.

I studied up to class V and got married at the age of 14. And now I am just helping my mother in the shop and bar. I have two kids.

The saddest thing that happened to me was the death of my father.

My mother is very good to me. She has always treated me well and never made me feel that I was fatherless.

S. DEMA

I like to work in private firm

I was born in the year 1981. I am the first child of my parents. I have a younger sister.

I have studied up to class XII. My parents and my sister are very good to me. I have worked in a Beer Agency for four months in Phuentsoling.

But nowadays I am helping my parents to run a shop. I would like to work in a good private firm.

S. PRADHAN (23 years, female)

I have experience in farm work

My happiest incident was the day I heard the news that I had passed class VIII.

My family treats me very well. I have experience in farm work from my parents. My aspiration is to become a great man.

BINOD KUMAR (male)

I have never indulged myself in bad things

I have passed class XII with very good marks and I will be going for my higher education soon.

The happiest incident was the day I first went to school when I was very young and the day I got my class XII results where I had scored an aggregate of 74 percent.

The saddest incident was when I did not get the chance to join the institution of my choice after class XII.

I have never involved myself in bad company or in drugs and alcohol. I want to be a successful man and serve my parents and my country.

BARUN LAMA (male)

Working in the farm taught me how hard it is to earn money

Working in the farm with my parents has taught me how hard it is to earn money. So I am studying hard at school to be a great and respected man in future.

The saddest time of my life was the time I had to go away from my parents to be in a boarding school when I was very small. It was hard to stay away from my parents because I had never gone away from home.

The happiest time was when I heard the news that I had passed my class VIII common exams.

My parents always treated me well. From my brothers, I learned how to look after the cows and plough in the field and how to lead the life of a farmer. From my sister I learned how to cook and from my friends I knew how to adjust with circumstances when we are away from our parents.

Working in the farm with my parents and brother has taught me how hard it is to earn money and how easy it is for us to blow it away. It has taught me the value of money. It has also taught me that if we want to earn lots of money, we should be hard working and determined.

I am a person who doesn't drink or do drugs. I always think about my parents' welfare and the respect they have in the village.

I want to be someone who will be respected by all the people and who'll be known by all the people of my country, who shall be remembered after my death. In short, I want to be a great man.

KINOD KUMAR

I was happy that I came out with good result but sad that I had to discontinue my studies

My parents and I were very happy thinking that I had stood first in my class with 74 percent, but on the other hand I was very sad more than my parents because I was not allowed to continue my studies.

I remember the first day of school in my village when I was four years old. I did not want to go to school thinking that the teacher would beat

me. I used to trick my parents saying that I was not feeling well. Even if I had to go to school I used to bunk my classes with my friends.

This year, I completed my Class XII from Gyelposhing School with 74 percent in Science. But the saddest thing that happened to me was that I was not allowed to continue my studies in Kanglung College because I did not have the citizenship ID card. On the one hand, my parents and I were very happy thinking that I had stood first in my class with 74 percent, but on the other hand I was very sad more than my parents because I was not allowed to continue my studies. I cannot go to India because my parents cannot afford it.

Being the only son, my parents treat me well. My parents wanted me to continue my studies, they went everywhere in search of a loan for my studies which proved fruitless.

The good thing in my life is that I never hurt my parents by drinking or getting involved in all sorts of naughty things. I always make my parents feel that I am their best and only son. I never do drugs thinking that I am jobless or a drop out.

I want to have a job even if I do not continue my studies and serve my country and repay the gratitude of having educated me. I want to keep my parents in comfort during their old age.

BARUN LAMA (male)

I worked on farm to support my family

I was born in Dunkar 'B' under Samtse Dzongkhag and now I am 13 years old. I was studying in Gomtu where my father was a teacher and mother was a nurse. I studied in Gomtu for four years. After that, I had to go to India to continue my studies because of the Southern Bhutan problem.

I came back to Bhutan and studied in Gedu. But I failed in class VIII. We had to suffer a lot. My mother had to leave her job. I came back to my village and sold farm produce and cheese and other milk products to support my family.

Being the only child, I was always loved by my parents and always treated well.

K. SUBBA (13 years, male)

I am studying as days scholar in a rented house

I got admission in my present school and am continuing my studies now. I am staying with my friends as a day-scholar in a rented house.

I joined my school in Changmari where my father was a teacher. I was in Changmari till class V, after which I had to leave school for a few years because of the Southern Bhutan problem. My father also lost his job.

Later I had to go to Phuentsholing and I studied there till class VII.

I got admission in my present school and am continuing my studies now. I am staying with my friends as a day-scholar in a rented house. I am facing lots of problems such as financial, housing and others at the moment.

I want to become a teacher or engineer and serve our king and the country. I want to fulfill my parent's desires and their dreams.

A. BISWA (female)

I could not continue my studies due to family disruption

I wanted to continue my studies but since my parents got divorced and father got married with another woman, I could not continue my studies.

I was born in Dagana and was brought up in Dagana itself. I did my early studies in Dagana and did my class XII from Chukha. Now, I am working as a site Supervisor at Ghatiya.

I am a son of divorced parents. I was a spoilt brat but now I am trying to come over it. When my parents got divorced I was in Class XII at Chukha. When I got the news that my parents had divorced I was preparing for my final exams. Because of this, I could not concentrate on my studies and I landed up as a Site Supervisor.

I wanted to continue my studies but since my parents got divorced and father got married with another woman, I could not continue my studies.

When my parents got divorced I was shattered and was broken down and that was the saddest thing to happen in my life, and because of that I had to leave my school.

Father always treated me well and so did mother, but when they got divorced, my father became a different man though his present wife treats me well. I do not have any brothers or sister but with friends I have always had a good time. With them I learned how to bunk school, smoke, drink and make girlfriends. When I got the news that my parents got divorced it was my friends who controlled me and never made me feel alone.

Working here in such a place as a Site Supervisor is a boring job, but since I have no choice I am compelled to do it. I even tried my luck in some of the institutes but since I haven't got good marks I have got no

options. But working here as a Site Supervisor and earning 2000-3000 a month has taught me the value of money and how hard it is to earn oneself and be self-sufficient.

I want to be somebody in this world. Starting with this simple job I want to be a man with a good personality and have a good name and fame in the society.

T. WANGCHUK (male)

My parents knew no value of education

I am sad because I could not go to school because my parents were uneducated and they never knew the value of education.

I am 24 years old and was born in Ghatiya under Samtse Dzongkhag. My parents are just simple farmers who are uneducated and live in the village.

I was brought up here at Ghatiya. I used to work in the farm and look after the cattle at a time when I was supposed to be in school. I used to go to the forest to collect firewood and look after the cattle.

While I was small I never felt anything but as the time passed by and as I matured, I used to feel sad when I saw my friends going to school. I got married at the age of 22. My father expired after six months of my marriage.

I am sad because I could not go to school because my parents were uneducated and they never knew the value of education. I was very sad when my father expired. He always treated me well. The death of my father was the saddest thing that happened to me.

I was happy when I got married with a man of my caste, someone who I loved so much. I am also happy because I got this job as a road worker here at Ghatiya from which I can earn Nu. 2000-3000 a month.

I always wanted to go to school but that dream did not come true. But now, I want to have a good permanent job as a road worker and keep my mother happy and give her comfort and peace during her old age and build my own house.

K. KUMARI (24 years, female)

My parents did not know how valuable is education

I could not go to school because my parents were just simple farmers and they thought it was of no use. Anyway, when I was just 10 years old, both my parents expired one after the other.

I was born in the year 1982 at Beteni under Samtse Dzongkhag. Now I am 22 years old and working as a road worker. I could not go to school and get education because my parents were just simple farmers and they thought it was of no use. So, I had to be in the village as a farmer till the age of 18.

When I was just 10 years old, both of my parents expired one after the other. It was indeed the most unbearable moment in my life. Since, I do not have any brother and sisters, I had to bear all the pains and sorrows myself.

The saddest thing that could happen to anybody would be the death of his/her parents one after another within a month.

I was excited when I came to know that I got the present job thinking that I do not have to be in the village looking after the cattle and ploughing the field, etc. I am satisfied with what I earn and hope the contractor will increase our wages in the near future.

Parents never wanted me to go to school. Maybe they could not afford it. But it is for sure, they thought it was not worth while.

I do not have any dreams, but if I can, then in the future I shall become a contractor and earn enough. I want to give my children a good education. I want them to be somebody.

KARMA (22 years, male)

My education was hindered by many factors

I studied up to class VI in Bara after which I had to leave school due to problems in southern Bhutan. After my father's death I had to do everything at home being the eldest son.

I was born in 1981 at Bara. My parents are simple farmers. I studied up to class VI in Bara after which I had to leave school because of the anti-national problem in southern Bhutan.

After the death of my father, I had to help mother because my small brother was just one year old. We had to work very hard.

Having to leave school at an early age makes me feel sad. Had I continued my studies, I would have graduated from Kanglung College. The death of my father was yet another sad thing that has happened. After his death I had to do everything being the eldest among the two of us.

Parents always treated me well and wanted me to continue my studies despite the problems that they faced.

I left my village at the age of 22 in the search of a job. I had a few hundred Ngultrums in my pocket. I am doing something good now to my mother. I give her half of my earnings and some times bought clothes for my brother who is in the village, helping mother. I do not think I have done any bad thing.

I had a dream to become teacher but since I had to leave school, the dream is no more. But what ever it is, I want to look for a good job,

which gives me enough money to support my mother, brother and myself.

B SUBBA (male)

My parents were ignorant

Since my parents are uneducated and ignorant they never thought of sending me to school and giving me education.

I am from Trashigang Bikhari, but now we live at Changmari, Nangladang. I am 22 years old and till the age of 20 I was in Bikhari working as a farmer. Since my parents are uneducated and ignorant they never thought of sending me to school and giving me education.

We came to this present place because of the government's resettlement program. We got a land here at Nangladang.

Parents have always treated me well; they never made me feel alone they were always there to support me

I want to be in the village as a farmer and support my younger brother and sister in their education. I want to get married and have my own house and a family and spend the rest of my life happily.

TASHI (22 years, male)

One has other options in life to be happy

We are six in the family including father and mother. All of us children were in school, but due to certain circumstances we had to leave school one after another.

We were not a well-off family. We always had to go to school half stomach. We are six in the family including father and mother. All of us children were in school, but due to certain circumstances we had to leave school one after another.

After the southern Bhutan problem, my father lost his job and schools were also closed down. Mother and father used to run a shop while I used to work in the fields and sell its produce. My two sisters were small to work so they used to help my parents in the shop.

I want to expand my present shop with a variety of goods. I want to be an honest salesman/businessman and keep my parents happy and give my two sisters good education and finally marry at the age of 29 and settle down for the rest of my life.

M.R. SUBBA

Disgruntled groups of people spoiled my dream

I left school due to the southern Bhutan problem. After that we had to work in the village, looking after the cattle.

I remember the day when we were told not to come to the school any more by our head master. I was in class II then. I did not know the reasons but as the years passed by I came to know that it was because of the anti-national problem in southern Bhutan. The school was closed down. After I left school, I had to work in the village, looking after the cattle. My father and mother were farmers. I had to work and help parents in the fields, had to feed the cattle, and do other village works.

My parents always treated me well. When my sister was born they were very happy because they now had a son and a daughter. They loved both of us so much that I do not have words to express how much. But when my sister died, they were broken down and they started loving me more than they used to do. I think that they thought that same thing might happen to me also. Finally, I want to get married and have all the possible comforts of life.

N.SUNWAR

Divorce made my future bleak

I am working in the village as a farmer because I could not continue my studies since my parents got divorced.

I was born here at Magay in Changmari in the year 1981. Now I am working in the village as a farmer because I could not continue my studies since my parents got divorced. My mother got married again and now lives with her own children and husband. I live here with my father.

When my parents got divorced, I felt very sad because I had to leave school. I am sad because I am here working as a farmer.

I am happy because I am proud of my father for he did not marry another woman. Had he married another woman, I would not have been here as I would have been somewhere working as a waiter or washing somebody's clothes or dishes. I am thankful to my father, but I have no relationship with my mother.

I want to have a good job with which I can help my father during his old age and give good education to my children, if I happen to marry.

S. GHALEY (23 years, male)

THIMPHU DZONGKHAG

Relatives - the cause of my failure

It was really difficult to go to school, not just because of the long walk, but because I had to take my family's cattle to the grazing grounds along with me when I went to school in the morning. The road used to be muddy with leeches on all sides.

I am twenty-three years old. I am from Tshimakha in Chukha. I live in a rented house at Taba and study at Nima High School which is a private school. I am the youngest in my family.

Till class V, I studied in my village, where I had to walk for two and half hours daily to and fro to school. But it was really difficult to go to school, not just because of the long walk, but because I had to take my family's cattle to the grazing grounds along with me when I went to school in the morning. The road used to be muddy with leeches on all sides.

I did not know my mother as she had died when I was very young. Later, I moved to Thimphu to live with my civil-servant brother, as my father could not afford to bear my school expenses. For five years from class V to X, I stayed with my brother. Every day after school I had to go and collect grass for the cattle. After that I had to milk them. Then it was time for me to cook dinner and after dinner followed the washing-ups. I hardly got time to study. Then the next morning, I had to prepare breakfast, milk the cows and sometimes help my sister in-law in preparing the thread for her weaving works. This was my daily routine.

Despite all the work I did, my sister in-law differentiated me from her own brother who also used to live together. During Tshechu, I was not allowed to go and take part in the festival. When I did not qualify for admission to class XI in a government school from class X, I could not

ask for the financial help from my brother. But while in school, I was lucky that Ashi Kezang, daughter of H.R.H. Ashi Pem Pem Wangchuck, recognized my plight. Therefore, I am presently studying in Nima High School under the sponsorship of H.R.H. Ashi Pem Pem Wangchuck and Ashi Dechen Wangmo Wangchuck. My dream is to become an army officer and serve my country.

THINLEY (23 years, male)

Expectations demand pursuit

I had always dreamt of becoming a lawyer, but my dream was shattered when I couldn't qualify for admission after class XII.

I am twenty years old. I am from Laneri, Pema Gatsel. I had always dreamt of becoming a lawyer, but my dream was shattered when I couldn't qualify for admission after class XII. With an average mark of only 62 percent, I could not even qualify for Sherubtse College. This was the worst time of my life.

I am the youngest among four children. I came to Thimphu when I was young to study as I lived in a very remote village. My parents are simple subsistent farmers.

For now I am planning to undertake GNM (General Nurse Midwife) training at the Royal Institute of Health Sciences, Thimphu.

TSHERING (20 years, male)

My desire for a peaceful world to live in

I was born on the 12th of November 1988. I am now 15 years old. My general interests are music, reading books watching TV, hanging out with friends and family, chatting online and lots more. I dislike people who have problems with what other people do and people who are

jobless. I think the world would be a better place without people like them.

I am currently studying in Lungtenzampa Middle Secondary School. School is fun sometimes but at times it can get annoying because of all the pressures of studying and doing well in school. I think that sometimes our parents and teachers expect too much from us. The pressure of having to live up to so many expectations lessen our interests and our ability to work hard and do well in studies.

My parents are open and frank and they always encourage me to open up to them and to talk to them if I have any problems.

I have had a lot of experiences in life till now and I have also learnt a lot of valuable lessons from these experiences. I want to grow up to be a productive, independent and self-sufficient person.

EUDEN (15 years, female)

All of us have the capacity to scale certain heights

I want to be the first woman pilot in Bhutan to prove that Bhutanese women are equal to their male counterparts in all fields.

My name is Kuenzang Deki. I am 15 yrs old. I like reading novels, collecting stamps and coins and listening to music. I dislike being accompanied by rowdy people.

Till class III, I studied in Phuentsholing. Since my father got transferred to Thimphu, from class IV, I have been studying in Lungtenzampa Middle Secondary School and now I am in class IX.

My parents and I have an open relationship but I still respect them like how all parents should be respected. They are like my friends in many aspects.

Everything that I have gone through in my life was good. Whether it is good or bad, it all depends on how we look at it, and I look at all my experiences as having been good. If I do something wrong I learn from it and make it right. I do not take it as a bad incident.

I did a voluntary work in the children's ward at the hospital. It was a wonderful experience and I am planning to do again in the winter vacation.

I want to be the first woman pilot in Bhutan to prove that Bhutanese women are equal to their male counterparts in all fields.

K DEKI (female, 15 years)

Expectations matter a lot

I am presently studying in Lungtenzampa Middle Secondary School and I am in class X. I aspire to be a successful and happy person.

My name is Kinley Zimba Tshering. I am a shy person but I can be really stubborn at times. I have a twisted sense of humor and I am quite sarcastic. I am presently studying in Lungtenzampa Middle Secondary School and I am in class X.

My parents and me get along fine. I respect them and I am grateful for what they have done and what they are doing for me. But the problem is that they expect too much from me in education, and I worry about not being able to live up to their expectations.

I aspire to be a successful and happy person. I hope to achieve some wealth and along with it great peace and prosperity.

KINLEY Z TSHERING

Happiness - My pursuit in a life-long journey

I live in Thimphu and study at Lungtenzampa. I want to be successful and happy in my life.

I am Kunzang Chuki. I live in Thimphu and study at Lungtenzampa. I love listening to music, learning new things, chatting with my online friends and having a balanced, limited good time with my friends.

I am in class IX. I am grateful that I have wonderful, understanding parents. We have a very open relationship.

One of the main things would be to be successful, happy and have everything I want and the people I love around me, and hopefully, to die a happy peaceful woman.

K WANGDI (15 years, female)

A high degree of honesty and team spirit are necessary

I am studying in class X. I do enjoy studying but at times, I feel very pressured.

I am an ordinary teenage girl who likes spending time with my parents and friends. I value my parent's concern and advices but I also like to have my space and my freedom. Although, I like my life, I sometimes feel that it is a real pain but basically I enjoy my life or at least I try to.

I am studying in class X. I do enjoy studying but at times, I feel very pressured.

My relationship with my parents is close but sometimes, my parents misunderstand me, and they think that I am still a kid and so they do not share their problems.

To tell you about a bad incident in my life, I had got my exam papers but I didn't tell my parents about it. I lied. When my parents came to know about it. My parents, especially my father was very mad and hurt that I did not tell him. I finally apologized to my father and he forgave me. He encouraged me to better next time. I also realized that honesty is

the best policy and this experience made me closer to my parents especially my father.

A good incident in my life was when we won the inter school basketball tournament. That made me realize that team spirit can overcome all obstacles. My aspiration in life is to be successful and make my parents proud of me.

UGYEN (female, 17 years)

Be open and frank

I am in class IX. I enjoy watching horror movies and playing video games. I am honest, frank and believe in miracles.

I am 15 years old and I am in class IX. I enjoy watching horror movies and playing video games. I am honest, frank and believe in miracles.

I have been studying in Lungtenzampa High School since class IV. I am confident to take up science in class XI. I want to be a forensic journalist. I am doing well in my studies currently.

I have a nice relationship with my parents and I am extremely close with my father. My parents are very frank.

The most memorable day in my life was on Teachers day when I had such great fun. I was the emcee for the talent show and I enjoyed being on stage. My aspiration in life is to be a forensic journalist.

TSHERING (15 years, male)

Appreciate and respect your parents and teachers

I study in Lungtenzampa Middle Secondary School in class X. I aspire to become a pilot and travel the world.

My name is Kuenga Choden Dorji. I am 15 years old. I live above the hospital. My ambition in life is to be a Pilot. I have an interest in

traveling around the world and meeting different people of different cultures. I like to read books of all types, watch TV, listen to music etc. I dislike friends who backbite, who are annoying and who ignore me.

I study in Lungtenzampa Middle Secondary School in class X. I enjoy all subjects but I think Dzongkha is very difficult. I like all the teachers since they teach well. I have a good relationship with my parents since I share all my problems with them. I enjoy their company and advice. I love my parents very much.

I felt happy when my young cousin was born. I felt bad when I fought with my brother for a small reason.

My most memorable day was when I met my best friend Phuentsho Choden. I aspire to become a pilot and travel the world.

K DORJI (15 years, female)

Believe in faith and never spare chances

I am in class X. I like school but get tensed up easily. I do not like studying but I am trying.

I am honest and open with everyone I know, I like doing things my way (independently), I believe in faith and I believe in taking chances.

I am in class X. I like school but get tensed up easily. I do not like studying but I am trying.

I am very close to my parents; I am very open with them. I tell them almost everything, especially my mother, because she can understand me better as she has gone through the same things.

My aspiration in life is to work hard in life and make good money, so I can donate it to the monasteries and open a school for the disabled and help the children and start an orphanage, I also want to become someone who stands up to what she believes in.

T DORJI (16 years, female)

Believe in yourself and let other's do their own

I did my class XII in Nima Higher secondary school. I did not qualify for college. So I left school. My family forced me to study but I did not, as I was not interested in studying.

I am Tshering Dema. I was born on 22nd December 1983. I am the youngest daughter of the late Sigye Phuba and Tshering Yangzom. I have three elder sisters and an elder brother. When I was young, I was a very shy person, always hiding behind my mother's back and now I am a very short-tempered girl.

I come from a very broad-minded generation of ancestors, where every body is treated equally. When I was small, I even stole apples from the neighbour's yard. I am a romantic person. For me life is one big party and I am absolutely sure that I am, outgoing, fun, gregarious, and spontaneous. Sitting at home and sulking is not my style. I had plenty of friends and believe in living life to the fullest.

I believe in unconditional love. Actually love to me is like in the movies, 'falling in love, being together in good and bad times and living happily ever after.' My man must have a mind of his own. Only then we can grow together after marriage.

I did my primary education in Zhilukha and High School in Yangchenphug High School and finally I did my class XII in Nima Higher secondary school. I did not qualify for college. So I left school. My family forced me to study but I did not, as I was not interested in studying.

My parents were really supportive and encouraging. My father used to love me very much but I feel very bad because he expired last year before I could repay my gratitude. My mother is my idol.

My most memorable day is when my nephew was born on Jan 17th 1997. The worse day is when my father expired last year, December 16, 2003.

My aspiration in life is to be a businesswoman and start an orphanage.

T DEMA (21 years, female)

Only when you earn, you know how much you value

I got married and then I had to leave my job as I gave birth to my child. But now I am running a small shop of my own.

I was born at Wangdue. At the age of seven, I started schooling and studied till class IV in Wangdue.

My sister got transferred to another place and then I studied at Lungtenzampa Jr High School up to class VII. I studied at Punakha High School till class X. Then, as I did not qualify for further studies, I decided to join a private firm, Sigma Cable Services, which is owned by my aunty. I worked there for two years at a monthly salary of Nu. 2500. I got married and then I had to leave my job as I gave birth to my child. But now I am running a small shop of my own.

I have my parents and four sisters and a brother, all elder to me. I am the youngest.

My parents are now quite old. They live with one of my sisters. I meet them when we have some family get-together on festive occasions.

My happiest occasion was when I was in a school basketball team and we won a tournament. My sad incident was when my 18-year old nephew died on April 23, 2002. He was very nice and a handsome young man, full of promises.

Being a mother, I have learnt many things. I have learnt to take care of the money that my family earns. When I was in school, I used to be very lavish.

DZAM (22 years, female)

Work with dedication - Who knows you might own it

My father died when I was small. I dropped out of school to help my mother. I am working as an assistant mechanic in a workshop.

I came to Thimphu two months ago. It was my first journey to the capital. My father died when I was very young. Then I stayed at home to help my mother.

My uncle brought me here in Thimphu to try and put me in the painting school. But when I could not qualify in the interview. My uncle put me as an assistant mechanic in a motor workshop. It had been only two weeks now since I joined the work.

Right now I feel that the job is physically easy and that my employer treats me well. Apart from my salary of Nu. 1000 per month, my employer provides me food and clothing. Thus I hope to continue with the present profession.

I feel I am too old to attend school and study, but if given the opportunity and with financial support I have the desire to study under the Non-Formal education scheme.

I do have one ambition. I want to be a proud owner of a motor workshop. I am pretty confident that my dream will come true one day.

JSANGAY

Divorce made my future bleak

I now earn Nu. 1000 per month of which I send half to my mother who lives in Phuntsholing with my elder brother.

I was born in the year 1991 at Wangchu under Thimphu Dzongkhag. I was only four and a half years old when my parents got divorced. I was then too young to understand the impact of their separation. My father went to Wangdiphodrang and my mother in need of money put me to work at a very tender age of seven. At that time I was paid only Nu. 600 per month.

I now earn Nu. 1000 per month of which I send half of it to my mother who lives in Phuntsholing with my elder brother.

I regret not being able to go to school and study. The reason being that my mother could not simply bear the expenditure. I feel unlucky that my parents got divorced.

D SHERPA (13 years, male)

Smoking – I thought is an antidote to worries

I was studying in class V when my parents got divorced. I dropped out of school and I am presently working in a workshop for a monthly salary of Nu.1500.

I was born in the year 1985 at Sarpang. I was studying in class V when my parents got divorced. Their separation put mental pressure and I had to leave home to earn a living. Presently I am working in a workshop for a monthly salary of Nu.1500. I am living with my elder brother who works as a salesman in one of the furniture shops.

I do regret that I could not continue my studies. I have heard of the Non-formal education scheme and if I get the opportunity I would love to study under this scheme. I work in the workshop partly because I have no choice and partly because I have to supplement my parent's income. If in the near future a better job offer comes my way I would not hesitate to leave my present occupation. I smoke occasionally. It

makes me forget my worries. One goal in my life is to run a workshop of my own.

PMONGAR (19 years, male)

Uncontrolled family size is a real burden

My father died and my mother could not afford to enroll me in studies.

At present I am earning income by selling momos (dumplings). My father died and my mother could not afford to enroll me in studies because she had many children to support. I am helping my brothers and sisters go to school by what I earn.

I am staying on my own. If I can get a better job where I can earn more, I want to leave the present job. Then I can help my mother and siblings in a better way and also lead a more comfortable life myself.

UTSHERING (male)

I always failed in my studies

Though my parents enrolled me in school, I could not pursue my studies further because I always failed.

I am from Paro. And at present I am working as a babysitter. Though my parents enrolled me in school, I could not pursue my studies further because I always failed.

My parents told me to be a babysitter. But my employer is strict and they even beat me sometimes. I thought of running away from them but again I am afraid of the police. I heard from my friends that the police would come after me if I run away. I feel very sad thinking why I was so weak in studies and wish to be with some good employers.

D YANGDEN (female)

My Uncle rescued me

My parents did not send me to school and life became even harder for me when they got divorced.

My parents did not send me to school. Then they got divorced. Both of my parents were remarried. As a child when I was staying with my father, my father neglected me for my stepbrother and sister.

Under the guidance of my uncle, I came to Thimphu and at present I am working in a workshop. I am staying all by myself in a rented room where I pay Nu.1000 per month as rent.

I am sad that I cannot send money to my brother and sister, as it is not enough for myself.

JANGAY (male)

Flight to my dreamland

I ran away from my village and came to Thimphu. I am now working in a restaurant.

Presently I am working in a restaurant as a dishwasher and waitress. I am from Merak under Trashigang Dzongkhag. I come from a large family consisting of nine siblings.

It has been four years since I ran away from home with a friend. Till that time, I stayed at home to look after my younger brothers and sisters.

When I was 18, I heard about Thimphu. I heard so many good things about Thimphu and since then it became my dreamland. But I knew my parents would never send me away from home. So with one of my friends I decided to run away. My friend and I stole some money from home and came to Thimphu.

I was employed in a restaurant as a waitress. Now, it has been three years working as a waitress. I feel I am lucky to have met a kind employer who provides me free food, free lodging and pocket money. I am happy for myself but not for my brother and sisters at home. I am saving money to support my family at home. I will forever be guilty for leaving my parents and being selfish in pursuit of my own happiness.

N YANGZOM (21 years female)

Father's drinking habit transferred family responsibility to me

I dropped out of school when I was in class VII to find a job and help my struggling mother.

I am from Leopani, Sarpang Dzongkhag. I have both my parents, but my father was not a responsible and caring father. He was a heavy drinker. During the daytime he used to go for work (carpenter) but he hardly brought his earnings home.

He always made my mother and four of us (two brothers and one sister) wait for him late into the night.

When he arrived, he used to start quarrelling with mother and keep on banging those things around him. Most of time he would not even return from the bar. He always kept my mother and four of us in tears. Soon he left all of us for another woman. So, I being eldest of all, had to leave the school when I was in class VII and came to Thimphu in search of a job to help my mother, brother and sister. I am presently working as an assistant mechanic.

A THAP (male)

I pitied my mother

I dropped out of class IV to help my mother after my father left my mother. I am working in a motor workshop now.

I am from Samey, Dagana. Though I have both parents they are divorced. I stay with my mother. I have two younger brothers and two sisters. I am the eldest.

I studied till class IV. I was good in studies. I used to secure high marks from the class and even used to hold position during my school days. But my father and mother weren't in good relation. Most of the time there was misunderstanding between them. I could not make out whose fault it was; and soon father left us when I was in class IV.

Still I continued my studies even after father left us. All of us were in the school except my little sister. Though my mother always encouraged us to study but I being the eldest, could not see my mother struggling through all sorts of hardship just to bring us up. So, one night I thought I should stop my studies and do something to help my mother, brother and sister. So I sought the help of my uncle and went to Tsirang and stayed there with him in search of a job. But it was of no use. I could not get a job even after six months. Then my uncle took me to Thimphu. It is here where I at last got a job of a car washer. I did my duty sincerely and my boss was quite impressed with me and soon promoted me to the post of an assistant painter.

TSHERINGI (20 years, male)

TRASHIGANG DZONGKHAG

My parents wanted help them in their business

When I was in class VIII, I was forced to leave my studies by my parents to help them run their shop.

I am 16 years old. I was born in Rangjung under Trashigang Dzongkhag. At present I am helping my parents to run a shop at Kanglung.

I am the second eldest from the family. I have an elder brother who is still studying and two little siblings, who at present are in class V and III. I was brought up in my village until I was put in school at the age of seven. When I was in class VIII, I was forced to leave my studies by my parents to help them run their shop. I have been helping my parents for the past two years, though I am not happy with what I am doing.

In my life, the most disappointing thing that has ever happened was when I was forced to leave my education half way. Now I do not want the same things to happen to my younger siblings. I am not happy with my parents for making me discontinue my studies.

JAMYANG (16 years, female)

Improper guidance - My escape to drugs

I am twenty-two years old. I want to be a driver. I am from Phongmey in Trashigang.

Ten years back, I had to leave my schooling, due to my parents divorce. After the divorce we faced lots of financial problems at home. Because of the lack of proper guidance, I was influenced into drugs, alcohol and fights.

I do all these things, because I cannot stand to see myself doing nothing. I am unhappy with my life because I have no job.

TSHEWANG (22 years, male)

Working to educate myself

I was born in the year 1987. I was born in Rongthong and still continue to live there along with my only father. My mother died when I was young.

Presently, I study at Kanglung Junior High School. But sometimes I think of leaving school because of the distance from my home. As my father is poor, I work during my winter vacations and I give all my earnings to my father. Apart from this I even look after the cattle, work in the farm and do household chores. I want to study hard and become a teacher and help my father.

KARMA (17 years, female)

My step-father is supportive

I never saw my father because my father had died when I was a small child. My stepfather is very supportive and now I am able to attend school.

I am 16 years old. I am from Ashamdaylo under Kanglung gewog. I never saw my father because my father had died when I was a small child. After the death of my father, my mother as a farmer faced a lot of financial problems. So my mother decided to marry again. My stepfather is very supportive and now I am able to attend school.

I am regular in my classes. After my school I help my mother with cooking, looking after the cattle and with farm works. I even work during winter vacation and earn enough money to buy myself my school uniform and stationery. I even know a bit of carpentry.

I am often disturbed by the long distance between my house and the school. I really get worried thinking about my future but I have a dream of being independent and helping my mother.

KINLEY (16 years, female)

I left school due to pregnancy

I studied till class IX. I had to leave school because of pregnancy.

I am 18 years old. I am from Kanglung. I am the mother of a child. After the death of my father, my mother remarried. But my stepfather treated me badly.

I studied till class IX. I had to leave school because of pregnancy.

I am still interested in my studies. I am now running a small shop. What worries me most is about my child's life. I want to earn enough money to give him a good education.

CHIMI (18 years, female)

I sell vegetables while coming to school

I am 13 years old. I am from Resangdung village under Kanglung gewog. At present I am studying in class VI in Kanglung Junior High School.

As I come from a poor family, I face a lot of financial problems. I help my mother by selling fresh vegetables while coming to school. We also supply vegetables to Sherubtse College, one of the only two degree colleges in Bhutan.

Though I am poor and young, I want to be successful in life and lead an independent life.

SONAM(13 years, female)

I am trying to stand on my own

*My parents are poor and they have to look after the other children.
So I am trying to support myself by working as a waitress. But I am
worried about my mental problem.*

I am 16 years old. I am from Changmeygonpa under Trashigang Dzongkhag. Both my parents are farmers and I have five brothers and sisters.

I studied till class II. I left school because I had some mental problems, and I was not interested in my studies at all. At present I am working in a hotel as a waitress. I stay with the owner. My owner treats me well. My parents are poor and they have to look after the other children. So I am trying to support myself by working as a waitress. But I am worried about my mental problem.

TSERING (16 years, female)

I am a heart patient

*In the year 2001, I was referred to Vellore, India for treatment. But
due financial problems, I could not afford to go even though most of
the expenses were borne by the government.*

I am 21 years old. I am from Jamkhar, TashiYangtse. I am a heart patient. I have been suffering from this disease for past six years. In the year 2001, I was referred to Vellore, India for treatment. But due to the financial problem I could not afford to go even though most of the expenses were borne by the government.

I was married to a man from my own village in the year 2002. But unfortunately, he left me after knowing about my disease. I have a two-year old daughter from him.

At present I am working in a hotel. I have been working here for the past two months. It seems that my heart disease has now come to the last stage. So the hotel owner is sending me back to my village. My father died and my mother is a farmer. I actually came to Trashigang to look for a job because I could not do physical work in the village.

I am worried about my health, my daughter and my mother's welfare. But right now all I can do is pray for a longer life.

TSHEWANG (21 years, female)

I am the only one studying

I have an older brother, an older sister and two younger sisters. All my siblings are illiterate and are helping my parents at home. I am the only one from the family who is studying and I feel lucky about it.

I am 18 years old. I am from Resangdung under Kanglung gewog. Both my parents are farmers. I have an older brother, an older sister and two younger sisters. All my siblings are illiterate and are helping my parents at home. I am the only one from the family who is studying and I feel lucky about it. I am very interested in studies. I am also interested in sports like football and volleyball. I am in the school team of both these games. The school is quite far from my home, but I am not at all discouraged because of the distance.

At home I look after the cattle and do some works, and it is hard to find time to study. During the vacation I makes the best use out of it by doing some work to earn money to buy my school uniform, books etc.

I take alcohol sometimes during winter vacation. My drinking is not a habit. I drink only after working in a field or after some works that require physical strength. I am worried about the completion of my

schooling, then my employment and the welfare of my parents. My dream is to become a police officer.

TSHEWANG (18 years, male)

I regret that I did not go to school

I am content with my life but the only regret in my life is that I could not attend school.

I am 14 years old. I am working in a hotel in Trashigang. I am from Yalang under TashiYangtse Dzongkhag. Though both my parents are alive, they are divorced. My father is a peon and is in Mongar. My mother is a housewife. Both my parents are remarried.

My parents divorced when I was six years old. After the divorce, I lived with my mother, who at that time could not afford to send me to school. I like my mother and hate my father because he never bothered about my life.

At present I am working for my cousin who is running a hotel in Trashigang. I am happy with what I am doing because the job is easy, my sister treats me well and I can send money to my mother.

I am really interested in studies. If there is non-formal education class being conducted near by, I want to go and study.

I am content with my life but the only regret in my life is that I could not attend school.

DORJI (14 years, male)

I worry about not being able to finish my studies

While going to school, we also have to take along with us vegetables and some cheese and butter to sell. I worry about not being able to finish my studies, looking at the problems that my mother faces.

I am 14 years old. I am from Resangdung villang under Kanglung gewog. I am a student of Kanglung Junior High School studying in class VII. I am living with my mother and my three sisters.

Since my father died when I was small, it has been very difficult for my mother to make ends meet. Due to financial problems, my two elder sisters had to drop out of school and help our mother. Though my younger sister and I are going to school, the school is far away and we have to walk for one and half hours through the jungle to reach our school.

While going to school, we also have to take along with us vegetables and some cheese and butter to sell. I worry about not being able to finish my studies, looking at the problems that my mother faces. I want to fulfill my dream of becoming a doctor and help my sisters and my mother who are my strength in life. I dream of helping those people in my village particularly those with problems that facing now.

SONAM (14 years, female)

My father made me work as helper

Being poor I had to do some work to support my father. So my father brought me to Trashigang to work as a helper in a house. I get Nu. 200 per month, which my employer sends directly to my father.

I am 11 years old. I am from Bangtar under Samdrupjongkhar Dzongkhag. My mother died when I was small.

My father is a farmer. I have four brothers and sisters. I am the youngest. Being poor I had to do some work to support my father. So my father brought me to Trashigang to work as a helper in a house. I get Nu. 200 per month, which my employer sends directly to my father.

The employer also provides me clothing, food, lodging and some pocket money.

My father could not send me to school, because of financial problems. I am interested in studying, but I am unlucky to be born in a poor family.

TASHI (11 years, male)

I had to leave school due to financial problems

I studied till class IV. I had to leave the school because of health problem, financial problems and the divorce of my parents.

I am 14 years old. I was born in Thrimshing, in Wamrong gewog under Trashigang Dzongkhag. Both my parents are alive but they are divorced. My father is a religious practitioner and my mother is a housewife. Both of them remarried.

At present I am working in a hotel where all I have to do is to wash the dishes and clean the rooms. The job is easy and the employer treats me well but I feel that I am being paid too less. The benefits I get from the employer apart from my salary are food, clothing and even some pocket money.

I studied till class IV. I had to leave the school because of health problem, financial problems and the divorce of my parents.

SONAM (14 years, female)

All I have to do is wash dishes and clean the house

I am 10 years old. I am from Bartsham under Trashigang. Both my parents are alive, but both of them cannot talk properly.

At present I am staying with my adopted family in Trashigang. They own a hotel. All I have to do is wash the dishes and clean the house.

Narratives

I never had the opportunity to study because firstly, my parents are not bothered about my education. My parents thought that studying was not worthwhile and besides they could not afford it. I don't regret for not being able to go to school because I am happy with my employer who is my adopted mother

I do not worry about anything just now. I only want to stay with the present employer helping them in all the possible ways I can.

PHUNTSHOM (10 years, male)

TRONGSA DZONGKHAG

Everybody loved me so much that I was pampered

I am a student in Trongsa. I want to become a teacher or a doctor in future.

I am a student studying in Trongsa. I was born in Nanggor village. I am a daughter of an ambulance driver. When I was small I used to stay with my grandparents. They used to treat me well.

Every body loved me so much that I was pampered. I began my schooling when I was seven.

I was really sad when my grandfather passed away and I could not attend his funeral as I was in school. I remember staying in my aunt's place when my parents left for granny's funeral. I was not treated well there.

I am happy at present because I am with my parents and I love them. I want to become a teacher or a doctor in the future.

D WANGMO (female)

I saved someone's life

I am a class X student of Trongsa. My ambition is to become an army or a forestry officer.

I am 21 years old. I am a class X student of Trongsa. I started my schooling at the age of nine. I was suspended from school when I was in class VII as I was found bunking from the hostel and drinking.

After suspension, I applied for police training. I got selected but my brother advised me to continue my studies. That is why I am here now.

I felt sad when my parents told me not to study. I joined school forcefully by myself. I am lucky to get a chance to study again. I hold positions in the class also. I am a captain at present.

I appreciate myself for one good deed that I have done. That is for saving the life of a man who had fallen off the cliff by taking him to the hospital. Actually I was going to the market to sell oranges with a horse. As soon as I saw the man, I took him on horseback. I also donated blood three times.

Something bad I have done was stealing chicken and vegetables from other people's homes while staying in the hostel. I also ran away from home when I was suspended from school.

My ambition is to become an army or a forestry officer. If I do not fulfill these dreams, I want to be an educated farmer.

T DORJI (21years, male)

My parents brought me up with love and care

After class XII, I could not qualify for admission in a government college in Bhutan. Now am studying in India with the support of my parents.

I was born in 1983. My parents brought me up with great love and care.

I was sent to school when I was five years old. My primary schooling was in a remote place, as my father was posted there. After a few years, he was transferred to Zhemgang. My parents were good and happy. My father was working as a Judge (Thrimpon). I was the third youngest among seven children.

After class X, I studied class XI and XII in a private school in Thimphu as I could not qualify for admission in a government school. I worked hard, but again in class XII, I could not qualify for admission in a

government school. Now am studying in India with the financial support of my parents.

KINGA OM (21 years, female)

Financial problem made me discontinue my education

I studied till class VIII. Then I had to leave school because of financial problem. Now I am working as a machine operator.

I studied in Gelephu up to class II. It is unbelievable but I fell in love with a girl named Kesang at that time. I even used to steal pencils from other friends and give it to her to make an impression.

After that I had to leave for Nanglam to continue my studies there. I studied in Nanglam till class VIII. Then I had to leave school because of financial problem. My father did not have a proper job and at the same time I had very young brothers and sisters. So I stayed home to help.

Then I joined Penden Cement Authority and worked there for around five years. I stayed there with an uncle and aunt. Later, I left that job as I could not bear the bad treatment of my aunt. Then I returned to my village where I got married. Then I shifted to Trongsa where I am working as a machine operator.

I am supporting my sister who is presently studying in a private school. I am supporting my wife's parents also.

My dream is to make my children's future a bright and happy one.

TASHI CHHOPEL (male)

My mother brought me up all by herself

My mother worked as a road-worker and supported my education. But when I was in class VIII, my mother grew too old to work hard and could not support me any longer and I had to leave school.

I am a road worker. My mother brought me up all by herself as my father left for another woman when my mother was pregnant with me.

My mother worked as a road-worker and supported my education. But when I was in class VIII, my mother grew too old to work hard and could not support me any longer and I had to leave school. Then I started work as a road worker like my mother.

I am still feeling sad for not having seen my father. I feel miserable when I recall the times I had spent with just one dress or stayed naked, as we had no money to buy new clothes.

I am satisfied with what I am doing now. Above all I can look after my old and ailing mother. I dream to become a driver in future.

K. TAMANG (male)

I work as a babysitter

I am here in Trongsa at present to be my aunt's babysitter. My daily work is to look after the kids, cook and also do weaving. At the same time I am studying through the Non-formal education scheme in Trongsa.

My life's greatest sorrow and regret is that I could not go to school. My parents kept me to help them at home.

My happiest incident is that I left my village and came to Trongsa. Here I earn around Nu. 2000 to Nu. 3000 monthly by weaving traditional clothes. So I am satisfied with what I am doing at present.

T.CHODEN (female)

I could not go to school due to sickness

I gave up my studies after I could not go to school for more than two months due to sickness.

I was born in 1985 in Dagapela and started my schooling at six.

I gave up my studies after I could not go to school for more than two months due to sickness.

After that I stayed at Thimphu for three years where I worked in a workshop earning only Nu.1500 a month. I came to Trongsa to meet my brother but after reaching here I could not return back. I am working as vehicles scrap collector at present.

I want to become a driver in future.

DK. TAMANG (19 years, male)

I studied till class III

I studied up to class III and left school due to problems at home.

I am a waitress at Sherubling hotel in Trongsa. I was admitted in a school at eight. I studied up to class III and left school due to problems at home.

While staying in village my aunty came and requested my parents to take me to Trongsa. Actually I came here to stay only for one month but after reaching here I was made to stay here and not allowed to return. Therefore I am here in Trongsa working as a helper cum waiter in my aunt's hotel. I am not happy and don't want to stay.

I ran a small shop after my studies. And I was successful in running the shop. I earned a little and gave money to my parents and to my brother and sisters. But all of a sudden due to misfortune I suddenly went under financial shortage. So I gave up the shop and stayed in the village doing some agricultural works.

I miss my parents and home. I am getting little free time here. I always have to stay within the four walls of my aunt's hotel. I have to really work hard. I have to get up at 5 am and start working and have to work

till 10 to 11pm. I get scolding for small mistakes and stay under their order only.

I want to start a small business on my own and be a free and independent woman in the near future.

B. MAYA (female)

I am unemployed

I have studied till class XII. After that, I failed to qualify for admission in a government college and presently I am staying with my father in Bjezam without any work.

I was born in 1983 in Samdrup Jongkhar. When I was four years old my mother ran away. So my father and grandparents brought me to Trongsa where they were working as road workers.

They admitted me to school and I have studied till class XII. After that, I failed to qualify for admission in a government college and presently I am staying with my father in Bjezam without any work.

I help my father in cooking. Some time I wash my father's and grandparents' clothes. During my free time I give free tuition to my neighbors' children.

B.GURUNG (21 years, male)

My parents forced me to marry a man against my choice

At 17, my parents forced me to marry a man against my choice. This man has ruined my life now

I am a mother of two children presently working under the Trongsa dzong renovation Project as a manual labourer.

I stayed in the village till the age of 20. During my childhood I could not go to school because of my poor parents. I was forced to marry an

orphan while I was only 17. Soon after marriage I came to know that my husband was in debt of around Nu. 25,000 which is a heavy sum for us. I had no option but to work hard and help my husband in repaying the debt. Still, Nu. 10,000 remains to be paid.

I have a son and a daughter. I was a happy mother. But all of a sudden my husband decided to go in search of a job and did not contact us for two years. I tried inquiring and later found that he was married again. I divorced him.

And in 2002 I came to Trongsa with my kids and started working there. My former husband came to me and approached me again. Thinking to give him one more chance, I accepted. But one day while returning from work I found my personal box open and my husband gone. To my horror he had taken my hard earned savings of Nu 10,000 and gone. My beast husband robbed me of everything I had.

I would like to run a small shop in the near future if possible. I always dream of my children's good and bright future.

R. MAYA (female)

TSIRANG DZONGKHAG

I can't forget the night

I will never forget the night when my father beat my mother and left her half dead. Let me tell you how it happened.

I am nine years old. I live in a small hut below the Tsirang - Thimphu highway. I live with my mother and two sisters.

I used to live with my parents in Punakha where my father was a carpenter and mother used to weave at home. Those were the happy days because we had enough to eat and wear.

But soon our happiness ended when we left for Tsirang. I was sad to leave behind my friends and the wide river of Punakha. As we began to settle down, father started to act strange. His drinking habit became worse day by day and became aggressive. My parents were constantly quarrelling. My elder sister and mother were crying most of the time. Soon I came to know that my father was seeing another woman. The situation began to deteriorate because we did not have money to pay the house rent and food was scarce in the house. Eventually we moved to a small hut on somebody else's farm below the road and this is the place where I live now. Father disappeared for days and when he came home it was only to fight with my mother. I hate my father for beating my mother.

But the worst was yet to come. It happened one night when my father came to our small hut with his woman. He began to push my mother out of the hut. She began to protest and fight back but the other woman caught hold of my mother's hands and pinned her down to the floor. My father picked up a big firewood and began to hit my mother. My sister came in between and tried to push away father but she too was beaten. I

ran to get help but it was too dark and the closest neighbour lived too far.

I came back to find my mother unconscious and my sister pouring water on her head. I was helpless and I began to cry. Father was still holding the firewood and with that he poked it into my eyes because my crying irritated him. Then my father and the woman left home with my mother half dead.

Early the next morning my sister told me to look after our little sister and stay at home since she had to take mother to the hospital. Sister came back at lunchtime and told me that the police had caught father and the woman and mother was in the hospital.

I have an uncle who is a driver and I hope to go to my uncle's place and learn how to drive.

NAMGAY WANGCHUK (9 years, male)

I live alone

I am happiest when I am going to school because I have lots of friends and playing with them makes me forget the sad things of my life.

I am a twelve-year old boy. I live alone. The headmaster of Mandaygang primary school has given me a single-room apartment as my parents are divorced and my mother works in a small hotel in Damphu and supports me financially.

My mother is happier now because she earns and lives on her own. When my father was with us, he was always drunk and beat my mother every day without any reason. My father was even taken to the police station for violence. I am ashamed of my father and my mother and I am better off without him. I am happiest when I am go to school

because I have lots of friends and playing with them makes me forget the sad things of my life.

I cook my own meals and wash my clothes and sleep alone. I get scared and some times I remain wide awake at night. Then I go to my teacher's quarters. My mother comes to visit me once in three weeks. She brings provisions for me and washes my clothes.

I feel sorry for my mother because she has to work hard in the hotel for me. In school I am ashamed that I do not have a proper home to live in and the fact that my parents do not live with me. I am very grateful to my headmaster for giving me a house to live in and my teachers for helping me with everyday life.

P. PRASAD (12 years, male)

I don't remember my mother

I don't remember my mother. She had died when I was too young leaving my little sister and me with a drunkard father.

I am eleven years old. I work in a small bar. I wake up at 5 o'clock in the morning and sweep the floor of the entire house, wash clothes and dishes.

It is a hard work but now it's almost four years and I am quite used to it. I don't remember my mother. She had died when I was too young leaving my little sister and me with a drunkard father.

My father was a roadside worker. When father went for work I carried my younger sister on my back and did all the household chores. We never had enough to eat but some sympathetic neighbors used to give us rice and vegetables.

When I was seven, my father took me to the market and sent me with a woman who is presently the owner of the bar I am working in. I cried

myself to sleep thinking of my little sister. I was afraid that my sister would go hungry and that she may be all alone since father did not come home that often.

After two years I heard from my employer that my sister had been sold to a man for Nu. 200 by my father. I then realized that I too must have been sold to my employer. I do not know for how much he sold me. But I am lucky because my employer treats me well and makes me feel comfortable. I do not know what my future will be.

I have only one wish and that is to meet my little sister.

K.L (11 years, female)

He beat my sister and paralyzed her

My most dreadful memory is of my father beating my mother. He even beat my sister and made her paralyzed.

I am a nine-year-old girl. I am studying in class IV. I come from a broken family and I am very much exposed to hardship.

I live with my mother and elder sister who are paralyzed. My mother goes to work on other people's farms and sometimes she works on the road to feed the family. Though they have to work a lot, they are better off now since home it's become peaceful after father left us. My most dreadful memory is of my father beating my mother.

One evening my father came back from farm work totally drunk. First my parents began to quarrel and then father began to hit mother. My elder sister and I tried to stop them. But we failed and all three of us were beaten. Then father with the handle of a spade began to hit all three of us. I ran away but my sister could not. My sister was hit on her head and back. That night father went away and did not come back. I got help from my neighbours and took both my mother and sister to the

hospital. They were there for about a week during which I had to carry food for them twice a day. Mother recovered but my sister became paralyzed.

It is almost two years since I last saw my father. Some say that he had migrated to another village where he has married again.

I want to become a teacher and would like to support my family and help my sister get better medical facilities.

SG (9 years, female)

My step-mother scolds me too much

I am happy to be in school and I do not like being at home because my stepmother scolds me always saying that I only know how to eat.

I am twelve years old. I live with my father and stepmother. I walk to school from home, which takes about an hour. In the summer time it's difficult for me to reach school in time because it rains hard and the path is usually washed away. I feel discouraged by all these difficulties but I love to be with my friends at school and play the whole day. I do not like being at home because my stepmother scolds me, always saying that I only know how to eat.

I will be happier when I start to earn and live on my own. During the winter vacation I carry oranges and earn money for school. I feel that those children who have their mothers are the luckiest since mother is the one who takes care of the children's food, clothing and health. I have a feeble memory of my mother who was always sick. She died when I was about five year old. My only dream is to leave school soon and live on my own by doing some work, earning by myself and free from the scolding of my stepmother.

P. TAMANG (12 years, male)

My father left my mother for another woman

My father left my mother for another woman. This has made me face a lot of difficulties.

I am sixteen years old. I live with my mother in Dunglagang. It is almost two years since we came to Tsirang from Thimphu. In Thimphu my father was in the Army. But he left us for another woman. My mother was sick for about a year since the divorce. I was depressed and suffered severe stomach ulcer. That year I had to leave school to look after my mother.

My mother is a constant encouragement to me to make me study more. I have a dream to become a doctor.

I am the only child. When I go to school, I am scared that something might happen to my mother as she is left all alone at home. During the vacations, it's even more difficult for me as I have to work and earn money for school. I have to carry oranges from the far-off farms and sell it on the roadsides. I sometimes work on the road. My mother weaves and grows vegetables and some fruits. I bring the farm products to the local market and sell them.

The greatest worry in my life is my mother's health. My mother is frail and often falls sick. I don't know what will happen to me if my mother passes away.

My mother sometimes tells me to get married and I myself think that this would be a solution to our problem but then again I think of my parents getting divorced and the related problems. These things make me think that marriage is not so good.

My only wish is that my mother lives long enough.

J. ZANGMO (16 years, female)

I am studying hard to support my parents

My father died when I was small. We have a lot of problems but I am studying hard to support my family.

I am 18 years old. I am studying in class X. I was born in Mongar. I want to become a doctor.

My father died when I was small. At present I live with my mother and my two younger sisters who are also studying. My family is going through a hard time. My mother runs a shop in Damphu town, but she hardly earns enough from it to support all of us.

So during my vacations I work on the roadside to help my mother.

My mother being so busy in the shop really worries me. She is an ulcer patient who needs proper food and rest. I am also worried that my mother takes many medicines and I feel that taking too many medicines is also not good.

A. SUBBA

I work during winter vacations

I manage my school expenditure by working during vacations in construction sites like school, projects etc.

I am from Senkhar in Mongar. I am studying in class X. Before I could understand the love and affection of a mother, my mother expired. I was just two years old then.

Later, my father remarried and my little sister and I were treated very badly at home.

I manage my school expenditure by working during my vacations in construction sites. And for this reason I have not been home for three

years. I plan to use this money to further my education as I aspire to become a teacher in the future.

SHERAB ZANGMO (female)

I wish if my father would get well soon

I wish that my father who is a leprosy patient in Gidakom Hospital would get well soon.

I have a wish. I wish that my father who is a leprosy patient in Gidakom Hospital would get well soon. I am thirteen years old. I am in class III now.

I stay with my relatives in Tsirang. My mother died when I was very small. My father remarried a lady called Aum Bow who used to hit me with pots and pans on my head. Later she left my father, taking all our belongings and furniture and me.

Again my father told me that he needs some one to give him food. So again he remarried with a woman called Wangmo. Later she also left us and went to Nepal, taking all my father's money.

I have an elder brother who is in the army. I hate him because last year when my father was undergoing an eye operation, he did not come because he was ashamed that father was suffering from leprosy. I want to become an Army officer. I always pray to god for my father's recovery because I love him very much.

D. DORJI (13 years, male)

I stay with a neighbour

My father left my mother for another woman. At present I am staying with a neighbour because my mother went to Thimphu hospital because my brother is sick.

I am nine years old. I am from Ridha in Wangdiphodrang. I am at present in class II. I am the youngest among the four children. I don't like my father because he left us for another woman. I have not seen my stepmother. At present I am staying with my uncle and aunty (neighbour) because my mother went to Thimphu hospital because my brother is sick.

Due to financial problem at home, my mother could not pay money for my school fees. But the head master of my school understood my problem and admitted me for free. For money my mother works in other people's house as a maid and some times on the land of Bhur. It is very tough for my mother. As for food it's ok but not that enough sometimes.

P. WANGMO (9 years, female)

I sell vegetables to by books

During my holidays I sell vegetables and get money for my books and fees. When I grow up I want to become a doctor.

I am studying in class VIII. I moved to Tsirang with my father on the land given by the government under the resettlement program. My parents divorced a few years back.

My school is very far away from my house. It is a two hours' walk by the short cut path.

In school some times the teachers ask us to bring money. I am not able to bring. So I feel ashamed in school. During my holidays I sell vegetables and get money for my books and fees. When I grow up I want to become a doctor.

WANGDI (13 years, male)

I just want to work at home

I am originally from Panbang, Zhemgang, but now I have come to live in Tsirang on the land given by the government under the resettlement program. I am 24 years old. I have two children. My husband is a policeman who is posted in Samdrup Jongkhar, but I have not heard from him for a year now.

My parents are in Suray. I have been living in Tsirang for more than five years with my in-laws. I have to do everything at home.

I have no aspirations in my life. All I want to do is look after my children and just work at home.

P.DEM

Our father left us for another woman

I am 13 years old. I am studying in Mendagang Primary School in Tsirang. I live with my mother.

My father and mother are divorced. One day my father brought home a woman. Then the woman and my mother quarreled. My father did not say anything. So my mother, brother, sister and myself left for our village. Later after a few months, my mother received a letter saying that my father has moved in with that woman. Since then there has been no contact with my father.

It is a tough life for my family with a lot of problems at home.

SW (13 years, male)

I worry about my mother

I really worry about my mother's health as she does not get enough to eat and works a lot.

I am studying in class V. My parents are divorced. At present I am living with my mother, grandfather, grandmother and my sister who is in class III.

I do not miss my father as he remarried a younger woman leaving my mother. But I really love my mother. My mother borrowed money from the neighbor for our school fees and to buy rice and edibles for home.

I really worry about my mother's health as she does not get enough to eat and works a lot. After a day's hard work my mother suffers from severe back aches, but she still continues with her job of carrying oranges.

I want to study hard and become a teacher.

L. GYEM (12 years, female)

I carry oranges and earn money

I carried oranges during my vacation and earned about Nu. 500 and paid my school fees.

My father expired and my mother remarried when I was very small. Since then I have been living with my mother and stepfather and two of my stepsisters.

My stepfather has no work and drinks a lot. And after drinking he beats my mother and me. But now I have learned to run away when my stepfather gets drunk.

My stepfather differentiates me from his own children. I am made to do hard manual work at home after school. I often sleep without eating, since my stepfather does not give me food to eat. At school I envy my friends who are well loved by their parents. I like being at school rather than at home.

My mother wants me to study till class VIII and drop out of school. But I want to continue my studies and become an officer. For some pocket money I carried oranges during my vacation and earned about Nu. 500 and paid my school fees.

K.TARCHEN

WANGDUEPHODRANG DZONGKHAG

I do not have good clothes when I go to school

I am not happy when I go to school because I do not have good clothes to wear.

I was born in a very poor family. I am not happy when I go to school because I do not have good clothes to wear. I have no proper shoes and no pocket money.

When I see my friends eating lots of things, I feel sad. My parents have a lot of problems and they did not want to put me in school. But being so interested in studying, I forced my parents to put me in school. So my poor parents borrowed money from others and sent me to school. They don't have their own land. So my parents work in other people's fields and get only half of what they harvest. The other half goes to the landowner.

P. GYELTSHEN(male)

My parents borrow money for my education

My shoes were worn out because of the long distance in walking to school.

I am interested in studying but I am worried that my parents will not be able to afford it. They are very poor and I go to school wearing torn clothes, shoes and socks. My parents often have to borrow money from others.

Last time, my shoes were worn out because of the long distance in walking to school. I asked my parents for a new pair, but they had no money for it.

When I get home from school, I work in the farm, looking after the cattle or doing household chores.

T. ZAM (female)

I can't go to school because my parents are poor

My parents are so poor that they are not able to send me to school.

I have both my parents but we are so poor that we have to depend on others to fill our stomach. I am really an unlucky person to be born to a poor family. Sometimes I feel happy with my employer because my employer gives me good food, good clothes and sometimes some pocket money too.

We are six children but we do not have any land and also no good house to live in. My parents are not able to educate me. My father was a blacksmith but he used to drink a lot and spend all his money.

NIMA (male).

Both our father and mother can't work now

We are brothers and sisters. We are studying but we depend on financial help given by others, as our parents are both crippled.

Our mother had broken her leg long time back. Father used to work hard and earn enough for the family. But now, father has broken his legs in an accident and cannot work.

We are happy that Her Majesty Ashi Dorj Wangmo Wangchuck has promised that we would be given help by the Tarayana Foundation for our education.

KARMA(male) and DEKI OM (female)

I look after uncle's cattle

I am from a poor family and at present I am staying with my uncle. My parents have many children to support.

I feel comfortable with my uncle. My uncle really likes me. My poor parents do not have any land or house to live in. At present my parents are staying as tenants.

I am staying with my uncle and looking after the cattle. My uncle gives me money as well if my family is in need of it very urgently. But I really feel sad when I see my friends going to school.

T. PENJOR (male)

I regret that my parents can't afford my education

I regret that my parents and even grandparents cannot afford the cost of my education.

I am staying with my grandparents at present. My parents are very poor to support me. We are six children in all and my parents look after the rest of us.

My parents are too poor to give me education. My parents are living at Tsirang at present. My father is a policeman but his salary is very low.

Although my grandparents love me very much, they are now getting very old. I regret that my parents and even grandparents cannot afford the cost of my education.

OM (female)

My step-father never treats me well

My father left us when I was very small. At present he gives me some clothes sometimes. I could not attend my school but I joined as a monk in a monastery. My stepfather never treats me well.

I want to study hard and become somebody and help my poor mother. She suffers a lot at home.

P. DORJI

My parents could not support my education

My parents have nine children including me. My father left us when I was small. At present I am living with my mother. My sisters are all living with my father.

I am the youngest from the family. But my parents could not send me to school.

LHAMO

I cannot concentrate on my studies

I am studying in Phobjikha Primary School. My parents do farm works in other's fields because they do not have their own land. They borrow money from others. We do not have a good house to live in. I am living with my grandparents at Phobjikha and study there.

I have to walk for three hours from home to school. When I reach home I get tired and cannot concentrate on my studies.

ZAM (female)

My parents work for others

I am staying with my grandparents and I go to school. My own parents are working in others' fields, as we have no land of our own. I love my parents a lot because they work very hard to support my education. My parents usually have to borrow money from others.

SODA

My step-father is kind man

I am studying in Samtengang Lower Secondary School. My parents were divorced when I was small. My mother has married again and my stepfather treats me very well. He is kind and supportive of me.

My own father also gives me clothes every year. My father's sister who works in Thimphu also gives me clothes, books, pens, pencils and other things.

PHUB OM (female)

ZHEMGANG DZONGKHAG

I had to leave school soon after my grandparents died

I studied till class IV with the support of my grand parents, but when they passed away, I also had to leave school.

I was an illegitimate child. I still do not know my father. My mother is somewhat dumb. I have a sister, who was fathered by the husband of my mother's sister. I studied till class IV with the support of my grand parents, but when they passed away, I also had to leave school.

After so many years of life in the forest looking after the cattle, I decided to leave my village looking for better prospects. My friend, who was working in a construction project in Sarpang came back to my village and he influenced me to go and work elsewhere on the construction sites. I borrowed Nu. 500 from him and we went to Surey where I earned Nu.100 per day. The nature of work was much easier there than at the village.

I feel pity on my mother and sister who are also not educated. I think I can give better life to my mother and sister by working here. I am afraid that my uncle may do something dangerous to my sister and mother, as he is quite influential in the village. At present I am learning to drive. I hope I will be a driver soon.

CL (19 years, male)

Often I work with the construction projects

After my father retired from the army, we came back to our village. Then the troubles began, and I even had to leave school.

My father was a soldier. I lived in Thimphu for several years until my father retired from the Army. Then we came back to our village. After that, my father became more habituated to drinking, while my mother

broke her leg. My brothers are married and are living with their families. I have to bear a lot of responsibility at home.

I studied till class V. Because of lack of educational facility at my village coupled with the absence of manpower at home as well as having no one to bear my school expenses, I had to drop out of school despite my interest to continue.

I heard about the Non-formal education scheme and even participated in this programme. I thought it was one opportunity for me to learn what I did not learn in school. Often, I work along the road in construction projects. This is one source of income for me. With this money, I buy rice and other household items.

Village life is a bit harsh. I often drink but not as much as elders do. I do not know why I drink, but often I feel I should drink to quench my thirst after heavy physical work.

K. JIGME (17 years, male)

It is for the first time that I traveled out of my remote village

*I never went to school. My mother died when I was 12 years old.
Since then, I had to take up the responsibility in the house.*

I am 18 years old. I am from Ritijing, Pantang. My mother died when I was 12 years old. Since then, I had to take up the responsibility of household chores. My father hardly stayed home, but was conducting his own small business. All through my years, I have been living in the remote village.

The farthest place that I have been to be Tingtibi. It is the biggest town I have ever seen. When I was 15, my father remarried. He was then a happy man. However, I lived in the original house with my grand parents. My father set up his small shop in Gomphu. Back at the village,

I used to attend to grandparents, carry out the field works and also look after the herd. Farming work was really difficult.

I attended Non-formal education, thinking that I might be able to know the world better. I regret that my parents did not send me to school. One of reasons why they did not send me to school could be that, there wouldn't be anyone at home to take up the responsibility in the house during their old age.

Now, I have come to Gomphu to live with my father and stepmother. I can see many different things. In my village, there is no road, no electricity, and vehicles. My stepmother is kind and treats me well. I dream to become a driver. This aspiration was derived from the moment I saw a woman driving a vehicle.

K. CHODEN (18 years, female)

I work on the road with my parents

I studied up to class V. I left the school mainly because I was poor in Dzongkha. I now work on the road along with my parents.

I am 20 years old. I studied up to class V. I left the school mainly because I was poor in Dzongkha. My parents have been working on the road since 1998. Among three children, my younger brother is still studying, while my sister and I are also working on the road along with our father. We live together. In a month, we earn more than 9,000 Ngultrums, which is sufficient for us to sustain ourselves. My brother, studying in Tingtibi is staying in a rented house. Every month, either father or I bring him rice and vegetables. We also give him pocket money. As far as his school expense is concerned, I think it is not a big problem because three of us are earning. However, my brother seems less interested in studying.

I want to become a machine operator or a driver. It is because, every time, I go on duty, I see many machine operators and drivers in the Road Division. They have become a constant source of encouragement for me, mainly because they seem to be content and enjoying their jobs.

My parents left their village mainly because of economic reasons. They did not have enough money at the village.

J BISWA (20 years, male)

I regret a lot

Life was difficult for me mainly because my parents got divorced when I was just seven years old. I studied till class IX with the support of my grand parents, but had to drop out because of problems at home.

I am 19 years old. I am from Tingtibi. Life was difficult for me mainly because my parents got divorced when I was just seven years old. My mother, who used to drink too much is to be blamed for this. My father, who actually preferred not to separate, could not tolerate my mother's constant drinking habit. Not only did she drink too much and fought with him every day, she also quarreled with the neighbors.

My grandfather opened a shop for my mother and built a house for her. But within a year or two, she became bankrupt. It was due to her drinking habit. My father left us, without informing anyone, and then we did not see him for the next 12 years. My grandparents did not object to the divorce because they knew that the fault was with mother. However, they took up the responsibility of bringing us up. They sent us to school. For several years, they provided my school expenses. However, with the passage of years, they became too old to look after the three of us.

My mother, who used to drink, started selling her wealth including cattle and zees (onyx). Some amount was spent on our education while most of it was spent on her drinks.

I studied till class IX. I failed in my exams mainly because I was always worried and sad about this life. It was all the time frustrating. I decided to leave the school and work. I worked as a driver's assistant but never succeeded in becoming a driver myself. Then later, I worked in Bhutan Power Corporation. By then, I realized that I have been habituated to smoking and drinking. I used to attend my duty but at times I failed. The reason behind my drinking and smoking was the unfortunate situation in my life.

Then I went to Thimphu with the hope of getting some jobs. But I am still jobless. I dream of becoming a driver, but it is really difficult. I blame it on the divorce of my parents and mother's drinking habits. Otherwise, my life would have been much happier. Now when I see my friends completing their graduation, I regret a lot.

PU (19 years, male)

Elders bully me in the monastery

My father died when I was small. I am a monk and live in a monastery. But life in the monastery is difficult as the elders bully me.

A river carried my father away. He used to drink a lot. So now I live with my mother, elder sister and a younger brother. My mother is just a simple farmer. We have a small hut. We do not have sufficient to eat.

I am a monk and live in a monastery. When I come home, I do the household chores and look after the cows as well as weed the maize fields. It is almost four years since I became a monk. I earn very little and I give my money to my mother to buy rice and clothes. I do not

keep any money to myself as I get food from the monastery. But life in the monastery is difficult as the elders bully me. I wish to leave the monastery but I am afraid that I may have to pay penalty. I wish to work back at home.

I never heard about drugs. I never drink. As I grow up, I wish to help my mother. I have never been to any other place. Therefore, I have very little exposure. I do not feel sad that my father is dead as he was cruel to me. After drinking so much, he used to beat me without reasons. Even while eating, my father used to torture me by pulling my legs and hanging me upside down. He never used to beat my sister. However, my mother used to be so kind to me. My mother gives me whatever she has. My mother is around 60 years old now.

RINCHENLA (11 years, male)

With the money that I earn, we buy rice

I am a farmer like my parents. I work hard but we are poor and food becomes scarce in my home sometimes.

I am not married. I have both my parents. They are strong and are farmers. I am from a very poor family. Even food becomes scarce sometimes. Our house is not so strong. It is just a small wooden shack. We have five members in the family. My elder brother also left school after studying till certain stage until our parents could not further afford to bear his school expenses. At home, I work in the fields as well as on the roads with the contractors. With the money that I earn, I buy rice for the family. I did not go to school because my parents did not send me to school. However, I studied for one year under Non-formal education scheme.

P.DENDUP(18 years, male)

Our mother do not care for us

My parents are divorced. I live with my uncle. I could not go to school, but my elder sister is studying in class XI.

I am staying with my uncle who is a Buddhist priest. My brother also stays with him. My uncle will decide our future. Our mother does not care about us.

We have an elder sister who is studying in class XI. When my parents got divorced, I was in the forest herding the cattle for two years. My father has now sold all the cows because it was hard to look after them. Mother was at fault for causing the divorce. She went with another man.

While as a cowboy, I used to be in the forest singing and facing lots of physical hardship. I studied till class III. Mother used to sell ara (alcoholic drink) and meet my school expenses. We used to have a good income from our cows as well. Once our parents got divorced, we, the children got spoiled. Father has now reached the point of selling the house.

I do not have any job. When I get some money, I spend it on edibles and beer. I have heard about drugs but never tried it. I regret the fact that I could not study. I wish to become a *gomchen*- (a lay religious person) because it is a much easier way of sustaining my own life.

P WANGDI (17 years, male)

PART B

Analysis of the Narrative Report on Voices of Bhutanese Youth: Dreams, Experiences, Achievements and Struggles¹

Analysis done by Yeshi Dema

1 Introduction

This report is based on the narrative report: Voices of the Bhutanese Youth: Dreams, Experiences, Achievements and Struggles, included in Part A. It contains the stories narrated by 209 young people interviewed in 12 Dzogkhags². 56% of the respondents were male and 44% female. The respondents included the school-going children, school dropouts and uneducated youths.

2 Interview objectives

The Centre for Bhutan Studies (CBS) conducted the personal interviews in July-October, 2004 to find out various issues and problems facing Bhutanese youth throughout the country. The questions of interests were:

1. What is the current situation of school dropouts in the country?
2. What are the factors contributing to these dropout rates?
3. What are the problems and issues raised by these youth?
4. What are the dreams and aspirations of these youth?
5. What are the other issues facing the youth?

¹ Yeshi Dema had carried out this analysis.

² Viz. Bumthang, Chhukha, Haa, Paro, Punakha, Samtse, Thimphu, Trashigang, Trongsa, Tsirang, Wangdue Phodrang and Zhemgang.

3 Materials and Methods used in this survey

The information reported in this document was collected through unstructured interviews. The data entry, analysis and reporting were done using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. The focus of the data analysis was to provide possible answers to the five main questions.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 The main findings of the survey report

Out of 209 youths interviewed, 17% male and 15% female were the school going children. The age group of these respondents varied from 9 to 25 years. The age is not recorded in some cases. In this interview group, the maximum respondents were teenagers (13% male and 21% female) followed by the adult group i.e >20 years of age (11% male and 10% female), and the minor i.e. <12 years of age (5% male and 3% female) was the least.

4.1.1 Level of education of the dropouts

Majority of the respondents were school dropouts (43%), 32% of them are still studying and 24% of them never went to school. 1% of them wanted to continue studies in India (Figure 1). The drop out percentage for the males and females are 28% and 15% respectively. The level of education for the dropouts varied from 5th grade to 12th with the maximum number of respondents (21% males and 12% females) fall below 5th grade category. About 13% males and 6% females have studied up to or less than 8th grade while 10 % males and 8% females have studied up to 10th grade. About 7% males and 10% females have studied up to plus 2 while about 11% of the dropouts have not been recorded (Figure 2).

Figure 1 status of the respondents

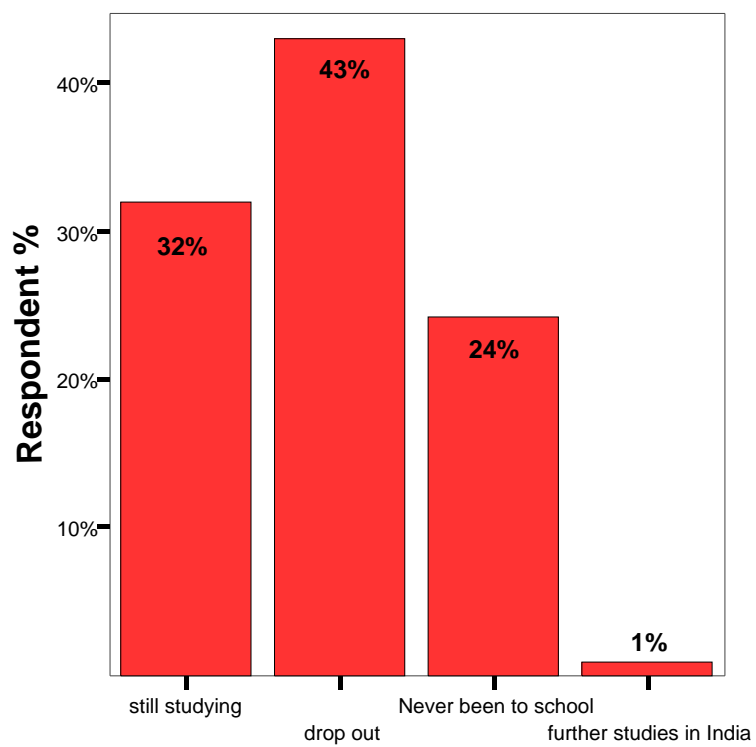
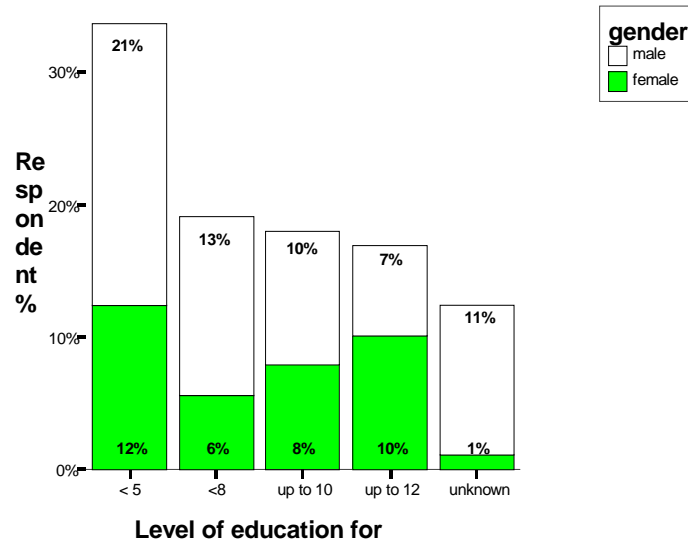


Figure 2. Drop out level of education



4.1.2 Reasons for dropout

There are numerous reasons accounted for the various levels of dropouts by each respondent. The reasons for the school drop out varied from the poor family status, burden of household tasks, family disruption, individual's interest and disinterest in studies to the southern Bhutan problem of 1990s. The main cause for the school dropout was the financial problems (33%) associated within the family that includes the education cost for poorer children. Children of the divorced accounted ill treatment by their step parents as the reason for dropping out of schools. Some of them were forced to live with their grand parents and relatives. Most of the broken families were associated with either a drunken father or mother who poorly managed the families. A nine-year boy stated, "I will never forget the night when my

drunken father hit my mother and left her half dead and later married another woman.” Another nine-year old girl said, “My most dreadful memory is of my father beating my mother frequently. He even thrashed my sister and paralyzed her forever.” There were also some stories portraying the misconducts of mothers.

About 10% of them accounted that they felt too dull to study and were not interested in studying. Another 10% of them could not qualify for higher studies. There were some stories on personal problems such as the drug abuses, early marriages and teenage pregnancies. One of the girls raised the issue; “I got pregnant, when I was in class seven thereby forcing me to leave the school”. In addition, about 3% of them could not continue their studies because of the 1990’s problems in Southern Bhutan.

4.1.3 Current status of these dropouts

Figure 1 shows that 43% of the respondents were school dropouts. Most of them belonged to farmers, unemployed and low-income families. 3% of these dropout (all males) are at present working in the National Work Force (NWF), while about 5% of the females are now settled as housewives and another 3% work as baby sitters across the country, mostly in towns like Thimphu, Paro and Phuentsholing. About 5% of the male dropouts are employed as mechanics or as helpers in the workshops (Garage). The majority (19% male and 11% female) of them are unemployed and idle at homes. A few of them plan to go for further studies outside Bhutan. 9% male and 1% female dropouts have taken up farming occupations while about 4% males and 9% females are engaged in small-scale business like small grocery shops, restaurants and saloon. About 15% male work in others occupations: chef, painting school, printing press and various small-scale contract works. About 4% of females are working as waitresses in the hotels and restaurants. 5% of the male are enrolled as monks.

Figure 3. Reasons for dropout

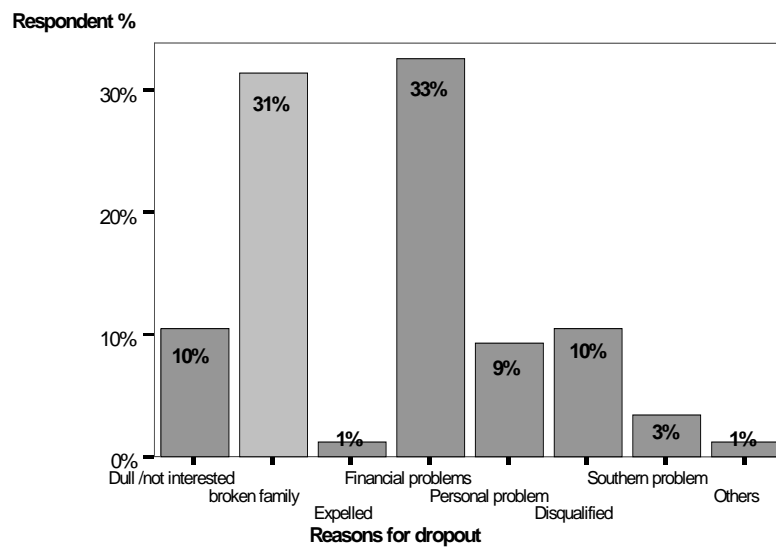
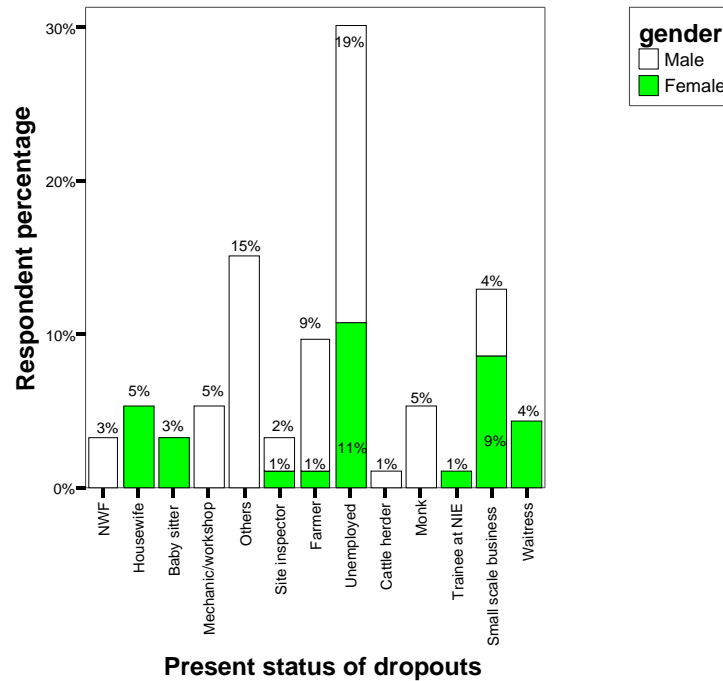


Figure 4. Present status of dropout (gender)



4.2 Children who have never been to school

Some of the youths never attended schools for various reasons. In this category, the percentage of the male to female respondents is 13% and 12% respectively. Parental divorce was reported as the main reason for not attending schools. 22% male and 14% female gave this reason. Another reason accounted by them is the cost of education. 16% male and 22% female gave this reason. Children had to stay home and contribute to the family's income rather than attend schools. The females were most affected in such case. Lack

of the financial means has forced some of the poor families to send their children to monasteries as monks. About 6% males and 2% females reported that their parents were not aware of the value of education. “I am sad that my parents who were uneducated themselves did not send me to school.” A girl stated, “Since my parents are uneducated and ignorant, they never thought of sending me to school and giving me education.” Many children were interested to study but failed to get school admissions, as they were late for schools when their parents decided to send them to schools. “My parents said, you should work to earn something and next year if you are still interested in studying we will admit you in school, but this promise was forgotten the next year, and so I was late for school admission”. This was mainly related to the children of resource poor parents where they had to work at homes that it became too late when their parents decided to send them to schools. About 4% each of both the males and females stated that they were too old to join school (figure 5). Most of these under privileged children stated that they wish to attend schools, “ When I see other children going to school, I also feel like going but my mother thinks I am too old to go to school now. ”

4.2.1 The present status of the youth who have never been to school.

The figure 6 shows that a majority (14% male and 20% female) of youths stays at homes helping their parents and relatives in farm works. Some of them work out side their natal homes as paid workers. 8% females and about 2% males work as home-nurses. 6% each of both the male and female works as NWF while another 6% of the females work as waitresses in hotels and restaurants owned by their relatives. About 8% of the males work in the farms. 6% of the males work as mechanics or their assistants. 6% of them are enrolled as monks. 4% of them are employed as cattle herders of their own cattle or work for the others. Those young people who work with richer people as cow herders are not always treated well. This is indicated by the words of a ten-year-old boy, “since my family is poor, I look after the cows of a rich man

in Gedu. Sometimes when a cow gets lost, I get beatings and I have to go in search for the lost cows in the jungles even at night.”

In general, most of the young boys want to become drivers. They hope to learn driving either from their employer or from their relatives. Most of them regard this occupation as desirable because they can earn enough and travel to many places. Most of them who failed to attend schools have strong desires to enroll themselves in Non Formal Education Programmes (NFE).

Figure 5. Reasons for not admitting to school (gender)

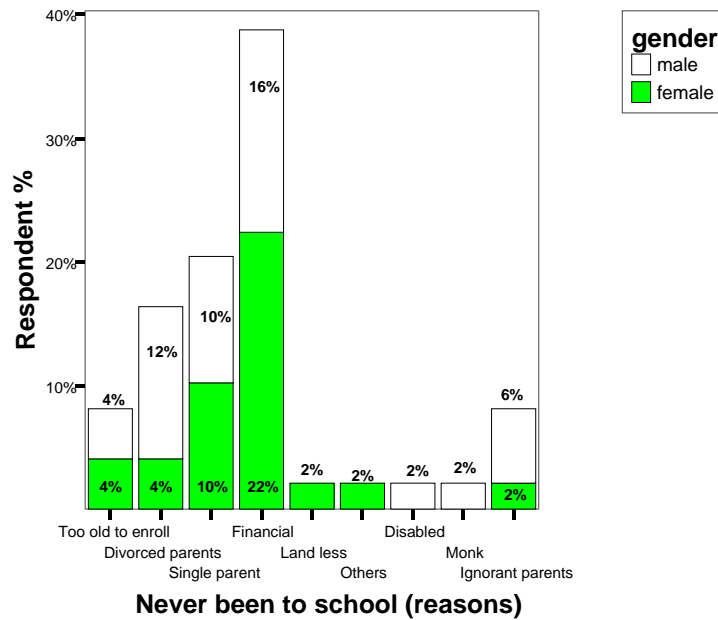
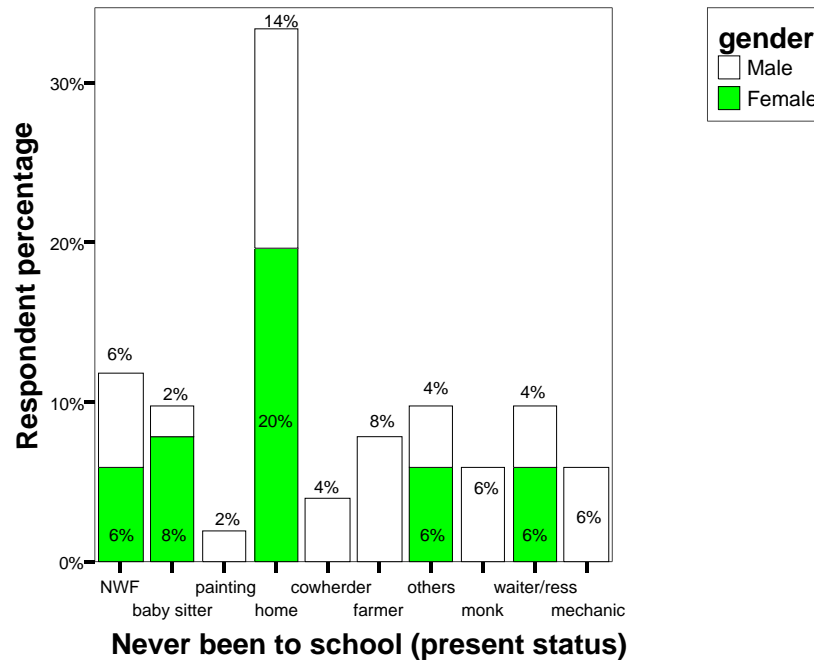


Figure 6. Present status of the never been to school category (gender)



4.3 Still studying

In figure 1, about 32% of the respondents were school going-children. Their present status is described below. Some of these children are associated with the divorced and broken families. There were some students from town and well-to-do families, who expressed their stronger views on their lives. “I am currently studying in Lungtenzampa Middle Secondary School. School is fun sometimes but at times it can get annoying because of all the pressures of studying and doing well in school. I think that sometimes our parents and

teachers expect too much from us. The pressure of having to live up to so many expectations make us less interested in studies and discourage us to work hard". The children from poor families, especially those who come from rural areas have stated that they work during vacations to meet their school-related expenses. "During my holidays I sell vegetables and get money for my books and fees. When I grow up I want to become a doctor." These poor children reported that they are also burdened with the household tasks besides their studies. "I was not good at studies, but was hard working. I had to find many excuses to miss games and sports activities in the school, because I had to reach home early to do household chores. Moreover, I usually did not have money to buy sports dress and shoes. I used to miss all activities like picnics, trekking, etc."

The figure 7 indicates that a majority of these school-going children have to find means to support their own education. 13% of these students have to work in the construction sites during their vacation so that they can buy stationeries and school uniforms with the income. Some of them have to work in the fields, look after cattle and sell vegetables. There were some children who reported that they have to sell vegetables even during school seasons. "While going to school, we also have to take along with us vegetables and some cheese and butter to sell. I worry how I would be able to finish my studies looking at the problems my mother faces." There are many children who transport oranges during winter holidays, the income of which they invest on books and school uniforms.

Few respondents reported cases of drug addiction, alcoholism and smoking related issues. These are usually associated with broken families though it is not significantly prominent.

4.3.1 Aspiration and hopes of the students

Most of these school-going children stated their dreams to become respectful civil servants. 13% of them, and mostly girls reported that they want to become doctors. 11 % said that they want to become teachers 3% of them want to become pilots. 2% of the total respondents want to initiate an orphanage. Among the male respondents, 11% of them want to be great men, 8% want to become doctors and 3% of them aspire to become engineers or army officers. About 2% of them want to become forensic journalists. However, there were a few students who just wished to be free from the harsh treatments of their stepparents and their relatives. Those were the children of the divorced and the dead. 32% of these children have not reported anything about their dreams and wishes.

Figure 7. Present status of school going children

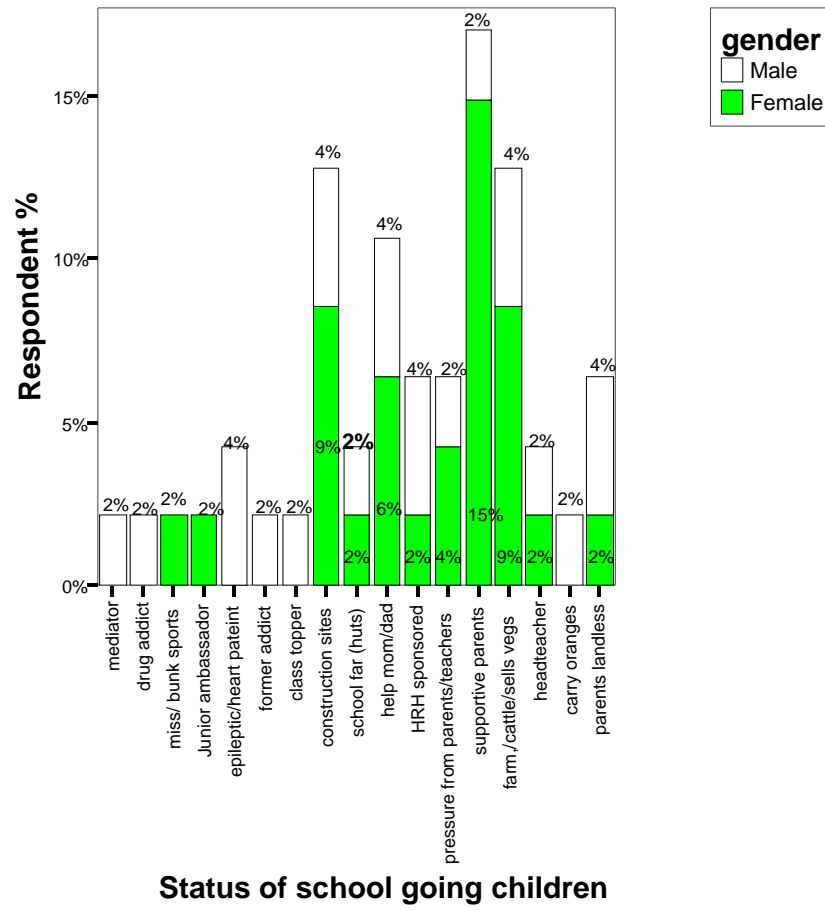
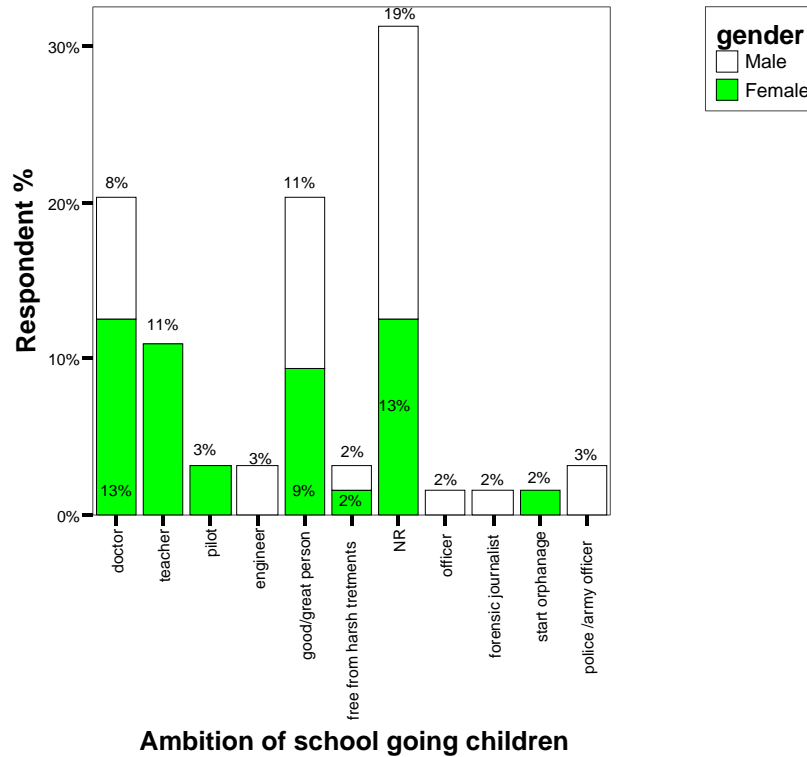


Figure 8. Ambition/ hopes of the school going children



4.4 The main problems faced by the youths in general

In general, the main youth problem reported in the interviews is related to family disruption as a result of parental divorces. The roles of step-parents are not portrayed well by them as the step-parents tend to be discriminating them from their own children. Most of these children who experienced family

disruption reported that they had to discontinue their studies against their wishes. Single-parenthood is reported as another cause of problems that the youth in focus group faced. There were several stories of how mothers had to deal with difficulty in bringing up their children. "I do not miss my father as he remarried a younger woman leaving my mother. But I really love my mother. My mother borrowed money from the neighbor for our school fees and to buy rice and edibles for home."

Those children who claimed themselves as belonging to landless and poor families have reported about their difficulties associated with school-life. "I was born of a very poor family. I am not happy when I go to school because I do not have good clothes to wear. I have no proper shoes and no pocket money". In addition to these family problems, the children have also started to go astray with their behavior as there were no proper guidance and support from their parents. 'It is here that I started taking even dendrite with my friends. It is really good especially for a person like me who do not have any one to care and bother about.'

There were a few of the students who reported about the difficulties in schools, especially in rural places. 'During school days in boarding school, we hardly got enough food to satisfy our hunger. Although we were at our growing stage, most of the time we went hungry and unnourished.' In some other cases school going children have to walk for hours to school and therefore, some stay in temporary shelters nearby "My village is a 3 hours walk from school. Due to this reason, like many other students from far-off villages, I live in a temporary shelter made of bamboo near the school."

Although they were not able to attend schools for whatsoever reasons, some of the young people who are settled now expressed their regrets for not attending schools. They are now concerned about educating their own children in future. 'I did not get chance to go to school because I was from a poor family and

more over my parents died when I was just small. My aspiration is to give good education to my child.'

4.5 The life of a monk

In Bhutan, sending children to monasteries is still considered important. 'We had no monk in the family and I had to be a monk because we believe that there should be at least one monk from each family.' The interviews recorded the narrations of a few young monks. Most of them said that they were enrolled as monks because their parents could not afford to send them to schools. Not all those boys who were enrolled as monks have managed to continue their studies in the monasteries; some of them have to abandon monastic life not being able to bear harsh discipline. There were some monks who spoke well of their monastic lives. "Life as monk is meaningful; everything is provided in the monastery. What I have to do simply study and pray". A few boys have become *gomchens* as they feel that it is easier to survive as *gomchens* than to be a farmer.

5. Conclusions

The main problem that youth in interview have reported is parental divorce and disruption in the families. Divorce of parents entailed other problems for them such as financial constraint, discontinuation of studies,

PART C

National Youth Survey

Analysis done by Dorji Penjore

The survey questionnaire was broken into two parts: Part I was basically designed to get information about the youth respondents such their background (rural or urban), gender and age; whereas Part II was designed to get details of their parents' marital status, economic background, their dependency on other family members, migration, etc.

Part One

1. Distribution of sampling

Out of 942 youths enumerated in this survey, 476 (50.75%) were female and 49.25% male. The maximum respondents were from Trashigang (10.34%), and the minimum from Gasa (0.21%). Although, the enumerators had visited only 12 Dzongkhags, there were respondents from all the twenty Dzongkhags.

The Dzongkhag-wise distribution of sampling is given in table 1.

Table 1: Youth Respondents by dzongkhags

Dzongkhag	No.	%
Trashigang	97	10.34
Samtse	87	9.28
Tsirang	79	8.42
Mongar	79	8.32
Punakha	66	7.04
Trongsa	62	6.61
Samdrup Jongkhar	51	5.44
Paro	56	5.86
Chhukha	56	5.97
Dagana	37	3.84
Sarpang	36	3.84
Wangdue	35	3.73
Bumthang	34	3.62

Zhemgang	35	3.73
Thimphu	30	3.20
Pemagatshel	30	3.20
Haa	26	2.77
Lhuntse	22	2.35
Tashi Yangtse	22	2.24
Gasa	2	0.21
Total	942	100 %

The survey did not make a deliberate choice of respondents sampling from different Dzongkhags. The enumerators interviewed any youth they came across, whether they were students, monks, road and construction workers, baby-nurses, cattle herders, etc. In many cases, youths refused to respond while some ran away in fear. Out of 20 Dzongkhags, the maximum and minimum youths enumerated in the survey came from Trashigang and Gasa respectively. This testifies to our common belief that the number of youths (employed, unemployed, students...) is proportional to demographic size of the Dzongkhags irrespective of its development, be it commercial or farming.

2. Age and marital status of respondents

The ages of respondents were broken into three categories: (a) >12, (b) between 13-17 and (c) < 18. This age break-up was not based on any previous standard used for the study of youth. The choice of <18 was based on the government's regulation barring anyone below 18 years from consuming alcoholic beverages. Of 938 respondents, 105 youths (11.19 %) were less than 12 years, and 361 (38.49 %) were more than 18 years. Respondents between 13 and 17 years formed the maximum group at 50.32 %.

Table 2: Age of respondents

Age Range	Number	%
>12	106	11.19
13-17	473	50.32
<18	363	38.49
Total	942	

Analysis

Only about 9% of respondent were married, while 40.41 % were single. Surprisingly, a majority (50.64 %) refused to respond either Yes or NO.

Table 3: Marital Status

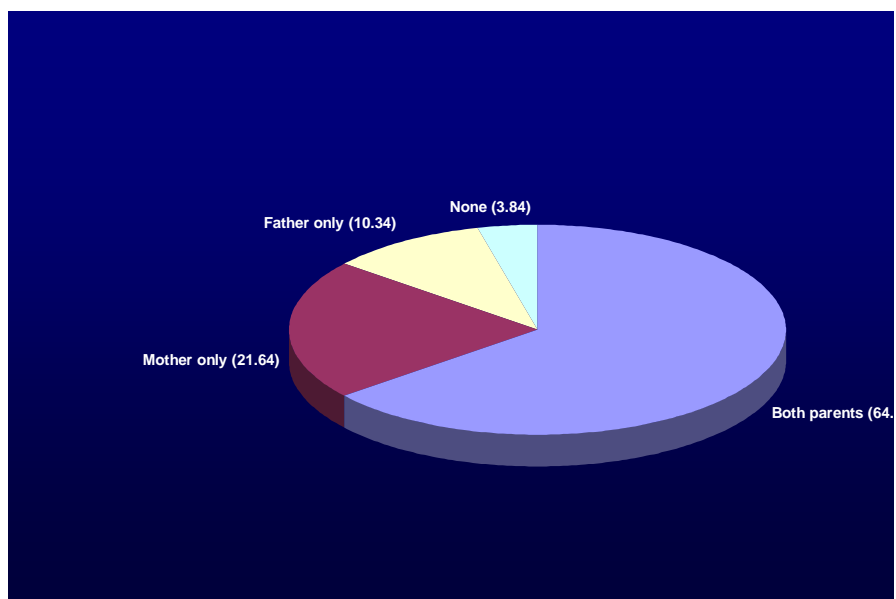
Marital Status	Numbers	%
Married	85	8.96
Unmarried	381	40.41
No response	476	50.64
Total	942	100

Part Two

1. Parental status

Of 938 youths, 602 have both their parents, while the single parent youths living either with mother and father are 203 (21.64 %) and 97 (10.34 %) respectively. Only 36 youths (3.84 %) did not have both parents. The number of youths living with single mother is more than youths living with a single father by 11.3%. So mothers mostly bears the burden of bringing up children be it after divorce or 'birth outside wedlock'. The figure 3.84% who are without parents (orphan) is a great concern. It directly translates into a direct dependency on other surviving family members.

Table 4: Parental Status



Of 336 who did not have their mother, father or both, 64.88 % responded they were dead, 33.33 % (112) were divorced, and only 1.78% have other reasons. So, 1.78% (6 youths) were born out of wed-lock.

2. Parents' Occupation

Farmers formed a sizable 65.16% (593) of parents, followed by civil servants at 11.43%. National Work Force (NWF) and Private Firms are next at 10.11 % and 9.12 % respectively. There were 26 retired civil servants (2.9%). Religious occupation and others each constitute less than one percent. Details of parents' occupations are as follows.

Table 6: Parents' Occupations

Occupation	Numbers	%
Farmer	593	65.16
Civil servant	104	11.43
National Work Force (NWF)	92	10.11
Private Firm	83	9.12
Retired Civil Servant	26	2.89
Others	7	0.76
Religious occupation	5	0.58
Total	910	100

3. Family's Economic Background

When asked about the economic status of 731 respondents, 286 (39.12%) replied their parents' income were low; 30.64% said their parents were without job. 25.17% reported their parents have no land, while 3.28% were homeless. Only 13% said their parents have inadequate food.

Table 7: Economic Status of the Family

Economic status	Numbers	%
Low income	286	39.12
Jobless	224	30.64
Landless	184	25.17
Homeless	24	3.28
Inadequate food	13	1.78
Total	731	100

Parents of low-income group (39.12%) can come from all seven occupation groups listed in table 7, but the figure of 25.17% landless family is high. The maximum and minimum land-holding ceiling of 25 and 5 acres per household respectively leaves no family or household landless technically, and His Majesty has been granting land kidu to any landless Bhutanese. If the figure is correct, one can surmise that the youths flock to urban centre due to lack of land back in villages. A possession of a fertile land in rural areas may attract youths even after completing their education. 3.28% of the youths feel their parents are homeless. These parents must be those living away from their villages in urban centers, and those living in rented houses normally do not consider it their home, but houses or residences. Less than 2% of 731 responding their parents had no adequate food reflect real poverty both in rural and urban areas.

4. Like/Dislike of Parents

To the question, do you like your parents, 97.9% of 886 youths interviewed responded positively, while 2.1% said they dislike their parents. Asked why they dislike their parents, 56 youths gave the reasons. 24 youths said parents do not care about their education, 8 respondents replied the parents punish them. Parental advice and parents' poverty scored 10.71 % each. The other reasons were given below in table 11.

Table 8: Reasons for disliking

Reasons	No	%
Do not care about my education	24	42.86
Beat me frequently	8	14.29
Advise me too much	6	10.71
They are poor	6	10.71
Because of step-father	6	10.71
Because of step-mother	2	3.57
Left me when I was a baby	2	3.57
Drinks too much	1	1.77
Others	1	1.77
Total	56	100

This question was designed to understand whether the problem or failure of the family has created any dissatisfaction among the children. This is important in understanding any dilution of the strong belief in repaying what parents had done for one's upbringing and education (investment). 2.1% of 886 who said they hate (dislike) their parents is a great social concern. Dislike directly converts into non-investment or helping their old parents and relatives at home. Poverty or low income (39.12% of parents) prevents them from sending their children to school (42.86% dislike parents for not caring about their education), and parents have little control. This figure also shows that youths value education above all others. Parents' divorce and subsequent re-marriages contributes 17.85% of *dislikes*.

6. With whom do you live now?

Table 9: With whom do you live at present?

Persons	No.	%
Both parents	300	31.98
Self-earning	119	12.69
Mother	114	12.15
Father	63	6.72
Sister	59	6.29
Uncle	52	5.54
Friends	39	4.16
Employer	39	4.16
Brother	34	3.63
Aunt	24	2.56
Paying student	20	2.13
Grandparents	13	1.39
Step families	9	0.96
Others	53	5.65
Total	938	

About 32% of 938 youth respondents live with both parents, while those living with mother and father only constitute 12.15 % and 6.72 % respectively. About 6.29 % and 3.6 % of them live with their sisters and brothers respectively. Uncles and aunts share 5.54 % and 3.56 % of the burden, while 4.16 live with their friends. Table 13 provides details of with whom they live during the survey.

12.69% of those who are self-earning is both the strength and weakness – strength because youths can earn themselves and lead a decent life; weakness because this group could be behind a series of petty crimes like theft, shoplifting, burglary. 20.37% the youths depend on either their sister, brother, uncle, aunt, grandparents and step-families. Childhood dependency is an important indicator of economic and social burden which young people (and old population) give to working age population.

6. Why do not you live with your parents?

Of the 461 youths who do not live with their parents, 22.13 % left home to live with others because their parents have many children to support. 75 of them (16.27%) said they do not want to burden their parents (some may not necessarily have many children) and 15.62% thought parents are poor to support them. 36 youths left for studying reason and the parents of about 8% of youths were dead. The parents' habit of beating and drinking contributed to 7.38% and 4.78% respectively. About 21% left for other reasons.

Table 10: Why youth live with others?

Reason	No.	%
Parents have many children to support	102	22.13
Do not want to burden parents	75	16.27
They are poor to support me	72	15.62
For studies	24	5.21
Both parents are dead	36	7.81
Parents beat me	34	7.38
Their drinking habit	22	4.78
Others	96	20.82
Total	461	100

7. How long have you been living with them?

203 (33.12%) of the 613 youths surveyed said they have been living with the present family/host family for more than five years. 21.21 % (130 youths) had arrived a few months ago.

Table 11: When did you start living with them?

Duration	No.	%
More than 5 years	203	33.12
A few months ago	130	21.21
2 years	76	12.4
1 years	71	11.58
3 years	54	8.809
4 years	49	7.993
5 years	30	4.894
Total	613	100

8. Reasons for Migration

Of 672 youths interviewed, 73.21% came from rural to urban areas, and only 26.79% vice versa.

54.77% of 409 youths migrated to urban areas looking for job, 28.61% moved with their parents, 6.36% were persuaded by friends to move, while 6.36% moved for studies. 1.47% moved because of conflicts with parents.

Table 12: Reasons for moving to urban areas?

Reason	No.	%
I came looking for job	224	54.77
Moved with parents	117	28.61
Came with friends	26	6.36
For studies	26	6.36
Resettlement	8	1.96
Conflict with parents	6	1.47
Others	2	0.49
Total	409	

Only 2.57% of 661 youths enumerated said their parents do not know where they are.

9. Nature of Domestic Work

Almost half of 600 youths surveyed for the above question said cooking is the main work, followed by looking after younger siblings (19.43) and farm work at 9.29%. Doing nothing or illness (8.20%) is followed by attending to grandparents at 7.86 %. About 5 % of them herd cattle and 1.14 % perform *woola*. Only 1% has the luxury of studying and playing at homes.

Table 13: Regular works youth perform at home?

Activity	Number	%
Cooking	333	47.57
Look after younger siblings	136	19.43
Farm work	65	9.29
Do nothing	58	8.29
Attend to grandparents	55	7.86
Herding cattle	33	4.71
Woola	8	1.14
Studying and playing	7	1
Others	5	0.71
Total	700	100

10. Affects of Divorce

Asked how their parents' divorce affected them, 55 youths out of 148 surveyed faced financial problem, while 27 had to leave their school; 5.4% said they lost self-esteem and 3.38% faced physical hardship. 2.7% was forced to steal and less than 1% had to remarry early.

Table 14: Affects of divorce

Affect	No.	%
Faced financial problem	55	37.2
Could not attend school	47	31.8
Had to leave school	27	18.2
Lost self-esteem	8	5.41
Faced physical hardship	5	3.38
I was forced to steal	4	2.7
Teen (early) marriage	1	0.68
Others	1	0.68
Total	148	

Analysis

However, Out of 197 youths whose parents were either divorced or one of the parents dead, 57.87% (83 youths) said the parents have remarried; 42.13% did not remarry. The survey of 114 youths whose parents remarried revealed 61.02% of step-parents were supportive, 21.19% punish them, and 16.1% said they discriminate them from their children.

Table 15: Step-parents' treatment

Treatment	No	%
Supportive	72	61.02
Beat me	25	21.19
Discriminate me from his/her children	19	16.1
Others	2	1.695
Total	118	100

Questionnaires

NATIONAL YOUTH SURVEY

Questionnaire for study of Youth in Bhutan

(This form consist of 8 pages, printed back and forth)

ENUMERATOR:

.....

FORM NO.:

PART A: PERSONAL INFORMATION

Q1. Name:

Age:or year of birth

Q2. Dzongkhag of Birth.....

Q3. Gender:

Marital Status

Q4.

Married

Not married

1
2

Permanent Address

Q5. Village.....

Q6. Gewog.....

Q7. Dzongkhag

(This ends the questions for personal information)

PART B: YOUTH AND FAMILY

Q1. Parental Status.....

Only mother

Only father

Both

None

1
2
3
4

Give a reason if you have a single parent? (If the reason is divorced, >> Q 8,

Q2. Section B)

Dead

Divorced

Others

(specify).....
.....

1
2
3

Q3. What is your parent's occupation? (Write for each)

1. Father.....

2.

Questionnaires

Mother.....

Q4. Economic status of your family....

Landless

1

Jobless members

2

No house

3

Low income

4

Not enough to eat

5

Q5. Do you like your parents? (If yes, skip Q 6.)

Yes

1

No

2

Q6. Why do you dislike your parents?

Do not care about my education

1

Beat me frequently

2

Advise me too much

3

Drinks to much

4

Are poor

5

Others

6

(specify).....

.....

--

Q7. Who do you live with at present? (If you are living with both the parents, tick both father and mother)

- | | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Father..... | 5. Brother..... | 9. Self-earning..... |
| 2. Mother..... | 6. Sister..... | |
| 3. Uncle..... | 7. Grandparents | 11. step-families..... |
| 4. Aunt..... | 8. Friends..... | 10. employer..... |

Q8. Why are you living with someone other than your parents?

Parents have many children to support

1

Parents are too poor to support me

2

Parents beat me

3

Parents' drinking habits

4

Do not want to burden parents

5

Others

(specify).....
.....

6

Q9. When did you come to the present place? (This is for those who have migrated from one place to another)

Give the name of the place and Dzongkhag.....
.....

Questionnaires

A few months ago

1 year

2 years

3 years

4 years

5 years

More than 5 years

1
2
3
4
5
6
7

Q10. Where did you live before coming to this place?

Rural

Urban

1
2
1
2
3
4
5

Q11. Why did you migrate to this place?

Parents moved seeking better economic prospects

I came alone to look for job

Conflict with parents

Came with friends

Others (specify).....

Q12. Do your parents know where you are living and what you are doing?

Yes	1
No	2

Q13. What are the daily activities that you carry at home?

<i>Attend to grandparents</i>	1
<i>Look younger brothers and sisters</i>	2
<i>Cooking</i>	3
<i>Herding cattle</i>	4
<i>Farm works</i>	5
<i>Woola (labour contribution)</i>	6
<i>Do nothing</i>	7
<i>Others (specify).....</i>	8

How did divorce of your parents affect your life? (This is specifically for the children of divorced parents)

<i>Could not ever attend school</i>	1
<i>Had to leave school</i>	2
<i>Felt lot of financial problems</i>	3
<i>Became susceptible to alcohol</i>	4
<i>Often forced to steal</i>	5

Questionnaires

Lost self-esteem

6

Exposed to physical hardships

7

Teen marriage

8

Others

(specify).....

9

Q15. Are your divorced parents remarried?(if NO, skip Q..)

Yes

1

No

2

Q16. How does your stepparents treat you?

Kind and supportive

1

Beat me

2

Differentiate from his/her own children

3

Others

(specify).....

4

(This Is the end of Part B on Youth and Family)

PART C: YOUTH AND EDUCATION

Q1. Are you literate? (If YES, >> Q2)

YES (...)

NO (.....)

Q2. Where did you study?

School

1

Monastery

2

NFE

3

Others(specify).....
.....

4

Q3. If you have once gone to school, what level of education did you complete?

Primary (class VI)

1

Lower Secondary (class VIII)

2

Higher Secondary (class X)

3

Pre-university (class XII)

4

Q4. At what age did you leave school?

9-12 years

1

13-15 years

2

16-19 years

3

20-24 years

4

Q5. Why did you leave school? (This is specifically for school dropouts)

I was not interested in studying

1

Questionnaires

Needed at home to help parents	2
Cost of travel to school	3
Contribution to school welfare fund	4
Cost of school uniform	5
No boarding in school	6
Health problem	7
Distance from school	8
Failed in exam	9
Early pregnancy	10
Discouraged by parents	11
Fear of unemployment after studying	12
Divorced parents	13
Others (specify).....	14

Q5. Why did not you ever go to school? (*This refers to illiterate young people*)

<i>Parents could not afford</i>	1
<i>They were not bothered of my education</i>	2

<i>I was the only child</i>	3
<i>Health problem</i>	4
<i>School faraway</i>	5
<i>Afraid of teachers</i>	6
<i>School not safe</i>	7
<i>I refused to go</i>	8
<i>Needed at home</i>	9
<i>Parents do not think school worth while</i>	10
<i>Problems getting school</i>	11
<i>Others</i> (specify).....	12

Q6. Do you wish to go to school?

<i>Yes</i>	1
<i>No</i>	2
<i>I do not know</i>	3

Q7. If you are still going to school, what are your problems? (Q.. refers to school going children)

1.
2.

Questionnaires

3.

Q8. How long does it take for you to walk from home to school?

1 hr.

2 hrs.

3 hrs.

Q9. Is home –school distance discouraging you from going to school?

Yes

No

<i>1</i>
<i>2</i>

Q10. What do you do at home after school hours?

Study and homework

Do household chores

Do nothing

Other (specify).....

<i>1</i>
<i>2</i>
<i>3</i>
<i>4</i>

Q11. How do you manage to meet your school expenses?

Sell farm produces

Parents borrow from neighbours

Education loan

<i>1</i>
<i>2</i>
<i>3</i>

Work for money during holidays

4

Working family members gives me money

5

Others

(specify).....
.....

6

Q12. Where do you work during vacations?

Road

1

Construction Projects

2

Farm

3

Small business

4

Others

(Specify).....
.....

5

Q13. What benefits do you get by working during vacations?

Monetary

1

Meet friends

2

Interaction with adults

3

Work experience

4

Others (specify).....

5

Questionnaires

If you are a son/daughter of road workers, what determines your access to

Q15. education?

No school in the locality

1

Look after home when parents go for work

2

Parents think I can earn additional income

3

Parents want me to work in the same profession

4

Parents cannot support my education

5

There is a school, but cannot get admission

6

Others (specify)

7

Q16, Did you hear about NFE?

YES (.....)

NO (.....)

Q17. If there is one near by, will you enroll?

YES (.....)

NO (.....)

**If you were a monk, why did not you pursue your monastic
Q18. education?**

(This is the end of part C on youth and Education)

PART D : YOUTH AND OCCUPATION (*This is for those young people who are working on their own* **)**

Q1. What is your present occupation?

Q2. Who decided it for you?

- Yourself*
- Parents*
- Friends*
- Others (specify).....*

1
2
3
4

Q3. Why do you work in the present job?

- Forced to*
- To support parents*
- Support myself*
- To support school- going brothers and sisters*
- My own interest*
- Do not want to be in village*

1
2
3
4
5

Questionnaires

Others(Specify).....

6

Q4. Do you like it? (*Circle any number in the boxes, can circle more than one*)

YES (.....)

NO (.....)

1. I can earn enough money 2. Job is physically easy 3. My employer treat me well 4. I am proud of what I am doing	1. I earn less money 2. Job is physically difficult 3. Harsh treatment by employer 4. Not satisfied
---	--

Q5. How much do you earn in a month?

200-500

500-1000

1000-2000

2000-3000

1

2

3

4

Q6. How do you spend your money?

To buy clothes for yourself

Give your earning to parents

Buy alcohol

1

2

3

<i>Buy tobacco</i>	4
<i>Save</i>	5
<i>Spend for freinds</i>	6
<i>Others (specify).....</i>	7

Q7. What other benefits do you get from the employer?

<i>Food</i>	1
<i>clothing</i>	2
<i>Pocket money</i>	3
<i>Lodging</i>	
<i>Others (specify).....</i>	

At what age did you join the present job?

.....

Q8. If you can, will you switch to another occupation?

YES (.....)

N0 (.....)

Q9.

Questionnaires

If yes, what kind of occupation?

(This is the end of Part D on Youth and Occupation)

E **PART E: YOUTH ALCOHOLS, DRUGS AND OTHER CHALLENGES**

Q1. Did you hear about drugs?

Yes

1

No

2

Q2. Do you take drugs? *(Treat it private, make sure that respondent feel comfortable with the question)*

Never

Once

Sometimes

Regularly

Q3. Why do you take drugs?

Family problem

No employment

Not happy with life

Friends influence

1

2

3

4

Others (specify)

5

Q4. Do you take alcohol?

YES (.....)

NO (.....)

If yes,

why?.....

.....

Q5. Why do you take alcohol?

Family problem

1

No employment

2

Friends' influence

3

Not happy with life

4

Others(specify).....

5

Q6. How often do you take alcohol?

Daily

1

Weekly

2

Occasionally

3

Q7. Where do you drink?

At home

1

Bar

2

Questionnaires

Alone

3

With parents

4

With friends

5

Others (specify)

6

Q8. What worries you the most in life? (Tick only one)

Education

1

Employment

2

Health

3

Welfare of parents

4

Others

5

Q9. What do you aspire to become in life? (This is an open ended question, list his or her dreams and aspirations)