

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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

Questionnaires

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 thorough 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.

Questionnaires

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

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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 un nourished.

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 un nourished.

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

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

HRMA (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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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 to 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

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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

Questionnaires

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

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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 Phuentsoing.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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,

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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

Questionnaires

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

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

I am Kunzang Chuki. I live in Thimphu and study at Lungtenzampa. I love listening to music, leaning 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

Questionnaires

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 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

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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.

Questionnaires

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

Questionnaires

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)