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Education Resilience Approaches (ERA) Program

A complement to the Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER)

RES-Research

Resilience in Education Systems

Bhutan

The Education Resilience of Out-of-school Children in Bhutan

A Methodology and Pilot Study

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A Methology and Pilot Study

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The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this paper are entirely those of the authors. They do not necessarily represent the views of the Education Resilience Approaches program team, the World Bank and its affiliated organizations, or those of the executive directors of the World Bank or the governments they represent.

Photo: Children looking out on terraced fields. Bhutan. © Curt Carnemark / World Bank

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Contents

About the RES-Research Studies Series 10

I. Introduction: Defining Resilience 11

II. Context of Adversity and Desirable Outcomes in this Study 12

III. Overview of the Methodology 14

III.I Sample 15

III.II Data collection methods 16

III.III Data analysis 19

III.IV Ethical clearance and participation 20

IV. Preliminary Findings and Analysis 21

IV.I Policy level findings 21

IV.II Community level findings 22

V. Tentative Recommendations for Policy and Practice 25

VI. Conclusion: Researcher Critical Reflections 26

References 27

Annexes 28

Annex A. Interview guide for national level data collection 28

Annex B. Interview guide for local level data collection 30

Annex C. Questionnaire template 33

About the RES-Research Studies Series

Development practitioners in fragile, conflict, and violence-affected contexts are demanding better support for research, evaluation and assessments: this can range from conducting an exploratory needs assessment for an emergency intervention, monitoring and evaluating ongoing project impact, or building the evidence base to design a reconstruction or post-conflict program. In contexts of overwhelming adversity it is crucial not only to get reliable and valid data but to also ensure that we are going about this data collection in the right way. Doing research "right" in these contexts requires asking the right questions, talking to the relevant participants and stakeholders, using the most pertinent methods, and paying particular attention to ethics and power differentials.

To address these concerns, the ERA Program developed the Resilience in Education Settings (RES)-Research training module. The training is specifically targeted for researchers living in context of conflict, violence and other adversities. It brings together resilience theory and a transformative research paradigm. Resilience theory seeks to understand the process by which individuals, communities and organizations recover from crisis, continue to perform in the midst of adversities and even radically change to prevent future risk exposure and continue their development process (Reyes 2013). The transformative research paradigm provides methodological guidance to conduct studies with vulnerable populations, while recognizing both their exposure to overwhelming threats but also their assets such as strengths, opportunities and available services (Mertens 2009).

As with all SABER tools, the RES-Research training module is openly available for education practitioners within the World Bank, as well as other agencies. The module consists of a research manual and handouts, power point presentations and additional guidance materials.

If you are interested in using this tool please contact the ERA team for the appropriate resources: educationresilience@worldbank.org

Through a nine-month training program, RES-Research builds on the capacities of academics and education practitioners in fragile, conflict and violence-affected contexts to undertake locally relevant and rigorous education resilience research. First piloted in Central America, the training program was improved and recently implemented in the South Asia region as part of a multi-donor trust fund for the Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER) initiative supported by DfID-UKAID, DFAT-Australian AID and the World Bank.

This report presents the ongoing application of research design and implementation skills gained by the Bhutanese participants in the RES-Research training module, delivered in November 2013, in Delhi, India, and in April 2014, in Kathmandu, Nepal. It provides valuable contributions to our on-going understanding of resilience in education settings in difficult contexts.

I. Introduction: Defining Resilience

Accessibility and quality of education is a much-debated issue today. In Bhutan this is especially a concern for the population scattered across the extreme mountainous terrain of the country. Difficult access and spatial isolation leads to an unequal distribution of the quality services in Bhutan. It is also an issue for children in urban communities despite the easy access to schools. Poverty and disability hold children back from enrolling in and completing school. Hence, the education resilience in these vulnerable communities can differ accordingly even despite the fact that the government provides free basic education in Bhutan. We define resilience as the ability of students, education institutions, and communities to achieve positive education outcomes in spite of adversities, such as the marginalization, isolation and poverty that exist in pockets in Bhutan.

The World Bank's Education Resilience Approaches Program (ERA) is aimed at improving education policies and systems by offering tools to systematically assess resilience processes that protect from risks and promote education outcomes in difficult contexts as mentioned above. Thus, this study draws from the "Resilience in Education Settings Research" (RES-Research) method and the RES-360° Tool, developed by ERA, to map relevant policies and programs to the real risks and assets that children face in school enrollment and attendance.

Our aim was to gain an understanding of the educational situation in a sample of poor, urban and rural communities in Bhutan identified from secondary data. This report presents the results of our pilot study. We consulted with education policy makers and implementers at the national level, and communities, parents and children themselves at the local level, to conduct an in-depth analysis of the risks and the assets (strengths, opportunities and resources), that exist in schools, homes and in communities. Accordingly, recommendations are also made in this report with a view towards filling the gaps and enhancing the relevance of education policies and programs based on the evidence collected from the field during the study.

II. Context of Adversity and Desirable Outcomes in this Study

Over the last decade, Bhutan has made tremendous progress in the field of education. The rising enrollment and primary school completion rates indicate that Bhutan is on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Progress made within the primary education program over the last decade to meet the MDGs and the Education for All goals has placed enormous pressure on limited teaching, infrastructure and financial resources, and severely tested the capacity of the system to deliver Bhutan's commitment to provide quality education for all. The Bhutan Multiple Indicator Survey (Bhutan, National Statistics Bureau 2010) indicates that about 0.7 percent of 6 to 12 year old children attend monastic schools and about 0.4 percent are studying outside Bhutan. Based on the above, the Ministry of Education concluded that the adjusted net primary enrollment rate of 6 to 12 year old children is 98 percent (Bhutan, MoE 2012). This is an impressive achievement.

This study is concerned with the approximate 2 percent of primary-school-age children who are out of school. We suspect these children may be those who reside in remote and hard-to-reach areas, children of nomadic communities and migrant populations, children with learning disabilities whose special learning needs are currently not catered for and children of the urban poor. These children have different needs from the majority of students, and the key challenge is to put in place innovative and cost effective strategies to provide equal and equitable access to quality education for all children. The Bhutan Living Standards Survey (Bhutan, National Statistics Bureau 2012) found that as many as 21 percent of children who are out of school stated that they could not afford school despite the free education provided by the government. The same report showed that among children who are not in school, 4 percent of urban children and 3 percent of rural children struggle with some kind of disability. Thirty percent of these children residing in urban areas are girls, and 4.4 percent of girls in rural areas reported that their schools are too far away for them to attend.

The Bhutan Living Standards Survey data also showed that primary school net attendance rates are particularly low in some *dzongkhags* (districts), namely

Educating for Gross National Happiness

Bhutan's Ministry of Education initiated a nationwide educational reform in December 2009, Education for Gross National Happiness. The initiative was introduced to approach learning from a more holistic perspective in an effort to restore the true essence of education (Bhutan, National Environment Commission, 2012). The education system has been tasked to:

> *...effectively cultivate GNH values and practices, including critical and creative thinking, ecological literacy, practice of the country's profound traditional wisdom and culture, contemplative learning, a holistic understanding of the world, genuine care for nature and for others, competency to deal effectively with the modern world, preparation for the right livelihood, and informed civic engagement.*

Efforts to infuse GNH principles and values into the education curricula began in 2007. The eduation system is assessed using four broad domains: quality of education, values in education, challenges and barriers, and GNH Principles in education.

Chukha (89 percent), Wangdue (88 percent) and Lhuntse (87 percent). The rates are lower among females in these dzongkhags except for Wangdue. This remains a concern. Enrollment gaps, despite the Ministry of Education's efforts to reach all children by 2015, need attention. They could represent those children from vulnerable communities that the education system finds difficult to reach as their particular needs may be different from those of less vulnerable children. This would call for

This study aims to understand the factors that keep children out of school despite the free education provided by the government. More importantly, this study attempts to understand the resilience of the children, parents, and communities that enable children to remain in school. Bhutan's objective to reach every child needs to be approached differently if all children's needs are to be fulfilled. This report also provides a set of recommendations for policy makers and implementers based on evidence collected in this study from out-of-school children aged 6 to 16 years old, their parents and also their community.

The 1990 Education for All (EFA) goals launched in Jomtien, Thailand, were initiated to bring the benefits of education to "every citizen in every society". Since then the World Bank has been working with the national governments, civil society groups, and other development agencies in line with the objectives of its Learning for All Education Strategy 2020. The study contributes to the Strategy's efforts to ensure that by 2015, all children, particularly girls, those in difficult circumstances, and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free, and compulsory primary education of good quality in Bhutan. We use the framework developed by the Education Resilience Approaches (ERA) Program of the World Bank. We contextualize the framework to assess how adversity such as poverty fuelled by remoteness and social culture in Bhutan impedes children from attending school.

We take this resilience angle, shifting the paradigm of our thinking and support, with a view to understanding the resilience of vulnerable children and build on their assets to include them in the education system in an effective way. Special attention is also required to understand the changes desired by individuals, cultural sensitivity and how social, cultural and institutional forces influence their individual behaviour. The mixed-methods and resilience approach used for this study not only helps us understand such complexity in human behaviour but also provides us with avenues to address them.

The desired outcomes of this study was to both develop a resilience-based study methodology and to gather information on the assets and sources of resilience that children from poor, urban and isolated, rural communities draw on in their family, school and community. It also aims to show how schools and the Ministry of Education can provide targeted support to ensure that the remaining out-of-school children in these vulnerable communities can go to school and complete basic education. We aspire to show how out-of-school children in vulnerable communities can be integrated into the education system and contribute to the development of the country. As a pilot study, these objectives are only partially met, but we hope to use this tested methodology in planned future resilience-based research in the country.

III. Overview of the Methodology

This section discusses the research questions and describes the methodology designed for the resilience study tailored to the local context in Bhutan. It presents the mixed-methods approach planned for the study, and the steps taken to complete the pilot of the qualitative phase.

Research Question:

> *How can the education system in Bhutan foster the education resilience of rural and urban out-of-school children?*

To answer this research question, we developed three research sub-questions.

1. *What are the challenges faced by out-of-school children in the selected communities and how do these challenges serve as obstacles to going to school?*
2. *What are the sources of resilience of children and parents in these communities, and how can teachers and the schools use these assets to support out-of school children to enroll and complete basic education?*
3. *How can these communities participate in the education of their children?*

To answer the research sub-questions above, we broke them down into the following categories to gather information with as much detail as possible. These questions also guided the data collection methods as shown in the table below.

Table 1
Research questions for the study

Research question	Data collection tool	Type of data
RISKS		
R1: What are the challenges faced by out-of-school children in the selected communities to go to school?	Qualitative: desk review, focus group discussions (FGD) and key interviews	Survey, school data, verbal, written, recall
R2: How do these challenges serve as obstacles to going to school?	Qualitative: desk review, FGD and key interviews	Survey, school data, written, verbal, recall
ASSETS (Protective and Promotive Processes)		
R3: What are the sources of resilience of children and parents in these communities?	Qualitative: FGD with parents and children who are out of school	written, verbal, recall
R4: How can teachers and schools use these assets to support out-of school children to enroll and complete basic education?	Qualitative: interview with service providers and key informants and FGD with teachers	written, verbal, recall
R5: How can these communities participate in the education of their children?	Qualitative: FGD with parents, teachers and out-of-school children	written, verbal, recall

III.I Sample

The qualitative phase of our mixed-methods study collected data from education officials and specialists in the first phase, and from a sample of community members, children and parents from poor, urban and isolated, rural communities in the second phase.

First, key officials who have knowledge on the education policies, systems and policies were purposely sampled to obtain information on their perceptions regarding the possible risks experienced by children, and the promotive and protective factors within the education system that enable these children to attend school. Interviews with key focal points also focused on perceptions of how education services and policies can serve as risks for children as well as promote school attendance.

The key personnel interviewed at the national level, in the first phase, were one representative from each of the following:

1. Ministry of Education
2. Parliamentarian
3. The Rural Education Foundation (Executive Director)
4. Local education expert/consultant

Second, communities were also recognized as critically important agents to assist families and their children to complete schooling. At the community level, two communities were selected based on the lowest net attendance rates and highest school dropout rates according to the Bhutan Living Standard Survey (2012). One rural and urban community was selected. Within these communities, Nyisho (rural) and Bajo Throm (urban) in Wangdue district, approximately 12 children, (6 boys and 6 girls) who are presently out of school were selected for the Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The out-of-school children were identified through the Bhutan Living Standard Survey (2012).

In addition to the sample of out-of-school children, the study interviewed a sample of parents and teachers in the community. The criteria for each sample type at the community level was the following:

1. **Out-of-School Children:** Children 6 to 16 years of age, who have never been to school or who dropped out. They participated in a focus group discussion (FGD) on the challenges in their lives and the difficulties they face in going to school, as well as on the assets (people that support them, what makes them proud, etc.). Children who had been to school before were interviewed about what they liked and did not like about school and why they dropped out.

2. **Parents of Out-of-School Children:** Twelve parents, 6 from each community, whose children have never attended school or have dropped out. They participated in an FGD about the challenges within the family and the reasons why their children are not in school or dropped out. Information was also collected on the family and community assets, and how these assets support their children, how communities support each other and

about society values. Finally, we asked questions about how communities can support the education of their children.

3. **Teachers:** Twelve teachers, 6 from each school serving in each selected community. They participated in an FGD on their perceptions of the challenges within families that children face in enrolling and staying in school, and how schools and teachers can help. The teachers' FGD took place after the FGD with out-of-school children and parents, which gave the researchers the opportunity to ask the teachers some specific questions related to the challenges and assets identified in the earlier FGDs.

III.II Data collection methods

Four Bhutanese researchers, trained in mixed-methods research by the World Bank, carried out the pilot study. The research team members are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Study team

Tashi Choden	Team leader
Yangkee	Data collection
Tshering Wangmo	Data collection
Dechen Zangmo	Technical support

Since the researchers share a nationality with the respondents and speak their language, the respondents felt more comfortable talking about sensitive issues such as family problems.

This study adopted a Mixed-Methods Research (MMR) design as the RES-Research approach advises, and drew from the ERA Program's RES-360° research tool. It will utilize qualitative and quantitative data collection approaches in three sequential phases. These are detailed next.

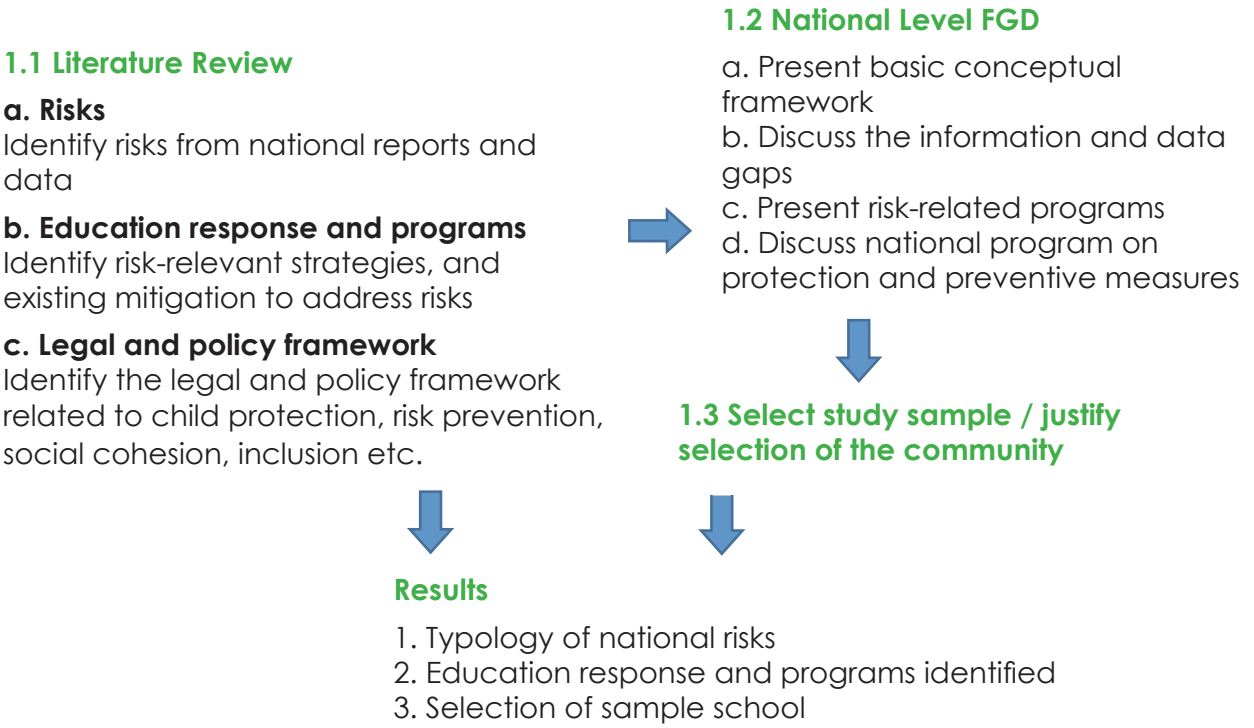
Phase 1. National level: Literature review and key informants interviews

Phase 1 of the RES-360° approach focuses on identifying the perceptions of national level actors (such as the Ministry of Education, or MoE, officials). It collects perceptual information on the risks related to the school enrollment and attendance of vulnerable children (the remaining 8 percent out-of-school in Bhutan) and the institutional assets that could support them (such as schools, teachers, education programs, etc.).

The research team took notes during the interviews on the perceptions of education-related policies and programs, and the risks identified. Based on the information on risks and especially assets identified at the national level, researchers reviewed the FGD questions for follow up at the community and school level (Phase 2). The data from both levels fed into the design of the 360° questionnaire, which was applied to a larger sample (Phase 3).

The national level MoE discussions also confirmed the school sample selected for Phase 2 of the study (see diagram on Phase 1, below).

Figure 1
Phase 1: Assessment at the national level



Phase 2. Community level: Focus groups with children, parents, and teachers

The second phase consisted of a qualitative exploration of risks and assets in the selected communities and the schools that serve them. The research team formed a Local Advisory Committee (LAC) made up of members from the selected communities, to provide feedback and guidance on the sample participants, data collection and analysis of data. The data at the community and school level was collected through FGDs.

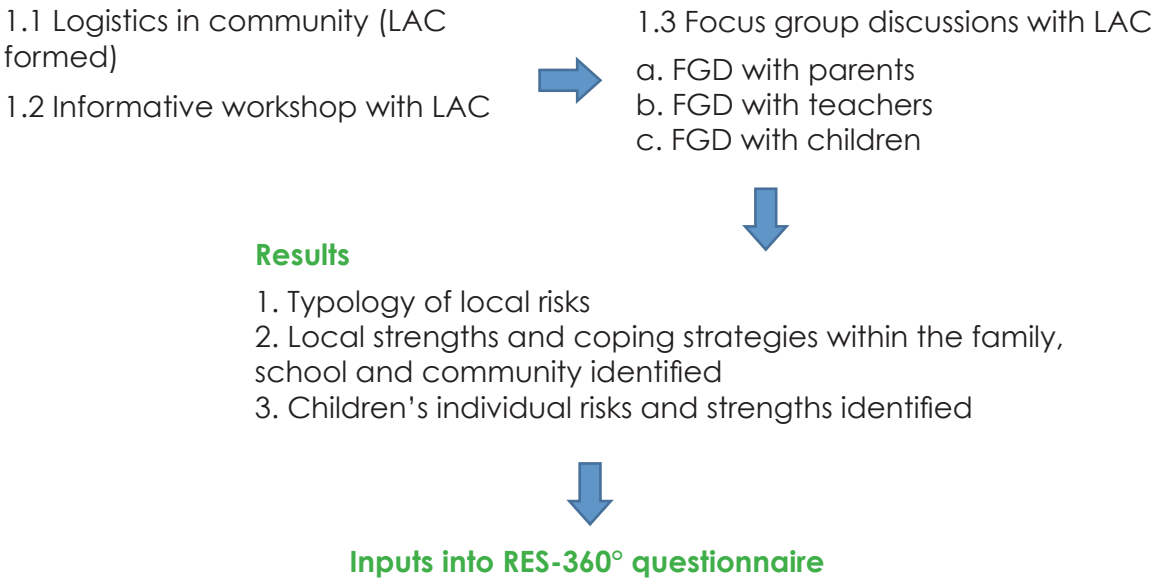
All three sets of FGDs (with parents, teachers and children) attempted to identify:

- the challenges faced by communities,
- the obstacles impeding children from going to school in these communities
- the assets within families and communities that can support children to enroll in and attend school;
- the programs and services in schools that could support out-of-school children to enroll in and complete their basic education.

We gathered data on the risks at all levels (individual, family and school). The risks at the individual level gave the context and backdrop for the data collection on external assets at the family and school level, which mitigate those risks experienced by children, such as communities and schools, and policies and programs.

These findings fed into and were included in the design of the RES-360° questionnaire.

Figure 2
Phase 2: Assessment at the community level



Phase 3. Development of the RES- 360° questionnaire

The qualitative phase identified both the risks and assets present in isolated rural communities in Bhutan, and how they relate to education access and completion. Based on these findings, the research team designed a questionnaire that will be applied in a second stage of the study, to a larger number of participants. The ERA team's RES-360° manual helped guide its development.

In the second, quantitative phase of the study, the RES-360° questionnaire will be administered to selected households to collect further data regarding the risks and available assets that are considered most prevalent and relevant within the local community. It will be pre-tested and re-validated to gather more accurate information.

The findings serve as local evidence to inform education policies addressing vulnerable populations and enable practitioners to design strategies for targeted interventions.

The Risks and Assets sections of the RES-360° questionnaire was structured as shown in the table below. For the full questionnaire see Annex 3.

Table 3
RES-360° questionnaire

SECTION I: RISKS	
Section 1.1	The challenges faced by communities
Section 1.2	The obstacles impeding children from going to school
SECTION II: ASSETS	
Section 2.1	The assets within families and communities that can support children's education
Section 2.2	Programs and school services that can support children's education

III.III Data analysis

The qualitative analysis of data collected through interviews and focus groups included coding. Coding played an important role in the analysis, serving to summarize as well as reduce data. During the coding process the team generated many different codes, categories and themes. It also developed a framework for the process that organized the data to facilitate its analysis. The process was exploratory and iterative meaning that each cycle of coding built upon the previous one. The team ended up with three different levels of coding: open (or free coding), second level coding (or formation of categories), and axial coding (or relations across the codes that tell a story).

The steps for the coding process were as follows.

1. Review of other data available (especially the Bhutan Living Standard Survey 2012)
2. Review of transcripts and notes from key informant interviews and focus group discussions.
3. Identification of an initial codes list from the data. (This list was long and identified all relevant resilience findings and themes.)
4. Grouping together of similar codes as categories. Categories included resources (additional cost for schooling, walking distance to schools, low morale in children), relationships (with parents, teachers and friends) events and others.
5. Identification of sub-categories within each broad list
6. Identification of a final level of 'axial' codes linked to resilience theory and concepts analyzed from our data, using a process of collapsing and grouping codes.

As mentioned above, the findings from the qualitative analysis guided the design of the RES-360° questionnaire that will be applied in Phase 3. This process considered: (i) the list of main risks identified by isolated rural communities, including those that prevent children from accessing or completing basic education; (ii) the list of individual, family and community assets (strengths, opportunities and indigenous resources) that can support children in their education opportunities;

and (iii) the list of education programs and social services that are considered important to protect children from risks and promote their access and completion of basic education.

The research team conducted a final integrated analysis of the qualitative findings through an interpretation of all the data gathered from the secondary sources, interviews, focus group discussions and the survey. Through this process, the RES- 360° was validated redesigned which can be applied again in similar contexts in Bhutan. Follow up cycles of this study will be considered based on the need, resources and feasibility

III.IV Ethical clearance and participation

We sought ethical clearance for the study from the Ministry of Education. The district education officer and the *gup* (local leader), who headed the Local Advisory Group for arrangement of the logistics, were also informed.

Participation of stakeholders was a key component of both project design and implementation. The Local Advisory Committee included one representative from the following stakeholder groups:

1. *Gup*
2. School principal
3. Teacher from each school
4. Children from the communities
5. Business community representative

In Phase 2, the committee was briefed on the objectives of the study and entrusted with the following roles:

1. Approval from *gup* for logistical arrangements (transportation, information)
2. Stakeholder consultation (refinement of research questions and objectives based on feasibility, timeline, etc.)
3. Facilitation of data collection
4. Interpretation
5. Dissemination of findings as well as evidence-based planning

The LAC not only assisted in arranging logistics but also in gaining the confidence of the children and parents to open up during discussions. Also, without the support of the local authority, it would have been difficult to locate the children in the communities and bring them together for discussions as they reside in very scattered settlements.

IV. Preliminary Findings and Analysis

This study is in progress; however, based on the completion of the first research cycle and preliminary analysis, some preliminary findings can be noted. These are divided into policy and program level, community and school resources. This emphasis is important as our definition of resilience looks at the external resources available to support individuals at risk, rather than focusing on how individuals fend for themselves in adversity.

IV.I Policy level findings

The desk study of relevant documents and data revealed that there are many policies that suit the needs of children to enable them to go to school. Each of these education-related policies and programs were discussed with different key informants at the national level to identify the sample for Phase 2 and also to gain an understanding of the risks and assets for out-of-school children in Bhutan.

Policies

School Admission Policy 2014: This policy allows children to be enrolled in school from age 6 to 13. It also allows children who failed to attend school at the corresponding age for their grade level to attend until age 13. Education officials were of the opinion that twice-yearly admissions should be conducted for the convenience of parents.

Early Childhood Care Development Policy 2011: This policy aims to increase children's school-readiness, mitigate school dropout and improve individual achievement levels and retention rates. However, the general consensus among the members of our national level focus groups was that childcare is an urban phenomena and therefore mostly available to parents who can afford it.

School Discipline Policy 2012: This policy banned corporal punishment in schools. Informants reported that it caused more harm than it helped, however. There has been an increase in cases of discipline issues, and students are unable to re-integrate into school after they are expelled.

National Youth Policy 2011: The policy facilitates youth skill building. It has very little reach and coverage as Bhutan has only 13 youth centres mostly clustered in the towns. Rural children do not have access. According to interviewees, schools should have provisions to reintegrate children after they are suspended and expelled from the schools.

National Education Policy 2011: The National Education Policy provisions include free and compulsory basic education and ensure accessibility. It outlines the government oversight over private schooling as well, and high enrollment numbers in these schools not are encouraged. However, respondents claimed that the general quality of all schools is a major issue as the skills taught do not match the needs of the job market. This could be one of the reasons why parents' cost-benefit analysis leans towards keeping their children at home.

National Policy on Special Education Needs 2012: This policy calls for the inclusive education of children with special education needs. It supports retaining the majority of children who are

cognitively or physically disabled to attend schools along with other children. However, members of the focus group remarked that there are still gaps whereby rural disabled children cannot enroll in normal schools. Few schools offer boarding facilities and the majority are located in urban areas.

Programs

Educating for Gross National Happiness: This program aims to promote mutual respect and cooperation – between the educated, the intellectuals and the non-educated. It aims to create the right conditions for children to think, reflect and show concern for each other. The perception of our key informants was that this fostered a conducive learning environment and also reduced discipline problems in school. The program takes a holistic approach to improve the quality of education and ensures principals deal with teachers, and teachers deal with students, in a just and equitable manner.

Extended Classrooms (ECR) Program: This program was designed to fill the gap when primary schools are downgraded, upgraded or closed depending on the need. It aims to enhance enrollment and primary school completion by clustering lower primary classrooms around upper primary schools with boarding facilities. This model avoids the need for boarding facilities at lower grades and increases parents' motivation to send their children to school as boarding is guaranteed in later grades. However, the quality of ECRs is an issue. Low quality leads to low attendance as the children fail to achieve good marks and hence drop out. Our informants remarked that they expect the provision of boarding and feeding will increase net enrollment. This will attract the children to come to schools and also study well without the need to worry about their lunch. According to some key informants, multigrade teaching would also address the risks of teacher shortage especially in rural areas. This in turn would help children to remain in school who could otherwise leave because of the shortage of teachers.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Program: A key informant shared their perspective about how girls stay home from school and eventually drop out when they have to share toilets or there is no water at school.

IV.II Community level findings

We conducted three sets of FGDs (with parents, teachers and children) to assess the risks that these children face in going to school in the communities and to understand the assets within families and communities that can help children continue their education. Based on the findings, the following analyses were made at the individual, family and school-community level.

Risks at the individual level

Children belonging to the study sample were from two different locations; that is, from an urban town and a rural area. During the focus group discussions, children participated and discussed at length about the risks they face. Not surprisingly, children from the poorer rural families said that they faced the risk of not being able to afford extra schooling expenses such as uniforms and other things. Participants from the urban area also expressed similar views. Thus, children's

education is deeply affected by family poverty, regardless of urban or rural location, despite the policy for free education enacted by the government.

Orphanhood is another risk faced by children in both locations. When their parents die they risk dropping out of school, especially if they are from a poor family. Children also face the risk of having to work at home and look after their ageing parents. Poor parents tend to send their children to the monastic schools, especially boys, as it is less expensive. The risks of not going to school are higher because when children drop out of monastic schools and they are not permitted to go back to school. This phenomenon is very prominent in rural areas where many children do not go to school because they are too old, despite the government's flexible admission policy for children age 6 to 13, and despite ban on corporal punishment in schools.

None of the children we spoke with had attended an early childcare development centre (ECCD). This highlighted the importance of ECCD to prepare children to perform well in school and hence reduce dropout. Disability is another reason why children in both urban and rural areas cannot go to school.

Children who had already dropped out of school expressed that they thought the present curriculum was too demanding. They reported that they quickly became confused and lost interest in their studies, which eventually prompted them to drop out of school. A few children explained that they dropped out because they lost their morale as teachers were strict and looked down on the low performers. Children from urban areas feel that their parents try to better understand the pressures they face at school, and their need for clean uniforms. Children who had dropped out also stated they wanted more freedom to enjoy the school's extra-curricular activities.

In the above context of adversity for these children, our study identified both the risks and assets that were present in their community and schools. This approach is consistent with our view of resilience not as individual coping, but as in the resources available in the children's environment that are potential assets for their educational well-being. We discuss these next.

Risks and assets at the family level

The study found that most parents keep their children home from school when they cannot to afford uniforms and school supplies for their children. Parents also felt that there is lack of future job opportunities due to high unemployment and prefer their children work on the farms and look after their parents and younger siblings. Some parents also expressed that they find it difficult to force their children to go to school if their children want to stay home. The children of divorced parents suffer low morale and prefer to remain home, in both rural and urban areas.

In terms of assets, children and parents both stated that family support is the most important factor that determines whether children go to school or not. Relatives play a very important mentorship role in such cases. Peers also have a strong influence over the decision to remain in school. Parents also reported that parent-teacher meetings organized by the schools greatly affect their decision to keep their children in school.

Risks and assets at the school level

After the discussions with children, parents, and teachers, we concluded that there were risks related to school enrollment and completion, as well as much needed financial support for poor families. Respondents mentioned such support has never been made available and could also make a positive difference. Limited counselling for parents and needed school infrastructure were also noted as risks. Teachers also recommended more social cohesion practices in the communities to help children remain in schools.

As for school assets, teachers reported that they are available and often approached for help when children face problem at school. The school Student Support Service also helps students to continue their studies. School counsellors are sometimes approached by students when they face the problems that might lead them to drop out of school. Training of teachers to better assume this counselling role, can able them to better mitigate school-community risks.

School programs such as Life Skills Talks help children to understand the need to develop skills to be able to get a job later. Teachers were of the opinion that this needs to be strengthened through offering skills development as well, not only lectures. They stated that the Green Lunch program helps keep children healthy and as such should be continued. (A program in select schools that provides children with vegetable-rich meals.)

As noted earlier the primary goal of this pilot study was to develop and test a methodology on resilience education research, relevant for the out-of-school population in Bhutan. Some preliminary findings of our pilot data collection have been noted here. However, the next section presents our reflections regarding the process of design and piloting such methodology in the context of Bhutan.

V. Tentative Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Some of the policy, program, school and community recommendations from this pilot study are:

1. The National Education Policy should be reviewed with a view to enhancing the quality of education. Because skills development at school does not match the needs of the job market, parents are more likely to keeping children at home.

2. The Special Education Policy should address the challenges of education access for rural disabled children to make schools more inclusive.

3. The Early Child Care Development programs should be made more inclusive.

4. Extended Classrooms should provide boarding and feeding tare to increases net enrollment.

5. Extended Classrooms should offer multigrade teaching to address the teacher shortage especially in rural areas.

6. Corporal punishment is banned in the schools, but there are no alternative discipline programs in place. Thus, more and repeated cases of discipline issues are reported as expressed in the interview. Child-friendly discipline is needed to allow the students who are offenders to integrate well into schools through relevant corrective practices.

7. More counselling for parents is required through parent-teacher meetings. Strengthen parent-school relations through discussions about the risks and assets for children's education, to foster family support and mentoring roles.

8. Raise awareness in the community about the importance of education and garner their support.

VI. Conclusion: Researcher Critical Reflections

Lastly, as this was a first pilot study using a resilience framework by the researchers, this section presents our reflections regarding both the relevance of the methodology and the approach for Bhutan.

The resilience mixed-methods research approach is designed to identify and understand the risks, assets, and supports that are present in schools and communities that can help education systems deliver relevant services of high quality for learning, capacity development, and the well-being of students and teachers in difficult situations and in contexts of adversity. However, the method can also be applied in peaceful contexts. Bhutan is a peaceful country but there are many gaps to address nonetheless. Equity is much talked about issues in Bhutan and there are many pockets of poor people who suffer. This has a major implication on their children's education. The resilience mixed-methods approach was contextualized, tested and applied and proved to be an effective tool. It provided a holistic picture of how and where children face risks, and also helped us develop an understanding of the Ministry of Education's assets and targeted interventions. Some lessons learned during this study are listed as follows:

1. The top-down approach to assessing policies and programs at the national level is very effective are we were able to confirm how each of these are designed and what gaps exist.

2. It was important to involve high-level audiences in the design of the study to help them understand the need and urgency to reach out-of-school children in order to achieve the MDGs.

3. Using existing information and further mining this data from recent surveys saved time and money, especially as the sample was scattered.

4. The support of the Local Authority is very important. This was proved when we had to identify the sample, which was scatted over mountains and valleys. The parents and students felt more comfortable talking to the team when they were being interviewed because of this support.

5. Sample should be disaggregated by location. By disaggregating our sample, we found that urban children face different risks and have different assets as compared to their rural counterparts.

6. Facilitation skills are very important when talking to children about their education. Many children we spoke with had dropped out of school as their parents could not afford it, and this topic was sensitive for them.

7. The research approach also helps the researcher easily link the risks children face to existing policies and programs, and assess their gaps. Based on the assets identified in the communities, the Ministry of Education could design targeted interventions and also review existing policies and programs.

8. The mixed-methods approach also enabled us to compile and prepare a questionnaire that covered all aspects of the risks that children face. Upon pre-testing of the questionnaire, it was found to be holistic.

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Annexes

Annex A. Interview guide for national level data collection

Section 1: Risk Assessment - Ministry of Education			
1.1.1 Risks Identified in the National Data Review			
Identified Risk	Source Document/s	Brief description regarding source, details, prevalence, and location of risk	Name: Date:
1.3 Assessment of Protective or Promotive Programs • *Interview to focus on identifying the national level resources (programs and services) available to children that address risks.*			
1.3.1. Protection • *Explain how this part of the meeting focuses on establishing a framework of what is expected from the country's government in general and the MoE in particular with regards to child protection. Additional laws that may not pertain to the local context may also be presented as reference points.* • *Explain the difference between protective programs (that protect students from risks of isolated rural areas, including poverty, lack of nutrition, isolation, abuse, etc.) and promotive programs (that help students achieve desirable education outcomes, such as school buildings, teachers, textbooks, etc.).* • *Explain how these laws or policies related to children can provide useful frameworks for the consideration of prevention and protection supports.* • *Provide MoE members the opportunity to identify any additional key policies or protective measures which have not been found by the research team*			
1.3.2 National & International Laws and Policies Related to Child Protection *Note: Once this review is complete proceed to a review of identified programs.*			
Identified Law/ Policy	Source Document/s	Brief description regarding details, impact, and reach of program and the kind of risks addressed	Name: Date:

1.3.3. Programs Identified in National Level Desk Study

- *Introduce the list of resources and programs identified in the earlier desk study to MoE members to obtain their feedback on the findings.*
- *Validate these findings with MoE members.*

Note: Once all assets identified during the desk review have been presented to MoE members, the interviewer should encourage participants to identify additional key policies, programs, and protective measures employed by the MoE and the education system that have not been addressed in the "Any other" column.

Identified MoE Program	Source Document	Brief description regarding details, impact, and reach of program	Risks Addressed Name: Date:

Annex B. Interview guide for local level data collection

Names of the participant/s:
Age:
Sex:
Location:
Name of school/community:
Interviewer:
Date:

1.Risks established in the typology at school level	**Participant discussion and comments**	
	Where?	Who is affected by it?
1.1 Could not afford ..... (probe)		
1.2.Disability		
1.3 Schools are too far		
1.4 Need to take care of a sick person		
1.5 Not interested		
1.6 Need to work		
1.7 Too young or too old		
1.8 Unable to qualify for the next grade		
1.9 Illness		
1.10 Parents' support		
1.11 School atmosphere		

1.11 Job opportunities in future		
1.12 Others		
1.11 Are there teachers that form special relationships with children and youth?	Yes - Who are they? What role does this play in the lives of youth?	
1.12 Are there people that children and youth can talk to?	Yes- Who are they? What role does this play in the lives of youth?	
1.13 What role does connection to community and between community members play in positive outcomes?		
What role does trust and respect play in this?		
What about working together and doing things together?		
1.14 What about teachers? How can they adapt their teaching methodologies?		
How can the curricular programs be adapted?		
What role does this or can this play in positive outcomes for children and youth?		
1.15 How could or does parental involvement in school and schooling promote positive outcomes for children and youth?		
1.6 What about community involvement in schools?		
1.7 Any other views		
2. Assets or coping strategies within the community/family	**Which risk(s) does it help to mitigate? Who exhibits this asset?**	**Who exhibits this asset or coping strategy?**
2.1 Family income		
2.2 Extended family		

2.3 Family mentors		
2.4 Community leaders		
3. Name of program or resource received	**Which risk(s) does it help to mitigate?**	**Who executes the program or support?**
3.1 Educating for GNH		
3.2 Extended classroom program		
3.3 Multigrade teaching		
3.4 Performance compact		
3.5 Multisectoral approach		
3.6 Free basic education		
3.7 Community ECCD centre		
3.8 School Admission Policy		
3.9 WASH program		
3.10 Provision of boarding and feeding to increase net enrollment		
3.11 Others		
3.12 Are there informal programs? If so, where are these programs located? Who is running these programs? How do these programs operate?		

Annex C. Questionnaire template

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY	
PARTICIPANT ID	
SAMPLE ID	
SITE ID	
DATE OF ADMINISTRATION	
PARTICIPANT ID	
Are you male or female?	
How old are you?	

SECTION 1A: RISKS

How prevalent are the following risks in your home, school, community, or neighborhood?

	Not at all	A little	Somewhat	Often	Very
1.1 Could not afford	O	O	O	O	O
1.2 Disability	O	O	O	O	O
1.3 Schools are too far	O	O	O	O	O
1.4 Need to take care of a sick person	O	O	O	O	O
1.5 Not interested	O	O	O	O	O
1.6 Need to work	O	O	O	O	O
1.7 Too young or too old	O	O	O	O	O
1.8 Unable to qualify for the next grade	O	O	O	O	O
1.9 Illness	O	O	O	O	O
1.10 Parents' support	O	O	O	O	O
1.11 School atmosphere	O	O	O	O	O
1.12 Job opportunities in the future	O	O	O	O	O
1.13 Enrollled in monastic school	O	O	O	O	O
1.14 Peer pressure	O	O	O	O	O
1.15 Unsuitable school	O	O	O	O	O
1.16 Low morale	O	O	O	O	O
1.17 Other	O	O	O	O	O

SECTION 1B: LOCATION OF RISKS Where do you experience these risks?			
	At home	At school	In community
1.1 Could not afford	O	O	O
1.2.Disability	O	O	O
1.3 Schools are too far	O	O	O
1.4 Need to take care of a sick person	O	O	O
1.5 Not interested	O	O	O
1.6 Need to work	O	O	O
1.7 Too young or too old	O	O	O
1.8 Unable to qualify for the next grade	O	O	O
1.9 Illness	O	O	O
1.10 Parents' support	O	O	O
1.11 School atmosphere	O	O	O
1.12 Job opportunities in future	O	O	O
1.13 Enrolled in monastic school	O	O	O
1.14 Peer pressure	O	O	O
1.15 Unsuitable school	O	O	O
1.16 Low morale	O	O	O
1.17 Other	O	O	O

SECTION 2A: SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES How important is this to you?					
	1.Not important	2. A little important	3. Somewhat important	4. Important	5. Very important
2.1 Extended classrooms	O	O	O	O	O
2.2 Multigrade teaching	O	O	O	O	O
2.3 Boarding facilities	O	O	O	O	O
2.4 Educating for Gross National Happiness	O	O	O	O	O
2.5 Extra-curricular activities	O	O	O	O	O
2.6 Parent-teacher meetings	O	O	O	O	O
2.7 School mentoring program	O	O	O	O	O
2.8 Student Support Service	O	O	O	O	O
2.9 Green School program	O	O	O	O	O
2.10 School counsellors	O	O	O	O	O
2.11 Community leaders	O	O	O	O	O

SECTION 2B: SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES How often is this happening?					
	1. Never	2. Rarely	3. Some-times	4. Often	5. Always
2.1 Extended classrooms	O	O	O	O	O
2.2 Multigrade teaching	O	O	O	O	O
2.3 Boarding facilities	O	O	O	O	O
3.4 Educating for Gross National Happines	O	O	O	O	O
2.5 Extra-curricular activities	O	O	O	O	O
2.6 Parent-teacher meeting	O	O	O	O	O
2.7 School mentoring program	O	O	O	O	O
2.8 Student Support Service	O	O	O	O	O
2.9 Green School program	O	O	O	O	O
2.10 School counsellors	O	O	O	O	O
2.11 Community leaders	O	O	O	O	O

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