BMIS 2010 Thematic Analyses Series

Child Protection

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Contents

Acknowledgement iii
Foreword xi
List of Abbreviations xii
Executive Summary xiii
Demographic and socio-economic profile of children xiv
Living arrangements of children xiv
Birth registration xiv
Child labour xv
Early marriage, childbearing, and young motherhood xv
Gender and family-based violence xvi
1. Introduction 1
1.1. Emerging issues in child protection 2
1.2. Policy Context 2
1.3. Conclusion 3
2. Methodology 7
2.1. Working group 7
2.2. Statistical analysis 7
2.3. Data limitations 7
2.4. Technical Notes 8
3. The demographic and socio-economic profile of children 11
3.1. Demographic profile of children 11
3.2. Household composition and socio-economic profile of children 12
3.3. Section summary on the demographic and socio-economic profile of children 15
4. Living arrangements of children 17
4.1. Introduction 17
4.2. Living arrangements 17
4.2.1. Living arrangements and school participation 18
4.2.2. Children in monastic institutions 20
4.2.3. Children in other settings 22
4.3. Section summary on living arrangement of children 22
5. Birth registration 25
5.1. Introduction 25

5.2. Policy Discussion 25
5.3. Section summary on birth registration 26
6. Child labour 29
6.1. Introduction 29
6.2. Household characteristics and living arrangements of children engaged in child labour 30
6.3. Child labour and attributes of mother or caretaker 32
6.4. Child labour and school participation 32
6.5. Section summary on child labour 38
7. Early marriage, childbearing and young motherhood 41
7.1. Introduction 41
7.2. Early marriage 42
7.2.1. Early marriage, education, and literacy among girls aged 15-17 years 42
7.2.2. Early marriage and knowledge of HIV transmission among women aged 18-49 years 44
7.3. Early childbearing 45
7.3.1. Early Childbearing among girls and young women aged 15-19 years 45
7.3.2. Early childbearing, education, and literacy 46
7.4. Young motherhood 49
7.4.1. Young motherhood and reproductive and new-born health 49
7.4.2. Young motherhood and child outcomes 51
7.5. Section summary on early marriage, child bearing and young motherhood 52
8. Gender and family-based violence 55
8.1. Introduction 55
8.2. Attitudes toward domestic violence among women 56
8.2.1. Attitudes toward domestic violence, education and literacy 59
8.3. Experience of Domestic Violence 61
8.3.1. Attitudes toward domestic violence among women who have experienced domestic violence 65
8.4. Section Summary on gender and family-based violence 66
9. Conclusions 69
Annex 1. Early childbearing regression results 73
Annex 2. Attitudes toward domestic violence regression results 74
Annex 3. Additional tables on the experience of ever married women of violence by husband in past 12 months by frequency 75
Annex 4. Summary table of key indicators for child protection 78
Annex 5. List of Contributors 79

List of Tables

Table 1. Household Age Distribution of Children Under age 18 by sex, Bhutan, 2010 11
Table 2. Selected indicators of households by whether the household has at least one individual under age 18, Bhutan, 2010 12
Table 3. Household composition by whether household has at least one individual under the age of 18, Bhutan, 2010 12
Table 4. Distribution of child population by wealth quintiles, Bhutan, 2010 13
Table 5. Living arrangements of children under the age of 18 years, Bhutan, 2010 18
Table 6. Primary level school attendance among children aged 6-12 years by living arrangements, Bhutan, 2010 19
Table 7. Secondary level school attendance among children aged 13-17 years by living arrangements, Bhutan, 2010 19
Table 8. Sample demographic information for child monks and nuns under the age of 18 years, Bhutan, 2010 20
Table 9. Distribution of parental care and disabled status of child monks and nuns under the age of 18 years, Bhutan, 2010 21
Table 10. Living arrangements of children aged 5-14 years engaged in child labour, Bhutan, 2010 31
Table 11. Percentage of children aged 5-14 years who live in households with improved sanitation facilities by child labour status, Bhutan, 2010 31
Table 12. Percentage of mothers of children aged 5-14 years who accept domestic violence by their children's child labour status, Bhutan, 2010 32
Table 13. Child labour and school attendance rates among children age 6-14, Bhutan, 2010 33
Table 14. School participation of primary school age children aged 6-12 years distributed by level of economic activity, Bhutan, 2010 34
Table 15. School participation of secondary school age children aged 13-14 years distributed by level of economic activity, Bhutan, 2010 34
Table 16. Distribution of school participation status among children aged 6-14 years by child labour status, Bhutan, 2010 35
Table 17. Mean number of hours of economic activity of children aged 5-14 years who engaged in labour by single age, Bhutan, 2010 37
Table 19. Marital status of girls aged 15-17 years by orphan status, Bhutan, 2010 42
Table 18. Distribution of girls aged 15-17 years by marital status, Bhutan, 2010 42
Table 21. Literacy and educational attainment among girls aged 15-17 years by marital status, Bhutan, 2010 43
Table 20. Secondary level school attendance among girls aged 15-17 years by marital status, Bhutan, 2010 43
Table 22. Literacy and educational attainment among women aged 18-49 years by early marriage status, Bhutan, 2010 44
Table 23. Comprehensive knowledge of HIV transmission among women aged 18-49 years by early marriage status, Bhutan, 2010 45
Table 24. Adolescent birth rate among girls and young women aged 15-19 years, Bhutan, 2010 46

Table 25. Early Childbearing among girls aged 15-17 years, Bhutan, 2010 46
Table 26. Median age at first birth among women aged 20 years and above who have ever given birth, Bhutan, 2010 47
Table 27. Secondary level school attendance by early childbearing status among girls aged 15-17 years, Bhutan, 2010 47
Table 28. Percentage of girls aged 15-17 years who have begun childbearing by secondary level school participation status, Bhutan, 2010 48
Table 29. Educational Attainment by Early Childbearing status among girls aged 15-17 years, Bhutan, 2010 48
Table 30. Literacy rates by early childbearing status among mothers aged 18-49 years, Bhutan, 2010 48
Table 31. Percentage of girls and women aged 15-49 years who received antenatal care and neonatal tetanus protection by age of mother at birth of child, Bhutan, 2010 49
Table 32. Percentage of girls and women aged 15-49 years with skilled birth assistance, institutional delivery, postnatal care, and child's weight by age of mother at birth of child, Bhutan, 2010 50
Table 33. Child health and education outcomes by mother's age among women aged 15-49 years, Bhutan, 2010 52
Table 34. Attitudes toward domestic violence among women aged 15-49 years, Bhutan, 2010 57
Table 35. Attitudes toward domestic violence among girls aged 15-17 years, Bhutan, 2010 58
Table 36. Attitudes toward domestic violence among girls aged 15-17 years by secondary school attendance, Bhutan, 2010 60
Table 37. Attitudes toward domestic violence among women aged 15-17 years by educational attainment, Bhutan, 2010 60
Table 38. Attitudes toward domestic violence among girls aged 15-17 by literacy, Bhutan, 2010 61
Table 39. Percentage of ever married or in union women aged15-49 years who have ever experienced domestic violence committed by husband by type of violence by demographic background, Bhutan, 2010 62
Table 40. Percentage of ever married or in union women aged 15-49 years who have ever experienced domestic violence committed by husband by type of violence by dzongkhag, Bhutan, 2010 63
Table 41. Percentage of ever married women aged 15-49 years who have ever experienced domestic violence committed by husband by type of violence, Bhutan, 2010 63
Table 42. Percentage of ever married women aged 15-49 years who experienced any form of violence committed by husband in past 12 months by frequency, Bhutan 2010 64
Table 43. Attitudes towards domestic violence among ever married women aged 15-49 years by their experience of domestic violence, Bhutan, 2010 65

List of Figures

Figure 1. Sex ratio of children under the age of 18 years, Bhutan, 2010 11
Figure 2. Percentage of children under the age of 18 years living in poorest wealth quintile by Dzongkhag, Bhutan, 2010 14
Figure 3. Age distribution of child monks and nuns under the age of 18 years, Bhutan, 2010 21
Figure 4. School participation by category and age by child labour status, Bhutan, 2010 36
Figure 5. Secondary level school attendance among girls aged 15-17 years by marital status, Bhutan 43
Figure 6. Adolescent birth rate among girls and young women aged 15-19 years, Bhutan, 2010 47
Figure 7. Reproductive and newborn health among girls and women aged 15-49 years by age of mother at birth of child, Bhutan, 2010 51
Figure 8. Attitudes toward domestic violence among women aged 15-49 years, Bhutan, 2010 57
Figure 9. Percentage of ever married or in union women aged15-49 years who have ever experienced specific form(s) of domestic violence, Bhutan, 2010 62

List of Boxes

Box 1. Background of the BMIS 2010 4
Box 2. Measuring child labour 29
Box 3. Gender based violence 55

List of Maps

Map 1. Share of Population in Poorest Wealth Quintile, Bhutan, 2010 14
Map 2. Attitudes toward domestic violence among women aged 15-49 years in South Asia, 2005 – 2010 58
Map 3. Attitudes toward domestic violence among young women age 15-24 by Dzongkhag, Bhutan, 2010 59

Foreword

The Child Protection Thematic Analysis Report is the outcome of partnership between the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC), Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) and UNICEF Country Office. The Report presents an in-depth analysis of data on a wide range of indicators, including demographic characteristics, living arrangements of the children, birth registration, child labour, early marriage, child bearing and young motherhood, gender based and family violence collected in the BMIS by the National Statistics Bureau (NSB) in 2010.

Bhutan has achieved some remarkable result in the area of Child Protection in the recent past. Some of the most significant accomplishments are the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1990 without any reservation, the establishment of the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) in 2004, and the passing of the Child Care and Protection Act in 2011 and the Child Adoption Act in 2012.

Despite such achievements many challenges still remain to be addressed for the protection of children in Bhutan. Particularly, the disproportionally high level of poverty among rural children, the prevalence of child labour throughout Bhutan with a high number of them living separately from their parents, and early marriage and earlt child bearing are still common. The high level of accepting attitude towards domestic violence (15-49 years), more so among younger women (15-24 years) is a matter of great concern.

The Report provides policy recommendations for addressing the main issues highlighted, including inequities between rural and urban and between the wealth quintals, in order to sustain the significant gains made so far and to build the Child Protection System for enhancing the protection and wellbeing of the children in Bhutan.

The Report, we strongly believe, will provide useful information and greater insight to all stakeholders including the policy-makers, development partners, NGOs, programme officials, researchers and the like in their endeavours to protect and promote child rights.

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List of Abbreviations

APSSC:	Asia-Pacific Shared Services Centre
ASFR:	Age-specific fertility rate
BCRS:	Bhutan Civil Registration System
BMIS:	Bhutan Multiple Indicator Survey
CCPA:	Children Care and Protection Act 2011
CEDAW:	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CID:	Citizenship Identity Cards
CRC:	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DCRC:	Department of Civil Registration and Census
E-G2CSDS:	Electronic Government to Citizen Service Delivery System
MDGs:	Millennium Development Goals
NCWC:	National Commission for Women and Children
NSB:	National Statistics Bureau
NYP:	National Youth Policy
RGoB:	Royal Government of Bhutan
SOP:	Standard Operating Procedure
UN:	United Nations
WCPU:	Women and Child Protection Unit

Executive Summary

This report is the result of an analysis of data collected in the Bhutan Multiple Indicator Survey (BMIS) of 2010, carried out by the National Statistical Bureau (NSB). In order to provide estimates at the national and the dzongkhag level, data from 15,400 households were sampled in both urban and rural areas. Data were collected, among others, on demographic characteristics, children's living arrangements, child labour, early marriage and child bearing, and domestic violence against girls and women.

Regarding child protection, Bhutan has made considerable progress in recent decades. Noteworthy milestones include:

- On 1 August 1990, Bhutan became one of the first countries in the world to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC);
- In 2004, the RGoB established the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC). The NCWC provides a forum for receiving and investigating violations of rights of women and children, besides coordinating and implementing activities under the CRC, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and other regional and international conventions;
- In 2011, the RGoB passed the Child Care and Protection Act. This act provides a framework for a comprehensive national child protection system while reflecting much of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in national legislation. [1]

Notwithstanding these achievements, more action is required to protect children in Bhutan from violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect. Apart from traditional risks grounded in long-standing social norms, the process of modernization, including urbanization, limited job opportunities, changing family structures, and the erosion of traditional forms of protection are posing new risks for the children of Bhutan.

Some of the most urgent issues found to be affecting children in Bhutan include:

- A disproportionally high level of poverty among rural children, putting them at a serious disadvantage as compared with urban children;
- The continued prevalence of child labour throughout Bhutan, which the BMIS calculated to be 18 per cent among children aged 5 – 14 years of age, with 13.5 per cent of these children also being out of school. Children engaged in child labour are more likely to live in poor households, in rural areas, with unimproved sanitation facilities and unhealthy solid fuels for cooking. Child labour negatively affects school attendance and educational attainment. At the secondary level, school attendance of children engaged in child labour is only half the level of children not engaged in child labour;
- A disproportionately high number of children engaged in child labour are also living separately from their parents in urban and wealthy households and attending school at lower rates than the national average among urban and wealthy households. This trend points to the possibility that these children could be working for wealthy families as live-in domestic help;
- Early marriage and early childbearing is still relatively common in Bhutan – one in four young women aged 15 – 24 years were married before the age of 18 years. Early marriage and childbearing is associated with significantly poorer educational outcomes. Neither the prevalence of early marriage or early childbearing show any decline over recent decades overall, although the proportion of girls marrying and childbearing below the age of 15 years has dropped consistently. Early childbearing among girls under 18 in fact shows a slight increase over time. BMIS data estimate that 7.5 per cent of girls of the age 15-17 years are currently married and 4.4 per cent have

[1] National Commission for Women and Children, Royal Government of Bhutan and UNICEF, 2011. Concept Note on Mapping and Assessment of Child Protection Systems in Bhutan.

begun childbearing. Less than one per cent of married girls aged 15-17 years attend school.

- Nearly one in every four young women report having ever experienced domestic violence (emotional, physical, sexual), with one of every five women reporting repeated violence in the year prior to the survey. An alarmingly high per cent (68 per cent) of women in Bhutan aged 15-49 years find this violence acceptable. Acceptance of domestic violence is statistically even higher among younger women.

Demographic and socio-economic profile of children

Nearly 40 per cent of Bhutan's population are children, most of whom live in rural areas. The sex ratio of children under 18 years of age shows an almost perfect gender balance of 0.99 with no indication of socially-driven gender biases.

Households with children show a similar wealth distribution as the general population, but as resources have to be distributed among a larger number of people, they are more likely to face food insecurity than households without children. There is a large discrepancy in household wealth between urban and rural children. 28 per cent of rural children live in the poorest wealth quintile compared with less than one per cent of urban children. A child-oriented policy addressing the rural poverty trap is needed to ensure that rural children benefit from the same opportunities as their urban counterparts.

Living arrangements of children

Children living without one or both parents for various reasons can be more exposed to the dangers of violence, abuse and exploitation. Informal kinship care has been common practice in Bhutan, although formalised alternative care is a new concept for Bhutan. There is also a trend of sending children as domestic help to affluent families in the city, which can hinder these children's educational achievements and limit their future opportunities.

Among children in Bhutan living in family settings, 79 per cent live with both biological parents, 14 per cent live with one biological parent, and 7 per cent do not live with a biological parent. Children not living with a biological parent are more likely to be girls, to live in urban areas, to be older, and to live in wealthier households. Just over 5 per cent of children in Bhutan are orphaned by at least one parent. This figure increases with age from 2 per cent among children aged 0-4 years to 10 per cent among children aged 15-17 years.

Children who do not live with a biological parent or are single or double orphans have a lower level of school attendance than those who live with at least one parent. The disparity in school attendance among these children is surprisingly most evident among girls, among children living with mothers or caregivers with secondary education, among children in urban areas, and among those living in the richest households. This is in contrast to national averages, which show a positive correlation between school attendance and wealth, urban living, and mother's education. This hints at the possibility of children living as domestic workers within affluent, well-educated families.

Monastic schooling have long since existed, and still do, also as a form of alternative care for children in need, as well as to relieve poor families who are unable to support them. A 2010 assessment found that among a sample of 3,091 child monks and nuns, comprising children in monastic institutions in 17 districts, around 90 per cent of whom were adolescent boys aged 11-18 years, almost a quarter reported that they lack parental care. The practice of having one (male) child out of the family enter the monastery to become a monk has diminished but still exists. Recently, a number of relevant steps have been taken by the Dratshang (monastic body) with support from NCWC and UNICEF to align child well-being in monasteries with modern child rights and child protection principles and practices.

Birth registration

BMIS data show that 99.9 per cent of all children in Bhutan have had their birth registered. BMIS data consider the birth of a child to be registered if a birth certificate or a health card had been obtained. However, while a health card is a prerequisite to obtaining a birth certificate, it is insufficient for acquiring Bhutanese nationality. Citizenship of a child is based on the citizenship laws of the land. The percentage of children registered through a health card only is not available.

As per the citizenship laws, a child whose parents are Bhutanese citizens is eligible for Bhutanese citizenship. Such children whose parents are both Bhutanese citizens have to be enumerated in the census records maintained by the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs within a

timeline of one year. Children, where one of the parents is a non-Bhutanese, will have to apply for citizenship as per the citizenship laws of the land.

Child labour

Children aged 5 – 14 years engaged in child labour are estimated to comprise 18 per cent of children in Bhutan. The BMIS data show that a large portion of children in Bhutan spend a few hours per week on activities which are unlikely to be exploitative by nature but are probably best seen as helping out in the household or on the farm, or otherwise supporting family income outside school hours. The percentage of children aged 5 – 11 years performing at least one hour of economic activity per week (the definition of child labour for this age group) is estimated at 25 per cent.

Children aged 5 – 14 years engaged in child labour[2] are almost twice as likely to live in the poorest quintile of households as children not engaged in child labour, are more likely to be from rural areas, and to live in households that use solid fuels for cooking or have no improved sanitation. This indicates that children engaged in child labour often are disadvantaged in multiple ways, increasing risks to their well-being and health. Also, a disproportionately high percentage of children engaged in child labour do not live with a biological parent, and reside in urban areas, in the richest households, and in which the mother or caretaker has secondary level education. This, again, suggests that a substantial number of children live away from parents, working as domestic help for affluent families, particularly in Thimphu.

Child labour appears to negatively affect school attendance and educational outcomes. Though at the primary level this is not shown in the data, presumably due to the broader definition of child labour for 5-11-year-olds, at the secondary level school attendance of children engaged in child labour is only half of that of children not engaged in child labour. At all educational levels, there is a steep decline in school participation if a child works more than 6 hours per week.

Poor outcomes among children engaged in child labour living in urban areas and in the richest households once more point at the possibility that a considerable number of these children are working in affluent homes as domestic help without attending school.

Early marriage, childbearing, and young motherhood

Early childbearing is highly correlated with early marriage. In Bhutan, approximately 7.5 per cent of girls aged 15-17 years have ever been married, and 4.4 per cent of the girls in this age group have already begun childbearing. While this is Bhutan's lowest recorded level of early childbearing for girls under 15, the number of female youth concerned is still considerable. Neither early marriage nor early childbearing show declining trend over time among girls under 18 years of age; early childbearing however shows a slight increase over time.

Early marriage and childbearing have a negative correlation with girl's education. School participation among married girls aged 15-17 years or those who have begun childbearing drops to near zero, thwarting women's educational attainment. In other words, early childbearing affects women for the rest of their lives by preventing them from benefitting from the advantages of (secondary) education. Rural women, women from the poorest households, and orphans are more likely to get married and/or give birth to children before the age of 18 years than their peers from different demographic groups.

In terms of women's reproductive health, the data show that women aged 15-17 years are more likely to have newborns with low birth weight than women aged 18-49 years. Due to a small sample size of girls aged 15-17 years who have begun childbearing, much of the data on reproductive health care is not statistically significant and therefore should be interpreted with caution. That said, it is interesting to note that though the data show equivalent levels of antenatal care uptake, the data regarding skilled birth assistance, institutional delivery and postnatal care seems to present lower levels for the younger women aged 15-17 years. More attention is required for demographic groups vulnerable to early marriage and childbearing. It is urgent to analyse and address the conditions that lead poor and rural women to marry and give birth early.

[2] The following children are considered to be engaged in child labour: children 5-11 years in any economic activity, or in household chores for 28 hours or more during the reference week; children 12-14 years in economic activity (excluding those in light work for fewer than 14 hours per week) or in household chores for 28 hours or more during the reference week. Source: UNICEF ChildInfo. www.childinfo.org/labour.html

Gender and family-based violence

Domestic violence against women and children is a sensitive issue. Because of the perceived private nature of this issue, research and interventions are extremely difficult. The BMIS survey provides Bhutan with its first data on the acceptance and experience of domestic violence against adolescent girls and women. Experience of domestic violence includes emotional, physical and sexual violence.

24 per cent of ever-married women aged 15-49 years report having experienced domestic violence by their husband or partner. In 88 per cent of these cases, the violence happened more than once or even frequently. Among adolescent girls aged 15-17 years, 18 per cent have experienced domestic violence. Domestic violence against women is strongly associated with poverty and lack of formal education, and particularly high levels are reported by formerly married women (39 per cent). It is more frequent in rural areas, and particularly high rates of all forms of domestic violence (emotional, physical, and sexual) are reported from southern and eastern dzongkhags.

The majority of women in Bhutan (68 per cent) state that violence by a husband or partner against his wife is justified for any number of reasons, the most common one being neglecting the children. The acceptance of domestic violence is remarkably constant across demographic groups, and is largely independent of age and education. Girls aged 15-17 years and young women 18-24 years even show a slightly higher level of acceptance than women aged 25-49 years. Rural women and those with no formal education are also more likely to accept violence than urban women, those with secondary level education, and those from the richest households. Women who have experienced domestic violence express the highest levels of acceptance of domestic violence of all groups. 87 per cent of women who frequently experienced violence express an accepting attitude.

The findings indicate both the endemic nature of domestic violence as well as the generally high level of social acceptance of this violence. Victims of domestic violence may be either hesitant and/or have great difficulty in seeking help. To reach and help these women, as well as to sensitise the population on the unacceptability of violence against women and children, a strong, concerted effort from all concerned institutions is required.

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1. Introduction

Bhutan has always been deeply concerned with the welfare of its children. To protect them from societal ills of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation and provide them with a safe, secure and bright future has been a fundamental priority for Bhutan. From the Fourth King's vision of "nurturing the youth of today as the future of tomorrow", His Majesty and the Royal Government have recognized that children and youth hold the future of the country in their hands and it is they who will ensure the "very survival of the Bhutanese society"[3]. Reflecting this commitment, the Royal Government of Bhutan, putting words to action, positioned Bhutan as one of the first countries in the world to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 1 August 1990. The Government has also placed the welfare of children at the centre of Bhutan's development agenda, within the framework of Gross National Happiness. The Government allocated an average 23 per cent of the annual budget to education and 11 per cent to health services between 2002 and 2010[4] to ensure the survival and development of children. Over the years, and especially with ratification of the CRC,

Child protection can be defined as preventing and responding to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect against children.

Bhutan has started to address issues related to children's protection such as corporal punishment in school, child labour, children in conflict with law, and trafficking.

The Royal Government of Bhutan has been making tremendous efforts towards protecting and upholding the rights and well-being of children and women through various social and economic programmes and by adopting several global policies. To have a single agency coordinate all matters related to the well-being of women and children in Bhutan, the government established the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) in 2004, granting it full autonomy in August 2008. Besides providing a forum for receiving and investigating violations of rights of women and children, NCWC also coordinates and monitors the implementation of activities under the CRC, the Convention on Elimination of Discriminations against Women (CEDAW), and other relevant treaties. The establishment of NCWC has been a crucial step towards developing a solid foundation from which to launch a protection response for both women and children. Realizing the need for a comprehensive framework prevent and respond to violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect against children, the NCWC initiated collaborative efforts with key partner agencies: the Royal Court of Justice and Bhutan National Legal Institute, the Royal Bhutan Police, the Dratshang Lhentshog, the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, and Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women (RENEW). Working together with these partners has facilitated greater investments in child rights and child protection. However, "the recent passing of the Child Care and Protection Act (2011) is perhaps Bhutan's most significant achievement to date in protecting children: the legislation provides a framework for a comprehensive national child protection

[3] National Commission for Women and Children, Royal Government of Bhutan and UNICEF, 2000. The Convention on the Rights of the Child Guidebook.

[4] Ministry of Finance, Royal Government of Bhutan. 2011. Annual Financial Statements 2002-2011.

system whilst reflecting much of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in national legislation."[5]

1.1. Emerging issues in child protection

Despite these achievements, it is increasingly clear that more action is required to protect children in Bhutan from violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect. Due to new challenges associated with modernization, increased media influence, urbanization, diminishing job opportunities, and the changing family structure within Bhutan, new risks are emerging for children in Bhutan. Traditional forms of protection that have existed within Bhutanese society are beginning to erode; extended families are spread across greater distances, increased divorce and separation of parents create additional stress and pressures within the family environment. This is at times compounded by the use of alcohol, which can create and exacerbate difficult circumstances and unhealthy environments for children.

The 2010 Bhutan Multiple Indicator Survey showed that approximately 30 per cent of girls are married illegally before the age of 18 years; that approximately 18 per cent of children are engaged in child labour; and that approximately 68 per cent of women report an accepting attitude towards domestic violence. Such findings warn us that not all children in Bhutan are enjoying a safe and positive childhood in the spirit of Gross National Happiness.[6]

As the NCWC/UNICEF Situational Analysis of Bhutan 2006 further highlights, "Bhutanese children have been able to rely on the protection of their parents and extended families. But modernization has brought new responsibilities and risks". And although the government has aimed to provide equitable access to basic services and infrastructure, there remain "groups which are disadvantaged due to their remote locations," as well as others who are especially affected by changing factors (e.g. women and children), which expose them to increased levels of risk[7]. "Young people in Bhutan, today grow up in a different and complex world and....with limited life experience, inadequate resources and decision making skills, they are exposed to the risks of neglect, abuse, and exploitation. Recent statistics indicate that they are most at risk from major socio-economic challenges including unemployment, low income, physical and sexual abuse, substance abuse, crime and violence and a wide range of health issues, significantly HIV/AIDS and [poor] reproductive health with young women being most disadvantaged." [8]

1.2. Policy Context

Recognizing these facts, the rights of children are more specifically upheld under Article 9 (18) of the Constitution where it is stated that: "The State shall endeavour to take appropriate measures to ensure that children are protected against all forms of discrimination and exploitation including trafficking, prostitution, abuse, violence, degrading treatment, and economic exploitation."

Concerns related to the protection of children have been reflected in Bhutan's support for a number of international commitments as well as in the establishment of other domestic acts and legislation that address and provide protection for children by mainstreaming them into broader policies and regulations.

The Children Care and Protection Act 2011 (CCPA), unanimously passed by the Parliament of Bhutan, is the first act of its kind in Bhutan to deal exclusively with the care and protection of children in conflict with the law and children in difficult circumstances.[9] Enactment of the Act was an important step towards building a comprehensive child protection system in Bhutan. The objective of the CCPA is to codify the rights of children and develop a uniform justice system in the context of a rapidly changing socio-cultural-economic environment. The Act also lays provisions for the establishment of a child justice system, including child justice courts and benches to deal exclusively with all

[5] National Commission for Women and Children, Royal Government of Bhutan and UNICEF, 2011. Concept Note on Mapping and Assessment of Child Protection Systems in Bhutan

[6] National Commission for Women and Children, Royal Government of Bhutan and UNICEF, 2011. Concept Note on Mapping and Assessment of Child Protection Systems in Bhutan,

[7] Planning Commission, Royal Government of Bhutan, 1999. Bhutan 20/20: A Vision for Peace, Prosperity and Happiness

[8] Department of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education, Royal Government of Bhutan , 2011. National Youth Policy 2011.

[9] A child in difficult circumstances is a child who (a) Is found without having any home or settled place of abode and without any ostensible means of subsistence and is a destitute; (b) Has a parent or guardian who is unfit or incapacitated to take care of or exercise control over the child; (c) Is found to associate with any person who leads an immoral, drunken, or depraved life; (d) Is being or likely to be abused or exploited for immoral or illegal purposes; or (e) Is a frequent victim at the hands of individuals, families, or the community. Source: NCWC, CCPA 2011. www.ncwc.org.bt

proceedings relating to a child in difficult circumstances or a child in conflict with the law. Part of the Act stipulates the diversion of children from formal justice systems toward child-friendly judicial sentencing and using detention as a last resort only as and when absolutely necessary. The Act recommends procedures and the establishment of specific institutions for the protection and care of children, such as setting up various categories of homes for children to provide care and protection. Provisions for the appointment of child welfare officers and probation officers will provide much needed human resources to implement the CCPA.

Accordingly, the Penal Code of Bhutan 2004 was amended in 2011 to include stronger penalties for offences committed against children and also raised the age of criminal responsibility for children from 10 years to 12 years. The amended Marriage Act 1996 established the legal age of marriage for both boys and girls as 18 years and defined the age of sexual consent as 16 years.

The minimum age of employment has been established as 18 years in the Labour and Employment Act 2007. Children between the ages of 13 and 17 years are allowed to be employed in certain areas of work which are not considered hazardous. The worst forms of child labour are prohibited under Section 9 of Chapter 2.

The National Youth Policy (NYP) was launched in 2011 "to provide a broad framework for youth engagement that endeavours to ensure that all young men and women are provided with support and meaningful opportunities to reach their full potential as they actively participate in society."[10] The NYP addresses major concerns and issues critical for youth in Bhutan and gives direction to youth programmes and services provided by governmental and non-governmental organizations. Every three years, a National Youth Action plan will be developed to provide a framework for the implementation of the NYP, reflecting its priorities and strategic themes. The plan will define specific strategies and actions to be undertaken, when they will be undertaken, by which organisation, and the financial and human resource implications.

The policy has identified eight key areas of concern: education, health and well-being, employment and training, environmental education, awareness and action, social environment, culture and identity, recreation and sports, youth civic participation, and empowerment. These eight key sectors were used as a basis in the formulation of the policy statements. The priority target youth group of the policy are out-of-school youth, under-employed and unemployed young people, young people engaging in risky sexual behaviour, young people using drugs and alcohol, youth with disabilities, orphans, young monks and nuns, domestic workers, girls working in *drayangs*, uneducated young women in urban and rural areas, and gifted youth.

The Parliament of Bhutan recently passed the Child Adoption Act of Bhutan 2012 during its 8th Session. The Act will ensure that adoptions are made in the best interests of the child and provide for procedures and mechanisms to facilitate monitoring the well-being of children and to prevent the abduction, sale, or trafficking of children.

The Domestic Violence Prevention Bill was passed by the National Assembly in 2012 and has been put up to the National Council for discussion. Once enacted, the bill will help to close the existing gaps in our systems for promoting and protecting the rights of women, especially the victims of domestic violence. One of the important features of the Domestic Violence Prevention Bill 2012 is that the definition of domestic violence has been expanded to define violence as any act, omission, or behaviour towards a person which results in physical, sexual, emotional, or economic abuse, and not just as battery as it was traditionally defined. The Bill also makes provisions for establishment of services like One Stop Crises Centres in hospitals, Women and Child Protection Units in the Royal Bhutan Police, and Family Courts. It makes provisions for protection orders to safeguard the victim. It also makes provisions for mitigating and aggravating factors which could be considered by the Court while determining a convicted defendant's sentence.

1.3. Conclusion

In 2011, the Royal Government of Bhutan attained two landmark achievements in its effort to promote and protect the wellbeing of children. First, it passed the ground-breaking Child Care and Protection Act as a first step towards building a comprehensive child protection system in Bhutan. Second, it launched the findings of the country's first internationally-benchmarked survey, the Bhutan Multiple Indicator Survey (BMIS), which focuses strongly on data relevant to the welfare of children. The BMIS provides decision makers with a significant amount of robust data to help them design policies and programmes that respond to identified needs. BMIS data also provide stakeholders

[10] Department of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education, Royal Government of Bhutan , 2011. National Youth Policy 2011.

with the evidence required to conduct a full mapping and assessment of Bhutan's child protection system to better implement the goals articulated in the CCPA.

The protection of children is integral to every one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including poverty reduction, achieving universal primary school attendance, realising gender parity in education, and reducing child mortality.[11] Unfortunately, evidence in the issues that relate to child protection is often unreliable or missing.

Box 1. Background of the BMIS 2010

The Bhutan Multiple Indicator Survey (BMIS) was carried out by the National Statistical Bureau (NSB) between March and August 2010. The survey's main objective was to provide up-to-date information on the situation of children and women in Bhutan. The sample for the BMIS was designed to provide estimates at the national level, urban and rural areas, and Dzongkhag level. The sample design followed a two stage cluster approach with a total sample size of 15,400 households.

The BMIS was carried out under the technical support of the UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey programme (MICS)and with assistance of UNFPA. To download the full BMIS report including datasets and to find out more about the survey methodology please visit:

http://www.childinfo.org/mics4_surveys.html

These issues include among others birth registration, child labour, early marriage and childbearing, physical and sexual exploitation and abuse, trafficking, neglect, and wrongful imprisonment. The prevalence of these issues is difficult to quantify because of their illegality, and at times, due to deeply entrenched social norms that sanction some forms of exploitation and abuse. To ensure the enactment of sound policy and programme interventions, a concerted effort is required to expand the evidence base on these issues.

It is against this backdrop that this report seeks to provide decision-makers in Bhutan with an overview of the current well-being and key challenges that children in the country face vis-à-vis their right to protection. By conducting more in-depth analysis of BMIS 2010 data, policymakers are able to make good use of recent data to identify population groups that face relatively higher levels of deprivation, inequality, and/or vulnerabilities and to uncover protection issues for which outcomes are generally poor and require policy and programme attention. As such, this report hopes to contribute to the body of evidence required to develop policies and programmes that engender greater equity and improved well-being in the protection of all children in Bhutan.

[11] Progress for Children: A Report Card on Child Protection. 2009. UNICEF. This publication provides a comprehensive overview of child protection information and data.

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2. Methodology

This report is the product of a partnership between the Royal Government of Bhutan and UNICEF Bhutan, and was supported by UNICEF Asia-Pacific Shared Services Centre (APSSC). More specifically, it is the output of the National Commission for Women and Children and its partners with support from the UNICEF Bhutan Child Protection Section and two international consultants.

2.1. Working group

This report is the output of a working group, convened and led by the National Commission for Women and Children, with the active participation of RENEW, Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, the Child Care and Protection Office of the *Dratshang Lhentshog,* and UNICEF. The working group met regularly to determine the scope of analysis, interpret data, and write the report. The working group benefited from inputs and support from the Department of Youth and Sports in the Ministry of Education and the Department of Census and Civil Registration in the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs.

2.2. Statistical analysis

Consultations between working group members and the international consultant determined the scope of this report, which set a parameter to limit analysis to BMIS 2010 data. Principal activities included:

- identification of child protection related issues and policies;
- selection of key indicators for quantitative analysis relevant to the protection of children;
- exploration of quantitative relationships between indicators and across sectors; and
- design and writing of the report based on findings.

Statistical analysis was primarily undertaken by two international consultants with the support of the Bhutan National Statistics Bureau. Statistical analysis was largely restricted to background variable disaggregation[12] and indicator cross-tabulations.

2.3. Data limitations

This report is based on the BMIS 2010, which is a household survey that focuses primarily on women and children and indicators related to their well-being. Therefore, the survey does not necessarily collect data on all issues relevant to the situation of children in Bhutan and analysis is limited to content for which data were collected. For example, the BMIS does not contain a male questionnaire and for this reason, the report has a stronger focus on issues particular to female children. An additional constraint is that BMIS data for indicators were only collected for specific age groups. For example, nutritional data exist only for children under the age of 5 years, which doesn't allow for analysis of nutritional status by child labour status.

As a household survey, it is important to recognise that several children are excluded from this analysis. This includes children in conflict with the law residing in retention centres, child monks and nuns living in monastic schools, children living in boarding schools, children living in transitional

[12] Standard background variable categories include: age group, sex, area of residence (urban/rural), dzongkhag, educational attainment, wealth quintile, and marital status.

shelters[13], children living in hostels, and children living on or around the streets.

Child labour is an important issue for child protection and is analysed at an in-depth level in this report. The BMIS 2010 collected data on the extent to which children aged 5-17 years are engaged in economic activity or household chores and produced estimates of child labour rates for children aged 5-14 years. Extending this analysis into prevalence rates for child labour up to and including the age of 17 years is more challenging, as there is no internationally agreed-upon definition of what constitutes child labour for youth aged 15-17 years. Furthermore, the international definition of children aged 12-14 years is not readily applicable to this older age group. For this reason, child labour data in this report are analysed only for children aged 5-14 years.

2.4. Technical Notes

The following apply to the entirety of this report's data analysis:

- ***Data in brackets*** indicate that the percentage is based on only 25-49 unweighted cases[14] in the sample. ***An asterisk indicates*** that the percentage is calculated on fewer than 25 unweighted cases;
- ***Statistical significance*** refers to the 95 per cent significance level unless otherwise stated. Statistical significance means that, on average, the true means of the two groups being compared will be different in 95 per cent of the samples. It refers to whether the critical value of the t-test of independent samples is greater than 1.96 and the p-value is less than 0.05. The p-value represents the probability of observing a difference equal to or greater than the observed difference given that the null hypothesis that the difference is zero is true. 90 per cent and 99 per cent statistical significance are observed when the critical values of the t-test are greater than 1.645 and 2.576, respectively.
- In statistics, ***practical significance*** can be tested by evaluating the effect-size of an observed difference. In this report, practical significance refers only to a qualitative assessment of whether the observed difference has a meaningful policy or programming impact.

[13] Two transit shelters in Thimphu are the only residential alternative care services available in the country

[14] The number of unweighted cases in the sample is the actual number of observations for which there are data. Estimates presented in this report weight observations in order to adjust for over- or under-representation of any particular group and to produce population-wide representative estimates.

3. The demographic and socio-economic profile of children

3.1. Demographic profile of children

Table 1 below shows that children under the age of 18 years constitute a significant 38 per cent of Bhutan's population. In other words, approximately two of every five people living in Bhutan are children, making this analysis of their protection and well-being exceptionally salient for the well-being of Bhutanese society, now and in the future.

Table 1. **Household Age Distribution of Children Under age 18 by sex, Bhutan, 2010**

Age group	Males		Females		Total	
	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
0-17	38.5	12,847	38.1	12,923	38.3	25,770
18+	61.5	20,528	61.9	21,022	61.7	41,550
Total	**100**	**33,375**	**100**	**33,944**	**100**	**67,320**

The data show that approximately 40.1 per cent of urban residents are children compared to 37.6 per cent of rural residents. This difference is statistically if not practically significant. While the population structure of rural Bhutan is slightly older than in urban areas, policymakers are cautioned against adopting the prevailing discourse that the rural areas are largely devoid of young people. There is a substantial number of children in rural areas and as the data will reveal, they live in relative deprivation vis-à-vis their urban counterparts across a number of important indicators.

According to BMIS data, the sex ratio among children under the age of 18 years is at nearly perfect parity at 0.99, meaning that for every 100 females in this age group, there are 99 males. For children under the age of 5 years, the sex ratio ranges from 0.98 to 1.09 by single year of age, figures that lie within a reasonable range of biological expectations. The data show that the sex ratio for all children under the age of 18 years decreases with wealth from 1.01 in the poorest quintile of households to 0.94 in the richest households and is slightly higher in rural areas versus urban areas (1.01 and 0.97, respectively). Nevertheless, this analysis finds no evidence of socially determined gender imbalances in the sex ratio data of children.

As can be seen in Figure 1 below, the sex ratio declines with age in Bhutan. For children under the age of 5 years, the sex ratio is estimated at 1.05, falling to 1.02 for children

Figure 1. **Sex ratio of children under the age of 18 years, Bhutan, 2010**

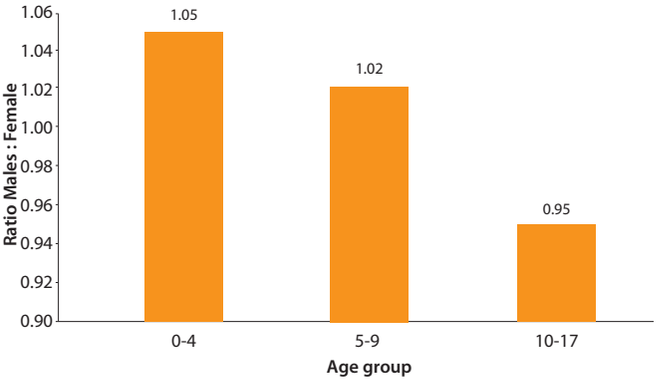


Table 2. Selected indicators of households by whether the household has at least one individual under age 18, Bhutan, 2010

		Household has at least one individual under age 18				
		No		Yes		
		% of households members	Number of households members/ households	% of households members	Number of households	Number of households members/ households
Sanitation facilities	Use of improved drinking water facilities	96.6	8,938	96.1	58,382	67,320
	Use of improved sanitation facilities	58.4	8,938	58.5	58,382	67,320
	Household has electricity	71.8	8,938	71.6	58,382	67,320
	Household faced food insecurity	9.1	8,938	12.3	58,382	67,320
	Household density	1.8*	3,672	3.5*	11,004	14,676

* persons per sleeping room

aged 5-9 years, and to 0.95 for children aged 10-17 years. This indicates a shift from more boys in the younger age cohorts to more girls in the older cohorts.

3.2. Household composition and socio-economic profile of children

This section opens by considering whether the general features of household composition differ by whether or not children under the age of 18 years live in the household. Although children comprise just less than 40 per cent of the Bhutanese population, 75 per cent of households in the country contain at least one child under the age of 18 years.

As children constitute such a large percentage of the overall population, it is not surprising to find that they live in households with a similar wealth distribution as the general population. The BMIS distributes households by their wealth across five equal quintiles. In other words, 20 per cent of the households live in the poorest quintile, 20 per cent live in the second quintile, and so on. Table 4 presents data on the wealth distribution of the child population in Bhutan. It shows that 20 per cent of children live in the poorest wealth quintile, indicating that child poverty is *generally* in line with the overall level of material poverty in Bhutan. This finding correlates with an equivalent level of material welfare vis-à-vis the overall population as measured by several indicators, including use of improved drinking water and sanitation facilities and access to electricity (see Table 2).

However, Table 2 also shows that households with children are statistically more likely to face food insecurity than households without children. According to the data, 12 per cent of households with children experienced a situation in the 12 months prior to the survey in which there was not enough food to feed all members of the household. This compares to 9 per cent of households without children. This finding may be explained in part by the composition of households with children.

Table 3 below shows key differences in the composition of households with and without children. Households with children are slightly more likely to be urban and to have a

Table 3. Household composition by whether household has at least one individual under the age of 18, Bhutan, 2010

		% of households without children under age 18	Number of households weighted	% of households with children under age 18	Number of households weighted
Area	Urban	27.6	1,013	30.1	3,307
	Rural	72.4	2,659	69.9	7,697
Number of household members	1	24.4	895	0.0	5
	2	37.4	1,373	1.9	213
	3	19.8	728	12.4	1,366
	4	11.7	431	22.8	2,513
	5	4.0	146	23.9	2,627
	6	1.7	62	17.6	1,937
	7	0.6	21	10.1	1,112
	8	0.3	12	5.5	601
	9	0.0	1	2.6	284
	10+	0.1	3	3.2	347
Education of household head	None	64.4	2,364	62.7	6,901
	Primary	9.6	352	16.2	1,782
	Secondary +	26.0	956	21.1	2,319
Sex of household head	Male	70.1	2,574	72.6	7,994
	Female	29.9	1,098	27.4	3,011
Total		**100**	**3,672**	**100**	**11,004**
Mean number of household members		2.4	3,672	5.3	11,004

Data for 2 cases in which the education of the household head is not known are not shown

male head of household. The real significant difference between the two groups, though, is the average size of household. Households with at least one child under the age of 18 years are more than twice as large (5.3 members on average) than households without children (2.4 members on average). This difference is statistically significant. More than half of households without children comprise only one or two individuals. On the other hand, only 2 per cent of households with children are this small. In addition, households that contain children are twice as dense with an average of 3.5 persons per sleeping room compared with 1.8 persons per sleeping room in households without children (see Table 2). This difference is also statistically significant.

To conclude, although children live in households that reflect the overall wealth distribution of all households (according to the components of the BMIS wealth index), they live in larger, more crowded homes that require more resources to feed the family. As a result, the same level of wealth has to be distributed across a larger number of household members and the data suggest the negative impact may manifest in shelter and food security more so than in use of utilities such as electricity, clean water, and improved sanitation.

Table 4 below shows that, on the national level, children live in poverty at the same rate as the overall population. There are no significant differences in poverty rates by sex or by age. However, there is a tremendous chasm in poverty between rural and urban children. Whereas 28 per cent of rural children live in the poorest

Table 4. Distribution of child population by wealth quintiles, Bhutan, 2010

		Wealth index quintiles					Total	Number of individuals
		Poorest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Richest		
Sex	Male	20.4	19.6	19.5	21.1	19.4	100	12,847
	Female	20.1	18.5	19.5	21.5	20.4	100	12,923
Dzongkhag	Bumthang	8.7	25.3	30.0	19.5	16.5	100	619
	Chhukha	15.0	16.4	15.1	23.9	29.6	100	2,631
	Dagana	47.0	22.3	14.1	11.1	5.5	100	993
	Gasa	27.5	35.8	26.3	6.3	4.0	100	175
	Haa	7.0	8.3	24.7	41.5	18.4	100	500
	Lhuntse	34.8	27.3	24.0	9.7	4.2	100	585
	Monggar	36.5	28.2	13.8	8.5	13.0	100	1,843
	Paro	0.4	7.8	28.8	36.8	26.2	100	1,397
	Pema Gatshel	25.4	34.2	20.7	10.5	9.2	100	942
	Punakha	3.4	15.4	31.7	32.2	17.3	100	996
	Samdrup Jongkhar	34.4	17.0	15.5	22.7	10.4	100	1,667
	Samtse	27.7	17.7	16.7	23.6	14.4	100	2,878
	Sarpang	12.2	12.1	21.5	28.7	25.5	100	1,518
	Thimphu	0.1	1.1	12.0	32.5	54.3	100	3,216
	Trashigang	21.3	33.0	31.9	8.7	5.2	100	2,086
	Trashi Yangtse	15.1	38.9	23.8	10.9	11.4	100	654
	Trongsa	25.7	28.2	20.6	16.4	9.1	100	581
	Tsirang	47.1	27.9	8.2	8.1	8.7	100	797
	Wangdue Phodrang	12.8	22.5	28.1	24.3	12.2	100	1,030
	Zhemgang	46.3	22.6	12.5	10.6	8.0	100	664
Area	Urban	0.4	1.1	10.6	36.2	51.7	100	7,410
	Rural	28.3	26.2	23.1	15.3	7.0	100	18,361
Age group	0-4 years	20.7	18.3	19.1	22.8	19.1	100	6,514
	5-9 years	21.7	19.0	19.7	21.5	18.2	100	7,386
	10-17 years	19.1	19.5	19.6	20.4	21.3	100	11,870
Total		**20.3**	**19.0**	**19.5**	**21.3**	**19.9**	**100**	**25,770**

quintile, this is true for less than one per cent of urban children.

The level of inequality in child poverty reflects the increasing overall level of material inequality in Bhutan. Map 1 below shows where material poverty as measured by the BMIS wealth index is most concentrated. It shows that

Map 1. **Share of Population in Poorest Wealth Quintile, Bhutan, 2010**

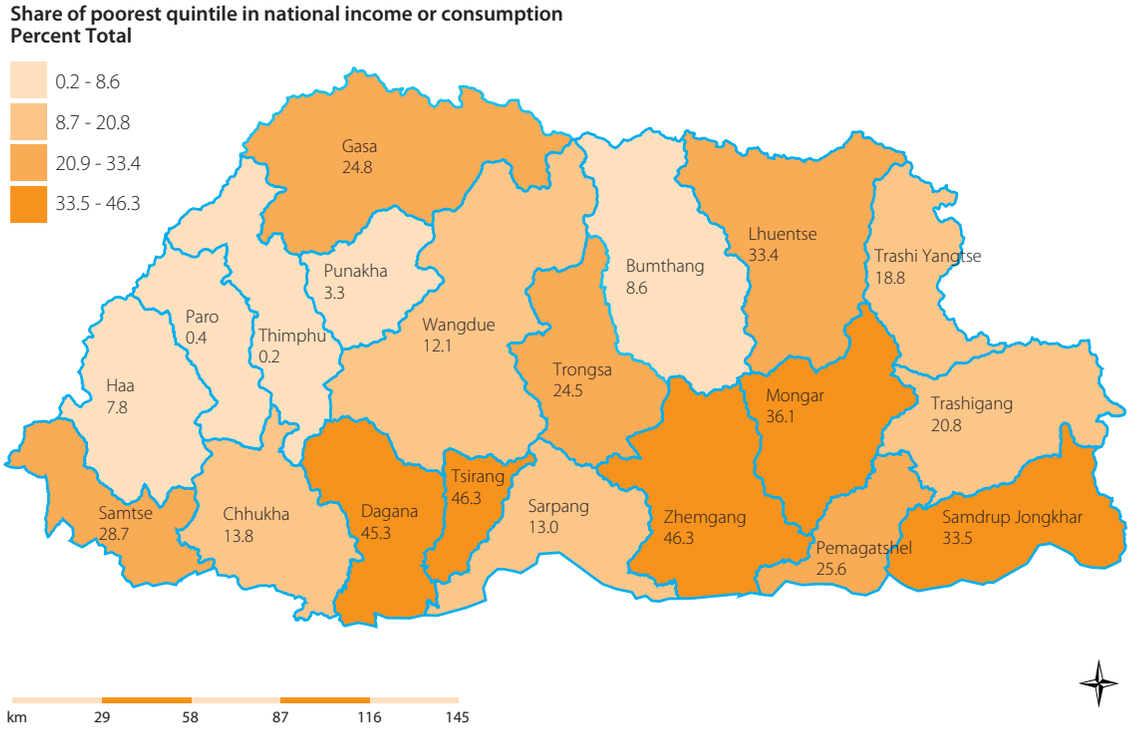
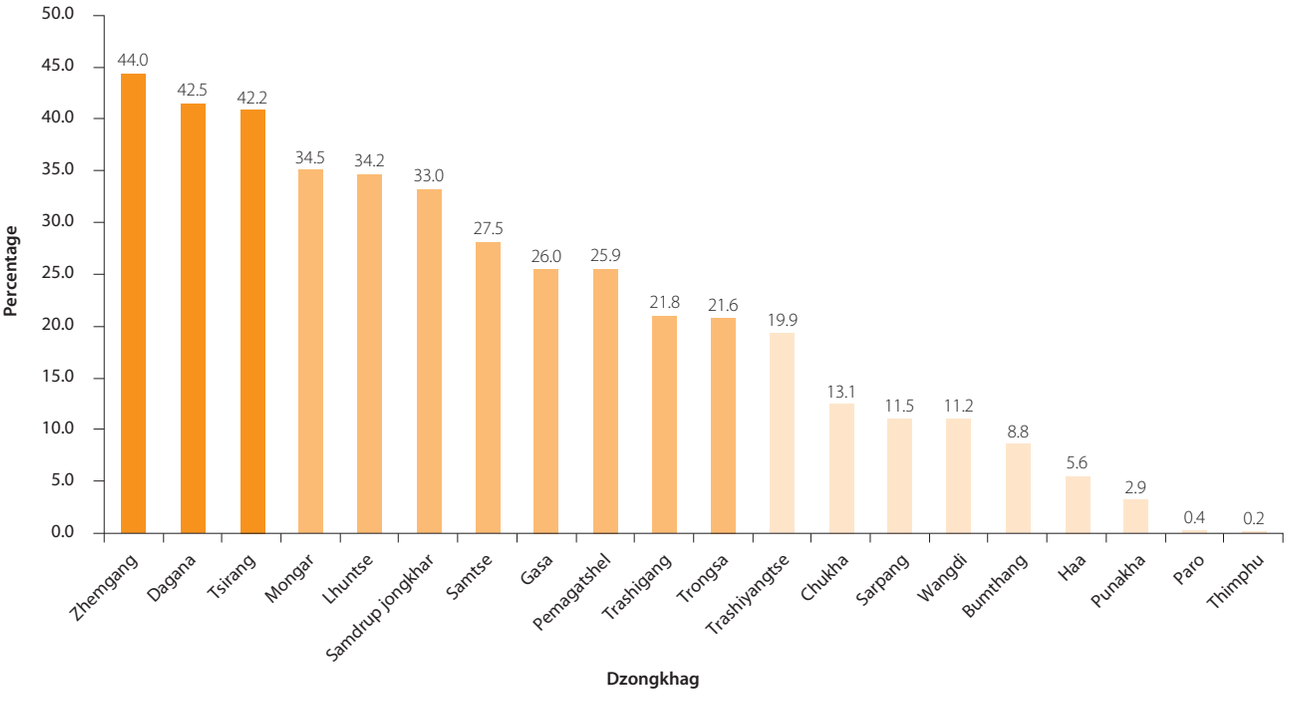


Figure 2. **Percentage of children under the age of 18 years living in poorest wealth quintile by Dzongkhag, Bhutan, 2010**



the poorest quintile of dzongkhags is located in the south and east and that the richest dzongkhags are primarily in the west.

The stark level of material inequality across dzongkhags can also be seen in Figure 2. If all were equal, 20 per cent of the child population in each dzongkhag would live in the poorest wealth quintile. This graph shows that while less than one per cent of children in Paro and Thimphu live in the poorest wealth quintile, almost half of children in Tsirang, Dagana, and Zhemgang live in the poorest quintile.

This particular discussion of poverty is important because children from the poorest households, those from rural areas, and those with no formal education routinely have the worst outcomes. Given that living in rural areas is also associated with less education, it becomes evident that many children inhabit multiple demographic groups of relative deprivation. Addressing these underlying material inequalities should be a central element to any child-oriented policy or programme strategy and will require grappling with the complexity of forces that inhibit families from overcoming poverty or sending their children to school, especially in rural and remote areas of the country.

3.3. Section summary on the demographic and socio-economic profile of children

The demographic analysis of children in Bhutan shows that approximately two out of every five people are children under the age of 18 years. The percentage of children among the total population shows a minimal difference between urban and rural areas. The general perception that rural areas are largely devoid of young people, therefore, is not true. The number of children living in rural areas is sizable, and as they are relatively more disadvantaged than their urban counterparts across several significant indicators such as wealth and education, they deserve proper attention from policy makers.

Data analysis of the sex ratio of children under 18 years of age in Bhutan demonstrates an almost perfect gender balance of 0.99, with no evidence of socially driven gender biases. The sex ratio declines with age in Bhutan, from 1.05 for children under the age of 5 years, to 0.95 for children aged 10-17 years.

In Bhutan, three of every four households have at least one child under the age of 18 years. These households show a similar wealth distribution as the general population. However, as households with children have more family members (on average more than double the number of households without children) the same resources have to be distributed among a larger number of people. Consequently, households with children are more likely to face food insecurity than households without children.

While poverty among children by sex or age shows little variability vis-à-vis the overall population, the discrepancy in poverty levels between urban and rural children is significant. 28 per cent of children in rural areas live in the poorest set of households compared with less than one per cent of children in urban areas.

Policy interventions have to be child-centric and aimed at eliminating entrenched rural poverty, especially in the most remote regions. Achieving this outcome will expand the opportunities for rural children across multiple indicators, enabling them to realize their full potential.

4. Living arrangements of children

4.1. Introduction

The living arrangements of children are an important child protection consideration. As a general rule of thumb, children usually enjoy more protection when under the care of their family. Separation from their parents can leave a child more exposed to various forms of violence, abuse and exploitation. Informally, kinship care has long been practiced in Bhutan, whereby a child who is unable to remain with their parents due to death or other circumstances is taken in by extended family. In more recent times, poor children from rural areas are sometimes sent to wealthier relatives in urban areas to live and often work as domestic helpers. Outside of monastic schools, which sometimes operate as a form of alternative care for children in need, there is no tradition of institutional care in Bhutan. There is one retention centre for children in conflict with the law who receive custodial sentences. The Child Care and Protection Act 2011 makes provision for the establishment of various residential services, however the Royal Government of Bhutan is sensitive to the importance of ensuring children enjoy the opportunity to grow up in loving family environments. Accordingly, these centres will only be established within the framework of a comprehensive rights-based alternative care system including fostering and kinship care services.

Globally, there has been extensive analysis of the situation of orphaned children as compared with other children. Much of this work has come about due to the profound loss of life associated with HIV and AIDS. Until recently, it was assumed that children who had lost one or both parents to death typically experience more vulnerability than their peers with living parents. A recent meta-analysis of child vulnerability found that orphan hood *per se* was not, in fact, the best determinant of vulnerability, although the living arrangements of children constituted a critical benchmark. It found that the four primary determinants of child vulnerability were, 'low household wealth, low educational level of adults in the household, the household head is not a parent or a grandparent, and parents missing from the household'.[15] The analysis below provides an opportunity to explore the impact of living arrangements and orphan hood on outcomes for children in Bhutan.

4.2. Living arrangements

The report now considers the various living arrangements of children under the age of 18 years by disaggregating these children into groups who live with both parents, one parent, those who do not live with a biological parent, and those who have been orphaned. It then examines differences in their school participation, by their varying living arrangements.

Table 5 shows that a large majority of children under the age of 18 years in Bhutan live with both of their biological parents (79 per cent). Another 14 per cent live with one biological parent. A little more than 7 per cent of children do not live with a biological parent and just more than 5 per cent have been orphaned by at least one parent. Disaggregating these children by demographic background reveals many interesting findings.

In terms of children who do not live with a biological

[15] Knight, R. (2011), Determinants of Child Vulnerability, UNICEF (in draft), cited in United Nations Technical Review (2011), Vulnerability & Child Protection in the Face of HIV: Report of the United Nations Technical Review Team on programming for children affected by HIV and AIDS in Malawi, UNICEF

parent, girls are more likely than boys to have this living arrangement. Similarly, urban children, older children, and those who live in wealthier households are all more likely to live in households without a biological parent. Together, these data are consistent with the hypothesis that many children who do not live with a biological parent might actually be working in the homes of affluent families in Thimphu. The likelihood of child labour like this obviously increases with age and is apparently associated more with girls than boys.

With regard to orphans, rural children are more likely to lose one or both parents than urban children. Also, the percentage of orphaned children decreases substantially with wealth. A child from the two poorest wealth quintiles is more than twice as likely to be orphaned as a child from the richest quintile. The differences observed between each of the wealth quintiles are statistically significant. What cannot be said is whether the observed poverty is more the cause or the consequence of the orphaned state. As would be expected, the percentage of orphaned children increases with age from 2 per cent among children aged 0-4 years to 10 per cent for adolescents aged 15-17 years.

4.2.1. Living arrangements and school participation

An important question to ask is whether children's school participation differs by their home living arrangements. For younger children of primary school age 6-12 years, the primary net attendance ratio nationally is estimated at 92 per cent. Table 6 shows the attendance rate of children in this age group by their living arrangements. Children living with both parents have the highest rate of school attendance at 93 per cent compared with 88 per cent of those who do not live with a biological parent. Surprisingly, the disparity in attendance between these two living arrangements is most evident among the urban, the richest, and those whose mothers or caretakers have secondary education, once again indicating the possibility that some of the children who do not live with a biological parent in these demographic groups may be working for the family instead of attending school. These differences in attendance are both statistically and practically significant as is the difference between those living with both parents and orphaned children.

With regard to secondary level education, the national-level net attendance ratio of secondary school aged children 13-17 years is 55 per cent. Table 7 shows the attendance rate of children in this age group by their living arrangements. Again, children living with both parents have a higher attendance rate at 56 per cent than those who do not live with a biological parent (47 per cent) and orphaned children (46 per cent). As with the primary level, these disparities are greatest among those living in the urban areas, households in the richest quintile, and children whose mothers or caretakers have secondary level education. The high disparities in these demographic groups may be a function of the fact that many of the children listed in

Table 5. Living arrangements of children under the age of 18 years, Bhutan, 2010

		Living with Both Parent	Living with one parent	Not living with a biological parent	Head of household	Impossible to determine	Total	Total number of children under age 18	One or both parents dead	Total number of children under age 18
Sex	Male	80.4	13.5	5.9	0.0	0.3	100	12,847	4.9	12,847
	Female	77.5	13.5	8.8	0.1	0.2	100	12,923	5.9	12,923
Area	Urban	80.2	9.6	10.1	0.0	0.1	100	7,410	4.2	7,410
	Rural	78.4	15.1	6.3	0.1	0.3	100	18,361	5.9	18,361
Age group	0-4	84.1	14.0	1.8	0.0	0.2	100	6,514	2.1	6,514
	5-9	80.9	12.6	6.5	0.0	0.1	100	7,386	3.9	7,386
	10-14	76.7	13.0	10.3	0.0	0.1	100	7,887	7.1	7,887
	15-17	71.5	15.1	12.4	0.4	0.7	100	3,983	10.3	3,983
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	82.0	13.8	4.1	0.0	0.3	100	5,220	5.8	5,220
	Second	77.3	17.6	4.9	0.1	0.2	100	4,901	7.3	4,901
	Middle	75.1	17.2	7.3	0.3	0.2	100	5,028	6.1	5,028
	Fourth	81.1	10.2	8.6	0.0	0.1	100	5,495	4.5	5,495
	Richest	78.9	9.1	11.8	0.0	0.3	100	5,127	3.5	5,127
Total		**78.9**	**13.5**	**7.4**	**0.1**	**0.2**	**100**	**25,770**	**5.4**	**25,770**

these households as not living with a biological parent are working for the families and therefore, not attending school. There is no statistical difference in attendance between those living with both parents or with one parent. However, the difference between children who live with one or both parents and those who do not live with a biological parent or are orphaned is statistically significant.

Table 6. Primary level school attendance among children aged 6-12 years by living arrangements, Bhutan, 2010

		Primary school attendance								Total number of children 6-12
		Living with Both Parents		Living with one parent		Not living with a biological parent		One or both parents dead		
		Primary school attendance	Number of children	Primary school attendance	Number of children	Primary school attendance	Number of children	Primary school attendance	Number of children	
Sex	Male	92.3	4,217	85.3	630	87.8	350	84.7	227	5,201
	Female	93.3	4,011	91.6	695	88.8	482	86.7	313	5,192
Area	Urban	97.3	2,318	95.9	293	88.5	272	84.2	123	2,884
	Rural	91.1	5,911	86.5	1032	88.3	560	86.4	417	7,508
Mother's education	None	91.6	6,565	85.9	955	88.2	562	85.2	450	8,087
	Primary	97.8	895	93.5	205	96.3	76	95.5	45	1,176
	Secondary +	97.8	769	98.1	165	85.8	194	82.3	45	1,128
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	85.9	1,759	77.4	253	81.9	112	75.8	109	2,126
	Second	89.1	1,601	87.5	331	88.0	115	87.2	142	2,048
	Middle	94.1	1,537	91.3	341	92.5	183	89.9	121	2,061
	Fourth	96.8	1,735	90.2	223	93.9	201	87.8	101	2,162
	Richest	98.6	1,597	99.3	177	83.4	221	89.3	67	1,995
Total		**92.8**	**8,229**	**88.6**	**1,325**	**88.4**	**832**	**85.9**	**540**	**10,392**

Table 7. Secondary level school attendance among children aged 13-17 years by living arrangements, Bhutan, 2010

		Living arrangements						One or both parents dead		Total number of children 13-17
		Living with both parents		Living with one parent		Not living with a biological parent				
		Secondary school attendance	Total number of children 13-17	Secondary school attendance	Total number of children 13-17	Secondary school attendance	Total number of children 13-17	Secondary school attendance	Total number of children 13-17	
Sex	Male	53.3	2,531	48.1	510	55.7	312	45.2	298	3,479
	Female	57.7	2,548	58.8	468	42.8	562	46.3	357	3,708
Area	Urban	80.2	1,376	79.9	226	55.4	420	68.0	142	2,127
	Rural	46.4	3,703	45.3	753	40.0	454	39.6	512	5,059
Mother's education	None	51.6	4,385	47.9	791	42.2	427	42.2	520	5,616
	Primary	73.8	446	73.5	107	57.5	80	74.9	62	632
	Secondary +	91.8	249	83.1	77	51.1	350	49.1	69	690
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	29.3	1,082	31.9	184	17.8	70	31.3	132	1,372
	Second	38.6	1,003	37.5	248	43.0	97	35.5	168	1,385
	Middle	51.2	953	50.7	232	41.4	148	42.3	146	1,377
	Fourth	68.4	1,011	72.5	169	56.8	216	69.2	112	1,441
	Richest	91.0	1,030	89.0	146	51.3	343	61.7	96	1,612
Total		**55.5**	**5,079**	**53.3**	**979**	**47.4**	**874**	**45.8**	**654**	**7,187**

Data for 31 cases in which the child's living arrangement is not known are not shown; Data for 24 cases in which the mother is not in the household and whose education is unknown are not shown; Data for 193 cases in which individuals were age 17 at the beginning of the current school year but were 18 at the time of survey are missing because living arrangements data were only asked of individuals who were under age 18 at the time of survey

4.2.2. Children in monastic institutions

Monastic institutions in Bhutan have a long history that dates back to the 12th century. The spiritual and temporal head *Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel* established formal monastic schools during his consolidation of the current Bhutanese state in the early 17th century. Due to the deeply religious nature of the Bhutanese people, it was customary practice until the 1970s to have one son in the family enter the monastic body upon attaining the age of six years. With the expansion of formal education, this tradition has diminished but the practice does still exist.

A 2010 assessment covering monastic institutions in 17 districts highlighted that the majority of child monks and nuns come from poor and/or rural families[16]. Monastic institutions provide child monks and nuns with religious education, food, and accommodation free of cost. In addition to providing religious education, monastic institutions also serve as orphanages for children whose parents have died or whose families are unable to support them. The religious education that child monks and nuns receive enables them to earn cash income by performing prayers, ceremonies, and rituals for the people. However, these children do not have access to secular education curricula.

The system of discipline is quite strict in monastic life in order to ensure that those who enter the monkhood are able to pursue a life committed to practicing religion, distanced from worldly distractions. With the changing of time, the monastic disciplinary system must also change. In 2007, the National Commission of Women and Children (NCWC) and UNICEF agreed with His Holiness the 70th *Je Khenpo to* sensitize the *Lam Netens* (dzongkhag-level *Dratshang* heads), *Ue Zin* (*Shedra* and *Lobdra* principals), and *Lopen Gom (*head teachers) on the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and other related subjects. As almost half of all monks and nuns are under the age of 18, these are important issues of concern for the monastic body.

In 2009, His Holiness the *Je Khenpo* (Chief Abbot) issued a decree to protect and monitor the rights of child monks and nuns. This decree established the Eleven Expert Committee charged with making members of the monastic community more aware of the need to safeguard and promote the rights of child monks and nuns while striking a balance with traditional practices and sentiments. This committee comprises ten very learned senior monks and one representative from the nunneries from different dzongkhags/*rabdeys*. Most recently in 2010, the *Dratshang* established a Child Care and Protection Unit, based in Thimphu, to support and provide protection for children during a time of need.[17]

4.2.2.1. Demographic profile of children in monastic institutions

According to a 2010 assessment covering 3,091 child monks and nuns in monastic institutions across 17 districts, the vast majority of child monks and nuns (91 per cent) are male monks. This data must however be interpreted with caution as the assessment may not have included all unregistered monasteries and nunneries, which could influence the sex ratio as many nunneries are unregistered. The assessment found that 2.6 per cent of child monks and nuns were living with disability.

Table 8. Sample demographic information for child monks and nuns under the age of 18 years, Bhutan, 2010

Sample demographic information for child monks and nuns under age 18, Bhutan, 2010 (17 districts)				
		Male	Female	Total
Total no. of registered child monks/nuns under age 18		3,043	48	3,091
Number of registered child monks and nuns with special needs		81	0	81
Age group of registered child monks and nuns	0-5 years	26	0	26
	6-10 years	308	4	312
	11-15 years	1,519	20	1,539
	16-18 years	1,190	24	1,214

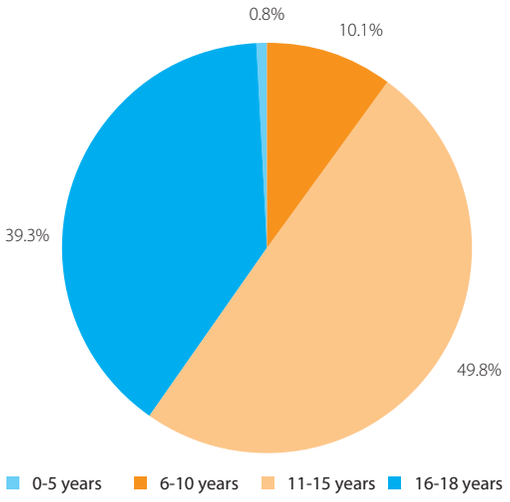
Figure 3 illustrates the data presented in Table 8 above, showing the age distribution of child monks and nuns in Bhutan. Figure 3 shows that the vast majority, nearly 90 per cent, are adolescents aged 11-18 years. Another 10 per cent are younger children age 6-10 and less than one per cent is age five and under.

Table 9 provides data on the extent to which child monks and nuns have parental care, based on the sample of 3,091 child monks and nuns. The large majority (68 per cent) do have parental care. However, nearly one of every four child monks does not have parental care (24 per cent). It would

[16] Assessment of Situation of Young Monks and Nuns in Monastic Institutions by the Eleven Expert Committee Members, 2010.

[17] A time of need refers to medical treatment, appearance in court, or could be used to ensure child safety during any investigation of abuse in the monastic institutions.

Figure 3. **Age distribution of child monks and nuns under the age of 18 years, Bhutan, 2010**



Source: Dratshang Lhentshog,2009

be mistaken to assume the lack of parental care is solely a function of orphan hood. Only 5 per cent of child monks and nuns are orphaned. Of the 48 child nuns, only two lack parental care and that is because they are orphans. Table 9 also shows that all of the children with disabilities are boys.

4.2.2.2. Child protection in monastic institutions

In 2010, the *Dratshang,* with support from NCWC and UNICEF, conducted a situational assessment of child monks and nuns in monastic institutions. The assessment covered a range of issues relevant to the well-being of child monks and nuns, including health, education, sanitation, accommodation, discipline and protection.

With respect to the protection of child monks and nuns, awareness on child rights remains low among monastic leaders and teachers. It was also found that physical punishment as a form of discipline still takes place in monastic institutions. Teachers reported using physical punishment as a means of discipline for lack of knowledge of other approaches. Recommendations were made to further sensitise all monastic institutions on alternative methods of discipline, child rights and other protection issues through the Eleven Expert Committee Members and those who have been trained on child rights. The establishment of the *Dratshang* Child Care and Protection Unit is a direct outcome of this situational assessment.

The assessment recognised that some child monks and nuns are not registered with the *Dratshang*. Along with other differences[18], the protection system for unregistered children can follow a different procedure from those monks and nuns who are registered with the *Dratshang* including children in conflict with the law. For registered child monks and nuns, any possible child protection violation is investigated and managed internally through the Child Care and Protection Unit. If the internal investigation finds evidence of a serious criminal offence as per the Child Care and Protection Act (CCPA) and other laws, the case must be handed over to state authorities for further investigation. In contrast, for unregistered child monks and nuns, the *Dratshang* may choose to bypass an internal investigation and refer cases directly to external authorities such as the NCWC or police. Conversely, if state authorities first learn of a child protection issue related to monks and nuns, they must refer the case to the *Dratshang* for initial investigation upon which the process unfolds as above depending on whether the monk or nun is registered or not.

A key priority of the *Dratshang* has been to establish a complaints and response mechanism for child protection. During the data collection for the situational assessment,

Table 9. **Distribution of parental care and disabled status of child monks and nuns under the age of 18 years, Bhutan, 2010**

		With parental care			Without parental care			Orphan			Disabled			Total		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Age group of child monks and nuns in the sample	0-5 years	18	0	18	5	0	5	1	0	1	2	0	2	26	0	26
	6-10 years	183	4	187	96	0	96	20	0	20	9	0	9	308	4	312
	11-15 years	1,023	20	1,043	371	0	371	96	0	96	29	0	29	1,519	20	1,539
	16-18 years	829	22	851	271	0	271	49	2	51	41	0	41	1,190	24	1,214
Total		**2,053**	**46**	**2,099**	**743**	**0**	**743**	**166**	**2**	**168**	**81**	**0**	**81**	**3,043**	**48**	**3,091**

[18] Child monks and nuns who are registered with the Dratshang are provided monthly stipends, health and life insurance, and pensions whereas unregistered monks and nuns are not afforded these entitlements.

the Eleven Expert Committee Members shared their mobile numbers with all children who participated. It was hoped that this would give child monks and nuns a means to report any child protection issues. However, child monks and nuns have not been permitted to use mobile phones and do not have access to fixed lines in the monasteries, so no complaints have been made as yet. Furthermore, this makes it difficult to establish a telephone hotline service for child monks and nuns. To resolve this problem, the *Dratshang* Child Care and Protection Unit considered using wooden boxes for child monks and nuns to write their complaints and concerns. However, with monasteries spread out across remote parts of the country, it would be difficult for the Eleven Expert Committee Members to regularly check these boxes. Appointing a child protection focal point in each monastery could help with some matters, however, it is felt that many cases would not be properly investigated considering that the focal point might have a close relationship with the alleged perpetrator. It is hoped that additional staff for the *Dratshang* Child Care and Protection Unit might enable more contact with child monks and nuns to facilitate reporting of child protection concerns. Another possible solution is to establish a partnership with civil society to assist in receiving complaints and reports from child monks and nuns and to provide counselling and support for those who need it.

In line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Child Care and Protection Act, and other existing laws, the *Dratshang* is actively working to better meet the needs of child monks and nuns. The *Dratshang* Child Care and Protection Unit team understands that by protecting, educating and nurturing child monks and nuns to give them a safe and supportive childhood, their path to enlightenment will be accelerated. In turn, they will grow to be excellent adult monks and nuns who can share and embody the teachings of Buddhism not only in this life, but in the next. Given that many children who are in need of care in Bhutan enter monastic institutions, this commitment is a positive step towards ensuring the protection of the most vulnerable children in the country.

4.2.3. Children in other settings

Boarding school continues to be an important feature of Bhutan's education system, particularly at secondary level. Many children still complete their secondary education in boarding schools in India, a practice that was more common before the expansion of the national education system. While there are no data available, there are cases where children from remote areas who are unable to commute to school daily live in makeshift houses next to their schools. These houses typically lack water and sanitation facilities, depending on the provisions available through the school itself. There is a need to better understand this phenomenon and monitor the protection and well-being of these children.

According to the Royal Bhutan Police data, 395 boys and 20 girls were retained in police custody at some point over a 12-month period during 2011/2012, including 46 boys who received a custodial sentence and were placed in the Youth Development and Rehabilitation Centre. According to the same records, all children who were formally charged with a crime were also retained in custody, indicating an overuse of retention following arrest. Furthermore, children convicted of a crime automatically receive half the usual adult sentence. The only mechanism in place for non-custodial sentencing is through the discretion of a judge to allow payment of a fine in lieu of a custodial sentence. In light of current practice, there is an urgent need to train justice actors on provisions under the CCPA, which stipulate that the retention of children should be used only as a measure of last resort.

The BMIS is a household survey and as such does not contain data on children living in non-household settings, such as those living in hostel settings or on the streets.

4.3. Section summary on living arrangement of children

This chapter focuses on children's living arrangements, especially of children living without one or both parents for various reasons, orphans, and children in monastic institutions. These have important implications for child welfare. Children growing up in the care of their own family generally enjoy more protection and are less exposed to the dangers of violence, abuse, and exploitation than if they are separated from their parents. While kinship care has long been practised in Bhutan, it is increasingly common for children to be sent as domestic helpers to wealthier relatives in urban areas. Apart from this, monastic schools sometimes operate as a form of alternative care for children in need. The Royal Government of Bhutan is aware of the importance of children growing up in a family environment. The Child Care and Protection Act 2011 provides for the establishment of various residential services.

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF CHILDREN

Of children living in family settings in Bhutan, 79 per cent live with both of the biological parents, 14 per cent live with one biological parent, and 7 per cent do not live with a biological parent. Just over 5 per cent have been orphaned by at least one parent. Girls, urban children, older children, and those from wealthier households are more likely to live without a biological parent. These findings are believed to be consistent with the hypothesis that some children not living with a biological parent may be working in the homes of affluent urban families.

Rural children and children from poor households are more likely to be orphaned than urban children. A child from the two poorest wealth quintiles is more than twice as likely as a child from the richest quintile to be orphaned. As would be expected, the percentage of orphaned children increases with age from 2 per cent among children aged 0-4 years to 10 per cent for adolescents aged 15-17 years.

Children living with both parents have an average rate of primary school attendance of 93 per cent. School attendance is higher among urban children and generally increases with household wealth and education level of the parents. School attendance of those not living with a biological parent is 88 per cent. The disparity in attendance between children from these two living arrangements is most evident among the urban and the richest households.

School attendance at the secondary level shows similar patterns though disparities are much more pronounced here. Average school attendance among children living with both parents is 56 per cent compared with 47 per cent for those not living with a biological parent. Disparities are particularly large among girls, urban children, children living with mothers or female caretakers with secondary education and those from the wealthiest households. This again suggests that a considerable number of children might be living as domestic helpers with affluent families.

While the practice to have one son in the family enter the monastic body upon reaching the age of six years has receded, it still exists. An assessment covering monastic institutions in 17 districts identified a total of 3,091 monks and nuns under 18 years of age that were studying in monastic institutions, where they receive religious education, food, shelter, and healthcare. Nearly 90 per cent are adolescents aged 11-18 years, 10 per cent are children aged 6-10 years, and less than one per cent is younger than six years. The vast majority are boys (91 per cent). Almost a quarter of these children report having inadequate parental care, suggesting that the monastery may be their sole refuge.

Recently, a number of steps have been taken to align child welfare in monasteries with modern child protection practices. These include a situational assessment of child monks and nuns in monastic institutions by the *Dratshang* with support from NCWC and UNICEF. One of the results was the establishment of the *Dratshang* Child Care and Protection Unit.


INFANT SCALE SK-20
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THIMPHU, BHUTAN
NEONATAL DISCHARGE CERTIFICATE

5. Birth registration

5.1. Introduction

Birth registration is considered a fundamental right under Article 7 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Article 7 stipulates that every child has the right to be registered at birth by the State, providing the child with a name and the right to acquire a nationality. It highlights the obligation of State Parties to ensure implementation of this right, particularly in cases where a child would otherwise be stateless.

Birth registration is evidence of a State's legal recognition of the existence of a child as a member of society. If children are not registered at birth, they will not have the all-important proof of their name and relationship with their parents and the State.[19] A fully registered birth helps a child secure their right to know and preserve his or her name and identity, to have a nationality, besides helping to safeguard other human rights throughout his or her lifetime.

In Bhutan, the Department of Civil Registration and Census (DCRC) under the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs is mandated to maintain the national population database and register vital events such as births and deaths. Between November and March each year, Civil Registration and Census Officers, with the assistance of the *Gups* (Village Headmen), carry out annual registration of births and deaths at the *gewog* (block) level. Completed birth forms are compiled and forwarded along with relevant documents such as the marriage certificate of the parents, birth certificate of the child, and Citizenship Identity Cards (CID Cards) of the parents to the DCRC headquarters for entry into the Bhutan Civil Registration System (BCRS). Following final verification and validation at DCRC headquarters, the data are updated in the BCRS. On registering the birth into the BCRS, an eleven -digit citizenship identity number is generated. This number is assigned on the CID Card which is issued to the person upon reaching 15 years of age. In the event such eligible children are not enumerated during the annual birth registration, their applications for birth registration have to be directly processed with the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs.

BMIS data found that 99.9 per cent of children under five years of age in Bhutan have had their birth registered. Unfortunately it was not possible to disaggregate this 99.9 per cent by those children who had their birth registered and those with only a health card or birth certificate, as the sample size of registered births was too small to analyse. There were no significant variations in birth registration across sex, region, or mother's education. However, BMIS data considered the birth of a child to be registered if they had obtained a birth certificate or had only been issued with a health card. However, the health card or the birth certificate does not confirm the nationality of the child. According to the BCRS database an average of 13,000-14,000 new births are registered annually.

5.2. Policy Discussion

Birth registration is the foundation for realising many rights integral to a child's development and well-being and is a crucial first step in building a culture of protection. Without

[19] Birth Registration: Right from the Start. 2002. UNICEF

birth registration, children may live beyond the reach of protective services of the State. Moreover, lack of proper registration may prevent them from exercising their rights as citizens later in life.[20] Birth registration is a critical first line of protection to prevent a child from becoming stateless, and consequently outside of the protection of any state. Stateless children are some of the most vulnerable children in the world.

In Bhutan, the birth certificate issued to a child at the time of his or her birth does not guarantee Bhutanese citizenship. For registration of children eligible for Bhutanese citizenship the birth certificate must be accompanied by a marriage certificate issued by the Court and the CID Cards of both parents. In accordance with the citizenship laws, "A person whose parents are both citizens of Bhutan shall be deemed to be a citizen of Bhutan by birth." If a woman is single or not legally married, without the name of the father, her child cannot be registered as Bhutanese citizen. Furthermore, if one of the parents is not a Bhutanese national, the child will have to apply for citizenship through provision for naturalization.

The CID Card issued to a child at the age of 15 years according to the identification number generated upon his or her registration into the BCRS as an infant is required for important purposes in his or her lifetime such as employment, exercising their right to vote, opening bank accounts, and so on.

A CID card is a prerequisite for the security clearance certificate issued by the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs to apply for and secure a passport, driver's license, formal employment, and for registering and exercising your right as a voter or later standing for an elected office.

CID cards or birth certificates are also required at the time of enrolment of a child into school mainly to assess the age of the child. In the event the parents are not able to produce one, such children are not denied their right to education by the Ministry of Education. However, CID cards are required for admissions to class XI and educational scholarships. Lack of birth registration does not hamper access to domestic health care.

In 2011, the DCRC developed a draft Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for registration of births and deaths. The SOP makes the registration and certification of births and deaths mandatory within 30 days by the DCRC from the place of residence or occurrence and provides for registration of all births and deaths, irrespective of nationality. As outlined in the SOP, the DCRC plans to use Electronic Government to Citizen Service Delivery System (e-G2CSDS) to improve timelines for the registration and certification of births and deaths.

The government plans to establish ICT-enabled Community Information Centres in all 205 *gewogs* and hospitals. However, given Bhutan's tough geographical terrain, there may still be logistical hurdles for parents to successfully register their child's birth, including the difficulty and expense of travelling to the nearest registration office from a remote area. The Department of Civil Registration and Census will monitor and evaluate the new registration process to ensure its effectiveness and accessibility.

The SOP requires parents to submit several documents, such as copies of the parents' CID Cards or, in the case of a non-Bhutanese parent, copies of their Special Residence Permit, work permit, and passport along with copies of the parents' marriage certificate; in the absence of a marriage certificate, a separate statement confirming the parentage of the child must be obtained from the *Tshogpa* and endorsed by the *Gup* to verify the credentials of the parents and confirm whether they are Bhutanese citizens. As such, the registration procedure itself may remain too complex and bureaucratic for some parents to navigate, hampering the registration of some children.

5.3. Section summary on birth registration

Birth registration is a fundamental human right. It not only gives children a recognized legal existence and identity, it is the sign that a child 'belongs' to a family, a community, and a state. It shows that a child has rights and responsibilities in all three. Birth registration is the gateway to citizenship rights such as access to health and education services, employment, fair treatment in the justice system, and the right to vote, and offers protection against discrimination and neglect. The impact of birth registration has lasting impacts over a person's lifetime and guarantees an individual's right to take their place in the social and political life of their country.

[20] Progress for Children: A Report Card on Child Protection. 2009. UNICEF. This publication provides a comprehensive overview of child protection information and data.


THIMPHU

6. Child labour

6.1. Introduction

Child labour is a critical issue to the protection and well-being of children. Being both a cause and consequence of poverty, it can damage children's health, threaten their education, lead to further exploitation, and consequently reduce their life opportunities as an adult. Child labour is not a new phenomenon. It has existed throughout history and in all types of economies. Experiences around the world show that the fight against child labour continues to be a daunting challenge. Children engaged in harmful labour are often subject to discrimination and exclusion, particularly its worst forms which dehumanize children, reducing them to mere economic assets. Although there is no universally accepted definition of child labour, it is understood as work done by children under 18 years which is exploitative, hazardous or otherwise inappropriate for their age, and detrimental to their schooling, social, physical, or moral development. To measure child labour, the BMIS considered the following children to be engaged in child labour: children 5-11 years of age involved in any economic activity, or doing household chores for 28 hours or more during the reference week; children 12-14 years of age involved in economic activity (excluding those in light work for fewer than 14 hours per week) or in household chores for 28 hours or more during the reference week.

Around the world, deep-rooted poverty and growing inequality force millions of young children out of school and into work. Therefore, giving adequate consideration to the special position of these groups is a critical factor for success in fighting child labour.

Child labour involves at least one of the following characteristics:

- Violates a nation's minimum age laws;
- Threatens children's physical, mental, or emotional well-being;
- Involves intolerable abuse, such as child slavery, child trafficking, debt bondage, forced labour, or illicit activities;
- Prevents children from going to school; and
- Uses children to undermine labour standards.

Box 2. Measuring child labour:

As per the BMIS, the following children are considered to be engaged in child labour: children 5-11 years in any economic activity, or in household chores for 28 hours or more during the reference week; children 12-14 years in economic activity (excluding those in light work for fewer than 14 hours per week) or in household chores for 28 hours or more during the reference week.

Source: UNICEF ChildInfo. www.childinfo.org/labour.html

In Bhutan, child labour is regulated through the Labour and Employment Act 2007. The minimum age of employment is 18 years, although children between the ages of 13-17 years are allowed to undertake light work under certain conditions following registration with the Ministry of Labour and Employment. Work in hazardous environments is strictly prohibited. Labour inspectors routinely monitor child labour in formal workplaces. However, there are currently no provisions to monitor child labour in domestic and agricultural settings, which fall outside the purview of

labour inspections. This is an important qualification given that a 'Situation Analysis of Child Labour in Bhutan'[21] found that agricultural work was common among both male and female working children. It also found that girls were more likely to work in the service industry, whereas boys were more likely to work in the industrial sector. The 2011 Labour Force Survey found that 57 per cent of working children are unpaid.[22] Given the existing evidence that child labour remains an issue in Bhutan, this thematic analysis of the BMIS undertakes an in-depth analysis of child labour in Bhutan to explore the health and educational outcomes of children engaged in child labour and to identify children from particularly vulnerable demographic groups.

It bears noting that children in Bhutan have traditionally assisted their families with household and farm chores. This contribution was considered to help children learn important skills and inculcate important values related to helping others and is not exploitative in its intention. It is still common for children to contribute to their family's economic security either by helping with family businesses after school or on weekends, or by taking on additional work during their school holidays. However, modernisation has brought new avenues for children to be exploited through child labour, such as through the increased demand for domestic helpers and babysitters along with increased demand for industrial and hospitality workers. For some children, their work now comes at the expense of their right to education, play, and protection. It is important that the BMIS findings on child labour be understood within this context.

The child labour rate among all children aged 5-14 in Bhutan is estimated at 18.4 per cent.[23] For children aged 5-11 years, the child labour rate is considerably higher at 25.1 per cent because the child labour designation is given to any child that performs at least one hour of economic activity per week. For children aged 12-14 years, the child labour designation is more stringent and begins at 14 hours of economic activity, which screens out many young people in this age group who are working. Therefore, the child labour rate for 12-14-year-olds falls to 4.2 per cent. This abrupt shift in the definition of child labour at age 12 will reveal itself in the data throughout this section.

6.2. Household characteristics and living arrangements of children engaged in child labour

BMIS data shows that 14.4 per cent of all households in Bhutan have at least one child engaged in child labour. According to Table 10, approximately 91 per cent of children engaged in child labour live with one or both of their parents. Almost the entirety of the other 9 per cent does not live with a biological parent. These figures are very similar to children not engaged in child labour. Among the group of children engaged in child labour who do not live with a biological parent, there are disparities by demographic characteristics. Children engaged in child labour in urban areas are twice as likely to live in a household without a biological parent as their counterparts in rural areas (16 per cent versus 8 per cent, respectively). Also, children engaged in child labour listed in the richest households are more than twice as likely to live without a biological parent as children in any of the other four wealth quintiles. And interestingly, children engaged in child labour in households in which the mother or caretaker has secondary level education are far more likely to not live with a biological parent than in households where the mother has no formal education or primary level education. Put together, these data provide initial evidence that a disproportionate number of children engaged in child labour in urban areas and in the richest and most highly educated households are not living with a biological parent, suggesting that these children have been listed in affluent households where they work for the family.

Generally, children engaged in child labour aged 5-14 years are far more likely to live in poverty than children not engaged in child labour of the same age group. 32 per cent of children engaged in child labour live in the poorest quintile of households as compared with 18 per cent of children not engaged in child labour. Put another way, 28 per cent of those who live in the poorest quintile of households are engaged in child labour as compared with 5 per cent in the richest households. Children engaged in child labour also come from larger, more crowded households. Analysis of BMIS data shows that the average size of a child labourer household is 5.9 members compared to an average of 4.4 members in non-child labourer households. The average

[21] Situation of Child Labour in Bhutan. 2008. National Commission for Women and Children

[22] MoLHR/NSB. Labour Force Survey, 2011

[23] The following children are considered to be engaged in child labour: children 5-11 years in any economic activity, or in household chores for 28 hours or more during the reference week; children 12-14 years in economic activity (excluding those in light work for fewer than 14 hours per week) or in household chores for 28 hours or more during the reference week. Source: UNICEF ChildInfo. www.childinfo.org/labour.html

Table 10. Living arrangements of children aged 5-14 years engaged in child labour, Bhutan, 2010

		% Living with Both Parents	% Living with one parent	% not living with a biological parent	Impossible to determine	Total % of children living with none, one, or both parents	Total number of children 5-14 engaged in child labour	% of children engaged in child labour with one or both parents dead	Total number of children 5-14 engaged in child labour
Area	Urban	73.6	10.2	16.2	0.0	100	381	6.0	381
	Rural	79.6	12.7	7.6	0.2	100	2,425	6.0	2,425
Mother's education	None	80.5	12.0	7.4	0.2	100	2,402	6.0	2,402
	Primary	76.1	14.4	9.4	0.0	100	262	5.0	262
	Secondary +	54.0	14.5	31.4	0.0	100	142	9.0	142
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	82.4	11.3	6.2	0.1	100	885	6.0	885
	Second	79.3	14.8	5.7	0.5	100	688	6.0	688
	Middle	76.7	14.1	9.2	0.2	100	646	4.0	646
	Fourth	77.8	9.6	12.6	0.0	100	430	6.0	430
	Richest	67.1	8.2	24.7	0.0	100	157	7.0	157
Total		**78.8**	**12.4**	**8.8**	**0.2**	**100**	**2,806**	**6.0**	**2,806**

Table 11. Percentage of children aged 5-14 years who live in households with improved sanitation facilities by child labour status, Bhutan, 2010

		Children Not Engaged in Child Labour		Children Engaged in Child Labour		Total number of children age 5-14
		Percentage with improved sanitation facilities	Number of children age 5-14	Percentage with improved sanitation facilities	Number of children age 5-14	
Area	Urban	94.0	3,989	83.5	381	4,371
	Rural	56.1	8,478	52.9	2,425	10,902
Mother's education	None	62.1	9,479	53.9	2,402	11,880
	Primary	80.6	1,430	70.2	262	1,693
	Secondary +	94.4	1,554	87.5	142	1,697
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	30.5	2,194	35.9	885	3,078
	Second	45.8	2,252	52.2	688	2,940
	Middle	61.7	2,393	59.8	646	3,039
	Fourth	89.9	2,822	89.6	430	3,252
	Richest	99.4	2,806	97.4	157	2,963
Total		**68.2**	**12,467**	**57.1**	**2,806**	**15,273**

density of a child labourer home is 4.1 persons per sleeping room compared to 2.9 in non-child labourer households. These differences are statistically and practically significant.

Given this higher level of poverty, it should then come as no surprise that children engaged in child labour are more likely to live in homes that use solid fuel for cooking[24] or do not have improved sanitation facilities. Table 11 shows that 57 per cent of children engaged in child labour use improved sanitation facilities as compared with 68 per cent of children not engaged in child labour. The lower use of improved sanitation facilities holds when controlling for area of location or mother's education. These differences are highly statistically significant. In the case of wealth, the analysis shows a statistically higher level of use of improved sanitation among children engaged in child labour than children not engaged in child labour in the *poorest* two quintiles. This finding cannot readily be explained but it could be that the children's income generation may contribute to the family's ability to upgrade its sanitation facility.

[24] While not shown here, a separate test shows that 56 per cent of child labourers' homes use solid fuel for cooking versus 34 per cent of non-child labourer homes. This difference is statistically significant. The data show no difference in use of improved drinking water between child labourers and non-child labourers (95 and 97 per cent, respectively), which is likely a function of near universal use of improved drinking water in Bhutan.

Table 12. **Percentage of mothers of children aged 5-14 years who accept domestic violence by their children's child labour status, Bhutan, 2010**

		Children 5-14 not engaged in child labour		Children 5-14 engaged in child labour		Number of children
		For any of these reasons	Number of children	For any of these reasons	Number of children	
Area	Urban	54.8	3,989	68.3	381	4,371
	Rural	57.2	8,478	61.3	2,425	10,902
Mother's education	None	56.7	9,479	61.3	2,402	11,880
	Primary	59.8	1,430	66.2	262	1,693
	Secondary +	51.5	1,554	70.4	142	1,697
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	51.9	2,194	61.3	885	3,078
	Second	56.2	2,252	63.3	688	2,940
	Middle	56.9	2,393	61.0	646	3,039
	Fourth	62.9	2,822	66.2	430	3,252
	Richest	53.2	2,806	57.0	157	2,963
Total		**56.4**	**12,467**	**62.2**	**2,806**	**15,273**

6.3. Child labour and attributes of mother or caretaker

One concern expressed by child protection advocates is that children engaged in child labour, who are already exposed to a greater level of material poverty, may also be more vulnerable to violence. While the BMIS survey does not account for experience of violence by children, it does measure mother's attitudes toward domestic violence by children's labour status. In Table 12, the data show that 62 per cent of mothers of children engaged in child labour accept domestic violence compared to 56 per cent of mothers of children not engaged in child labour, a difference which is statistically – and somewhat practically – significant. An interesting feature of this table is the significant gap in mother's attitudes toward domestic violence by their children's labour status for urban households and those with secondary level education. Mothers or caregivers in homes with children engaged in child labour express a much higher acceptance of domestic violence than those in non-child labourer homes.

Many believe that children of single mothers (divorced, widowed, or never married) are more likely to engage in child labour than children whose mothers are married. This analysis also finds no statistical difference in child labour rates for children aged 5-11 years or aged 12-14 years by their mother's marital status.[25]

[25] Child labour among 5-11 children whose mother is currently married is 24.8 per cent compared to 24.3 per cent for children whose mother is formerly or never married. For children aged 12-14, the rates are 5.1 per cent and 4.8 per cent, respectively.

6.4. Child labour and school participation

Table 13 shows that school attendance rates of school age children engaged in child labour aged 6-14 years generally mirror those of children not engaged in child labour in this age group (89 and 90 per cent, respectively). This has a lot to do with the loose definition of child labour for the majority of children in this age group (i.e. at least one hour of economic activity per week). This has the effect of drawing in nearly 20 per cent of all children into the category of children engaged in child labour. However, disaggregating the data shows that the percentage of children engaged in child labour who attend school increases with wealth, suggesting the positive offsetting effect of wealth on child labour. This trend, however, breaks down for households in the richest wealth quintile where children engaged in child labour have statistically the same attendance rate as children from the poorest quintile. This provides further evidence of children living with and working for caregivers in the most affluent homes who may face poorer educational prospects as a result.

This table also shows the percentage of school attending children who are engaged in child labour, estimated at 19 per cent. Disaggregating the data by demographic characteristics shows that school-going children in rural areas are more than twice as likely to be children engaged in child labour as children in urban areas. This is true as well for children whose mothers have no formal education vis-à-vis those whose mothers have secondary level education. In terms of wealth, school-going children from the poorest

quintile of households are six times as likely to engage in child labour as children from the richest households.

Table 14 shows that, among primary school children aged 6-12 years, school attendance of children engaged in child labour is almost exactly that of children not engaged in child labour (92 per cent). However, this statistic masks important differences in school attendance by the number of hours that children work. On the whole, child labour has a significantly negative impact on school attendance. However, primary school age children who work 1-5 hours per week have a statistically higher level of school attendance than those who do not engage in any economic activity (95 versus 92 per cent, respectively). This difference holds for all levels of mother's education and the poorest three wealth quintiles. It is also more noticeable for children aged 10 years and above. That the difference is significant for the poorer households and for older children may support the hypothesis that a small amount of economic activity on the part of these children may generate just enough income to pay for the direct and/or indirect opportunity costs of a child's education, enabling him or her to stay in school.

This phenomenon vanishes, though, for children who work more than 5 hours per week. Children who work 6-12 hours or 13 hours or more have a statistically lower level of school attendance than children who do not engage in any economic activity. For those children who work more than 13 hours a week, school attendance drops to a mere 65 per cent. Child labour at this level is highly concentrated among children from the poorest households, rural areas, those whose mothers have no education, and the older children aged 10-12 years in this cohort. This much work also takes a greater toll on school attendance for males than females, dropping 29 and 25 percentage points, respectively.

In terms of secondary level education, the effect on school attendance of child labour for 13 and 14-year-olds is much more profound. Table 15 shows that there is no statistical difference in school attendance between those who work 1-5 hours per week and those who do not engage in any economic activity (89 and 87 per cent, respectively). However, school attendance falls precipitously in accordance

Table 13. **Child labour and school attendance rates among children age 6-14, Bhutan, 2010**

		Percentage of children engaged in child labour who are attending school	Number of children engaged in child labour	Percentage of children attending school who are involved in child labour	Number of children attending school	Number of children age 6-14 years
Sex	Male	89.1	1,247	18.6	5,970	6,669
	Female	88.0	1,446	20.1	6,343	7,048
Area	Urban	89.0	367	8.8	3,693	3,907
	Rural	88.4	2,326	23.9	8,620	9,809
Age	6	70.1	242	13.9	1,214	1,574
	7	90.0	302	20.3	1,340	1,452
	8	94.1	405	28.8	1,321	1,374
	9	96.6	449	31.4	1,380	1,430
	10	97.0	535	36.1	1,437	1,521
	11	91.8	552	37.8	1,340	1,441
	12	50.5	46	1.5	1,509	1,661
	13	51.8	55	2.2	1,315	1,498
	14	46.3	108	3.4	1,456	1,767
Mother's education	None	87.7	2,308	21.3	9,510	10,754
	Primary	96.0	248	16.4	1,452	1,505
	Secondary +	87.6	138	9.0	1,348	1,453
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	83.2	837	31.2	2,233	2,745
	Second	87.7	665	25.3	2,306	2,680
	Middle	93.6	626	23.6	2,481	2,726
	Fourth	95.2	411	14.3	2,733	2,877
	Richest	81.5	154	4.9	2,560	2,688
Total		**88.5**	**2,693**	**19.4**	**12,313**	**13,716**

Table 14. School participation of primary school age children aged 6-12 years distributed by level of economic activity, Bhutan, 2010

		% of children engaged in child labour who are attending school	% of children attending school who are involved in child labour	No economic activity	1-5 hours economic activity	6-12 hours economic activity	13+ hours economic activity	Number of children age 6-12 years
				Percentage of children attending school	Percentage of children attending school	Percentage of children attending school	Percentage of children attending school	
Sex	Male	91.7	23.5	91.3	93.9	88.7	61.9	5,201
	Female	92.6	26.0	92.9	95.9	86.5	67.8	5,192
Area	Urban	95.3	12.2	96.8	97.5	85.5	*	2,884
	Rural	91.6	30.0	89.7	94.5	87.8	64.6	7,508
Age at beginning of school year	6	78.0	14.5	83.1	78.2	[73.0]	*	1,571
	7	92.4	23.2	93.7	94.1	[73.7]	*	1,431
	8	94.9	29.0	97.0	95.4	98.2	*	1,343
	9	97.0	32.4	96.2	97.3	96.3	*	1,443
	10	96.8	36.3	92.2	97.7	97.8	[95.6]	1,489
	11	91.5	37.1	93.7	96.9	91.4	*	1,481
	12	51.4	1.8	91.5	95.8	77.9	57.0	1,634
Mother's education	None	91.7	27.4	90.5	94.4	86.8	64.0	8,087
	Primary	96.3	20.4	97.4	98.2	92.4	*	1,176
	Secondary +	92.6	11.4	95.7	98.9	*	*	1,128
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	87.2	38.1	82.8	92.0	80.9	54.9	2,126
	Second	91.6	31.5	87.8	93.5	84.8	[72.7]	2,048
	Middle	96.6	30.8	92.5	97.2	95.9	*	2,061
	Fourth	97.7	18.7	95.6	98.4	92.6	*	2,162
	Richest	87.2	6.5	97.5	100	[89.0]	*	1,995
Total		**92.2**	**24.8**	**92.1**	**94.9**	**87.5**	**64.9**	**10,392**

Table 15. School participation of secondary school age children aged 13-14 years distributed by level of economic activity, Bhutan, 2010

		% of children engaged in child labour who are attending school	% of children attending school who are involved in child labour	No economic activity	1-5 hours economic activity	6-12 hours economic activity	13+ hours economic activity	Number of children age 13-14 years
				% of children attending school	% of children attending school	% of children attending school	% of children attending school	
Sex	Male	55.0	2.6	84.3	91.5	82.0	56.7	1,389
	Female	45.1	3.4	89.4	87.4	70.7	46.0	1,782
Area	Urban	[46.1]	1.4	91.1	95.5	[94.7]	[57.3]	943
	Rural	48.8	3.8	84.6	87.6	71.2	48.8	2,228
Age at beginning of school year	13	57.7	2.8	88.5	93.4	75.1	60.2	1,548
	14	42.5	3.3	85.5	84.6	74.1	43.9	1,623
Mother's education	None	47.0	3.3	86.6	89.1	73.5	46.3	2,574
	Primary	*	3.4	93.4	92.5	[99.2]	*	302
	Secondary +	*	0.6	83.8	[84.2]	*	*	291
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	32.3	3.8	78.2	78.4	57.3	34.4	578
	Second	[48.3]	5.2	78.8	89.8	69.9	[53.6]	631
	Middle	*	1.8	84.8	92.7	85.7	*	622
	Fourth	[63.9]	3.6	93.6	96.4	94.7	*	677
	Richest	*	1.3	91.5	91.3	[78.8]	*	663
Total		**48.4**	**3.0**	**87.0**	**89.1**	**74.6**	**49.8**	**3,171**

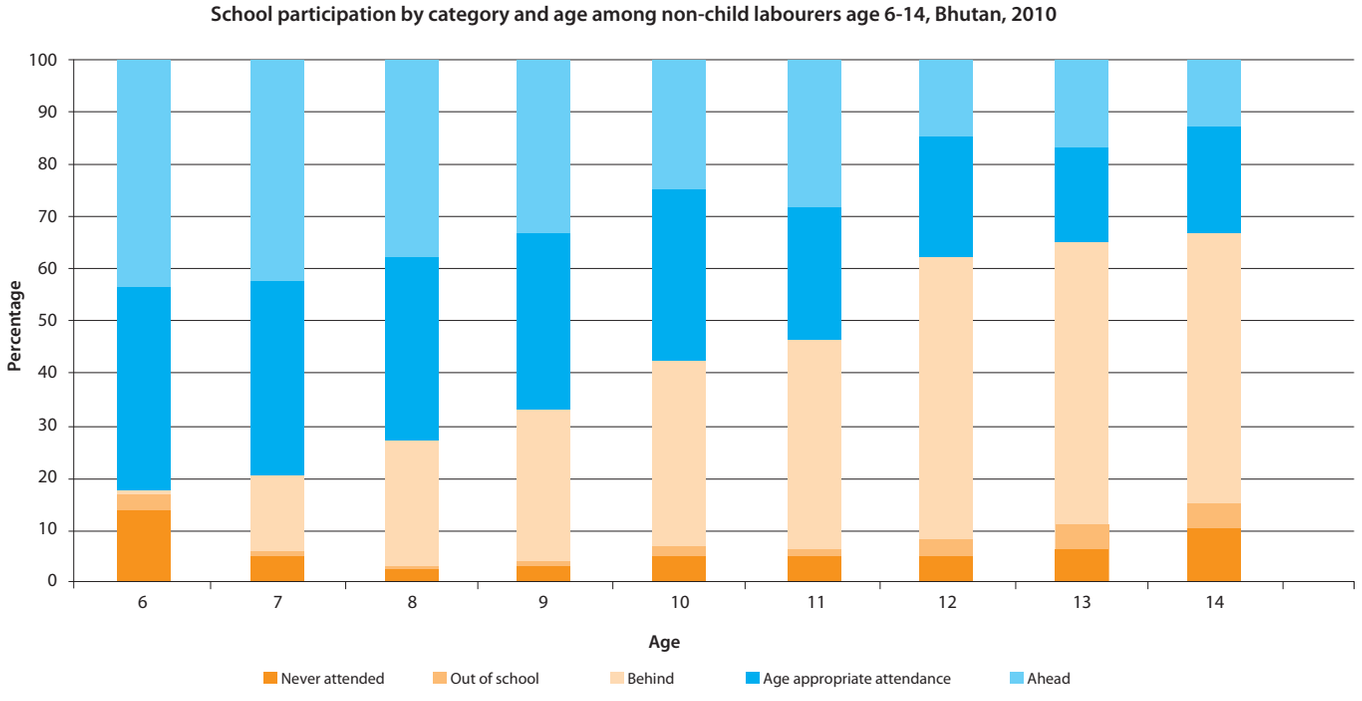
Table 16. **Distribution of school participation status among children aged 6-14 years by child labour status, Bhutan, 2010**

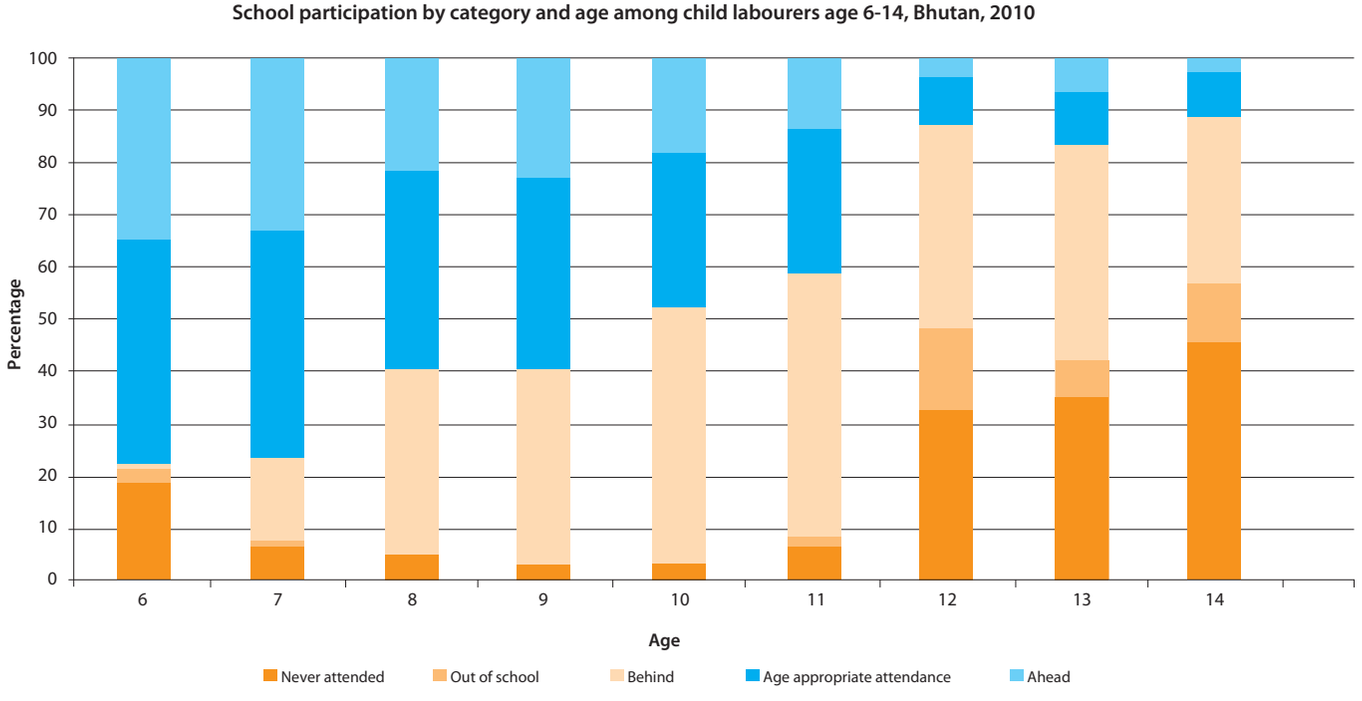
		Children 6-14 not engaged in child labour						
		% that have never attended school	% currently out of school	% currently behind age-appropriate attendance	% currently at age-appropriate attendance	% currently ahead age-appropriate attendance	Total	Number of children age 6-14
Sex	Male	5.9	4.3	34.7	28.3	26.9	100	5,315
	Female	6.9	1.9	35.6	28.6	26.9	100	5,508
Area	Urban	2.6	1.8	22.0	27.7	46.0	100	3,446
	Rural	8.2	3.7	41.3	28.9	18.0	100	7,377
Age at beginning of school year	6	13.6	3.3	0.6	39.5	43.5	100	1,331
	7	5.4	1.0	14.3	36.5	42.8	100	1,094
	8	2.5	0.4	24.0	34.5	38.7	100	948
	9	3.0	0.9	29.3	33.7	33.1	100	978
	10	4.7	2.8	35.0	32.8	24.6	100	964
	11	4.5	1.7	40.3	25.3	28.3	100	923
	12	4.8	3.6	53.9	23.5	14.2	100	1,583
	13	6.0	5.3	53.0	19.0	16.7	100	1,482
	14	10.0	5.6	51.4	19.6	13.3	100	1,520
Education of household head	None	8.3	3.8	41.1	29.2	17.7	100	6,824
	Primary	2.9	2.3	38.4	31.7	24.7	100	1,852
	Secondary +	3.4	1.5	13.8	23.2	58.2	100	2,144
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	14.8	4.1	49.4	21.9	9.8	100	1,869
	Second	9.7	4.3	46.8	27.4	11.8	100	1,999
	Middle	5.2	3.8	42.3	33.2	15.5	100	2,052
	Fourth	2.6	2.2	30.7	34.5	30.1	100	2,406
	Richest	2.2	1.5	13.8	24.6	57.9	100	2,498
Total		**6.4**	**3.1**	**35.2**	**28.5**	**26.9**	**100**	**10,823**
		Children 6-14 engaged in child labour						
Sex	Male	7.2	2.7	36.4	33.7	20.0	100	1,275
	Female	9.8	1.2	35.7	31.2	22.3	100	1,466
Area	Urban	6.7	1.3	27.2	29.3	36.4	100	381
	Rural	8.9	2.0	37.5	32.9	18.8	100	2,359
Age at beginning of school year	6	19.5	2.5	1.5	39.8	38.2	100	241
	7	6.7	0.9	16.1	41.6	34.6	100	336
	8	5.1	0.0	35.0	38.6	21.3	100	395
	9	2.8	0.1	36.6	37.7	22.8	100	465
	10	2.9	0.3	49.4	29.1	18.3	100	525
	11	5.4	3.1	50.6	26.8	14.0	100	558
	12	33.9	14.7	38.5	9.3	3.6	100	51
	13	35.0	7.3	41.2	10.5	6.0	100	65
	14	45.8	11.7	31.3	8.3	2.9	100	103
Education of household head	None	9.6	2.0	36.6	32.2	19.8	100	2,051
	Primary	5.3	1.3	38.7	37.5	17.5	100	491
	Secondary +	6.4	2.9	24.0	21.6	45.1	100	199
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	13.6	2.4	44.5	26.6	12.9	100	835
	Second	10.1	1.7	39.5	32.5	16.1	100	680
	Middle	3.4	.8	34.3	39.7	22.5	100	631
	Fourth	3.8	1.2	25.4	35.6	33.9	100	433
	Richest	9.7	7.1	12.8	23.9	46.5	100	160
Total		**8.6**	**1.9**	**36.0**	**32.4**	**21.2**	**100**	**2,740**

Data for 2 cases in which the education of household head is not known are not shown

Age determined by age at beginning of school age, not current age

Figure 4. School participation by category and age by child labour status, Bhutan, 2010





with the number of hours worked after that. 13 and 14-year-olds who work 6-12 hours a week have a school attendance rate of 75 per cent, a figure which plummets to 50 per cent for children who work 13 or more hours per week. As with primary school age children, the impact of child labour has a disproportionately negative affect on school attendance for children from rural areas, the poorest households, and those whose mothers have no formal education. For example, the drop in school attendance between children not engaged in child labour and children who work 6-12 hours from the two richest quintiles households is 3 percentage points whereas it is 21 percentage points for children from the poorest households.

Table 16 provides a rich amount of data on the differences in school participation among children engaged in child labour and children not engaged in child labour. It shows that children engaged in child labour aged 6-14 years are statistically more likely to never have attended school than children not engaged in child labour of the same age group (9 versus 6 per cent, respectively). Table 16 shows a dramatic increase in disparity in no formal education for children aged 12-14, however this is likely to be a function of the change in definition of child labour for this age group, which increases from one hour of economic activity to over 10 hours of economic activity, and therefore should be interpreted with caution. The likelihood of never attending school decreased monotonically with wealth except in one case – children engaged in child labour in the richest households. 10 per cent of these children have never attended school, a figure more in line with children from the poorest households. These data provide further evidence of an issue that must be addressed – children labouring in affluent homes without a biological parent and who are experiencing poorer educational outcomes than would otherwise be expected.

Figure 5 illustrates very clearly the differences in school participation among children aged 6-14 years by child labour status. The red and orange columns indicate the percentage of children who have never attended school or who are currently out-of-school. It shows that this group is much higher for children engaged in child labour aged 6 years and aged 12-14 years than their non-child labourer peers, indicating a delayed start to education and a higher rate of early dropout, respectively. More than 40 per cent of 12-14-year-old children engaged in child labour fall into this category as compared with less than 15 per cent of children not engaged in child labour.

Adding in those who are behind age-appropriate attendance (yellow columns), shows that more than 80 per cent of children engaged in child labour aged 12-14 years are behind in school, have dropped out, or have never attended, a figure 20 percentage points higher than children not engaged in child labour. The 'drag' on young people's education observed across Bhutan as children fall behind in their education or drop out as they get older is even stronger for those children engaged in child labour.

Finally, the report presents data on the mean number of hours of economic activity of children aged 5-14 years. As can be seen in Table 17 below, children in Bhutan aged 5-14 years work an average of 1.3 hours per week. This figure rises steadily for each year that a child gets older. Children

Table 17. **Mean number of hours of economic activity of children aged 5-14 years who engaged in labour by single age, Bhutan, 2010**

		Children not classified as children engaged in child labour		Children classified as children engaged in child labour		Total	
		Mean number of hours of employment	Number of children 5-14	Mean number of hours of employment	Number of children 5-14	Mean number of hours of employment	Number of children 5-14
Age	5	0.00	1,444	2.93	113	0.21	1,557
	6	0.00	1,332	2.55	242	0.39	1,574
	7	0.00	1,150	3.09	302	0.64	1,452
	8	0.00	969	3.14	405	0.93	1,374
	9	0.00	981	3.08	449	0.97	1,430
	10	0.00	986	3.55	535	1.25	1,521
	11	0.00	888	4.81	552	1.85	1,441
	12	1.26	1,615	22.83	46	1.86	1,661
	13	1.35	1,443	23.58	55	2.16	1,498
	14	1.41	1,659	23.33	108	2.75	1,767
Total		**0.51**	**12,467**	**4.97**	**2,806**	**1.33**	**15,273**

aged 5-11 years who are not engaged in child labour do not have any economic activity by definition. For children in this age group who engage in child labour (i.e. at least one hour of economic activity per week), the mean number of hours worked ranges from about 3-5 hours per week and increases with age. This is a relatively low number of hours of economic activity, suggesting that child labour of this sort may not be intended to exploit children but rather to constructively contribute to the well-being of the household or perhaps even to support the cost of school participation. However, many children in this age group work more than the mean number of hours with negative consequences on their school participation.

Considering children aged 12-14 years, those who do not engage in child labour (i.e. less than 14 hours of economic activity per week) work, on average, between 1 and 2 hours per week. However, for children engaged in child labour, the mean number of hours is much higher at a very high 23 hours per week, far above the minimum number of hours to meet the child labour definition, and clearly an amount that would prevent many from attending school.

6.5. Section summary on child labour

This discussion of child labour has illuminated several issues that policymakers should consider. Children engaged in child labour are almost twice as likely to live in the poorest quintile of households as children not engaged in child labour (32 per cent versus 18 per cent, respectively). They are more likely to be from rural areas, and live in households that use solid fuels for cooking and less likely to use improved sanitation facilities. All together this greater material hardship increases the risks to the well-being and health of children already engaged in child labour.

A noteworthy finding is the disproportionately high percentage of children engaged in child labour who do not live with a biological parent are in urban areas, the richest households, and those households in which the caregiver has secondary level education. This suggests that there may be a substantial number of children living away from their parents who are working for affluent families, particularly in Thimphu.

In terms of school participation, children engaged in child labour attend primary school at similar rates as children not engaged in child labour. However, by secondary school children engaged in child labour are attending school at only about half the rate of children not engaged in child labour (albeit that this has much to do with the stricter definition of children engaged in child labour for children aged 12-14 years). Nevertheless, at both educational levels, there is a steep drop-off in school participation after the child works more than 6 hours per week. It is important to note once again the observation that children engaged in child labour in urban areas and in the richest households repeatedly show unexpectedly poor educational outcomes (i.e. the percentage who have never attended school and the percentage of school-attending children who are children engaged in child labour). These findings raise concern that these children, many of them quite young and more likely to not be living with a biological parent, are working in affluent homes and achieving poorer educational outcomes than should be expected.

7. Early marriage, childbearing and young motherhood

7.1. Introduction

Marriage before the age of 18 years is a reality for many girls. Early marriage represents a violation of human rights for both boys and girls[26], but leaves girls particularly vulnerable to deprivation and exploitation. Early marriage compromises their development and often results in early pregnancy and social isolation, with little education and poor vocational training reinforcing the gendered nature of poverty. Required to perform heavy amounts of domestic work and under pressure to demonstrate fertility, married girls and child mothers face constrained decision-making and reduced life choices. According to UNICEF, "the harmful consequences include separation from family and friends, lack of freedom to interact with peers and participate in community activities, and decreased opportunities for education." [27]

Early marriage, better known as child marriage, is defined as marriage below the age of 18 years, "before the girl is physically, physiologically and psychologically ready to shoulder the responsibilities of marriage and child bearing".[28] Many factors interact to place a child at risk of marriage. Parents encourage the marriage of their daughters while they are still children in the hope that the marriage will benefit them both financially and socially, while also relieving financial burdens on the family. Early marriage also means the individual becomes sexually active early, often raising children while still themselves children. The marriage of a young girl affects not only her life but that of the children she will bear.

The right to 'free and full' consent to a marriage is recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – with the recognition that consent cannot be 'free and full' when one of the parties involved is not sufficiently mature to make an informed decision about a life partner. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, which was ratified by the Royal Government of Bhutan in 1981, mentions the right to protection from child marriage in Article 16. "The betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage..." While marriage is not considered directly in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, child marriage is linked to other rights – such as the right to express their views freely, the right to protection from all forms of abuse, the right to be protected from harmful traditional practices, and the right to education.

The Royal Government of Bhutan sought to address early marriage by amending the Marriage Act of Bhutan in 1996 to increase the legal age of marriage for women in Bhutan from

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[26] Article 16.2, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations, 1948.

[27] See UNICEF Child Protection Information Sheets, 2006.

[28] The Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (19930, Newsletter, December 2003.

16 years to 18 years.[29] The Act also stipulates that no marriage certificate will be issued for marriages of persons under the age of 18 years. However, according to BMIS data, child marriage is still prevalent. Moreover, it is difficult to trace child marriages because they are not officially registered.

Fortunately, the marriage of girls before the age of 15 years in Bhutan is in decline, falling from 6.6 per cent of women aged 45-49 years to 2.3 per cent of women aged 15-19 years. While marriage before the age of 15 years is now within reach of being eliminated entirely, this is not the case with marriage before the age of 18 years. Early marriage under this definition has held rather steady over time at between 26 and 36 per cent of women, making this issue one of importance to the well-being and protection of young women.

Early marriage is a socially established practice in Bhutan that has been carried forward across generations. It exists not only because of tradition but also because of poor economic conditions and limited opportunities. Typically, child marriage is considered a family matter and therefore remains a widely ignored violation of children's rights, exposing girls and boys to multiple risks including sexual abuse and exploitation.

7.2. Early marriage

Table 18 shows that approximately 7.5 per cent of girls aged 15-17 years are currently or formerly married.[30] The marriage rate increases by approximately 5 percentage points per year for this age group but at a rate of 10 percentage points per year from 18-24 years. By age 24 years, more than 80 per cent of women have ever been married. Rural girls aged 15-17 years marry at 10 times the rate of urban girls. The data also show that almost all early marriages occur to girls from households in the poorest three wealth quintiles.

Table 18. Distribution of girls aged 15-17 years by marital status, Bhutan, 2010

		Ever married/ in union	Never married/ in union	Number of girls age 15-17 years
Age of woman	15	2.4	97.6	365
	16	7.2	92.8	396
	17	12.0	88.0	444
Area	Urban	1.2	98.8	456
	Rural	11.3	88.7	749
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	18.1	81.9	188
	Second	16.2	83.8	177
	Middle	11.7	88.3	182
	Fourth	0.7	99.3	272
	Richest	1.2	98.8	386
Total		**7.5**	**92.5**	**1,205**

Marital rates for girls also differ by whether they have been orphaned. As Table 19 below shows, girls aged 15-17 years who are either single or double orphans have an ever-married rate nearly twice that of girls whose parents are both alive. While the sample size is relatively small, this higher likelihood of marriage among orphans does appear to be more pronounced among rural girls.

7.2.1. Early marriage, education, and literacy among girls aged 15-17 years

While the question of legality is of importance when discussing early marriage, an equal or greater concern is the impact that early marriage has on women's life opportunities

Table 19. Marital status of girls aged 15-17 years by orphan status, Bhutan, 2010

		% of girls age 15-17 who:						Number of girls age 15-17
		Single or double orphan			Both parents alive			
		Ever married/in union	Never married/in union	Number of girls age 15-17	Ever married/in union	Never married/in union	Number of girls age 15-17	
Area	Urban	[1.0]	99.0	42	1.1	98.9	409	456
	Rural	17.1	82.9	91	10.4	89.6	651	749
Total		**12.0**	**88.0**	**133**	**6.8**	**93.2**	**1,061**	**1,205**

[29] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) Thirtieth Session, Bhutan. 2004. http://www.iwraw-ap.org/committee/bhutan.htm. Accessed 8 Dec 2011.

[30] While not shown, disaggregating ever married women by their current marital status reveals that 0.9 per cent of girls aged 15-17 are formerly married or in union (i.e. separated, divorced, or widowed).

and well-being. Given an overwhelming body of evidence of the positive impact of education on women's empowerment, this analysis considers the relationship between early marriage and women's educational prospects. Table 20 and Figure 5 below reveal a chasm in secondary school attendance of girls aged 15-17 years by their marital status. Whereas 62 per cent of never married girls in this age group attend school, less than 1 per cent of ever married girls attend school. In other words, never married girls of secondary school age are *100 times* more likely to attend school than their ever married counterparts. While not shown here, 19 of the 90 ever married girls in Table 19 married before the age of age 15 years. Of these 19 girls, not one of them attends school. In short, among girls of secondary school age, being currently or formerly married is associated with almost *zero* school participation.[31]

Given the highly positive correlation between school participation and literacy, a lower level of assessed literacy among girls who marry early should be expected. As Table 21 below reveals, this is indeed the case. The literacy rate among ever married girls aged 15-17 years is only 23 per cent compared to a literacy rate of 75 per cent for never married girls in the same age group.

An interesting observation is that this literacy gap appears to remain throughout the woman's life. Table 22 shows that literacy among women age 18-49 who married before the age of 18 years is only 14 per cent compared to a literacy rate of 29 per cent for women who married at or after age 18. It is possible that non-formal education interventions, which focus on basic literacy, have helped to mitigate this gap to some extent. Another fascinating feature of Table 22 is the

Table 20. Secondary level school attendance among girls aged 15-17 years by marital status, Bhutan, 2010

Secondary school attendance among girls aged 15-17 by marital status	Secondary School Net Attendance	No. of girls aged 15-17
Never married/in union	62.4	1,115
Ever married/in union	0.6	90

Figure 5. Secondary level school attendance among girls aged 15-17 years by marital status, Bhutan

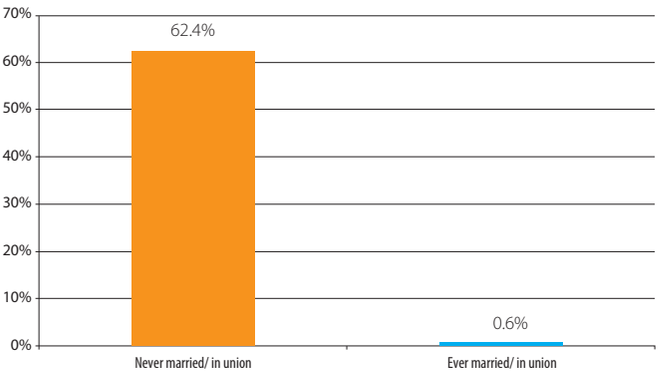


Table 21. Literacy and educational attainment among girls aged 15-17 years by marital status, Bhutan, 2010

		Ever married/in union			Never married/in union			Number of girls 15-17
		% literate	Highest grade at level	Number of girls 15-17	% literate	Highest grade at level	Number of girls 15-17	
Area	Urban	*	*	6	87.6	7.8	451	456
	Rural	19.9	1.7	85	66.3	5.0	664	749
Education	None	2.0	0.0	60	5.3	0.0	206	266
	Primary	*	*	17	54.0	4.1	185	202
	Secondary +	*	*	14	100.0	8.4	724	738
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	[8.0]	[0.8]	34	39.8	2.6	154	188
	Second	[21.8]	[1.7]	29	59.4	4.1	149	177
	Middle	*	*	21	74.5	5.4	161	182
	Fourth	*	*	2	89.6	7.2	270	272
	Richest	*	*	5	84.8	7.8	382	386
Total		**22.9**	**1.9**	**90**	**74.9**	**6.1**	**1,115**	**1,205**

[31] While early marriage among women aged 15-17 does appear to significantly affect school participation, a woman's mother's marital status does not. A separate test of school participation among women aged 15-17 by mother's marital status revealed no statistically significant difference in overall school attendance. Similarly, young children's primary school attendance does not appear to be affected by mother's early marriage status.

Table 22. Literacy and educational attainment among women aged 18-49 years by early marriage status, Bhutan, 2010

		Never married			Married at or after age 18			Married before age 18			No. of women 18-49
		% literate	Highest grade at level	No. of women 18-49	% literate	Highest grade at level	No. of women 18-49	% literate	Highest grade at level	No. of women 18-49	
Area	Urban	87.5	9.6	819	52.1	5.4	2,195	25.9	2.2	978	3,991
	Rural	44.6	4.2	1,146	18.3	1.7	4,800	9.3	0.7	2,875	8,821
Education	None	5.1	0.0	642	2.9	0.0	4,597	3.3	0.0	3,081	8,320
	Primary	33.5	3.7	193	31.8	3.9	752	34.9	3.9	541	1,485
	Secondary +	100	10.6	1,130	100	10.3	1,646	100	8.6	231	3,008
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	20.2	1.4	250	5.0	0.3	1,142	3.7	0.2	840	2,231
	Second	28.5	2.4	274	8.7	0.7	1,251	6.1	0.5	831	2,356
	Middle	47.0	4.5	322	17.4	1.5	1,363	9.6	0.6	792	2,477
	Fourth	79.1	8.0	426	29.5	2.8	1,526	18.3	1.4	816	2,768
	Richest	88.1	9.9	694	68.1	7.2	1,714	37.1	3.3	573	2,981
Total		**62.5**	**6.5**	**1,965**	**28.9**	**2.8**	**6,995**	**13.5**	**1.1**	**3,853**	**12,813**

much higher literacy rate of never married women aged 18-49 years compared to ever married women of the same age group (63 per cent versus 20 per cent, respectively).

It should be noted that these disparities are driven in part by the combination of the survey assumption that all women who attend any secondary level education have a literacy rate of 100 per cent and the very high differences in secondary school participation by marital status. For example, because 58 per cent of never married women aged 18-49 years have attended secondary school compared with only six per cent of women who married before the age of 18 years (as shown in Table 22), the 100 per cent literacy assumption will boost the estimate among never married women and drive down the estimate for early-married women.[32]

Table 21 also shows very significant disparities in educational attainment for girls by whether they marry early. Ever married girls aged 15-17 years have an average level of education of 1.9 years compared to never married girls who average 6.1 years. These estimates mask the true extent of the disparity because they do not take into account that 62 per cent of never married girls are still attending school compared to less than one per cent of ever married girls. Not surprisingly, this disparity lasts through a woman's life as a married woman is very unlikely to re-enter school after leaving. Table 22 shows that among women aged 18-49 years, never married women have an average level of education of 6.5 years compared to only 1.1 years for women who married before the age of 18 years.

These data on school participation, literacy, and educational attainment by early marriage status show very clearly the powerfully detrimental and life-long effect that early marriage has on women's educational outcomes. And, to the extent that improved educational outcomes affect other life opportunities for health, employment, and income, early marriage has many negative externality effects.

7.2.2. Early marriage and knowledge of HIV transmission among women aged 18-49 years

Another concern of early marriage is the effect it may have on women's health. Table 23 shows women's level of knowledge about HIV transmission modes by their marital and early marriage status. It shows the potential effect of early marriage on women's health through the medium of education. Women aged 18-49 years who have never been married or married at or after the age of 18 years have a statistically higher level of comprehensive knowledge about HIV transmission and about mother-to-child transmission than women who married before the age of 18 years. In the case of comprehensive knowledge about HIV, never married women are twice as likely to have knowledge as women who married early.[33] These disparities are often strongest for women in urban areas and from the richest households.

[32] Please see Education Thematic Analysis for a test of this assumption. Findings show that a more realistic assumption for 100 per cent literacy would be school attendance to Class 9 rather than to Class 7.

[33] Although not shown here, comprehensive knowledge of HIV is substantially higher among never married girls aged 15-17 than among ever married girls in the same age group (24 and 13 per cent, respectively). In this sample, never married girls aged 15-17 have a higher level of knowledge about mother-to-child HIV transmission but the difference is not statistically significant.

Table 23. Comprehensive knowledge of HIV transmission among women aged 18-49 years by early marriage status, Bhutan, 2010

		Never married			Married at or after age 18			Married before age 18			Total no. of women 18-49
		% who know three ways HIV can be transmitted from mother to child	% with comprehensive knowledge of HIV	Number of women 18-49	% who know three ways HIV can be transmitted from mother to child	% with comprehensive knowledge of HIV	Number of women 18-49	% who know three ways HIV can be transmitted from mother to child	% with comprehensive knowledge of HIV	No. of women 18-49	
Area	Urban	63.3	33.1	819	62.1	28.8	2,195	58.3	20.8	978	3,991
	Rural	51.2	17.1	1,146	55.8	12.8	4,800	51.3	8.9	2,875	8,821
Education	None	43.4	10.9	642	55.0	10.8	4,597	50.7	9.5	3,081	8,320
	Primary	55.3	10.5	193	60.2	15.6	752	59.1	17.8	541	1,485
	Secondary +	63.7	33.4	1,130	64.1	38.8	1,646	70.6	30.4	231	3,008
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	45.6	9.3	250	46.1	4.2	1,142	44.7	6.7	840	2,231
	Second	46.7	11.8	274	56.2	7.3	1,251	50.5	4.7	831	2,356
	Middle	55.1	14.5	322	61.6	13.2	1,363	55.2	9.0	792	2,477
	Fourth	59.9	31.0	426	60.8	23.6	1,526	60.8	20.4	816	2,768
	Richest	62.1	33.7	694	60.8	33.3	1,714	55.3	22.1	573	2,981
Total		**56.2**	**23.8**	**1,965**	**57.7**	**17.9**	**6,995**	**53.1**	**11.9**	**3,853**	**12,813**

This analysis also considered several sexual and reproductive health outcome indicators by the age difference between women and their husbands. While not shown here, analysis of BMIS data found no evidence of any difference in knowledge of HIV transmission, skilled birth assistance, institutional delivery, or in use of contraception by spousal age difference.

7.3. Early childbearing

Early marriage often leads to early childbearing with all its associated risks to the health of girls and their newborns. As girls who are married young have a larger number of childbearing years, they have a higher probability of miscarriage, infant death, malnutrition, cervical cancer, sterility, and maternal death over their lifetime. According to UNICEF, girls and young women globally between the ages of 15 and 19 years are twice as likely to die during pregnancy or childbirth as women in their twenties.[34] Apart from the concern for early childbearing, evidence shows that women who marry early have, on average, a greater number of births over their lifetime.

In Bhutan, as with marriage before the age of 15 years, the rate of childbearing before the age of 15 years is at its lowest recorded level among women aged 15-49 years, at only 0.5 per cent for young women currently aged 15-19 years. However as with early marriage, the percentage of women aged 15-49 years who have had a live birth before the age of 18 years has not declined over time; in fact, it shows a slight upward trend over time. For this reason, early childbearing and the impact it has on women's well-being remains an issue worth examining.

7.3.1. Early Childbearing among girls and young women aged 15-19 years

Table 24 shows the age-specific fertility rate (ASFR) for girls and young women aged 15-19 years, estimated at 59 births per 1,000 young women aged 15-19 years in Bhutan. However, as Figure 6 shows, there are tremendous differences in fertility by demographic background. The adolescent birth rate for rural girls and young women is more than twice that of urban girls and young women; those with no formal education have a birth rate more than three times that of those with secondary education; and most strikingly, girls and young women from the poorest households have a birth rate 11 times that of girls and young women from the richest households.

Looking more closely at the data, Table 25 shows that overall, 4.4 per cent of girls aged 15-17 years have given birth or are currently pregnant. As nearly 96 per cent of these

[34] United Nations Population Fund, State of the World Population 2005: The promise of equality: Gender equity, reproductive health, and the Millennium Development Goals, UNFPA, New York, 2005, pp. 12-13; cited in UNICEF Child Protection Information Sheets, 2006.

Table 24. Adolescent birth rate among girls and young women aged 15-19 years, Bhutan, 2010

		Adolescent birth rate (Age-specific fertility rate for girls and young women age 15-19 years)
Area	Urban	30
	Rural	77
Mother's education	None	113
	Primary	70
	Secondary+	29
Wealth index quintile	Poorest	112
	Second	95
	Middle	97
	Fourth	36
	Richest	10
Total		59

births are delivered by ever married girls[35], this analysis estimates that about 58 per cent of girls who marry before the age of 18 years also begin childbearing before the age of 18 (4.4 per cent of 7.5 per cent) years. The disparities noted above by area of location, education, and wealth status in early childbearing hold. In both early childbearing indicators below, women who live in rural areas, come from the poorest households, or have no education are 10 times or more likely to experience early childbearing vis-à-vis their more privileged counterparts in each demographic domain.

The high correlation between these demographic identities means that many of these women inhabit all three of these characteristics – that is, there are a large number of rural women with no education, and who come from the poorest households. This combination of multiple vulnerabilities almost certainly increases the likelihood of early childbearing further.

Table 25. Early Childbearing among girls aged 15-17 years, Bhutan, 2010

		% of women age 15-17 who have begun childbearing	% of women age 15-17 who have had a live birth before age 15	Number of women age 15-17
Area	Urban	0.6	0.0	456
	Rural	6.7	0.9	749
Education	None	12.8	1.5	266
	Primary	4.9	1.4	202
	Secondary +	1.2	0.0	738
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	10.9	2.3	188
	Second	8.4	0.0	177
	Middle	6.5	1.4	182
	Fourth	0.7	0.0	272
	Richest	1.0	0.0	386
Total		4.4	0.6	1,205

7.3.2. Early childbearing, education, and literacy

Early childbearing impedes school-aged children from enjoying their right to the education they need for their personal development, to prepare them for adulthood, and to contribute to the future well-being of their family and society. Lack of exposure outside the immediate home environment can lead to lower self-esteem, less sense of identity as an independent person with an independent mind, reduced socialization with peers and non-family adults, and considerably less understanding of what early marriage entails.[36] Although there are no guidelines to support educators to address early childbearing in schools, the Ministry of Education encourages girls to continue their education if they are pregnant. In spite of this positive initiative, the emotional and physical strains of being a young mother are often too great for an adolescent girl to continue schooling successfully.

As with early marriage, this report examines the relationship between early childbearing and girls' level of school participation, educational attainment, and literacy. This discussion opens by looking at the median age at first birth of adult women aged 20 years and above by their educational attainment. Table 26 below shows that the median age at first birth among women with no formal education is 20.3 years, which is more than two years earlier than women with secondary level education or above. This difference is statistically and practically significant. The disparity in median age at first birth holds across every demographic group with the exception of women from the poorest two wealth quintiles. 90 per cent of all never married women who have given birth in the sample have had no formal education.

Table 27 shows that girls aged 15-17 years who have begun childbearing do not attend school at all. The secondary

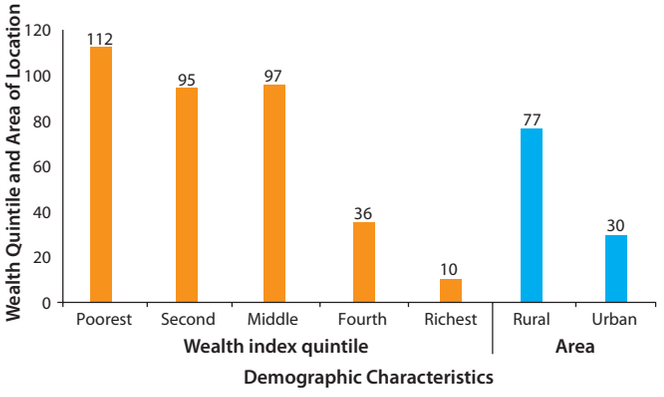
[35] Analysis of BMIS data show that 81.8 per cent of girls aged 15-17 years who have begun childbearing are currently married, 13.8 are formerly married, and 4.4 per cent have never been married.

[36] Taking Action to End Child Marriage, Forum on Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls-Maggie Black, December 2005.

Table 26. Median age at first birth among women aged 20 years and above who have ever given birth, Bhutan, 2010

		Education: None		Education: Primary		Education: Secondary +		Number of women
		Median age at first birth	Number of women	Median age at first birth	Number of women	Median age at first birth	Number of women	
Area	Urban	20.2	1,464	19.3	424	22.8	970	2,859
	Rural	20.3	5,790	19.8	761	22.0	548	7,098
Age Group	20-29	19.4	2,118	19.1	546	21.9	865	3,528
	30-39	20.3	2,846	20.0	495	23.5	526	3,868
	40-49	21.3	2,290	20.6	144	22.9	127	2,561
Marital Status	Ever married	20.3	7,221	19.7	1,183	22.5	1,517	9,921
	Never married	22.1	33	*	2	*	1	36
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	20.3	1,753	19.4	108	[20.7]	21	1,881
	Second	20.3	1,700	19.7	163	20.6	50	1,913
	Middle	20.3	1,593	19.9	245	21.3	121	1,959
	Fourth	20.3	1,504	19.8	329	21.8	300	2,133
	Richest	20.2	705	19.3	340	23.0	1,026	2,071
Total		**20.3**	**7,254**	**19.7**	**1,185**	**22.5**	**1,518**	**9,957**

Figure 6. Adolescent birth rate among girls and young women aged 15-19 years, Bhutan, 2010



school net attendance ratio is approximately 60 per cent for girls who have not begun childbearing and zero for those girls who have begun childbearing.[37]

Another way of looking at these data is to divide this group of girls aged 15-17 years into those who attend secondary level school or higher and those who do not. Table 28 reveals that of those who do not attend school, 11.6 per cent have begun childbearing compared to zero per cent of those girls who do attend school. Table 28 also shows that childbearing increases substantially by age among those who do not attend school but remains flat at zero per cent for those attending school.

[37] This finding of 0.0 per cent school attendance among girls who have given birth or who are pregnant holds when expanding the definition of school attending to those in primary school.

Table 27. Secondary level school attendance by early childbearing status among girls aged 15-17 years, Bhutan, 2010

	Have not begun childbearing		Have begun childbearing		Total	
	Secondary school net attendance ratio	Number of girls age 15-17	Secondary school net attendance ratio	Number of girls age 15-17	Secondary school net attendance ratio	Number of girls age 15-17
Total	**60.5**	**1,156**	**0.0**	**60**	**57.5**	**1,216**

* Age determined by age at beginning of school year, not current age

As early marriage and early childbearing exhibit a strongly positive correlation, it should come as no surprise that the data show a significantly detrimental effect of early childbearing on school participation. The evidence shows that women who get married, pregnant, and/or have children have either already dropped out of school first, which increases the likelihood of early marriage and childbearing, or if they have remained in school, face significant obstacles to continuing their education.

Table 29 provides evidence for the hypothesis that girls with less education are more likely to begin early childbearing. The data show that early childbearing among girls aged 15-17 years is highly concentrated among those with no formal education. Nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) of early childbearing occurs among girls with no education. While not shown in this table, women aged 18-49 with no education are nearly 3 times as likely to begin early childbearing as women in the same age group with any primary level education and 10 times as likely as women

Table 28. Percentage of girls aged 15-17 years who have begun childbearing by secondary level school participation status, Bhutan, 2010

		Not in secondary school		Attending secondary school		Total	
		% of girls who have begun childbearing	Number of girls of secondary school age	% of girls who have begun childbearing	Number of girls of secondary school age	% of girls who have begun childbearing	Number of girls of secondary school age
Area	Urban	4.5	96	0.0	375	0.9	470
	Rural	13.3	421	0.0	325	7.5	745
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	13.5	163	0.0	30	11.4	192
	Second	14.5	120	0.0	50	10.2	171
	Middle	13.9	95	0.0	94	7.0	189
	Fourth	7.1	52	0.0	221	1.4	273
	Richest	4.4	86	0.0	304	1.0	391
Age at beginning of school year	15	6.1	143	0.0	223	2.4	366
	16	7.6	169	0.0	255	3.1	424
	17	18.8	204	0.0	222	9.0	426
Total		**11.6**	**516**	**0.0**	**699**	**4.9**	**1,216**

Table 29. Educational Attainment by Early Childbearing status among girls aged 15-17 years, Bhutan, 2010

	Level of educational attainment				Number of girls age 15-17
	None	Primary	Secondary+	Total	
Have not begun childbearing	20.1	16.6	63.3	100	1,153
Have begun childbearing	64.4	18.9	16.7	100	53
Total	**22.0**	**16.7**	**61.2**	**100**	**1,205**

with any secondary level education. In other words, ever attending school is associated with a significant decrease in the likelihood of early childbearing.

This negative relationship between early childbearing and educational attainment carries forward to educational outcomes such as literacy, a key indicator for women's empowerment and improved well-being. Table 30 below shows that the literacy rate of mothers who gave birth at or after the age of 18 years is 23 per cent compared to 14 per cent

Table 30. Literacy rates by early childbearing status among mothers aged 18-49 years, Bhutan, 2010

		% of mothers who				Number of mothers age 18-49
		Had first birth at or after age 18		Had first birth before age 18		
		Literacy	Number of mothers age 18-49	Literacy	Number of mothers age 18-49	
Area	Urban	43.8	2,389	28.8	489	2,878
	Rural	14.5	5,793	8.4	1,423	7,216
Education	None	2.7	5,853	3.5	1,485	7,337
	Primary	33.0	900	30.4	314	1,214
	Secondary +	100	1,430	100	113	1,543
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	4.6	1,510	2.2	403	1,914
	Second	6.5	1,555	5.6	401	1,956
	Middle	13.3	1,564	10.5	434	1,998
	Fourth	23.1	1,760	19.2	392	2,152
	Richest	61.3	1,794	38.7	281	2,075
Total		**23.0**	**8,183**	**13.7**	**1,912**	**10,094**

for mothers who gave birth before the age of 18 years. This statistically significant difference holds when controlling for each area of location and wealth quintile.[38] The literacy gap between early and non-early mothers increases with wealth quintile, suggesting that wealth status is a contributing factor in early childbearing.

Although not shown here, data show that when the analysis expands the population to include *all women* aged 18-49 years and not just mothers, the disparity in literacy rates between women who gave birth before the age of 18 years and those who either gave birth at or after the age of 18 years or never gave birth increases from 9 percentage points to 18 percentage points, indicating the much higher literacy rate of women aged 18-49 years who have never given birth.[39]

A simple maximum likelihood regression was also run on early childbearing among women aged 15-49 years to control for several variables that may affect its likelihood (see Annex 1). The model supports a hypothesis that higher levels of education decrease the probability of early childbearing. It also confirms the increasing likelihood of early childbearing among girls under 18 over time.

7.4. Young motherhood

As there is concern for the effect of early childbearing on a woman's education, so is there for the impact it may have on a woman's health and that of her new-born. This section considers associations between the age of a woman at the birth of her child and her reproductive health outcomes. The analysis also tests child health and education outcomes against the age of the mother.

7.4.1. Young motherhood and reproductive and new-born health

A concern often expressed by many in the health sector is that young pregnant women have a lower take-up of antenatal

Table 31. Percentage of girls and women aged 15-49 years who received antenatal care and neonatal tetanus protection by age of mother at birth of child, Bhutan, 2010[40]

		Mother's age at birth											
		15-17				18-24				25-49			
		Received antenatal care at least once by skilled provider	Received antenatal care 4+ times	% protected against tetanus	Number of women who gave birth in past two years	Received antenatal care at least once by skilled provider	Received antenatal care 4+ times	% protected against tetanus	Number of women who gave birth in past two years	Received antenatal care at least once by skilled provider	Received antenatal care 4+ times	% protected against tetanus	Number of women who gave birth in past two years
Area	Urban	*	*	*	6	99.2	87.3	85.6	296	98.9	86.8	65.6	388
	Rural	99.3	74.9	78.6	66	97.0	73.6	76.9	713	96.0	72.9	68.5	896
Education	None	99.0	77.2	81.4	48	96.9	75.8	77.2	582	96.2	72.1	66.7	850
	Primary	*	*	*	17	98.9	70.0	74.0	154	98.5	81.3	60.3	131
	Secondary +	*	*	*	7	98.5	85.9	87.4	272	98.4	89.2	73.4	303
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	[100]	[64.0]	[76.2]	26	97.1	67.8	76.0	195	94.1	60.5	66.8	247
	Second	*	*	*	27	96.6	66.6	79.6	178	93.5	69.2	61.9	243
	Middle	*	*	*	10	96.1	79.8	72.3	235	98.9	75.4	68.1	231
	Fourth	*	*	*	7	98.8	84.2	82.9	254	99.5	83.0	68.9	257
	Richest	*	*	*	1	100.0	89.2	89.5	147	98.2	93.0	71.3	306
Total		**99.3**	**77.0**	**80.4**	**72**	**97.6**	**77.6**	**79.5**	**1,009**	**96.9**	**77.1**	**67.6**	**1,284**

Data for 4 women who gave birth before age 15 not included.

[38] The one exception is for women in the second wealth quintile for whom no statistical difference exists in this sample.

[39] A separate test of women aged 18-49 years that have never given birth yields a literacy rate of 60 per cent.

Table 32. **Percentage of girls and women aged 15-49 years with skilled birth assistance, institutional delivery, postnatal care, and child's weight by age of mother at birth of child, Bhutan, 2010**

% of mother age 15-24 who gave birth in the past two years who received skilled birth attendance, institutional delivery, and post-natal care within two days by mother's age birth of child																
		Mother's age at birth														
		15-17					18-24					25-49				
		% with skilled birth assistance	% delivered in health facility	% who received postnatal care within two days	Birth below 2500 grams	Number of women who gave birth in last two years	% with skilled birth assistance	% delivered in health facility	% who received postnatal care within two days	Birth below 2500 grams	Number of women who gave birth in last two years	% with skilled birth assistance	% delivered in health facility	% who received postnatal care within two days	Birth below 2500 grams	Number of women who gave birth in last two years
Area	Urban	*	*	*	*	6	93.0	92.7	58.5	9.2	296	86.6	87.4	62.9	8.0	388
	Rural	50.9	47.9	28.4	[14.6]	66	54.8	54.3	34.0	9.5	713	54.1	50.8	36.3	10.9	896
Education	None	52.9	50.1	32.7	[13.3]	48	56.7	55.6	34.8	9.5	582	51.5	48.8	36.0	10.6	850
	Primary	*	*	*	*	17	56.0	55.6	43.5	8.6	154	72.0	72.8	53.5	11.3	131
	Secondary+	*	*	*	*	7	91.7	92.6	53.6	9.7	272	95.1	93.6	63.6	7.7	303
Wealth index Quintiles	Poorest	[51.4]	[64.2]			26	30.5	32.5	21.7	10.4	195	35.4	32.2	22.4	13.2	247
	Second	*	*	*	*	27	43.5	42.6	28.3	9.7	178	43.7	40.0	32.5	10.6	243
	Middle	*	*	*	*	10	71.4	68.7	45.1	9.4	235	62.7	59.5	40.6	9.5	231
	Fourth	*	*	*	*	7	86.3	86.2	49.1	9.5	254	75.2	73.2	53.7	10.3	257
	Richest	*	*	*	*	1	96.8	96.8	62.9	7.7	147	94.3	95.2	66.3	7.0	306
Total		**55.0**	**52.2**	**34.4**	**13.9**	**72**	**66**	**65.6**	**41.2**	**94**	**1,009**	**63.9**	**61.8**	**44.3**	**10.0**	**1,284**

4 women who gave birth beforeage 15 not included

care than older women. To test this, the analysis considered the percentage of women who received antenatal care at least once by a skilled provider and at least four times by any provider if they had given birth in the past two years. Table 31 shows the results. As at least one skilled antenatal care visit is nearly universal in Bhutan, the difference between any two groups never exceeds 6 percentage points and there is no statistically significant difference by age of mother. When considering at least four antenatal care visits, the data produce the same finding. The report's conclusion then is that take-up of antenatal care for girls aged 15-17 years experiencing early childbearing is statistically equivalent to that of older women in Bhutan.

However, the analysis shows statistically significant differences in neonatal tetanus protection among girls and women by their age at birth but not in the direction that motivated this test. Girls and young women aged 15-24 years have a higher level of neonatal tetanus protection than older women aged 25-49 years.

At the time of birth, there are several indicators of reproductive health. The analysis now considers the proportion of women by age group who have received skilled birth assistance, institutional delivery, post-natal care, and whose new-borns are born with low birth weight.

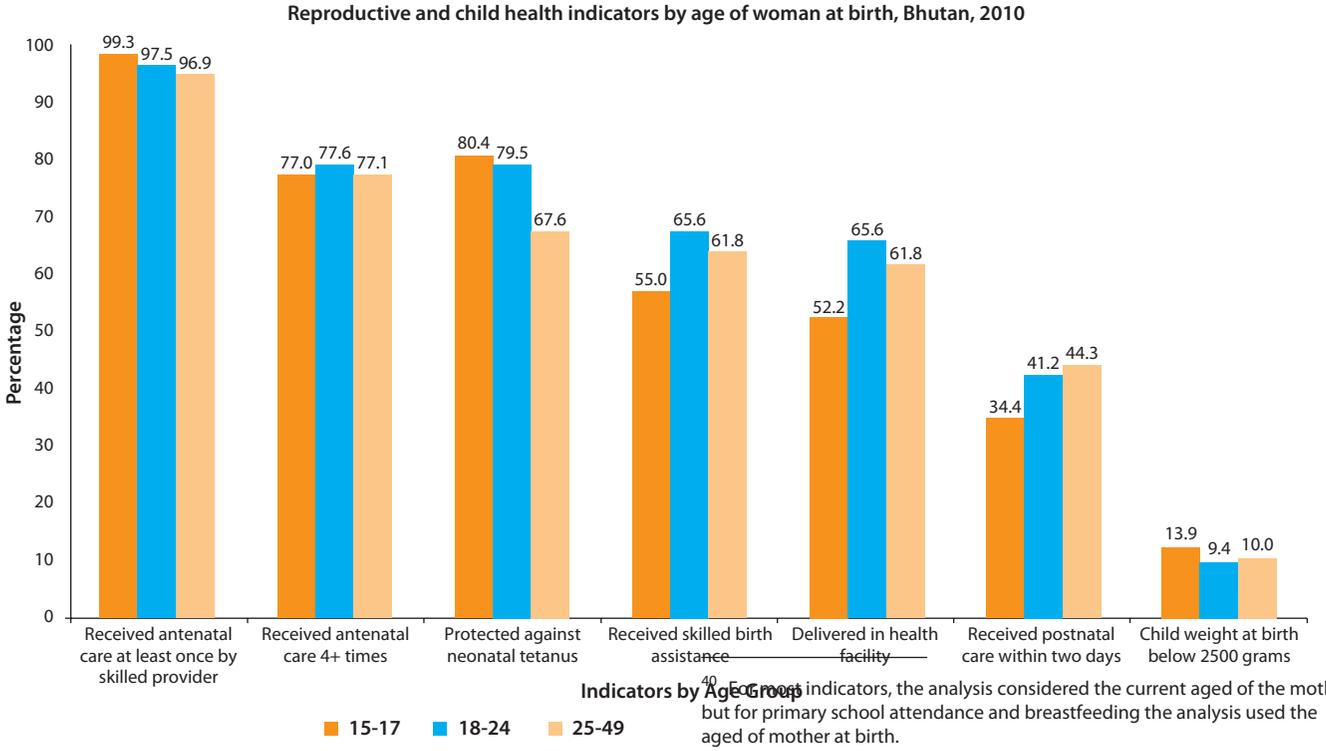
In Table 32, girls aged 15-17 years appear to experience a lower level of reproductive health care for all three indicators than their counterparts aged 18-49 years. However, because the sample size of girls aged 15-17 years that have begun childbearing is so small, these differences are not statistically significant except in the one case where girls aged 15-17 years have a lower level of institutional delivery than women aged 18-24 years. However, girls in this younger age group are more likely to give birth to newborns with low birth weight. 14 per cent of newborns to girls aged 15-17 have low birth weight compared to 10 per cent of newborns to women aged 18-49 years. This difference is statistically significant.

Figure 7 below illustrates the above discussion, showing the *observed* lower level of reproductive and newborn health for the youngest mothers aged 15-17 years and the relatively better outcomes for women aged 18-49 years.

7.4.2. Young motherhood and child outcomes

A key concern in public health is whether children of young mothers are more likely to have poorer health and educational outcomes than children of older mothers. For this reason, the analysis looked at a range of child well-being indicators by age of mother[40] and found very little evidence

Figure 7. **Reproductive and newborn health among girls and women aged 15-49 years by age of mother at birth of child, Bhutan, 2010**



[40] For most indicators, the analysis considered the current aged of the mother but for primary school attendance and breastfeeding the analysis used the aged of mother at birth.

Table 33. Child health and education outcomes by mother's age among women aged 15-49 years, Bhutan, 2010

Indicator	Age Group	Mother's age group			
		15-24		25-49	
		%	No.	%	No.
Early Childhood Education	36-59 months	6.8	478	10.3	1,866
Learning Materials in the Home	0-59 months	50.4	1,701	52.0	4,306
Inadequate Care	0-59 months	12.0	1,701	14.8	4,306
Early Childhood Development Index Score	36-59 months	68.4	478	72.2	1,866
Primary School Attendance**	6-12 years	90.4	4,474	88.9	4,310
Breastfeeding within one hour of birth**	0-2 years	58.8	1081*	58.9	1284*
Exclusive Breastfeeding**	0-5 months	46.5	173	51.2	363
Appropriate treatment of diarrhea	0-59 months	82.0	446	79.5	1,064
Care-seeking behaviour for suspected pneumonia	0-59 months	77.9	117	71.1	291
Underweight Prevalence	0-59 months	10.9	1,701	13.1	4,306
Stunting Prevalence	0-59 months	32.9	1,701	33.5	4,306
Wasting Prevalence	0-59 months	5.8	1,701	5.9	4,306

* Number of mothers who gave birth in past 2 years, 3 women who gave birth before age 15 not shown.

** Indicator uses mother's age at birth of child

for this hypothesis. Table 33 notes the national-level statistics for several key health and educational outcomes of young children. In most cases, children's outcomes by age of mother are statistically equivalent. In fact, in three of the four cases in which there is a statistical difference, children of younger mothers have a better outcome than children of older mothers.[41] In only one case – the percentage of children attending early childhood education – is the estimate lower for children of young mothers than for children of older mothers. Given these data, the report concludes that there is no evidence that mother's age bears a significant impact on the health and educational outcomes of young children in Bhutan.[42]

7.5. Section summary on early marriage, child bearing and young motherhood

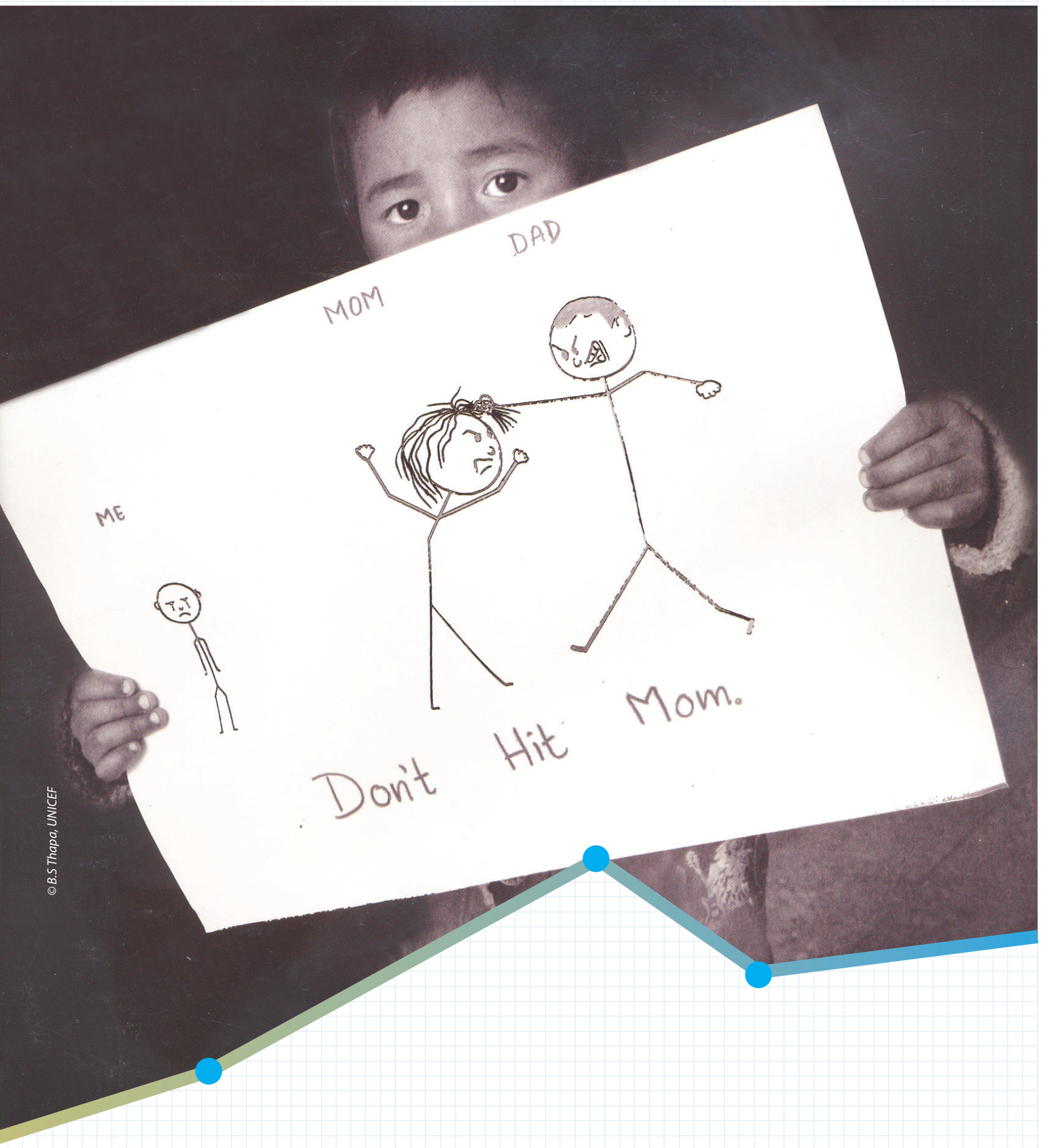
To summarise, approximately 7.5 per cent of girls aged 15-17 years in Bhutan have ever been married before the legal age of 18 years. 4.4 per cent of girls in the 15-17 years age group have already begun childbearing. Neither early marriage nor early childbearing before 18 years of age show a decline over time in Bhutan. Early childbearing has in fact increased slightly over time. Hence, more effort is required to further lower these numbers. As this analysis has shown, early marriage and childbearing have a detrimental effect on women's education. School participation evaporates almost entirely, which then thwarts overall educational attainment and adult literacy. Rural women, those from the poorest households, and those girls who have been orphaned are more likely to get married and/or give birth to children before the age of 18 years than their peers from different demographic groups.

In terms of women's reproductive health, the data show that women aged 15-17 years are more likely to have newborns with low birth weight than women aged 18-49 years. Due to a small sample size of girls aged 15-17 years who have begun childbearing, much of the data on reproductive health care is not statistically significant and therefore should be interpreted with caution. That said, it is interesting to note that though the data show equivalent levels of antenatal care uptake, the data regarding skilled birth assistance, institutional delivery and postnatal care present lower levels for the younger women aged 15-17 years. A conclusion to this discussion would be that continued attention should be given to demographic groups

[41] The three indicators are: inadequate care, primary level school attendance, and underweight prevalence.

[42] However, the analysis does find a statistically lower level of use of improved sanitation and a statistically higher level of use of solid fuels for cooking for girls and women aged 15-49 years who gave birth before the age of 18 years. These differences in household characteristics, however, did not manifest in differences in the health outcomes observed in Table 31 above.

vulnerable to early marriage and childbearing as these practices produce negative effects for women's educational, and to a lesser extent, health prospects as measured by these selected indicators. The conditions that lead poor and rural girls to disproportionately marry and give birth early should be urgently addressed.



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8. Gender and family-based violence

Box 3. Gender based violence: Any act of violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. Any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on *socially associated differences* between males and females. Includes, but it is not limited to sexual violence. While women and girls of all ages make up the majority of the victims, men and boys are also both direct and indirect victims.

Domestic Violence (DV): Domestic Violence is the act of physical, emotional, sexual or economic abuse or intimidation within a family.

8.1. Introduction

According to the BMIS, 68 per cent of women in Bhutan express an accepting attitude toward domestic violence. This statistic demonstrates a critical need of raising awareness among women in Bhutan on the unequivocal unacceptability of violence. Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread violations of human rights. In Bhutan, a 'culture of silence' still prevails around family and gender-based violence. A significant cause of this 'silence' is that often the perpetrator happens to be a family member. In Bhutan, domestic violence is still treated as a private affair and part of married life.

Domestic violence spans all social-economic levels. It occurs in the homes of both the rich and the poor and is perpetrated by abusers both old and young who are usually the husbands and male partners. Often, domestic abuse is woven into the daily routine of both the victim and the abuser. Consequently, the repetitive nature of abuse makes the victim resign herself to her fate. Socio-cultural gender biases, society's reluctance to face the sensitive issue of domestic violence and the victim's own conservative family environment compel her to maintain a stoic silence. Some of the most vulnerable victims are perhaps the children living in violent homes, experiencing domestic violence directly or witnessing it on a daily basis.

International restrictions as well as domestic laws and regulations do exist in Bhutan to protect women against violence. To begin with, Bhutan is signatory to the international Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, known informally as the international bill of rights for women. CEDAW was adopted by the United Nations in 1979 and Bhutan ratified it in 1980 without any reservation. Through its acceptance of CEDAW, Bhutan committed itself to undertake measures to end any and all forms of gender-based discrimination against women by: incorporating the principles of gender equality in the legal system; abolishing all discriminatory laws and adopting more appropriate/gender sensitive ones; establishing tribunals and other public institutions to ensure effective protection against discrimination; and eliminating all acts of discrimination against women be person, organization or enterprises.

Domestic laws such as the Marriage Act of Bhutan 1980 which covers separation, divorce and child custody were later revised to ensure more sensitivity to women's needs. Accordingly, child support was significantly revised in

favour of mothers and marriageable age was revised to 18 years. The Rape Act of 1996 lays down a range of penalties and length of imprisonment for offenders, particularly of minors. The Penal Code of Bhutan adopted in 2004 is a highly comprehensive set of legal norms and procedures to guide citizens and legislators alike to access the law and seek legal protection. The definition of rape has been expanded to cover 'marital rape' as well. The Domestic Violence Prevention Bill will address and protect women and children against domestic violence and it will also put legal mechanisms in place for the perpetrator/ abuse. The National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) monitors the issue at a policy level and formulates policies accordingly.

In 2004, RENEW was established with the objective to address the needs of survivors and provide necessary services in complement to government services. Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Sangay Choden Wangchuck is the Founder and the President of RENEW and Goodwill Ambassador for UNFPA in Bhutan. While on a high-level advocacy tour to all 20 dzongkhags, Her Majesty met several victims of domestic violence. Most of them were found to be wilfully neglected by their intimate partners only to be the victim of sexual abuse by another man. Like in every other country, women and children in Bhutan are disproportionately affected by domestic and gender-based violence.

Up till November 2011, RENEW has seen 1,072 survivors. Physical abuse is the most common type of case, with 99 cases out of the 274 cases registered in 2011. RENEW has been successful in establishing Community Based Support system in all 20 dzongkhags to provide information on domestic violence and services to survivors. Till date, the Royal Bhutan Police has established specialised Women and Child Protection Units (WCPU) in three urban centres. RENEW works closely with the WCPU and the Forensic Unit at the hospital in Thimphu, which provides medical support to survivors through their One Stop Crisis Centre.

The Royal Bhutan Police plans to establish Women and Child Protection Units or Desks in all 20 dzongkhags shortly. For now, Thimphu houses the only existing One Stop Crisis Centre, there are recommendations to roll out this service across the country.

Each of the three agencies – RENEW, Royal Bhutan Police, and NCWC - have records of domestic violence with a good referral network between them. The WCPU and Forensic Unit contribute in providing services to the survivors of domestic violence, particularly in Thimphu, where all services are active.

While such support services for survivors are available, albeit in a limited way, the most critical problem is that hardly anyone so remotely located is aware of the existence of these facilities. Additionally, making these support services accessible in such remote regions, some without road connections, is another major challenge.

Cultural norms can deter an individual from identifying and asserting their fundamental rights, and they are forced by consequences to be tied down in an abusive relationship. Financial difficulties, including financial dependency on their spouse, and concern regarding their children are some of the reasons that RENEW's clients prefer to reconcile with their partner and not come out of the cycle of violence. A common reason for women returning to an abusive partner is the fear of losing the support of family members if she leaves her husband. In many relationships, it is the woman who is blamed for not keeping the marriage together. It is important to note that in Bhutan's context, alcohol use is often a factor in domestic violence cases.

Life is particularly harsh for women living in the rural/ remote villages. Rural women perpetually run the risk of stigma and discrimination if they talk about their private lives. As such, they certainly don't get the required support and protection from society or their families to break free from violence. Most often, the leaders/decision-makers in the village suggest to the woman to reconcile with her husband by signing internal settlement documents. RENEW has been engaging decision-makers at the village and district level to participate and endeavour to resolve these issues.

When a survivor of domestic violence reports a case to the police or if she files a case at the court, the woman is always asked if she would like to settle the case internally and resolve it. In some cases, a survivor of domestic violence files a case to the court and subsequently gets a divorce from her abusive partner. However, soon after she decides to reconcile with her husband. But if she faces violence again, she has to put up a petition to the court for divorce since both the woman and her partner will be penalized for going against the law (for getting a legal divorce and reconciling again).

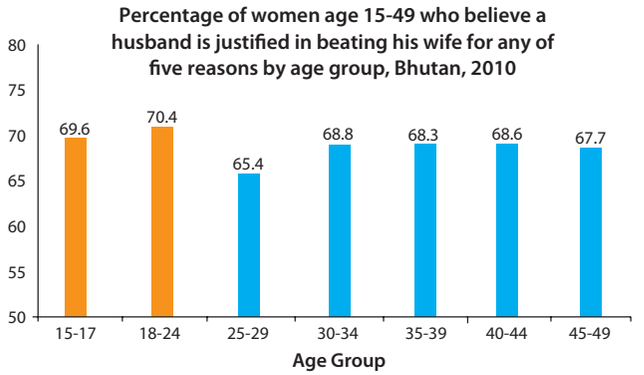
8.2. Attitudes toward domestic violence among women

The BMIS measured the extent to which women in Bhutan believe domestic violence is justified by asking them whether it is acceptable for a husband or partner to hit or beat his wife for any of five reasons. The five reasons are:

Table 34. Attitudes toward domestic violence among women aged 15-49 years, Bhutan, 2010

% of women age 15-49 years who believe a husband is justified in beating his wife/partner:		Number of women age 15-49 years
Age	For any of these reasons	
15-19	70.1	2,052
20-24	70.3	2,502
25-29	65.4	2,721
30-34	68.8	2,219
35-39	68.3	1,856
40-44	68.6	1,561
45-49	67.7	1,106
Total	**68.4**	**14,018**

Figure 8. Attitudes toward domestic violence among women aged 15-49 years, Bhutan, 2010



a) if she goes out without telling him; b) if she neglects the children; c) if she argues with him; d) if she refuses sex with him; and e) if she burns the food. Neglecting the children ranked highest as a justified cause for beating followed by going out without telling him and arguing. Nationally, 68 per cent of ever married women in Bhutan believe a husband or partner has the right to hit or beat his wife for at least one of these reasons.

One of the more concerning findings from the BMIS survey was that acceptance of domestic violence among girls and young women aged 15-24 years is higher than that of their older counterparts.[43] As Table 34 and Figure 8 show, 70 per cent of young women aged 15-24 years in Bhutan believe a husband is justified in beating his wife for any of the five reasons, with neglecting the children cited as the most common justification. Given women's tremendous gains in educational attainment over the past two generations in Bhutan, one may have expected acceptance of domestic violence to be in decline.[44] These data suggest, however, that education alone will not eliminate deeply rooted cultural beliefs that get passed on through and internalised by generations of women. And, to the extent that acceptance of domestic violence signifies prevalence of actual violence, these data should concern policymakers.

To understand this phenomenon better, it is helpful to contextualise Bhutan within its larger geographical region. Map 2 illustrates the level of acceptance of domestic violence across South Asia among women aged 15-49 years for those countries for which we have data. It helps place Bhutan in the context of a larger region that comprises the Northeast Himalayas and parts of Northeast India where acceptance of domestic violence is very high, even exceeding 90 per cent in Paro dzongkhag. Indeed, Bhutanese dzongkhags represent 7 of the 10 South Asian sub-national regions with the highest level of acceptance of domestic violence and 13 of the 20 highest sub-national regions. Indeed, all but two of Bhutan's 20 dzongkhags fall within the top half of regions with a higher level of acceptance (Thimphu and Lhuentse as the exceptions).

Map 3 zooms in to look at Dzongkhag-level data of *young women's* attitudes toward domestic violence. It shows no clear pattern in that two of the wealthiest dzongkhags, Thimphu and Paro, are at opposite extremes as are two of the poorest dzongkhags, Lhuentse and Trashi Yangtse. Likewise, there are no observable distinctions by ethnic or linguistic boundaries. This finding is due, in part, to the disappointing fact that there is little variability at all – acceptance of domestic violence is almost universally very high across each sub-stratum of Bhutanese society.

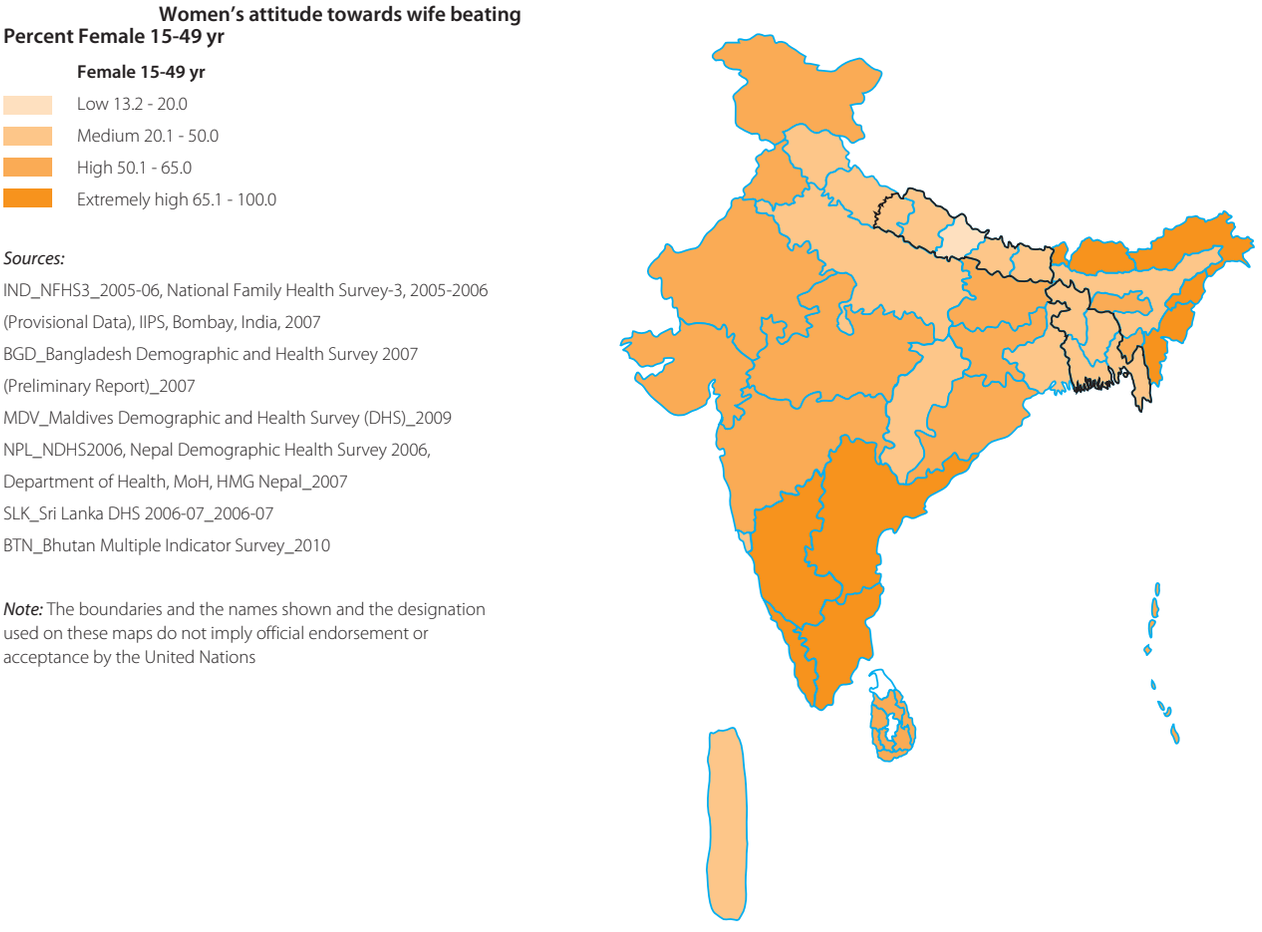
Focusing on girls aged 15-17 years, we observe rather small differences across demographic groups. As Table 35 shows, there are a few exceptions, with rural girls more likely than urban girls to accept domestic violence. In terms of wealth status, only girls from the richest households express a lower level of acceptance. While statistically significant, none of the differences in estimates are very practically significant as they rarely exceed 10 percentage points. Interestingly, there is no difference in attitudes toward domestic violence by the education level of girls aged 15-17

[43] This difference between women aged 15-24 years and women aged 25-49 years is statistically significant at the 99 per cent level.

[44] Indeed, despite significant educational advances for women across the world, data show that young women aged 15-19 years globally are no less likely to accept domestic violence than any other age cohort of women aged 15-49 years. See Progress for Children: A Report Card on Child Protection. 2009. UNICEF.

GENDER AND FAMILY-BASED VIOLENCE

Map 2. **Attitudes toward domestic violence among women aged 15-49 years in South Asia, 2005 – 2010**



Sources:

IND_NFHS3_2005-06, National Family Health Survey-3, 2005-2006 (Provisional Data), IIPS, Bombay, India, 2007

BGD_Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2007 (Preliminary Report)_2007

MDV_Maldives Demographic and Health Survey (DHS)_2009

NPL_NDHS2006, Nepal Demographic Health Survey 2006, Department of Health, MoH, HMG Nepal_2007

SLK_Sri Lanka DHS 2006-07_2006-07

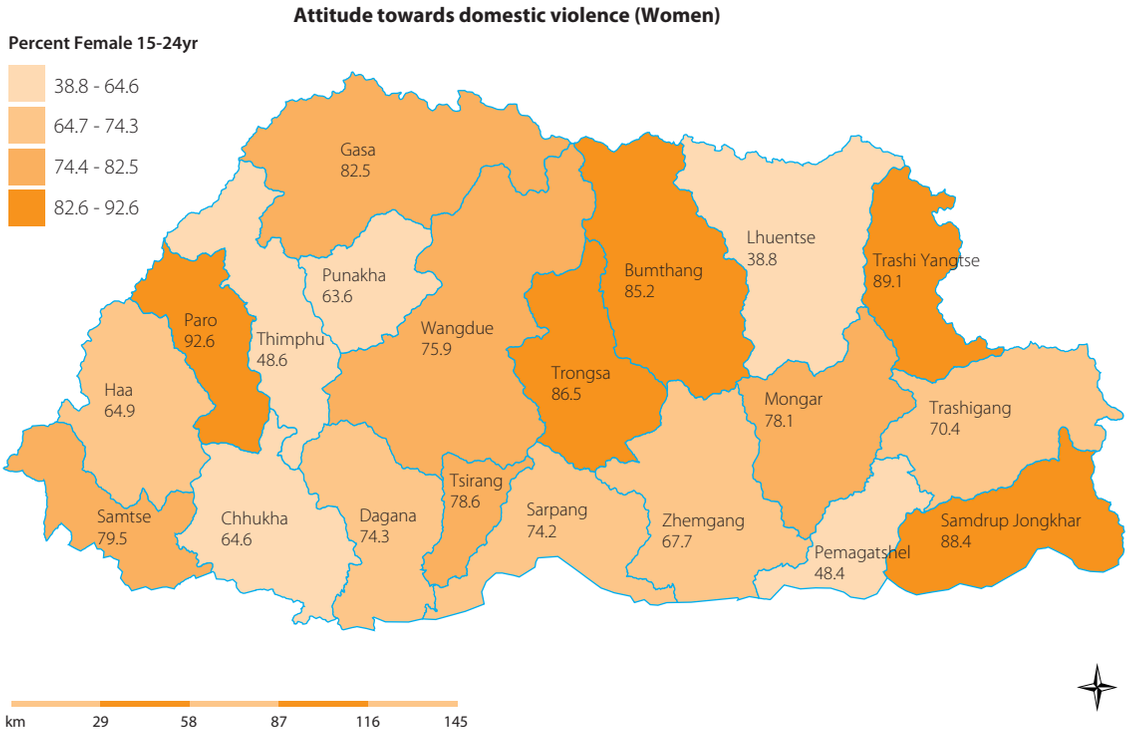
BTN_Bhutan Multiple Indicator Survey_2010

Note: The boundaries and the names shown and the designation used on these maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations

Table 35. **Attitudes toward domestic violence among girls aged 15-17 years, Bhutan, 2010**

		% of women age 15-17 years who believe a husband is justified in beating his wife/partner:						Number of women age 15-17 years
		If goes out without telling him	If she neglects the children	If she argues with him	If she refuses sex with him	If she burns the food	For any of these reasons	
Area	Urban	34.9	51.0	32.4	12.7	16.3	63.0	456
	Rural	42.7	58.4	43.4	21.3	24.3	73.7	749
Education	None	37.2	50.0	42.9	19.7	25.4	68.8	266
	Primary	45.9	53.1	37.7	23.7	22.8	69.0	202
	Secondary +	39.0	58.3	38.4	15.8	19.3	70.1	738
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	36.9	55.2	41.7	23.8	24.6	72.1	188
	Second	48.7	69.6	40.5	25.0	26.6	76.5	177
	Middle	49.1	57.1	53.0	20.9	20.1	76.4	182
	Fourth	36.8	55.5	42.4	18.1	26.3	73.6	272
	Richest	34.6	48.7	28.9	10.6	14.2	59.3	386
Marital status	Ever married / in union	42.8	57.7	46.1	33.3	25.5	69.4	90
	Never married / in union	39.5	55.4	38.7	16.8	20.9	69.6	1,115
Total		**39.7**	**55.6**	**39.3**	**18.0**	**21.3**	**69.6**	**1,205**

Map 3. **Attitudes toward domestic violence among young women age 15-24 by Dzongkhag, Bhutan, 2010**



Note: The value for Gasa is based on just 25 to 49 unweighted cases

Sources: BTN_BMIS_2011

years. In testing acceptance of domestic violence by age of marriage and spousal age difference among women aged 20-49 years, we found no statistically significant differences either.

8.2.1. Attitudes toward domestic violence, education and literacy

As mentioned earlier, the substantial increase in the level of education of women alone does not appear to have led to any decrease in the percentage of women who express accepting attitudes toward domestic violence. Table 36 shows the percentage of girls of secondary school age (15-17 years) who believe domestic violence is justified by whether they currently attend secondary school or not. The data show that acceptance of domestic violence does not differ statistically by school attendance status (70 per cent in both cases).[45] However, a noteworthy feature of this table is the decrease in acceptance of domestic violence from age 15 years to age 17 years among girls who attend school. While the point estimates *between* secondary school attendance groups do not differ statistically when controlling for age, the maximum difference by age *within* each school attendance group is statistically significant *for those who attend school.* The conclusion is that school participation may contribute to decreased acceptance of domestic violence *over time* as a girl gets older.

Table 37 shows acceptance of domestic violence among girls aged 15-17 years by their overall educational attainment – whether they have no formal education, any or completed primary level education, or any secondary level education or above. The data show no statistical or practical difference at all in acceptance of domestic violence by education level for any demographic group.

Finally, we look at acceptance of domestic violence by literacy status. Table 38 shows that 67 per cent of girls aged 15-17 years who are not literate accept domestic violence compared with 71 per cent who are literate – point estimates with no statistical difference. However, non-literate rural girls, never married girls, and girls from the richest

[45] While not shown in the body of this report, a separate test of secondary school participation rates by whether or not women aged 15-18 years accept domestic violence also shows no statistical difference. Likewise, data show no difference in young women's secondary school attendance by whether or not their mothers accept domestic violence.

Table 36. Attitudes toward domestic violence among girls aged 15-17 years by secondary school attendance, Bhutan, 2010

		Those who do not attend secondary school		Those who attend secondary school		Total women 15-17
		% who believe violence is justified for any of five reasons	Total women 15-17	% who believe violence is justified for any of five reasons	Total women 15-17	
Area	Urban	63.8	101	65.0	370	470
	Rural	71.1	422	76.2	323	745
Age at the begining of the school year	15	71.0	143	75.2	223	366
	16	66.0	169	70.1	255	424
	17	71.8	211	65.2	215	426
Mother's education	None	70.3	381	73.0	450	831
	Primary	63.9	21	62.1	80	100
	Secondary +	59.7	82	66.3	117	199
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	71.0	163	84.1	30	192
	Second	74.4	120	76.6	50	171
	Middle	76.1	95	75.7	94	189
	Fourth	70.8	52	73.9	221	273
	Richest	54.0	93	63.3	298	391
Total		**69.7**	**523**	**70.2**	**693**	**1,216**

Age determined by age at beginning of current school year, not current age

Data for 10 cases in which the mother is not in the household have not been shown

Table 37. Attitudes toward domestic violence among women aged 15-17 years by educational attainment, Bhutan, 2010

		Education							
		None		Primary		Secondary+		Total	
		% of women who believe domestic violence is justified	Number of women 15-17	% of women who believe domestic violence is justified	Number of women 15-17	% of women who believe domestic violence is justified	Number of women 15-17	% of women who believe domestic violence is justified	Number of women 15-17
Area	Urban	[50.9]	39	[72.2]	31	63.5	387	63.0	456
	Rural	71.9	227	68.4	171	77.4	351	73.7	749
Wealth index Quintiles	Poorest	69.6	102	68.9	53	[85.3]	32	72.1	188
	Second	72.2	61	74.6	53	82.2	64	76.5	177
	Middle	[75.7]	41	[74.7]	46	77.4	95	76.4	182
	Fourth	*	27	*	15	74.1	230	73.6	272
	Richest	[46.4]	35	*	34	61.0	318	59.3	386
Marital status	Ever married/ in union	79.6	60	*	17	*	14	69.4	90
	Never married/ in union	65.7	206	71.6	185	70.3	724	69.6	1,115
Total		**68.8**	**266**	**69.0**	**202**	**70.1**	**738**	**69.6**	**1,205**

households display a statistically lower level of acceptance of domestic violence than their literate counterparts.

A simple maximum likelihood regression was also run on attitudes toward domestic violence among women age 15-24 to control for several variables that may affect the likelihood of accepting violence against a wife by a husband (see Annex 2). The regression output shows that living in a rural area substantially increases the likelihood that a woman will accept domestic violence. It also shows that increases in women's household wealth status are associated with a decrease in the likelihood of accepting domestic violence.

Table 38. Attitudes toward domestic violence among girls aged 15-17 by literacy, Bhutan, 2010

		Not Literate		Literate		Number of girls age 15-17
		% of girls who believe domestic violence is justified	Number of girls age 15-17	% of girls who believe domestic violence is justified	Number of girls age 15-17	
Area	Urban	[56.0]	58	64.0	398	456
	Rural	68.9	292	76.8	457	749
Education	None	67.8	253	*	12	266
	Primary	63.9	96	73.6	106	202
	Secondary +	*	0	70.1	738	738
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	69.2	124	77.6	64	188
	Second	70.6	83	81.7	95	177
	Middle	72.9	57	77.9	125	182
	Fourth	[74.0]	28	73.6	244	272
	Richest	[46.5]	58	61.6	328	386
Marital status	Ever married / in union	74.3	70	*	21	90
	Never married / in union	64.9	280	71.2	835	1,115
Total		**66.8**	**350**	**70.8**	**856**	**1,205**

8.3. Experience of Domestic Violence

The BMIS asked currently and formerly married women aged 15-49 years a series of questions about their experience of various types of violence by their husbands or partners. These questions related to emotional, physical, and sexual forms of violence. Table 39 provides an overview of the findings. 24 per cent of ever married women aged 15-49 years report having experienced domestic violence by their husband or partner at some point in their life. The percentage of women who have ever experienced any domestic violence increases with age. Whereas 18 per cent of women aged 15-19 years have experienced domestic violence, 26 per cent of women aged 40-49 years have. This is not necessarily an indication that domestic violence is in decline. Rather, it more broadly reflects the fact that the likelihood of any event *ever* occurring in one's life increases with age.

The prevalence of domestic violence experience is strongly associated with poverty. Women from the poorest wealth quintile of households are considerably more likely to report having ever experienced any form of domestic violence than women from the richest quintile of households (29 per cent versus 17 per cent, respectively). Similarly, women with no formal education report a 50 per cent higher level of experience of any form of domestic violence than women with secondary level education (26 per cent versus 17 per cent, respectively). Rural women are also more likely to have ever experienced domestic violence than urban women (26 per cent versus 20 per cent). Formerly married women exhibit one of the highest rates of experience of domestic violence. 39 per cent of separated, divorced, and/or widowed women have ever experienced violence by their husband or partner compared with 23 per cent of currently married women.

Table 39 also presents more specific data on the types of domestic violence experienced by women. It shows that emotional violence is most prevalent with 18 per cent of women experiencing this form of violence. It is followed by physical violence (14 per cent) and sexual violence (7 per cent). 3 per cent of all women have experienced all three forms of domestic violence at some point in their married life. Regardless of whether the violence is emotional, physical, sexual, or some combination of the three, the poorest women, rural women, older women, formerly married women, and those with no education are more likely to have experienced abuse by their husband or partner than their counterparts.

Figure 9 illustrates these findings showing that nearly one of every four ever married women aged 15-49 years in Bhutan have experienced some form of domestic violence by their husband. Although emotional violence is the most common form of violence, an equal percentage of women have experienced physical *or* sexual violence in their life.

Table 39. **Percentage of ever married or in union women aged15-49 years who have ever experienced domestic violence committed by husband by type of violence by demographic background, Bhutan, 2010**

		% of ever married women age 15-49 years who have ever experienced domestic violence committed by husband by type							Total number of ever married women age 15-49
		Emotional violence	Physical violence	Sexual violence	Physical or sexual violence	Physical and sexual violence	Emotional, physical, *or* sexual violence	Emotional, physical, *and* sexual violence	
Area	Urban	14.9	13.0	5.8	15.1	3.7	20.1	3.0	2,874
	Rural	19.1	14.5	7.7	18.2	4.0	25.7	3.3	7,587
Age	15-19	13.9	9.9	4.8	11.7	3.1	17.7	2.3	330
	20-24	14.6	10.6	6.1	14.2	2.5	20.9	1.8	1,601
	25-29	16.5	12.7	6.5	15.6	3.6	22.1	2.8	2,280
	30-34	19.2	15.0	7.2	18.2	4.0	25.1	3.3	2,022
	35-39	19.1	17.2	7.5	20.4	4.4	27.2	3.9	1,728
	40-44	20.8	15.7	8.9	19.2	5.4	26.5	4.5	1,468
	45-49	19.1	14.9	7.6	18.4	4.1	25.3	3.7	1,031
Education	None	18.9	15.1	7.6	18.5	4.1	25.5	3.4	7,499
	Primary	18.8	16.5	7.5	19.5	4.5	26.0	3.5	1,246
	Secondary +	13.1	8.1	5.1	10.5	2.7	16.7	2.1	1,716
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	22.2	17.1	9.2	20.9	5.4	29.3	4.4	1,987
	Second	20.2	15.4	9.1	20.0	4.4	26.8	3.6	2,086
	Middle	17.8	13.4	6.4	16.4	3.4	24.1	2.7	2,107
	Fourth	17.3	14.8	6.7	17.6	3.9	24.0	3.3	2,247
	Richest	12.2	9.8	4.4	11.7	2.5	16.5	2.1	2,035
Marital/ Union status	Currently married/in union	16.7	12.8	6.7	16.0	3.5	22.7	2.8	9,600
	Formerly married/in union	31.1	28.9	12.3	32.3	9.0	39.8	7.7	861
Total		**17.9**	**14.1**	**7.1**	**17.3**	**3.9**	**24.1**	**3.2**	**10,461**

Figure 9. **Percentage of ever married or in union women aged15-49 years who have ever experienced specific form(s) of domestic violence, Bhutan, 2010**

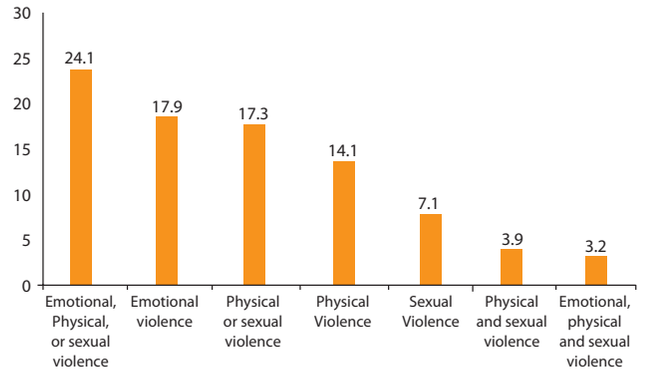


Table 40 continues this discussion by viewing these data at the dzongkhags level. BMIS data indicate that the prevalence of domestic violence varies tremendously across Bhutan. Women in Tsirang, Paro, and Thimphu report the lowest levels of any form of domestic violence whereas women in Dagana, Pema Gatshel, Samdrup Jongkhar, Zhemgang, and Trashiyangtse report astonishingly high levels of nearly every form of violence or combination thereof by their husbands. Indeed, no less than one of every two women in Trashi Yangtze (51 per cent) report having ever experienced any form of domestic violence.

Table 41 provides further detail on the specific types of violence that women report to be most common in their lives. According to the BMIS, emotional violence takes the form of a husband or partner publicly humiliating, threatening, or insulting his wife or partner. The data show that a relatively equal number of women report experiencing the three different types of emotional violence (9 to 12 per cent).

With regard to physical violence, women were asked questions about their experience in the order of increasing severity. Women cited slapping as the most common form of physical violence used against them by their husbands followed by pushing, shaking, or having objects thrown at them. The least common forms of physical violence were the most extreme. Nevertheless, 2 per cent of women

Table 40. Percentage of ever married or in union women aged 15-49 years who have ever experienced domestic violence committed by husband by type of violence by dzongkhag, Bhutan, 2010

		% of ever married or in union women age 15-49 years who have ever experienced domestic violence committed by husband by type							Total of ever married women
		Emotional	Physical	Sexual	Physical or sexual	Physical and sexual	Emotional, Physical or sexual	Emotional, Physical and sexual	
Dzongkhag	Bumthang	19.8	13.4	4.9	15.4	2.9	23.9	2.5	246
	Chhukha	13.4	14.4	9.2	18.0	5.6	20.8	4.4	1,104
	Dagana	36.7	19.1	10.4	24.3	5.3	42.7	4.7	422
	Gasa	11.2	11.2	5.5	13.3	3.4	15.3	2.1	95
	Haa	17.8	13.9	13.4	20.8	6.4	27.2	5.7	223
	Lhuntse	13.2	15.3	3.0	15.5	2.7	20.1	1.8	247
	Monggar	16.0	16.5	7.4	19.4	4.5	24.1	3.4	773
	Paro	8.8	8.7	2.0	8.9	1.8	12.8	1.2	593
	Pema Gatshel	25.8	18.5	30.1	37.7	10.9	42.1	8.6	406
	Punakha	22.8	10.4	6.7	14.0	3.1	27.1	2.6	338
	Samdrup Jongkhar	30.9	28.1	13.2	31.6	9.6	40.4	8.4	638
	Samtse	21.1	16.0	5.4	18.4	3.0	27.8	2.5	1,186
	Sarpang	6.7	10.0	2.4	10.4	2.0	11.6	1.5	703
	Thimphu	7.8	6.6	2.1	7.5	1.2	9.8	1.2	1,098
	Trashigang	16.5	11.8	2.7	12.5	2.0	20.2	1.7	836
	Trashi Yangtse	43.1	16.1	23.3	33.3	6.2	51.0	5.7	242
	Trongsa	30.8	18.8	4.3	19.6	3.5	34.8	3.0	223
	Tsirang	4.5	5.4	0.6	5.9	0.1	7.1	0.1	350
	Wangdue Phodrang	19.0	15.0	11.7	20.3	6.4	27.2	4.9	457
	Zhemgang	32.1	19.6	0.2	19.6	0.2	38.4	0.2	281
Total		**17.9**	**14.1**	**7.1**	**17.3**	**3.9**	**24.1**	**3.2**	**10,461**

Note: Sample size is limited to ever married woman who were able to complete the domestic violence module of questionnaire without interruption

Table 41. Percentage of ever married women aged 15-49 years who have ever experienced domestic violence committed by husband by type of violence, Bhutan, 2010

Type of violence		Total
Emotional Violence	Said or did something to humiliate her in front of others	9.2
	Threatened to hurt of harm her or someone close to her	10.4
	Insulted her or made her feel bad about herself	11.5
Physical Violence	Pushed her, shook her, or threw something at her	8.3
	Slapped her	9.8
	Twisted her arm or pulled her hair	6.2
	Punched her with his fist or with something that could hurt her	7.1
	Kicked her, dragged her, or beat her up	6.6
	Tried to choke her or burn her on purpose	1.8
	Threatened her or attacked her with a knife, gun, or any other weapon	2.0
Sexual Violence	Physically forced her to have sexual intercourse with him even when she did not want to	6.6
	Forced her to perform any sexual acts she did not want to	3.0
Number of women		**10,461**

Note: Sample size is limited to ever married women who were able to complete the domestic violence module of the questionnaire without interruption

report having had their husband or partner threaten or attack with a knife or gun.

In terms of sexual violence, more than 6 per cent of women report having been raped by their husband or partner. 3 per cent of women report having been forced to perform sexual acts for their husband that they did not want to.

Beyond asking women whether they have ever experienced domestic violence, the BMIS asked women whether they experienced each type of domestic violence "often or only sometimes" during the twelve months preceding the survey. Lest readers believe that the data presented above represent isolated events in women's lives, Table 42 indicates otherwise. Of the 24 per cent of women aged 15-49 years who

Table 42. Percentage of ever married women aged 15-49 years who experienced any form of violence committed by husband in past 12 months by frequency, Bhutan 2010

		% of ever married women age 15-49 who have ever experienced any violence	% of ever married women age 15-49 who have ever experienced any violence in past 12 months			Total number of women 15-49
			Often	Sometimes	Often or Sometimes	
Dzongkha	Bumthang	23.9	5.3	20.2	20.7	246
	Chhukha	20.8	2.1	12.9	13.4	1,104
	Dagana	42.7	4.8	40.3	41.3	422
	Gasa	15.3	5.9	15.3	15.3	95
	Haa	27.2	10.7	20.3	25.6	223
	Lhuntse	20.1	2.7	20.1	20.1	247
	Monggar	24.1	5.4	20.7	22.2	773
	Paro	12.8	1.4	12.6	12.8	593
	Pema Gatshel	43.1	12.8	35.7	39.2	406
	Punakha	27.1	1.6	23.1	23.2	338
	Samdrup Jongkhar	40.4	6.7	32.9	33.3	638
	Samtse	27.8	4.1	23.7	24.7	1,186
	Sarpang	11.6	1.8	5.2	6.3	703
	Thimphu	9.8	1.9	8.0	8.3	1,098
	Trashigang	20.2	2.9	19.8	20.2	836
	Trashi Yangtse	51.0	3.8	50.4	51	242
	Trongsa	34.8	3.9	25.7	26.6	223
	Tsirang	7.1	2.9	5.8	7.1	250
	Wangdue Phodrang	27.2	7.1	26.4	26.8	457
	Zhemgang	38.4	2.1	38.0	38.4	281
Area	Urban	20.1	2.8	16.0	16.5	2,874
	Rural	25.7	4.4	22.1	23.1	7,587
Age	15-19	17.7	3.4	14.6	15.7	330
	20-24	20.9	3.3	18.0	19.1	1,601
	25-29	22.1	3.8	19.5	20.1	2,280
	30-34	25.1	2.9	22.0	22.7	2,022
	35-39	27.2	4.1	22.3	23.1	1,728
	40-44	26.5	4.7	21.1	22.1	1,468
	45-49	25.3	4.1	21.2	22.1	1,031
Marital/Union status	Currently married/in union	22.7	3.3	19.8	20.5	9,600
	Formerly married/in union	39.8	10.8	27.7	29.7	861
Education	None	25.5	4.3	21.6	22.5	7,499
	Primary	26.0	3.9	21.6	22.4	1,246
	Secondary+	16.7	2.2	14.5	15.0	1,716
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	29.3	4.6	26.0	26.9	1,987
	Second	26.8	5.6	23.2	24.5	2,086
	Middle	24.1	4.1	20.3	21.3	2,107
	Fourth	24.0	4.1	19.9	20.8	2,247
	Richest	16.5	1.3	12.9	13.0	2,035
Total		**24.1**	**3.9**	**20.4**	**21.3**	**10,461**

Note: Sample size is limited to ever married woman who were able to complete the domestic violence module of questionnaire without interruption

reported having ever experienced any form of domestic violence, a full 88 per cent of them report having experienced some form of domestic violence often or sometimes in the previous year. Women from the poorest households, those who are currently married, and younger women aged 20-34 years report the highest levels of frequent domestic violence, defined as occurring often or sometimes during the previous year. Even 74 per cent of formerly married women report having experienced some form of violence by their ex-husband or partner in the previous year. This may be due to either a recent split or continued exposure to the man, which is a plausible possibility in many areas of rural Bhutan.

A shocking finding in this table is that 100 per cent of the women in seven dzongkhags (Gasa, Lhuentse, Paro, Trashigang, Trashi Yangtse, Tsirang, and Zhemgang) who report having ever experienced domestic violence also report having experienced some form of violence in the previous twelve months.

The findings presented above in Table 42 are not unique to the experience of 'any' form of domestic violence. 89 per cent of women who have experienced emotional violence have reported having experienced some form of physical violence often or sometimes in the year prior to the survey. Of women who report having ever experienced physical violence, this figure is 80 per cent. And of women who ever experienced sexual violence, a stunning 90 per cent report having experienced sexual violence in the previous year. These data can be viewed in detail in the tables presented in Annex 3.

8.3.1. Attitudes toward domestic violence among women who have experienced domestic violence

One very important question is whether women who experience domestic violence are more or less likely to express acceptance of domestic violence. In other words, do women who experience domestic violence come to believe that it is unjustified in greater numbers than women who have never experienced domestic violence? Or, do women who experience domestic violence internalise the violence and believe that they deserve it?

This analysis tested attitudes toward domestic violence among ever married women aged 15-49 years by their experience of domestic violence. Table 43 shows the results. Among the majority of women who have never experienced domestic violence, two-thirds (67 per cent) say that the violence is justified for at least one of five reasons.[46] This

Table 43. Attitudes towards domestic violence among ever married women aged 15-49 years by their experience of domestic violence, Bhutan, 2010

		Has never experienced domestic violence		Has ever experienced domestic violence		Has ever experienced domestic violence, but not in the past 12 months		Has experienced domestic violence often in the past 12 months		Number of married women age 15-49
		% of women who believe domestic violence is justified	Number of married women age 15-49	% of women who believe domestic violence is justified	Number of married women age 15-49	% of women who believe domestic violence is justified	Number of married women age 15-49	% of women who believe domestic violence is justified	Number of married women age 15-49	
Area	Urban	62.0	2,298	75.8	576	77.5	406	84.0	80	2,874
	Rural	69.3	5,639	81.6	1,948	82.1	1630	87.0	332	7,587
Education	None	68.6	5,585	80.8	1,914	81.6	1552	87.1	325	7,499
	Primary	68.1	922	85.4	324	85.0	247	86.6	48	1,246
	Secondary +	60.8	1,429	71.5	287	74.5	237	[81.0]	38	1,716
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	66.3	1,405	79.3	582	79.7	511	90.0	91	1,987
	Second	69.8	1,528	83.4	559	84.2	474	87.5	116	2,086
	Middle	70.7	1,599	80.1	509	81.0	414	82.8	87	2,107
	Fourth	69.1	1,708	82.7	539	82.6	413	86.2	91	2,247
	Richest	60.3	1,698	73.2	337	75.9	224	[82.4]	27	2,035
Total		**67.2**	**7,937**	**80.3**	**2,525**	**81.2**	**2036**	**86.5**	**412**	**10,461**

Note: Sample size is limited to ever married women who were able to complete the domestic violence module of the questionnaire without interruption

[46] The five reasons are: going out without telling the husband/partner, neglecting the children, arguing, refuses sex, or burns the food.

figure is very close to the national average of 68 per cent for all ever married women aged 15-49 years.

However, for women who have *ever* experienced domestic violence, acceptance climbs steeply to 80 per cent. In other words, four of every five women who have experienced violence by their husband or partner say that this violence is justified in some circumstances. The highest level of acceptance is expressed by women who have experienced some form of violence against them by their husband or partner often in the prior year. A stunningly high 87 per cent of women who experience violence frequently express accepting attitudes of violence by husbands against their wives or partners. The difference in acceptance of domestic violence between women who have experienced violence and those who have not is statistically and practically significant for all data for every demographic group presented in Table 43 below.

The pattern of increasing acceptance of violence with increasing levels of experience of violence holds rather evenly across all demographic characteristics. Whether a woman is urban or rural, educated or not, poor or rich, if she experiences more violence she is more likely to believe that domestic violence is justified.[47]

These findings have powerful implications for the government and other organisations that work on behalf of women who experience domestic violence. The data suggest that women who experience domestic violence may be inclined to believe that it is justified and as such, may not seek out support services. In addition, as the majority of women in Bhutan believe that domestic violence is justified; abused women may be hesitant to seek help from family, friends, and neighbours. For these reasons, increased sensitisation will be required to publicise that domestic violence is unacceptable in all circumstances and that women who experience domestic violence do not deserve it.

8.4. Section Summary on gender and family-based violence

Violence against women and girls is a major violation of human rights. In Bhutan, the perception that domestic violence is a 'private affair', if not part of married life, is still prevalent, and a 'culture of silence' around family and gender-based violence is fairly common. Nearly one in every four ever married women aged 15-49 years reports having experienced domestic violence by their husband or partner at some point in their life. In almost 90 per cent of these cases, the violence happened more than once or even often during the preceding year.

Experience with domestic violence is more prevalent among rural women, and is associated with poverty and lack of formal education. It is especially high among formerly married women (39 per cent). Some southern dzongkhags stand out with high levels of nearly every form of domestic violence against women (emotional, physical, and sexual).

Acceptance of domestic violence is surprisingly high in Bhutan (68 per cent) and, even more surprisingly, slightly higher than average among young women aged 15-24 years. The most commonly cited justification is neglecting the children besides going out without the husband's consent and arguing. The acceptance of domestic violence among women is slightly higher in rural areas, and lower among the richest women, but otherwise quite constant across all demographic groups. The data show that acceptance remains high even among women with secondary level education. Data based on all age groups show that experience of domestic violence is associated with an increased level of acceptance. As much as 87 per cent of the women who frequently experienced violence express an accepting attitude.

These findings have policy implications for the government and other organisations that seek to protect women from domestic violence. Action must be taken to reduce the number of women in Bhutan, including adolescents and well educated women, who believe that domestic violence is justified. Victims of domestic violence may be very hesitant to seek help from either family and friends or professional institutions. It will require strong, concerted efforts from health professionals, the educational system, the police, legal, and judicial systems, and from civil society organisations to communicate to men and women, and boys and girls, that domestic violence is never acceptable. In order to have any effect, health care targeting victims of domestic violence will have to be more forthcoming and pro-active in discussing these issues.

[47] In a separate test of whether acceptance of domestic violence differs by women's experience of domestic violence and by whether they married early (before the age of 18 years), no statistical difference in acceptance of violence by early marriage status was found for any of the categories in Table 43 of "experience of domestic violence".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9. Conclusions

As policymakers in the Royal Government of Bhutan have set forth to develop the country's 11th Five Year Plan and craft appropriate policy and programme interventions for children, it is hoped that this analysis provides relevant evidence about some of the key protection issues that affect children and young women, including birth registration, child labour, early marriage and childbearing, and attitudes towards violence in the home. This report has purposely limited the scope of topics in order to analyse at greater depth the rich data contained in the landmark Bhutan Multiple Indicator Survey 2010. The report recognises that the issues addressed and data presented in this report are not exhaustive of all those faced by the children in Bhutan. For example, the report does not address important protection issues such as the experience of violence (emotional, physical, or sexual) of younger children, trafficking, substance use and abuse, or children in conflict with the law. Policymakers are encouraged to use this report alongside the many other administrative and survey data that exist in Bhutan as they implement the Child Care and Protection Act, design the National Youth Action Plan, and devise strategies for the next Five Year Plan. Put together, these data will properly inform an evidence-based strategy to improve the well-being of young people in Bhutan and help to advance Gross National Happiness throughout the country.

The following is a summary of some of the key findings and observations of this report:

- **Children comprise a significant share of Bhutan's overall population**. According to BMIS data, children under the age of 18 years represent 38 per cent of the population and 75 per cent of households in Bhutan contain at least one child. Ensuring their well-being and expanding their life opportunities is critical to the country's future prospects. Overall, this report finds that children under the age of 18 years are living in households in which material conditions are largely equivalent to the general population. However, the data raise concerns about children living in more crowded homes, and in homes that experience a higher level of food insecurity at some point during the year.
- **Alternate living arrangements that arise out of poverty or from the death of one or both parents suggest that a number of children are working in rich households**. It is hypothesised, though not substantiated by direct data, that some of the children who are reported as living in homes without a biological parent may be working as domestic helpers, perhaps under the guise of kinship care. As these children are listed along with the biological children of the house owner, there is no specific quantitative indication of the numbers of children that are working in such affluent family set-ups.
- **Children living with one or both parents have stronger educational outcomes than children in other living arrangements.** An analysis of primary and secondary level school participation shows that children who do not live with a biological parent and/or are single or double orphans have a statistically lower level of school attendance than those who live with at least one parent.
- **Data gaps persist with regard to birth registration data.** Despite having collected data on birth registration, in-depth analysis of child well-being

by their birth registration was not possible in this analysis due to the way registration was defined in the BMIS survey adaptation. It is recommended that future rounds of the BMIS correct for this in order to distinguish between the different rights and benefits conferred by different forms of legal registration of a child.

- **Children engaged in child labour often live in households that face higher material hardship than children not engaged in child labour.** Children engaged in child labour are twice as likely to live in the poorest quintile of households. They are more likely to live in homes that are rural and that use unimproved sanitation facilities and solid fuels for cooking. Together, their poverty adds to the increased health and educational risks associated with child labour.
- **A significant number of children engaged in child labour are living in urban areas, in the richest households, and with mothers or caretakers with secondary level education.** Children engaged in child labour who live in these affluent demographic groups are more than twice as likely to not live with a biological parent, suggesting that some may be working for wealthy families, particularly in Thimphu. These children also have a lower level of school attendance than would otherwise be expected for these demographic groups, suggesting that their being engaged in child labour is detrimental to their educational outcomes.
- **Children engaged in child labour have a lower level of school participation than children not engaged in child labour.** At the primary level, children engaged in child labour seem to have a similar school attendance rate as children not engaged in child labour, in part because of the broad definition of child labour for this age group. However, at the secondary level, school participation of children engaged in child labour is only half that of children not engaged in child labour. At both levels of education, school attendance drops off steeply if a child works more than 6 hours per week.
- **A comprehensive alternative care system should be established as part of the development of the national child protection system.** This should focus on providing family-based living arrangements for children without adequate family care, such as fostering and regulated kinship care. Attention is also required to monitor the situation and wellbeing of particularly vulnerable children such as those living without their parents and ensuring their protection from exploitation and abuse including through child labour in domestic settings.
- **A substantial number of girls marry and begin childbearing before age 18 with a detrimental effect on their educational outcomes**. BMIS data estimate that 7.5 per cent of girls aged 15-17 are married and 4.4 per cent have begun childbearing, indicating a strong correlation between early marriage and early childbearing. These girls are more likely to live in rural areas, live in the poorest wealth quintile of households, and/or be orphaned. Early marriage and childbearing has a significant negative impact on educational outcomes. School participation drops to near zero for girls aged 15-17 who are married or have begun childbearing. This premature termination of education persists throughout their life in terms of overall educational attainment and assessed literacy. In terms of reproductive health of girls aged 15-17 years who have commence childbearing, the data show that girls aged 15-17 years are more likely to have newborns with low birth weight than women aged 18-49 years. The data show equivalent levels of antenatal care uptake, but the data regarding skilled birth assistance, institutional delivery and postnatal care present lower levels for the younger women aged 15-17 years, although this must be interpreted with caution as these differences are mostly not statistically significant and derive from low sample sizes.
- **Nearly one in every four ever married women aged 15-49 years report having experienced domestic violence by their husband or partner at some point in their life.** In almost 90 per cent of these cases, the violence happened more than once or even often during the preceding year. Experience with domestic violence is more prevalent among rural women and formerly married women, is strongly associated with poverty and lack of formal education, and is especially high in some southern dzongkhags.
- **Acceptance of domestic violence among women aged 15-49 is high across all demographic groups at 68 per cent**. Despite a higher level of educational attainment, young women aged 15-24 express an even

slightly higher acceptance of domestic violence than their older counterparts. Acceptance of domestic violence is slightly higher among rural women, and lower among the richest women, but otherwise quite constant across demographic groups. The high level of acceptance among women makes it very difficult for victims to come forward. Resolute and prolonged advocacy of absolute non-acceptance of any and all forms of violence against women and children is required by the government.

Finally, one clear outcome of this analysis is the importance of education for the protection of children. Each of the topics addressed in this analysis are affected in some way by education. More highly educated persons have better outcomes across the board, particularly those with secondary level education. Education is shown to help change attitudes toward domestic violence and improve knowledge of HIV transmission. Early marriage and childbearing is, on average, very detrimental to women's educational prospects. Government policy-makers should continue to consolidate the educational gains in Bhutan, including its tremendous progress toward realising gender parity in education.

A critical issue facing policy-makers in Bhutan is the substantial disparities between demographic groups across many outcome indicators, in particular between the rural and urban population and between the poor and the rich. In many cases, inequality in health and education outcomes is very high, and as stated earlier, inequality poses a serious threat to Bhutan's aspirations as articulated by the tenets of Gross National Happiness.

Annex 1. Early childbearing regression results

A simple maximum likelihood regression was run to test early childbearing against key demographic variables, namely area of location (urban/rural), educational attainment, age, and household wealth. This basic model can be expressed as:

$$Early\ Childbearing = \alpha + \beta 1 Area + \beta 2 Educ + \beta 3 Age + \beta$$

$$Early\ Childbearing = \alpha + \beta_1 Area + \beta_2 Educ + \beta_3 Age + \beta_4 Wealth + \varepsilon$$

The regression output in Figure A1 below shows education to be the most significant variable, both statistically and practically. Due to the specification of this model, these coefficients cannot be interpreted directly, however according to this model, higher levels of education decrease the probability of early childbearing. The slight uptick in the trend in early childbearing over time has already been noted and this model confirms that girls today have a higher likelihood of early childbearing than older women had when they were girls.

Figure A1: Probit Regression Results for Early Childbearing, Bhutan, 2010

Constant	-0.158
	(0.158)
Area of Location	-0.068*
	(0.039)
Women's level of Education	-0.413***
	(0.022)
Women's Age Group	-0.037***
	(-0.008)
Wealth Index Quintile	-0.017
	(0.013)
Pseudo R-squared	0.045
No. Observations	14018

Standard errors reported in parenthesis.

*.**,*** indicates significance at the 90%, 95% and 99% level, respectively.

Annex 2. Attitudes toward domestic violence regression results

As with early childbearing, the model is restricted to the most basic demographic variables as can be seen in the expression below:

$$Acceptance\ of\ Domestic\ Violence = \alpha + \beta 1 Area + \beta 2 Educ + \beta 3 Age + \beta$$

$$Acceptance\ of\ Domestic\ Violence = \alpha + \beta_1 Area + \beta_2 Educ + \beta_3 Age + \beta_4 Wealth + \varepsilon$$

The regression output in Figure A2 below shows that living in a rural area substantially increases the likelihood that a woman will accept domestic violence. It also shows that increases in women's household wealth status are associated with a decrease in the likelihood of accepting domestic violence.

Figure A2: Probit regression results for attitudes towards domestic violence among women aged 15-24 years, Bhutan, 2010

Constant	0.374
	(0.137)
Area of Location	-0.214***
	(0.052)
Women's level of Education	-0.005
	(0.025)
Wealth Index Quintile	-0.053***
	(0.020)
Pseudo R-squared	0.045
No. Observations	4555

Standard errors reported in parenthesis.

*.**,*** indicates significance at the 90%, 95% and 99% level, respectively.

Annex 3. Additional tables on the experience of ever married women of violence by husband in past 12 months by frequency

Table A3.1 Percentage of ever married women age 15-49 years who experienced emotional violence committed by husband in past 12 months by frequency, Bhutan, 2010

		% of ever married women age 15-49 years who have ever experienced emotional violence	% of ever married women age 15-49 years who experienced emotional violence in past 12 months:			Total number of women 15-49
			Often	Sometimes	Often or Sometimes	
Dzongkhag	Bumthang	19.8	2.9	16.1	17.2	246
	Chhukha	13.4	1.7	7.2	8.1	1,104
	Dagana	36.7	3.0	34.0	35.9	422
	Gasa	11.2	2.6	8.6	11.2	95
	Haa	17.8	3.8	14.7	16.4	223
	Lhuntse	13.2	1.2	12.8	13.2	247
	Monggar	16.0	2.6	13.2	14.8	773
	Paro	8.8	0.3	8.8	8.8	593
	Pema Gatshel	25.8	7.5	18.3	21.9	406
	Punakha	22.8	0.7	19.1	19.7	338
	Samdrup Jongkhar	30.9	4.8	25.4	26.6	638
	Samtse	21.1	3.0	18.4	19.9	1,186
	Sarpang	6.7	0.7	2.5	3.1	703
	Thimphu	7.8	1.8	6.0	6.9	1,098
	Trashigang	16.5	1.6	15.9	16.5	836
	Trashi Yangtse	43.1	2.5	42.2	43.1	242
	Trongsa	30.8	3.3	22.2	23.5	223
	Tsirang	4.5	2.0	3.0	4.5	350
	Wangdue Phodrang	19.0	3.3	17.9	18.5	457
	Zhemgang	32.1	0.9	31.6	32.1	281
Area	Urban	14.9	1.9	11.4	12.5	2,874
	Rural	19.1	2.5	16.2	17.3	7,587
Age	15-19	13.9	2.6	10.0	12.0	330
	20-24	14.6	1.9	13.0	13.8	1,601
	25-29	16.5	2.4	14.4	15.3	2,280
	30-34	19.2	2.3	15.8	17.0	2,022
	35-39	19.1	2.7	15.7	16.9	1,728
	40-44	20.8	2.7	15.9	17.3	1,468
	45-49	19.1	2.3	15.9	16.9	1,031
Education	None	18.9	2.6	15.6	16.8	7,499
	Primary	18.8	2.5	15.9	16.8	1,246
	Secondary +	13.1	1.4	11.2	11.8	1,716
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	22.2	2.7	19.3	20.7	1,987
	Second	20.2	3.2	17.0	18.4	2,086
	Middle	17.8	2.2	14.9	15.9	2,107
	Fourth	17.3	2.8	13.7	14.9	2,247
	Richest	12.2	1.0	9.7	10.2	2,035
Marital / Union status	Currently married/in union	16.7	2.0	14.4	15.4	9,600
	Formerly married/in union	31.1	6.2	20.0	22.9	861
Total		**17.9**	**2.4**	**14.9**	**16.0**	**10,461**

Note: Sample size is liimited to ever married women who were able to complete the domestic violence module of the questionnaire without interruption

Table A3.2 Percentage of ever married women age 15-49 years who experienced physical violence committed by husband in past 12 months by frequency, Bhutan, 2010

		% of ever married women age 15-49 years who have ever experienced physical violence	% of ever married women age 15-49 years who experienced physical violence in past 12 months:			Total number of women 15-49
			Often	Sometimes	Often or Sometimes	
Dzongkhag	Bumthang	13.4	3.4	11.0	11.4	246
	Chhukha	14.4	1.4	6.0	6.9	1,104
	Dagana	19.1	3.3	16.8	18.0	422
	Gasa	11.2	4.7	9.9	11.2	95
	Haa	13.9	2.1	11.1	11.9	223
	Lhuntse	15.3	1.7	15.3	15.3	247
	Monggar	16.5	3.1	13.2	14.5	773
	Paro	8.7	1.3	8.5	8.7	593
	Pema Gatshel	18.5	4.6	12.1	15.0	406
	Punakha	10.4	1.5	7.5	7.5	338
	Samdrup Jongkhar	28.1	2.3	21.3	21.6	638
	Samtse	16.0	1.9	12.2	12.4	1,186
	Sarpang	10.0	0.6	3.8	4.4	703
	Thimphu	6.6	0.2	5.2	5.2	1,098
	Trashigang	11.8	2.4	11.2	11.8	836
	Trashi Yangtse	16.1	2.9	15.8	16.1	242
	Trongsa	18.8	0.8	11.4	11.7	223
	Tsirang	5.4	2.3	4.0	5.4	350
	Wangdue Phodrang	15.0	3.2	14.0	15.0	457
	Zhemgang	19.6	0.3	19.4	19.6	281
Area	Urban	13.0	1.3	8.8	9.2	2,874
	Rural	14.5	2.2	11.4	12.1	7,587
Age	15-19	9.9	2.6	7.5	8.5	330
	20-24	10.6	1.2	8.6	9.0	1,601
	25-29	12.7	1.5	9.9	10.6	2,280
	30-34	15.0	2.0	12.1	12.7	2,022
	35-39	17.2	2.6	12.7	13.3	1,728
	40-44	15.7	2.5	10.9	11.6	1,468
	45-49	14.9	2.0	10.3	11.2	1,031
Education	None	15.1	2.2	11.4	12.1	7,499
	Primary	16.5	2.0	12.1	12.9	1,246
	Secondary +	8.1	0.7	6.5	6.8	1,716
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	17.1	2.8	14.3	15.3	1,987
	Second	15.4	2.8	12.2	13.2	2,086
	Middle	13.4	2.3	9.9	10.7	2,107
	Fourth	14.8	1.2	10.9	11.3	2,247
	Richest	9.8	0.6	6.2	6.2	2,035
Marital / Union status	Currently married/in union	12.8	1.4	9.8	10.4	9,600
	Formerly married/in union	28.9	7.5	19.9	21.7	861
Total		**14.1**	**1.9**	**10.7**	**11.3**	**10,461**

Note: Sample size is limited to ever married women who were able to complete the domestic violence module of the questionnaire without interruption

Table A3.3 Percentage of ever married women age 15-49 years who experienced sexual violence committed by husband in past 12 months by frequency, Bhutan, 2010

		% of ever married women age 15-49 years who have ever experienced sexual violence	% of ever married women age 15-49 years who experienced sexual violence in past 12 months:			Total number of women 15-49
			Often	Sometimes	Often or Sometimes	
Dzongkhag	Bumthang	4.9	0.2	4.5	4.7	246
	Chhukha	9.2	0.4	6.4	6.6	1,104
	Dagana	10.4	0.9	9.2	9.9	422
	Gasa	5.5	1.3	5.5	5.5	95
	Haa	13.4	8.4	4.8	13.0	223
	Lhuntse	3.0	0.4	2.6	3.0	247
	Monggar	7.4	2.1	5.2	6.8	773
	Paro	2.0	0.0	2.0	2.0	593
	Pema Gatshel	30.1	2.3	23.7	25.7	406
	Punakha	6.7	0.3	5.9	5.9	338
	Samdrup Jongkhar	13.2	2.7	10.3	12.0	638
	Samtse	5.4	1.7	3.6	5.3	1,186
	Sarpang	2.4	1.0	1.6	2.3	703
	Thimphu	2.1	0.3	1.6	1.9	1,098
	Trashigang	2.7	0.0	2.7	2.7	836
	Trashi Yangtse	23.3	0.8	22.8	23.3	242
	Trongsa	4.3	0.4	2.4	2.6	223
	Tsirang	0.6	0.1	0.5	0.6	350
	Wangdue Phodrang	11.7	3.7	10.4	11.7	457
	Zhemgang	0.2	0.0	0.2	0.2	281
Area	Urban	5.8	0.6	4.4	4.9	2,874
	Rural	7.7	1.4	6.0	7.0	7,587
Age	15-19	4.8	0.5	3.3	3.4	330
	20-24	6.1	1.2	4.7	5.8	1,601
	25-29	6.5	1.1	5.2	6.1	2,280
	30-34	7.2	0.9	6.0	6.8	2,022
	35-39	7.5	1.7	5.7	7.0	1,728
	40-44	8.9	1.4	6.4	7.2	1,468
	45-49	7.6	1.1	5.8	6.6	1,031
Education	None	7.6	1.4	5.9	6.9	7,499
	Primary	7.5	1.3	5.2	6.4	1,246
	Secondary +	5.1	0.2	4.4	4.6	1,716
Wealth index quintiles	Poorest	9.2	1.5	7.5	8.8	1,987
	Second	9.1	1.7	7.2	8.1	2,086
	Middle	6.4	1.1	5.0	5.8	2,107
	Fourth	6.7	1.3	4.7	5.8	2,247
	Richest	4.4	0.3	3.5	3.8	2,035
Marital / Union status	Currently married/in union	6.7	1.0	5.3	6.1	9,600
	Formerly married/in union	12.3	3.3	7.9	10.5	861
Total		**7.1**	**1.2**	**5.6**	**6.4**	**10,461**

Note: Sample size is limited to ever married women who were able to complete the domestic violence module of the questionnaire without interruption

Annex 4. Summary table of key indicators for child protection

CATEGORY	INDICATORS	Age Group (years)	Total	Sex		Area		Wealth Quintile				
				Male	Female	Urban	Rural	Poorest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Richest
Socio-Economic	Children under age 18 as percentage of total population	0-18	38.3%	38.5%	38.1%	40.1%	37.6%	38.8%	36.4%	37.3%	40.8%	38.1%
	Sex ratio of children under age 18 (males : females)	0-18	0.99	*	*	0.97	1.01	1.01	1.05	1.00	0.97	0.94
	Sex ratio of children under age 18 living in poorest quintile	0-18	20.3%	20.4%	20.1%	0.4%	28.3%	*	*	*	*	*
Reproductive Health	Adolescent fertility rate, young women 15-19	15-19	59	*	59	30	77	112	95	97	36	10
	Percentage of women age 15-17 who have begun childbearing	15-17	4.4%	*	4.4%	0.6%	6.7%	10.9%	8.4%	6.5%	0.7%	1.0%
Protection	Percentage of children underage 5 whose birth is registered	0-4	99.9%	100%	99.8%	100%	99.8%	99.7%	99.8%	100%	100%	100%
	Percentage of children age 5-11 engaged in child labour	5-11	25.1%	23.7%	26.5%	12.1%	30.1%	37.8%	31.7%	30.2%	17.9%	7.1%
	Percentage of children age 12-14 engaged in child labour	12-14	4.2%	3.3%	5.0%	2.0%	5.2%	7.5%	6.4%	2.5%	3.4%	1.8%
	Percentage of children age 15-17 married before age 15	15-17	1.6%	*	1.6%	0.0%	2.5%	5.0%	2.0%	2.8%	0.3%	0.0%
	Percentage of children age 15-17 married or in-union	15-17	6.7%	*	6.7%	0.8%	10.2%	17.2%	14.7%	8.4%	0.7%	1.2%
	Young women age 15-17 who believe domestic violence is justified	15-17	69.6%	*	69.6%	63.0%	73.7%	72.1%	76.5%	76.4%	73.6%	59.3%

Disaggregated by sex, area of location, and wealth quintile

Annex 5. List of Contributors

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