

Bhutan Centre for Media & Democracy

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Youth Voices: Youth Matters

A Bhutan Centre for
Media & Democracy Report



Youth Voices: Youth Matters
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Executive Summary

Youth face many issues in their daily lives. And with youth 24 years and under making up nearly 46% percent of Bhutan's population, (Population and Housing Census of Bhutan, 2017) their overall well-being and ability to become productive citizens is being challenged. Studies of current situations of youth in Bhutan show an increasing trend towards mental health issues such as depression and anxiety (Mental Health Strategy, 2015-2023) and increasing unemployment which sits at 15.7% (Labour Force Survey, 2018). Youth also feel left out of decision-making, remain critical about the quality of education and are generally not optimistic about future employment. The vulnerability of certain groups of youth, particularly those who are disadvantaged, is becoming more evident.

Learning from shortcomings in the process of drawing up the National Youth Policy (NYP) in 2011, the revision of the NYP in 2020 took an inclusive approach by incorporating youth voices. Under the guidance of the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD), 1,237 youth were involved in providing data not only through an online survey and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) but also in reviewing the policy itself. That more than two thirds of respondents did not know about the NYP indicates either youth ignorance or inadequate effort on the part of stakeholders to reach youth on an important policy instrument that affects their lives.

The introduction of a Western education system has served Bhutan thus far producing the manpower required to run the bureaucracy. Of late, however, an increasing number of students graduating from the education system is being faced with a high unemployment rate. While a high unemployment rate is indicative of multiple issues such as the quality of education and smallness of the economy, it is also suggestive of a mismatch between education and the economy and a similar mismatch between available jobs and attitudes towards such jobs. Many youths dream of being self-reliant and economically independent. However, this study finds that a perceived gap between education and employment - one that does not help them realise their potentials or secure them a job - and the poor status society accords to "blue-collar" jobs stand in their way of realising their dream. For youth with disabilities, limited human resource expertise, traditional infrastructural

design and discrimination are real challenges in accessing quality education unlike the rest of the Bhutanese youth.

In particular, youth living with disabilities and those that have come in conflict with the law, or have different gender identities remain vulnerable to stigmatisation and discrimination. Vulnerable youths in need of counselling services lack confidence in counsellors fearing breach of confidentiality, and this remains especially true in centres where authority figures in uniform serve as counsellors. While Youth Friendly Health Services (YFHS) are made aplenty, accessibility remains questionable as the opening hours of facilities coincide with school time, and health professionals, according to youth reports, are not adequately trained to deal with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) youths.

Democratic principles and governance received impetus with the introduction of democracy and a constitutional monarchy form of government since 2008. Bhutan's Children Parliament and Democracy clubs were introduced in schools with the aim "to provide effective participation [of the youth] in national-level discussion and decision-making" (<http://bcp.ecb.bt/>). However, participation and engagement of the youth is generally confined to community services and has not extended to decision-making in schools yet. Aside from election of student leaders, youths report limited decision-making platforms and opportunities. This is indicative of the fledgling stage of Bhutan's democracy requiring a multi-generational approach to educating about participatory democracy and citizenship.

Bhutan has made immense progress in all fields with rapid economic, social, political and cultural change in a relatively short period of time. Socio-cultural change has been most discernible after Bhutan introduced television and internet technologies in 1999. The youth are fully aware of their own participation in introducing and sustaining tangible and intangible cultural changes. They also appreciate the importance of cultural preservation for national sovereignty but feel that culture is promoted in ways that are not exciting and engaging for the youth. The youth believe that technology can be creatively used with other innovative means to help promote culture

among the young generation.

Bhutan's economy, largely agrarian in the past, has diversified; yet the economy is still highly dependent on a few sectors, namely hydropower and tourism for the generation of higher proportions of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In terms of the proportion of the population engaged in different sectors, around 60% of the people are engaged in agriculture. Bhutan still depends heavily on neighbouring countries for skilled labour, raw materials and food products, thus compromising one of its national goals of self-reliance. The study shows that the most important aspect of the economy for youth is employment. The dim prospect for employment even after a college education is disconcerting to youth. Though youth are aware of blue-collar jobs as an alternative, they are conditioned by the narrative that white-collar jobs will give them higher status in society.

Bhutan is renowned for its sound environmental policies and practices and is often hailed as the only carbon-negative country in the world. This study shows that the youth are well aware that our environment needs to be preserved but they also point out that such ideals and aspirations have to be realised through the concerted application of rules and regulations to achieve better environmental outcomes. Littering and use of plastic despite the bans in place are examples youth cite to show that our intents and actions do not match in Bhutan.

Despite numerous awareness programmes and conservation of the environment as one of the domains of GNH, it is questionable if the philosophical and policy intent has been supported by commensurate behavioural and attitudinal change.

While a majority of the youth express satisfaction with the six themes evaluated through this study, more detailed and nuanced discussions during the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) show that the youth are critical of a number of issues under each theme. The findings of this study recommend the following:

- Diversify the school curricula to expand options that cater to students'

interests, potentials and the job market requirements.

- Revamp the pedagogy to make learning more interactive and experiential.
- Improve amenities that contribute to the livability of the schools (e.g. adequate drinking water, heating/cooling system, balanced diet etc.), adopt principles of universal design to infrastructural development making it accessible for all including those with disabilities and making the school environment safe for all (e.g. free of discrimination).
- It is imperative that the education system (school and tertiary education) work in tandem with the direction of the economy to address the urgent needs of increasing youth unemployment.
- Adopt a multi-generational approach to advocacy programmes to enhance the social status of “blue-collar job” coupled with concurrent means to make the vocations attractive in terms of better training, sound contractual arrangements, better wages, protective gears, etc. Cross-sectoral efforts and co-ordination are imperative for the success of this intervention.
- Build the credibility of counsellors with professional standards to gain trust of youth who are in need of help. Revise the timing for YFHS so that it is convenient for school/college students and enhance the professional competencies of health personnels to address the needs of LGBTIQ clients.
- Make public recreational facilities accessible to different youth groups, including LGBTIQ, and persons with disabilities through provision of student discounts. Such facilities need to be made available during vacations and during off-school hours.
- Create platforms for youth to discuss political issues and expand

youth participation beyond community service to decision-making platforms to give them opportunities to practise being responsible, active and democratic citizens.

- Facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities in public discussions and discourses by attending to their physical and communication needs (e.g. sign language interpreter).
- Capitalise on technological advancement to promote culture and tradition through creative and innovative means and formats.
- Create awareness and educate people with disabilities and their parents or caregivers on personal safety measures and other help services.
- For a paradigm shift in appreciating the value of the environment, any awareness and policy intervention has to be rooted in the knowledge of how it impacts current and future lives coupled with viable alternatives and consistent enforcement of rules.

Acronyms

BHU	:	Basic Health Unit
BCMD	:	Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy
CICL	:	Children in Conflict with the Law
CSO	:	Civil Society Organisation
COVID-19	:	CoronaVirus Disease 2019
DoYS	:	Department of Youth and Sports
ECCD	:	Early Child Care and Development
FGD	:	Focus Group Discussion
GNH	:	Gross National Happiness
LGBTIQ	:	Lesbians, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer
NYAP	:	National Youth Action Plan
NYP	:	National Youth Policy
NGO	:	Non-Governmental Organisation
TVET	:	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNICEF	:	United Nations Children's Fund
YI	:	Youth Initiative
YFHS	:	Youth Friendly Health Services

Glossary

<i>Azha</i>	:	<i>Uncle</i>
<i>Boedra</i>	:	<i>Bhutanese traditional music and dance form</i>
<i>Drayang</i>	:	<i>Dance Club</i>
<i>Gho</i>	:	<i>Bhutanese national dress (men)</i>
<i>Kira</i>	:	<i>Bhutanese national dress (women)</i>
<i>Lozey</i>	:	<i>Ballads</i>
<i>Tsechu</i>	:	<i>A religious festival</i>
<i>Tsholam</i>	:	<i>Bhutanese traditional footwear</i>
<i>Zhungdra</i>	:	<i>A genre of Bhutanese traditional music and dance forms</i>

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

With 46% of the population under the age of 24 (Population and Housing Census of Bhutan, 2017), youth account for a significant proportion of the Bhutanese population both in terms of numbers and also as a social category. In 2011, Bhutan's National Youth Policy (NYP) was formulated to enhance interventions and programmes to improve the lives of youth in the country. Typically, policies are implemented over a period of five years after which a review is conducted to assess its relevance and impacts for revision.

Bhutan is undergoing significant socio-economic and political transformation. The changes brought about are visible in different fields such as education, health, economy, culture and politics, among others that shape the next generation of citizens.

As of 2019, there were 251,704 students in educational institutions including Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) centres and non-formal education programmes (Ministry of Education, 2019) and the youth literacy rate was 93.10%. However, there is an overwhelming focus on academics and examination in the current education system. The flipside of it is the neglect of other valuable educational goals such as grooming engaged and productive citizens. At the same time, vocational education and skilled work do not receive priority (Lhamu, 2016). The resultant effects of current trends is a lack of skilled labour in the market and jobs being filled by thousands of foreign workers annually. On the other hand, youth unemployment at 11.9% against the overall unemployment rate at 2.7% (National Statistics Bureau, 2020) continues to be one of Bhutan's major concerns.

The increase in life expectancy from 32.4 years in 1960 to 70.2 years in 2019 (Ministry of Health, 2020) shows significant progress in the overall health of the people. The growing incidences of depression among the general population (per 10,000 people) over the last three years, however, suggests new and emerging challenges. In 2017, the incidence of depression was 6 which increased to 9.6 and 10.4 in 2018 and 2019 respectively (MoH, 2020). Commenting on school education and youth development, Lhamu (2016,

p.22) argues that “...quality education doesn’t extend to the social and emotional health of youth.” Incidences of mental health across different age groups present a clear picture as to what interventions need to be made. A case in point is morbidity associated with mental and behavioural disorders due to multiple drug use and use of other psychoactive substances. There were three cases of morbidity between 5 and 14 years, 314 cases between 15 and 49 years and seven between 50 and 59 years of age in 2019 (MoH, 2020). The concentration of mental health related morbidity between 15 and 49 years of age suggests that young adults are vulnerable to mental health issues. The use of drugs and psychoactive substances also gives rise to many other social ills including coming into conflict with the law.

The introduction of democracy brought citizen participation to the forefront of governance. Among others, youth engagement gained traction in public discourse primarily because of their role in nation building as youth prepare to participate in governance. Civics curriculum in schools, the Election Commission of Bhutan’s (ECB) Democracy Clubs in educational institutions, and efforts by civil society organisations like the BCMD, GNH Centre, and BTI are standing testament to concerted efforts towards youth civic engagement and democratic participation. Despite these efforts, youth voter turnout for parliamentary elections is low. For example, in 2018, from a projected 100,765 population of persons between 18 and 24 years of age, only 21,833 young people voted, or less than a quarter of those who were eligible to vote. Considering that the youth constitute a significant proportion of Bhutan’s population, the turnout is comparatively low when compared to adult voter turnout. Among the adults, 93,421 between the ages of 25 and 45 years of age and 50,765 between 46 and 60 years of age had cast their vote (ECB, 2020).

On the cultural front, Bhutan’s embrace of modernisation and the growth of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) continues to influence Bhutanese culture and way of life. Bhutan’s transformation is such that young people born in this stage of transition are exposed to western ideas and culture bringing about changes in their world more than any other groups. Raised by parents with apparently strong adherence to a traditional

approach to life, youth face cultural identity issues in a fast-changing world driven by globalisation. Phuntsho (2016) claims that Bhutanese youth are in a cultural limbo wherein they have *“relinquished the old Bhutanese way of life yet not reaching the new modern lifestyle”* (pg. 34). Intergenerational gaps and changing societal values and norms are frequently discussed topics in the areas of youth and culture.

In response to new and emerging challenges to youth learning and development the government endorsed the NYP in 2011 with the objective to offer relevant and more co-ordinated services and programmes. The NYP 2011, however, fell short in its full implementation in the absence of a National Youth Action Plan (NYAP). The envisaged impacts of the policy, namely the articulation of concrete strategies and programmes to deliver the envisaged impacts, has been questioned (Choden, 2016). The NYP is long due for revision.

Nine years into its existence, the NYP 2011 sits without clout in the absence of a national action plan to enforce it systematically across sectors. Caught up in transition as elected governments changed, the policy missed its five-year periodic review in 2016. In the meantime, important developments took place with the formulation or revision of related legislations such as the Child Care Protection Act of Bhutan 2011, Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Substance Abuse (Amendment) Act of Bhutan 2018, Standard Operating Procedures on Case Management for Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL), and the Child Care and Protection Rules and Regulations of Bhutan 2015. During the same period, relevant policies such as the National Employment Policy 2013, National Policy for Persons with Disabilities 2019, and Cottage and Small Industry Policy 2019 were endorsed. While many issues in the NYP 2011 remain relevant, new youth problems stem from the prevalence of the social media compounded by lack of media literacy, the emergence of different gender identities, exploitation of rights associated with overseas employment and so on, to name a few.

The Department of Youth and Sports (DYS) - the custodian of the NYP - envisions a revised policy that is representative of all youths, their contexts,

and in cognisance of new developments in related legislations, policies and programmes. The BCMD was identified as the civil society partner to lead consultations with the youth and to gather their voices and perspectives on their contexts, concerns and issues on the 2011 Policy.

1.2 Rationale and Goals of the Project

The overall goals of the project are twofold, namely :

- a). *to enhance the relevance of Bhutan's National Youth Policy by integrating the voices of youth from diverse backgrounds, abilities, age and gender and*
- b). *to empower youth to engage in policy dialogue and formulation through a collaborative review of the NYP.*

The specific goal of this research is to present authentic youth voices and perspectives on the current state of affairs and their aspirations for the future.

BCMD believes that democracy is only as strong as its citizens' participation, and that policies make sense so long as it is grounded in the realities of those concerned. Premised thus, this project - Youth Voices: Youth Matters - is designed to transcend “tokenism” in youth participation. The model strives at sustaining youth participation with the objective of not only enhancing the relevance of the policy by grounding it in their experiences, but empowering the youth to engage in meaningful review and to serve as advocates of a policy that concerns them directly. It is designed with the belief that meaningful engagement is transformative - empowering young citizens and future leaders - and also increases the sense of ownership. By extension, the process expands awareness and enables the implementation of the policy.

As such, the engagement of the youth in the review of the NYP 2011 began with capacity building of youth on the concept of policy, theoretical lenses that must be used to analyse a policy from various perspectives that include the guiding principles of Gross National Happiness (GNH) and the historical context of the NYP. They were also oriented to the challenges and lessons from the drafting of the first NYP in 2011.

Over a nine-day residential camp, 24 Youth Initiative (YI) members reflected on the contexts (*education, well-being, economy, civic participation, etc.*) they live in, identified issues, delved into probable causes and envisioned a better world for themselves. With enhanced awareness of their current situation, the YI members, divided into 6 thematic groups (education and learning, health and well-being, governance, socio-cultural environment, economy and environment), reviewed the NYP. At the closing of the camp, the youth presented their aspirations, challenges and gaps in the 2011 policy document, and recommended revisions to stakeholders.



Picture 1: Youth facilitators conduct mock Focus Group Discussion

Eighteen youths continued to be trained in facilitating Focus Group Discussions (FGD). Using a role-play approach, supplemented by ethical considerations, they were trained on basic skills in asking questions, probing, building rapport and organising and transcribing data. The focus group questions were tested with another group of 20 volunteer youths and revised. Under the guidance of BCMD, the YI members were assigned in pairs to interview different youth groups across the country. Additionally, an online survey was conducted to increase the data pool. A total of 1,099 youth took part in the survey and 114 youths participated in 18 FGDs. While the online survey measured the youth's level of satisfaction on different aspects of the six thematic groups, FGDs generated qualitative reports from the participating youth who reflected on their experiences and observations.

This report, Youth Voices: Youth Matters, is a compilation of findings from the survey and discussions from the YI camp and the FGD. The figure below illustrates the process followed in engaging youth in the NYP Review.

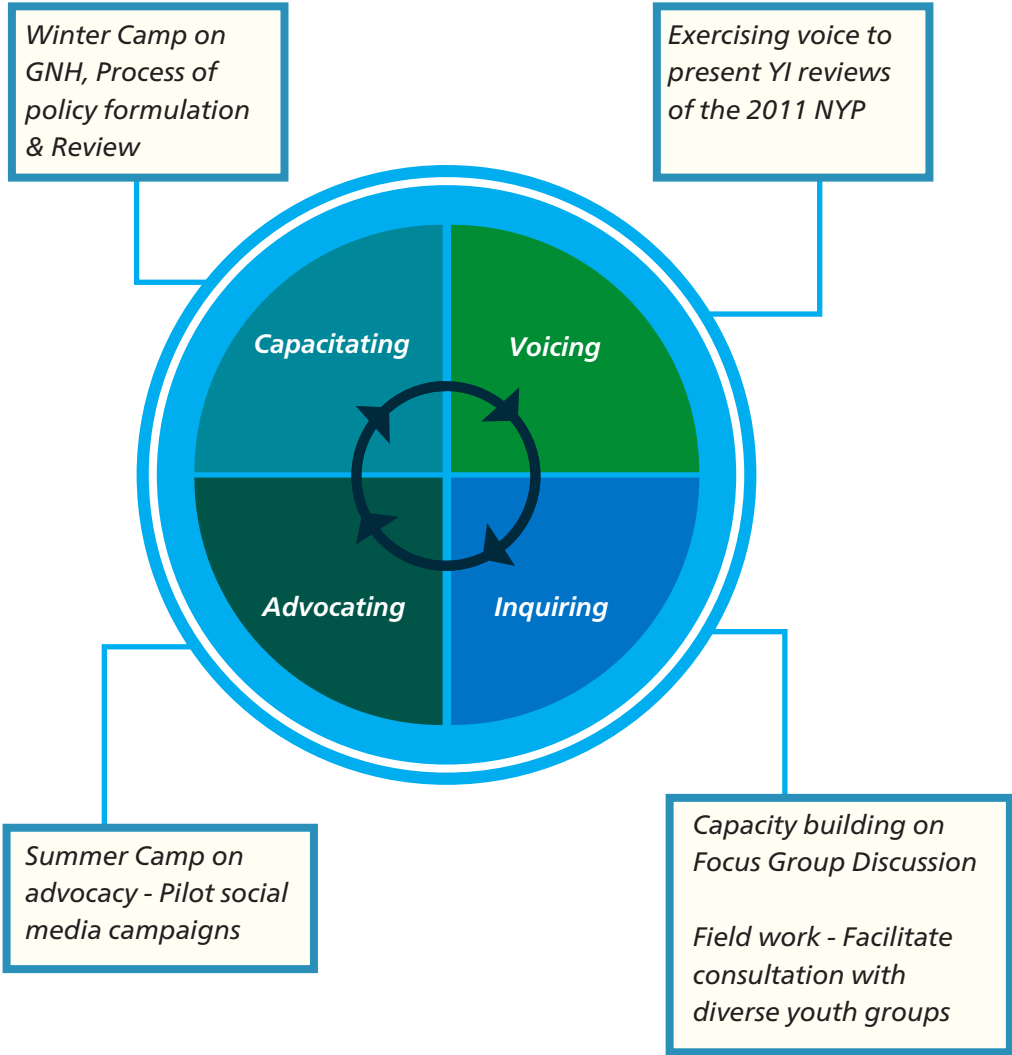


Figure 1: Illustration of youth engagement in NYP 2011 review

This report presents the results of the research which forms an essential part of the review of the NYP. The 2011 policy formulation exercise was not as inclusive nor comprehensive in terms of youth participation compared to the current review in 2020. The revision of the NYP in 2020 has been much more youth-centric in its approach.

1.3 Methodology

This research employed a mixed methodology approach. The data was collected through FGDs and an online survey in addition to a workshop-style review of the NYP 2011 by 24 YI members. Under the quantitative approach, an online survey was administered. Content analysis and Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyse the data from focus groups and the online survey respectively.

The online survey was administered to ensure wider coverage for representativeness. BCMD developed the data collections tools (online survey, FGD questions) in consultation with the DYS, UNICEF and a national consultant. The questionnaire is based on the NYP 2011 framework.

There are three parts to the questionnaire: the profile of respondents, six thematic areas and general services and programmes. The thematic areas include: 1) *Education and Learning*, 2) *Health and well-being*, 3) *Governance*, 4) *Socio-cultural environment*, 5) *Economy* and 6) *Environment*. The survey questionnaire was finalised after a pilot-test with a group of youth. Participation in the survey was solicited through social media posts by all partner agencies involved (See annex 1 and 2 for FGD and survey questionnaire)

In total, 24 participants underwent a nine-day residential camp (16-24 January 2020). The training content featured sessions on the concept of policy, its formulation, GNH screening tools and a historical account of the NYP 2011. The participants reviewed the six thematic areas described above in groups. Participants were taken through a process of exploring their current realities based on which they envisaged best possible future scenarios and proposed recommendations to get there. The findings from the review and recommendations from the camp were presented to relevant stakeholders on the closing day. The recommendations and comments of the YI members are incorporated in this report along with the findings from the online survey and FGDs.

Thereafter, ten participants from the winter camp and eight members from

the former YI cohort, who also served as the Steering Committee members of the YI, were trained as focus group facilitators. A two-day training (15-16 February 2020) on FGD was conducted covering different aspects of FGD including ethical considerations, role-plays, and hands-on transcription of interviews.

Eleven youth groups from 6 districts that include Thimphu, Paro, Chukha, Punakha, Trongsa and Trashigang participated in the FGDs. The FGDs were conducted in Dzongkha and English and an interpreter proficient in sign language was used in focus groups with participants from Wangsel Institute for the Deaf. Caregivers/guardians shared the experiences of youth with disabilities who could not communicate. YI facilitators transcribed the recorded discussions. The qualitative data from FGDs were analysed for themes using open coding and thematisation. An online survey circulated through Facebook was able to generate responses from 1099 youth from across the country (See details in the following section).

1.3.1 Sampling

Convenience sampling was used wherein Bhutanese youth between the ages of 13 and 30 years were invited through a Facebook post to participate in the survey. The target was to reach 2,000 respondents, however, only 1,099 youth participated in answering the online survey making a response rate of 55%. Had it not been for the COVID-19 pandemic, the target could have been met through survey questionnaires with youth groups who did not have access to the online survey. The sampling for the FGD was, therefore, purposive.

In deciding on the age group of participants - between 13 and 30 years- two considerations were made:

- *The lower age limit at 13 years as defined in the NYP 2011 and*
- *The upper age limit at 30 years for defining youth in Bhutan was under consideration by the DYS. In addition, it was felt that by including persons above 24 years of age, they would be better able to reflect and share their experiences of youth.*

For the FGD, inclusivity and diversity were highlighted as important components of the NYP review process. A total of 114 youths participated in the FGDs facilitated by an average of two facilitators who conducted the FGDs with 11 groups identified below :

1.	Monks - 6
2.	Nuns - 5
3.	Youth with disabilities - 13
4.	Youth in rehabilitation - 5
5.	Youth in conflict with law - 14
6.	Youth in creative arts - 9
7.	Youth in sports - 7
8.	Students (school, college and TTI) - 37
9.	Youth in entertainment centers - (Drayang) - 8
10.	Youth seeking employment - 7
11.	LGBTIQ - 3

The focus groups were conducted over sessions that were a maximum of 2 hours 49 minutes to a minimum of 53 minutes. The approval to conduct the FGDs were sought from respective agencies that facilitated the participation of the youth. Informed consent was sought from each participant, and to preserve the integrity of their experiences all interviews were recorded and transcribed. Names were not recorded to maintain confidentiality and protect the identity of the participants. Sessions with some groups were not filmed to adhere to the institutions' confidentiality and privacy requirements.

In total, the revision of the NYP 2020 was informed by perspectives of 114 youths from FGD, 24 YI members, and 1,099 survey respondents. In addition, the DYS had commissioned an independent consultant to conduct consultation with key informants as part of the consultation to revise the NYP 2011.

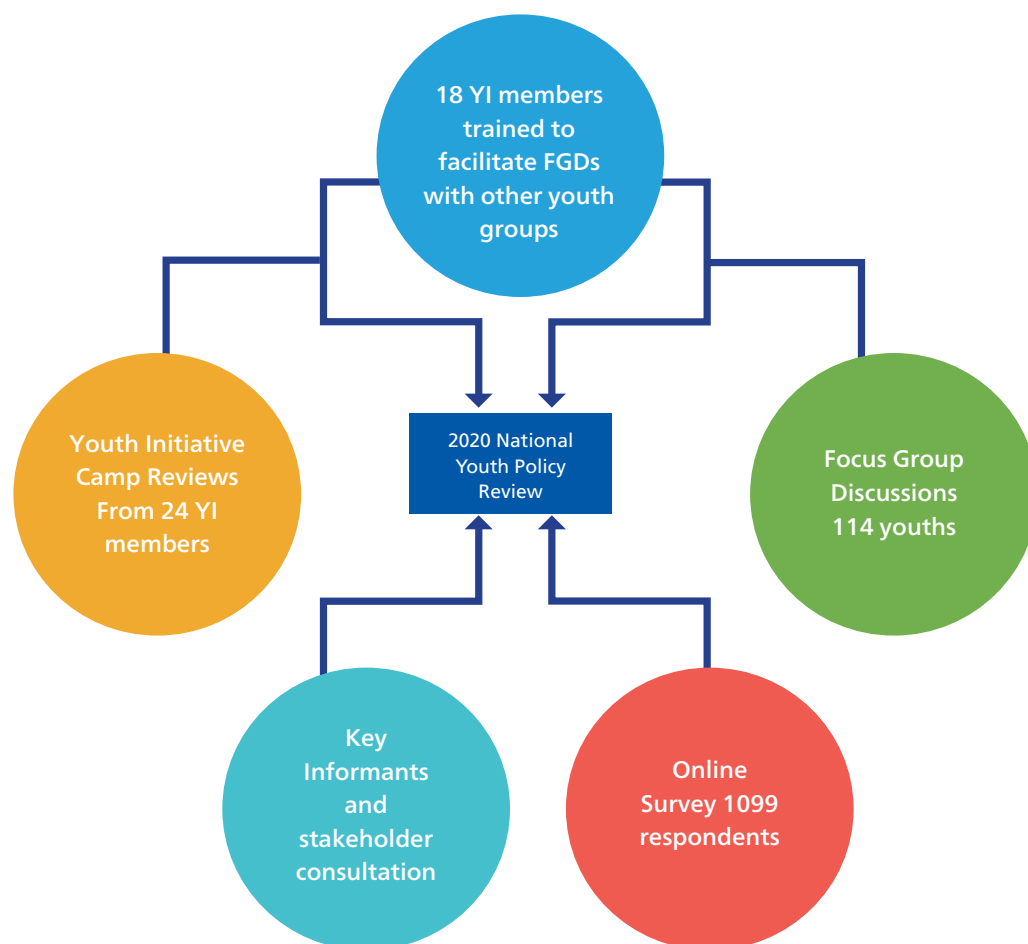


Figure 2: Sources of data for revision of the NYP2020

1.3.2 Limitations of the Methodology

The online survey followed a convenience sampling scheme in which Bhutanese youth between the ages of 13 to 30 years were encouraged to take the survey. However, given the online nature of the survey, the completed sample (1,099 respondents) may not be representative, as it does not include youth who do not have internet access. The plans to distribute paper surveys for groups such as monks, nuns and incarcerated youth to increase the pool of respondents and enhance representativeness could not materialise due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. FINDINGS

2.1 Profile of Respondents

A total of 1,237 youth participated in the research. Of this, 1,099 (89%) responded to the online survey, 114 (9%) participated in FGDs and 24 (2%) participated in the YI Camp.

Mode of data collection	No of participants	%
Online survey	1099	89
Focus groups	114	9
YI camp	24	2
Total research participants	1237	100%

Table 1: Profile of respondents

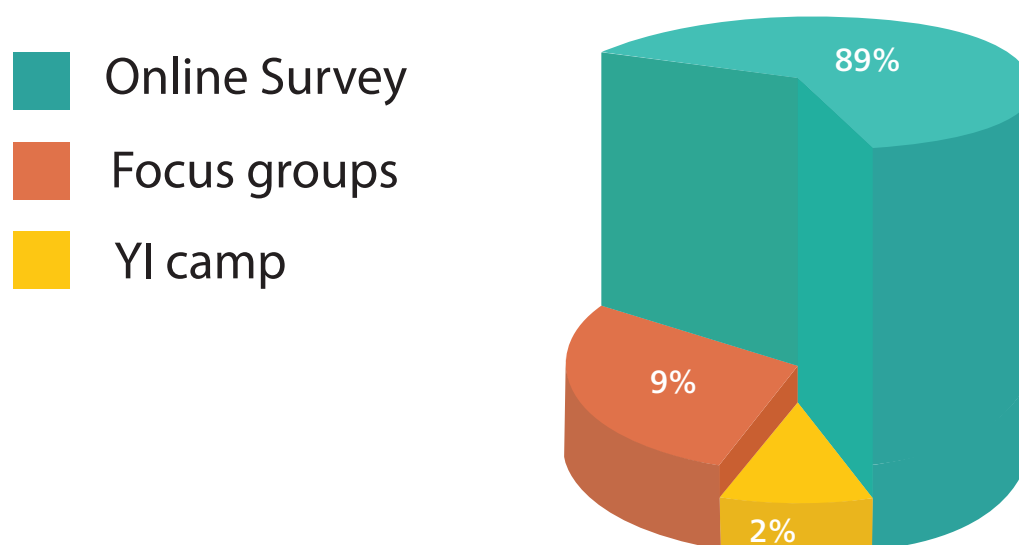


Figure 3: Profile of respondents by percentage

BCMD staff and 18 youth facilitators conducted the FGDs with 11 groups of youth. Students comprised the largest group at 27% followed by youth in conflict with the law at 13%, and youth with disabilities at 12%. The LGBTIQ group consisted of 3 persons.

Of the 1,237 participants who responded on the online survey, FGDs and YI Camp, 597 (48%) were male, 632 (51%) were female and 2 (1%) declared themselves under 'others' (transsexual).



Picture 2: Focus groups conducted with nuns from Kuenga-rabten Nunnery in Trongsa

From the total 1,193 who answered the question on age from the online survey, FGDs and YI Camp, 1,047 (88%) were from the 13-24 years of age category, and only 146 (12%) were 25 years or more in age. The average age of respondents is 21 years with the youngest respondent being 13 years and the eldest being 29 years of age.

Profile	Gender			*Total respondents	Age		*Total respondents
	Male	Female	Others		13-24	25 & above	
Numbers	597	632	2	1,231	1,047	146	1,193
Percentage	48	51	1		88	12	

Table 2: Online survey respondents by age and sex

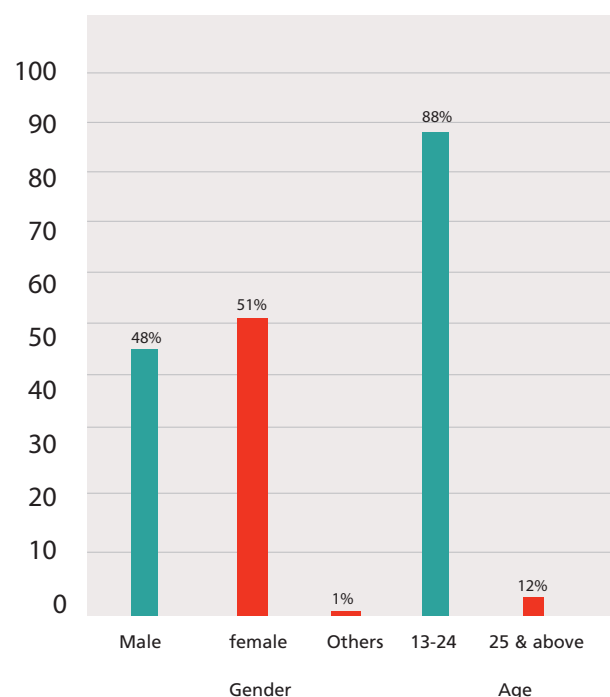


Figure 4: Percentage of respondents from online survey by age and sex

In terms of educational attainment, of the 1,177 respondents who answered the online survey, FGDs and YI Camp, 343 (29%) studied till high school, 79 (7%) had diploma level education, 653 (55%) were undergraduates, 83 (7%) were post-graduates, 11 (1%) had monastic education and 8 (1%) studied in the non-formal education system.

Of the 1,136 who answered the question on residence from the online survey and FGDs, 114 (10%) live in rural areas while 1,022 (90%) live in urban areas.

	Education level						*Total respondents	Residence		*Total respondents
	High school	Diploma	Under graduate	Post graduate	Monastic	Non-formal		Rural	Urban	
No	343	79	653	83	11	8	1177	114	1,022	1,136
%	29	7	55	7	1	1		10	90	

Table 3: No. & percentage of respondents by education level

* The number of respondents do not tally with the overall total number of respondents due to missing data.

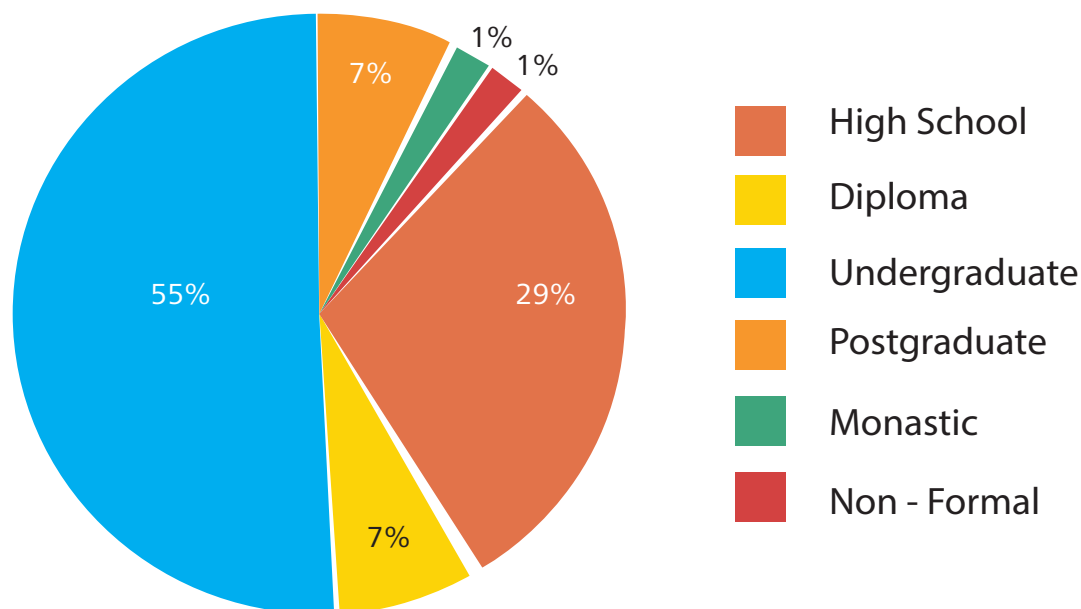


Figure 5: Percentage of online survey respondents by education level

Awareness of the National Youth Policy

Any policy formulation or revision entails research to assess context and evaluate the impacts of existing policy. It is imperative that policy revision include wide consultations with populations affected by the policy and take their understanding, experiences and views into perspective. This research, therefore, posed the question of whether or not the respondents were aware of the NYP prior to the survey. From the 1,090 online survey respondents, aggregated by education level (see Table 4 below), 406 respondents had heard about the NYP, of this number, 8% were postgraduates, 62% undergraduates, 7% diploma holders and 23% from high school.

If aware of the NYP before the survey	Educational Level						Total
	Non - formal education	Monastic education	High School	Diploma	Under graduate	Post graduate	
Yes	0	0	95	27	250	34	406
	0%	0%	23%	7%	62%	8%	100%
No	3	1	216	48	369	47	684
	0%	0%	32%	7%	54%	7%	100%
Total	3	1	311	75	619	81	1090
	4%	1%	29%	7%	57%	7%	100%

Table 4: Number & percentage of respondents aware of NYP before survey by education level

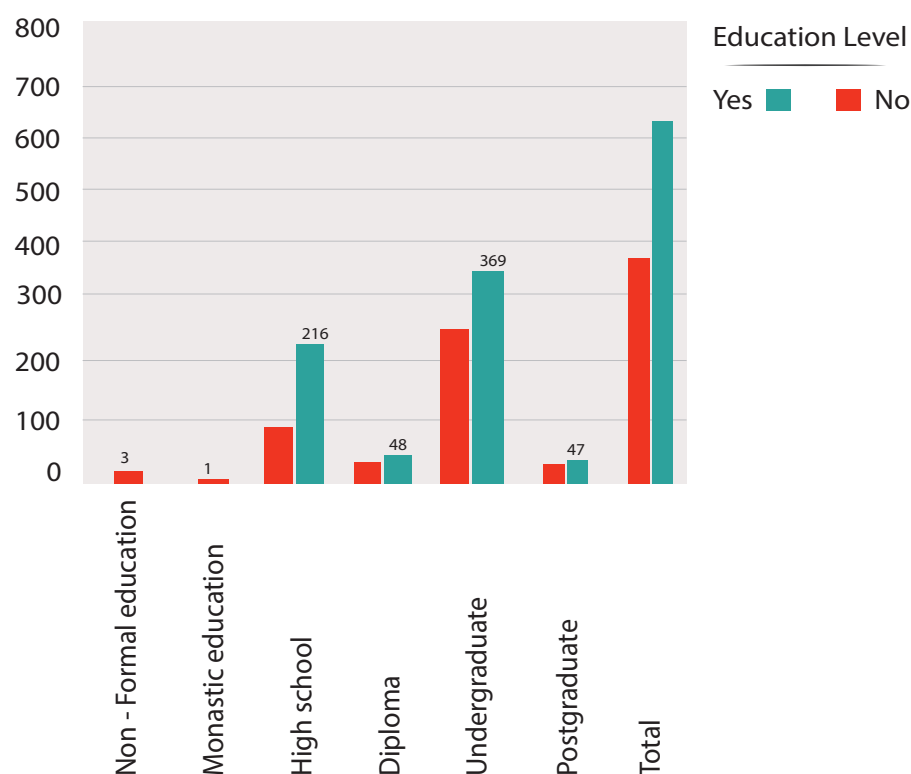


Figure 6: No of respondents aware of NYP before survey

The few research participants (FGD and Survey) who were aware of the NYP were either students, undergoing training or those employed. This suggests that other youth groups, including the vulnerable groups, are less aware of the existence of the NYP. The limited awareness of the NYP suggests that future advocacy needs to be more rigorous and expansive targeting all sections of the youth population.

2.2 Results of the Online Survey and Focus Group Discussions

2.2.1 Aspirations of Youth

The 2020 Youth Initiative Winter Camp used a workshop approach to engage the youth in reviewing the NYP 2011. Members were introduced to the concept and the process of policy development and review along with the historical context of the NYP 2011. They explored the values and principles of Gross National Happiness - Bhutan's development philosophy that guided the formulation of the National Youth Policy. The group was divided into six thematic areas and the groups went through the process of reflecting on their current realities, identifying the core issues, the underlying causes and possible solutions to address them.

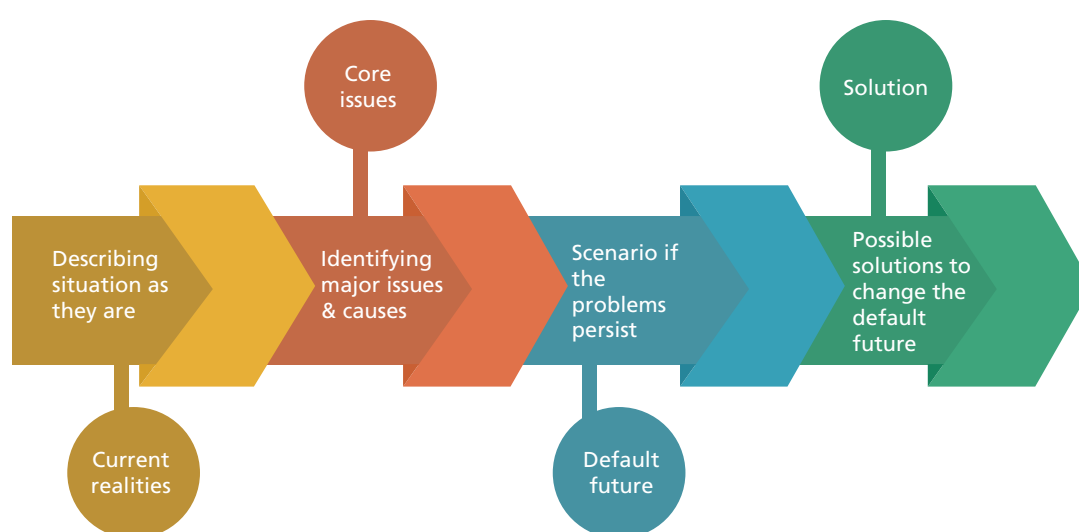


Figure 7: The process of the Youth Initiative Winter Camp

Box 1: Aspirations articulated by members of the Youth Initiative at the 2020 winter camp



“To create enthusiastic, knowledgeable, responsible, skilled and productive youth who are able to meet their emotional, physical and intellectual needs.”

- Aspiration of YI’s Education group



“To build an inclusive nation with informed law-abiding youths who are physically and mentally healthy, capable of contributing positively towards Bhutan’s development in accordance with Gross National Happiness.”

- Aspiration of YI’s Health and Well-being group



“Nurturing productive and responsible youth with ability to act as agents for change, irrespective of gender, in pursuit of sustainable development based on democratic values and ideals.”

- Aspiration of YI’s Governance group

"A vibrant, creative and diversified economy that creates opportunities; empowering youths as drivers of the Bhutanese economy."

- Aspiration of YI's Economy group



"To empower culturally conscious and socially vibrant youth through integrated, holistic and sustainable development to build a democratic Bhutan; empowering youth to recognise and develop their responsibilities to build a better future."

- Aspiration of YI's Socio-culture group



"Environmentally conscious youth who work in the spirit of collaboration towards sustainable and conducive environments in line with GNH values."

- Aspiration of YI's Environment group



Aspirations of the youth were also collected through the focus groups. Most FGDs started on a positive note inquiring into their aspirations. For the youth in conflict with law groups and those in rehabilitation, this question was asked at the end of the discussions to inspire a sense of hope given the nature of their experience and their current situation.

A common aspiration across different youth groups is the hope for independence and self-sufficiency with a source of income as evidenced from the following remarks:

“After going from here, even if I can’t be of any use to my parents, I don’t want to give them problems and I want to be able to stand on my own feet with a job.” – An incarcerated youth

“Right now, we seek jobs. In 15 years, I think, we should create one job. Instead of seeking jobs always, we should create jobs.” – A youth seeking employment

“In 10 years, a fulfilled life for me would be where I would have a proper job, where I can stand on my own feet and be happy wherever I am.” – A student

“Like today, I expect to see myself by not conflicting with law, a person who helps parents, a person who understands the situation of our country, who understands the situation of others and helps other people and wherever you go you should not depend on others but be independent and self-sufficient.” – An incarcerated youth

“It would be nice if we could get a chance to also have academic training after class 10 (at Wangsel Institute for the Deaf). And after class 12 also get a chance to go to college.” – A youth with disability

The analysis shows that youth aspirations arise out of their current situations and from the hope they have for themselves and their community. For instance, youth from Wangsel Institute for the Deaf, Paro hope to achieve academic fulfilment to the extent that is possible for students with disabilities.

There are currently limited opportunities for higher education for those with hearing impairment unlike the blind who can continue tertiary education and have employment opportunities.

Incarcerated youth and those in rehabilitation aspire to return to leading a problem-free and independent life. They hope for smooth reintegration into their community although they often face discrimination and stigmatisation. Youth from the LGBTIQ community report similar discrimination and they wish for a time when their gender and sexual orientation will be socially and legally accepted allowing same-sex marriage so they too can also *“build families together”*.

Youth also wish for closer bonding amongst people and between parents and children. They wish for a society free of alcohol and drug abuse, free of corruption. They also express the wish for an effective and efficient government with no unnecessary bureaucratic inertia, especially in the business sector, which they say should be vibrant and offer youth opportunities to engage in business. The youth believe that personal relationships influence success in getting jobs.

For many youth, securing a livelihood is a resounding aspiration as a means to become self-sufficient and independent and to be in a position to help their parents and community. Likewise, the YI camp also revealed aspirations for Bhutanese youth to be more informed and engaged in all spheres so that they can contribute to progressing an equitable and inclusive, economically and environmentally sustainable GNH society. An underlying aspiration is for a more engaged, responsible and aware generation of youth who are able to be more active in society.

2.2.2 Education and Learning

This section and the remaining five discuss the results of the online survey, FGD and the YI camp. It may be noted that the results of the online survey have been aggregated to place results from ‘very satisfied’ and ‘satisfied’ under satisfied. Similarly, ‘dissatisfied’ and ‘very dissatisfied’ are combined as

dissatisfied. The 'can't say' category is interpreted independently.

The areas of inquiry under the education theme in the online survey questionnaire covered quality of facilities in educational institutions, quality of curricula, quality of media literacy and teaching. Other areas include access to education for youth with disability and preparation of youth for the world of work.

Overall, as evident from Table 5, there is a high level of satisfaction with the quality of educational facilities (76%), the way teachers teach and guide learning (73%), access to quality media literacy (61%), education on rights & responsibilities (73%) and access to education for people with disabilities (60%). There is a lower level of satisfaction with diversity of curricula (53%) and preparation of youth for the world of work (45%).

A significant percentage of respondents chose 'can't say' for diversity in curricula (31%), access to media literacy (20%), access to education for people with disabilities (26%) and preparation for the world of work (34%). This is quite telling for policymakers and educators in particular as we corroborate this with findings from the FGDs.

Education	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Can't say	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Quality of educational facilities	13%	63%	15%	8%	2%
Diversity of curricula	6%	47%	31%	12%	3%
Way teachers teach & guide learning	14%	59%	15%	10%	3%
Access to quality media literacy	11%	50%	20%	14%	4%
Preparation for good understanding of rights and responsibilities	13%	60%	16%	9%	2%
Access to education for people with disabilities	15%	45%	26%	11%	4%
Preparation for the world of work	7%	38%	34%	16%	5%

Table 5: Level of satisfaction with programmes/services in education facilities

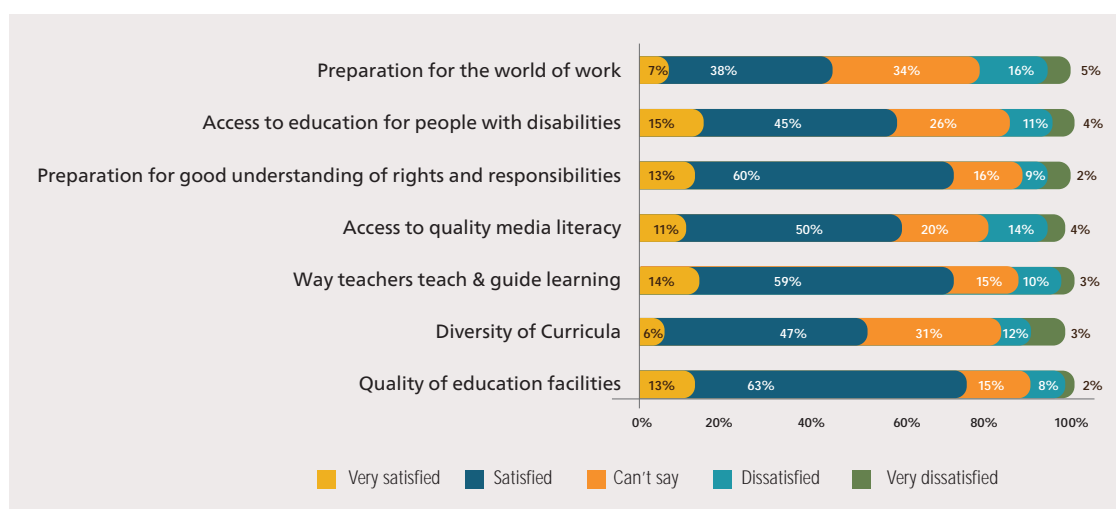


Figure 8: Respondents satisfaction level with programmes/ services in education facilities

An analysis of the data from the FGDs supports the finding from the survey that a majority of the youth within FGDs find the curriculum too narrow and lacking diversity to cater to their interests and potentials. They find their education too theoretical and with limited application in the world of work. Reports from the FGDs point to a disconnect between education and the labour market. A FG discussant from one of the vocational training institutes mentioned:

"I came here with the intention to receive skills and training but like my friend said, due to lack of resources we are helpless. We had a notion that joining TTI (Technical Training Institute), we'll receive full skills but instead we are only taught with more theories like in schools." – A TTI student

"I majored in science. But then the jobs I am applying for now are completely different from what I studied so yeah, it doesn't match." – An employed youth

Several groups recommended curricular diversification. For example, art students wanted to see an Art Academy established to pursue their interests; those undergoing vocational training and training in some skilled activities for future employability wanted a wider choice of trades to be taught;

and others wanted to see earn-and-learn programmes offered as well as internships.

The FGD results show that many have come to realise that higher education does not necessarily translate to assured employment. A discussant said:

“Also one thing is that sending students to study courses without having much scope is also an issue.”

Some respondents have also taken on the mantle of self-training through apprenticeships and have become more employable as evident by a discussant who said:

“After 2015, I was working to develop skills for myself. In 5 years, now I know carpentry, electrical works, and plumbing.”

Contrary to the online survey that shows a substantial proportion (72%) of the respondents satisfied with the way teachers teach and guide learning, the FGDs show that the predominant teaching methods are theoretical and less interactive.

Persons living with disabilities highlight their own needs. Discussants at the FGD with persons with disabilities shared that they are exposed to a variety of teaching methods and teaching aids. They acknowledged that while institutions are well resourced with libraries, there are few reading periods and students cannot access libraries during lunch breaks and weekends. Students also face shortages of laboratory equipment and of science teachers to prepare students for board examinations. In some institutions, facilities such as computer equipment and libraries remain underutilised.

While the online survey shows that 60% of the respondents are satisfied with access to education, the focus group discussion reveals challenges to education for youth with disabilities. The discussants acknowledge that there have been efforts to integrate children with disabilities in schools, such as in Changangkha Lower Secondary School (Thimphu) by creating access to classrooms, restrooms and other facilities. However, children with disabilities still face challenges in securing admission as there are limited special needs

teachers and experts in speech and other types of therapy. The need for better school facilities and teacher expertise to cater to the needs of children with special needs was also observed by Tshomo (2016).

While a majority of youth are satisfied with most of the components of the education in the online survey, the FGDs revealed several issues, such as limited and narrow curricula and inadequacy of curricula to prepare students for the world of work. Youth say that it is alright to get rounded knowledge on various subjects when in lower grades, but at higher secondary and college level, youth say that the curricula ought to be profession-oriented. School education is experienced as mostly theoretical and laborious learning. It is also evident that education facilities, specialised teachers and teaching resources for people with disabilities, including values, health and physical education remain inadequate in the system for now.



Picture 3: Students of the Wangsel Institute for the Deaf share their aspirations and concerns

Quality of education: Vast syllabus, lack of resources such as lab equipment in rural areas, and redundant curriculum are cited as reasons affecting quality of education. YI members expressed concerns about the capacity of ECCD teachers and Special Education Needs (SEN) as they play a central role in laying the foundations for education of the young and persons with disabilities.

Exam-oriented education system: The emphasis on summative assessment forces rote learning of the prescribed curriculum. YI members assert that the overwhelming focus on rote learning and examination creates much stress and anxiety in students.

Increase in youth disciplinary issues: Increasing rate of divorce, busy work life, domestic violence, peer pressure and widening communication gap between parent and child are said to be emerging issues that could be contributing factors to juvenile delinquency, and school dropouts among youth.

Low literacy levels among females in rural areas: The YI members expressed concerns about the low literacy levels among females in rural areas with the enrollment falling behind male counterparts.

Lack of life skills in curriculum: Given the overwhelming focus on academic subjects, classes on value education, health and physical education are often sacrificed for subjects like science and mathematics. This, participants argue, gives primacy to academic subjects over essential life skills and experiential learning.

Incidental costs hinder access to education for disadvantaged students: The YI members were of the view that reforms through the Central School programme and its blanket provision of necessities to all students have not really benefited the needy ones. The needy children in the rural parts of the country remain deprived of education due to incidental costs involved in buying uniforms, shoes, etc.

2.2.3 Health & Well-being

Health and well-being is an important domain of youth development. The provision of this service cuts across different sectors beyond education and health to services offered by Civil Society Organisations (CSO), the monastic body and the armed forces to name a few. Under this theme, the research inquired into the youth's level of satisfaction with the access to and quality of services that contribute to their physical, sexual and mental health, and recreational needs.

The results of the survey displayed in Table 6 shows that overall, in the six areas assessed, a majority of the respondents indicated satisfaction with access to mental health services (67%), access to sexual and reproductive health (67%), access to spiritual guidance (69%), access to recreational facilities (64%) and access to quality rehabilitation services (62%). A little more than half (55%) were satisfied with access to quality of services for people with disabilities. Also, in several areas a significant proportion (30%) stated 'can't say' as in the case of access to quality of services for people with disabilities, 29% in access to quality of rehabilitation services and 23% each for access to sexual and reproductive health, access to spiritual guidance and access to recreational facilities.

Health and Well-being	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Can't say	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Access to quality mental health services	16%	51%	19%	10%	4%
Access to quality sexual reproductive health services	14%	53%	23%	8%	2%
Access to spiritual guidance	101%	101%	101%	101%	101%
Access to recreational facilities	9%	55%	23%	10%	2%
Access to quality rehabilitation services	12%	50%	29%	7%	2%
Access to quality services for people with disabilities	11%	44%	30%	11%	4%

Table 6: Level of satisfaction with programmes/services in health and well-being services

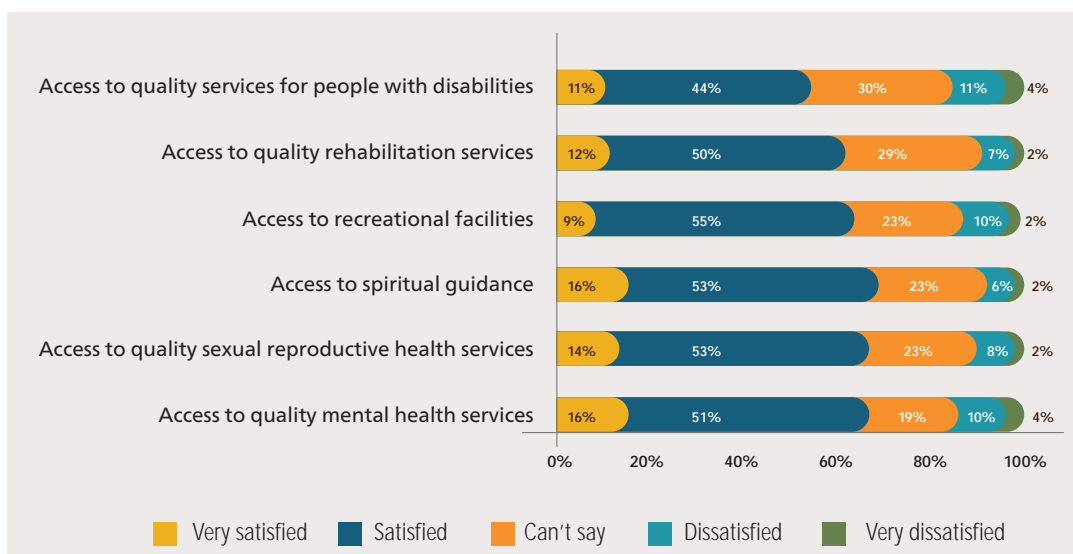


Figure 9: Level of satisfaction with programmes/services in health and well-being services

A majority of the youth identified depression as a major concern and indicated their inability to seek help. They report that this issue is exacerbated by their inability to cope with multiple stressors from parents and teachers to excel in academics. The connections between mental health, drug abuse and suicides were repeatedly highlighted by the focus group discussants. They shared that people suffering from depression are labelled and stigmatised which in turn deters them from sharing and expressing their emotional turmoil. *“Mental health is still considered as [sic] taboo in Bhutan”* said a FG discussant. Other discussants shared similar views:

“Physically I think there are not many issues as we have free medication, so I see most are physically healthy. But when it comes to mental and emotional state, many youths are not healthy; they are found depressed because of social issues like unemployment. And even from the primary school, they are pressured by their parents and teachers and they are found emotionally disturbed.” – Student

“We are given awareness on suicide and [the school management] tell us not to do so but students are having very hard time to tell personal things even to their close friends. I feel if students are being encouraged more; they could tell that it is better to share with someone than to keep it to oneself.” – Student

Feeling remorseful for finding himself in the situation he is, an incarcerated youth explains how he became hooked onto drugs due to peer pressure:

“One is peer pressure, because of friends. They get indulged because of friends. Friends say try once, it’s okay, nothing will happen. Your problems will all disappear. Then when you try, you take once, take twice. After a week of taking it, you start to take it yourself, you don’t need friends’ help after that. You start searching for it yourself. The urge to take comes to your mind. This is what happens when you take it, that is how you feel. So, you start taking drugs that way.”

It is no secret that drug abuse is widespread among youth in Bhutan. In 2016, narcotic-related offences numbered 316, which increased by 49% to 620 in 2018, almost double in just 2 years according to the Royal Bhutan Police Statistical Yearbook 2017 and 2018. A local newspaper, The Bhutanese, reported that a majority of drug abusers are below 24 years with the maximum offenders between 14 and 24 years of age. As a whole, 80% of offenders are below 24 years. While 2% of the drug-related offenders are reported to be females, the rest are males. The unemployed make up 50% of the drug offenders, and students comprise 30%.

There are also issues specific to certain groups. For example, drayang performers report suffering from bright stage lights and ulcers going without meals for long hours at a stretch. One of the discussants confided:

“In the drayang, after nightfall, we are not allowed to eat, if caught, the owner will scold. Being an ulcer patient, when food isn’t taken on time I fall ill.”

Respondents say that visits to school counsellors are not seen in positive light in view of the stigma attached to mental illnesses. Youth shared doubts about professional ethics of counsellors and peer-helpers and believe that not everybody respects confidentiality or protects the identity of the patients. A student from one of the schools shared:

“We did choose peer-helpers but still students won’t go because they feel their issues will be shared with other teachers. Here, the counsellor promises that he would maintain confidentiality but then the next day,

the rumors will be spread everywhere. After that, students start to get scared, they feel it is of no use to go to counsellor. The counsellor is not a counsellor but a place where the news are reported”.

Despite their distrust, youth recommend continuation of counseling and mindfulness sessions in schools:

“I think we need to have a counsellor here. There are many people who are stressed and are broken down mentally. For them, it is difficult since there is no one to share their problems with. If there is a counsellor, then we will be able to share our problems and seek advice from them.”

Similarly, a discussant from a youth rehabilitation centre believes that a counsellor who is not from the Royal Bhutan Police may be better at counselling them:

“Instead of RBP (Royal Bhutan Police), the government could provide us some counsellors like schools do and take care of it, then the students going out from here will share with others not to do such things.”

Echoing similar views, another youth from a juvenile centre who believes in “being given a second chance” and living life one day at a time suggested:

“Likewise, if NGOs [civil society organisations] can run this [rehabilitation centre], it will be more helpful as we can solve our own problems with them. Here, they are in police uniforms so by nature, we hesitate to talk to them.”

In recent years, four drug, alcohol and substance-related rehabilitation centres have been established in Thimphu to treat alcohol and drug dependence. Earlier, alcohol and drug dependent persons sought treatment in Siliguri, Sikkim or other cities in India. People apprehended with drug-related offences are now given opportunities by the police to rehabilitate themselves rather than being directly charged and convicted.

Children who come in conflict with the law for crimes are rehabilitated in juvenile centres located at Tsimasham, Chukha and Chamgang in Thimphu. However, youth in juvenile centres do not have access to professional

counsellors or to professionals equipped with the knowledge and skills to manage delinquent youth, services that are offered in substance-related rehabilitation centres.

Although Basic Health Units (BHU) supplement the hospitals in making access to health services more accessible, youth report challenges in availing timely services and information. Several groups of youth shared inconveniences in availing medical services at the hospital. Several discussants stressed the need for doctors to communicate better with their patients, and to enforce the policy of queuing without differential treatments of friends, families and high officials. They believe that while consideration should be given to the seriously ill, elderly and people with disability, the hospitals should not be partial in providing its services.

Reproductive and menstrual health is vital knowledge for youth entering teenage and adult life. Orientation programmes are provided in schools, nunneries and other institutions catering to youth like the Wangsel Institute for the Deaf in Paro. Discussants of the LGBTIQ group report that menstrual and sexual health information and services are not easily accessible to them because of their gender orientation and also because they experience stigma in the society. Moreover, the respondents state that the delivery of such education in schools is reportedly not entirely effective mainly because teachers are not confident in providing the orientation. Reportedly, teachers have not been able to convene common information sessions with boys and girls together for better understanding.



Picture 4: Trainees of Technical Training Institute share their views during a focus group discussion

Youth acknowledge satisfaction with mental health services and spiritual guidance. Counselling services provided in most schools and some institutes have benefited students. Yet, almost all youth groups pointed out mental health - namely depression - to be a major concern. They point to multiple stressors (employment and academics) in life, abuse of substance, the inability to express emotional difficulties and "taboos" around mental health issues which exacerbates and compromise their mental well-being.

The findings for this study also point to the need to revisit the services at the Youth Friendly Health Service as it currently is not able to make itself a safe space for people of other gender orientation, and the organisation's timing is not convenient for youth in school and college. Another pertinent finding is the lack of trust in counsellors in schools and the need to have professional counsellors at juvenile centres.

Rise in mental health issues such as depression and anxiety: Bhutan's official report of 561 cases of depression from the age of 5 to 49 in 2018 compared with a global trend of 1 in every 6 people aged from 10 to 19 suffering depression, participants argue that mental health issues in the country is comparatively low because of unreported cases. An increase in attempted suicide rate from 104 in 2014 to 126 in 2018 suggests growing concern in the areas of mental health disorders, which is also associated with substance abuse among youth.

Substance abuse and alcohol consumption: YI members believe that this issue is associated with mental health, peer pressure, dysfunctional families, poverty and lack of guidance from parents and guardians. This has been further aggravated by easy access to drugs, lack of youth-friendly health services and cultural acceptance of alcohol in Bhutan. Evidently, alcohol and substance abuse are a leading cause of national mortality.

Limited access to youth friendly health services (YFHS): While the YFHS has been established, its urban-centric focus and the timing of the services are matters of concern. For example, YFHS coincides with the working hours making it near impossible for school going and employed youths to avail the services.

Lack of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE): The YI members believe that Bhutanese youths are unaware of Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), and consequently engage in unsafe sex. As a result, unplanned pregnancies and an increase in abortion rates are imminent. For example, in 2018 alone, there were 1,438 cases of abortions recorded. The rise in STDs can also be attributed to lack of sexual education.

Limited support for recreational activities: There is limited financial support for youth recreational activities and sports. Further, sports and recreation are more focused towards school-going children, inadvertently, leaving out other youth groups such as monks, nuns, LGBTIQs, unemployed youth and youth living with disabilities. Also, recreational activities in schools are often relegated to secondary status. For example, Health and Physical Education

(HPE) classes provided in schools aren't supported with the necessary professional sports instructors. HPE classes are considered as free periods and at times, these classes are substituted by other classes like mathematics and science.

2.2.4 Governance

Democracy is only as strong as the participation of its citizens in governing themselves, and this is possible when citizens feel their voices are heard, their participation is solicited and their views are valued. As a major section of the population, youths' participation in community affairs, processes of decision-making and engagement in current affairs are critical to grooming citizens who will be more likely to be democratic, active and engaged. The theme "*governance*" queries the culture of youth engagement in community affairs, decision-making, access to information and their general perception of the independence of media.

The data in Table 7 shows that while a majority (74%) are satisfied with opportunities to participate in community services, a smaller proportion (55%) are satisfied with inclusion of people with disabilities and (53%) opportunities to participate in decision-making. Even fewer respondents (48%) expressed satisfaction with youth's views being valued and (41%) access to information critical for independent political decision-making. With the exception of opportunities to participate in community services (16%), the percentage of respondents who chose "can't say" is quite high under this theme (ranging from 22% to 37%).

Governance	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Can't say	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Opportunities to participate in decision-making	8%	45%	22%	18%	7%
Opportunities to participate in community service	17%	57%	16%	8%	1%
The extent to which youth views are valued	9%	39%	30%	15%	6%
Access to information to make independent political decisions	6%	35%	37%	17%	6%
Ability of media to inform people & hold government accountable	10%	43%	28%	13%	6%
Consideration for the needs of people with disabilities	11%	44%	30%	11%	4%

Table 7: Level of satisfaction with youth participation, access to information and independence of the media

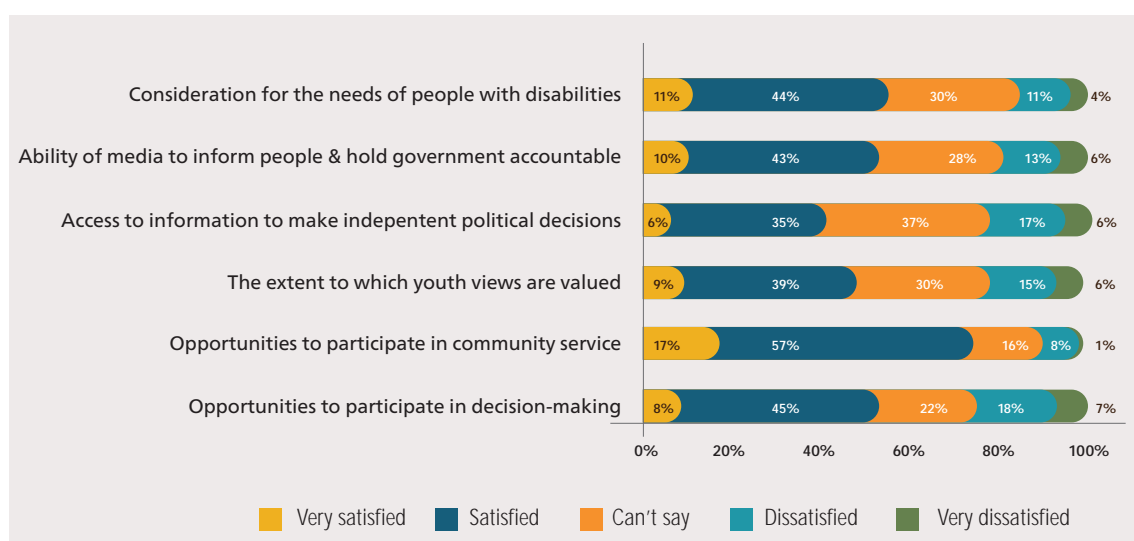


Figure 10: Level of satisfaction with youth participants, access to information and independence of the media

Focus group discussants report that they have limited access to educational information about government, governance and political parties. Whatever they know about these topics is from social media and mainstream newspapers, radio and television and in a few schools, through democracy clubs. A discussant currently serving a prison term explained:

"We watch parliamentary news because the parliamentarians could make a reference to our situation regarding drugs and come up with policies. We are hopeful to have the [sentencing] terms for drug abuse being made compoundable and even being reduced."

Youth talk about issues in the media that are of concern to them like suicide, drug abuse, rape and current media dominant news such as COVID-19. One mentioned that 'we are also interested in social and political issues in the country'. The youth are aware of how social media is misused to spread fake news and criticise organisations and public figures.

The FGDs corroborate the survey findings that, in terms of civic participation, community service does exist in the school culture. Students perform social service activities helping the poor and elderly near their institutes or assist in crop cultivation and so on. Clubs like the Tarayana and the Youth Volunteers in Action (Y-VIA) help mobilise volunteers for social services. Even those with disabilities (e.g. deaf students) volunteer to provide community work and teach sign language to junior students. While many are motivated to take part in community services for recognition in the form of certificates of participation that prove useful in securing jobs, some are intrinsically motivated as shared thus by a discussant:

"If we go somewhere and do voluntary work for the benefit of others, we get satisfaction and we are able to do good deeds and get more experienced at the same time."

Youth sometimes attend community meetings when they are on vacation. However, those with disability face challenges in attending meetings due to accessibility issues and they feel that their views are not always listened to. A discussant explained how she was able to attend and understand the presentations by the four political campaigns back in 2018 because she was

assisted by her sister who also interpreted the presentations.

Aside from the schools that have civics as a mandatory subject from classes VII to X, other institutes do not offer any programme that orient the youth on democratic systems of governance and the citizen's role in a democracy. Providing a peek into the school culture that is expected to reflect the democratic system of governance of the country, the focus group discussants shared that elections of student leaders for various positions (e.g. school captain, mess, sports, hostel, clubs etc.) are organised by the school for the student body to participate. However, the practice varies from nominees being selected by teachers and then students voting, to direct voting by students after candidates file their intent to run for the leadership position.

Youth from several groups perceive teacher intervention in nominations as nepotism and favouritism. Discussants, however, state that they are able to vote for the best candidates as they are able to assess candidates' capacity, character and performance.

Shedding some light on a substantial percentage of respondents who chose not to take a clear stance on their level of satisfaction with regard to opportunities to take part in decision-making (22%) and the extent to which youth views are valued (30%), the discussants revealed that despite having elected representatives, decision are made by the school management without consultation and how students voices are not really valued. One student representative shared thus:

"I have to attend because I'm a class monitor; I guess it's a part of my failure and the failure of my peers too. There is a forum, but although we have the liberty to raise the issues the students give us, we can't take part in the decision-making process at all. There was an ad hoc decision to make 4th year students go out of the hostels, but the plan was reverted again."

Students believe that their voices are not always appreciated as one of the discussant shared:

"When we complain [about food]- that it is not good... it might look like a personal issue with the management. And [when] we complain we get scolding; they say why are you not grateful when these are provided free of cost."

Another discussant with disabilities shared her experience of facing apathy from school management:

"We doubt that [if we are heard]. We are being heard sometimes and not being heard sometimes. It is diverse. Some don't even understand us due to our lack of communication."

Expressing their displeasure on being alienated from consultations and decision-making on issues that pertain to them (such as the removal of cut-off marks in class X, and a suicide prevention action plan etc.), youth complain that only adults are invited to such important processes while they are left without being heard. One of the discussants shared:

"I also feel youth should be consulted while making decisions on youth and normally we were never consulted. We have to just talk between ourselves, we can't tell anyone so we have no option then to keep it [our views] with ourselves."

The discussants expressed interest in politics and have critical views about parliamentarians attributing their non-delivery of pledges to non-availability of budget. Youth are of the view that decisions to vote for a certain party should, among others, be based on their ability to deliver the pledges. Youth, however, also expressed disillusionment in politics as it is perceived to be abrasive and governments fail to fulfill their pledges or make excuses citing constraints in budget availability. A discussant remarked :

"At first me and my friends were interested back when democracy was first introduced into Bhutan. I knew the names of all the ministers but right now I feel my interest has waned. At first, I was really excited. The charm has disappeared because I think it's repetitive, people always criticise the leaders and slander them, they can't fulfill all their promises. The charm has gone away for me."

The youth at the YI camp expressed concerns about poor gender representation in politics and leadership position, the dangers of long-term goals being compromised for short-term gains in Bhutan's democracy and structural impediment to youth's participation in political discourses and deliberations in the name of having to remain "apolitical".



Picture 5: Facilitators in conversation with the students of the College of Language and Culture Studies

According to Hart (1992):

"Participation is an important antidote to traditional educational practice which runs the risk of leaving youth alienated and open to manipulation. Through genuine participation in projects, which involve solutions to real problems, young people develop the skills of critical reflection and comparison of perspectives that are essential to the self-determination of political beliefs. The benefit is two-fold: to the self-realisation of the child and to the democratisation of society." (pg 36)

The current educational practices of preparing citizens for a democratic society is still in an infant stage. Bhutanese youth are educated on governance and politics through the civics subject, but the same is not true in other institutions like vocational and technical institutes.

The online survey results reveal that a majority of youth access political news from social media. A majority are satisfied with opportunities to participate in community service as reinforced by the scout programme and school clubs but the processes of election of student representatives are at a danger to stray from democratic ideals in some cases. While students have ample opportunities to engage in community services, their participation in consultative meetings and decision-making on pertinent issues that concern them are limited and their voices go unsolicited and unheard.

With such fledgling democratic practices in the schools -- where currently the design, leadership and control over the leadership platforms and clubs are still with the management and authority figures -- student participation may be described as a project of *"tokenism."* In Hart's (1992) *"ladder of participation"*, he describes *"tokenism"* as participation and volunteerism by children in adult-led and coordinated activities. According to Hart, children not only learn their responsibilities by collaborating with elders but elders and adults too learn from children. This underscores the importance of genuine consultation and engagement of youth in consultations and decisions that affect them. Indeed, Pek (2016) notes that, if the youth do not receive any formal orientation on politics in schools and colleges, they cannot be expected to be able to choose the government (Pg 72).

Structural impediments in engaging in mainstream political discourse and processes: Despite being eligible voters, youth in educational institutions do not get the opportunity to participate in the political process since institutions are considered 'apolitical'. Political discussions are considered too sensitive. While academic focus is a priority, lack of information directly from the sources (political parties) makes the students turn towards social media or hearsay which are described as 'dangerous', unmoderated and unregulated which inadvertently encourages ignorance and apathy.

Gender disparity in political and decision-making bodies: Women participation and representation is essential to ensure gender inclusivity and diversity. However, their representation in key decision-making bodies has been very minimal, observed the YI members. For example, the current parliament has only 11 women as compared to 61 men. Social stigma pertaining to women in politics and inferiority complex are seen as the two most pertinent causes of low women participation and representation.

Long-term goals compromised for short term gains: The YI members noted that in a democracy mobilising support at times means making popular promises which might not necessarily be long-term and sustainable. They cited the example of the removal of class ten cut-off points. While a noble initiative, the short notice affected more than 11,800 students, parents and private schools, according to the youth. Besides financial implications, the youth assert that in the long run, such an ad hoc decision will undermine people's faith in the elected government.

Misuse of benefits: The youth also discussed how the previous government, with noble intention, implemented the central school policy whereby students got all of their necessities for free. However, soon after, students were found to be misusing those resources. In schools, plates and mugs that were given for free were seen in gardens and school uniforms were not taken care of. Young people in colleges and other institutions are also seen misusing and destroying public properties with an utter lack of sense of ownership.

2.2.5 Socio-cultural Environment

The socio-cultural context is an important space for youth development. Educated, informed young citizens can maximise their potential and contribute to their communities only if the social and cultural contexts support their potential to do so. As Bhutan continues to navigate through opportunities and challenges brought about by modernisation, it is essential to nurture youth who are conscious of values and tradition and at the same time embrace the opportunities and innovations brought about by changing times. The theme socio-cultural environment queries youth on the influence of media and their appreciation of Bhutanese tradition and culture; social cohesion and safety of young people, care for PWDs, and the quality of parental guidance in youth development.

The results in Table 8 show that overall, a majority of the youth (72%) remain satisfied with parental involvement in their lives and the social cohesion (65%). Similarly, a substantial 54% of the respondents are satisfied with the extent to which their generation value Bhutanese tradition and culture and the influence of the media. But it is also interesting to note that a substantial 22 % of respondents chose 'can't say' and 25% indicated dissatisfaction with the extent to which youth value Bhutanese tradition and culture. 24% of the respondents indicating their inability to take a stance on the role of media in influencing youth values shows that youth themselves remain critical of how the media is shaping their values.

The survey also indicates the need to pay more attention to the issue of safety of young people and care towards people with disabilities. 26% of the respondents indicated inability to take a stance on social safety for boys and girls and 37% indicated the same for care received by people with disabilities.



Picture 6: Students of College of Natural Resources during a focus group discussion

Socio-cultural Environment	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Can't say	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
The extent to which youth value tradition & culture	9%	45%	22%	21%	4%
The social bond (helpfulness) in society	14%	51%	21%	13%	2%
The quality of guidance received from parents & adults	24%	48%	16%	9%	3%
The influence of media on youth values	1%	53%	24%	16%	6%
The safety of girls, boys and women in Bhutan	12%	37%	26%	18%	7%
The care received by people with disabilities	11%	41%	37%	9%	3%

Table 8: Level of satisfaction with programmes/services in socio-cultural environment

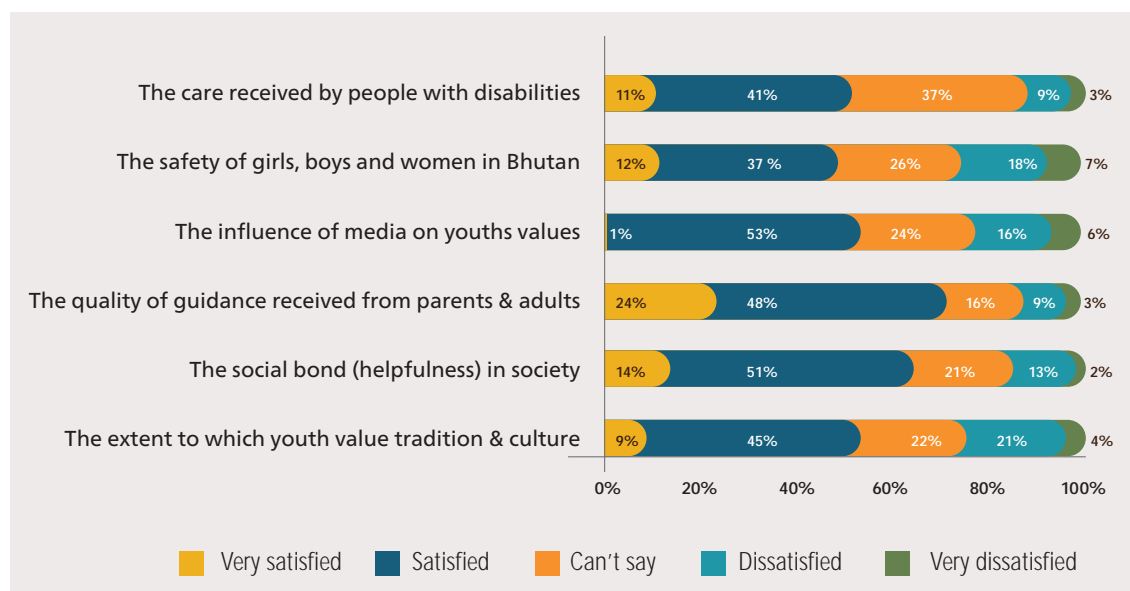


Figure 11: Level of satisfaction with programmes/ services in socio-cultural environment

The FGDs show that the youth are aware of tangible socio-cultural changes - changes in dress style, hair-style, and tastes in music and dance, and changes in speech - as well as the intangibles - attitudes and values. There are also differences in how youth view Bhutanese traditional culture. There is recognition that preservation of tradition and culture is central to Bhutan's identity and independence. While some youth feel that the younger generation is taking less interest in traditional culture (e.g. zhung dra, boe dra, mask dances, tsechus) and are more interested in foreign cultures like the Korean pop culture, others are of the view that cultural change is inevitable and not necessarily bad but something to be embraced.

Describing what it means to be a Bhutanese, a discussant shared:

"For me, being Bhutanese isn't simply wearing gho and speaking Dzongkha, for me it is the way we think...the concepts of loyalty and karma...[being] compassionate and peaceful. Just as important as the culture and other appearances are, I think for me, a Bhutanese is what is on the inside."

Many youth are of the view that preservation of culture and tradition is important particularly for the "independence" of the country, but they also

assert that culture has to change and evolve. They cite examples of “*eating doma*” and “*night hunting*” as cultural practices that have to change. Emphasising how being a Bhutanese goes beyond tangible cultural promotion one discussant shared: “*I think that what matters is not the type of clothes you wear but it depends on your intention and your mindset*”.

A discussant reveals how preservation of tradition and culture is a challenge among the young population:

“I for one love my Bhutanese heritage, I love old songs and I love wearing the gho. But when I listen to old Boedra songs I get called grandpa by my friends. I get called Azha when I wear my gho.”

Another said:

“...it is important to preserve our culture but modernisation is important as well...for example [the] older generation can't not accept LGBTIQ community.”

Another shared that it is hard to find young people who would perform mask dance in the village and tsechu had become more of a “fashion show” rather than a spiritual event. Making an argument for a balanced approach to cultural preservation and promotion, a discussant from a school explained:

“I think we have to change some aspects of our culture and adopt the better practices of the greater world. I think we should be very wise where we change too. I think flexibility is very important too, I can't work in the fields with a gho and tsho lham. I think there is a time to show consideration and respect to our culture and there is a time to show some flexibility. But I don't think we should forget our culture.”

Many youth call for more cultural and traditional programmes to be introduced in the schools as a solution to their perceived decline in interest. The unemployed youth group pointed out that the challenges to Bhutan's cultural promotion is because we do not have engaging contents like in the form of cartoons: “*Countries like Korea and Japan have everything in their own language... on the internet and the social media... we can make our language in various platforms...promote our language. Since most things are*

in English, people learn English more than Dzongkha."

Supporting a similar idea, another discussant said : *"Recently my aunt's son was asking me: "why isn't there any cartoon in Dzongkha?" I could not answer. He is fluent in Hindi because he watches Hindi cartoons... therefore if there are Bhutanese cartoons it would help our kids learn our own culture".* Revealing the emergence of the value of "individualism" the youth shared that traditional culture is less valued by the younger generation because they want to be in sync with "fashion", "to get name and fame and look unique" and to "go for unique and trendy; something that will make them stand out."

Some of the discussants are cognisant of how the media influence their values, the idea of beauty and how some behaviours are normalised. A discussant shared: *"Bollywood movies created a certain picture of what a man should be... good looking and have a great body to protect the heroine..."*. Commenting on how the media, movies and television normalises some behaviours in the minds of the youth, the discussant shared how young people emulate behaviours: *"...movies romanticise boys teasing girls...boys stalking girls...when we look into real life, stalking is a bad thing."*

The FGDs show mixed responses from youth with regard to parental guidance. Some youth pointed out that educated parents are better at guiding their children while uneducated parents are unaware of the substances that their children bring home and abuse. Some pointed out that with the emerging trend among educated parents to work outside of the country, young children are left behind under the watch of elder siblings or relatives, and in their perspective, this could weaken the parent-child bond. Many also pointed out how youth tend to gravitate towards their peers' influence and may not receive their parents' advice and guidance well. The youth undergoing rehabilitation and serving prison terms expressed remorse and regrets of having come under peer influence despite parents' guidance. The youth say that programmes on how "youth think" would be useful to educate the parents on guiding their children better.

The participants of the FGDs also alluded to how social media and phones

have invaded our family time and the tendency of the working parents in urban cities to lead busy lives that impinge on quality family time.

The FGDs with people living with disabilities (PWD) reveal that this group remains vulnerable to all sorts of abuse from teasing to sexual harassment by peers, relatives and strangers. People take advantage of this group's inability to communicate and defend themselves (blind and deaf).

A discussant shared that *"boys touch my hair and kiss me on my face and when I tell them not to do such things, they keep holding my hand"*. Another shared that taxi drivers tease them and lure them with promises of getting them mobile phones. One of the discussants shared that *"these days I even fear staying at home as there's a case of an uncle harassing his own niece"*. Girls with hearing impairment worry about the risks of being raped because they cannot hear perpetrators approaching and they also do not have the speech to lodge complaints. Boys worry about being stabbed or beaten by gangs and dogs biting them as they can't hear. A parent of a child with a disability shared that *"youth with disability are at greater risk because normal children can ask for help from others which disabled youth can't, especially the ones who cannot speak."* One of the teachers of students with special needs shared that teaching PWD the skills to fend for themselves should begin at home - not letting siblings of opposite sex sleep in the same room - and teaching them socially appropriate skills such as changing clothes in private, bathing themselves and not kissing everyone.

The FGDs reveal lukewarm support for and inconsistency in the integration of people with disabilities. For instance, PWD shared that they are left out of school cultural programmes because the others with normal faculties believe that they *"act stupid"*, *"look older"*, or *"cannot hear music"*. But as one of the discussants asserts:

"We feel sad when we are set apart. We have eyes so we can see others and dance...that is why we say [we want to participate]."

Many of them pointed out how they feel excluded because of their disabilities. One of them cited an event when he went to an art exhibition where he

struggled to understand but *“people near me kept on saying that they were busy and did not explain it for me”*. They pointed out how it is difficult for people on wheelchairs to visit dzongs or attend dzongkhag meetings or rent an apartment because they have a specific need which is not yet understood by the society. Referring to a sign language teacher who interprets the weekly news on BBS, a discussant shared *“We now have a translator for the weekly news on weekends but if we could have for the whole week we will get full information not only half of it.”*

Often, youth with LGBTIQ self-declared sexual orientation or those preferring to ‘stay in the closet’ find school rules (e.g. school uniform and hair length) incompatible with their sexual orientation. The management in some schools recognise and accept their status. However, the school environment does not provide security for stigmatised groups such as LGBTIQ who suffer public name-calling and ridicule in schools as shared by a member of the LGBTIQ community:

“When we were small, we liked going to school but when I reached higher schools ...teachers discriminate [against] us and many people ... like trans-men. There [are not many] who reached to higher schools ... because of the dress code, the way we have to keep the hair long and all; many of us dropped out. Due to the reasons, many people like us don’t like to go to school and they drop [out of] school. I completed high school.”

According to Kulkarni (2016) various kinds of violence occur in Bhutan such as physical violence at home, in school, community and monastic education. In Bhutan, it is reported that sexual violence is experienced by both boys and girls at least once in their lifetime. Around 17% of men between 18-24 years of age experienced sexual violence whereas only 13% of young women of the same age group experienced the same. Emotional violence occurs when the children witness verbal/physical conflict between parents. Girls disclose sexual violence more than boys whereas boys seek counselling. Kulkarni (2016) advocates concrete policies and implementation to solve this issue as the number of rape cases in the country has been increasing.

Many youth, across age groups and education levels expressed satisfaction with the extent to which youth value tradition and culture. This may imply that the youth are able to reflect on their shortcomings in valuing tradition and culture. However, they expressed concerns about widening the generation gap between parents and children, and coupled with social media influence and peer pressure, youth outlook, attitudes and behaviour may change as a consequence. The proportion of those saying '*can't say*', often up to one-third of respondents, points to respondents not being entirely convinced of the positive role of the media in influencing youth values.

Youth not only question the modality of encouraging traditional culture in schools but also the relevance and validity of certain customs and traditions in a modern and changed context. The role of religion in inducing youth's realisation to change their mentality and, therefore, their behaviour has also been suggested.

Society is unkind to people who have had a history of drug and alcohol abuse, with a record of treatment at a rehabilitation facility for abuse or criminal offence, having a physical and intellectual disability, having a different sexual orientation and if employed in a drayang. These groups often face discrimination in various forms ranging from name-calling, deprivation of documents required for employment, or other state benefits and are often victims of violence. It is likely that society lacks awareness and does not view such people in an impartial light, devoid of consideration and compassion. Oftentimes, it is the laws which discriminate against people (for example, the LGBTIQ and those who have served sentences for criminal offences) and when laws label their actions and their status as being criminal, community members also take it for granted that such people are deviants. Data shows that about half of the respondents are dissatisfied and almost a third of respondents who '*can't say*' with regard to care received by people with disabilities shows that much more effort needs to be invested in improving the lives of people with disabilities.

Youth in general face violence in different forms and environments. Violence is perpetrated in families, schools, institutions and society. This study shows

that youth are concerned about the safety of girls, boys and women in Bhutan. Also, youth with disabilities and LGBTIQ are more susceptible to violence. Violence can take the form of overt physical abuse, sexual abuse and also emotional violence that young children are exposed to in families by action of parents, in schools by teachers and peers and in society.

Influence of the media: With the ever-increasing access to information, communication and technology, access to media, particularly social media has increased exponentially. In the first place, the media consumption reduces real-time engagement and conversation. According to YI members, access to television, particularly following certain programmes such as Hollywood and Korean movies are alleged to have strong influence over the current generation of youth.

Increase in intergenerational gap: Bhutan's embrace of modernisation meant infusion of western-influenced modern ideas with that of community-based culture and tradition. Emphasis on career growth also meant limited time for family life. As a result, intergenerational dialogue between parents and children has reduced drastically, leading to widening gaps in understanding of values, attitudes and practices. With easy access to social media, online chats and conversations have replaced storytelling practices of the past.

Loss of community vitality: Associated with economic growth, rural-urban migration is a growing concern facing Bhutan, according to YI members. The concomitant effect of this phenomenon has been loss of community vitality. Elements of community vitality such as trust among neighbours, labour mobility and exchange of goods and services are very much part of village communities. Such practices help enhance social solidarity and community feeling. On the other hand, in urban centres, one does not know the neighbour living next door. For instance, the GNH Survey reported a decline in community vitality from 11% in 2010 to 10% in 2015.

2.2.6 Economy

Economic empowerment and independence are at the heart of individuals' success. The theme on economy evaluates the diversity of the economy to nurture youth talents and expertise, access to information on jobs and financial support as well as inquire on social status of blue-collar jobs and employment opportunities for the disabled.

Unlike the earlier themes, the data for economy as shown in table 9 below is striking. Aside from youth entrepreneurship opportunities, a majority of the youth express dissatisfaction with many aspects of the economy related to potential employment and opportunities. While 23% of the respondents chose '*can't say*' regarding access to information on jobs, training and internships, 35% remain dissatisfied. 49% are not happy with job availability in the market while 29% couldn't not take a stance. Thirty two percentage are dissatisfied with access to financial support and 34% remain unsure of their position. Similarly, 30% of the youth chose '*can't say*' to the diversity in the economy to cater to their talents and expertise and 29% remain unhappy about it. 39% of the respondents remain dissatisfied with the social status of blue-collar jobs while 37 % expressed inability to take a stance. As per the data, employment opportunities for PWD remain dismal with just 24% of the youth expressing satisfaction.

Economy	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Can't say	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Access to information on jobs, training and internships	7%	36%	23%	26%	9%
Opportunities that promote youth entrepreneurship	10%	45%	26%	15%	4%
Jobs available in the market	3%	19%	29%	32%	17%
Access to financial support	4%	30%	34%	23%	9%
Diversity of the economy to cater to youth talents & expertise	5%	36%	30%	22%	7%
Social status of blue-collar jobs	3%	21%	37%	23%	16%
Employment opportunities for people with disabilities	4%	20%	44%	20%	11%

Table 9: Level of satisfaction with programmes/services in economy

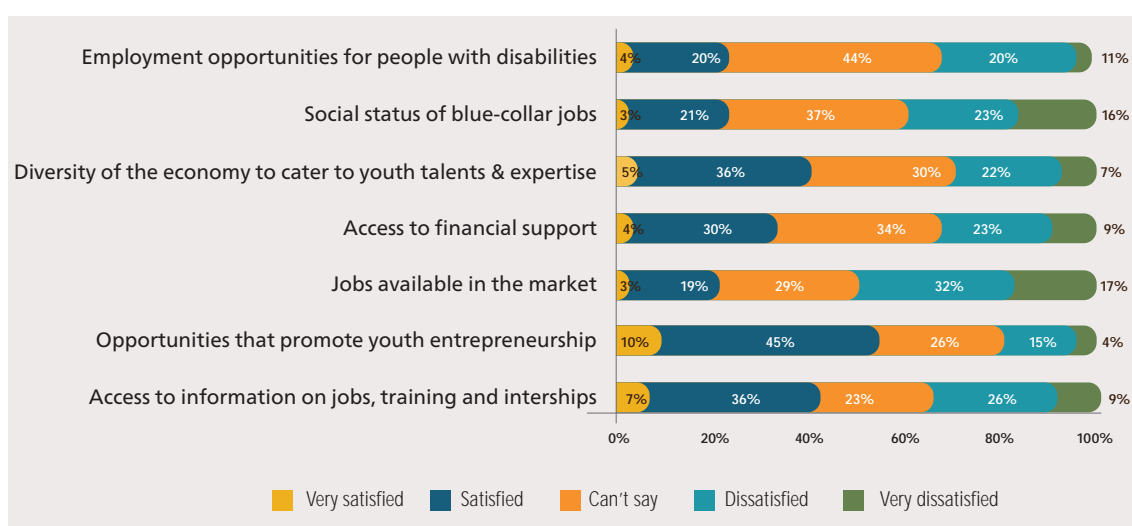


Figure 12: Level of satisfaction with programmes/ services in economy

Of all the themes, a majority of the youth remain critical about the state of the economy. The youth share concerns about heavy reliance on imports and the inability of the local produce to compete with imported produce.

Alluding to a mismatch between their aspirations and what the economy can offer, many youths remain acutely aware of this tension. Several remarks from the discussants reveal this. For instance, one of them said: *"The economic situation is not up to our expectation"* and another adds: *"there is a mismatch in jobs we demand and [what is] provided"*. Referring to the limited scope for making a living out of their passion and talents shared, another youth claims: *"We can hardly see anyone [making a] living with their skills and interests... The number is limited"*. Another youth shares a similar view and asserts that

"To earn a living in Bhutan, I think it is quite difficult. Right now, we see the national football players complaining about their low pay on social media. Moving to arts, we can see many talented people in colleges but with no platform. I think it is difficult to earn a living that way"

It is interesting that the participating youth acknowledge that youth are not willing to take the jobs that are available in the market. Youth prefer white-collar jobs and parents too have the notion that blue-collar jobs are for the illiterate. There is stigma attached to blue-collar jobs and youth, therefore, do not readily take up such jobs. This is partly because these jobs are not attractive enough in terms of salary, working conditions, safety and training to attract youth to take up the jobs.

Rationalising why youth do not take up manual work, one of them brings out the high cost of living in Thimphu. A drayang artist shared, *"In Thimphu... even if we drink water we have to pay money; on top of that, the house rent is very high"*. Another discussant claims:

"Working along the roadside and construction sites does not make me feel low. In Thimphu, if we earn Nu 6000/- a month, what [can] we do? Shall we spend it on food or pay house rent? I share with my friends that if there is an increase in salary, I won't mind working along the roadside and construction sites."

Another youth recounts how the society looks down upon manual work which shapes youth's attitude towards such work:

"Firstly, it's the society which looks down on us by saying 'after studying so much we are working under somebody else. Secondly, the payment isn't great...Thirdly, if you work under someone you are a labourer."

Echoing similar views, another discussant wished *"there is more respect for blue collar jobs in the market so that more youth can take on the jobs"* and another stated the *"need to increase the pay scale for blue collar jobs and we need to create awareness on dignity of labour."*

It is evident from the FGDs that youth's attitude towards manual work is stipulated by the expectation society places on them and it is not only determined by the difficult working environment and low wages. How they look at manual work is tainted by society's priori attitude towards it. Recognising the state of the economy and challenges in employment, another youth suggested:

"Changing the mindset of the people and letting them think that every job is alike. People do business, but if there were no labourers, even their business factory won't be set up. Instead of spending on labourers from other countries, if we could hire people from our own country for construction works, that could be a way to achieve independence."

There are also discussants who, while acknowledging the society's poor attitude towards manual work, believe that it can be a good source of income. An unemployed youth shared:

"I completed grade 12 in 2014, didn't go to college, stayed back and worked on getting skills... a few friends landed up taking blue collar jobs...they earn more than those in the government sector. They go out and try. Youth nowadays wait for jobs ...but never take an initiative to explore or look out for jobs". Another unemployed youth suggests that entrepreneurial attitude and skills need to be nurtured from a young age - "In other countries even small kids try to make pocket money by selling juices...For them they know the value of money even at a very young age. Similarly, we should...make them [children] learn entrepreneurial skills as well."

A discussant observed that *“Though we produce our own, the price is a bit high. So people import goods from India that are a bit cheaper than ours. This is why economic progress is sluggish.”* An unemployed youth suggests the need to explore international markets for Bhutanese produce as Bhutan’s market is small. He asserts: *“In terms of TVET programmes like Zorig Chusum, there is a need to focus on marketing because there is less market demand in Bhutan for skilled youth. ... Building market even for vegetable vendors”.* Youth say that though poverty may affect few in the country, economic inequity is high. Some youth see scope in the Cottage & Small Industries (CSI) sector and agriculture as potential ventures that could contribute to the economy.

Many youths see ventures in technology as lucrative as there is emerging evidence of opportunities to earn from online gaming, development of apps, and endorsing products on YouTube, etc. Several youths pointed out the credit terms and conditions of the financial institutions are not favourable to youth entrepreneurs and while they have the interest to venture into business, they remain unsure of the viability of their ideas in the market.

In response to access to information on job and internship opportunities, a youth shared that *“farmers’ children are left out of such programmes”* because they do not have the economic means to attend youth development programmes. One participant shared how children from low income families are not able to take advantage of opportunities as *“some of us have to work on our own things during breaks so that we are able to come to school in upcoming days.”*

The work environment in the drayangs is quite unique as shared by the discussants. While the performers are trying to make an honest and decent living, they are prone to unwelcome overtures and remain vulnerable to abuse and stigmatisation as shared by one of them:

“When [we] ask them [customers] to make a request [for songs] they ask us to go to the rooms. Some even criticise us as drayang girls. And people do ask us to accompany them to their rooms....It could be an office girl or a drayang girl, but the most important [thing] to have is a good heart.”

On probing about the safety of their work environment they referred to the Drayang Co-operative and aside from the HIV tests employees have to fend for themselves. Going home after work, mostly at night time was also stated as a factor which contributes to their vulnerability. Another drayang performer shared:

“When us drayang girls travel during the night we face problems because we cannot get cars ... if the government can provide a car.”

While this statement is an indication of reliance on the government, it also points to an opportunity for concerned authorities to look into the safety and well-being of young people and to enforce certain measures in place.

Youth with histories of crime and substance abuse face discrimination in the job market. Even after rehabilitation many cannot find jobs. A respondent explained how a rehabilitation centre in Paro trained them and helped them find jobs after they completed treatment. Disabled youth, such as deaf persons, often lose out on loans to finance their business ideas as they are unable to explain their ideas. There has to be a way that such groups are no longer discriminated in the job market. Even student discussants and other categories of youth like the disabled are pessimistic about obtaining jobs in future.

PWDs face multiple challenges from accessibility to services due to language barriers and the infrastructure design that hinders people on wheelchairs to avail services. A sign language interpreter for the youth with hearing impairment who participated in the FGDs shared the challenges PWD have in availing support from agencies:

“A few days ago, a group of students from Wangsel school who are deaf wanted to do business but they couldn’t get support from any of the agencies ... The main problem is due to their inability to talk and convince or get their voices heard. Therefore, they are facing more challenges while asking for loans... It is due to lack of accessibility. They don’t have access due to lack of infrastructure... like wheelchairs.”

Employment is an important component of the Bhutanese economy. According

to Tshomo (2016), many unemployed youths get frustrated and commit crimes resulting in a high number of juvenile delinquents in the country that further increase social disorder. The unemployment statistics consistently report that crime rates are highest among unemployed youth. Youth constitute a high proportion of the unemployed in Bhutan. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) of Bhutan 2017 established that youth unemployment constituted 54.3% of total unemployment in the country of which the incidence of youth unemployment in urban areas was 51.1% while rural areas was 60.2%.

The relatively low level of satisfaction with most items within the 'economy' theme compared to other themes suggests that much intervention is required in economic development – diversification of the economy to boost competitive internal production and creation of employment for Bhutanese especially for youth. To cater to their talents, skills and interests, information on access to jobs, training and internships, opportunities to promote entrepreneurship coupled with technical and financial assistance is needed. Employment opportunities for people with disabilities are also limited. An unexploited opportunity exists to create awareness of and institute better terms and conditions for blue-collar jobs to make it attractive for youth to venture into such jobs. Rehabilitation programmes for youth in conflict with the law needs to be accompanied with reforms by initiating a restorative justice system where in youth are provided with security clearance. Otherwise, current denial/delay of security clearance deprives youth access to employment opportunities, hence leaving them in vulnerable situations. Reforms in these areas will not only address employment and livelihood for youth but in broader terms, will substitute expatriate labour inducing national self-reliance in jobs that Bhutanese can take up.

Youth unemployment: Lack of interest to pursue agriculture, lack of youth entrepreneurship and dignity of labour are attributed as causes of high unemployment among youth. Limited access to market, inadequate funds, access to technology and duplication of ideas were seen as factors constraining entrepreneurship. Lack of dignity of labour is another impediment in youth employment where the distinction between white-collar and blue-collar jobs is associated with the social status in society. Coupled with this, low wages for vocational and skills-oriented jobs further aggravate the unemployment issue as these professions are deemed not financially sustainable for those seeking jobs.

Lack of livelihood opportunities: Discussed from the perspective of vulnerable groups such as youth in conflict with the law, withholding security clearance deprives them of opportunities to pursue economically productive life.

Lack of quality training: Youth participants associate the issue of professional incompetence among youths to lack of quality training. This is deeply rooted in the ongoing debate on mismatch of skills and education where the education system is not job oriented. Lack of internship opportunities is also attributed as a cause to lack of professional competence for jobs.

2.2.7 Environment

Bhutan's development philosophy of Gross National Happiness places emphasis on conservation of the environment as the very basis of life and livelihood in addition to cultural promotion, balanced regional development and good governance. The premise of the GNH philosophy is that in order to secure the well-being of the future, the current generation has the responsibility to be conscious of sustainable consumption and exploitation of the environment and natural resources for development purposes. It is imperative then for all generations - current and future - to be aware of the role of the environment in sustaining lives and to be custodians of environmental conservation and sustainable development approaches. As future leaders and drivers of the country's development, this rationale underscores the need to evaluate youth's level of satisfaction with how we are managing our environment.

The environment theme assesses youths perceptions of how we are managing our environment through adoption of eco-friendly ways of living and enforcement of policies and practices.

The data on environment depicted in table 10 below shows that except for the enforcement of plastic ban (46%) and accessibility of infrastructure for people with disabilities (39%), a majority of the respondents are satisfied with environmental education (67%), management of natural resources (64%), the cleanliness of the environment (64%) and the Bhutanese way of living as it relates to environment (52%). However, it is also evident from a substantial percentage of respondents who chose 'can't say' as answers that youth still remain uncertain of the Bhutanese way of life (28%), management of natural resources (20%), enforcement of plastic ban (22%) and provision of services like online system that can minimise impacts on the environment (24%).

Environment	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Can't say	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Way of living as it affects the environment	8%	44%	28%	15%	5%
Environmental cleanliness	10%	54%	12%	19%	4%
Management of natural resources	14%	50%	20%	14%	3%
Education on environment & climate change	14%	53%	18%	11%	4%
Availability of online services	10%	43%	24%	17%	7%
Enforcement of the plastic ban	14%	32%	22%	19%	13%
Accessibility of infrastructure for people with disabilities	6%	33%	41%	14%	6%

Table 10: Level of satisfaction with environment management and practices

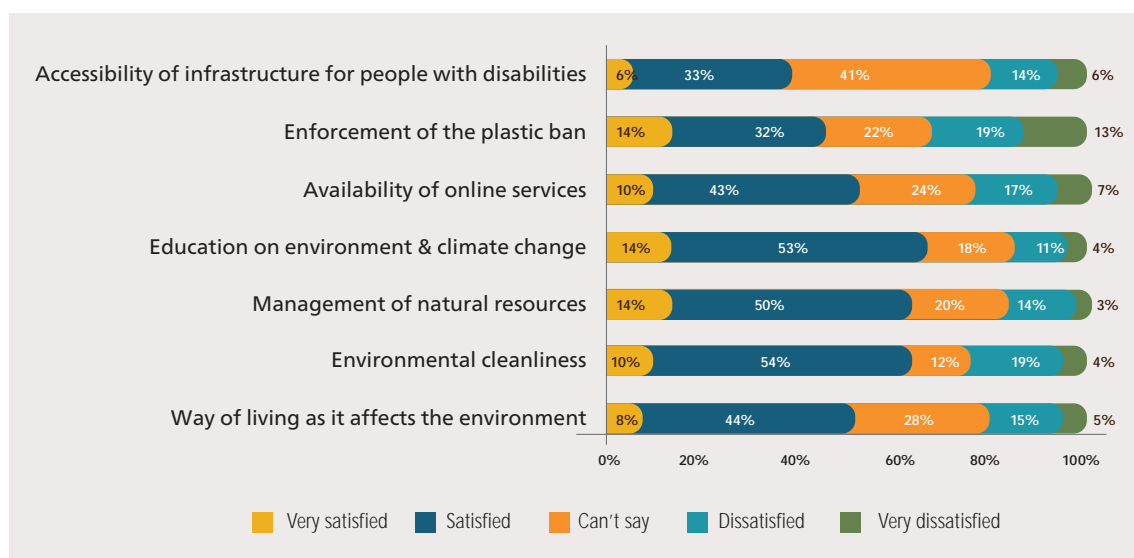


Figure 13: Level of satisfaction with environment management and practices

It is evident from the FGDs that programmes to keep the environment clean and hygienic are practised in all formal institutions from schools and dratsangs to rehabilitation centers and at Chamgang prison. Programmes that promote environmental consciousness include Scouts, cleaning campaigns and Social Forestry Day. Programmes of some civil society organisations such as Clean Bhutan, Bhutan Toilet Organisation and Y-VIA help promote practices and habits that are environmentally-friendly. According to the discussants, some

institutes have water filtration facilities and practise waste segregation. Some schools have started clubs to recycle plastic wastes and old clothes into products of utility. Other schools have started flower and vegetable gardens. Commonly discussed environmental issues include littering and waste management, continuous use of plastic despite many bans initiated, water shortages in institutions, ineffective solid waste disposal and erratic garbage collection services. Other environmental issues discussed by few youth include management of medical waste, e-waste (old computers, printers and cartridges), waste from automobile workshops and open defecation due to lack of public toilets. Several discussants also mentioned the recurring incidences of forest fires in the country. They also noted air pollution from vehicle emissions as a result of an increase in the number of motor vehicles. Increased canine population is also discussed as a risk to public health. Some youth also made observations about mining sites in the country. A high school student observed:

“Another thing is the allocation of resources is done in such a way that they take more than what they need. And especially mining companies; I do not think they are carrying their responsibilities well after they are done with mining. They do not clean it or make things in place after they are done; they take what they want to take and leave the place as it is.”

Given the Buddhist concept of ‘interconnectedness’ it is safe to surmise that Bhutanese in general, and especially monks and nuns, can appreciate the importance of environment to human life. A participating monk said:

“there is [a] belief that Bodhisattvas may be anywhere, even in the trees, thus we respect nature...with the [concept] of interdependence it is easy to learn the condition and nature.”

Supporting this belief, a nun shared that all sentient beings including animals and the environment find a place in their prayers so it is easy to understand and appreciate the importance of keeping the environment clean. While the monks and nuns living in monasteries are quite satisfied with how they manage their environment, other youths are more critical of how Bhutanese in general manage wastes despite several programmes like Scout and cleaning campaigns that teach environmental values.

Youths are generally aware of the need to preserve the environment. In the FGDs they talked about various negative impacts on the environment and are also aware of current issues in the environment such as climate change. As a discussant shared:

"Climate change is happening. In olden days we had snow but now we don't have snow. I have one friend who is an artist. He says there is no snow in Thimphu so he paints more snow. Climate change is a concern because the climate is changing drastically every year and new things are evolving. The species that existed and survived may not survive now."

It is interesting to note that the youths discussion about environmental concerns do not extend beyond what is observable like pollution and the garbage. Their comprehension of the long-term adverse effects of environmental degradation on human health, well-being and the threats to sustainability of livelihood and life is missing from their discussion. One may wonder if the youth are parroting what national policies prescribe without fully comprehending the implications of and the need to protect the environment. For instance, their discussions do not extend to how pollution of the environment could affect the production of food and ingestion into the human system and its ill effects. A college youth explained:

"Most of the students expect environmental science students to do it [take care of the environment] and the rest ignore them because they are not environmental science students."

Youth believe that introducing art and craft clubs in the schools that teach production of new items from old and discarded items would promote habits of reuse and recycling. They refer to YouTube videos that teach how to reuse old tyres as flower pots, and knitting bags from plastic wastes.

Several youths suggested that environmental practices at the individual level first would result in a cumulative effect of community best practices in environmental management. Youth are aware that if adults manage the environment better, they could be role models for children. One discussant remarked:

"Firstly, I think it's adults' problem as it is the behaviour from adults that

the youths follow. So, if adults could change, then naturally it will change the youths' behaviour."

With urbanisation, production of waste in the country has been on the rise. According to the Bhutan Waste Inventory 2019, nationwide, 172.16 tonnes of waste is generated per day (per capita of 0.23 kg/day) consisting of household waste (50%), commercial waste (40%) and others (10%). Of the wastes, 46% is organic waste, 33% is plastic and the remaining consist of assorted wastes. Schools and institutes generate waste amounting to 5,400 kg/day, the composition of which are food waste (38%), paper and cardboard (25%) and plastics (21%). Thimphu Thromde generates waste amounting to 40.3 tonnes /day (per capita waste generation of 0.35 kg/day) with 58% of the waste being organic according to the National Waste Management Strategy 2019.

The Government issued the first plastic ban notification in 1999 and a Waste Prevention & Management Act was enacted in 2009. With limited impact on reducing plastic in the country, the ban was reinforced through a notification on 1 April 2019. The reinforced ban indicates the complacency of both shopkeepers (in importing plastic) and the general public (in asking for carry bags). The absence of alternatives to plastic carry bags may have left customers with no resort. The continued use of plastic also emphasises a need for intensive sensitisation of the general public, exploration of alternatives to plastic carry bags, and more effective enforcement and monitoring of the ban. Littering and use of plastic is still an issue. A strong message that has emerged from the discussions is the need to enforce and monitor the implementation of rules related to littering and the plastic ban. Most groups pointed out the ineffectiveness of the rules due to inadequate enforcement. People continue to litter, throwing waste all around and creating an eyesore and public health hazard. Shops continue to use plastics despite the ban.

A discussant recalled:

"Even in the shops, they give it secretly. We still use plastic. If we don't have plastic, there's nothing else. Some people don't carry anything and don't have anything to put their things in. The plastic ban is all talk and nothing else."

A discussant explained the need for alternatives to plastic carry bags:

“Moreover, having alternative choices for plastic bags, like cloth bags produced within the country would be helpful. The reason for people not adhering to such laws could be because of the high price of alternate options. For instance, reusable carrying bags are more expensive than the plastic bags.”

The youth are aware of climate change and the need to conserve the environment. Such efforts have been possible because of education on environment and climate change delivered through environmental education, school environmental clubs and other environmental activities.

This has translated to their participation in environmental conservation efforts within the school campus but also enhanced awareness of conserving water, electricity and managing waste at an individual level. Students are aware that the way of living affects the environment and is not always sustainable with increasing consumption habits and improper waste management manifested in littering and the protracted use of plastics, tree-felling and inadequate restoration of mines. Youth are also aware that the plastic ban can be effective through exploration of alternatives to plastic carry bags and the enforcement and monitoring of rules would ensure better compliance. However, this observation is more reflective of youth studying environmental science and the same cannot be said about other youth groups.

However, the depth of the youth’s discussion on environmental issues point to limited knowledge that precluded the fundamental understanding of the interdependence between environment and the sustenance of human life. Their discussion does not go deeper than plastic waste, garbage and pollution. There is a clear lack of understanding about how human activities impact the environment and its reciprocal effects on human life, health and well-being. It would be interesting to find out how cognisant the youth are of their own role in polluting the environment and if they make conscious choices in their everyday lives and habits to reduce the impact on the environment.

Box 7: Summary of environmental issues discussed at the Youth Initiative winter camp

Increase in production of wastes: Waste production and management is increasingly becoming a major challenge as urban centres grow in the country. For example, in Thimphu alone, the waste collected increased from 17,246.25 mt in 2011 to 25,367 mt in 2016 (Annual Environment Report, 2017). The issues of waste production is directly related to increases in imports and growing rural-urban migration. The YI members pointed out that the use of paper in the age of information and technology, for example, in job applications reflects our complacency and they believe that this issue is also fueled by growth of consumerism.

Impact of infrastructure development on the environment: Poor planning in infrastructure development gives rise to environmental issues. Participants argue that infrastructure such as roads last only for a few years after which it has to be renovated. In doing so, bigger damage to the environment is caused in the process of frequent maintenance.

Weak enforcement and monitoring : Evaluation and monitoring of environmental-related policies are found weak. For example, the plastic ban policy in Bhutan was enforced in 1999. Twenty years later in 2019, the policy was once again enforced but due to lack of monitoring, people are using plastics openly. Youth respondents raised the need to put in place a viable alternative to plastic bag use.

2.3 Youth Services/Programmes

The last section of the survey was to list three most important services/programmes and to rank their level of satisfaction on the three identified areas. However, there was no clear majority as the responses varied a lot with the open-ended question. A few programmes which were selected by 3-4 respondents were the Youth Leadership Training, Youth Awareness and Health Service, and the Youth Initiative.

3. CONCLUSION

Although the revision of the NYP has long since been due, the current research report outlines the novel approach taken in policymaking that puts youth at the centre of the consultation process. Furthermore, it outlines the effort taken to ensure representation across various categories of youth as well as the extensive reach of the consultations as outlined above, integrating youth voices from diverse backgrounds, abilities, age and gender.

The aspirations of youth are varied and grounded in their respective life experiences; however, there is convergence as it relates to economic self-sufficiency and employment across various target youth groups. With the unemployment rate quite high among youth, coupled with the lack of better incentives in blue-collar jobs, even graduate students harbour bleak hopes of securing employment. Youths undergoing rehabilitation for drugs, alcohol and those in conflict with the law face the added difficulty of obtaining security clearances and social stigma in their efforts to re-integrate into society. Youths in formal education voiced their concerns over the mismatch between their education and the world of work as well as Bhutan's heavy reliance on the Indian economy.

Additionally, a higher proportion of high school students remain dissatisfied with the diversity of the education systems' current curricula and wish for alternative models that make learning more interactive, practical and experiential. Across all youth groups, a majority of the youth rare unsatisfied with access to quality education and educational facilities for youths with disability.

Findings on health and well-being indicate a satisfactory view of physical health; as they avail services from health care centres while some expressed concerns over nepotism and medical staff lacking sensitivity in dealing with vulnerable youths. Concerns over mental health and substance abuse are dominant. Youths (especially those undergoing rehabilitation) report lack of trust in counsellors to maintain confidentiality and believe that the services are not gender-friendly and stigma-free. Regarding sexual and reproductive health, youths expressed the need for more effective sex-education that focus on informed consent, safe sex and teenage pregnancy. It is important

to note that the emergence of new gender identities among youth (LGBTIQ) also needs to be taken into consideration as services are designed and administered.

Youths' participation in governance falls roughly into three areas: formal educational institutions, national electoral processes and community-based spaces. Even though students are given the opportunity to elect their student representatives, the elected leaders nonetheless remain absent from the decision making processes in school affairs. Within the national electoral processes, the students are deprived of direct access to political parties and candidates in the interest of remaining '*apolitical*'; discussions on politics are rare thereby affecting youths' ability to evaluate and vote with free will.. Finally, the motives of youths in community-based volunteering was also subject to question as the expectation of certificates override genuine contribution and altruism. Youths with disabilities remain in the periphery in terms of opportunities for civic participation due to inaccessible infrastructure design and dismissive attitudes towards them.

Youths are at the centre of socio-cultural change in Bhutan as they wrestle between foreign influences of globalisation and their own inherited culture and traditions. The generation gap plays a major role as seniors view youth as importing and incorporating foreign culture and styles. The youth, however, view it as a form of self-expression within a rapidly changing world. Youths argue for a middle path where the useful or essential aspects of culture need to be preserved, while harmful and discriminatory practices need to be discarded.

Concerns surrounding the environment are dominated by plastic issues and littering as they recommend better enforcement and monitoring of rules on the plastic ban and littering. They point towards clean-up campaigns and tree planting programmes as efforts to preserve the environment. Other issues highlighted within the environment were water shortages, erratic waste collection services, and broken down or limited sanitary disposal facilities.

Finally, in many instances, the data from the online survey showed a recurring

incidence of '*can't say*' answers on the '*satisfaction*' scale with the proportion being around a third of the respondents on average and sometimes even crossing 40% of the answers. This concentration of responses across various thematic categories is problematic, since it could mean that the respondents '*couldn't say*' if they are satisfied or not because they are not informed enough to make a stance or, have critical views on matters that affect their lives.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The youths findings from their consultations with other youth groups across the country has informed the on-going revision of the NYP 2011. A summary of key recommendations under each theme is provided below for quick reference and action planning.

Education and Learning

1. The Ministry of Education may consider diversification of the school curricula to expand options that cater to students' interests, potentials and the job market requirements. The pedagogy may be revamped to make learning more interactive and experiential, along with placing more importance on extracurricular activities to prepare youth with non-academic but essential life skills.
2. Make the school environment safe for all - one that is tolerant and accepting of diversity in individual's needs (e.g. persons with disabilities, those suffering from mental health issues, and those that have different gender orientation, recovering addicts etc.)
3. While facilities in schools have improved considerably in the last couple of decades, youth observe a rural-urban divide o that points to a need to improve amenities that add to the livability of the schools (e.g. adequate drinking water, heating/cooling system, balanced diet etc.).
4. School infrastructure needs to adopt principles of universal design to enhance access to education for all including those with disabilities.

Health and Well-being

1. The need for counselling services in all training institutes and centres aside from schools are becoming more evident. The credibility of counsellors can be strengthened with professional standards to gain the trust of youth who need to seek timely help and intervention. Uniformed counsellors can be replaced with civilian counsellors to

gain the trust of the youth who are undergoing rehabilitation or serving prison terms.

2. Timing for Youth Friendly Health Services (YFHS) needs to be reworked so that it does not coincide with school hours and the health personnels need to be oriented to serve the needs of LGBTIQ professionally.
3. Public recreational facilities need to be made accessible to different youth groups, including LGBTIQ, and persons with disabilities.
4. Reproductive and sexual health education needs to be provided with greater professionalism for it to be taken seriously by the youth. Joint sessions attended by both males and females and delivered with the active participation of youth volunteers who are trained could make these sessions more fun and informative.
5. The role and reach of relevant CSOs need to be strengthened to help reduce delinquency and provide proactive interventions to reduce mental health related issues.

Governance

1. Create platforms for students to practise engagement, voice and decision-making under the guidance of the teachers and the administration. This will enable the youth to develop into responsible, active and democratic citizens. Currently, youth participation is confined only to community and voluntary services which cannot solely prepare future citizens who are able to engage in discussions, deliberations and democratic decision-making.
2. Create platforms for youth to discuss political issues (e.g. in strengthening and expanding democracy and media clubs) which would educate them on their right and responsibilities, the role of the media in a democracy, and help them make informed decisions

including choosing the right representatives and leaders.

3. Facilitate the participation of persons with disabilities in public discussions and discourses by attending to their physical and communication needs (e.g. sign language interpreter).

Socio-cultural Environment

1. Cultural promotion and preservation is a topic that requires balanced perspectives in this rapidly globalising world. While the importance of culture to the country's national identity and sovereignty needs to be explicated for the sake of the youth's understanding, the pursuit of this goal cannot undermine cultural evolution, innovation and respect for diversity.
2. Capitalise on the innovations and creativity made possible by technological advancement to promote culture and tradition. Educational programmes on culture and tradition need to be presented in formats that are appealing and developmentally appropriate (e.g. cartoons, comics, films, music, creative arts etc.)
3. With urban lives becoming busier by the year, the youths are left to their own means to seek entertainment and engagement in activities. The youths claim a widening generation gap between them and their parents that warrant urgent parent education and awareness.
4. As persons with disabilities in particular feel unsafe in their social environments with increasing incidences of fights, rape and other sorts of abuses, this situation merits educating them and their parents or caregivers on safety measures and other help services.

Economy

1. Discourses on employment cannot be divorced from education. While

education serves a bigger purpose, employment is the most basic and urgent goal to secure a decent living and livelihood. The employability of the youth and their success in securing a job hinges on the quality and relevance of education they receive that are also able to answer to the needs of the economy. It is imperative that the education system (school and tertiary education) work in tandem with the direction of the economy to address the urgent needs of increasing youth unemployment.

2. The poor social status associated with the so-called “*blue collar*” job is a creation of the adults that has shaped the perception of the young. To enhance the profile of blue-collar jobs, sufficient awareness is necessary targeting both the young people and the parents; and this intervention has to be coupled with concurrent means to make the vocations attractive in terms of better training, sound contractual arrangements, better wages, protective gears, etc. Cross-sectoral efforts and coordination are imperative for the success of this intervention.

Environment

1. Schools and institutes seem to have good practices that take care of the environment with waste segregation and cleaning campaigns, which the youths comply with as institutional regulations. However, it is unclear if their understanding of the value of the environment goes deeper than just compliance to truly appreciating the environment along with reflections on their habits and choices in life that affect the environment.
2. For any intervention to preserve and conserve the environment, the plan (e.g. plastic ban) needs to offer viable alternatives coupled with wide awareness programmes and consistent enforcement for the public to take the issue with seriousness and improve compliance.

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ANNEXE

Annexe 1: Survey questionnaire

Profile

1.	Age:
2.	Gender (Select one that applies to you).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Male Female Others
3.	Educational Level (Select one that applies to you).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No formal education Monastic education (may need to specify how many years studied) High School Diploma Undergraduate Post-graduate (Masters/PG Diploma/Others)
4.	Profile, I... (Select one that applies to you).
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Am a student (College/ Schools) Am employed Am undergoing a training Am unemployed Have special needs (physical, neurological, learning disability, etc.) Am undergoing some rehabilitation programme (for substance abuse or juvenile crime) Identify myself as a third gender (LGBTQI++) Am a monk/nun Am working in entertainment centres (e.g. drayang, discotheques, club, bar, etc.) Live in a rural area
5.	Were you aware of the National Youth Policy before this survey?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes No

Please rank your satisfaction level with the following statements.

	Theme 1: Education and Learning	Level of satisfaction				
		Very satisfied	satisfied	Can't say	Disatisfied	Very Disatisfied
1.	Preparation for good understanding of rights and responsibilities					
2.	Preparation for the world of work					
3.	Diversity of curricula					
4.	Access to education for people with disabilities					
5.	Way teachers teach and guide learning					
6.	Access to quality media literacy					

	Theme 2: Governance	Level of satisfaction				
		Very satisfied	satisfied	Can't say	Disatisfied	Very Disatisfied
1.	Opportunities to participate in decision making					
2.	Opportunities to participate in community service					
3.	The extent to which youth views are valued					
4.	Access to information to make independent political decisions					
5.	Consideration for the needs of people with disabilities					
6.	Ability of media to inform people & hold government accountable					

	Theme 3: Health & Well-being	Level of satisfaction				
		Very satisfied	satisfied	Can't say	Disatisfied	Very Disatisfied
1.	Access to quality mental health services					
2.	Access to quality sexual reproductive health services					
3.	Access to recreational activities					
4.	Access to quality rehabilitation services					
5.	Access to spiritual guidance					
6.	Access to quality services for people with disabilities					

	Theme 4: Socio-Cultural Environment	Level of satisfaction				
		Very satisfied	satisfied	Can't say	Disatisfied	Very Disatisfied
1.	The extent to which youth value tradition & culture					
2.	The social bond (helpfulness) in society					
3.	The safety of girls, boys & women in Bhutan					
4.	The influence of media on youth values					
5.	The quality of guidance received from from parents & adults					
6.	Access to quality services for people with disabilities					

	Theme 5: Economy	Level of satisfaction				
		Very satisfied	satisfied	Can't say	Disatisfied	Very Disatisfied
1.	Access to information on jobs, trainings & internships					
2.	Diversity of the economy to cater to youth talents & expertise					
3.	Opportunities that promote youth entrepreneurship					
4.	Jobs available in the market					
5.	Access to financial support					
6.	Social status of blue collar jobs					
7.	Employment opportunities for people with disabilities					

	Theme 6: Environment	Level of satisfaction				
		Very satisfied	satisfied	Can't say	Disatisfied	Very Disatisfied
1.	Environmental cleanliness					
2.	Enforcement of the plastic ban					
3.	Management of natural resources					
4.	Education on environment and climate change					
5.	Way of living as it affects the environment					
6.	Accessibility of infrastructure for people with disabilities					
7.	Availability of online services					

Annex 2: Guiding questions for FGDs (General)

<i>Understanding the aspiration of youth</i>	
<i>If you were to imagine the best possible Bhutan for youth 10 to 15 years from now, what would it look like?</i>	
<i>Understanding the concerns of the youth and their suggestions under specific themes (Exploring current realities, concerns and possible outcomes)</i>	
B1.	<p>Education & Learning</p> <p><i>Areas for probing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of educational facilities • Preparation for good understanding of rights and responsibilities • Preparation for the world of work • Diversity of curricula • Access to education for people with disabilities • Way teachers teach & guide learning • Access to quality media literacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is it like to be studying/training in schools/monasteries/nunneries/institutes? • Do you think that the education/training you are receiving is enough and caters to your interests, needs and aspirations in life? Please, share your experience or views. • Which part of your education (e.g. academic subjects, clubs, co-curricular programs, internships, participation in youth programmes etc.) do you think is the most useful and prepares you for life? • What do you think can be done to improve the quality of education that will contribute to youth's holistic development and good preparation for life?
B2.	<p>Economy</p> <p><i>Areas for probing:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to information on jobs, training and internships • Diversity of the economy to cater to youth talents & expertise • Eg. Do youths take sports just as a pastime activity or as a genuine career path • Opportunities that promote youth entrepreneurship • Jobs available in the market • Access to financial support • Social status of blue-collar jobs • Employment opportunities for people with disabilities <p>1. What do you think about Bhutan's economy?</p>

	<p>a. <i>Is it able to generate employment opportunities, support youth entrepreneurship and cater to youth's interests and aspirations?</i></p> <p>2. <i>What services/programmes are available in the market that help youth become economically independent? Share your experience of availing those services/programmes.</i></p> <p>3. <i>What do you think can be done to improve Bhutan's economy to make Bhutanese youth economically active?</i></p>
B3.	<p>Health & Well-being</p> <p>Areas for probing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to quality mental health services • Access to quality sexual reproductive health services • Access to recreational facilities • Access to quality rehabilitation services • Access to spiritual guidance • Access to quality services for people with disabilities. • Awareness and feedback on Youth Friendly Health Services (YFHS)
	<p>1. <i>How healthy do you think are Bhutanese youth physically, emotionally and spiritually?</i></p> <p>a. <i>Why is the situation so? Based on your experience, what are the barriers to youth leading a physically and emotionally and spiritually healthy life?</i></p> <p>2. <i>What health, wellbeing and recreational services and programs are available for youth in your community? Share your experience of availing those services/programs</i></p> <p>3. <i>What do you think can be done to improve the health, wellbeing and recreational needs of the youth?</i></p>
B4.	<p>Youth voice and participation (Governance)</p> <p>Areas for probing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities to participate in decision-making • Opportunities to participate in community service • The extent to which youth views are valued • Access to information to make independent political decisions • Consideration for the needs of people with disabilities • Ability of media to inform people & hold government accountable

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>How interested do you think are Bhutanese youth about social and political issues in the country?</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Why is it so? Based on your experience, what are the barriers to youths taking part in decision-making (in schools/ community etc) and community services?</i> 2. <i>What programs (clubs or youth programmes) are available that prepare youth to be socially and politically engaged and have the confidence to bring about positive change?</i> 3. <i>What do you think can be done to produce a generation of youth who are socially and politically conscious and who remain active and engaged citizens?</i>
B5.	<p><i>Socio-cultural promotion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The extent to which youth value tradition & culture</i> • <i>The social bond (helpfulness) in society</i> • <i>The safety of girls, boys and women in Bhutan</i> • <i>The influence of media on youth values</i> • <i>The quality of guidance received from parents & adults</i> • <i>The care & services received by people with disabilities</i>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>How is the Bhutanese society and culture changing among the new generation of youth?</i> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>What is causing all these changes? What will be the result in the future due to these changes?</i> 2. <i>What existing programmes, services, platforms contribute to the continuation of Bhutanese culture and tradition with the youth?</i> 3. <i>How do we make Bhutanese culture and tradition appealing to youth while not stopping cultural evolution and progress? / What do you think needs to be done so that Bhutanese youth continue to maintain the unique identity of Bhutan's culture and tradition?</i>
B6.	<p><i>Environment</i></p> <p><i>Areas for probing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Environmental cleanliness</i> • <i>Enforcement of the plastic ban</i> • <i>Management of natural resources</i> • <i>Education on environment & climate change</i> • <i>Way of living as it affects the environment</i> • <i>Accessibility of infrastructure for people with disabilities</i> • <i>Availability of online services</i>

1. *What environmental issues are of most concern to youth?*
 - a. *What are the causes of these environmental issues?*
2. *What programmes/services are available in your community that prepares youth to contribute to environmental protection and preservation?*
3. *What do you think can be done so that the next generation of youth get to enjoy a clean and green environment that can sustain life?*

C. Cross-cutting issues

C1. Media/Social media

1. *What is the influence of media (TV, movies) and social media on youth's values, attitude and lifestyle?*
2. *What media-related issues have you experienced or observed among youth?*
3. *What can we do to tackle these issues?*

C2. Inclusiveness

1. *Which sections of the population (e.g. age group, gender, economic background etc) are not visible in current discussions and priorities of the government?*
2. *What issues of these groups need consideration?*
3. *What do you think can be done to address these issues?*