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## Country Report

Bhutan

EFA National Plans of Action  
Prepared by Mr. Singye Namgyel  
Joint Director  
Non-Formal and Continuing Education Division  
Department of Adult and Higher Education  
Ministry of Education

### PART I: Legal Framework

The kingdom of Bhutan started its planned developmental activities since 1961 with the launching of First Five Year Plan. Ever since then the country made headway in many socio-economy programmes. Bhutan began to open her door to the outside world for assistance and partnership in development. Other countries also began to pay attention to Bhutan for various fields of cooperation, much of which happened since 1971 when Bhutan became the member of UNO.

Although Bhutan doesn't yet have an Education Act and National Constitution is in draft stage guiding principles on education can be identified in many documents. In many senses they are legal frameworks, which provides basis for developing policy programmes and activities

#### **1. Legal framework of education in general**

BHUTAN 2020, A vision of Peace, Prosperity and Happiness provides the following framework for education in general. Figures are the articles of the document.

**123.** Access to basic education has become the inalienable right of all Bhutanese and it is the key to most of the nation's ambitions. The rapid progress recorded in this area must be maintained with the aim of achieving universal enrolment at the earliest opportunity. Universal enrolment in primary education and junior high schools (Class 8) is now within our reach. Although universal enrolment at high schools will take longer, it is a target that must be pursued with the greatest urgency.

**124.** Our future strategies for basic education must be further refined and developed with high priority being accorded to achieving progress in the following areas.

**125.** *First*, basic education is not yet available to everyone and it must be further extended to cover the most remote parts of the Kingdom and all our young people. If necessary, our teachers must be provided with appropriate incentives to work in more remote areas.

**126.** *Second*, the expansion of the coverage of basic education must be accompanied by further determined efforts to achieve an improvement in the quality of basic education. The Bhutanization of the primary school curriculum is now very largely completed, but we still have some way to go before we have completed the Bhutanization of the curricula at junior high schools and high schools. Our efforts to achieve improvements in the quality of education must meet several requirements, notably:

**127.** Education must be guided by a holistic concept based upon the total development of the child and the need to ensure that the innate potential of each and every child is fully realized. This concept must be progressively applied throughout the nation and differentials that exist

in the quality of education in urban centres and rural areas must be progressively removed.

**128.** Education must instil and awareness of the nation's unique cultural heritage, drawing upon sources of inspiration that date from the time of the Shabdrung as well as universal values that develop that capacity of our young people to distinguish right from wrong, good from evil, and to lead lives that our guided by moral and ethical choices.

**129.** Education must prepare young people for the world of work and instil and acceptance of the dignity of labour. This implies increased importance to the applied and practical studies that are able to prepare young people for technical and vocational work as well as 'white collar' employment, breaking the association that appears to exist in the minds of many young people that manual work and skilled trades are the reserve of the illiterate and a sign of 'backwardness'.

**130.** Related to the above, greater efforts are required to highlight the importance of agriculture as an occupation. This requires us to present agricultural work in a more sophisticated and development-oriented way, stressing the growing potential that exists within the sector. This may encourage our children and young people to form an image of agriculture that differs from the one they may at present see around them.

**131.** The Bhutanization of school curricula should not be seen as a 'one-shot' operation. Curricula must be made the subject of continuous monitoring and review, with adaptation taking place swiftly in response to changing needs and development priorities.

**132.** Curricula development must be accompanied by the expansion of technical and vocational training programmes at the *dzongkhag* level, with appropriate career counselling services, that provide opportunities for drop-outs to join the world of work.

**133.** *Third*, the attainment of the above will be dependent upon our capacity to train teachers who are not only highly professional in their approach to education but also motivated and dedicated to the profession they have chosen. Teachers have a vitally important role to play in instilling in our children and young people an understanding and appreciation of our culture and heritage. They must also be able to guide and motivate young people in their career choices and, given that some young people will have aspirations that are greater than their abilities, possess the skills required for early counselling. This implies that the development of a more holistic approach to the development of the child will be impossible without a teacher-centred approach to basic education. This has enormous implications for teacher training and for the knowledge and skills that they require.

**135.** *Fifth*, steps must now be taken to privatize education. Education has so far been provided free of charge to all Bhutanese and this imposes a major burden on the government exchequer. There are growing numbers of Bhutanese who can now realistically be expected to meet some of the costs of education. Initiatives that lead to the establishment of private schools should be further encouraged. The development of private schools will free resources that can be used to achieve improvements in both the coverage and quality of the basic education that is provided by the state.

**136.** *Sixth*, we must take steps at the earliest feasible opportunity to establish a National University that is not only able to meet national needs but also those of individuals from neighbouring countries and even further field. The university should link Bhutan to the international world of learning and its establishment should be guided by the need to establish recognized 'centres of excellence'.

Education Sector Strategy paper further elucidates focussed framework on education.

1.1 Education Sector Strategy: Realizing the Vision 2020 is an articulation of the goals and processes for achieving Bhutan's aspirations in the education sector, as part of the wider development initiatives toward becoming a progressive sovereign nation enunciated in *Vision 2020*. *Vision 2020* provides a framework of development principles, which address Bhutan's National Happiness. Human Development, Culture and Heritage, Balanced and Equitable Development, Governance and Environmentally Sustainable Development are the cornerstones of this vision.

1.2 Education is recognized both as a basic right and as a pre-requisite for achieving the wider social, cultural and economic goals set for the country within this national vision. Six strategic objectives have been enunciated for this sector:

To continuously improve the quality and relevance of education to ensure holistic development of the child, encompassing innate abilities, moral and social values, social cohesion and the world of work including agriculture and other vocations;

- To expand basic education to the entire population;
- To develop a highly motivated and competent teaching cadre which supports a holistic approach to education and learning;
- To take advantage of new educational innovations and technologies to increase access to and improve the quality of education;
- To develop private schools which will lessen the resource burden on Government for greater improvement of Government schools and provide greater choices to the public; and
- To establish a National University based on the idea of 'centres of excellence' that meet national and wider international needs.

## 2. Legal Framework of Non-Formal Education in Bhutan

Government/National documents also provide legal framework specific to NFE programme:

Bhutan will create a system of learning opportunities for all people at any stage of life. The entire population will be literate in the national language, Dzongkha, and numerate. This target could be accomplished by 2012. This will contribute to the establishment of a culture of reading and learning. Opportunities will also be available for those outside the formal system of education to learn new skills and knowledge through a system of continuous education. Learning opportunities will be community-based and seek to improve people's lives to the greatest extent possible. In light of the important development outcomes and effect on the overall well being of the family, particular emphasis will continue to be placed on the learning needs of women.

**134.** We must intensify our efforts in the area of educational innovation, taking advantage of new technologies that were previously unavailable to us. New information technologies are facilitating the introduction of distance learning programmes that are not only able to respond to the learning needs of drop-outs but also of illiterates who are too old to have benefited from the advantages of a modern system of education.

It is evident that the Jomtein Declaration of Education for All and the Dakar framework for EFA provided directions for Bhutan to move forward with focussed and planned activities on NFE. National and Sectoral documents are aligned with those declarations.

To further cement the NFE programme, UNICEF and RGOB have entered into a Strategic plan to cater to the educational needs of adult population. Master Plan of Operation 2002-2006 states the following:

The expanded Learning Opportunities Project contributes to addressing the needs of out-of-school youth and adults, particularly girls and women, including those who have missed the opportunity for formal schooling. The project will support learning opportunities for those who have little or no previous education and for teachers to improve their knowledge and skills.

There are five sub-projects of Policy and strategies for non-formal education, Development of curriculum and materials, and Capacity building Improvement of learning environment.

The project will support Non-Formal Education Division of the Ministry of Health and Education, to develop and implement a non-formal education policy to provide learning opportunities for diverse groups throughout the country.

## **PARTII: NFE Components of National Plan of Action and UNLD**

### **1. Overall review of the literacy/NFE components of EFA National Plans of Actions (NPA):**

Since the time Bhutan became member of UNO and signatory to the declaration of Education For All concerted efforts have been made towards achieving the goals of EFA.

#### **1.1 Members of the National EFA Forum**

Provision of EFA is a national priority in Bhutan. Ministry of Education, Royal Government of Bhutan takes lead role in achieving the noble goal. Education Minister as the head ministry is the chair of any educational matters. Head of Policy and Planning Division of MoE coordinates. Policies and programmes of EFA are also discussed at various levels of education forum: district, divisional, departmental and ministerial. Related issues are also put up to the National Assembly, the highest forum of the country. Therefore every stakeholder in one way or the other is a member of national EFA forum.

The highest forum relating to NFE programme in the country is the 'National Steering Committee' (NSC). Education Ministry secretary is the chair of NSC and members represent relevant departments and divisions of the Education Ministry and other. Close to fifteen-member committee meets once a year. The NCFED proposes any new policy matter, latest development and seeks approval. The NSC provides directions to the division for further improvement of programmes, consolidation of activities and the like.

#### **1.2 Time bound targets and strategies in the plan**

Education Ministry sees that the plan has time bound targets with workable strategies. The Ministry has the following milestones set as strategic options for the development of both formal and non-formal education in Bhutan:

Universal primary enrolment	-2007
Full enrolment of junior high school (class 8)	-2007
Full enrolment of high school (class 10)	-2012
Full adaptation of secondary school curricula to the Bhutanese context	-2007
Attain student competencies equivalent to average level by International standard	-2010
Attain student competencies equivalent to excellence level by International standard	-2020
Introduction of an operational distance education programme	-2007
Full adult literacy	-2012

Programme of cooperation between RGOB and UNICEF has further spelt out time bound targets, objectives and strategies to materialize NFE programmes:

The **Objectives** of the Project Expanded Learning Opportunities are:

- To support and expand learning opportunities for out-of-school youth and adults, particularly girls and women addressing the gender gap, through non-formal education approaches.
- To provide opportunities for continuing education for those who have completed formal and non-formal programmes, including teachers (life long learning)
- To develop curricula and materials for expanded learning.
- To build capacities of community NFE committees.
- To strengthen policies and framework for NFE and continuing education.

**Project Strategies** include the following:

- Support for the development of national policies will be provided to ensure a structure and organisational framework in which a system of continuing education will co-exist with and support both formal and non-formal systems.
- Capacity building of formal and non-formal education personnel will be a major strategy through technical assistance and appropriate training.
- Combine nation-wide interventions with decentralized approach: Apart from support at national level, new initiatives such as the improvement of curriculum, materials, learning environment, teaching methodologies, will be piloted at the community level in the six districts. This will make NFE attractive to learners through a friendlier learning environment. Lessons learned will be expanded later for national coverage.

**Expected results** include the following:

Policy and framework on non-formal and continuing education with linkages of the formal system, non-formal programmes and vocational training adopted and implemented nationwide.

- Comprehensive review of the NFE programme and a national literacy survey completed resulting in improvements to plans, strategies and implementation.
- Curriculum and materials for basic and post-literacy, continuing education and vocational training development produced and used effectively.
- Community NFE committees trained on planning, management and monitoring of NFE programmes and actively supporting NFE efforts.
- Approximately 50 new NFE centres and five new Community Learning Centres established and functioning effectively in addition to the continuation of the previously established NFE centres.
- Information technology for pre-service and distance in-service teacher training development and in use throughout the country.

### **1.3 Linkage/coordination mechanisms with formal education/private sector/NGOs**

As mentioned earlier NFE is an integral component of education. It is one of the divisions in the Ministry of Education. There is a strong link and coordination with formal education system. Specifically, coordination can be seen as follows:

**At the Centre:** Minister and Secretary of the ministry is the overall guide of NFE policy and programmes. NFE and its programmes are important components within the broad parameters of the holistic education system, which the PPD of the ministry is responsible for the overall planning.

Issues relating to NFE also are discussed along with matters concerning formal education in the

Annual Education Conference, the highest forum of the ministry. Monthly coordination among Directors, Joint Directors chaired by the Secretary and sometimes Minister also discusses agenda relating to both formal and non-formal education.

**At the Dzongkhag/District:** District administrators and district education officers are responsible to implement all activities, be it formal or NFE. Planning, implementing, monitoring and providing support services at the district level lie in the hands of DEOs.

**At the local:** Head teachers of formal schools implement NFE programmes. In fact majority of the NFE centres are attached with the schools. There is a strong link in the actual carrying out of NFE activities. Head teachers are the coordinators and member secretary of the local NFE committee. Budgeting and any other proposal for expansion of education facilities include both formal and NFE.

### **1.4 Support from external agencies in preparing NPA**

External agencies namely UNESCO and UNICEF have extended their support in preparing National Plan of Actions. Support include both financial and expertise. Meeting all representatives plans annual activities known as Programme Plan of Actions (PPA). Proposals put up by benefiting agencies are prioritized based on the need and fund position available for the year.

## **2. Major Literacy/NFE programme of NPA**

Some of the major Literacy/NFE programmes which are planned for the 9<sup>th</sup> plan (2002-2007) are: (1) Development of both Basic and Post literacy course materials, (2) Reprinting of teaching/learning materials for BLC and PLC, (3) Improvement of learning atmosphere, (4) Expansion of the literacy activities, (5) Enhance self learning through construction of Community Learning Centers (CLC), (6) Conduct nation wide literacy survey. These activities are spread over five years. External assistance namely UNICEF has committed to fund some of the programmes. Similarly the Royal Government of Bhutan shares the funding which mostly covers expenditure for current activities for the NFE Division.

UNESCO Paris/APPEAL has also supported in a three-phase project to construct CLC in three districts for a comprehensive NFE programme encompassing literacy as well as life skills training. The support also includes capacity building and material development. Spread over a three-year period UNESCO has committed fund for the project to be jointly implemented by NFE Division and the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources.

Among other, Bhutan National Literacy Survey (BNLS) 2003 is the major (especially in terms of volume of works) NFE programme included in the NPA. As an example a detail presentation of the programme can be further elaborated in the light of:

### **2.1 Name of the programme:**

Bhutan National Literacy Survey 2003

### **2.2 Duration:**

The programme is expected to take at least one year. The conceptualization of it began sometime in 2001 but the ministerial approval to carry out happened only in April 2003. The time line of literacy survey activities reproduced below is self-explanatory:

Sl.	Activity	2003					2004						
		4-6	7-9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Meeting with CSO, NFED and UNICEF	X											
2	Get the approval from the Ministry of Health and Education	X											
3	Developing study design, draft questionnaires and finalizing all instruments	X	X	X	X								
4	Translation and pilot testing				X								
5	Selection of surveyors and supervisors				X								
6	Training of field surveyors and supervisors				X	X							
7	Fieldwork					X	X	X					
8	Checking and editing completed questionnaires							X	X				
9	Coding and data entry								X	X			
10	Data analysis and drafting report									X	X		
11	Share report to the stakeholders, collect feed back and finalize report										X	X	
12	Conducting a "Users Workshop"												X

### 2.3 Objectives:

The main objectives of the Bhutan National Literacy Survey are:

- ❖ To get a reliable baseline information on the proportion of literate among the entire population;
- ❖ To test literacy and numeracy skills for the population aged 15-59 and estimate functional literacy rates;
- ❖ To build the capacity of the Ministry of Education Officials, especially the Non-formal Education Division staff through on-the-job training to enable them to set up, use, maintain, and monitor databases for literacy and conduct future literacy surveys by themselves; and
- ❖ To provide recommendations for future literacy programme and interventions to improve education and literacy in the country.

### 2.4 Beneficiaries/Target groups:

It is a nation wide programme. The findings of the survey are expected to benefit the whole country, as they will inform the concerned stakeholders for future planning based on data. Illiterate adults, especially women and un-reached groups will be benefited.

### 2.5 Funding Sources and amount

The estimated budget for the whole operation is Nu 4,238,175 (or about 95,000 USD). The expenses are expected to be incurred for personnel, printing, training, transportation, stationery/supplies, etc.

Of the amount mentioned above different agencies committed (UNICEF=US 45000, UNDP=US 20000, WFP= US 6000) amounts to US 71000. UNICEF has committed to mobilize the balance fund. Besides, the Royal Government of Bhutan pays for the permanent national staff.

### 2.6 Implementing partners

The Non Formal and Continuing Education Division, Department of Adult and Higher Education of

the Ministry of Education takes the lead role in the implementation of the survey. National Statistical Bureau provides technical support to implement the programme. The funding agencies are also responsible in the implementation of the survey. At the district level the administrators and education officers are also involved in terms of providing guidance, logistics support and supervision to enumerators. Bhutan National Commission for UNESCO is also a party to the programme implementation in terms of providing necessary expertise.

### **3. Specific programmes/activities planned for the promotion of the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) which link to NPA**

Specific programmes planned for promoting UNLD amongst other are:

**EFA target:** Bhutan has targeted 2012 to achieving full adult literacy coinciding with the last year of UNLD. The milestone is 3 years ahead of the target being set by the region and the Dakar framework of action for EFA.

**Celebration of ILD:** NFE Division began to initiate the celebration of International Literacy Day on 8<sup>th</sup> September. 2003 marked the 2<sup>nd</sup> such celebration in Bhutan. NFE learners, especially the women, across the country participated in the three-day programme which included reading, writing, speaking, singing, etc. In 2002 the day was observed at the national level while in 2003 it was organized at a regional level. We would like the day to be observed every year as one of the main activities to promote UNLD.

**Self-learning activities:** Another programme the NFE Division will continue to focus to promote UNLD is the expansion/enhancement of self-learning and continuing education through the development of CLCs. We would like to see that by 2012 Bhutan has not only attained full adult literacy but the self-learning culture has become established among adults. To this end some 9 CLCs are being established in 2003 alone.

### **4. In connection with sections 2 and 3 above:**

#### **4.1 Which activities can be implemented within the government's budget?**

Since our country continues to encounter financial constraints we cannot finance many major programmes. However, with limitations we see that the following activities could be managed within government's budget:

**Activities in CLCs:** Once CLCs are established and necessary materials (equipments, furniture, library) installed the local beneficiaries could be able to manage. There is a possibility to sustain those activities through limited income generation. Employment of instructors and their salary can be paid by the government, as has been the case.

**International Literacy Day Celebration:** In the long run the celebration of ILD could become established within the regular other celebrations. Schools, Districts and Division could include the expected expenditure within the government budget.

**Monitoring and Support Services:** As mentioned elsewhere NFE Division is one important part of the whole Education Ministry many administrators, officers and teachers at various levels also look after NFE activities. Government can continue to pay these personnel who are responsible for planning, monitoring and supporting in carrying out various NFE programmes.

**Expenditure for Current Activities:** Further government can continue to fund current activities both for NFE Division office at the center, and the implementing levels of Dzongkhag and schools.

#### **4.2 Which activities need external support and how?**

Achieving EFA through NFE and adult literacy is relatively a recent drive in Bhutan. The country will continue to need external support, particularly in activities, which require a substantial fund. The areas, among other, could include:

**Capacity Building:** Both quality and quantity of personnel need to be improved at the head office and as well as in the fields. This would mean training the instructors in country as well as abroad in the area of managing CLCs, teaching adults, material development, etc.

In the similar way staff at the NFE Division need to enhance their professionalism by undertaking both short and long term studies leading to obtain diploma and postgraduate certificates and degrees in relevant fields. Such capacity building activities would need substantial fund for which external support is essential. Thus the NFE Division would continue to need support for Human Resource Development.

**Construction of CLCs:** Our plan is that CLCs should be established in many communities as possible where there is a need. Requests from communities and districts to establish CLCs have been plenty. As of now we are not able to match our supply and help with that of demand from the fields. We will continue to need external financial support to cater to the need of illiterate lots.

**Literacy materials and equipment:** NFE and adult learning activities are expanding at a rapid pace. Expansion in terms of number of centres established and learners enrolled need to be matched with the supply of learning materials. Many materials need to be reprinted, some library books are to be purchased and other to be developed/adapted on need based. For this, the division will continue to need financial support from external agencies.

CLCs need to be furnished and equipped for making them useful and functional. Areas of support include furniture, equipments for skill training, lighting facilities, etc.

#### **4.3 What kind of inter-country activities would be useful?**

Almost all activities which UNESCO, ACCU/APPEAL have been initiating and organizing are useful. Joint Planning Meeting, Capacity Building by way of conducting workshop/training on material development, etc. are very useful. There is a significant multiplying effect in respective countries. While we must continue with what has been happening following would also be useful:

- Research on related field and sharing the findings for strategic planning;
- Capacity building for the personnel; and
- Sharing expertise by way of working in inter-countries as visiting officials.

#### **4.4 Which international agencies support literacy/NFE programmes of NPA?**

While other agencies do play significant part in their own ways UNICEF and UNESCO have been supporting literacy/NFE programmes in a major way.

#### **4.5 What are the remaining key issues that are not included in NPA?**

While we continue to maximize the quality of the planned programmes/activities and ensure wider coverage some new thinking has emerged in the NFE Division in the recent past, which largely has been affected by the type of geographical situation of the country.

**Home Based Literacy Programme (HBLP):** In order to achieve the national goal of attaining full adult literacy by 2012 there is a need to move forward with some innovative approach. Bhutan's population is widely spread in the mountains and valleys and mostly difficult to reach through easy means. Usually the people living in such areas are illiterate. There is a need to reach literacy programme to this un-reached group through HBLP. Some of the strategies would be developing a literacy package of audiovisual materials with instructional materials for self-learning. The same could be managed by an instructor to teach a limited number of learners by himself/herself moving from place to place. In some ways it is 'Mobile Literacy Activity'.

**Equivalency Programme:** The existing programme does not provide any equivalent credit. The division's thinking is to develop literacy activity in some ways equivalent to basic education level. Similarly, we would like to work towards entering into a dialogue with relevant Ministry and design courses and provide skills training which could be certified as levels of some kind.

**Widening scopes for instructors:** Most of the existing NFE instructors are grade X graduates or who

have completed basic education. Wages paid to them is not only meager but their positions are temporary. Our thinking is to enhance their positions by providing training both in-country and abroad in the field of managing CLCs, to be District level NFE Focal Persons, material development personnel and the like.

### **PART III: Literacy/NFE Programme**

Of the 2002-2003 Regional Literacy/NFE Programmes/Projects/Workshop organised by ACCY/APPEAL Bhutan has participated in some of them, which is indicated in the table below. Review of the same has been presented in light of strength, weaknesses and suggestions.

**Table of review of major ACCU Regional Literacy/NFE Programmes/projects (2002-03)**

<b>Programme/Project title</b>	<b>Main Activities</b>	<b>Strength</b>	<b>Weakness</b>	<b>Suggestions</b>
1. Meeting and workshops (Regional/sub-regional)	Regional workshop on capacity building for trainers of NFE facilitators (3-12 December 02.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhanced the capacity of the programme officer as trainer at national level.</li> </ul>		
2. Regional network	Consultative meeting on establishment of Druk Literacy Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acquired the Concept of LRC.</li> </ul>	- Lack of budget for construction	Need external support
3. Material Development	Adaptation and production of Saving Group in local version Dzongkha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good as post literacy materials for dissemination.</li> <li>Relevant to the need of the learners.</li> </ul>	Project time is bit too short. Could not produce adequate copies.	Need enough time as it involves translation, adaptation, illustration, layout, and printing
	Distributed the Handbook for Adult Learning Material Development to CLCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Simple and applicable at all levels.</li> <li>Comprehensive guide.</li> </ul>		Need to be made available to all the NFE instructors.
	Literacy clip art	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good coverage of sub relevant subject and topics.</li> </ul>	It is not suitable in Bhutanese context.	
	Production of local version PLANET 1 Water. (Distributed to all CLCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners like the video programme and the story in the booklet</li> </ul>	But the chart seems to less attractive to them	

	Production of local version PLANET 2: Forest distributed to all CLCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The format and the layout of the booklet are well designed.</li> <li>• The story in video programme is interesting.</li> </ul>		
	Redesigned and reprinted NFE Facilitators handbooks and distributed to the instructors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very handy. Easy to understand.</li> <li>• Simple and practical.</li> </ul>		
4. Project	Community Learning Centres: (National level activity)	Communities are finding CLCs very useful for continuity of learning and skill development training.	Dependant on government and external support remains to be weakness of communities.	

*Sources:*

*Bhutan 2020, A Vision of Peace, Prosperity and Happiness, Planning Commission, RGOB, 1999.*

*Master Plan of Operations 2002-2006: Programme of cooperation for Children and Women of Bhutan, Country Programme of cooperation between the Royal Government of Bhutan and UNICEF.*

*Education Sector Strategy: Realising Vision 2020 Policy and Strategy, Department of Education, Ministry of Health and Education, Thimphu, 2003.*