



ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023

Department of Employment and Entrepreneurship
Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment
December, 2023



Department of Employment and Entrepreneurship
Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment
Royal Government of Bhutan

© Copyright DoEE, 2023

This publication is free for distribution, however, manipulation of information and data contained in this document is not allowed.

This publication is available at: www.moice.gov.bt

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at:
doee@moice.gov.bt

Department of Employment and Entrepreneurship
Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment
P.O Box #1036, Thongsel Lam
Lower Motithang
Thimphu, Bhutan
PABX: +975-2-333867
Employment Service Centre: +975-2-334495

Table Of Contents

Foreword	1
Acronyms and Abbreviations	3
Tales from DoEE	1
Chapter One.....	16
Department Profile.....	16
Chapter Two.....	19
The Employment Service Division	19
2.1 Youth Engagement and Livelihood Program (YELP)	19
2.2 Overseas Employment Program	21
2.3 Employment Service Centre (ESC).....	25
2.4. Employment Responsibility System.....	29
Chapter Three	30
The Entrepreneurship Promotion Division	30
Activities for the Fiscal Year 2022-23	30
3.2. Startup Innovation and Promotion Events	36
Chapter Four	42
Labour Market Information and Career Guidance Division	42
Chapter Five	47
Regional Offices of Industry, Commerce and Employment (ROICEs)	47
5.1 Gelephu	47
5.2 Phuentsholing.....	48
5.3 Samdrup Jongkhar	49
5.4 Trashigang	50

List of Tables

Table 1 YELP Engagement for FY 2022-23 by Qualification	6
Table 2 Region Wise Engagement	6
Table 3 Programs under the OEP	8
Table 4 Placement details as per country for FY 2022-23	9
Table 5 Placement details as per agent FY 2022-23	9
Table 6 Placement details as per sector for FY 2022-23	9
Table 7 Placement details as per qualification	10
Table 8 Vacancies compiled by ESCs in FY 2022-23	12
Table 9 Referral Support by ESCs in FY 2022-23	13
Table 10 Placements carried of by ESCs in the FY 2022-23	14
Table 11 Consolidated ERS data for the 12th FYP	15
Table 12 Activities for the FY 2022-23	17
Table 13 List of schools providing Business and Entrepreneurship subjects	18
Table 14 New Products Launched on June 4, 2023	26
Table 15 GOWA events held in Thimphu Region for FY 2022-23	30
Table 16 Dzongkhag wise placement for FY 2022-23	35
Table 17 GOWA forum details for the FY 2022-23	36
Table 18 Area wise placement for FY 2022-23	36
Table 19 Sector wise placement for FY 2022-23	37
Table 20 GOWA forum data for FY 2022-23	38

Foreword



I am very pleased to release our Department's publication of the Annual Report 2022-23. The Department's services are broadly grouped under four categories: Employment Service Division (ESD); Employment Promotion Division (EPD); Labour Market Information and Career Guidance Division (LMICGD); Regional of Offices of Industry, Commerce and Employment (ROICES). Each of these categories chronicles the activities that were carried out to meet the objectives of the Department.

Bhutan's labour market is constantly undergoing changes over the years. The unemployment rate being an important parameter to measure the economy of the country has continued to be a

growing concern for policy makers and the government. The unemployment rate has been further exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The overall unemployment rate in 2022 increased to 5.9% from 4.8% in 2021. The youth unemployment rate soared to 28.6% (female: 32.8%, male: 24.4%) which is 7.7% higher than that of 2021 (20.9%).

Understanding these challenges, the Department designs interventions concerning employment promotion and creation through providing job and talent matching services, assisting fresh job seekers to increase their employability through engagement programs, career guidance and employment counselling, leveraging on promoting entrepreneurship as an alternative measure of creating employment and a myriad of other services.

These activities are backed by evidence-based data and information that are being constantly generated from the labour market. The ROICES serving as the functional arm of the Ministry has been actively carrying out the initiatives of the Department, taking it to far-flung places of the country. The newly established LMICGD has played a

critical role in taking up initiatives related to career guidance and labour market information. We also present a special segment “*Tales from DoEE*”, bringing stories from our youth.

The success of our department’s services is also because of the invaluable support we receive from our donors and stakeholders. Much of the activities of the Department demands working in close collaboration with these supporters because employment is an economic process rather than the doings of a single government Ministry. I look forward to an

optimistic future as we all work together to bring gainful employment to all the Bhutanese.



Kunzang Lhamu
Director General, DoEE

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AEC	Advanced Entrepreneurship Course
BBP	Build Bhutan Project
BEC	Basic Entrepreneurship Course
BIC	Business Incubation Centre
BNVC	Bhutan New Venture Challenge
BOWs	Bhutanese Overseas Workers
CEFE	Competency-based Economies, Formation of Enterprise
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DoEE	Department of Employment and Entrepreneurship
DTG	Druk Tshongrig Gatoen
EDO	Economic Development Officers
EPD	Entrepreneurship Promotion Division
ERS	Employment Responsibility System
ESC	Employment Service Center
ESD	Employment Service Division
FYP	Five Year Plan
GCIT	Gyelpozhing College of Information Technology
GEW	Global Entrepreneurship Week
ICGU	Information and Career Guidance Unit
IZC	Institute of Zorig Chusum
JNEC	Jigme Namgyal Engineering College
MIS	Management Information System
MoLHR	Ministry of Labour and Human Resources
NBC	New Business Creation
NEP	National Employment Policy
NKRA	National Key Result Areas
NLCS	National Land Commission Secretariat
NSOE	National Strategy on Overseas Employment
OEP	Overseas Employment Program
OPD	Organizations working for Persons with Disabilities
PPD	Policy and Planning Division
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
RBOEAs	Registered Bhutanese Overseas Employment Agents
RRCO	Regional Revenue and Customs Office
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal

SDP	Skills Development Program
SF	Specialized Firm
TITP	Technical Intern Training Program
TOT	Training of Trainers
TPD	TVET Promotion Division
TTI	Technical Training Institute
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
YELP	Youth Engagement and Livelihood Program

Tales from DoEE

Empowered Dreams: Damchoe's YELP Journey



Introduction:

This case study explores the impact of the Youth Engagement and Livelihood Program (YELP) on the life and career of Damchoe, a 26-year-old individual with a disability in Bhutan. It examines how YELP provided him with opportunities to overcome financial constraints, pursue professional training, and gain employment as a Massage and Spa Therapist.

Background:

Damchoe grew up in a small town and despite limited opportunities and financial challenges in his modest family, he had an unwavering ambition to achieve significant milestones in life.

YELP and Professional Training:

During his time at Muenseling Institute of Khaling (MIK), Damchoe learned about the Massage and Spa Therapist Training in Thimphu. He expressed interest in taking up the training, which eventually led him to become a certified therapist at Norbu Healing Centre in Olakha, Thimphu.

Employment and YELP Support:

After completing his training, Damchoe secured a position as a Traditional Ku Nye Massage Therapist at Barma Sorig Healing Centre. Despite his limited experience, YELP supported him with an additional monthly stipend of Nu 5000, boosting his financial stability and motivation to excel in his job.

Professional Growth and Regularization:

With the guidance of his employer and support from the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Employment, Damchoe gained valuable experience and honed his skills as a therapist. His dedication

and hard work led to his regularisation and increased salary from the employer based on his performance.

Impact on Damchoe's Confidence and Career:

Within a year, Damchoe's confidence and expertise as a therapist grew significantly. He embraced the opportunity to explore the field further, offering healing and care to patients. The YELP program played a crucial role in empowering him to embark on this journey.

Empowerment of People with Disabilities:

Damchoe's success story exemplifies Bhutan's commitment to inclusivity and ensuring that no one is left behind. YELP's support has enabled him to contribute to society, earn a livelihood, and lead a fulfilling life despite visual impairment.

Concluding Note:

The Youth Engagement and Livelihood Program (YELP) in

Bhutan has had a transformative impact on the life of Damchoe. Through professional training and financial support, YELP empowered him to become a skilled therapist, contributing to the workforce and society. Damchoe's journey highlights the significance of inclusive programs and the commitment of the government to uplift individuals with disabilities, providing them with opportunities to succeed and excel in their chosen careers.

"I express my gratitude to my king and country for the person I have become. In our nation, no one is left behind, regardless of disabilities or differences in abilities. Although I am visually impaired and cannot see the world in its entirety, I stand shoulder-to-shoulder with others. I am able to afford the prices set by retailers and earn a livelihood like anyone else. I extend my heartfelt thanks to the Ministry for the YELP program, which has had a significant impact on my life. Hence, I wholeheartedly praise and appreciate YELP."

—Damchoe, Traditional Ku Nye Massage Therapist.

Empowering Youth through YELP: Tshering's Journey

Introduction:

In a rapidly changing job market, finding employment as a young individual is a daunting task. However, my life took a transformative turn when I discovered the Youth Engagement and Livelihood Programme (YELP). This program not only provided me with the opportunity to enhance my skills but also helped me secure a fulfilling job at iBEST. Here I will share my experiences and the impact that YELP had on my professional growth and success.

Chapter 1: The Struggle

Like many other Bhutanese youths, after completing my education, I faced the challenge of finding suitable employment. The competitive job market demanded experience, which I lacked at that time.

Chapter 2: YELP - A Beacon of Hope

YELP was more than just a government program; it was a beacon of hope for young job seekers like me. The program's aim was to provide skill development and work experience opportunities

to unemployed youth. The financial support offered by the Ministry to newly employed youths also alleviated the burden on both employers and employees, making it an attractive proposition for potential employers.

Chapter 3: Enrolling in iBEST - A Journey of Exploration

After a few tests and interviews held by iBEST, I was selected for the position that I applied for. During my time at iBEST, I gravitated towards the field of Human Resources (HR). The course provided insights into talent management, recruitment, and employee development, among other crucial aspects of HR. Equipped with my newfound knowledge and guided by the experienced trainers, I felt more confident to enter the job market.

The institute offers a plethora of opportunities that allow me to explore various fields. It was a transformative experience as I honed my skills, gained practical knowledge, and developed a deeper understanding of the job market.

Chapter 4: YELP's Impact

Thanks to YELP's support, I was able to secure a job in a reputable organisation like iBEST. The financial assistance from the Ministry during my initial months of employment alleviated the financial strain and allowed me to focus on my role with enthusiasm and dedication.

Chapter 5: Professional Growth and Success

As I delved deeper into my role, the skills and experience I gained through YELP proved to be invaluable. I not only excelled in my responsibilities but also contributed to the growth of the organisation. The program had not only transformed my career but had also given me the confidence to tackle new challenges in the workforce.

Conclusion: YELP has been a game-changer in the lives of many Bhutanese youth, including mine. It provided the necessary skills, experience, and financial support to bridge the gap between education and employment. I am very grateful for the opportunity. It is a testament

to the positive impact that such valuable programs can have on the future of our youth and the entire nation. I hope my story inspires others to explore the possibilities that YELP offers and seize the opportunities that lead to a brighter and more promising future.

Thank you ALL!

—*Tsbering C. Tshomo, HRO, iBEST*



Success story from our YELP supported candidate



Kencho Dema completed class 12 from Orong Central School in the year 2020. Since September 2022, she has been working as an ICT Faculty at Eastern Computer Trainer Institute, Samdrup Jongkhar. She is one of the candidates who was engaged and supported through the Ministry's Youth Engagement and Livelihood Program (YELP) with a monthly subsidy payment of Nu.5000/-, and additional payment from her employer. As a recipient and beneficiary of YELP, she takes us through her learning and experience of 9 months.

“It's never easy to start a new beginning. Becoming an ICT Instructor was not in my plan but after completing Class-XII

from Orong Central School in 2020, I have been looking for a job to earn my livelihood. Therefore, I did Tally ERP for three months thinking that I should learn for my personal development. After attending the course for six months, I became jobless and it became the most challenging part of my life. Financial issues became a pressing issue for me. I heard somewhere through the social media page of the erstwhile Ministry of Labour and Human Resources that there is a YELP initiative for job seekers. YELP is a program that provides job seekers with opportunities to enhance their skills and work experience. This program was looked after by the erstwhile Regional office of Labour and Human Resources, Samdrup Jongkhar. YELP came as a beacon of hope for me. I was able to earn and get employed. I am thankful to the Ministry and our Government for the opportunity. Being an instructor was not easy, I faced challenges at the beginning due to lack of confidence and experience. However, as time progressed, I managed to build confidence, and I currently find fulfilment in my work. I am earning my livelihood as a Tally ERP instructor. I am working wholeheartedly and giving my best no matter how small or big it is. I believe small steps make a big difference in life.”

Overseas Employment Journey (Technical Training Intern Program, Japan)



This is Ugyen Chophel from Lhuentse. I am the only one in my family with a diploma in Nursing and Midwifery. And perhaps we were, and are still from an underprivileged family background.

The vacancy in this program was announced in the newspaper (Kuensel) by erstwhile MoLHR and I applied for it to try my luck. I was shortlisted and then got selected for the Technical Training Intern Program. We had to undergo a Japanese Language Course for 10 months where we were also provided with a monthly stipend.

I was looking forward to moving to Japan as I was fascinated by how

developed and advanced Japan is when it comes to technology. Therefore, I felt that it was a great opportunity for me to get hands-on experience in such an advanced country. Moreover, the pay scale was more than my expectation which indeed was very important to sustain my life. Thus, I would say that this very opportunity came as a blessing in disguise for me and my family.

After joining the Technical Training Intern Program in Japan, I got hands-on experience in my field. I have also learned about how to deal with different age groups of people which indeed was a great experience. Most importantly what I loved about working with them was, firstly, they are all particular when it comes to time management, secondly when it comes to work, they give their 100% and the work is being done with utmost dedication and integrity which always left me in awe. I felt privileged to have been guided by those intellectuals. Lastly, they are all very polite and they always solve

the issues through a calm demeanour ensuring a smooth working environment. These are the basic but valuable etiquette I have achieved after having worked in Japan and it shall always be that important lesson from my Japan diary.

Coming to the challenges that I have faced; language was the biggest barrier regardless of official and unofficial situations. Although I attended Japanese language classes, it was brief and

basic which resulted in miscommunication. Moreover, writing a report in the Japanese language which was mandatory at my work was challenging in the beginning. However, all thanks to my leader who was so supportive, countable, and generous I was able to overcome these challenges.

Conclusively, I offer my positive recommendations to any future interested applicants for this program in Japan.

World Of Tomorrow- Pema's Journey at Cozmo Entertainment Company

Let me get back to the year 2019. So, right after high school, I stepped forward to support my family. Being the second eldest child in the family, I have to take on too many responsibilities which is overburdening and stressful.

I started my job in the museum. My income was insufficient to even assist my parents during their times of need. Saving money proved to be a challenge, and others questioned my career choice. This lingering query persisted until I discovered that some of my peers were departing Bhutan in pursuit of better earning opportunities. Even though the museum job was challenging for me, my parents supported me in every decision I took. They would proudly say, "My daughter can manage her own personal finances". Residing in Thimphu with a high school qualification posed challenges for me. Eventually, in late 2021, I chose to explore employment opportunities overseas.

Many colleagues of mine recommended I opt for overseas employment through the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment. It was then that I found a job vacancy that suited my skills and interests. I was so excited and looked forward to applying to the Cozmo entertainment company in Kuwait.

I applied online through the Bhutan Labour Market Information System (BLMIS) and after a few weeks, MoICE called me for an interview. I did my interview confidently and it was engaging and fun. I was selected and was so thrilled when I signed the offer letter. I started packing for the new journey ahead and braced myself for the new endeavour.

After arriving here, I was overwhelmed by how different the lifestyle, landscape, and geographical location of Kuwait was. It was my first time travelling out of Bhutan and it was a nerve-racking experience considering the language barrier, new food, and social norms of the country. However, I braced myself for this challenge while thinking about my family and my career.

So far, I take pride in both the challenge I embraced and the decision I ultimately made. I love my work and my colleagues who are all giving their best. It has been a year working at Cozmo Entertainment company and I have been promoted to second in line. I am happy with the progress I have achieved in just one year, and I eagerly anticipate further learning opportunities. Additionally, I look forward to utilising my upcoming vacation to reunite with my family and friends.



Pema Wangmo, Cozmo Entertainment, Kuwait

Entrepreneurship Diaries

Women Empowerment through Entrepreneurship

Karpo Tshemkhang was set up at the heart of Nganglam town in September 2022 by a group of six aspiring women entrepreneurs. Coming from diverse social and economic backgrounds, they are desperate to delve into tailoring business driven by economic necessity. It was a great opportunity for them when they got the lifetime opportunity to avail three months of basic tailoring training conducted by erstwhile Regional Office of Labour and Human Resources, Samdrup Jongkhar.

Mrs. Sherab Zangmo, who completed Class-XII and is a mother, is the group leader and is coordinating the daily functioning of the business. She shared, *“Me and my friends are very privileged and fortunate to attend the basic tailoring course through the Village Skills Development Program (VSDP). We acquired skills and invaluable knowledge in sewing clothing and found an area to realise our potential to start up the business. We are much indebted and owe a load of gratitude to erstwhile Regional Office of Labour and Human Resources, Samdrup Jongkhar for the opportunity”*.

Mrs. Lungten Selden who is one of the active group members shared, *“Right after the tailoring course, we attended the Basic Entrepreneurship Course (BEC) to pursue our entrepreneurial aspirations. It motivated us to put our ideas in the form of products. During the*

BEC, we even bagged the first position with a sum of Nu.50,000/- which we have used as seed money for our business”.

Tshering Zangmo, who is a mother of three and completed CI-VIII is determined and optimistic that women can be champions and take lead in the success of doing business. She shared, *“There is a sceptical notion in society that women lack self-confidence and are confined to looking after their family. However, given a good social support system and a conducive entrepreneurial environment from the government, women have the potential to drive forward and achieve bigger reach in doing business. We could foresee areas to tap entrepreneur potential in us and promote women's economic empowerment through participation”.*

Today their business is progressing and thriving in their local market with product diversification and innovation of services. Their success story is a true testament and inspiration to the rest of other women who are impeded to pursue their dreams due to prevailing societal taboos and inherent cultural norms. Although their journey ahead was tough and daunting nothing could deter their unity, strong teamwork, resilience, and commitment which are instrumental in the success of their business. As such with no high level of educational and entrepreneurship background, their heartwarming success in entrepreneurial careers is an immense pride in empowering our women who bring a significant ripple impact in the community in bringing about rural-economic development.



Experiences sharing from Internee with RoICE

When I was studying in high school, I constantly got advice from my seniors to avail internships. Gaining work experience is a key instrument to boost our employability skills. So far, upon completion of high school, one foremost thing I chose to do was an internship in a government organisation.

For this, I undertook a three-month internship at the Regional Office of Industry, Commerce, and Employment (RoICE), Samdrup Jongkhar. I was attached to the Employment Section. During the internship, I was involved in assignments such as maintaining proper records of all correspondences, assisting job seekers to apply for all the jobs through BLMIS, scheduling meetings whenever there is an appointment with stakeholders and receiving and answering calls from clients. It was a moment of pleasure and I was privileged to undergo a three-month internship in which I learned so many things and was also given a chance for personal development.

Therefore, I would suggest young talents to take the opportunity and avail internship opportunities, even if it is not necessarily in the department that you wish to work in. There is much to gain from it on both a professional and personal level.

By Cheki Zangmo, Interned with RoICE, SJ from March-May, 2023



Kith-Tshel Garden's Journey in Green Entrepreneurship, Empowering Youths and Women for a Sustainable Tomorrow



Melam Zangmo, hailing from Bartsham, Trashigang, successfully earned her BA degree in Media and Dzongkha from Sherubtse College in 2018. After her completion, she attempted the Bhutan Civil Service Examination, however, she did not get through and it turned out to be a blessing in disguise as it ultimately led her to embark on an entrepreneurial path. Hence, Kith-Tshel was founded in the midst of 2019 in response to her unemployment. According to Melam, Kith-Tshel is characterised as a "youth initiative, a proactive measure to tackle unemployment issues." However, they were only able to enter the market in 2021.

Kith-Tshel Garden operates as a nursery specialising in the large-scale production of plants designed for beautification and landscaping. The initiative was launched with the

primary goal of creating job opportunities for both youths and women by involving them in activities related to the environment. The focus is not only on enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the surroundings but also on actively contributing to the preservation of the country's diverse plant life. This, in turn, aligns with the national objective of environmental conservation. Their vision is to advance greening initiatives that provide employment opportunities for youths regardless of gender. Additionally, they aim to deliver environmental education and generate income by establishing environmentally friendly industries.

Till now, Kith-Tshel Garden has offered part-time and daily wage employment to over 50 youths, extending internship opportunities to recent graduates. Their commitment extends beyond youths alone where they actively engage and provide employment to women aiming to empower them towards financial independence.

Currently, their team consists of members including Melam herself and she proudly said, *"I could employ these three on a regular basis."*

Melam added, *“Nevertheless, these small achievements are not solely attributed to me. I express gratitude to several stakeholders who have significantly eased my entrepreneurial journey: DHI BIZAP for the funding support, MOAF, and DCSI for imparting floriculture training, ITEC for providing valuable entrepreneurship training, Horticulture Association of Bhutan for consistent support, and UNDP, MOICE, and Loden Foundation for their Springboard Plus program. Without the contributions of these entities, I wouldn't have progressed this far in my entrepreneurial endeavours.”*

Messages from our beneficiaries

“May 2nd is celebrated as teacher's day in Bhutan. I wanted to wish you a very happy teacher's day sir. You might not have been part of our student life journey as a teacher but the way you lend your helping hand to make us reach Singapore is nothing less than a teacher's effort. Our teachers may have prepared us for the future with the knowledge, but it's you who actually helped us to reach a place where we can upgrade our basic knowledge to the expert level. If our teachers gave us the wings to fly, you actually showed us a platform to showcase how high we can fly with those wings so you deserve a huge respect and yes for who we are today and will be tomorrow, we'll always owe you. Thank you so much sir”
Message from Asian Nursing Scholarship Programme beneficiary to Mr. Christopher Lim, Community Director of Heritage Soccap Pte Ltd, who is the contact person and counterpart for the Ministry for the smooth implementation of the programs of the Ministry.



(Left: Dechen Zangmo; Right: Christopher Lim)

“Kuzuzangpo la Sir. How are you la? This is Kiran Gurung and I have been given training as a line cook under Chillies company in Shaba Al Salim, Kuwait. It has now been a month and 4 days leaving our Country and tt is a great experience working out here representing our country. Thank you for your support and best regards la.”

Message from Kiran Gurung to OEP focal.



Youth Unemployment in Bhutan: A Meta-Analysis of the Lessons and Perspectives

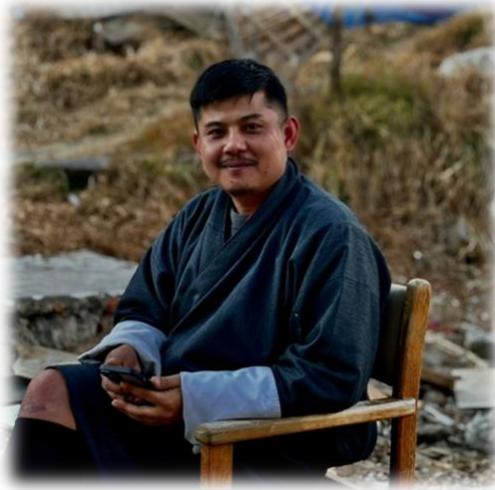
ABSTRACT

The issue of unemployment is a significant concern for the global economy, and Bhutan has experienced it since 2020 due Covid-19 and its aftermath. There have been multiple attempts to resolve this issue, but nothing has changed. To gain insight into the developments of youth unemployment over the past ten years, the study examines relevant sources such as labour force survey data, papers from the five-year plans, and similar studies from Bhutan. The analysis uses tables, graphs, and descriptive statistics to present its findings and conclusions. The impact of sectoral development predictions and employment initiatives is questioned in the study. The study identifies three critical elements—referred to as the "employment triangle"—that significantly influence labour market changes, including the demographic shift, the work attitude, and the educational deficit. Furthermore, the unfavourable perceptions that young people hold about manual labour, labour-intensive jobs, contract and casual work, all have a big influence on how they feel about their jobs. Furthermore, an examination of

current and previous government activities demonstrates a non-pro employment agenda.

To sum up, the research clarifies the intricate factors contributing to youth unemployment in Bhutan. It emphasises how important it is to conduct more study and carefully examine existing methods in order to address this pressing problem.

*An excerpt from the research paper, 'Youth Unemployment in Bhutan: A Meta-Analysis of the Lessons and Perspectives'. This research paper has been published in the South Asian Journal of Human Resources Management, A SAGE Publication. Author: **Phurba Sonam Waiba, Employment Officer, Overseas Unit, DoEE.***



Chapter One Department Profile

The Department of Employment and Entrepreneurship is focused on promoting and facilitating gainful employment through the provision of effective employment and entrepreneurship. This is realised through formulating policies concerning employment promotion and employment creation by working closely with the Ministry's Policy and Planning Division (PPD). The policy-making is based on the evidence and insights collected through rigorous consultation with the various stakeholders. The policies are implemented with best practice models and methods that suit our local needs and objectives.

The Department plays a critical role in the employment creation process and facilitating gainful engagement of youth in the labour market. The Department is guided by the National Employment Policy (NEP). The NEP 2013 outlines strategies that will accelerate employment growth, improve the quality of working conditions, and provide equal employment opportunities while addressing the requirement of producing an adequately skilled workforce aligned to the requirements of the job market¹.

Based on the policy mandates, the Department is focused on delivering effective services towards facilitating the demand and supply of human resources in the labour market. This entails providing high-quality jobs and talent-matching services based on data and information obtained through our labour market information system. The Department aims to assist fresh jobseekers in increasing their employability and gaining experience through engagement programs. The Department is also leveraging promoting entrepreneurship as an alternative measure to creating employment.

The Department offers a myriad of other services apart from facilitating job-talent matching services. It supports private employment agencies as complementary service providers for recruitment and employment facilitation services. Career guidance and employment counselling are also rendered to the job seekers.

¹ The National Employment Policy, Ministry Labour and Human Resources

The Department comprises three divisions and the Regional Offices which work closely to realise the overall objectives of the Department.

The **Employment Services Division (ESD)** strives to seamlessly match job seekers with the right opportunities in the Bhutanese labour market and facilitate overseas placements. To achieve this goal, the division employs a dynamic blend of in-person and online service delivery strategies. Through strategically located Employment Service Centres (ESC) spread across the country, the focus is on delivering services with utmost efficiency and effectiveness. These ESCs serve as powerful platforms, extensively marketed to both employers and jobseekers, creating a harmonious nexus in the labour market.

To supplement the division's efforts, the Bhutan Labour Market Information System (BLMIS) takes the lead, enabling online services that bridge the gap between talents and opportunities. Guided by the core values of the 3Ps - Prepare, Promote, and Place of the Employment Responsibility System (ERS) - the division ensures that jobseekers are empowered with the essential tools and support for navigating the job market and enhancing their employability.

The **Entrepreneurship Promotion Division (EPD)** focuses on self-employment and business start-ups through entrepreneurship support and development activities. Entrepreneurship is the catalyst for economic development in any country. Entrepreneurship is viewed as one of the key solutions in tackling unemployment issues through self-employment and import substitution through the formation of ventures concerned with the production of goods and services. The division collaborates with other similar agencies and different financial institutions to facilitate self-employment and entrepreneurship. The Entrepreneurship Promotion Division focuses on promoting the culture of entrepreneurship through capacity building, entrepreneurship education, organisation of entrepreneurship events, startup acceleration and business development interventions and infrastructure support such as Fablabs and incubation centres to enhance the entrepreneurship ecosystem.

The **Labour Market Information and Career Guidance Division (LMICGD)** is a newly established Division under the DoEE focusing on

analysing the labour market to identify trends, opportunities, and challenges and empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their careers. The Division focuses on carrying out research, producing employment prospectus and labour market-related projections and forecasting to inform individuals, businesses, policymakers, and other stakeholders about employment and the workforce. It is also responsible for empowering individuals to make informed decisions about their education and career, maximise their potential, and achieve their personal and professional goals through rigorous career guidance-related programs.

The **Regional Office of Industry, Commerce, and Employment (ROICE)** serves as the functional arm of the Ministry. The RoICEs discharge its roles and responsibilities to ensure that all the activities, initiatives and programs of the Ministry reaches a wider audience across Bhutan. The RoICEs are located at Gelephu, Phuentsholing, Samdrup Jongkhar, Trashigang, Trongsa, Mongar and a sub-office of Mongar at Trashigang. The ROICES play a critical role in connecting labour market information, and other critical initiatives of the Ministry to the nooks and corners of the country.

Chapter Two The Employment Service Division

2.1 Youth Engagement and Livelihood Program (YELP)

Background

In pursuit of fostering a vibrant workforce and providing gainful employment to youth towards a purposeful future, the Youth Engagement and Livelihood Program (YELP) has been implemented to enhance the employability of jobseekers. The YELP is aimed at providing gainful employment through engagement, job training, and internship opportunities.

YELP

YELP is one of the key support programs of the Department to enhance the employability of jobseekers in transitioning from schools/institutions to work. YELP has been designed to benefit both employers and jobseekers. A monthly allowance of Nu. 5000 is provided to jobseekers engaged with different employers. The support duration ranges from 1 to 12 months. YELP provides wage subsidy support for the engagement of jobseekers in government and non-civil service sectors and an avenue for jobseekers to gain on-the-job skills and work experience required to enhance their employability while also supporting their livelihood.

In the FY 2022-23, YELP has engaged around 2256 individuals, with the engagement higher for females (64.8 percent) compared to their male counterparts (35.1 percent). The beneficiaries were engaged in various sectors such as accommodation (25.2 percent), manufacturing (18.1 percent), trade (11.1 percent), and public administration (8.9 percent).

Considering the profiles of the beneficiaries it is evident that the majority were individuals with academic qualifications of class XII (39.2 percent), followed by class X (20.1 percent) and below class X (14.4 percent) respectively.

Table 1 YELP Engagement for FY 2022-23 by Qualification

Status Report of the Current Financial Year (2022-23)			
Qualification	Male	Female	Total
PHD	0	0	0
Masters	0	3	3
Technical Graduate	1	1	2
University Graduate	141	182	323
Certificate/TII/IZC	39	25	64
Diploma	67	89	156
Class XII	308	696	1004
Below Class XII	11	26	37
Class X	134	319	453
Below Class X	154	215	369
Missing Values	44	101	145
Grand Total	899	1657	2556

Table 2 Region Wise Engagement

Placed By	Male	Female	Total
Thimphu Head Office	512	907	1419
Gelephu RO	120	215	335
Samdrup Jongkhar RO	93	177	270
Trashigang RO	69	178	247
Phuentsholing RO	105	180	285
Grand Total	899	1657	2556

2.2 Overseas Employment Program

In accordance with the Cabinet directives outlined in order C-3/3/30 dated 21 August 2013, the Ministry received instructions to explore opportunities for overseas employment. As a result of this mandate, the Overseas Employment Program (OEP) was launched in 2013, alongside other employment facilitation initiatives. The Cabinet approved the implementation of the Overseas Employment Program on 26th September 2013. The placements through the OEP have seen a steady rise except for the FY 2020-21 when the overseas placement was kept on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the FY 2022-23, a total of 2063 job seekers were placed under the program with higher females (67.5 percent) being placed compared to males (32.4 percent). Kuwait was the most preferred destination country as the majority of placements were made there (87.8 percent of the placements). Similarly, if we look at the sector of engagement abroad, it is considerably popular in tourism and hospitality (74.3 percent), and retail and sales (24.2 percent) sectors. A total of 7272 vacancies were announced under the program in the Financial Year. Supplementing the existing in-country job seeker preparation programs, the OEP is an added avenue for engagement and skilling opportunities for job seekers. The highest placement has been conducted for those with Class XII (55.6 percent) qualification followed by Class X (35.2 percent), and university graduates (8.5 percent).

Modality of the Program

The placement of job seekers overseas for employment is conducted through two main channels: either directly by the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment (MoICE) or through the Registered Bhutanese Overseas Employment Agents (RBOEAs). The MoICE engages in a public-public partnership by collaborating with certain government agencies for the implementation of specific programs. Additionally, the MoICE also facilitates placements directly with potential overseas companies through a public-private partnership.

Likewise, the RBOEAs operate through private-private partnerships by collaborating either directly with potential overseas companies or with recruitment agents based in the destination country.

Table 3 Programs under the OEP

The following programs were implemented in the FY 2022-23;

- Employment Program in Middle East Countries,
- Technical Intern Training Program in Japan,
- Nursing Program in Singapore,
- Nursing Program in United Kingdom,
- Employment Program in Middle East Countries.

Placement Status

A total of 13,149 Bhutanese has been deployed abroad as overseas workers since the launch of the program in 2013, engaging in various sectors such as retail, education, tourism and hospitality, agriculture, wellness, IT, finance and accounts, geo-fitness, and skills development. Bhutanese youth are deployed across different countries through the RBOEAs.

Similarly, in the 12 FYP, of the 21,088 vacancies announced, a total of 7387 Bhutanese were placed of which the majority were female (63.3 percent), compared to males (36.7 percent), and in the FY 2022-23 a total of 2063 job seekers were placed, with the majority being females.

Table 4 Placement details as per country for FY 2022-23

Country	Male	Female	Total
Kuwait	582	1230	1812
Qatar	49	74	123
Singapore	5	15	20
UAE	34	74	108
Total	670	1393	2063

Table 5 Placement details as per agent FY 2022-23

Agents	Male	Female	Total
Ministry of Labour and Human Resources	233	282	515
Wangchuk Overseas Employment Agent (Previously BISHT)	210	595	805
EmployBhutan Overseas Employment Agent	58	274	332
RUMI Overseas Employment Agent	165	233	398
Bhutan Jinzai Overseas	4	9	13
Total	670	1393	2063

Table 6 Placement details as per sector for FY 2022-23

Sector	Male	Female	Total
Tourism and Hospitality	485	1049	1534
Retail and Sales	180	319	499
Health	5	25	30
Grand Total	670	1393	2063

Table 7 Placement details as per qualification

Qualification	Male	Female	Total
University Graduate	57	119	176
Certificate/T ^{II} /IZC	1	0	1
Diploma	7	5	12
Class XII	380	767	1147
Class X	225	502	727
Grand Total	670	1393	2063

Status Update

In the 2022-23 FY, the Department developed the National Strategy on Overseas Employment (NSOE) which lays out the best ways to deliver effective services towards decent, safe, and satisfying jobs through placement in overseas job markets. It has three strategic objectives; Strategic Objective 1, focuses on the strengthening and improved governance of overseas job placements; Strategic Objective 2, details the measures to ensure harmonised support and protection of Bhutanese working overseas; and Strategic Objective 3, concerns instituting a responsive reintegration program.

The Department also initiated the development of the National Reintegration Program, revised the Technical Intern Training Program (TITP) program, and signed the MoU on the UK Nursing Program.

2.3 Employment Service Centre (ESC)

ESCs function as an important communication link between jobseekers and employers² and provide facilitation services such as registration, referrals, placement, vacancy announcements, and career guidance and counselling services. In addition, the ESCs provide training and recruitment facilitation services to job seekers and employers.

In 2022-23 FY a total of 22,826 individuals registered in the job portal, from which 4274 were placed while 913 were referred to different agencies/companies and government sectors.

The following services are provided to the job seekers:

- Online BLMIS Services
- Career guidance and counselling
- Processing the security clearance for employment
- Job interview skills and curriculum vitae writing sessions
- Job matching, referrals, and placement
- Information on current job vacancies
- Assist job seekers to submit documents to employers
- Information on in-country training opportunities and other labour market-related information
- Reprographic services

The following services are offered to Employers:

- Online registration on BLMIS
- Announce job vacancies
- Arrange job interviews (employers & job seekers)
- Employment consultation
- Job matching, referral, and placement
- Assist to update employee details and other information on BLMIS
- Assist to apply for foreign workers.

² Employers refer to any registered entity including the training providers.

Table 8 Vacancies compiled by ESCs in FY 2022-23

Months	Thimphu ESC				Regional ESCs				Total
	Government/Autonomous	Corporate	Private	NGOs	Phuentsholing	Gelephu	Samdrup Jongkhar	Trashigang	
July, 2022	22	12	86	0	83	14	0	0	217
August, 2022	0	32	66	2	30	6	0	82	218
September, 2022	3	8	87	1	67	10	1	0	177
October, 2022	6	6	239	2	237	5	15	0	510
November, 2022	66	21	86	0	212	5	1	0	391
December, 2022	37	14	107	2	59	6	0	0	225
January, 2023	103	50	68	8	78	8	41	1	357
February, 2023	324	1	96	5	68	2	3	12	511
March, 2023	112	28	73	2	37	15	53	0	320
April, 2023	78	83	121	9	56	9	1	3	360
May, 2023	36	60	107	10	104	14	69	3	403
June, 2023	21	12	121	1	243	11	13	4	426
Total	808	327	1257	42	1274	105	197	105	4115

Table 9 Referral Support by ESCs in FY 2022-23

Months	Thimphu ESC				Regional ESCs				Total
	Government/Autonomous	Corporate	Private	NGOs	Phuentsholing	Gelephu	Samdrup Jongkhar	Trashigang	
July, 2022	0	0	0	0	6	0	0	0	6
August, 2022	0	83	22	0	0	0	0	0	105
September, 2022	81	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	81
October, 2022	62	0	15	0	0	0	0	0	77
November, 2022	175	0	210	0	0	0	0	0	385
December, 2022	16	0	41	0	0	0	0	0	57
January, 2023	11	0	29	0	0	0	0	0	40
February, 2023	1	0	16	0	4	0	0	0	21
March, 2023	1	0	25	0	2	0	0	0	28
April, 2023	0	0	16	2	0	0	2	0	20
May, 2023	20	0	27	0	0	0	0	0	47
June, 2023	16	0	23	0	1	3	3	0	46
Total	383	83	424	2	13	3	5	0	913

Table 10 Placements carried by ESCs in the FY 2022-23

Months	Thimphu ESC				Regional ESCs				Total
	Government/Autonomous	Corporate	Private	NGOs	Phuentsholing	Gelephu	Samdrup Jongkhar	Trashigang	
July, 2022	27	8	18	0	93	23	4	18	191
August, 2022	0	8	16	0	141	19	6	33	223
September, 2022	162	8	21	1	118	27	6	8	351
October, 2022	32	31	201	1	123	25	3	7	423
November, 2022	44	19	119	20	144	23	10	0	379
December, 2022	111	9	204	1	122	23	11	29	510
January, 2023	101	8	200	0	122	27	16	2	476
February, 2023	92	11	167	5	167	21	15	27	505
March, 2023	101	15	169	0	134	29	14	3	465
April, 2023	46	10	107	3	149	0	24	1	340
May, 2023	37	1	85	1	77	0	17	0	218
June, 2023	34	6	96	0	39	0	18	0	193
Total	787	134	1403	32	1429	217	144	128	4274

Status Update

In the FY 2022-23, the Department initiated the development of the ESC strategy in order to revamp the ESC services including the enhancement of coordination, facilities and services, human resource pool and capacities, and locational requirements to make it a vibrant one-stop-shop for all employment related services.

2.4. Employment Responsibility System

The Employment Responsibility System (ERS) is aimed at promoting shared responsibilities in employment generation and ensuring effective coordination among key agencies in facilitating gainful and productive employment in the country.

It clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of various ministries/departments and other key agencies involved in employment-related activities. It also provides a platform for collaborative policy intervention planning and implementation.

Table 11 Consolidated ERS data for the 12th FYP

Sectors	Year 1 (2018-19)	Year 2 (2019-20)	Achieved	Year 3 (2020-21)		Year 4 (2021-22)		Year 5 (2022-23)		12th FYP	
	Targets	Targets		Targets	Total	Targets	Total	Targets	Total	Grand Total	Achieved till date
MoWHS	0	50	544	220	2453	250	1958	308	1115	828	6070
MoIC	400	400	34	400	196	400	284	400	5139	2000	5653
TCB	2983	3281	3068	3609	1640	3970	233	4367	157	18210	5098
MoAF	540	540	242	540	1579	540	234	540	183	2700	2238
MLI/MoEA	195	195	270	195	1170	195	735	195	0	975	2175
DHPS/MoEA	301	302	355	302	146	302	170	302	678	1509	1349
DoT/MoEA	3000	3000	3860	3000	4326	3000	9243	3000	4887	15000	22316
DGM/MoEA	50	50	123	50	76	50	1332	50	1088	250	2619
DCSI/MoEA	2291	2291	664	2292	635	2292	8698	2292	45517	11458	55514
TOTAL	9760	10109	9160	10608	12221	10999	22887	11454	58764	52930	103032

Chapter Three The Entrepreneurship Promotion Division

The Entrepreneurship Promotion Division (EPD) is dedicated to fostering the spirit of entrepreneurship in Bhutan. The division's primary objective is to transform mindsets and attitudes, encourage self-employment through comprehensive entrepreneurship development training, arrange impactful events, and provide support for novel infrastructural ventures in partnership with relevant agencies.

Four primary results have been recognized in the pursuit of fostering a dynamic startup ecosystem that nurtures creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship, and facilitates profitable self-employment and economic growth. These four outcomes encompass:

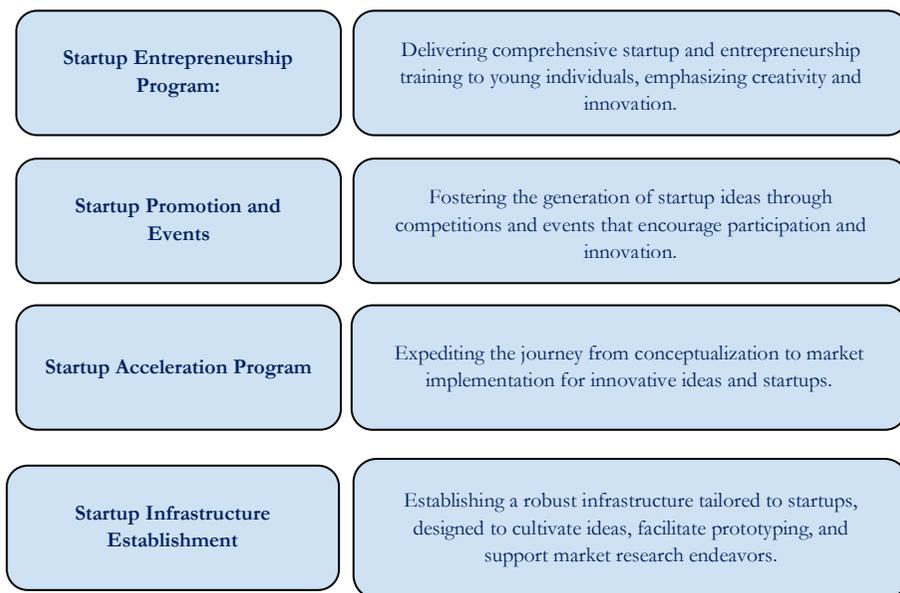


Figure 1 Outputs of startup ecosystem

Activities for the Fiscal Year 2022-23

During Fiscal Year 2022-23, the division implemented various programs, including an Entrepreneurship Development Program course, Promotional and

networking activities, and startup events, resulting in the creation of 37 startups and generating around 145 jobs.

Table 12 Activities for the FY 2022-23

AEC/BEC/ToT Trainees	EPD Events (SHC/SBS/SpB+/BNVC)	EPD BIC Incubatees	Startups	Jobs
2079	10	12	37	145

3.1. Startup Entrepreneurship Program

Entrepreneurship courses are designed to ignite innovative thinking and empower individuals in the pursuit of their entrepreneurial dreams through targeted interventions. These courses are structured around the CEFE methodology, Competency-Based Economics, Formation of Enterprise. The comprehensive curriculum encompasses dynamic elements such as business games, role-playing exercises, lifelike simulations, immersive field visits, and the preparation and presentation of business plans. These components collectively constitute an experiential learning approach. Further, the top four participants of each course are granted a cash prize of Nu. 50,000, along with dedicated facilitation and support services, as they continue their journey to fulfill their entrepreneurial ambitions. The entrepreneurship courses comprise the Basic Entrepreneurship Course (BEC), spanning 15 days and tailored for aspiring entrepreneurs with educational qualifications equivalent to or below the 12th standard. Moreover, the Advanced Entrepreneurship Course (AEC), extending over 21 days, caters to those with educational qualifications surpassing a bachelor’s degree.

In the Fiscal Year 2022-2023, an entrepreneurship course was offered in four dzongkhags which are Mongar, Samtse, Thimphu, and Pemagatshel. A total of **164 enthusiastic entrepreneurs (132 males and 32 females)** took part in the course. As a result of these entrepreneurship programs, **five new start-ups** were established. Further, the Entrepreneurship Promotion Division organised the Basic Entrepreneurship Course, catering to the graduates of the Skills

Development Program (SDP/BEC). There were a total of **1916 participants across 78 batches of the SDP/BEC, including 848 females and 1068 males.**

3.1.1. Entrepreneurship Promotion Funds for Schools

It is crucial to integrate entrepreneurship education into the education systems. This shift is vital for cultivating a mindset that values entrepreneurship as a career choice and also empowers students to tackle socio-economic challenges.

In the 12th FYP, under the Startup/CSI Flagship Program 2018-2023, significant measures have been implemented to foster entrepreneurship in schools. The Division partnered with the Royal Education Council and the Department of School Education to integrate entrepreneurship education into the curriculum. Financial and technical support, including teacher training, was provided. In the fiscal year 2022-2023, additional funding was allocated to establish entrepreneurship clubs in schools, aiming to infuse an entrepreneurial spirit and provide practical services to communities. The objectives encompass promoting entrepreneurial activities, nurturing a robust entrepreneurial culture, and creating a dynamic ecosystem within schools. The target group comprises 16 Government Schools offering Business and Entrepreneurship subjects as listed below.

Table 13 List of schools providing Business and Entrepreneurship subjects

SN	School Name
1	Orong Higher Secondary School
2	Phuentsholing Higher Secondary School
3	Ura Central School
4	Chumey Higher Secondary School
5	Dechentsemo Higher Secondary School
6	Yangchen Gatsel Higher Secondary School
7	Phuentsholing Rigsar HSS
8	Peljorling Higher Secondary School
9	Lamoizhingkha High School
10	Thrimshing Higher Secondary School
11	Pemagatshel Middle Secondary School
12	Jigme Sherubling Central School
13	Laya Central School
14	Phobjikha Central School
15	Gongthung Middle Secondary School
16	Lingzhi Lower Secondary School

3.1.1.1. Entrepreneurship Education Capacity Development

As a part of Entrepreneurship Education Integration in the school education curriculum, the ministry provided capacity development of teachers on the newly developed curriculum. The existing Commerce subject is enhanced with the incorporation of the latest business and entrepreneurship concepts and practices. Eight days of orientation on the new textbook were conducted from 2nd to 9th March 2023, at Khasadrapchu MSS, Thimphu.

The aims and objectives of the orientation program were to:

- Understand the purpose of introducing the Business and Entrepreneurship curriculum.
- Discuss the importance of the curriculum framework.
- Identify different competencies of the subject and use them in the learning-teaching processes.
- Apply different tools to generate business ideas, select an idea, and develop a business model.
- Prepare a business plan.
- Carry out a financial analysis of the business idea and pitch it.
- Apply different techniques and tools for assessment to teach the subject.

A total of 39 teachers participated in the workshop, including four from the private schools.

3.1.2. TOT on New Business Creation Program (NBC)

In the FY 2022-2023, the Division organised a 15-day Training of Trainers (ToT) Program on entrepreneurship development from 14th to 30th November 2022 at JWPTI, Gelephu. The training was provided to Business Incubation Managers, Economic Development Officers (EDOs), officers from the erstwhile Regional Employment and Labour Office (RELO), instructors from TTIs/IZCs, and other ecosystem stakeholders. The focus was on building the capacity of crucial stakeholders who spearhead the entrepreneurship development activities in their respective institutes.

The primary aims of the training were to enhance the skills of future trainers, elevate the effectiveness of entrepreneurship training, and strengthen the abilities of Economic Development Officers, TTIs/IZCs representatives, MoICE members, and incubation managers. 25 individuals (15 males and 10 females) completed the ToT Program.

3.1.3. Microwork and Online Freelancing Program

Towards promoting the gig economy through freelancing programs, a 2-day “Online Freelancing and Micro Work Awareness Program” was organised for final-year IT students from the College of Science and Technology (CST), Jigme Namgyel Engineering College (JNEC), and media and data science students of Sherubtse College.

The main objective of the awareness program was to:

1. Introduce the concept of online freelancing to the participants.
2. Demonstrate the potential and scope of online freelancing.
3. Empower the participants to become active online freelancers.
4. Promote the viability of online freelancing as a career and tool for self-employment in Bhutan and create an image of online freelancing as a lucrative career.
5. Introduce and walk through one of the leading freelance portals *Fiverr*.
6. To instil an entrepreneurial mindset among the participants.

7. This awareness program will also act as a forerunner for the achievement of the 13th and 14th Five-Year Plan goals of creating 1,000 digital jobs annually.

During the 2-days' workshop, participants were introduced to the concept and importance of freelancing and different freelancing platforms and portals like UpWork, Fiverr, Freelancer, People per Hour, etc. Further, they also demonstrated how to create Fiverr GIGs, endorse GIGs, design thumbnails, create a Payoneer account, write a cover, and do graphic design.

The 30 participants (10 selected from each College) will additionally undergo the 2nd Phase of 10 days of "online training and mentoring" sessions with the experts to further enhance and sharpen their skills so that they can easily compete with the rest of the freelancers around the world in the freelance market place and pursue online freelancing as a preferred career at a later stage when they graduate from college. A total of 117(73 males, 44 females) participated in the 2 days awareness workshop.

3.2. Startup Innovation and Promotion Events

3.2.1. Startup Bhutan Hackathon Challenge 2023

The Startup Hackathon Challenge 2023 was conducted from 16 -18th of June 2023, at the Startup Center, Changzamtog with the theme ***“Empowering Startup Ecosystems through Digital Transformation”*** with eight registered teams from diverse backgrounds, including freelancers, college students, and private firms. The primary objectives were to encourage self-employment among IT unemployed youths, promote the use of technology for innovation, enhance creativity and innovation in the IT sector, and create a platform for digital job creation as a precursor to the 13th Plan.

The winner of the Startup Hackathon Challenge 2023 was “Team Domain”. The runners-up were bagged by “Team Tech No-Mind” from Gyelpozhing College of Information Technology (GCIT).

3.2.2. Startup Bootcamp, JNEC

Startup Bootcamp at JNEC was a dynamic five-day event fostering innovative thinking among young minds for viable business ideas under a specific theme. Diverse experts mentored participants from various fields, facilitating networking, team formation, and eventually company creation. The event not only promoted entrepreneurship education but also emphasised on team building. Aimed at cultivating a startup community, the Bootcamp primarily targeted Jigme Namgyel Engineering College (JNEC) students, encouraging entrepreneurial ventures leveraging their engineering and IT skills.

Comprising two phases, the event's initial phase educated 124 registered participants on entrepreneurship concepts, Lean Canvas, SWOT analysis, and business planning in a two days Pre-Boot Camp. Subsequently, the main three days Start-up Boot Camp event mirrored Start-up Weekend principles, incorporating idea pitching, design thinking, market research, and validation alongside mentoring. Notably, 14 standout ideas (7 each from IT/Electronic and Engineering) progressed to the main event, receiving mentorship and presenting before judges representing diverse sectors.

Category A, focused on IT and Electronics, saw "Harvest Connect Innovation" secure victory with plans for an app offering agriculture market insights. "Heroic

Realm," the runner-up, aimed to craft a culturally rich VR game. "Druk Sports," the second runner-up, concentrated on live sports broadcasting. In Category B, Engineering, "Reverse Vending Machine" incentivized plastic bottle deposits, "Fruity Pads" sought to create eco-friendly sanitary pads, and "Luung Chhu" aimed to harvest drinkable water using condensed air for fitness enthusiasts.

3.2.3. Bhutan New Venture Challenge 2023

The Bhutan New Venture Challenge is a program that encourages and supports the transformation of business ideas into fully-fledged enterprises by offering prize money to winners. Its key goals include fostering an entrepreneurial culture within Bhutan, providing a platform for innovative Bhutanese minds to showcase their business concepts, acknowledging and promoting feasible entrepreneurial ideas, enriching students' entrepreneurial skills through the establishment of business units within educational institutions, and nurturing the expansion of new startup ventures.

The Bhutan New Venture Challenge encompassed two primary target segments. The first was the Student Category, which comprises students from high schools, TVET institutes, and colleges affiliated with RUB. Guided by their educators, students developed proposals that tackled local needs or issues, with winning concepts affording them the chance to establish and run enterprises within their school premises. The thematic focus for the student category this year was "Sustainable Ventures for a Sustainable Tomorrow." The second segment, the General Category, was open to the broader public, embracing diverse business concepts spanning agriculture, technology, services, and hybrids. Proposed ideas within this category harmonised with the 2023 overarching theme, "Ventures Promoting Self-Sufficiency."

In the Student Category, the winner was the Electronic Doctor Store. This innovative business aimed to fulfil a critical community need by providing electrical maintenance services. Their unique approach involved offering convenient door-to-door repairs for electrical devices. Among the runners-up, Yenten stood out with its Learning Management System (LMS) designed for students. This comprehensive platform offered interactive educational content, including videos, tutorials, assessments, and quizzes, effectively enhancing student engagement and performance.

In the General Category, HPY Animation Production House was the winner. They specialise in crafting animation films, both in 2D and 3D formats, and also delved into online/offline gaming. With a focus on collaboration, HPY sought to partner with both local and international companies, creating animations, 3D modules, toys, and unique gifts. Other standout ventures in this category included Yoezer Epoxy Venture, which produced distinct epoxy-coated furniture featuring creative designs, catering especially to collectors. Another remarkable runner-up was Bja Glamping/Bja Ping, which introduced authentic hospitality experiences at the Jomolhari Base Camp. This venture seamlessly blended tradition, culture, and leisure activities like yak and horseback riding and biking, providing an unforgettable leisure experience.

3.2.4. International Business Idea Competition- Youth Co-Lab Regional Summit, Thailand

As a part of the International Business Competition, Mr. Roshan Chhetri, founder of Gyalrab Analytics, and Ms. Melam Zangmo, promoter of Kith-Tshel Garden, participated in the Youth Co-Lab Regional Summit in Bangkok, Thailand, from July 12–14, 2023. Along with the startups, representatives from the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Employment, the Loden Foundation, and UNDP Bhutan also participated in the summit.

The Summit envisioned to highlight, encourage, and celebrate the role of youth in our crucial Decade of Action, aligning on “Inclusive Entrepreneurship”, showcasing and inspiring youth action from underserved communities, as well as youth contributing to solutions to support the most excluded and hardest to reach groups to leave no one behind.

The government track at the 2023 summit focused on “policy experiments for the inclusive entrepreneurship ecosystem”. It convened policymakers from across the region in an interactive and dynamic setting to ideate, design, and refine innovative policy experiments that foster an enabling environment for all young entrepreneurs.

The Youth Co: Lab Summit was co-organized by UNDP and the Citi Foundation, and served as a critical milestone for the regional youth empowerment agenda by positioning young people and their innovative ideas front and centre to solve the region's most pressing challenges.

The 2023 Summit focused on the collective intelligence of policymakers and development practitioners by showcasing inspiring success stories and innovative initiatives, encouraging dialogue, and fostering collaboration for effective policy development on youth entrepreneurship.

3.2.5. Product Launching Event (Drukyul Homemade Fair)

The Product Launching Event is aimed at offering startups a platform where they can exhibit their products and services to the market, investors, and the media while establishing a distinct brand identity. This platform also enhances market accessibility and fosters connections with potential dealers and customers. The startups can also seek feedback from customers, which aids in enhancing the design, functionality, usability, and market appeal of the product. Additionally, it facilitates business connections between wholesalers and producers (B2B) and promotes local products and services in the market.

In the Financial Year 2022-2023, 8 new products were launched on June 4, 2023, during the closing of the Drukyul Homemade Fair and Award Day of BNVC 2023 in the presence of the Hon'ble Minister of MoICE.

Table 14: New Products Launched on June 4, 2023

SN	Name of Promoter	Business Name	Sector	Product/Service
1	Phub Thinley	Thinley Animation Studio	IT enabled Service	Animation, VR & Game Development
2	Duptho Kezang	DAPPA Sausages and ham	Production	Beef Jerky
3	Sonam Ghalley	The Shards and Rim	Production	Cocktails and Mocktails
4	Sonam Zangmo	NTT Fengsi Production	Production	Glass Phing (Glass Noodles)
5	Roshan Chettri	Gyalrab Analytics	IT enabled Service	Data Analysis
6	Yangchen Dema	Tara Noodles	Production	Bumthang Puta & Jangbali
7	Kencho Om	Kencho Om	Production	Veg Juma
8	Durgay Ghalley	Ghalley LED Lighting	Production	LED Bulb

3.3. Startup Acceleration Program

The Startup Acceleration Programme is a cohort-based training, mentoring, and networking event that enrolls participants from pre-accelerator programs such as the Basic Entrepreneurship Course, Bootcamps, Startup Innovation Tech Week, and the Business Idea Competition, which culminate in a demo day where the participants pitch their ideas to a panel of judges for funding support.

In the FY 2022-2023, the Department in collaboration with UNDP Bhutan, Youth Co: Lab, Loden Foundation, Citi Foundation, and Accelerating Asia, successfully conducted the Spring Board Plus Startup Acceleration program. A

total of 33 startups were selected from the pool of applicants based on the prescribed criteria. The selected participants underwent a rigorous six-month online course that focused on upscaling their existing businesses. The course started on January 30, 2023.

The program provided the entrepreneurs with skills development opportunities through mentoring, training on developing business operations, fundraising, scaling, skills building, knowledge exchange and networking, and sessions on accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through innovative businesses. The program also helped the startups address their business operations and management challenges.

The final pitch/demo day of the Springboard Program was conducted on May 31, 2023, during which 18 participants pitched their ideas to a panel of expert judges. During the graduation ceremony of the Accelerator Program on June 3, 2023, the top 10 participants were rewarded with a grant.

3.4. Business Development Services

Various business development services are provided to entrepreneurs in the form of business diagnostic services and mentoring programs.

3.4.1. Mentoring Services

Mentorship is crucial to the success of early-stage startups, as it provides invaluable guidance, knowledge, and hand-holding support to startups navigating the business world. A mentor can help startups develop and refine their business ideas, offer advice on fundraising, marketing strategies, and operational best practices, and help entrepreneurs avoid common pitfalls. A mentor can also provide valuable networking connections and act as a sounding board for the startup's progress.

In the FY 2022-2023, 11 startups at the Startup Centre were given mentorship on equity-based financing models, basics of bookkeeping, and financial management. As a part of training, 4 startups were sent to the College of Natural Resources for training on “Nutritional Analysis of Agricultural Commodities and Food Products,” organised from 3rd to 7th April 2023.

Chapter Four

Labour Market Information and Career Guidance Division

Background

The National Employment Policy 2013 highlights the need to assess employment around the country, examine problems of the informal sector, and propose measures to solve the issues identified through various job prospectuses. It also highlights the integration of career guidance and counselling in schools and institutes to understand and promote the requirements of the labour market. Therefore, the Labour Market Information and Career Guidance Division (LMICGD) was created under the Department of Employment and Entrepreneurship (DoEE) to analyse the labour market to identify trends, opportunities, and challenges to empower individuals to make informed decisions about their careers.

4.1. Labour Market Information and Research

4.1.1. Strengthening the Labour Market Supply Side Data Collection

The labour market is a dynamic system that connects job seekers and employers. Understanding the labour market requires comprehensive analysis, which includes the examination of new entrants' data to capture the supply side. New entrants to the labour market refer to the individuals entering the labour market for the first time or transitioning from education/training to employment.

Previously, the supply-side data was collected based on the publications of the relevant institute which led to a delay in the labour market analysis. Therefore, in FY 2022-23, the Division liaised with all agencies related to the supply side to obtain accurate data. This will ensure that the data accurately reflects the segment of specific individuals joining the workforce.

4.1.2. Data Collection for Labour Market Information Bulletin

Labour Market Information Bulletin (LMIB) is a report that provides up-to-date and reliable labour market data, enabling students, job seekers, employers, and other stakeholders to make well-informed choices. The bulletin covers key

aspects of the labour market including labour force, labour market institution, labour supply, and labour demand. LMIB is an annual publication that requires updates and data inputs from various agencies.

In FY 2022-23, the Division initiated the data collection for the LMIB publication to impart real-time labour market information.

4.2. Program and Career Guidance

4.2.1. GOWA

GOWA- connecting talents with the labour market is an information dissemination platform followed by on-the-spot recruitment by potential employers. Additionally, beyond the standard program package, both the Regional Offices and the Head Office have consistently been generating creative ideas to enhance the program's benefits. This includes taking the GOWA to the local government, parents, SDP graduates product display, and on-the-spot recruitment among others. In FY 2022-23, the Department conducted six GOWAs in the Thimphu region, informing 884 participants on the various labour market opportunities and employing 97 youths. Similarly, the Division also facilitated the coordination of 17 GOWA supported by the ROICES in the regions.

Table 15 GOWA events held in Thimphu Region for FY 2022-23

Date	Venue	No. of youths attended			No of employers attended	No. of youths employed
		Male	Female	Total		Total
29th September 2022	Thimphu (DYS Conference Hall)	115	236	351	18	5
30th November 2022	Punakha (TTI Khuruthang Hall)	113	113	226	10	40
21st & 22nd December 2022	Punakha (Youth Center, Khuruthang)	10	10	20	NA	The program was held as a part of "Capacity development workshop for the adolescents and NEET youths".
29th December 2022	Haa (Eusu Gewog Center Hall)	14	31	45	10	17
		No. of Parents attended				
		14	8	22		
19th January 2023	Thimphu (NITM Hall)	19	42	61	10	18
13th May 2023	TTI, Chumey (Bumthang)	96	63	159	10	17
Total		381	503	884	58	97

4.2.2. National Strategy on Career Guidance

The National Strategy on Career Guidance, launched on 17th December 2022, aims to enhance Bhutan's career guidance sphere. It enables youths to grasp a comprehensive understanding of available opportunities and the requisite skill sets and emphasises building skills aligned with potential career paths that suit their knowledge and abilities.

The strategy comprises five strategic actions as follows;

- **Strategic Action 1** - Increase visibility and focus on career guidance services.
- **Strategic Action 2** - Improve coordination and collaboration among relevant agencies.
- **Strategic Action 3** - Enhance data and information on the changing labour markets.
- **Strategic Action 4** - Strengthen implementation and human resource capacities.
- **Strategic Action 5** - Increase awareness on career guidance and various career opportunities.

4.2.3. Career and Occupation Dictionary Update

The Division aims to develop a comprehensive career guidance framework and planning tools in consultation with relevant stakeholders to improve the career guidance space in Bhutan. As such, to achieve the Division's mandate of enhancing the career guidance ecosystem, the Division worked towards revising the Career and Occupation Dictionary 2012. The Career and Occupation Dictionary caters to imparting information on various future career prospects available for Bhutanese youths and assists them in planning their career path accordingly. However, there have been no updates in eleven years since the last revision.

Considering the evolution in the labour market, with dynamics in the private sector, reforms in educational centres, and many new occupations training opportunities emerging, the Division collaborated with diverse relevant stakeholders to carry out a week-long innovation canvas session to revise the

Career and Occupation Dictionary and this collaborative effort aimed to incorporate valuable insights and ensure accurate information in the latest dictionary revision. This is to further ensure that the Dictionary is up-to-date and caters to the changing needs and evolving labour market.

Upcoming Activities of the Division:

- **Job prospectus publications:**

Job prospectus publications like in Labour Market Information Bulletin (LMIB) provide information to help both the supply side (jobseeker and workers) and the demand side (employers) to understand the current labour market situation and be informed about various opportunities available in the labour market. The bulletin also includes trend analyses derived from the Labour Force Survey data across various indicators.

The Labour Market Information Guide for Job seekers is intended to inform job seekers about the employment facilitation services and training opportunities provided by the ministry (MoICE and MoESD). It also serves as a guide for jobseekers to navigate through the Bhutan Labour Market Information System (BLMIS).

Besides these two publications, the division will periodically carry out tracer studies, surveys, and research to understand the current labour market situation and emerging dynamics.

The Establishment survey is conducted to understand the changes in the labour market that occur over time and to capture the existing and emerging skills in the different economic sectors. It also captures the demand side of the labour market by collecting data on upcoming recruitment/jobs.

- **Programs related to Career Guidance:**

The division actively supports job seekers by offering career guidance programs, such as the "Wednesday Counselling Sessions" held at the Employment Service Centres where the trained counsellors provide sessions covering CV writing,

interviewing skills, and other relevant topics for the job seekers. Additionally, on the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Employment's official Facebook page, every second Wednesday of the month features a segment called "Get to Know the Labour Market with DoEE," informing job seekers about available opportunities and labour market insights. One-on-one counselling for individuals seeking career-related guidance is also provided. Moreover, the Division conducts various other career-related programs and workshops in addition to these initiatives.

- **Coordinate and manage the Bhutan Labour Market Information System (BLMIS):**

BLMIS is an online platform where job seekers and employers can register and access employment-related services. They can avail the various engagement and training schemes offered by the government. The Division also looks into coordinating and managing the BLMIS by updating the data through Employer-Employee Registration (EER) which is done annually to strengthen the employer/employee information in the system and provide a more comprehensive database.

Chapter Five Regional Offices of Industry, Commerce and Employment (ROICES)

5.1 Gelephu

Internship and Employment Referral Services

Expressing their gratitude to the office, three class XII graduates; Karma Chezom, Kesar Chhetri, and Yeshi Yangzom often visited the ROICE, Gelephu. They availed internship opportunities under YELP support with the ROICE, Gelephu for three months. Right after their internship, they were recruited by the Rabgay Foreign Workers Recruitment Agent (FWRA). It has been almost a year since they were recruited as full-time employees with the FWRA. They were referred to the employer by ROICE, Gelephu. Their dedication to learning, hard-work, reliable nature, and sincerity contributed to their selection.

They shared that they were able to improve their communication skills, documentation, and filing, client interactions, and get a better understanding of the overall functioning of the ROICE. *“We have a deep appreciation for the support rendered through the internship and referral service and all credit goes to the ROICE in helping us gain professional as well as personal skills”*, shared Kesar Chhetri.

Targeted Employment Program

In order to encourage self-employment, the ROICE provided handholding support, to ensure that the knowledge acquired through the skilling program are carried forward. Eight women between the ages of 24-and 32 were supported with equipment to start a bakery at Tingtibi, Zhemgang. The support was timely considering access to finance being a challenge for startups. The ROICE, Gelephu in collaboration with the Department provided the support under the UNDP funded “Targeted Program for Enhanced Employment.”

The support recipient had undergone the Village Skills Development Program (VSDP) training under the Department of Workforce Planning and Skills Development (DoWPSD) under MoESD. They were unemployed before the support but now operate **‘Tashi Tagye Bakery’** at Tingtibi town.

YELP Engagement

Covering six dzongkhags, ROICE, Gelephu has placed a total of 340 candidates across the region. The dzongkhag wise placement for the FY 2022-23 is as follows:

Table 16 Dzongkhag wise placement for FY 2022-23

SN	Dzongkhag	Number of candidates
1	Bumthang	72
2	Dagana	14
3	Sarpang	191
4	Trongsa	43
5	Tsirang	19
6	Zhemgang	1
Total		340

5.2 Phuentsholing

GOWA: *Connecting talent to the labour market*

The ROICE, Phuentsholing organised the Regional GOWA Event. The main aim of the event was to inform job seekers about the labour market opportunities and familiarise them with the employment services and programs provided by the Phuentsholing Regional Office and the Department as a whole.

This event also provides a platform for the youth to share their ideas and skills, discuss them, and negotiate with potential employers. Further, this event has provided an opportunity to connect job seekers with employers and subsequently, recruit job seekers on-the-spot.

The forum also brought success stories of inspiring local entrepreneurs and YELP candidates to share their learning and growth journey. For instance, the Regional GOWA conducted in Gedu and Tashichhoeling/Sipsu was motivated by the ideas of the inspiring youth entrepreneurs. An overwhelming number of youth participants had the opportunity to interact with the candidates who had completed the YELP program and hear their inspiring stories. As a result, the

office has been able to sensitise gewogs and thromdes on the various employment-related opportunities and services available.

Table 17 GOW/A forum details for the FY 2022-23

Date	Dzongkhag	No. of youths attended			No of employers attended	No. of youth employed
		M	F	Total		
13.10.2022	Samtse	54	61	115	14	33
30.12.2022	Chhukha	17	24	41	54	34
25.01.2023	Samtse	13	8	21	57	4
9.6.2023	Chhukha	99	159	258	27	31
Total		183	252	435	152	102

5.3 Samdrup Jongkhar

Youth Engagement and Livelihood Program (YELP)

The Youth Engagement and Livelihood Program (YELP) was designed to meaningfully engage the youth while transitioning from school-to-work, the program has remarkably made a positive impact on the lives of the job seekers. The program not only assists in supporting their livelihoods but also in increasing their employability.

Therefore, the ROICE, Samdrup Jongkhar has extended the support to 270 job seekers in two Dzongkhags (Samdrup Jongkhar and Pemagatshel). The area-wise placement is reflected in the table below:

Table 18 Area-wise placement for FY 2022-23

SN	Dzongkhag/Drungkhag	Job seekers by gender		Total
		Male	Female	
1	Samdrup Jongkhar	31	99	130
2	Samdrupcholing	13	24	37
3	Jomotshangkha	14	1	15
4	Pemagatshel	17	17	34
5	Nganglam	12	42	54
Total		87	183	270

5.4 Trashigang

ROICE, Trashigang represents the Ministry in the eastern part of Bhutan. YELP is the main program that helps the private sector by providing a monthly wage subsidy. It has been facilitated in all four Dzongkhags which are under the ROICE namely Trashigang, Trashiyangtse, Mongar and Lhuentse). The sector-wise placement is as reflected in the table below:

Table 19 Sector-wise placement for FY 2022-23

Sector(s)	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
CSI	22	97	119
IT Enabled Services	4	1	5
Hotels & Tourism	5	33	38
Bhutanese Traditional Arts and Crafts	2	0	2
Trading	2	2	4
Manufacturing and productions	25	23	48
Institution Centers/Training Providers/centres	1	18	19
Agriculture & Livestock	1	6	7
Constructions	3	0	3
NGO	1	1	2
Total	66	181	247

GOWA Event

The ROICE Trashigang liaised with the local government and private sectors to take the GOWA forums to various places under the Mongar region. The forums were targeted for parents, out of school youth, teachers, and employers. The event was conducted with an aim to equip job seekers with the labour market information, and to familiarise them with the various programs under the Ministry. The GOWA engagement for the FY is as detailed below;

Table 20 GOWA forum data for FY 2022-23

Date	Venue	No. of youths attended			No of employers attended	No. of youths employed
		M	F	Total		Total
05/08/2022	Trashiyangtse	14	20	34	0	4
06/08/2022	Duksum	48	53	101	11	6
10/08/2022	Ngatshang	14	12	26	0	0
09/08/2022	Drametse	17	16	33	0	0
11/08/2022	Mongar	26	46	72	25	97
Total		119	147	266	36	107





༄༅། རྒྱལ་ཁབ་འཕུལ་འཕུལ་གྱི་ལས་དོན་ལྷན་ཁག་གི་འཕུལ་འཕུལ་ལྷན་ཁག་།

**Department of Employment and Entrepreneurship
Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment**