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Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative

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Tashi and Jamyang, Bhutan

Multidimensional Poverty Index Profile



Tashi and his wife Jamyang live with their three children in a small village in the southern Chhukha region of Bhutan. The village is not connected via roads so a four-hour walk through the mountainous countryside is needed to reach their village.

Tashi is 32 and Jamyang is 33. They have two sons, eleven-year old Karma and ten-year old Dorji and a six-year old daughter, Chimi. Both grandparents also live in the same village as the family.

The family wakes at 5am most days. Tashi milks the cow, whilst Jamyang prepares a breakfast of rice and curry for the family. They then leave for work. They own four acres of land on which they grow an assortment of vegetables. If they are working in their own fields, they will return at 4 or 5 pm with any vegetables they have been able to harvest for dinner.

On other days, the couple works as labourers on others' land. Tashi, like all men, will earn 100 Ngultrum per day (US\$ 1.95), while Jamyang, like all women in the village, will earn 60 Ngultrum (US\$ 1.17). With their land and work as casual labourers they have enough to eat and provide for the family's basic needs.

However they don't have enough money to construct a durable house, so they live in a thatched hut. Their hut lacks materials such as a corrugated iron roof (which would be watertight when it rains), and the family uses wood rather than electricity to cook (which can cause respiratory problems). For Tashi, the main problem with the family's hut is that it requires constant repair throughout the year, whereas a solid house lasts for a long time.





To get the bamboo needed to make the repairs, he must first walk for 8 or 9 hours and then carry the materials back to the hut. He then has to split the bamboo and weave it together to make the roof – a process which must be repeated every year to maintain the family’s home, and takes away from productive activities.

In terms of money and assets the family is certainly poor and do not own even small assets such as a radio, mobile phone or wristwatch – much less a tractor or refrigerator.

Tashi is an adept carpenter, and he greatly enjoys this work. He is known for working hard and doing a good job, which gives him a strong sense of satisfaction. Their land displays signs of his creative constructions (e.g. for drying vegetables), which often use found materials. Jamyang is particularly proud of her children. Although no one in the family has more than five years of schooling, the boys are doing very well in school (Chimi does not yet attend).

The one aspiration that both Tashi and Jamyang share is for their children to be able to continue their education past class 8 (14 years) and to get good jobs. How they will manage this is not yet clear, but their enthusiasm for doing so and the changes coming to their home give cause for hope. The road planned for their village will soon give them access to new markets where they can sell their produce – a particular cause for celebration.



Tashi and Jamyang are poor according to the MPI. The shaded boxes of the figure below show the deprivations that they each face.

