

Friday Lunch Circle

A story about sharing, caring, and cooking together!



*Promoting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Schools:
Building on What Children Value to Be and Do*



Disclaimer

This storybook has been developed under the project “Promoting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in Schools: Building on What Children Value and Aspire To Do and Be.” The project is a collaborative initiative of Samtse College of Education (Bhutan), Kathmandu University School of Arts (Nepal), and RDRS (Bangladesh). It is funded and supported by the Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE KIX) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada.

The views and ideas presented in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official positions of GPE KIX, IDRC, or their respective Boards of Governors.

This storybook was created to support children’s learning about cooperation, gender equality, inclusion, and shared responsibility. Through engaging storytelling, children are encouraged to recognize that boys and girls can participate equally in all tasks and activities, and that fairness and mutual respect are more important than fixed gender roles. The book promotes teamwork, empathy, respect, and inclusion in everyday school and community life. It is intended for educational use and is best enjoyed with the support of parents, teachers, and caregivers, who can help children reflect on the story and discuss its messages in an age-appropriate manner.

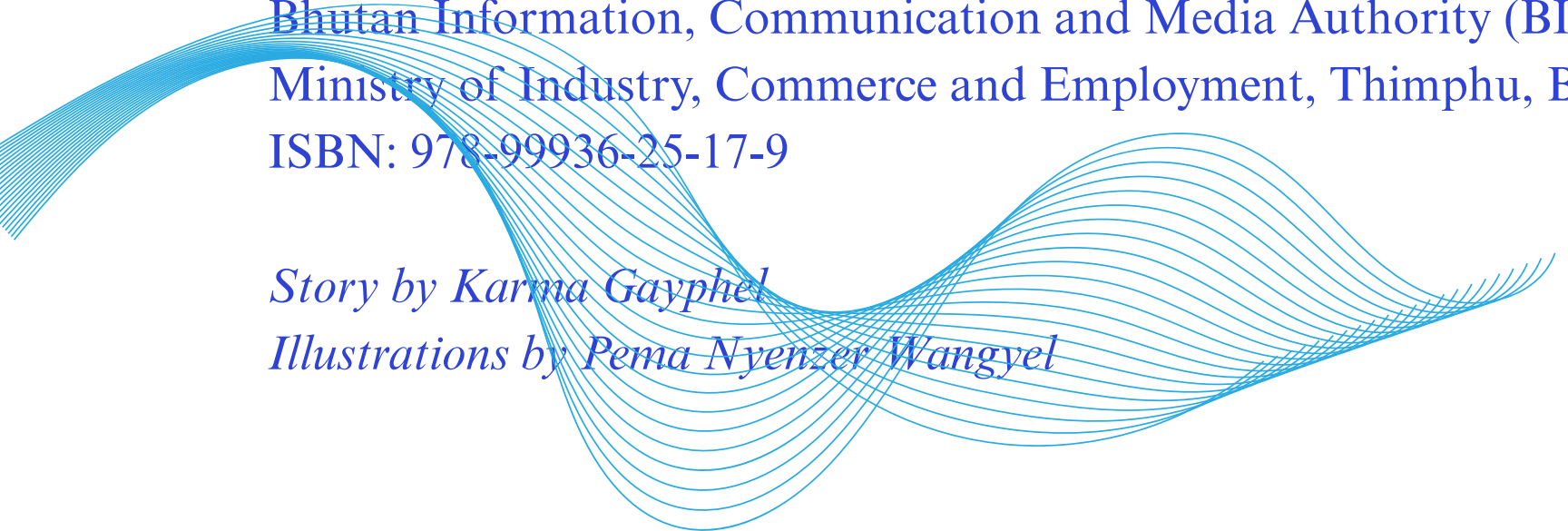
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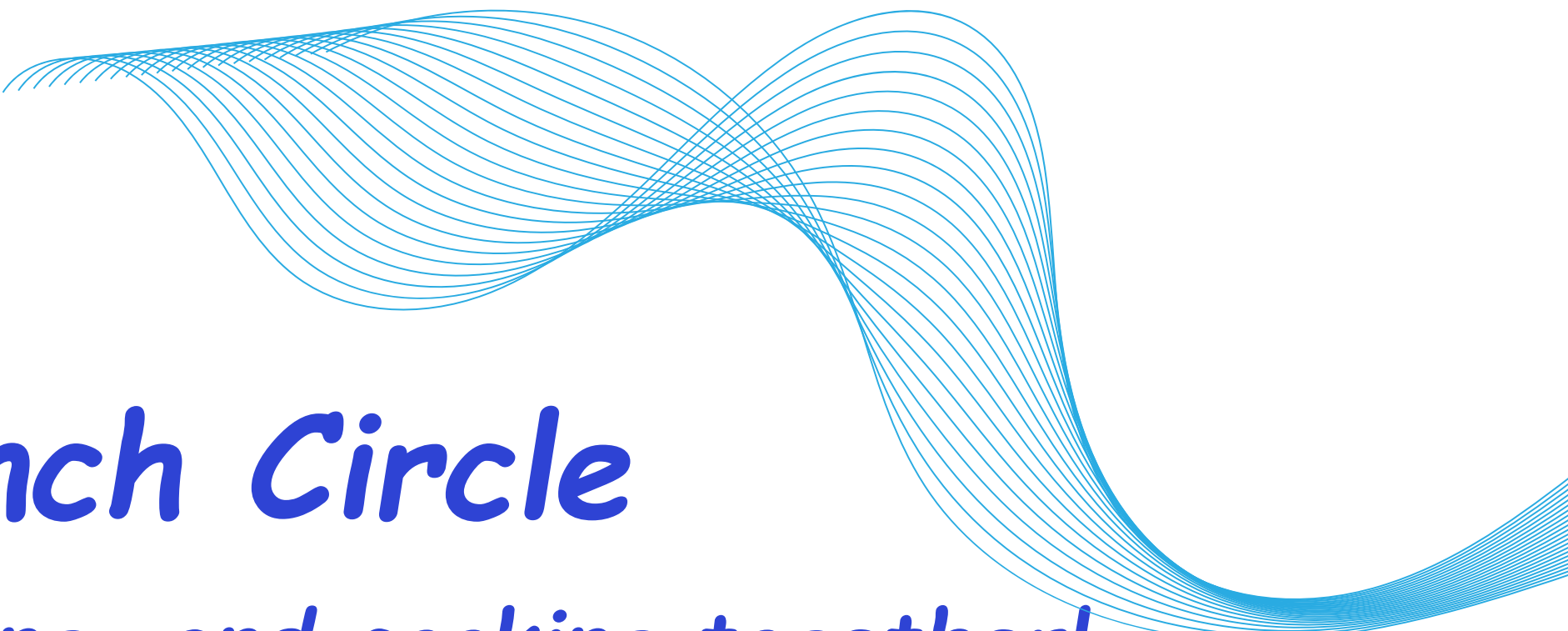
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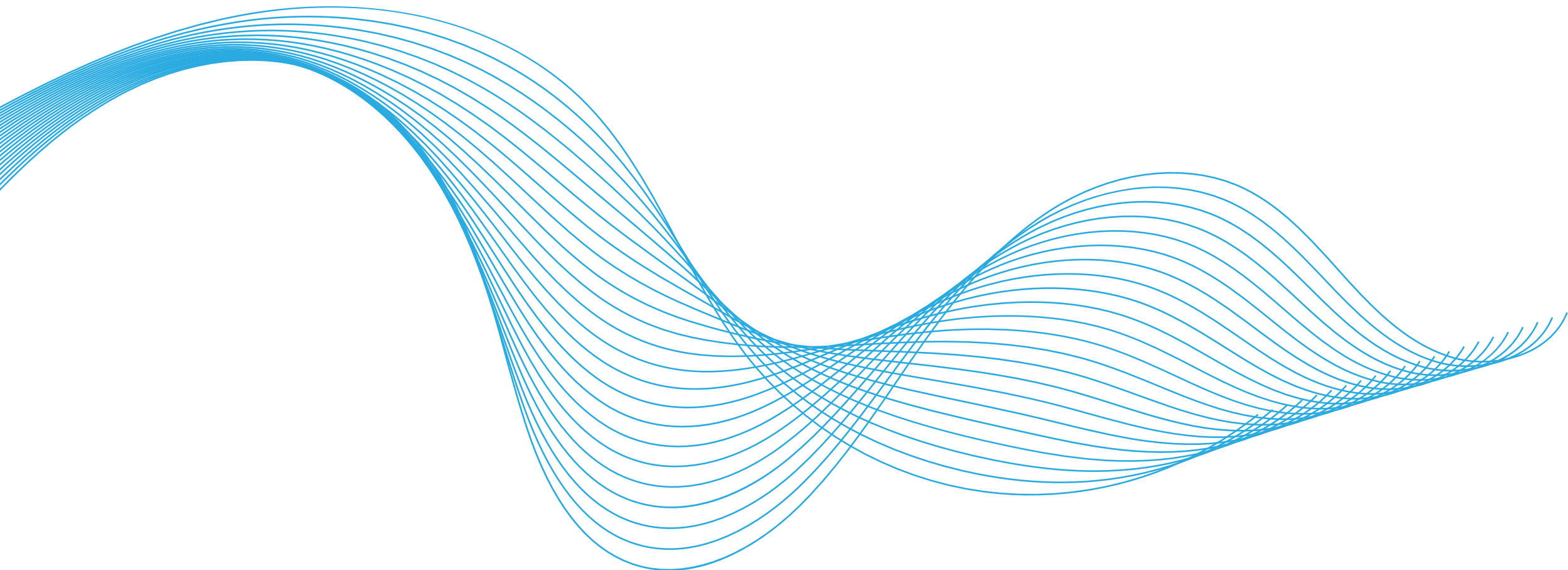
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Illustrations by Pema Nyenzer Wangyel



Friday Lunch Circle

A story about sharing, caring, and cooking together!



Every Friday,
Class 4-C had a lunch circle.

Every Friday, they cooked.
Every Friday, they shared.

Most Fridays were easy and fun.
But one Friday, they learned a
lesson they would never forget.





On that special Friday,
Pema clapped her hands.

"Let's make Momo today!"
she said.

"Yay! Momo!"
the class cheered.

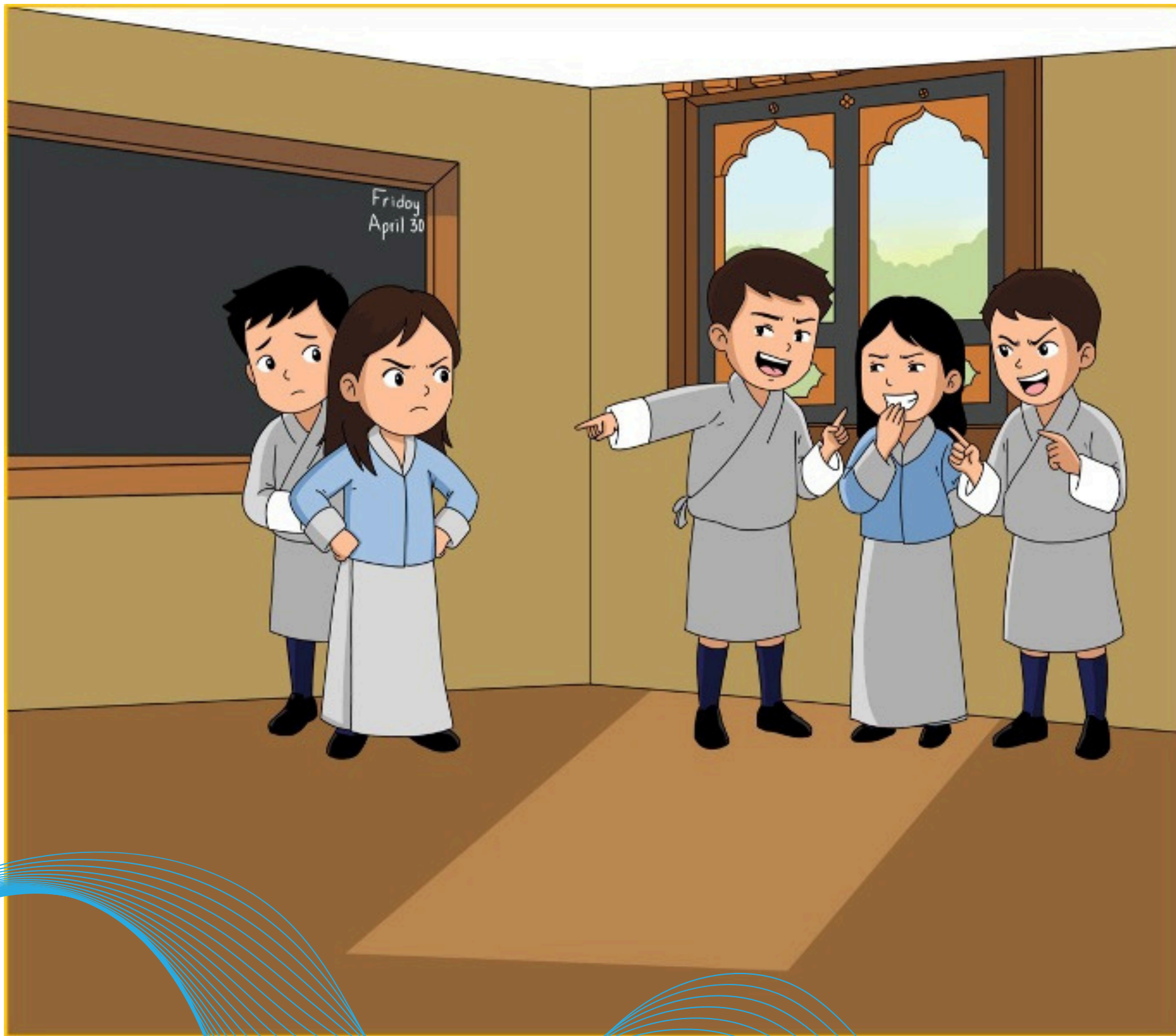
The room buzzed with
excitement.

Jigme raised his hand
"I want to help cook Momo,"
he said, stepping forward.

The room suddenly went quiet.
A few children giggled.
A few boys laughed.

"Are you joining the girl's team?"
A few chuckled.





They pointed and giggled, loud and clear.

"Cooking is for girls, not for boys."
one whispered.

Jigme felt shy and small.

He slowly stepped quietly behind Pema.

Pema frowned and spoke up.

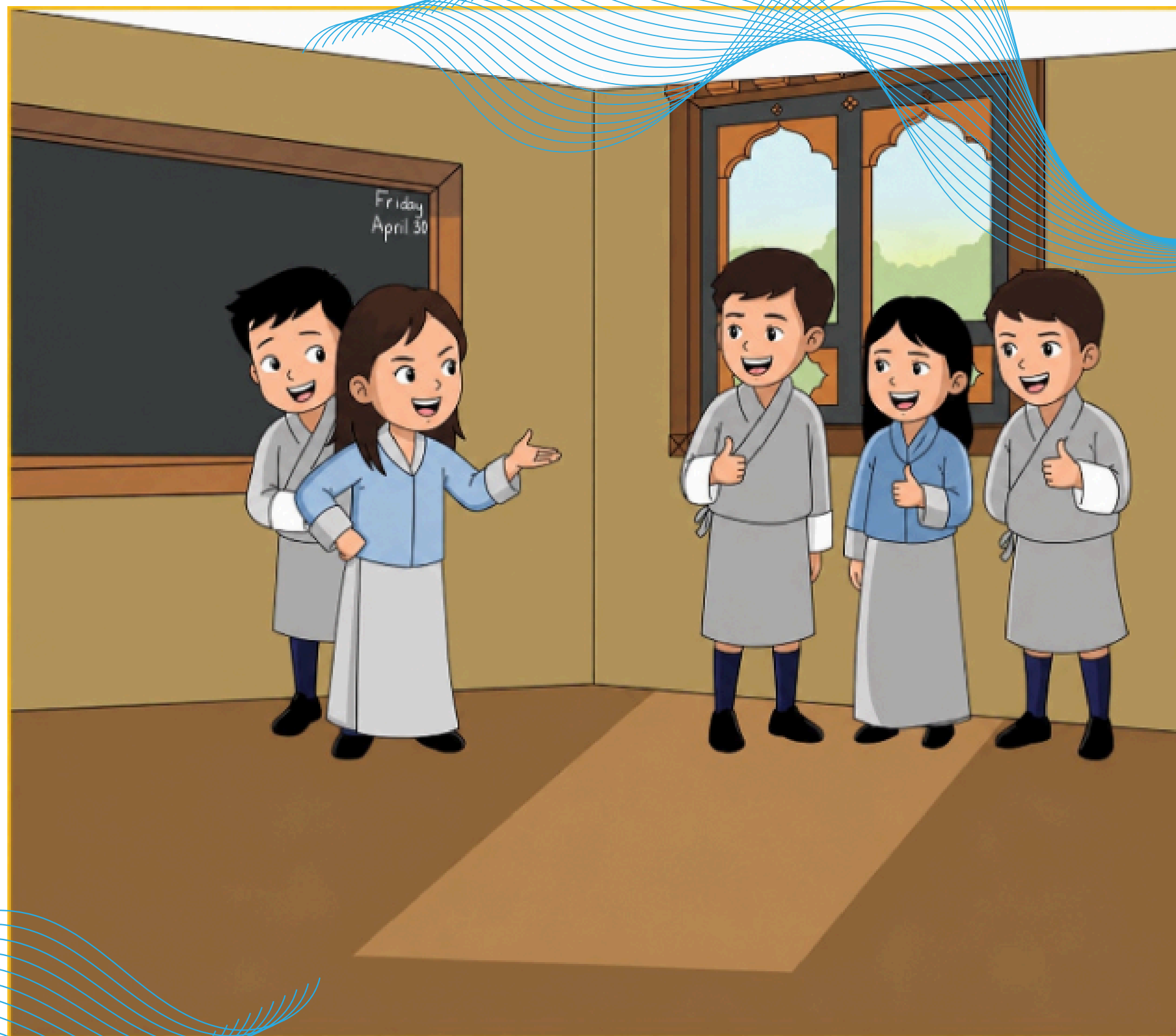
*"Cooking is for **EVERYONE!**
We all eat, so we all help!"*

The others nodded.

"You're right, Pema."

*"Come and join us!
We need all hands today"*

Pema invited.





"I'll chop the cabbage!"
shouted Sangay.

"I'll mix the dough!"
exclaimed Kinley.

"I'll fold the wrappers!"
offered Dechen.

"I'll chop the onions!"
volunteered Rigzin.



Suddenly, the cooking area came alive
with a *click-clack-clank!*

Tak-tak-tak! went Sangay's knife,
chopping the green cabbage.

Squish-squash! went Kinley's hands,
punching the fluffy dough.

Fold-and-pinch! went Dechen's fingers,
tucking the wrappers tight.

Chop-snip-snip! went Rigzin's onions,
making his eyes water.



Then came the usual chant, louder and
louder:

***CHOP, SCOOP, ROLL, and STIR!
CHOP, SCOOP, ROLL, and STIR!***

Everyone had a job,
All were busy,
cheerful and full of laughter.

*"Onions always make me cry,"
said Rigzin, wiping his eyes,
"But I love the fresh smell!"*

*Everyone laughed.
"You're doing great, just mind
the knife!"*





Pema showed Jigme how to steam the Momos.

*"Careful," she said.
"The steam is hot!"*

She lifted the lid, and a
delicious smell filled the air.

It smelled like **teamwork**.
It tasted like **friendship**.
It sounded like **kindness**.
It felt like **home**.



The Momos were hot, juicy,
and perfectly steamed.

Made by many hands,
they tasted just like *success!*

As everyone ate, Jigme stood up.

"I helped make these. I'm proud!"
he said.

This time, no one giggled.

The whole class cheered,
"Great job, Jigme!"





From that day on,
more and more children joined in cooking

Boy or girl, everyone
had a part to play.

Together they swept the ground,
washed the dishes, sorted the waste,
and cleaned up with care.

Laughter filled the air as everyone helped.



Along the way, the children learned something important:

No job belongs only to boys or only to girls.

Anyone can help.

Anyone can learn.

Anyone can make a difference.

Working together made them stronger, kinder, and happier.

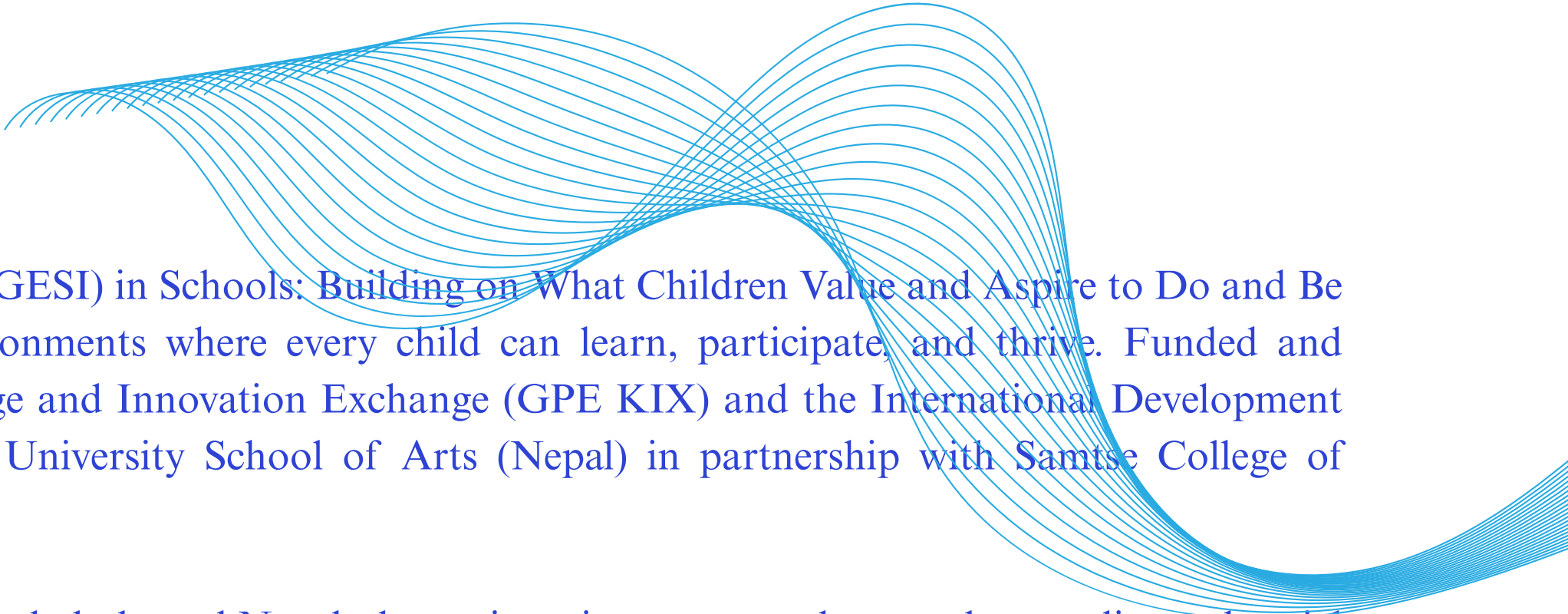
Now, every Friday in Class 4-C,
everyone joins in:

**Everyone Cooks,
Everyone Shares,
and Everyone Helps.**

Because, just as Pema
always says...

"We all eat, so we all help!"

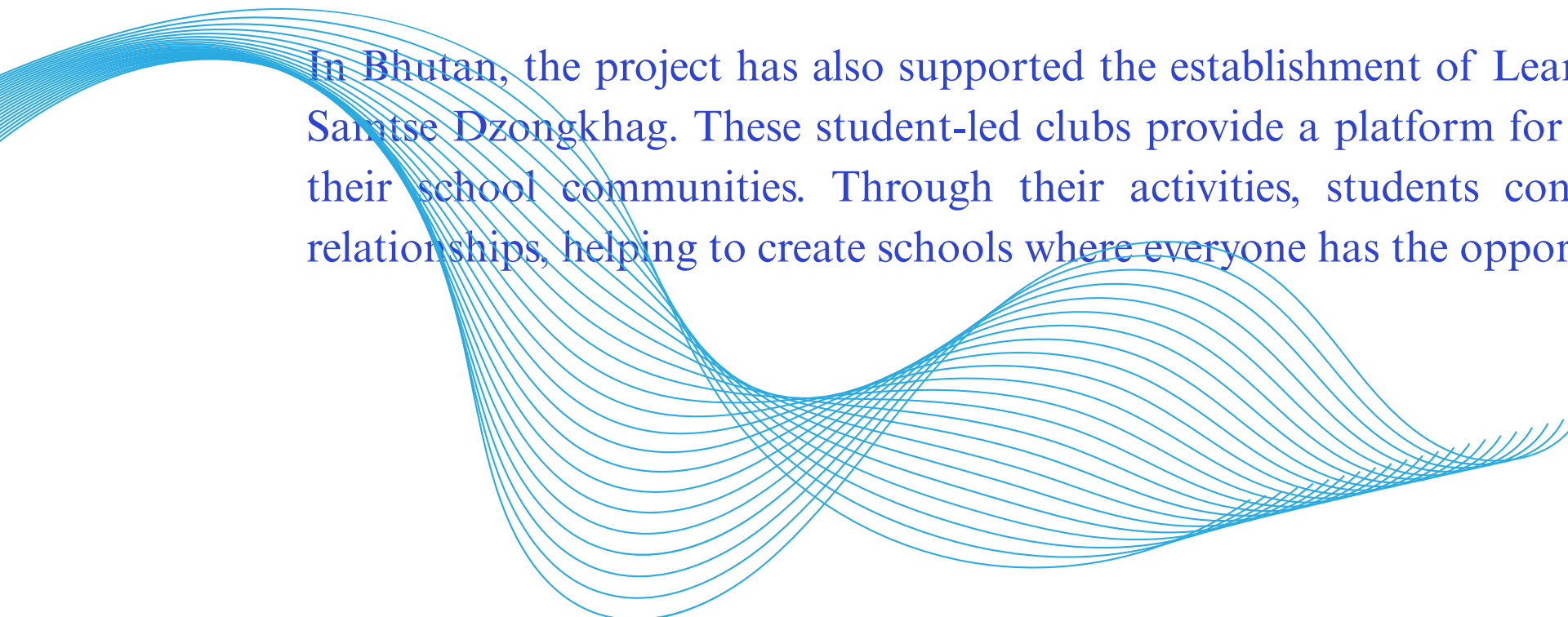




About the Project

The project Promoting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in Schools: ~~Building on What Children Value and Aspire to Do and Be~~ seeks to create safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments where every child can learn, participate, and thrive. Funded and supported by the Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE KIX) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the project is led by Kathmandu University School of Arts (Nepal) in partnership with Samtse College of Education (Bhutan) and RDRS (Bangladesh).

Implemented over three years in 25 schools across Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Nepal, the project aims to strengthen gender equality and social inclusion in education by improving school policies, practices, and learning environments. A central feature of the project is the GESI Diagnostic Tool, which was developed based on children's own values, aspirations, and school experiences. By listening to children's voices, the tool helps schools identify areas where greater inclusion, safety, and support are needed. It also guides schools in taking meaningful action to ensure that all children feel respected, valued, and empowered. Designed to be flexible and adaptable, the tool can be used in a variety of educational settings and contexts.



In Bhutan, the project has also supported the establishment of Learning Innovation Knowledge Exchange (LIKE) Clubs in five schools in Samtse Dzongkhag. These student-led clubs provide a platform for young people to promote inclusion, equity, and positive change within their school communities. Through their activities, students continue to champion gender equality, social inclusion, and respectful relationships, helping to create schools where everyone has the opportunity to belong and succeed.

