Dear friends of Bhutan,

First and foremost, thank you for continuing to support the Bhutan Foundation and for staying connected to Bhutan. With your help, we have begun 2010 with a full agenda and renewed vigor to work toward our mission of supporting the Bhutanese people through activities and programs that promote Gross National Happiness in Bhutan.

Your contribution to the Bhutan Foundation has helped support many exciting initiatives since last fall. Here are some examples of how your donations have made a difference:

- helping families rebuild their homes and their lives after the devastating earthquake in eastern Bhutan
- training 70 Bhutanese physicians and nurses in emergency care and more than 400 non-health personnel to become emergency medical “First Responders”
- training teachers in special education so they can tailor their teaching methods to accommodate children with different learning abilities
- building a team of committed wildlife conservationists to protect endangered species in Bhutan
- helping build a culture of democracy in Bhutan by supporting efforts to encourage quality journalism and media education in Bhutan

And there are many more. I hope you’ll enjoy reading about the tangible results of your contributions detailed in the following pages.

In the coming months, we plan to send more Bhutanese health-care personnel to be trained at the Phelps Memorial Hospital in New York; to support the restoration of two significant cultural heritage sites, Trashigang Dzong and Drametse Lhakhang, after they were destroyed by the earthquake; to support the Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environment (UWICE) as it expands its research programs and efforts to monitor wildlife populations and the effects of climate change on Bhutan's environment; and to conduct a Grantsmanship and Proposal Writing Workshop in Thimphu to help our partner organizations develop strong grant-writing skills.

Here in the United States, we continue to share our knowledge about Bhutan. For example, Professor James Clad, a research fellow at the National Defense University, gave a briefing on Bhutan that was hosted by Daphne Hoch Cunningham at the Arts Club in Chicago. The briefing shed light on the complex relationships Bhutan has with its neighbors, from geographic borders to demographics and political intrigue. The Bhutan Foundation is planning other briefings in New York, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, DC, that will be announced on our website (www.bhutanfound.org). We hope to see you at one!

The recent accomplishments detailed here have been made possible because of you, our supporters. As always, we look forward to your involvement in 2010 and thank you for staying connected to Bhutan through the Bhutan Foundation.

LOSAR TASHI DELEK!

Dr. Bruce W. Bunting
President
The Bhutan Foundation raised USD $60,000 to assist with earthquake relief in Eastern Bhutan. As you may remember, on September 21, 2009, an earthquake measuring 6.3 on the Richter scale hit the eastern districts of Bhutan, destroying houses, schools, basic health units, monuments, and monasteries. According to figures with the Department of Disaster Management, there was major damage to 890 of the 3,992 affected houses. At least 161 houses collapsed and were beyond repair. The number of stupas and monasteries damaged by the earthquake in the various districts rose to 681.

His Majesty’s Welfare Fund immediately took responsibility of restoring homes in these rural districts. Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Tshering Pem Wangchuck, Co-Chair of the Bhutan Foundation, presented a check for Nu. 1.8 million to His Majesty’s Welfare Fund on behalf of the Bhutan Foundation on November 13, 2009.

Our contribution was made possible primarily through the support of the Bhutan Foundation’s long-term donors in the United States and through online donations, including contributions from a few Bhutanese students in the United States.

The Bhutan Foundation secured a major grant of approximately USD $100,000 (€ 70,000) from the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development, a Dutch organization, under their Cultural Emergency Response program. The Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs will use the funds to restore two significant cultural heritage sites that suffered damage from the earthquake: Trashigang Dzong and Drametse Lhakhang.

Trashigang Dzong was constructed in 1659 by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel, the founder of Bhutan, during the unification period of the eastern regions under the central government. Trashigang Dzong showcases rich Bhutanese culture, such as arts and crafts, religious and cultural events, including daily rituals, and annual festivals. The structure is an irreplaceable witness to the history of Bhutan of the eastern region. The earthquake rendered the Dzong unstable and vulnerable to any slight threats of tremors or soil erosion. Inclination and deformation of timber structures and the walls, and numerous cracks, might lead to a collapse of the ancient structure.

Drametse Lhakhang in Mongar was located about 8 to 9 km away from the epicenter. The monastery suffered severe interior damage caused by flaws in the main walls and dislocation of timber frames and beautiful hand-carved traditional windows. Drametse Lhakhang was founded in the 16th century by Anim Choeten Zangmo, a descendent of a historic Buddhist saint, Pema Lingpa. The monastery is an excellent architectural reference for all other lhakhangs across Bhutan, having retained most of its original design and structure. The monastery’s antique murals are renowned for their historic and artistic value, and its hand-molded statues are among the finest in Bhutan. Drametse is also the place of origin of the Drametse Ngacham (mask dance), which is the only listed intangible heritage in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage list.
The Bhutan Center for Media and Democracy (BCMD) hosted a Media Officers’ Workshop on August 11, 2009, with Marguerite Sullivan from the National Endowment of Democracy in Washington, DC, as the resource person. One of the sessions focused on ethics and code of conduct for information sharing and was attended by members of the National Council, Parliament, and media houses, and by focal media professionals from the government and autonomous agencies.

The workshop is one of the BCMD's many efforts to build a culture of democracy. In 2008, the Bhutan Foundation helped establish the BCMD, which now has conducted several workshops, seminars, and a highly successful film camp for the youth of Bhutan.

The BCMD provides a forum where media, government, and members of the civil society (nongovernmental organizations) exchange views and ideas and discuss the development of media in a budding democracy. To continue its support for quality journalism and media education and practice in Bhutan, the BCMD in collaboration with the Bhutan Foundation is currently seeking funds to provide training and scholarships for media personnel in Bhutan.

Nuns in Bhutan Become First Responders

In October 2009, the Bhutan Nuns' Foundation approached the Bhutan Foundation to conduct a two-day First Responders Workshop for nuns in Bhutan, as many nunneries are located in remote areas, far from health facilities. Thirty nuns from nunneries across Bhutan attended the workshop, which was conducted by Dr. Gosar Pemba, part of the team from Bhutan who received emergency medical training at Phelps Memorial Hospital in New York. The First Responders Workshops have been a success, with 65 police officers and firefighters, over 150 taxi drivers, and 30 nuns trained as first responders.

In 2009, The Bhutan Foundation and Ministry of Health Emergency Medical Services program provided almost 400 Bhutanese citizens emergency medical training. Of those, 300 were non-health personnel, such as police, traffic personnel, firefighters, royal bodyguards, and taxi drivers. The Bhutan Foundation and Ministry of Health will continue the highly successful First Responders Workshops in 2010.
By Dr. Jim Holliman, Dr. Kim Forman, Dr. Michael Owens

[Volunteer physicians Jim Holliman, MD, FACEP, Commander (USN) Kim Forman, MD, and Mike Owens, MD, FACEP, traveled to Bhutan and conducted Emergency Trauma Care courses in Thimphu and Mongar as a part of the Bhutan Foundation and Ministry of Health Emergency Medical Services Program. This is their account of that experience.]

Our first trauma course had 35 Bhutanese physician and nurse participants and was conducted at the Royal Institute of Health Sciences November 16 to 20 in the capital city of Thimphu (famous for being one of the few national capitals without a single traffic light). We also toured the small but new emergency department in the country’s main referral hospital.

Then, to get to the city of Mongar where we were to present the trauma course a second time, we undertook a two-day drive to cover the 280 miles between the two cities. Why did it take two days? The entire 280-mile road is nothing but tight switchbacks along the mountain cliffs so it is impossible to drive fast and stay on the road. The lack of guardrails along much of the cliff edges was also disconcerting. However, we had a very skilled driver who works for the Health Ministry, and we were amazed at his ability to get by oncoming vehicles despite the narrowness (not much more than one lane wide) of most of the highway. We joked that the Bhutanese drivers were able to defy the laws of physics in getting two vehicles to pass each other safely on these roads. However, the winding, cliff-hugging nature of this main road points out the difficulty in transporting trauma patients, particularly patients with spine injuries, from outlying areas to the main referral hospital in Thimphu.

Once we arrived in Mongar, the nerve-wracking trip was certainly worth it; the mountain vistas were spectacular, and the town was starting its annual folk festival. Our second trauma course had 35 Bhutanese nurse and physician participants and was conducted at the newly built regional hospital. We used as a classroom the space allocated for the surgical intensive care unit (ICU), as it had not been activated yet due to lack of medical staff. We found our course participants to be energetic, enthusiastic, obviously interested, and, unlike in many countries, able to start on time and follow tight time schedules.

The small-group practical skills sessions we conducted seemed to be the most popular and useful for the participants, and these sessions included basic and advanced airway management, radiograph interpretation, case management simulation, and ultrasound. One skill we introduced that was entirely new for Bhutan was intraosseous needle insertion. Due to customs and security issues, we were unfortunately unable to bring the intraosseous drill gun with us to demonstrate its use directly. However, the usefulness and practicality of the
intraosseous technique was apparent to the course participants, particularly those who work in outlying, smaller health-care facilities.

Bhutan has made great recent strides in its health-care system development, but, of course, a number of major challenges remain: the extremely difficult geography, causing long time delays in getting patients from outlying areas to the regional or central referral hospitals; lack of sufficient health-care personnel in some facilities; equipment and supply shortages in some facilities and ambulance services; lack of advanced training for most of the ambulance personnel; the need to transfer patients needing certain tertiary health-care procedures (such as cardiac valve surgery) to other countries; and the need for health-care personnel to have to travel out of country for higher level medical training.

However, strengths for health-care development in Bhutan include the intelligence, energy, and enthusiasm of the health-care personnel; the government’s direct support of health care for all its citizens to include complete immunizations; and the support of organizations such as the Bhutan Foundation. With its currently limited resources, the Bhutan Health Ministry had decided to focus much of its health-care delivery system on preventive services and has organized very effective coverage of the population for immunizations and prenatal care. This cost-effective approach could act as a model for other national health-care systems.

Drs. Holliman and Forman are faculty in the Department of Military and Emergency Medicine at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland, and Dr. Owens is faculty for the Emergency Medicine residency program at the Naval Medical Center in Portsmouth, Virginia. He is also developing the first International Emergency Medicine Fellowship Program in the US military, to be based at his medical center in Portsmouth.

Support to ICT

Currently all records at Bhutan’s Basic Health Units (BHUs) are kept solely on paper, leading to substantial effort by BHU staff when compiling summary reports. These summary reports are sent to the BHU’s District Health Officer who then enters the records into a database, forwarding these records to the Ministry of Health. Eric Tavela from 5am Solutions, a company that develops innovative software solutions for academic, government, commercial and non profit life sciences organizations, volunteered in Bhutan in Nov 2009 to proposed a set of IT based enhancements that could make the reporting process more efficient.
Chimi Lhamo is a special teacher from Thimphu’s Changangkha Lower Secondary School with 23 years of experience. Raising a son with cerebral palsy has inspired her to look for new ways to reach children so they can be educated to their full potential. Chimi Zangmo is a dedicated teacher who has devoted three of her seven years of teaching to deaf students at Drukgyel Lower Secondary School just outside Paro.

Through the Special Education Project supported by the Bhutan Foundation, these two Bhutanese teachers were brought to the United States in September for postgraduate certificate courses in special education at the College of New Rochelle, New York, and internships in special education schools and programs in the New York area.

Hands-on experiences allowed the teachers to apply what they learned at the college. Chimi Zangmo is doing an extensive internship at a deaf services program run by the Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) of New York State. Meanwhile, teachers from that program are interested in going to Bhutan to work with deaf students there, a true exchange. The Mamaroneck School District in New York gave Chimi Lhamo the chance to work with various classrooms and models of special education, observing and working with students with different disabilities and abilities.

But the real success will come when schools in Bhutan can address every child’s learning needs. Both teachers look forward to going home and sharing what they have learned with other teachers at their schools back in Bhutan.

The Bhutan Foundation is also supporting internships for Bhutanese teachers in local school districts in Bhutan to give them experience in strong special education programs. Through the Special Education Project, we are building understanding, awareness, and insight among Bhutanese teachers about teaching children with special needs, which will help them develop special education in Bhutan.

Bhutanese teachers intern in special education schools in the New York area

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Clean Water, Dirty Tanks? Loden Entrepreneur Spots Business Opportunity!

Sangay Dorji might just be saving Thimphu residents from contracting numerous diseases, and he is not a doctor. Rather, Sangay Dorji is one of the recipients of interest-free loans from the Loden Foundation's highly successful Loden Entrepreneurship Program (LEP), which the Bhutan Foundation supports. With a good idea, aptitude for entrepreneurship, some capital investment from his parents, and a loan from Loden, Dorji started Water Tank Disinfectors, a company that cleans water tanks.

Although the Himalayan water in Bhutan is clean, the water tanks are not. Dorji's company is the first of its kind in the country. And judging by the more than 500 liters of sludge, dirt, frogs, and bats that he claims to have fished out of some 20 water tanks so far, the company's service is much needed.

Dorji is one of the 9 entrepreneurs selected for the 2009 LEP from 84 applicants for the business capital fund. When it started in 2008, LEP gave loans to 7 entrepreneurs out of 59 applicants. For the 2009 LEP, the 9 entrepreneurs selected by the Loden Foundation board were provided interest-free loans ranging from Nu. 150,000 to Nu. 400,000 (approximately USD $3,000 to $8,000). Other ventures that received loans include a mobile fast-food service, a global logistic service, mushroom cultivation, and a health spa. Loden also gives aspiring entrepreneurs a course on entrepreneurial business ventures to help them succeed.

The LEP is now an annual program of the Loden Foundation.

Support for the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Seminar

The Bhutan Foundation helped sponsor the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry’s seminar on Creating Employment Opportunities: Building Entrepreneurship through ICT and Education held in Thimphu on 22nd January, 2010. The seminar was conducted by Mr. Richard Tan, CEO of Success Resources Global, Asia’s largest seminar organizer, and a leading company in Singapore in the field of IT enabled businesses. The primary objective of the seminar was to create awareness among the young job seekers, and other policy makers in Bhutan about the opportunities that existed in the IT sector and how it might be implemented in Bhutan.

The Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry is a non-profit private sector organization which serves as a bridge between the government and the private sector and works collaboratively with government and non-governmental agencies to promote entrepreneurship, trade and industrial development in Bhutan.
Conservation Team Monitors Bhutan's Diverse Species

Earlier this year, the Royal Manas National Park recorded a species new to Bhutan: the small-toothed ferret badger. They also confirmed the presence of a crab-eating mongoose, six species of wild cats, and a myriad of ungulate species. The jewel of Bhutan’s protected areas, Manas awaits a systematic survey and inventory of its biodiversity.

To that end, a team of representatives from the Bhutan Foundation, the Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environment (UWICE), the University of Montana, and the Park Management of Royal Manas National Park trekked into Manas from the north access in Gonphu and discussed field research and survey training to protect Bhutan’s biodiversity. Following the trip, Dr. Mark Hebblewhite, who is a professor at University of Montana, conducted a two-day workshop for a small group of participants at UWICE on habitat modeling using snow leopard and blood pheasant data from the field. In February, UWICE furthered this collaboration through hands-on training in small mammal surveys, supported by the Bhutan Foundation. Dr. Kerry Foresman and Dr. Scott Mills from the University of Montana helped train Bhutanese field staff, who will subsequently lead the actual surveys. The Bhutan Foundation also supported this important training.

Humane Society International Commemorates World Rabies Day in Bhutan

Bhutan declared National Rabies Week September 27 to October 3, 2009. The Humane Society International (HSI), Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Health organized a week-long program in Thimphu and the Southern districts of Bhutan to commemorate World Rabies Day. The program included the inauguration of a long-term, nationwide dog population management and rabies control project.

The week's activities included free rabies vaccinations, walkathons by school children in Gelephu, television programs on rabies awareness, live theater performance by Happy Valley Youth, and multiple advocacy and awareness campaigns across several districts.

In Fall 2008, the Bhutan Foundation and the Tourism Council of Bhutan asked HSI to examine the large number of stray dogs in Thimphu and to help develop a strategy of dealing with the issue. Today, HSI is actively involved in programs across the country.
Bhutan Foundation Addresses Climate Change

According to Bhutan’s National Environment Commission (NEC), Bhutan is a carbon-negative country. Still, Bhutan cannot escape from climate change. The Bhutan Foundation is facing this multifaceted problem through some innovative projects.

For example, we are supporting the Tarayana Foundation and its women "Barefoot Engineers" in their efforts to provide solar electricity to remote villages in Rukha, Wangdue Phodrang. Local villagers learn to install, maintain, and repair photovoltaic solar sets in villages too distant to be connected to the national electricity grid. These solar sets should reduce the use of kerosene and resinous wood for lighting in these communities and save the villagers money spent on kerosene. The project could indirectly set an example for clean, alternate energy use for Bhutan.

JAST receives support from the Brigitte Bardot

The Bhutan Foundation presented a grant supported by the Brigitte Bardot Foundation to the Jangsa Animal Saving Trust (JAST) in Thimphu to support their work of building proper animal shelters. JAST is a nonprofit organization established in 2000 by Lama Kunzang Dorjee. Based on the Buddhist principles of compassion and care for other living beings, JAST is committed to the welfare of animals. The Humane Society International (HSI) Project in partnership with the Department of Livestock launched the Catch, Neuter, Vaccinate and Release program for homeless dogs all over Bhutan. JAST joined in the efforts during the pilot phase extending use of their staff and facilities.

The grant from the Brigitte Bardot Foundation will be used to build an animal shelter at Serbithang. The aim is to build a proper shelter with a small clinic to attend to the neglected animals and will complement the HSI project.
Bhutanese Snow Leopards Spark interest at National Geographic

On September 23, 2009, Tshewang Wangchuk (PhD candidate at the University of Montana and Conservation Advisor of the Bhutan Foundation) talked at the National Geographic Society in Washington, DC, on his research to authenticate the population distribution and abundance of snow leopards in Bhutan. It is estimated that there are around 3,000 to 6,000 snow leopards left in the world, and lack of reliable data limits conservation efforts. Wangchuk's research focuses on collection of scat samples and DNA analysis to conduct the first systematic assessment of distribution and abundance of snow leopards in Bhutan.

Bhutan Foundation and Ministry of Health Recognize Phelps Memorial Hospital

formally recognized Phelps Memorial Hospital in New York for its support and services for training Bhutanese health personnel in emergency medicine. Mrs. Lisina Hoch, on behalf of the Bhutan Ministry of Health, and the Bhutan Foundation presented the hospital with a plaque award and gave certificates of appreciation to individual trainers.

Phelps Memorial Hospital Emergency Training Center provided specialized classes in emergency medical training, free of cost, to Bhutanese physicians and nurses for one month. In addition, they provided accommodations in the hospital's residential nursing quarters. Phelps Memorial Hospital has agreed to train another group of Bhutanese health-care personnel in the near future.

Professor James Clad Gives Briefing on Bhutan

On December 10, 2009, Professor James Clad gave a lunchtime briefing hosted by Daphne Hoch Cunningham on Bhutan entitled "Bhutan and Its Neighbors - Only an Issue of Borders?" at the Arts Club of Chicago. Professor Clad, a distinguished research fellow at the National Defense University, was US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asia Pacific security affairs from 2007 to 2009. He served under Secretary Robert Gates, focusing on South and Southeast Asia and Australasia. The briefing addressed the complex relationships Bhutan has with its neighbors, including geographic borders, demographics, and political intrigue as Druk Yul navigates its future between two giants. The Bhutan Foundation is planning other briefings in New York, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, DC, so please keep checking our website for details.
Bumthang, the valley of a hundred monasteries suffered a great loss, with a tragic fire that destroyed the Konchogsüm lhakhang on the afternoon of 10 February, 2010. It is a tragic lesson of impermanence and of cultural loss.

Known as the Shrine of Three Jewels, it was a small, beautiful, well designed and, above all, a very old and historically important temple in Bhutan. The Lhakhang was built in 9th century by Thrisung Deutsen. A very interesting relic, preserved in the temple, which supports its origin in the 8th century is a large broken bell (choedril), one of the very few bells from the Yarlung dynastic period surviving today.

The temple contained as its central figure a statue of Buddha Vairocana, flanked by exquisite Avalokiteshvara and Guru Rinpoche statues. An ancient megalith stood at the entrance of the temple and some other interesting objects were discovered during a recent excavation.

“The murals, which were restored in recent decades using turpentine paints, easily succumbed to the flames,” says a lama of Tamshing. Luckily, the main statues were not severely damaged and other relics have been saved before any harm was done.
Those of us connected to Bhutan know that the principle of Gross National Happiness is supported by four pillars: Conservation of the Environment, Good Governance, Equitable Development and Preservation of Culture. At the Bhutan Foundation, we are mindful of those important foundations as we work to improve the lives of the Bhutanese people while conserving their rich natural and cultural heritage. In addition, the Bhutan Foundation seeks to increase awareness, knowledge and understanding of Bhutan in the United States and around the world.

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• Bhutan Youth Development Fund
• Bhutan Nun’s Foundation
• Center for Media and Democracy
• Friends of Tamshing
• Loden Foundation
• Jhangsa Animal Saving Trust (JAST)
• Royal Society for Protection and Care of Animals (RSPCA)
• Royal Society for the Protection of Nature
• Tarayana Foundation
• Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation & Environment
• VAST (Voluntary Artist Studio of Thimphu)
• WWF (World Wildlife Fund), Bhutan

Spring Issue 2010
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