Dear Friends of Bhutan,

Spring is a time for hope. This is particularly true for Bhutan where the past few months have been filled with expectation and promise. From the Royal Wedding of His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck to Her Majesty Jetsun Pema Wangchuck, to the overwhelming endorsement Bhutan received this April at the United Nations for its efforts to define a new economic paradigm for the 21st Century, one that incorporates the happiness and wellbeing of all people, there is much for Bhutan to look forward to in the coming years.

I am sure you will share this feeling of hope as you read through the pages of our Spring 2012 Newsletter. We continue to make real progress in improving the wellbeing of the Bhutanese people and this is only possible through your generous support.

One thing you will see is that we continue to work closely with Bhutanese as well as international partners in implementing all of our programs: from providing a portable ultrasound to the mobile clinic of His Majesty’s Welfare Fund, to improving health care by working with Bhutan’s Royal Institute of Health Sciences and Yale University’s School of Public Health, to carrying out research and supporting anti-poaching efforts in Royal Manas National Park with park staff and the Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environment.

In addition, our partnerships with Bhutanese organizations are growing each year with our newest partner being the Lhomon Society that was established by Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, to foster genuine GNH-based development in Bhutan.

We also continue our efforts to increase awareness and understanding of Bhutan in the U.S. including the premieres of several films on Bhutan at the Environmental Film Festival in Washington DC this March (The Yak Herders Son, 86 Centimeters and Bhutan: Land of the Black-necked Crane). We intend to share these films and other information on Bhutan at various venues this year.

We want to thank you for your support and for continuing to stay connected to Bhutan through the Foundation.

From everyone at the Bhutan Foundation,

Sincerely,

Dr. Bruce W. Bunting
President
In February 2011, the Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environment (UWICE), Jigme Dorji National Park (JDNP), the University of Montana, and the Bhutan Foundation organized a trip to Gasa to look for takin, Bhutan's national animal. The group included Dr. Joel Berger, a wildlife biologist and professor from University of Montana and Wildlife Conservation Society, Mr. Tiger Sangay, wildlife biologist from UWICE and Mr. Tshewang Wangchuk, wildlife biologist from the Bhutan Foundation. Sighting 11 takins on the far side of the Mochu River at their winter habitat, early in the morning was the highlight of the trip.

Takin are found in a few small populations in Bhutan, mostly in JDNP and Wangchuck Centennial Park. While these animals congregate in their summer habitat in large groups, they disperse in winter into smaller groups. In Bhutan, takin face little threat from poaching, but habitat destruction and threats from diseases could pose challenges for its conservation. UWICE will soon embark on a long-term study to understand population dynamics, seasonal movement, and threats to takin conservation. The Bhutan Foundation will support this initiative.

In addition, this project intends to help build capacity for Bhutanese park biologists and wildlife veterinarians to deal with animal capture and immobilization which would be especially useful in cases of human-wildlife conflict.
Strengthening Anti-poaching Capacity in Royal Manas National Park

Royal Manas National Park (RMNP), Bhutan’s oldest national park, continues to face challenges of poachers infiltrating from across the border to illegally cut high-valued timber such as agar and teak, and to poach endangered wildlife such as the Bengal tiger and Asian elephant.

In addition to establishing baselines for important species and monitoring their populations, strengthening anti-poaching capacity of the park staff is a high priority. Recognizing this, the Bhutan Foundation, with support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, is supporting this initiative.

Twenty Motorola hand-held radios, 120 sleeping bags and 15 field tents have been distributed to the field staff to help with anti-poaching patrols. A 6.5 km (4.04 mi) dirt road has been constructed from the Manas Ranger Post to Specialthang, an important grassland stretch in the park. This will allow easy access for patrol and monitoring by park staff.

This initiative would also help Bhutan invest in ecotourism access for wildlife observation, with a wildlife-viewing tower, soon to be constructed in this area.

Dr. Joel Berger, wildlife biologist and professor at the University of Montana and Wildlife Conservation Society gave a talk on Arctic Mammals and Climate Change at the Council for Renewable Natural Resources Research of Bhutan’s guest lecture series.

Please view Bhutan Foundation’s short video, “A Story of Hope” about Bhutan’s incredible diversity of wild cats: http://bhutanfound.org/AStoryofHope
The Bhutan Foundation continues to explore and build partnerships with renowned U.S. institutions such as Perkins International (the Perkins School for the Blind) to strengthen special education programs in Bhutan.

On March 16, 2012 the Bhutan Foundation invited Ms. Deborah Gleason, the Regional Coordinator for Asia/Pacific programs, and Ms. Namita Jacob, the Educational Specialist in India, from Perkins International to Bhutan to examine the current efforts Bhutan is making to provide access to education for all children including children with special needs. The Perkins School for the Blind in Massachusetts, USA is the oldest school for the Blind and today, offers day and residential programs to students of all ages who are blind, visually impaired, and deaf-blind or with multiple disabilities. Perkins International has helped establish services in over 66 developing countries around the world, 10 of them in Asia.

During their two-week visit, Perkins was able to visit and meet with various schools, institutions, non-profit organizations and other stakeholders involved in improving the Special Education Program in Bhutan. Perkins also traveled to the Eastern part of Bhutan to visit the National Institute for the Visually Impaired and Mongar Lower Secondary School, one of the 8 pilot schools where the government of Bhutan has integrated the Special Education Program. With Perkins’ assessment of the situation in Bhutan, the Bhutan Foundation hopes to facilitate and develop programs to further enhance opportunities for children with special needs. The Bhutan Foundation believes that Perkins International’s technical expertise and experience in working in various developing countries would be of enormous benefit to Bhutan’s Special Education Program especially in terms of helping children with moderate-to-severe disabilities.
Development

Reaching Medical Services to the Poor

With support from a generous donor, the Bhutan Foundation gifted His Majesty’s Welfare Fund with a portable ultrasound to be used for the mobile clinic. The mobile clinic was initiated by His Majesty the fifth King of Bhutan to provide specialized medical services to the poor. The mobile clinic consists of Bhutanese medical specialists, dentists, eye technicians, and health workers who travel the country on a regular basis to provide services to those living in remote areas of Bhutan.

Earlier this year, the mobile clinic traveled to remote villages in Bumthang and Samdrup Jongkhar to provide free medical services. The doctors attended to patients suffering from various lifestyle diseases. Among other services, the doctors also carried out ultrasound check-ups for pregnant women.

The villagers expressed their appreciation for providing them with medical services through the mobile clinic:

“I am thankful to His Majesty the King for providing us free medical services and that too at our doorstep. Unlike young people, we the elderly ones cannot travel far to the hospital for check-up and treatment,” said Tshewang, an elderly man from Bumthang, Bhutan.

(Source: BBS, February 15, 2012).

Enhancing the Public Health Program in Bhutan with the Yale School of Public Health

A comprehensive Public Health program can improve health in communities through education and research. Bhutan has done tremendously well in areas such as primary health care where childhood immunization is over 90%. This is mainly done through the 150+ basic health units, which are located throughout the country.

Bhutan’s Royal Institute of Health Science (RIHS) is now piloting a Bachelors of Public Health program to train Bhutan’s health care workers. The Bhutan Foundation is currently seeking funds to support capacity building and curriculum development for Bhutan’s new public health program. To begin, the Bhutan Foundation is supporting Dr. Nima Wangchuk, a professor at RIHS and the national coordinator of the Public Health program to attend a semester at the Yale School of Public Health as a visiting scholar. While at Yale, Dr. Nima will work with Yale faculty to develop curriculum in Environmental Public Health, and explore opportunities to formally establish linkages between RIHS and Yale through student and faculty exchanges, and collaborative public health research projects.

Read about Dr. Nima’s experience at Yale: http://bhutanfound.org/publichealth
Investing in Youth: Scholarships for Higher Education

The Bhutan Foundation supports Tarayana Foundation’s efforts to provide scholarships at Ugyen Academy, a private boarding high school in the Punakha valley. The scholarships provide financial aid to students from underprivileged backgrounds as well as students from far and remote areas. These students are provided with an opportunity to complete their higher secondary education and reach their full-academic potential at an institution with boarding facilities and a reputation for its high academic quality.

“I strive to study hard and make my family proud as well as to serve the government,” said a beneficiary of the scholarship who comes from a small village called Samdingkha. Being one of three children of a farmer and a disabled mother, the student is now able to complete her higher secondary education in hopes to pursue her dreams and work for the government. The Bhutan Foundation will continue to support Tarayana’s efforts to provide access to higher education for all children in Bhutan.

Bridging Stronger Partnerships between Health Volunteers Overseas (HVO) and Bhutan

The concept of “give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime” was the impetus for the 1986 creation of Health Volunteers Overseas (HVO), an American non-profit organization of doctors, surgeons, nurses, dentists, and physical therapists. HVO has been working in Bhutan for over 15 years with their mission to improve global health through education. “HVO was introduced to Bhutan at a critical time when Bhutan had the biggest shortage of medical specialists,” former health secretary Dr. Gado Tshering said. “Over the years HVO has shared their experiences with a number of Bhutanese specialists in orthopedics, anesthesia, physical therapy, and emergency medicine” (source: Kuensel). In January 2012, as a part of HVO’s 25 Year Anniversary, HVO Chairperson Julia Plotnick and Executive Director Nancy Kelly travelled to Bhutan to renew HVO’s commitment to Bhutan and invest in strengthening HVO’s Bhutan programs.

HVO Doctors and Bhutanese Health Workers at JDWNR Hospital in Thimphu, Bhutan
Culture

Restoring a Prestigious Heritage Site, Drametse Lhakhang

In response to the earthquake in September 2009, the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs prioritized the restoration of numerous cultural heritage sites in Bhutan. One of critical need was the Drametse Lhakhang (Monastery) in Eastern Bhutan and the Bhutan Foundation with the support of the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development and the World Monuments Fund undertook its restoration.

Drametse Lhakhang is a sixteenth-century monastery that continues to be a prestigious spiritual center of the Peling Lineage under the Nyingma tradition of Buddhism. The earthquake struck less than three miles from Drametse, scarring the monastery with significant damages and compromising the structural stability of the entire complex. The main three-storey temple and the surrounding buildings enclosing the courtyard suffered numerous cracks and displacement in the ancient walls.

Over the last few months timber has been harvested, seasoned and transported to the monastery. Local Bhutanese carpenters have also been deployed to make beams, window and door frames for the Lhakhang. Restoration of Drametse Lhakhang has commenced and the project is expected to be completed within the next year.

Drametse is also home to the Drametse Ngacham (Dance of the drums of Drametse) that is proclaimed by UNESCO as a masterpiece of the oral and intangible cultural heritage of the world. The dance is performed during the annual ceremony that is performed every year in the 10th Bhutanese month.

The Bhutan Foundation would like to congratulate Dr. Tashi Zangmo, Executive Director of the Bhutan Nuns Foundation, for being the 2012 recipient of the Mary Lyon Award from Mount Holyoke College. The Mary Lyon Award is given to a young alumna who demonstrates promise or sustained achievement, which is consistent with the humane values which Mary Lyon, exemplified in her life. Tashi has been awarded for her tireless efforts to change the lives of women and girls in Bhutan through the Bhutan Nuns Foundation.
Governance

Lhomon Society- Bhutan Foundation’s newest partner

The Bhutan Foundation is pleased to join hands with Lhomon Society (LS), which was established in 2011 by Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche, one of Bhutan’s most beloved and vocal Buddhist masters. It is Bhutan’s first major civil society development project with a mission to foster genuine GNH-based development harmony with government goals.

The Bhutan Foundation will support the Lhomon Society’s fundraising efforts for its two projects, Lhomon Education (LME) and the Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative (SJI).

The Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative’s purpose is to raise living standards in Bhutan in an ecologically friendly way, and to establish food security and self-sufficiency while protecting the natural environment, strengthening communities, promoting Bhutan’s unique culture, stemming the rural-urban migration tide, and fostering cooperative, productive, entrepreneurial, and self-reliant spirit.

Lhomon Education is a grassroots initiative that looks at education alternatives by fostering the development of innovative curricula designed specifically for Bhutanese students. The basis of the LME initiative is an alternative model of teacher training and curriculum development that integrates principles of Gross National Happiness (GNH) in the truest sense of the term. LME curriculum development workshops and teacher training seminars are open to a wide range of education institutions, including government schools, monasteries, women’s organizations, rural education centers, and other formal and non-formal education institutions and initiatives throughout Bhutan.

Please visit their website at www.lhomon.bt and www.sji.bt

Meet our New Staff in Thimphu, Bhutan

The Bhutan Foundation is proud to welcome two new staff in our office in Thimphu, Bhutan: Mr. Kuenga Yarphel and Ms. Tandin Pem. Mr. Kuenga Yarphel (above right) is our Communications and Development Officer and has had experience interning for international NGOs as well as various media firms in Bhutan. Ms. Tandin Pem (above left) is our Program Officer and has over five years of experience working as a journalist at Bhutan Observer, a national newspaper in Bhutan. She has reported on important events in the country including the country’s first general and local government elections.
US Premiere of The Yak Herder’s Son, a documentary by the Bhutan Foundation

The DC Environmental Film Festival is an annual event that draws huge crowds from all over the United States. This year, the Bhutan Foundation organized an event on Sunday, March 18, at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Natural History. The Bhutan Foundation’s film, The Yak Herder’s Son, was premiered at the festival together with Bhutan: Land of the Black Necked Crane. The screening was attended by an audience of about 350-400 people, and was followed by a Q&A session moderated by Dr. Bruce W. Bunting.

The Yak Herder’s Son is a story about a park ranger (Tenzin Phuntsho) who returns to the mountains to photograph its majestic splendor. However, he is fascinated with his encounter with Sonam Tshering, a thirteen-year-old boy who shoulders responsibilities beyond his age. Tenzin, now becomes more interested in the young yak herder’s life and realizes how snow leopards are problem for the herders. Being a conservationist, Tenzin cannot imagine what would happen to the snow leopards if the herders turned against the cats.

This short film sets the stage for Bhutan Foundation’s initiative to set up a snow leopard conservation program that would bring benefits from snow leopard conservation to the local communities as a way to regain the peoples’ tolerance and appreciation for the snow leopards. Discussions have already begun with the park, the Nature Recreation and Ecotourism Division, and the Snow Leopard Conservancy.

To view the trailer, visit: http://bhutanfound.org/yakherder

“Happiness and Wellbeing: Defining a New Economic Paradigm”

On April 2nd, 2012 a high-level meeting was held at the United Nations Head Quarters in New York in pursuance to the happiness resolution, initiated by Bhutan and adopted by consensus by the UN General Assembly on July 19, 2011.

Led by the Prime Minister of Bhutan, Lyonchhen Jigmi Y. Thinley and a representative group of top government officials, this meeting was attended by a select group of over 700 leading economists, scholars, spiritual and civil society leaders, representing both developed and developing nations.

Discussions on creating a new global wellbeing and sustainability-based economic paradigm took place along with recognizing that GDP indicator by nature was not designed to and does not adequately reflect the happiness and wellbeing of people in a country.

The Bhutan Foundation also hosted a reception in honor of Bhutan and the Prime Minister leading a delegation to the UN to initiate this different development paradigm, one that is holistic, sustainable, inclusive and humane.
Celebrating the most Joyous Occasion: The Royal Wedding

The nation came together to celebrate the most joyous occasion as His Majesty the Fifth King of Bhutan, King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck weds Her Majesty Gyaltseun Jetsun Pema Wangchuck on October 13th, 2011.

A rich and solemn traditional religious ceremony took place at the Punakha Dzong, fulfilling the wishes of the Bhutanese people. The spiritual ceremony and rituals that were in line with Buddhist practice and beliefs and strictly traditional was lead by His Holiness the Je Khenpo and His Majesty the Fourth King. With enormous support from the entire country and the world, Bhutan embarked an exciting new era and a promise for the continuation of the legacy of Bhutan’s monarchy.

“Our people are proud citizens who love our country and take it as our sacred duty to serve the nation. As Bhutanese we have so many qualities to be proud of. The manner, in which we all were united in celebration of my wedding, is a symbol of the fraternity and brotherhood among our people. It is an auspicious sign, that we will always come together, in good times and bad, in the interest of our nation. We will always, together as one, defend and protect our nation. If we are able to preserve this strength of unity and harmony, we shall overcome all challenges that may come our way.”

- His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck

Building Capacity within CSOs

In honor of the historic Royal Wedding of His Majesty the fifth King of Bhutan, King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck to Her Majesty Gyaltseun Jetsun Pema Wangchuck, various Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) of Bhutan including the Bhutan Foundation collectively decided to initiate a “Royal Wedding Scholarship” for a Masters Degree in Social Work. The Royal Wedding Scholarship will be awarded to an individual to attend a two-years Masters Program in social work in India. This scholarship program primarily aims to create opportunities for interested individuals working for a non-profit organization in Bhutan. This initiative will not only explore the individuals’ interest in social work but also build capacity within their organizations. Since the non-profit sector in Bhutan is still new and emerging, the CSOs continue to collaborate with one another to build capacity. A total of three scholarships will be offered beginning in the year 2012.
The Bhutan Foundation serves the people of Bhutan in living and sharing the principle of Gross National Happiness. We cherish the values of the Bhutanese intention: measuring “happiness” as the highest attribute of all decision-making. We contribute to strategies of conservation of the environment, equitable and sustainable development, good governance, and preservation of culture in Bhutan. The Bhutan Foundation serves as the only American not-for-profit organization that is wholly focused on the benefit of the country and people of Bhutan, bridging understanding between our two countries and beyond.

For more information on our programs and activities, please visit www.bhutanfound.org

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Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women
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