

Field Notes from the Newest Member of Our Team, Phuntsho Namgay

Greetings from Thimphu!

Last year, we celebrated one of the most momentous and joyful years in Bhutan's history with the 60th birth anniversary of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck. As the Bhutanese new year approached this year, their Majesties the King and Queen blessed us with another joyous occasion to celebrate: the birth of His Royal Highness the Gyalsey, the Royal Prince.



These auspicious celebrations have ushered in a wonderful atmosphere in the country, brimming with hope for the continuation of successful leadership in Bhutan. On this delightful note, I would like to share some of my recent experiences as the newest member of the Bhutan Foundation team.

Panbang, Zhemgang: It's 4:00 am on February 2, and our colleague, Kinley Rabgay, is driving around Thimphu to pick us up for the long journey ahead. We are traveling down south to Panbang to meet with our friends at the River Guides of Panbang (RGP). This was my first visit to Panbang, and there was much to look forward to. Once in Panbang, we worked with RGP on a "business model" exercise to encourage them to envision their future and strengthen their organizational structure in terms of communications, financial management, and overall management. We also visited the ongoing "eco-camp" development site. It was really inspiring to see how a group of local youth and others are working together to become productive members of their community.

We also visited Mr. Sithup, who is leading an organic farming initiative in Panbang. He explained that the demand for organic vegetables in the community is exceeding

supply. With this in mind, we participated in further discussions to encourage more members of the Panbang community to partner with Mr. Sithup and explore other areas in which to set up organic farming infrastructure.

Bumthang: Having been born and raised in Bumthang, it really makes me happy to see and hear constant progress on the restoration and adaptive reuse of the [Wangduechoeling Palace](#), once the seat of our First King. I'm pleased to report that the consolidation of the Lingka Lhakhang (palace temple), an ancillary structure within the palace complex, is almost complete. The progress made at the Palace has brought joy to everyone in the Bumthang valley. All of this is thanks to collaboration with the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs (MoHCA) and continued support from the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP). We look forward to upcoming restoration in other areas of the palace, such as the five Chhukhor Mani (Water Prayer Wheels) and the Shabkor (palace perimeter structure).

Soe: In January, I accompanied our program director, Tshering Dorji, to meet with 28 members of the Soe community who were attending a [week-long training on livestock management](#) to increase their knowledge of basic animal health treatment, such as wounds, fractures, abscesses, and gid disease. After interacting with some of the community members, I realized how much their livestock meant for the survival of the community. As the main source of their livelihood, the survival of the yaks means a great deal to the community, and the progress made through the gid project has had a positive impact in the community's lives. In 2015, the total number of calves lost to gid disease has gone down to 38 from 186 in 2013. With more trainings such as these, the Soe community is increasingly understanding and practicing new ways to save their livestock.

Thimphu: Education for all has been and continues to be a priority for Bhutan, and the Bhutan Foundation continues to support the government of Bhutan in [promoting an inclusive educational system](#). We are excited to welcome Perkins International this spring, expanding our global reach to support the Special Education Program. After eight years of growth in special education, we have now reached a juncture to understand how we can strategically provide further assistance in this field. Thus, Perkins International will help us identify the needs in the country, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and other relevant stakeholders. We are excited to see how we can further make an impact in special education in Bhutan!

I hope that you have found a few of my first experiences at the Bhutan Foundation to be as inspiring and educational as they have been for me. Spring is abuzz with more activities for the Bhutan Foundation and our partners. We are looking forward to the Foundation's first board meeting in Bhutan being hosted by the Co-Chair of our Board of Directors, Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Tshering Pem Wangchuck.

Finally, I conclude with my sincerest wishes and prayers for you and your loved ones

for a peaceful and prosperous new year. May the Fire Male Monkey Year bring you all good health and happiness.

Best wishes,



Phuntsho Namgay
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Read more about Phuntsho by clicking [here!](#)



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