

Field Notes From Our New Program Director, Mr. Tashi Tshering Dukpa

Warm greetings and happy new year from Bhutan! It has barely been three months since I started as the program director in Thimphu for the Bhutan Foundation, and I have learned, witnessed, and been able to take part in many exciting events and programs.

One of the most memorable events during my first week at the Bhutan Foundation was the visit by our Co-Chair, Her Majesty the Queen Mother Gyalyum Tshering Pem Wangchuck to the [Wangduechhoeling Palace](#) project site. This was Her Majesty's second visit, and her personal attention to the project highlights the importance of the Bhutan Foundation's concerted efforts in restoring the palace to its former glory. The palace epitomizes art, culture, and the history of the sacred institution of monarchy in Bhutan.

The monarchy continues to inspire and bring light to the lives of all Bhutanese. The 109th celebration of Bhutan's National Day in December witnessed another historic moment when His Majesty the King bestowed the National Order of Merit, Gold, to 23 civil society organizations, setting forth new pathways for partnership between the government and civil society. I am happy to report that almost all of our local partners are recipients of the national order. One such recipient is the Music of Bhutan Research Centre, with whom we have recently signed a three-year agreement to research, document, preserve, and promote the age-old music traditions of Bhutan. Here's a [great article](#) in our national newspaper, *Kuensel*, about the awards.



I also had the opportunity to celebrate the International Day of Persons Living with Disabilities on December 3, 2016. This year, to commemorate the day, we jointly opened a new [playground](#) for children with special needs at Changangkha Middle Secondary School. It was fulfilling to see smiles on the faces of the children and their parents and teachers. This was followed by a visit by facilitators from Perkins International to the same school, where they led a two-day training on preparing children with significant disabilities for transition to adult life. The participants from the school and other organizations, like Ability Bhutan Society, Disabled Persons' Association of Bhutan, and Draktsho Vocational Training Center for Special Children and Youth, were introduced to the process of planning for the future of each child with his or her own needs.

Another exciting program we carried out in the last month was the [Nomad Health Camp](#), where we took basic medical care to the remote highland communities of Bhutan. We have reached out to 11 highland communities in Jomolhari and Bumthang, conducting basic health screening and medical care to over 200 adults and children. Thanks to supporters like you, we are excited to scale up the camp this spring to the far eastern highland communities of Merak and Sakteng.

It gives me immense pleasure to let you know that our small grants program continues to bring commendable change in rural communities across Bhutan. Our small grant for a system of rice intensification (SRI) project led by the Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative has seen tremendous results, with improved rice yield by 122 percent using the SRI method versus the traditional method. Similarly, Namgay, the livestock officer in Jomolhari, has collected his first crop of fresh

vegetables - spinach, broccoli, turnips, and carrots - from the greenhouse piloted at an elevation of 12,795 feet above sea level. Like Namgay, the communities in the Jomdhari area have no access to or facility for fresh farm produce. They see hope for better nutrition and diet. The whole community of 26 households came forward to express their interest in growing vegetables and sought support from the Bhutan Foundation. We are encouraged and have already rolled out the second phase of the greenhouse pilot project to withstand the harsh winter conditions.

Amidst such exciting projects, we are mindful to stay grounded and revisit our internal team strengths and weaknesses to maximize our potential to deliver fully on promises and program goals. Our team in Thimphu organized a retreat in the secluded Marangdut jungle camp near the Royal Manas National Park in Southern Bhutan, which was set up by the [River Guides of Panbang](#) with support from the Bhutan Foundation. The retreat was not only worthwhile for team bonding, but it was also incredible to realize the impact created directly by the support of the Bhutan Foundation.

I am excited for my new role as the program director in Thimphu and the important work that we are doing in Bhutan. I look forward to an exciting year ahead and hope to keep you updated from the field.

Sincerely,



Tashi Tshering Dukpa
Program Director, Thimphu.

TAKE ACTION, DONATE TODAY!

CONNECT
WITH US:



SEND TO A FRIEND:



Bhutan Foundation (Washington, DC)

3121 South Street, NW
Washington, DC 20007
+1 (202) 609 7363
info@bhutanfound.org

Bhutan Foundation (Thimphu)

Nazhoen Pelri, Post Box 1918
Thimphu, Bhutan
+975 (2) 322751
info@bhutanfound.org