

Field Notes from Our Program Manager, Tashi Lhamo: Building Sustainable Communities



The Bhutan Foundation is supporting several exciting programs in Bumthang as part of our efforts to help build sustainable communities. These place-based initiatives integrate all our program areas to support communities in surviving the growing changes in Bhutan. Other such communities that we're focusing on are Panbang in south-central Bhutan and Jomolhari in northwestern Bhutan.

This September, Phuntsho Namgay, our communications officer, and I traveled to Bumthang for a media and advocacy program at the Wangduechhoeling Palace organized by the Bhutan Foundation in collaboration with our partners, the [Bhutan Center for Media and Democracy \(BCMD\)](#), the [Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environment \(UWICE\)](#), and the [Ministry of Home and Culture \(MoHC\)](#). This was my first visit to the [Wangduechhoeling Palace](#) after joining the Bhutan Foundation in August 2016. The visit was very special for me because I'm from Bumthang, and it's where I started my career as a teacher, but I wasn't aware of the significance of the palace during that time. Our recent visit allowed me to see

Bumthang from a very different perspective.

While in Bumthang, we organized a photography and multimedia story-telling workshop for students at the local high school, Jakar Higher Secondary School. The program trained over 30 participants, including students and members from UWICE and MoHC, to create short multimedia stories of the palace. This enabled the local children to explore the history of the palace and interview older generations who served in the courts of the Second and Third Kings of Bhutan. These videos will be used to advocate for the relevance of the palace in Bhutan's history and gain buy-in from the local Bumthang community to engage in the palace's restoration and adaptive re-use. We plan to show these films in other schools throughout Bumthang and conduct another workshop to document the restoration work happening at the palace, which one day will be showcased as an important model for restoration.

Lots of pictures with smiles and laughter of students, older community members, and monks filled the halls of the palace during the training. It was as if the palace was brought back to its old glory during the days of our Kings, when local community members came to pay their respects, and children were encouraged to come and play at the palace grounds.

Our work in the Bumthang valley doesn't end here. The Jakar Higher Secondary School is also one of the 20 schools participating in our **Himalayan Earth Rhythm Observation and Evaluation System (HEROES)** project in collaboration with UWICE. The HEROES project enables students to collect important climate data and use weather stations to understand maximum and minimum temperatures, relative humidity, and daylight hours. This way of learning about climate change and how our environment responds can help scientists and environmentalists devise better ways of adapting and mitigating such effects. Additionally, our collaboration with UWICE continues with support for their work on tiger research and wildlife tracking to find out movement patterns, which will better inform us of their conservation needs.

We're also collaborating with the local hospital, the Wangduechhoeling Hospital, and the Wangchuck Centennial Park to support Nomad Health Camps. We supported these camps last year and are doing it again because of the impact we're seeing and the health data we're collecting. These health camps take doctors to the most remote communities in the mountains above the Bumthang valley to provide health services to those in need. We'll also be collecting health data to be able to provide better public health interventions.

It brings me immense joy to present to you the work that we're doing in Bumthang, a place where I first began my journey. Thank you to everyone who helps support these initiatives. I hope you'll continue to participate in this journey with the Bhutan Foundation.

Sincerely,



Tashi Lhamo

The Bhutan Center for Media and Democracy is featured on Global Giving!

Our local partner, the Bhutan Center for



Media and Democracy (BCMD) is featured on Global Giving to empower Bhutan's citizens to engage in democracy. The people at BCMD work to create a culture of participatory democracy in Bhutan. First, they inspire active citizens through projects that tackle social problems. Next, they encourage and expand public discourse by organizing forums focused on diverse topics, such as the role of media and the crisis of democracy in modern times. Last, they produce resources targeted toward all citizens, ranging from rural teachers to government officials. To learn more about this project, please click on [here!](#)

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