

Field notes from our Executive Director.



As the southern United States and the Caribbean recover from hurricanes Harvey and Irma, our thoughts go out to the thousands affected. Even in Bhutan and elsewhere in South Asia, the monsoons have come down pretty hard this year. The rivers are in spate and the incessant rain caused several flash floods across Bhutan, disrupting travel, washing away paddy fields, and creating several roadblocks by landslides.

We have been pretty busy at the Bhutan Foundation, too. In Bumthang, it was "all hands on deck" at the **Wangduechoeling Palace** restoration project. Amid all the bamboo scaffolding, structural reinforcement work is proceeding well. Namgay, the master carpenter on the project, is happy with the progress. "After having worked on dzong renovation projects in Trongsa, Lhuentse, and Trashigang for the last 15 years [first as a mason and then as a carpenter], I am proud to lead the carpentry work on this palace project," he beamed, wearing his characteristic cowboy hat.

"This is a unique project. We are learning new conservation techniques every day. I am also proud that we are training many young Bhutanese workers." Indeed, at the moment, the project employs more than 40 young Bhutanese men and women. A monumental challenge that now awaits the project is how to and from where to procure large quantities of mineral paints like the ones



originally used to paint the palace.

Speaking of paints, we are excited to support a new project that involves a unique way of painting thangkas. Penjor Dorji's thangkas imbue a subdued pastel look, quite in contrast to the usual loud acrylic colors. That is because Penjor sources only plant matter for making his paints. Culminating from years of research, he founded Green Pigment Art—a small enterprise that is dedicated to promoting thangka painting using natural paints. Not only is Penjor reviving an old, natural way of painting beautiful thangkas, he is training a group of apprentice painters under his tutelage. It was heartwarming to see how our support has enabled Penjor to pursue his passion of painting high-quality thangkas, which he can now sell for a premium (his rates are still reasonable, though).

On my recent Bhutan trip, it was a pleasure to welcome the latest addition to the Bhutan Foundation team, **Rinchen Dema Rabgye**. One of the youngest members of our team, Rinchen is a powerhouse of energy. This month, she participated in the Tour of the Dragon bicycle race, which is touted as the toughest one-day bike race in the world! She made it to Lobesa, just short of 61 km until the finish line, crossing three passes over 10,000 feet, as a member of the Kora Tiger team. We have teamed up with Amankora again this year to raise funds for **tiger conservation in Bhutan** and raised \$10,000.



In October, our focus shifts to the mountains and snow leopards. The **Jomolhari Mountain Festival** is coming up in a few weeks (October 14-15), and our team is ready. The Jigme Dorji National Park team completed camera-trap training for village members of the snow leopard conservation committee. Next, they will set up the cameras to monitor these cats. This year, we are also encouraging young Bhutanese from Thimphu and other urban areas to visit Jomolhari. It is important that our youth understand the challenges and opportunities our mountain regions offer. I hope they also get to see a snow leopard or two!

We have a busy fall season ahead, and I look forward to connecting with all of you soon.

Stay safe.

Best wishes,

Tshewang Wangchuk
Executive Director

NOTICE: We have moved to a new office in Washington, DC!

New Address:
The Bhutan Foundation
21 Dupont Circle, NW
Suite 755

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