

ANNUAL REPORT 2019



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BHUTAN CENTRE
for MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY

The BCMD's logo represents that unique balance between modernisation and tradition. An abstract from referencing a lotus blossom or a range of mountain peaks, the symbol evokes fortitude, aspiration, and new beginnings.

An Engaged Society • A Vibrant Democracy

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2019 in Numbers



2,566+

People
Participated



157

Schools, Colleges & Other
Agencies Participated



44+

Activities Held



22+

Books & Audio Visual
Resources Produced

Message

from BCMD's Chairperson and the Executive Director

Inspiring Active Citizens in Bhutan's Democracy

As we move into 2020, BCMD reflects on moments and stories that touched us in 2019 and made us realise that the implications of being an engaged citizen is growing slowly but surely in Bhutan.

The support BCMD received in 2019 enabled us to reach more youth, more teachers, more civil society members and local leaders in Bhutan, one of the world's youngest democracies.

We live in disruptive times globally as democracy is in recession. But we in Bhutan are heartened that despite being a landlocked nation located in a region where two fifths of humanity lives, Bhutanese continue to forge our own democratic path.

BCMD's work contributes to the strengthening of Bhutan's long-term sovereignty and independence. This can happen if the 750,000 people in Bhutan understand that democracy is more than just a vote; that democracy is about how we engage with one another, how we agree to disagree, and how we address and deliberate on issues from climate change to how a landlocked country can be viable, and the role of citizens in a small society.

BCMD has been instrumental in providing space for these discussions and changes over the past 11 and a half years in Bhutan.

2019 activities enabled our constituents to be agents of change. They were personally moved or changed by BCMD activities that contribute to analytical thinking, news and media literacy, and to greater confidence in sharing voice. They developed a sense of agency to act independently and make informed decisions.

The idea that diversity and differences are part of democracy was reinforced as more than 240 youth explored their own role as citizens of Bhutan through the Youth Summits.

BCMD's forums and seminars continued to expand civic space – touching on critical issues such as Civil Society and Nation-building, Educating for Democracy, and Democracy: a Path to Good Governance that was attended by full houses in the colleges of the Royal University of Bhutan. BCMD appreciates our partnership with educational institutions in a nation where 48 percent of the population is under 25 years of age.

Our Druk Journal conversations created space for feedback on education in Bhutan and on tourism just as policies are being developed and reviewed by policy-makers.

We enabled a cross section of the population to share feedback on democracy through a documentary – Democracy – a decade on. The film triggered much discussion through broadcasts on national TV. Our publications, such as The Druk Journal, continue to reach a growing cohort of people including MPs, decision-makers, teachers and our website registered more than 2,074,048 hits in the past year. The Journal is listed in the US Library of Congress and was a reader for participants at the Bhutan Economic Forum for Innovative Transformation (BEFIT) conference in 2019.

In the towns of Paro and Samdrup Jongkhar, partnerships with urban and local government members, and town residents resulted in the co-creation of a vision and mission for their towns. This project included many activities to address local needs and show the importance of people's participation. Project *Mi-khung* (citizen) demonstrates that democracy is more than just a vote – it is our daily action, decisions and voice that give impetus to democracy.

BCMD enabled the growth of civic space, and kept the idea of citizenship and people's participation alive in 2019.

BCMD celebrates 11.5 years of engagement with the people of Bhutan. In this critical space of change in Bhutan, BCMD adopted a new strategic plan for the next five years that will guide us in working towards nurturing responsible and engaged citizens in Bhutan.

At the end of 2019, BCMD saw a transition in leadership with the founding director, Siok Sian Pek-Dorji, stepping away into an advisory position from 1 December, and a new director, Chencho Lhamu, taking over the helm. Our amazing team of colleagues remains the core of a team that has discovered our own role as civil society members and is dedicated to BCMD's work to deepen the culture of democracy in Bhutan.

2020 is a year of promise. Thank you for everyone's support, engagement, and feedback. BCMD looks forward to continued support and the partnership of many agencies, people and constituents.



Nancy Strickland
Chairperson



Siok Sian Pek-Dorji
Advisor

VISION A vibrant democracy where citizens are engaged and proactive

MISSION To nurture democracy in Bhutan through civic engagement, public discourse and media literacy

OBJECTIVES Help citizens understand democratic governance and values

Help citizens understand the importance of information and, therefore, the role of media in a democracy

Empower citizens to be participatory, proactive, responsible, and to hold authorities and service providers accountable

Enhance the visibility and understanding of civil society in Bhutan and promote the role of civil society in a democracy

BCMD Profile

Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD) entered its 11th year of inspiring active citizens, encouraging and expanding public discourse and creating Bhutan-centric resources.

As a non-profit, BCMD creates safe spaces for citizens, leaders and decision-makers to prompt critical-thinking and exercise responsible expression and action to contribute towards stronger, dynamic, and vibrant democracy.

BCMD has contributed to widening Bhutan's civic space, inspiring agents of change in the communities and developing smart consumers of news and information. With publication and production of over 57 books and audio-visual

resources, BCMD has expanded its reach to benefit people living with disabilities and people living on the fringes of society. The centre continues to expand and encourage public discourse - one of the prerequisites for a vibrant democracy.

We are one of the first civil society organisations to be formed after Bhutan's transition to democracy in 2008 and became the first CSO to be registered under the Civil Society Organisation Act of Bhutan in 2010. The centre is also honoured to be a recipient of the National Order of Merit (GOLD) from His Majesty the King in 2016.

Our Team



Siok Sian Pek-Dorji
Executive Professional Director



Chencho Lhamu, Director
(Programmes and Development)



Ngawang R Wangchuk,
Asst. Programme Officer



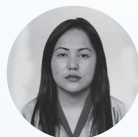
Tempa Wangdi,
Communications/Prog. Officer



Jigme Choden,
Programme Officer



Pasang Dorji, Asst.
Programme Officer



Rosy Chettri,
Finance Officer



Manisha Khawas,
Asst. Accounts/Admin-Finance Officer

Programme Area I

Inspiring Active Citizens



Youths reflect on themselves and the society at the Youth Summit.

Today, eleven years after democratic transition, people are still learning to be citizens and discovering their role in a democracy. The Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD) continues to bring citizens -- youths, teachers, local leaders, parliamentarians, and public servants -- into the process of democratic change. In this first programme area, BCMD's inclusive activities aim to awaken a sense of what it means to be a citizen in a changing society and nation.

As a result of our activities, youths, teachers and leaders are learning to provide constructive feedback on policies

and societal issues. They also learn to take initiatives and simple actions to improve their neighbourhoods at citizen and community levels.

Our participatory activities to inspire and engage citizens brought together students from across the country on a journey to discover one's abilities to spark change in their communities and to understand their role as citizens in a democracy.

The Building Community Initiative changed the attitude of people after youths in Rikhay and Menchari villages in Samdrup Jongkhar District took up

projects to improve the conditions in these communities by recultivating fallow lands and opening a youth engagement space in Dewathang.

Media/News Literacy has not only helped our constituents learn to analyse information and news, they also learned the importance of verification that enables them to stay abreast of national and global events to make informed decisions. More importantly, our news literacy participants have learnt about the importance of media in a democracy.

In BCMD's Youth Initiative programme, youths have undertaken policy reviews and provided their feedback to the policymakers.

In other words, they learned to become active citizens.



The winter Youth Summit was held in Kanglung, a region where such opportunities are rare.

Youth Summit

For the first time, a summit was held in eastern Bhutan and provided a rare learning space for youth residing there. Young citizens were able to share, listen and learn about the issues Bhutan faces.

“My sister told me the Youth Summit is a good place to learn. Moreover, it was held in the East for the first time. And I feel very lucky to be a part of it,” said Kunzang Choki from Radhi Middle Secondary School.

Every year the Youth Summit brings youth from across Bhutan for a four-day citizen education to discuss, listen and learn to be more socially conscious.

“... I learned what it means to be a good citizen and grow into a better person. It changed me as a person and I started to think more about who I am and what I can be. And most importantly, what I can do to serve my nation as a good and responsible citizen...,” said Rinchen Pelzang an alumni of Ugyen Academy.

For most of the participants, the Youth Summit was their first time away from home and their first time at a residential camp.

Learning to adapt to a new environment is an important part for youth’s self-discovery process. The summit enabled participants to understand diversity and its value in a community. The four-day summit encouraged young citizens to discuss, exchange and develop a plan to address issues,



A participant from eastern Bhutan presents his group’s work on ways to reduce sexual violence.



At the Youth Summit, policy-makers and leaders get to listen to the voice of the youth.

such as unemployment, corruption, how to handle divorce in the family, environment, waste, addiction, mental health, and media literacy, among others.

"From the outside, it always looks so good (referring to society and mental health situations) but from the inside, it is terrible... My friends and I want to create a more positive society by helping to spread awareness of mental health..." said a student from Gomtu Middle Secondary School.

In summer, another round of the Youth Summit held in July at Thimphu engaged 101 students to reflect on themselves and their role in a democratic set up.

Thirty college students were also trained in facilitation skills and co-facilitated the two Youth Summits. "Depending on each other and by interacting harmoniously, we learned how to create a harmonious society," said a peer facilitator from Sherubtse College, Rinchen Gyeltshen.

An important outcome of the peer facilitation workshop was how it enabled youth to listen to diverse opinions and encourage open conversations among peers.

229
Youths

37
Schools

13
Issues Covered

Building Community Through Project *Mi-khung*

In partnership with the Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative and Paro Dzongkhag (District) Administration, the Community Building Initiative continues to instil in participants a sense of belonging to, and ownership of their communities.

“We all say that the government cannot be expected to do everything for us but none of us has an answer to how to do it yourself.

The answer is Community Mapping,” said SJI Programme Director Cheku Dorji. This has translated into empowering the people in Samdrup Jongkhar to co-create their own community’s development. Both Paro and Samdrup Jongkhar towns launched their citizen-crafted vision and mission as a move to enable them to envision a future for their towns and to engage in creating the towns of their aspirations. This is citizen participation in the making.



Students of Shaba Higher Secondary School build a much-needed recreational space for other youth in Paro. The municipality provided the land for the project.

The Citizens Envision Their Towns' Future

Paro Town

Vision: To be a clean, green, safe and culturally vibrant town

Mission: To nurture a healthy, peaceful, inclusive and sustainable community living in harmony

Samdrup Jongkhar Town

Vision: A GNH-based commercial hub in Eastern Bhutan

Mission: To nurture a commercially and culturally vibrant community living in peace, health and inclusivity



1,009
People Reached

12
Projects Completed

6
Town Hall Meetings
in Two Towns

Change Makers in Action

Children from Dewathang in Samdrup Jongkhar are now playing more outdoors after youth mappers opened a space called the Centre for Joy of Learning.

“I now do not spend time watching TV and playing online games as I can come here to play and read,” said a student from Garpawoong Middle Secondary School, Tenzin Zangmo.

She said that her English has improved a lot after practising reading at the centre. The centre offers outdoor activities and music,

dance, games, library, and meditation to keep children engaged after school.


The new centre at Dewathang was an initiative taken by youths there as their Community Mapping project. Earlier, children from Dewathang had to travel 18 kilometres to a similar facility at the Youth Centre in Samdrup Jongkhar.

Over in Rikhay village, youths’ initiative to recultivate their families’ fallow land has sparked a change in the community’s attitude and behaviour towards youth.

“After our initiative, seven households in the village also recultivated land they left fallow before,” said Tempa Rabgay from Rikhay village.



A visible outcome of the mapping exercise, a renovated Chorten (stupa) in Menchari village.



"I now do not spend time watching TV and playing online games as I can come here to play and read," said a student from Garpawoong Middle Secondary School, Tenzin Zangmo.

The centre in Dewathang provides youth a space to engage in sports, reading and entertainment.

The Community Mapping project not only inspired youths but encouraged villagers as well.

"After our initiative, seven households in the village also recultivated land they left fallow before," said Tempa Rabgay from Rikhay village.

The success of their project also helped change the community's mindset that youth should always go to work in urban centres. "After we started a project we weren't criticised for staying back in the village as an educated person," said Tempa.

In Menchari, elders appreciate the efforts of the youth for renovating their *Chorten*

(Stupa). "I feel that youth don't need to go to towns to work. They can also make a living in the village," said an elder from Menchari village, Sangay Tshering.

In Paro District, students from Shaba built a volleyball court to keep youths engaged in healthy activities. Other student groups from Shaba Higher Secondary School and Drukgyel Central School focused on addressing pedestrian safety and managing waste through advocacy in different communities. One of the mapping groups built a fence and cleaned the *Menchu* (Hot Spring) in Drukgyel that was left uncared for.

Youth Initiative



The Youth Initiative (YI) takes participants through the various stages of policy research and review.

In its sixth year, the Youth Initiative (YI) continued to develop critical and analytical thinking skills amongst the youth - skills needed in every citizen. The YI programme focused on research and reviewed various issues of concern that participants identified. Issues explored included the effectiveness of the ban on use of plastic bags, Internet usage pattern and costs, public perception of LGBT, nutrition in boarding schools and perceptions on paper-recycled souvenir products.

“Before joining YI, I was very uninformed about our country's policies and democracy. However afterwards, I learned how the policies work, how laws are implemented and how our country functions as a democracy,” said Tenzin Dorji, a YI member of the 2019 cohort.



The plastic ban was an issue of interest in 2019 as the National Environment Commission imposed the plastic ban again, 20 years after it was first introduced. In June 2019, the National Assembly tabled the amendment of section 213 and 214 of the Penal Code of Bhutan on unnatural sex, which criminalises homosexuality.

Nima Khandu, who conducted the research, 'perception on paper-recycled souvenir products' was able to use his research as a business idea at a pitching competition where he proposed to start a company to recycle paper to produce souvenir products.

YI members conducted simple first-hand research and presented their findings on the topics at the end of the

YI cycle. Their papers can be found on the website, bcmd.bt/yibhutan under '*Leygyel: Walking the Talk*'.

"It helped me to do a lot of self-reflection that ultimately helped me look at other's perspective and appreciating and valuing otherness," said YI member, Sonam Choeki Wangmo.

"Before joining YI, I was very uninformed about our country's policies and democracy. However afterwards, I learned how the policies work, how laws are implemented and how our country functions as a democracy," said Tenzin Dorji, a YI member of the 2019 cohort.

24

Youths Engaged

13

Days Residential Training

5

Research Projects Undertaken

Enhancing News/ Media Literacy

Educating citizens to be Information Smart

While technology has enabled free expression to grow exponentially, its use has also given rise to misinformation, fake news, and “hate” speech, particularly on social media.

The Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD) is enabling youth, teachers, civil servants, and local leaders to critically read news and information through its News/ Media Literacy workshops. These activities equip citizens with critical-thinking skills and techniques to handle disinformation and fake news, gauge news and improve their online behaviour and safety. Its purpose is to educate citizens on the need for verified and more balanced information in a world of opinions and other unchecked information.

“I used to read newspapers but never knew how to question the information and look for sources and evidence to verify facts

as an individual...,” said Shaba Mangmi (Assistant Block Headman) Sangay Dorji from Paro’s District Administration.

Using a curricula that BCMD has developed over the years with Bhutanese content, BCMD trained about 80 teachers, local leaders, youths, and civil servants from various schools in news/media literacy. Through these workshops, participants learnt about the role of media in a democracy and why news media is crucial for a democracy to thrive.

“I now know why it’s important for us to read the news as citizens,” said a trainee from the Royal Academy for Performing Arts (RAPA), Kencho Om. A teacher from

80
People Trained

18
Colleges, Schools
& Other Agencies
Covered

5
News/Media
Literacy Workshops
Conducted



Drukgyel Central School, Pema Tenzin said: “The training helped me understand the importance of media and journalism in a democracy to provide objective information and news....”

***“I used to read newspapers but never knew how to question the information and look for sources and evidence to verify facts as an individual....”
said Shaba Mangmi, Sangay Dorji.***

The participants learned about the role of citizens in a democracy and why it's important to stay informed and educated to be able to make knowledgeable decisions. “Having come here made me understand the importance of sharing my concerns and questioning the leaders,” said a RAPA trainee, Sonam Wangmo. After learning about the dangers of social media many participants also became more mindful on social media use.

Teachers were also trained on Being a Good Citizen to reflect on values like interdependence, integrity and courage to learn to contribute to a stronger democracy.



Participants want to urge relevant agencies to promote media literacy curricula.

Programme Area II

Encouraging and Expanding Public Discourse

Our experiences have increasingly shown that providing an open and safe space for people to come and share their views not only encourages expression but people also learn to listen and build habits of sharing constructive feedback.

Such forums allow citizens, members of political parties, government, policy-makers and public servants to come together to understand each other and deliberate on diverse views and ideas for the betterment of society.

The learning space like filmmaking that BCMD offers for youth, women and persons with disabilities provided these sections of the population with the opportunity to express themselves through media. Photography training for students of Wangsel Institute for the Deaf in Paro culminated in a first-ever Photo Exhibition by these students.

Our initiative to organise the Civil Society Organisation (CSO) Retreat in 2019 enabled the CSO fraternity to review and endorse its way forward together for a stronger presence of civil society. The retreat reviewed existing CSO Rules and Regulations and updated thematic groups to create an enabling landscape for civil society.

“...By coming to this retreat, I came to know that it’s always better to stick together.... I’ve clarified lots of doubts in my mind,” said the Lhak-Sam Executive Director, Wangda Dorji.

Loden Foundation President, Dr Karma Phuntsho, lauded the 2019 CSO Retreat and called for stronger solidarity among the fraternity.

“...By coming to this retreat, I came to know that it’s always better to stick together.... I’ve clarified lots of doubts in my mind,” said the Lhak-Sam Executive Director, Wangda Dorji.



BCMD's digital activities have captured and shared everyday stories of people living with disabilities, unemployment, addiction, and people who struggle with daily demands.

A conference on "Educating for Democracy: Reflecting on the Role of Education" at Paro College of Education (PCE) attracted some 370 participants on 25 October 2019.

The conference provided space for people from diverse backgrounds to discuss how Bhutan's education system complements the strengthening of the Bhutanese democracy. The Finance Minister Lyonpo, Namgay Tshering, in his closing remarks

said that democratic education should help raise the importance of cultural consciousness and rich spirituality to realise Gross National Happiness.

Members of Parliament, researchers, educators, teacher trainees, media and civil society organisations attended the conference.

Thus, BCMD's activities from workshops to forums and the media productions continue to widen the public space needed to enable diversity in views to be shared and discussed, a process of deliberation that is fundamental to making democracy work.



Building solidarity amongst civil society members at the CSO Retreat 2019.

Strengthening Civil Society

The need to build trust between government and civil society organisations (CSO) was highlighted at BCMD's interactive forum on "Civil Society and Nation-building" held on 15 October 2019.

As the emerging third sector in Bhutan, there is still a huge gap in knowledge and understanding surrounding Civil Society space.

The interactive forum was able to steer the conversation around civil society to focus on the underlying values of civic space -- such as volunteerism, reciprocity, compassion and genuine acts of engagement which are at the heart of civil society, all of which contribute to a more participatory democracy and a stronger nation.

"The forum was a process of trust building and we need such engagements in order to build trust amongst private enterprises, government, parliament and CSOs," said an academic and a board member of a CSO who attended the forum.

The forum was timely since the Parliament was, at the time, drafting a review report on Civil Society. The Chair of the Foreign Relations Committee (National Council) tasked with the review, spoke about the current trust deficit between the government and CSOs.

"This is something to tackle. We have to learn to trust each other," said the National Council member. Another MP remarked that he now understands civil society better and shared his observation that it is challenging to bring citizens on board to forums and discussions as many people are not engaged in societal issues; and this is the implicit strength of civil society.

The forum is part of a project being undertaken to add to the strengthening of civil society in Bhutan. This aligns with BCMD's mission of contributing to the strengthening of democratic culture in one of the world's youngest democracies. BCMD also produced a series of short films on civil society work in Bhutan for broadcast on cable TV. BCMD believes that a strong civil society space creates a more engaged citizenry.



"The forum was a process of trust building and we need such engagements in order to build trust amongst private enterprises, government, parliament and CSOs," said an academic and a board member of a CSO who attended the forum.



The CSO Retreat, an important platform for the CSO fraternity to come together, and plan ways to address common issues.

131

Participants

36

CSOs

4

Activities Held



Podcasts help us revive the tradition of storytelling in a digital age.

The Media Lab

Space for creativity and voice

The media lab has been empowering youth to participate in public discourse through media training and media production.

The lab continues to train youth, CSO members and others on how to be more effective communicators and on how to use digital media tools to produce quality media content. They also learn the ethics of media production, sharing of photographs and how to verify information and take responsibility for representing other people's views. These are skills needed to negotiate a social media saturated world. And especially so for Bhutan where youth opinions and stories are rarely heard in the mainstream media.

The Media Lab has provided a digital learning space that inspired many youth, amateur photographers and filmmakers to enhance their storytelling skills and techniques.

Besides providing a year-long media course to a class of 75 students of Motithang Higher Secondary School students, the lab's photography and filmmaking training enabled our younger generation to delve deeper into social issues facing Bhutan and to share solutions on how to tackle them. The first-ever photography training for the Wangsel Institute for Deaf students was a lifetime learning opportunity that enabled the deaf students to use a digital platform to share their voice and communicate with others.

The Lab is home to BCMD's Youth Initiative programme and where many innovative trainings are conducted.

Our members can be found swinging by on Saturdays and after hours, for example, to share their latest photos or to seek tips on how to digitise/edit and improve their short films and photos.

The Media Lab is a safe space for many youths and citizens who share their constructive views in conversations, workshops, and forums.

Support our work and join us as a lab member or a Friend of BCMD.

Check out our films @Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy - YouTube.

213

Participants

12

Activities Held

6

Short Films Produced

5

Podcasts Made



Youth learn to use photography as a tool to understand underlying stories.

Photography for Amateur and Special Needs

A photo exhibition by the students of Wangsel Institute for the Deaf in their school turned the tables on the idea that special needs students are recipients and not contributors with ideas, views and organisational skills.

"Our students talked about how proud they felt when people came and saw their photos..." said Sonam Choden, Media and Photography Club Coordinator from the Wangsel Institute.

The exhibition was the culmination of BCMD's basic photography training that taught students composition, caption-writing and ethics of photography. A student from the Institute, Sangay Choeda, said that the training made him realise how important it is to capture moments. "...While taking photos, we had different experiences. I have improved a lot," said Sangay.

Over 95 people from different walks of life attended the exhibition. Even though the training proved to be challenging due to theoretical concepts coupled with the language barrier, the final products needed no words.

"They are visual learners and communicators but have been left out of opportunities to develop their skills. Since photography needs no words, they can express how they see the world through a frame much more fully," said Sonam Choden.

BCMD also partnered with NatGeo in conducting a week-long Photography Training (25 February - 8 March 2019) that resulted in a photo exhibition at the Royal Textile Academy, Thimphu. Sixteen amateur photographers were able to capture stories on rural-urban migration. Some stories gave an insight into families who came in search of better opportunities and now are struggling to afford a decent home in a city like Thimphu.

"I now know that photography is not just taking pictures of anything, it is all about experiencing, touching and getting into other's lives, creating and re-creating the story of my subject," said a participant at the NatGeo Photo Camp.

"I now know that photography is not just taking pictures of anything, it is all about experiencing, touching and getting into other's lives and creating, re-creating the story of my subject," said a participant at the NatGeo Photo Camp.



BCMD also supported Filmfest, an event to enable amateur photographers and filmmakers to advocate on critical social issues covering women, youth models, unintended exclusion of persons with disabilities, and challenges of young women in *drayangs* (dance bars).



Podcast Training

'Dha Rei Na Ba' is a 5-part audio podcast project covering themes of mental health, GNH in business, gaming addiction, copycat culture, and recovering addicts. The podcast project switched direction from the previous years to lengthen the duration of programmes from 5 to 15 minutes in line with the aim to delve deeper into the stories.

The projects followed protagonists within each of the areas and sought an intimate, conversational, in-depth interview on the topic.

"Most of my relatives or family members have been saying to me, be strong...be

strong. But internally for me, it's been very difficult to be strong. So, instead of that, if they can hear me; to listen to how I'm feeling, it would really help me or anyone else going through something similar," said the protagonist from 'I'm Not Possessed - My Bipolar Story'.

'Dha Rei Na Ba' was launched with a hope of reflecting on the stories of our society and re-imagining how we tell these stories in a way that brings us closer towards understanding each other in our digital age.

These heartfelt and moving stories can be heard on <https://soundcloud.com/bcmd>.

Bhutan Democracy Forum 2019

Voters and the political parties supported and lauded the Bhutan Democracy Forum 2019, “Democracy: a Path to Good Governance,” after they were able to openly share their diverse political concerns, experiences and lessons.

The representatives of the four political parties, Members of Parliament (MP), a journalist, an academic and a *Gup* (Block Headman) formed the two panels that talked about Bhutan’s experience with democracy and elections.

‘Trust’ was raised as one of the most critical problems that Bhutan faced as a democratic society, which led Vice

President of the Bhutan Kuen-Nyam Party, Sonam Tobgay, to call for some serious reflection and contemplation.

“...It is very important for an elected government consisting of politicians, both inside and outside the parliament, to restore public faith and confidence, political trust in a politician and the institutions,” said Sonam Tobgay. Questions were also raised around the media and its role in good governance. People questioned whether the media in Bhutan is becoming sensational or if social media is taking over the news media. Women in politics, corruption, youth, what being “apolitical” means, press freedom, foreign affairs and

250+
Participated

20
Government
Institutions Joined

17
MPs Attended



roles of the political parties outside the government were also discussed during the forum.

Nubi Gup (Block Headman) Ugyen Tenzin called on the youth to strengthen the Local Government. “I request all youth here, after your degree, you are welcome to the rural areas. Please don’t look towards civil service...come back to your villages. We will work together - form a good team...,” he said.

Students and faculty from Paro’s Wangsel Institute brought up the issue of being uninformed about democracy and other important issues in Bhutan as there was

inadequate access to information for the hearing-impaired with the absence of sign interpreters for televised political debates, for example. This received the attention of the four political parties and a wide section of society who attended the forum. The forum became instrumental in getting the national TV station, BBS, to start weekly sign language news bulletins.

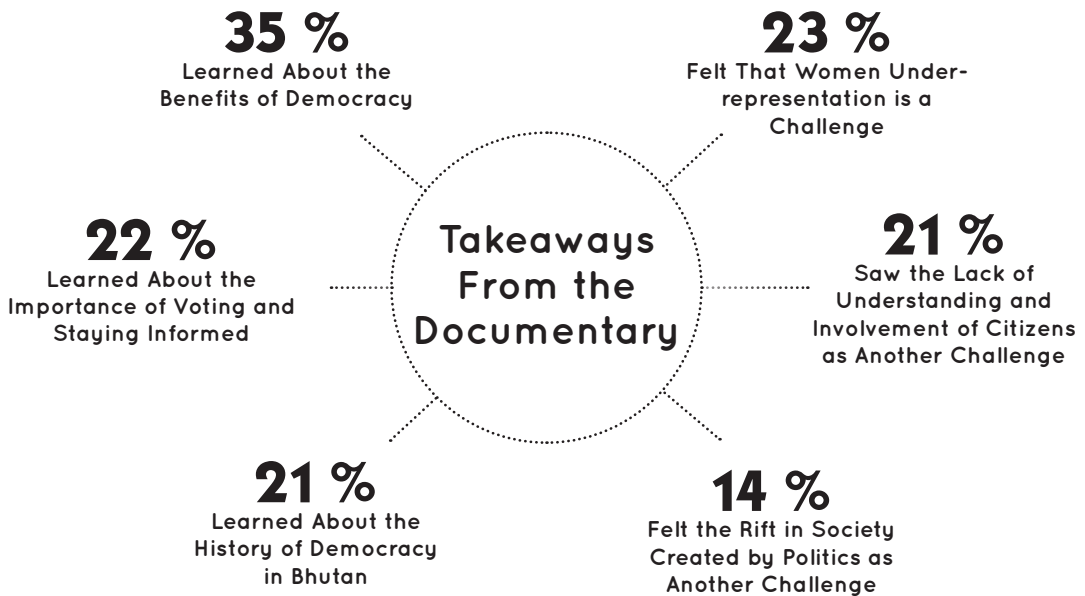
The forum took place at the auditorium of the Royal University of Bhutan in April 2019. It was the first time that political parties emerged publicly in a forum after the 2018 elections. The forum was televised on TV and received a large viewership on BCMD’s online sites.

9 Schools & Colleges Attended



The Bhutan Democracy Forum 2019: An important space for citizens, political parties, academia and media to share their concerns.

Bhutan's Democracy: a Decade On



Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD) marked a decade of democratic transition with the production of a 40-minute documentary, “Bhutan’s Democracy: a Decade On”.

The documentary, filmed at the end of Bhutan’s 3rd Parliamentary elections in 2018 enabled citizens, leaders, political parties, and the media to reflect on their experiences and concerns on the electoral process.

Bhutan’s former Chief Justice Lyonpo Sonam Tobgye launched the film with the Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB) and Minister for Information and Communication Lyonpo Karma Donnen Wangdi. In his keynote address, Lyonpo Sonam Tobgye said research shows that there has been stability, a steady improvement in people’s voice being heard, and a growing sense of accountability in the past decade of democratisation.

“The horizontal checks and balances by the Constitutional Offices are promoting accountability and our media is continuing to render oversight of responsibilities,” he said.

The film was handed over to ECB for distribution in schools and colleges across the country especially through Democracy clubs. Over 300 people including civil servants, press, INGOs, political parties, youths, former ministers, and Members of Parliament attended the launch at the Royal University of Bhutan.

Nearly four out of every ten persons (39 percent of a surveyed audience of 238 respondents) who watched the documentary said they wanted to recommend the film to “all the citizens of Bhutan”. Another 35 percent said they would recommend the documentary to youth. The remainder wanted their family, rural people and government, among others, to watch the film.

Programme Area III

Resources for Democracy

Eleven years since BCMD started producing resources on Bhutan's democracy, citizen education and media, our resources today are being used in classrooms and are increasingly sought after for policy reviews.

A BCMD publication, The Druk Journal 2018 Winter Issue on "Transforming Bhutan's Economy" was used as a guiding document for Bhutan Economic Forum for Innovative Transformation (BEFIT) 2019. "I would suggest everyone who wants to know about Bhutan to read this," said the Resident Coordinator of the UN in Bhutan, Gerald Daly, at BEFIT 2019.

"I use BCMD resources on media and citizenship to lead the media and democracy club activities every week and I've asked my colleagues to use the Active Citizen's Guidebook for classes," said a teacher, Ugyen Kelzang.

The Druk Journal Autumn Issue on "Tourism in Bhutan" was used as a policy reference to review the national tourism policy. An increasing number of people are also finding our resources on citizen education and media literacy resourceful.

"I use BCMD resources on media and citizenship to lead the media and democracy club activities every week and I've asked my colleagues to use the Active Citizen's Guidebook for classes," said a teacher from Gelephu Middle Secondary School, Ugyen Kelzang.

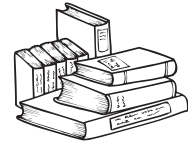
As a move to reach out to the unreached, BCMD launched a Media Literacy Resource Guidebook in Braille, the first of its kind in the country prepared in partnership with the Royal Education Council. The braille Media Literacy Resource was distributed to the National Institute for Visually Impaired, Sherubtse College, Royal Education Council, and Ability Bhutan Society.

Similar efforts are made to translate BCMD resources into Dzongkha for wider reach.

Check our resources @ www.bcmd.bt



7,878+
Copies Printed



6
Publications
Produced



300+
Institutes Receive
Our Resources



17
Films & Podcasts
Produced

The Druk Journal

Now in its 5th year of publication, The Druk Journal (TDJ) is increasingly providing constructive feedback on critical national issues. The Druk Journal issues on “Educating Bhutan” and “Tourism in Bhutan” and feedback from its conversations are now important inputs for government decisions, policies, and plans.

“Educating Bhutan” looked at education in Bhutan following the Royal Command from His Majesty the King to pursue knowledge and learning as a life-long endeavour, beyond the certificates.

The issue on “Tourism in Bhutan” analysed the impact of mass tourism against the national policy of ‘high value, low impact.’

In 2019, feedback from the conversation on “Tourism in Bhutan” became an important input for tourism policy that was under review. The Chairperson for the Tourism Council of Bhutan (Foreign Minister) Dr Tandi Dorji said that the conversation was instrumental in building up policy debates around mass tourism.

“These suggestions will be taken very seriously when we hold our bilateral discussions...Bhutan must have only one tourism policy...,” said Dr Tandi Dorji.



A Druk Journal interviewee shares his thoughts on sustainable tourism at the conversation.

*“These suggestions will be taken very seriously when we hold our bilateral discussions... Bhutan must have only one tourism policy...”
said Dr Tandi Dorji.*



The DJ focuses on themes of national relevance. DJ conversations are important forums to get policy feedback from a cross section of society.

Three conversations on "Educating Bhutan" were held, including one with the presidents of the 11 colleges at the Royal University of Bhutan. Sherubtse College and College of Language and Culture Studies held a conversation each in their respective campus reaching more students and faculty members.

Thirty two people contributed 37 articles to two issues of TDJ in 2019.

The Druk Journal is more than a publication, it is also a forum for grooming thought leaders in Bhutan by mentoring new writers and widening space for discourse on matters of importance. The ensuing conversations and seminars bring in people who were previously left out of the social conversation into the heart of democratic change in direct meetings with policy makers, journalists and others.

Ten issues of TDJ have been published since 2015. Copies are distributed to schools, colleges, parliament, and decision-makers. Selected issues of The Druk Journal are also available in the US Library of Congress.

Check Out: www.drukjournal.bt

2,300
Copies Printed

300
People at the
Conversations Across
Bhutan

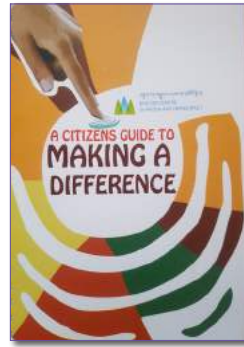
4
Conversations Held

2
Issues Published

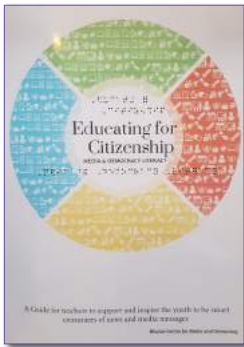
Resources in General



A publication and a TV programme produced from the discussions on “Democracy: a Path to Good Governance” and broadcasted on the national television, BBS.



BCMD’s popular Active Citizen Guidebook was updated with new chapters to provide citizen education. The guide promotes engaged citizenry.



A guidebook especially for teachers to build a more inclusive society by extending skills, knowledge and methods to critique news and information in Dzongkha and in braille.



This workbook was translated into Dzongkha to reach a wider section of the population in response to feedback from local leaders, teachers and officials on how to impart skills on citizen participation in Bhutan.



The Druk Journal, a journal of thoughts and ideas looked at two critical national issues, tourism and education in Bhutan. Conversations on these issues provided much-needed policy feedback.



A must-read publication for college students, researchers and those interested in politics and democratic change. It includes the question and answer sessions with the full transcript of the annual forums.



Six short films featured works of civil society organisations and their contribution to society, and change attitude and behaviour of citizens in a democracy.



A documentary film to reflect on 10 years of democracy through the lens of people from all walks of life.

You can watch these programmes on [youtube.com/user/TheBcmd/videos](https://www.youtube.com/user/TheBcmd/videos)



Resources for
Democracy

Building
Civil Society

Youth Voice
in Youth
Matters

News &
Media
Literacy

The Druk
Journal

Looking Ahead 2020

Youth
Summit

Strengthening
Civil Society

Support our work and give us feedback

Give here... <http://bcmd.bt/> (GlobalGiving) or
<http://bit.ly/2WkRjmw> (Bhutan Foundation) or
[https://give2asia.org/bcmd/...](https://give2asia.org/bcmd/) (Give2Asia)

Youth
Initiative
Camps

Project
Mi-khung
(Citizen)

The Druk
Journal
Conversations
& Seminars

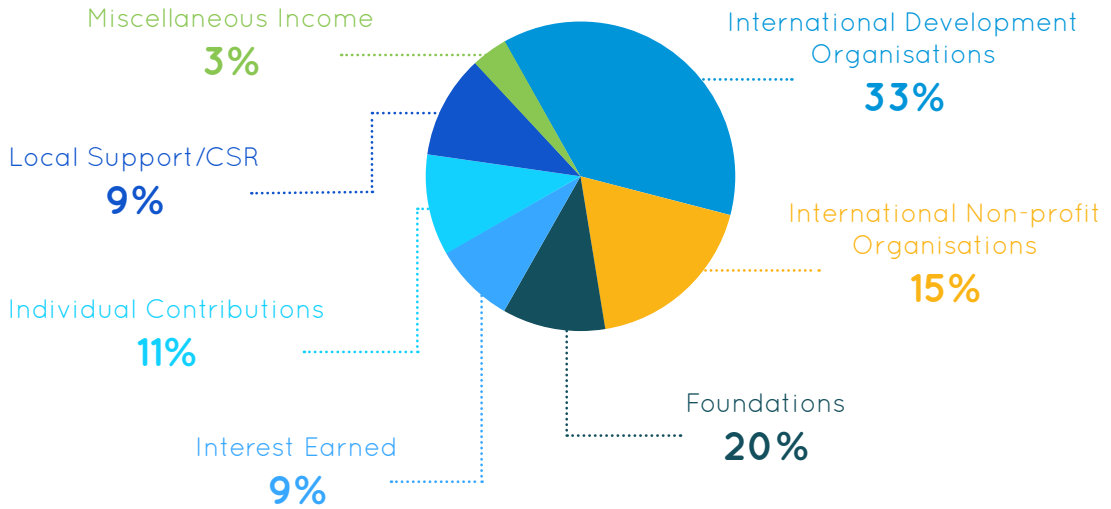
Reaching More
People Living
on the Fringes
of Society

Bhutan
Democracy
Forum 2020

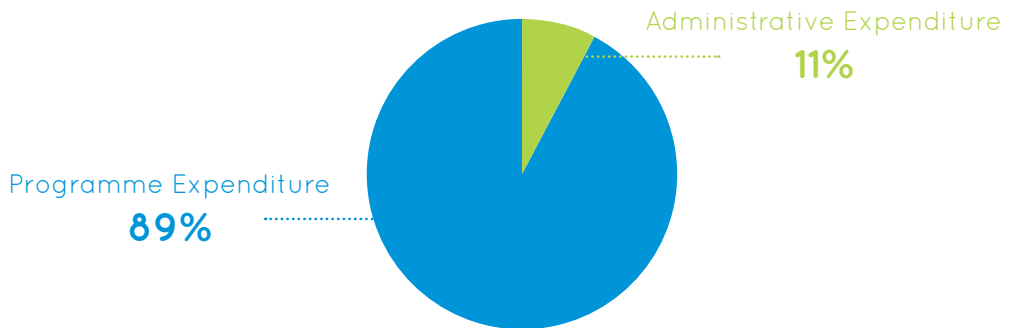
Multimedia
& film-
making

Funding and Financial Overview

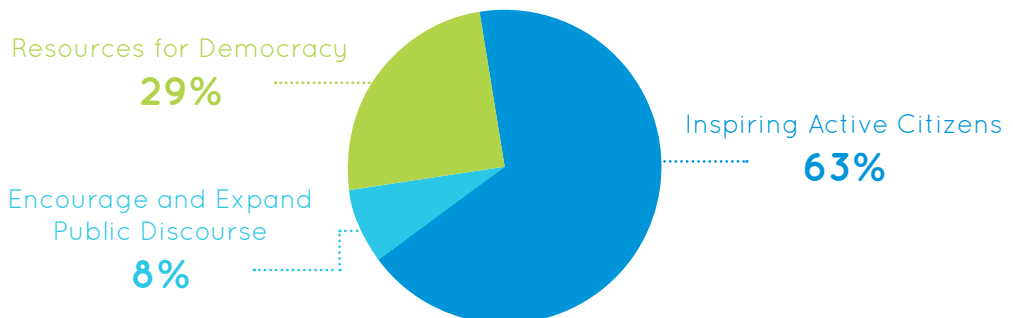
Details of Income Received During the Year 2019



Details of Expenditure Made During the Year 2019



Expenditure by Programme Areas



BCMD Income and Expenditure Statement as of 31 December 2019

Details of Income Received During the Year 2019		
1	International Development Organisation	5,515,654.08
2	International Non-profit Organisation	2,420,511.72
3	Foundations	3,266,022.54
4	Interest Earned	1,471,301.75
5	Individual Contributions	1,874,834.36
6	Local Support/CSR	1,530,000.00
7	Miscellaneous Income	464,988.27


Details of Expenditure Made During the Year 2019		
1	Administrative Expenditure	1,536,421.92
2	Programme Expenditure	12,878,487.58


Expenditure by Programme Areas		
1	Inspiring Active Citizens	8,184,815.15
2	Encourage and Expand Public Discourse	977,584.83
3	Resources for Democracy	3,716,087.60

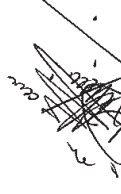
Bhutan Centre for Media & Democracy
RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS STATEMENT
 For the year ended 31st December 2019

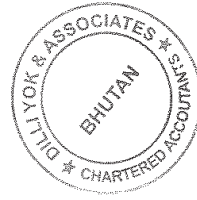
Receipts	Schedule	Amount (Nu.)	Payments	Schedule	Amount (Nu.)
Opening Balances:			Expenditures:		
Cash-in-Hand		-	i. Administration	2	1,536,421.92
Cash at Bank		10,118,791.76	ii. Programme Expenses		12,878,487.58
			iii. Refund to Donors		493,972.41
Fund Received during the Year:			iv. Purchase of Assets	3	191,717.58
i. International Development Organizations		5,515,654.08	v. Fixed Deposit	4	6,479,000.00
ii. International Non-profit Organizations		2,420,511.72	vi. Advance to staff	5	31,597.00
iii. Foundations		3,266,022.54			
iv. Interest Earned	1	1,471,301.75			
v. Individual Contribution		1,874,834.36			
vi. Local Support/CSR		1,530,000.00			
vii. Miscellaneous Income		464,988.27	Cash-in-Hand		5,050,907.99
Total		26,662,104.48	Cash at Bank		26,662,104.48
			Total		


 (Ms. Rosy Chettri)
 Finance Officer


 (Ms Manisha Khawas)
 Asst. Officer Adm/Finance


 (Siok Sian Dorji)
 Executive Professional Director


 (Dilli Yok & Associates)
 Auditor



Acknowledgement

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Partners



Among our many supporters, BCMD's friends from abroad and Bhutan continue to support us as resource persons, facilitators, volunteers, and interns. We acknowledge The Agentives Fund's support for our activities. We appreciate their involvement with our work and their contributions to making a difference. We also appreciate Paro and Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhags, Drukgyel Central and Shaba Higher Secondary Schools for partnering with us in our citizen engagement project.

Contact us on bcmd@bcmd.bt



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