



An Engaged Society • A Vibrant Democracy

2015 Annual Report

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Strengthening a culture of democracy

The Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy is turning nine with our small and innovative team deepening the pace of work.

With the focus on the qualitative reach and impact, our work is gaining recognition among decision-makers, youth, teachers, and journalists. We believe that what we do today will enable us to build a safe, just, and equitable society for ourselves, our families, our communities and society at large.

BCMD has incubated many innovations to strengthen a culture of democracy in Bhutan. 2015 saw results that went beyond our expectations.

- A Media Dialogue and a fellowship for journalists resulted in investigative reports on rural stories telling us who is doing what and how to cope with challenges and difficulties. Sherubtse College's journalism school also received support to enable youth to tell stories of change in democratic Bhutan. The support has helped to provide better insights into reporting.
- Our Youth Initiative (YI) programme moved into its third year with a focus on inspiring youth leaders to take action for positive social change. We believe that the experience of our first two YI programmes have borne fruit and inspired others to take on youth-led activities. Through other projects, including our community mapping exercise in Paro, we discovered that Bhutanese youth have aspirations for a bright future for Bhutan and are ready to commit themselves to action that will build this future.
- We began to strengthen our support to civil society through networking and the creation of democratic processes that amplify civil society's voice. This is aimed at building participation and confidence amongst CSOs and informal citizen groups in Bhutan. We're also excited about our partnership with the College of Language and Culture Studies to start a community/campus radio station to enable rural voices to emerge in the district of Trongsa.
- Our community mapping project in Paro continues to build momentum as a project that practices democratic problem solving and citizen action. We plan to go deeper with citizen engagement in Paro in the coming year.
- BCMD continues to produce Bhutan-centric resources – videos and publications to prompt discussion and thinking on issues central to our survival as a small, landlocked nation in a globalised world. The Druk Journal was launched to commemorate the 60th birth anniversary of His

Majesty the Fourth King of Bhutan. A journal of thought and ideas, our first spring edition focused on (national) Identity – a timely focus on the Bhutanese narrative that continues to bring feedback and trigger discussions.

The next 2 years are important as Bhutan moves towards the third general elections. BCMD's reach into rural Bhutan continues to grow with the youth-led grants, the radio project and the mapping initiative.

Here at BCMD, we believe that we have seeded many ideas and connections. We continue to grow and learn as Bhutan's democracy progresses. BCMD would not be where we are without the trust and confidence of our partners who have enabled us to respond to Bhutan's needs. We are grateful to the many participants and volunteer speakers who have attended our activities and who support our work to empower citizen voice and action.

We acknowledge each and every partner and supporter and are ready to launch another year of inspiring activities to build an engaged society and a vibrant democracy in the Kingdom of Bhutan.



Chairperson
Nancy Strickland



Professional Executive Director
Siok Sian Pek-Dorji

About BCMD



The Executive Director and the BCMD team

BCMD

The Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy was established in 2008 as one of Bhutan's first civil society organizations during Bhutan's governmental transition from a monarchy to a parliamentary democracy. Our dedicated team focuses on building a culture of democracy by promoting and strengthening quality media, building critical thinking skills among media users, and strengthening discourse, research, and educational activities on media and democracy.

MISSION

The mission of BCMD is to nurture democracy in Bhutan through civic engagement, public discourse, and media-literate citizens.

TEAM

Siok Sian Pek-Dorji, Professional Executive Director
Jigme Choden, Programme Manager
Needrup Zangpo, Communication Manager
Tshewang Lhamo, Programme Officer
Yeshey Choden, Finance Officer
Phuntsho Namgay, Programme Officer
Karan Katwal, Finance Officer
Sherub Dorji, Asst. Programme Officer
Tshering Norbu Uden, Asst. Communications Officer

Inspiring Active Citizens



Learning teamwork during the community mapping workshop

In our evolving democracy, each and every Bhutanese not only has new rights, but also new responsibilities. As his Majesty the Fourth King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, has said, “the destiny of the nation lies in the hands of its people” in the wake of a new Constitution. Yet, Bhutan still struggles to develop an engaged citizenry in a country where people are accustomed to a lack of personal agency and a reliance on the government to solve any problem.

BCMD “**inspires active citizens**” through a variety of skill-based workshops and long-term programmes that promote individual responsibility and initiative. In these civic education activities, citizens learn new analytical and communicative skills, gain a platform for airing their informed opinions about social issues in Bhutan, and attempt to solve local problems using local resources.

2015 in Review

Youth Engagement



6 trainings,
4 dialogues, 5 "local actions" campaign
578 participants



Mapping the community in Paro



Participants at the multimedia training in Paro

Skill Development



5 types of skills taught:
writing, photography,
media literacy, online
fluency & organisational
management

5 sectors of society reached:
out-of-school youth, non-
formal teachers, college
media clubs, monks & CSO
employees

Creative Expression



5 "Open Mic" nights
2 storytelling workshops 255 participants



Open Mic Nights at the media lab

Inspiring Active Citizens

When you meet Ngawang Gyeltshen for the first time, he smiles wide and pulls out your chair for you. Pretty soon, the two of you are laughing and chatting like old friends. However, it was only a few years ago, at age sixteen, that he moved from Phuentsholing to Thimphu where he knew almost no one. He says that at the time, he was “closed off” and “didn’t have many friends.” His friendly demeanor and ever-present smile makes that hard to believe. Now, he admits that he has friends in spades, thanks to his involvement in BCMD’s programming. Making lifelong friends “is one of the primary reasons [he] holds YI close to his heart.”



At the Youth Symposium, Ngawang Gyeltshen sharing his views on the Bhutanese education system

Ngawang’s involvement with BCMD began with his election to the Youth Initiative. He was nominally a member of the Education Committee, but soon came to feel that the separate branches of YI should not confine themselves to one domain. He asked his peers on the Sustainable Development Committee to collaborate on a unique project: selling locally made chips to nearby schools.

What resulted was a truly formative experience. Theirs was an idea born of idealism; by producing a local product, they tried to negate the health risks of non-organic food and negative impacts of imported goods on the local economy. Yet, its sales confirmed to Ngawang that such ideas could be commercially viable. Their chips could in fact compete in an international marketplace. The true success of their project, Ngawang says, was not in selling potato chips, but rather in “selling the idea of innovation – of YI”.

The impact of that experience with YI has endured. While implementing his project, he met and became friends with Farmer Sangay, a professional who had established a co-operative that produce and sold local goods. Ngawang was impressed with the collaborative underpinnings of the co-operative model.



The second batch of YI members after their first public sitting session

He thought to himself one day, “Why not try to make a co-operative myself?” And he did just that and started Y Co-op with thirty members. Importantly, it mirrors Ngawang’s initial experience with BCMD. For him, “YI was the experience where [he] learned that working in a team and doing something collectively has a far greater impact than working alone.”

Encouraging and Expanding Public Discourse



The first conversation on the Druk Journal to discuss the next possible themes and on how the journal can be improved

Bhutanese culture places emphasis on social harmony rather than individual expression. In a hierarchical and oral society, speaking up has its constraints. It is sometimes akin to questioning an elder's authority and considered deeply disrespectful. As a result, many people tend not to voice opposing or alternative views in a public forum even when they have valid opinions. Few people, especially the youth, feel empowered to voice their concerns or beliefs about what's best for society. Moreover, tall barriers exist between citizens and the policy makers meant to serve them; feedback, if ever provided at all, is often done so anonymously.

BCMD **"encourages and expands public discourse"** through forums and seminars intended to foster a more open and inclusive culture of policy formation. Through discussion, collective deliberation ensues, thus ensuring that all citizens have the opportunity to contribute to Bhutan's budding democracy.

2015 in Review

Journalism



10 fellowships endowed
54 print stories
10 audio stories
3 video stories

Nu. 2,056,408 funds disbursed to support socially conscious journalism
10 panel discussions aired on national t.v.



Journalists work together in the annual Media Dialogue



Conversations



5 topics covered: civil society, journalism, contemporary social issues, media & democracy.

12 days of conversation

295 students, journalists, media managers, thought leaders, civil servants & CSO employees reached

Former Chief Justice H.E Lyonpo Sonam Tobgye traces the development of democracy during the human rights day forum

Encouraging and Expanding Public Discourse

In 2012, Chencho faced a particularly personal dilemma as to whether she should be “a journalist or a human being first”. When Chencho went to report on a rape crime, the young victim - who was only seventeen at the time - hid from her in the family’s cowshed, refusing to speak, while her parents told Chencho what had happened. Chencho asked the parents what they planned to do next, they said they had no idea. Chencho did not offer any advice either, but back in her office, she felt regretful. She had come from a broken home and knew the pain of growing up without a parent, so she returned to the family without her pen and pad, but with a desire to help them find justice.



Chencho Dema reporting from the field

She took the young woman to register her case at the Women and Child Protection Unit of the Thimphu police station. She then introduced the young woman to the staff of a civil society organisation, RENEW, for additional support. The suspect was detained, and the case proceeded to court. The memory of the case remained with Chencho in her first encounters with BCMD. It was conversations at the media dialogue of 2014 that particularly struck a chord with Chencho. She learned that any journalist could “transform a story” by shifting his or her viewpoint. Stories could be used to “find solutions, rather than blame society or the government” for misfortune. With a newfound desire to use journalism to enact positive change, Chencho applied for and received a journalism fellowship from BCMD.

She used it to follow up on the same story she previously reported on, and looked at it as a story of triumph in the face of misfortune. The young woman who suffered rape three years ago now has twin daughters; she has found love and married a wonderful man. She continues to fight against her perpetrator in court to ensure that her voice is heard. With new stories such as these, Chencho hopes to change the defeatist attitude that usually accompanies crime victims. Through these stories, she hopes that victims will learn that “life does not have a full stop after every bad incident”; it goes on, oftentimes with hope and happiness.



Journalists, bloggers, lecturers, film makers attend the Bhutan Media Dialogue 2015

Resources for Democracy



Instructors of Early Child Care Development and Non Formal Education use BCMD's children's book for story telling sessions and to lead discussions with their students

Throughout Bhutan, few materials exist that are devoted to the topic of democracy and citizen action. Schools, libraries, and even the public domain rarely offer resources that allow citizens to comprehend what democracy entails. Moreover, the limited resources that do exist tend to target the elite, leaving most segments of society with little recourse to learn more about democracy.

BCMD provides a variety of **"resources for democracy"** that target citizens from all walks of life. Print publications are often translated into Dzongkha to ensure readership in the most remote parts of the country; radio programmes and music videos are produced to reach out to a typically disengaged youth population. By making democracy an accessible subject, BCMD contributes to civic education and enables citizens to understand the democracy they live in.

One of the BCMD's new publication is the Druk Journal, launched in 2015 as a journal of thought and ideas. The first edition of the journal had the theme "identity" and articles from the journal have been used in colleges to prompt discussion on topics of importance to an evolving democracy.

2015 in Review

Print



4 mediums:
newsletter, bookmark,
academic journal & radio
transcript

2 languages:
English & Dzongkha

11,200 copies
distributed

Video



BCMD's reading video was used in many schools and colleges during National Reading Year



3 audiences:
readers, CSOs &
youth

21,873 views
on Youtube

Audio



2 mediums:
rap song & audio book

1 topic:
democracy

528 listeners



BCMD teaches youth and teachers to create multimedia stories

Resources for Democracy

Soon after her national service ended, she took a civil service exam and gained employment at the Planning Commission. But only three months later, she went to her supervisor and “asked to be released from her new job” so she could return as a teacher in Pema Gatsel as that brief, unexpected stop in her life had impacted her so deeply.

That singular experience led to a career path devoted to progressive education. As the founder and principal of the Early Learning Center (ELC), Madam Deki now leads a school attempting to put GNH principles into practice.



The children’s audio book found its way to Laya and Gasa Primary Schools

“If happiness is the goal, what would be the pathways to education?” she and her teachers asked as they began working. They soon found an answer in “Design for Change,” an international movement to empower children themselves to actively craft the solutions to problems they observe in their lives, schools and communities.

It was this philosophy that prompted ELC to record and distribute audiobooks based on BCMD’s “What’s Fair?” and “Who’s Responsible?” publications. Students at ELC felt that “the need [for knowledge about democracy] is so much greater in rural communities where [they] don’t have access or privileges” that the urban centers offer.

Moreover, they felt that recorded voice will better reach an often illiterate rural population. And so, the students translated BCMD’s publications into audiobooks and began distributing them out to ELC’s rural partners.

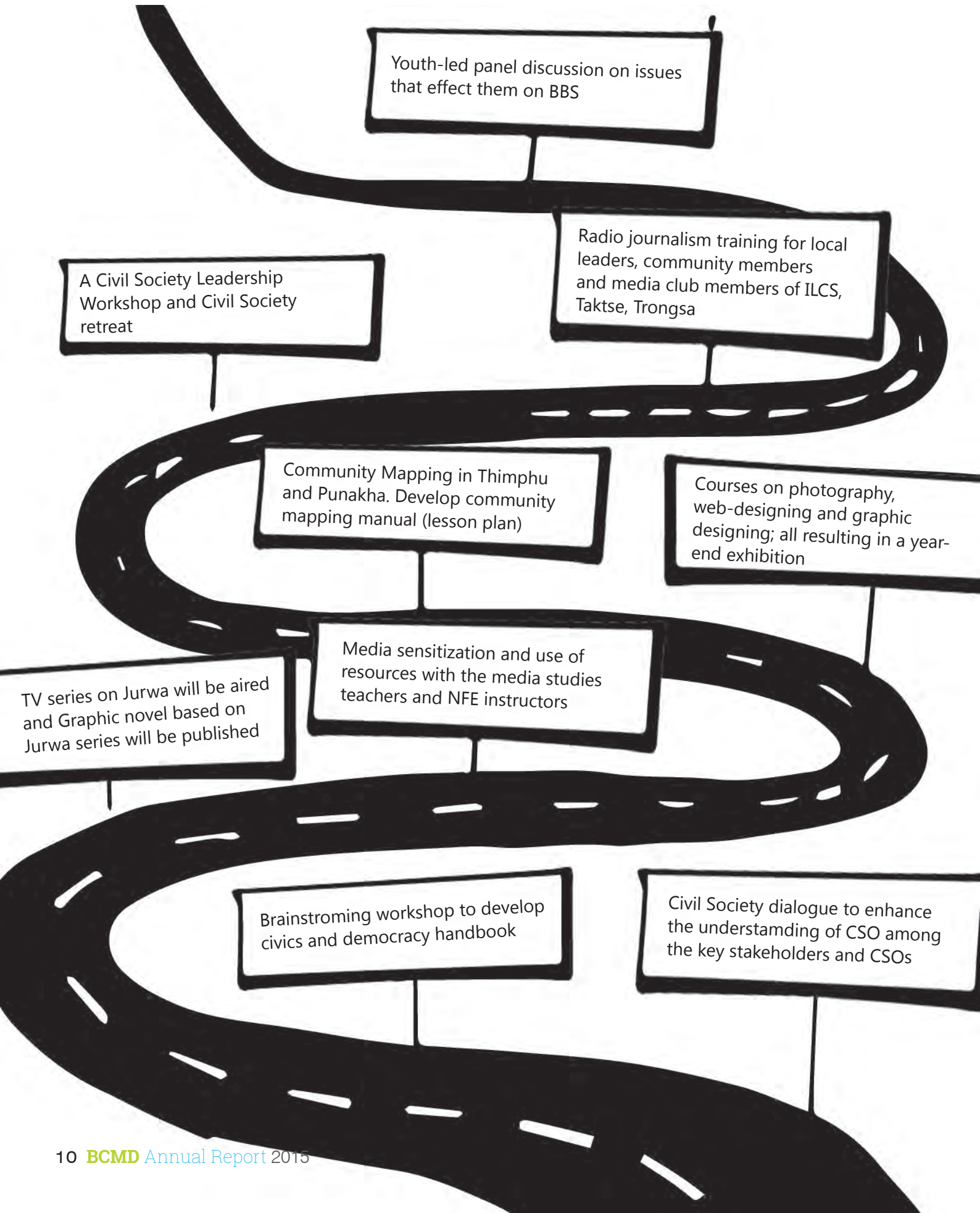
In recording the stories, the students have also themselves learnt the democratic values of fairness and responsibility. BCMD and ELC continue to work together to deepen understanding of democracy among youth and schools.



ELC in partnership with BCMD and READ Bhutan, launch children’s audio book. What’s Fair and Who’s responsible - modelling democratic values of fairness and responsibility



The Year Ahead



Funding and financial overview

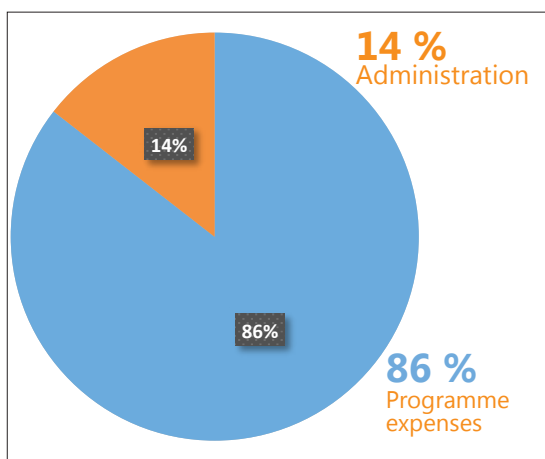
The Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy has been able to undertake many activities with a broad impact on many individuals and institutions in 2015. We thank the institutions and individuals who supported our work. Your support enables us to reach an increasing number of Bhutanese youth, local leaders and people in decision making with civic education and to hone their skills of citizenship.

Programming expenses represent 86 % of expenditures in 2015. BCMD continues to carry out most of the designing of curricula and implementation of the activities we offer.

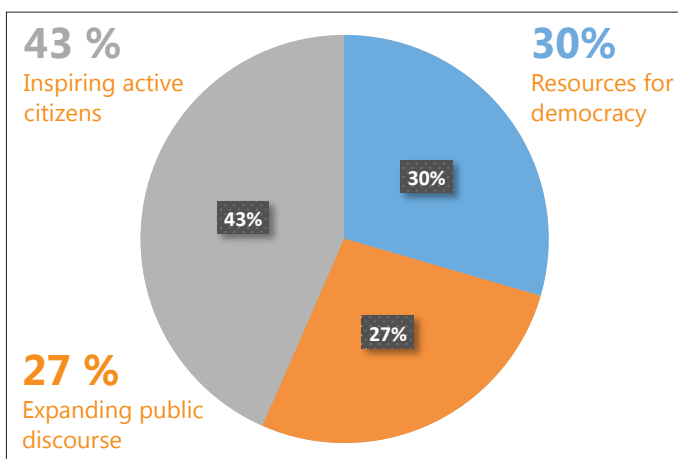
You can support BCMD's work through the following:

- Bhutan Foundation a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code in the United States.www.bhutanfound.org/BCMD
- Global giving.www.globalgiving.org/donate/10975/the-bhutan-centre-for-media-and-democracy-bcmd/
- Or support us directly. Contact us on bcmd@bcmd.bt

TOTAL EXPENDITURE



EXPENDITURES BY PROGRAMME AREAS



Income statement

BCMD income and expenditure statement as of 31 December 2015

Particulars	Amount in Nu.
Income	
Foundations	189,212.11
Individual Contributions	6,250
International Development Orgs.	7,263,494
International Nonprofit Orgs	3,289,141.56
Misc. Income	386,461.31
Rental income	155,000
Other Income	10,000
Total Income	11,299,558.98
Expense	
Core operational Cost	760,856.74
overhead/Recurrent Cot	803,970.94
Miscellaneous	19,421
Depreciation	102,626
Programme Expenses	9,968,284.39
Total Expense	11,655,158.64
Net Income	-355,599.66

*Note: Helvetas project audited for 2015

UNICEF project carried out onsite visit

DIPD project monitored and reviewed by DIPD



Yeshey Choden
Admin/Finance Officer
Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy



Siok Sian Pek-Dorji
Executive Professional Director
Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy



Nancy Strickland
Chairperson
Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy

Acknowledgments

BCMD's Board of Directors

1. Nancy Strickland, Executive Director, Bhutan Canada Foundation
2. Dr Tashi Wangchuk, CEO, Thunder Motors
3. Dr Jagar Dorji, Consultant
4. Dr Dorji Thinley, Royal University of Bhutan
5. Tashi Choden, Independent consultant
6. Siok Sian Pek-Dorji, Executive Director, the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy

BCMD's Advisors

1. Howard Schneider, Stony Brook University
2. James Bettinger, Stanford University
3. Judy Rogers, A.I. Specialist
4. Judith Brown, Consultant
5. Kavi Chongkittavorn, The Nation Multimedia Group, Thailand
6. Mark Mancall, Professor Emeritus, Stanford University
7. Martin Tan, Institute of Societal Leadership, S'pore Management University
8. Sangay Khandu, National Council Member

BCMD's Supporters

BCMD wishes to thank the following institutions and individuals for their support.

Institutions

1. Bhutan Foundation
2. Bhutan Power Corporation
3. Bhutan Telecom Limited
4. Canada Fund
5. Civil Society Organisations Authority (CSOA)
6. Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy (DIPD)
7. Fredric Roberts Photography
8. Friendship Association of Denmark and Bhutan (FADB)
9. Globalgiving Foundation
10. HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation
11. Open Society Foundation (OSF)
12. The Fetzer Institute
13. UNDP
14. UNICEF

Individuals

Among our many supporters, BCMD's friends from abroad and Bhutan continue to support us as resource persons, facilitators, volunteers and interns. We appreciate their involvement with our work and their contributions to making a difference. Kadringche-la

“ Democracy is an everyday exercise... ”



“ What we say, do, think and discuss contributes to the widening of democratic space. ”



“ An engaged society, a vibrant society. ”

