

# MI-KHUNG

Media and Democracy in Bhutan | www.bcmd.bt | Volume 1, Issue 2, December 2011

Pg. 3

Perspectives: The  
Bhutanese media  
crisis



Pg. 9

BCMD launched  
its first in a series  
of children's books

Pg. 12

What does  
it mean to be a  
citizen?



## CSOs can play a Vital Role in a GNH Country

■ BCMD

Civil Society Organisations can play a valuable role in fostering Gross National Happiness, a half-day forum held on November 16th, 2011 found.

The event, which was organised by the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy included 44 representatives of various civil society organisations in the kingdom, also agreed that the government could do more to tap the potentially important contributions that CSOs can make in the shaping of national policies in Bhutan.

The first ever forum aimed at helping CSOs focus their vision of GNH also saw lively dialogue on what constitutes GNH, the challenges of realising GNH in a country like Bhutan, and the ways in which the government can include a greater number of civil society organisations in the drafting and discussion of national policies.

“The recent GNH study should be studied as a whole since all the domains of GNH such as Community vitality, Cultural resilience, and Psychological well-being are inter-related,” the President of the Centre for Bhutan Studies, Dasho Karma Ura, said. “The findings provide data that can

>> Continue pg. 7

## Quality or Quantity: the Future of Broadcasting in Bhutan



Elizabeth Smith sharing her experience on Broadcasting.

■ Elizabeth Smith,  
[www.transformingbroadcasting.org.uk](http://www.transformingbroadcasting.org.uk)

Bids are now being considered for new commercial TV channels for Bhutan, and the expectation is that they will be up and running by the start of 2013. This will mean a major change in the culture of Bhutan, protected as it is to some extent from the full force of local consumer-driven commercial TV. Accordingly, some argue that it would be wise to treat commercial TV in Bhutan as tourism is treated: to go for quality rather than quantity. However, the Government is committed to an Open Media policy.

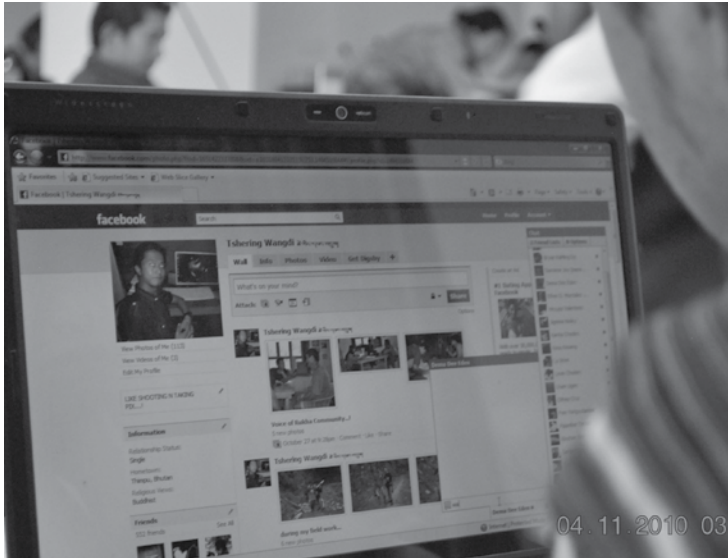
It should be remembered, though, that market forces cannot meet all the TV and radio needs of the public. The commercial sector, unless required to behave otherwise by the regulator, sees its mission as

making money for its shareholders rather than to serve rural populations, or minorities or the disadvantaged. TV is such a powerful medium that it affects the way people think. Local commercial TV encourages people, especially the young, to think that success and happiness lies in possessions rather than within oneself.

The traditions of Bhutan go back to its history as a successful subsistence economy, where money had little meaning. As a British envoy, George Bogle, put it when he travelled through Bhutan in 1774: the people of Bhutan “are strangers to falsehood and ingratitude. Theft and every other species of dishonesty to which the lust of money gives birth, are little known.” It would be sad if the current trustees of Bhutan’s distinctive culture were to

>> Continue pg. 10

## Facebook: Is it Good or Bad?



■ Myra Sioco

In Bhutan, with a population of 699,847, there are about 50,000 internet users as of June 2010. Of these users, 30,060 are on Facebook based on a research conducted in August 2010.

What is this “Facebook” that is attracting so many of Bhutan’s internet users? Facebook is an online social utility that helps people communicate more effectively with their friends and family. It keeps people connected even when they’re worlds apart.

Technologies have indeed made our work a lot easier and convenient. But does it really make us a productive and better person?

Tshering, a Media Officer, admits that he spends more than four hours a day on the Internet, the majority of which is spent on Facebook. Often-times, he is unable to finish his tasks because he could not stop chatting with friends.

A mother of three shared that her four-year old son would rather play games on his Facebook account than with his siblings. Her child spends about two hours on the computer everyday after school.

One private company

employee said that Facebook is quite addictive. She looks forward to comments and messages posted daily by her friends and relatives. She is happy that her former classmates and colleagues are now easily accessible.

There are so many stories about relationships being damaged, people losing their jobs and quality family bonding time lost. It is time to remind the people on the responsible use of Social Networking sites, and to truly examine whether it is improving or damaging our lives.

## Free Media: A Double-edged Sword

■ Indira Khatiwara

The explosion of media and media-related technologies may be a boon or a curse for Bhutan depending on how we respond to it.

Development in media has made it easier to acquire and share information and, even, to shape current affairs around the globe. Indeed, media can be seen as third eye through which a person can view the entire world. However, it also has the ability to blind people and drag them into a world of misinformation, darkness and despair.

In its many forms including print, digital and social networking sites media can serve many functions: it helps educate us about the world, keeps us informed, and entertains us when we are bored. Yet, a very famous Bhutanese saying goes *za shen men, ma shen du*, a piece of traditional wisdom that can roughly be translated as “even medicine taken without care can be poison”. This holds true for the use of, and reliance on, new and emerging media in all its varied forms.

What seem most important are a critical analysis of and a

proper understanding of the impact of our media consumption patterns on our lives.

For example, action movies may depict characters whose behaviours have been carefully scripted and digitally enhanced in other words, characters who are not real. The consumer must be able to understand that the real world is different from the constructed world of the media.

However, this is not to discount the positive impacts of the developments in media technology in recent years. Today, it is easier than ever to contact and stay in touch with people who are thousands of miles away. The Internet and mobile technology have succeeded in shrinking the world to a gadget that can fit inside your pocket. At the same time, too much of everything is venomous. Becoming too dependent on digital devices may lead to addictive behaviour, which can then lead to health problems, disruptions in eating patterns, strained eyes and frustrations. Socially, we may find ourselves spending less time with our offline, real-life, relationships, our family and friends and more with virtual online ones. But it’s not just time we’re losing, it’s money! Addiction to mobile phones can lead to an excessive amount of money spent on mobile vouchers, money that may be better spent on gifts for friends or books to read.

Thus media may be a boon to the intelligent but a curse to the fool. So be smart, be intelligent, think critically and consume media wisely!

**You can now join us on Facebook  
and be a part of BCMD. Keep  
yourself updated and know more  
about our latest activities.**

**You can also send in contributions for our next  
issue of Mi-khung.**

**To contribute, email to [bcmd@bcmbd.bt](mailto:bcmd@bcmbd.bt)  
[www.bcmbd.bt](http://www.bcmbd.bt)**

## Social media on the rise

■ Siok Sian Pek-Dorji

One of Bhutan's more controversial social media sites, [Bhutantimes.com](http://Bhutantimes.com), shut down in October after seven years of vibrant, sometimes controversial, discussions.

The site offended many people, including decision-makers who did not like blunt and often personal attacks. The site also highlighted issues that became subjects of conversation in homes, offices and bars around Bhutan.

The forum site hosted in California in the United States signaled a phase in Bhutan's early foray into social media use. In its sparse farewell, the site notes that during its existence, it has helped push the boundaries of social discussion in Bhutan, allowed for the meetings of minds and the building of a shared consciousness at a national level. While many of its postings were criticism voiced in the safety of anonymity, the site has been a close follower of Bhutan's recent historical change. Many Bhutanese did not appreciate the negative tone of voice that posters used to engage in the early days of social media use, but many also acknowledge that anonymity is inevitable in a small society.

Among Bhutanese social media users today, many believe that the site was a pressure valve enabling people to express their views, even if they were unsubstantiated. But that is a characteristic of social media that we are learning to accept.

*Check out another forum site [bhutanspeaks.bt](http://bhutanspeaks.bt) comprising news and views of citizens. Share your suggestions and ideas.*

[Bhutantimes.com](http://Bhutantimes.com) was representative of a world of social media that knows no bounds, and that can be more opinion than facts; making readers wade through the masses of infinite information to determine our view of the world.

Today, several other social media sites have become popular among an increasing number of social media users. Facebook, for example, has close to 55,000 users in Bhutan, a considerable number when you consider our population. Sites like the Bhutan Street Fashion and the Amend the Tobacco Facebook pages, have gained prominence, and the number of bloggers have also increased, all contributing to conversations about Bhutan. The Prime Minister, himself, manages his own FB page and his presence on social media has provided Bhutanese a new direct contact with the highest levels of government.

Social media will gain increasing importance as providers of forums and means of expression for a section of Bhutanese society. It is a vital channel for democratic discussion. And with the commitment of the government to broadband the country, Bhutan can only expect to see a growth in social media use.

As a post script to its closing statement, [Bhutantimes.com](http://Bhutantimes.com) says: "We exhort our many new newspapers, forums and Bhutanese spirits on the internet to fill the void we leave, if only because it really needs some filling".

## The Bhutanese Media Crisis

■ Tenzing Lamsang

The European debt crisis maybe the burning issue in world news today but here on home ground those of us in the Bhutanese media are facing a crisis of our own. Recent news of a private daily paper going bi-weekly and staff being laid off from some other private newspapers are indicators of that trend.

There are multiple reasons for the Bhutanese media crisis. In some cases not enough thought and planning is put into place when starting a paper. At times an inexperienced management takes decisions without proper research. The newspaper is also a business with a bottom line, so a detailed financial plan and business plan is a must with skilled people to execute it.

Unhealthy business practices like transferring money from the media company to other businesses or not plowing back money into the company further worsens the situation.

Due to a very nascent advertising culture advertisement is distributed irrespective of the reach, frequency, quality and content. Bhutan may be one of the few countries in the world where a private daily paper publishing six days a week would receive the same amount of advertisement as a weekly publishing once a week.

The Bhutanese media has several young and inexperienced reporters and marketing officers who are not receiving the right training and grooming. This affects both editorial content and financial revenue. This can only change when newspaper owners or the management realise that they have to look at long term growth and credibility instead of short term gains.

The Bhutanese Media as a business model is suffering

from the herd mentality that afflicts many other Bhutanese businesses making a business unviable due to too many businesses offering the same thing. This coupled with the lack of innovation and quality of most ventures ensures that they suffer the fate of the herd where the weakest and the least prepared die natural deaths.

What the Bhutanese Media needs are our own version of industry leaders like Steve Jobs; people who will light the way with new ideas and innovative perspectives rather than the mere "copy and paste" mentality we currently see. Launching "just another paper" will only spell financial disaster.

The solution is not to limit the number of media licenses, a move that would only create a "License Raj" but to allow the content, substance, maturity and creativity of a media house to determine its survival. This approach gives new players as well as existing organisations the opportunity to be more creative, innovative, professional and competent. With this approach, the Bhutanese media crisis though painful in the short-term will eventually lead to better professionalism in the media. Newspapers and publications that are established just for advertisement money or a quick buck with minimal circulation and poor quality will not thrive in the long term.

For the health and quality of our media scene only those media companies should be allowed to survive that are innovative, well planned, and have good in-depth content. We should let natural market forces weed out those companies that show long-term commitment and have truly invested in their human resources while letting the Bhutanese readership weed out the rest!

The image shows a screenshot of the Bhutan Speaks website. At the top, it says "BHUTAN SPEAKS" in bold, with "voices and views of citizens" underneath. Below this are three navigation links: "WHO'S LISTENING", "GUIDELINES", and "CONTACT US". In the center, there is a large, stylized graphic of a person's face. Below the graphic, it reads "A Site with Real People and Real Concerns" and "www.bhutanspeaks.bt". At the bottom left, there is a small logo for the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy.

# 4

## Tips on Media Literacy

Media and Democracy in Bhutan

| [www.bcmbd.bt](http://www.bcmbd.bt)

| Volume 1, Issue 2, December 2011

### Tips on Responsible Media Use for the Young

Media can impact young minds in many significant ways. Talking with children about what they watch, read, and listen to is a critical step towards media literacy.

Parents should plan their family's media consumption in the same way they plan meals to achieve a balanced diet.

Here are some of the ways media can impact children and the remedies that educators, parents, community leaders, librarians, and other elders can take to influence healthy media consumption among children.

#### Impact of Media on Children

##### TV

- Can lead to aggressive behaviour
- Can terrify children
- Provides violent heroes to imitate
- Shows that violence is OK

##### Involves:

- Less use of imagination
- Less direct contact with other persons
- Less imaginative play

## THE MEDIA DRUNGTSHO

### 5 TIPS FOR A HEALTHY TV DIET



**1. Pay attention to what is in the TV shows your child watches.** Make sure that the content is age appropriate.

**2. Talk to kids about what they see on TV.** If something you don't approve of appears on the screen, turn off the TV and use the opportunity to ask your child questions such as "Do you think it was okay when those men got in that fight?"

**3. Limit the number of TV watching hours.** Turn the TV off during meals, keep TVs out of kids' bedrooms, and set a good example - limit your own TV viewing!

**4. Offer fun alternatives to TV.** If your kids want to watch TV but you want them to turn it off, suggest alternatives like playing outside, starting a game of hide and seek, or reading a great book.

**5. Don't use TV as a baby-sitter for your children.** Doctors recommend that kids under age 2 have no screen time, and that kids older than 2 watch no more than 1-2 hrs a day of quality programming.

BCMD wishes to acknowledge and thank the following partners

# Spreading Media Literacy in Bhutan

# 5

Media and Democracy in Bhutan

| www.bcmbd.bt

| Volume 1, Issue 2, December 2011

## A New Publication for Takste



**Dangsel member interviewing a class XII examination topper on the way to prepare for examinations.**

■ Stephen R Peria

A new media publication by the Taktse Institute for Language and Culture Studies begins its life later this month.

Called Dangsel, which means “Spreading Light” in Dzongkha, the publication was inspired by a visit earlier in September 2011 by staff of Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD), led by the local non-profit’s Executive Director, Siok Sian Pek Dorji .

A newly formed 16-member media club at the institution came up with the idea for the publication after a series of meetings to come up with a name, logo and focus of the publication.

It was decided that Dangsel will consist of eight pages with contributions from the various clubs at the institute, the Trongsa Dzongkha, the institute’s Dzongkha Department and the general student body.

Members of Dangsel’s editorial board explained that the goal

>> *Continue pg. 7*



## Sherubtse Media Society



■ Kesang Om  
Sherubtse College,  
Eng/Evs (3rd Semester)

The newly formed Sherubtse Media Society (SMS) is a group drawn from among the faculty and student body of the college.

The society was formed by four second-year students Indira, Karma Tenzin, Kesang Om and Sonam Tobgay after attending a Media Literacy workshop for two weeks organised by Bhutan Center for Media and Democracy (BCMD) during summer break of 2011 in Thimphu. It is divided into several divisions with a staff moderator and a student coordinator. Among the activities of the SMS is a morning assembly presentation, a monthly newspaper, and a weekly radio show.

During the assembly presentation, members of the society take turns for about 10 minutes making a PowerPoint and video presentation. The presentation covers local, national and international news using resources such as the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS), Kuenselonline, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and the New Delhi Television (NDTV).

This semester we had many high officials visiting the college such as HRH DASHO Jigyel, Opposition Leader Lyonpo Tshering Tobgay, the Chief of the Royal Bhutan and others. The meetings with these dignitaries and the Question and Answer session with the students that followed were captured and made into a video presentation for the morning assembly.

The society also manages a monthly newspaper called ‘The Tower’. It was inaugurated on the 13th October to coincide with the



**Sherubtse media society members learn to become reporters.**

royal wedding. The main objective of the paper is to foster the creative writing talents of the students. “The Tower is a medium which facilitates students to showcase their writing and creativity.

It also provides a platform for the students to raise their thoughts and concern to a large mass of audience”, said Director Singye Namgyal in the Tower’s maiden issue.

The society also invites visiting journalists to give presentations on the media. These resource speakers have included Bhutanese reporters and editors as well as staff from the Bhutan Center for Media and Democracy (BCMD).

# 6

# World Democracy Day, 2011

Media and Democracy in Bhutan

| www.bcnd.bt

| Volume 1, Issue 2, December 2011

To celebrate World Democracy Day we asked entrants to explore what it means to be a citizen, urging them to think beyond basic voting to reflect on the roles and responsibilities of each and every citizen in a young and emerging democracy. Entrants were

asked to express their understanding in writing or through any visual medium such as video or photography. Cash prizes were given for the top three entries in each category and certificates and pens awarded for meritorious contributions.

Here are top six excerpts from the entries:

“Wearing the national dress, speaking the national language, and holding an ID card may legally define a citizen, but understanding and feeling yourself a citizen has a meaning broader than these physical markers. He or she is a person with honesty, a person true to himself or herself and to others as a whole. Above everything, all that it takes to be a good citizen of any nation (or, for that matter, the world) is basically being a good human being.”

**Lotey Om (1<sup>st</sup> prize)**

**University of New England, New South Wales, Australia**

“Citizenship demands us to be concerned and to care about the world around us, and then to act on the problems. We have a responsibility to care about other citizens of the world and to have an understanding of and openness about their cultures, histories, and ideas. In a global world, we live interconnected lives with crucial transnational dimensions, and it is every global citizen’s responsibility to be informed on how geopolitical realities shape life today.”

**Riku Dhan Subba (2<sup>nd</sup> prize)**

**Programme Officer, Department of Youth and Sports**

“The case of global citizenship will be Gompo’s biggest challenge [...] If Gompo litters on the streets of Thimphu; he is littering the streets of the world. If Gompo drives a Hummer polluting the Bhutanese air, he is one of many melting the Himalayan glaciers. If Gompo wants to become a good citizen, he will definitely have to understand that global interdependence means that our actions today will have an undeniable impact on his world and that of his children.”

**Dechen Yangzom (Tied 3<sup>rd</sup>), Thimphu**

“In the end, what citizenship really means in Bhutan’s new democracy is that every thumb makes a difference in the nation’s journey for generations to come. Citizenship means not only the choice to think and rethink but also the authority, prerogative, privilege and opportunity to exercise our choices to benefit the nation’s journey toward the goals of peace, prosperity and Gross National Happiness. The result of each ballot will be proof of the power of the citizenship of that individual. It will have the power to shape the nation’s future and unfurl socio-economic changes that will be Bhutan’s blessing in times to come.”

**Sonam Tshering (Tied 3<sup>rd</sup>)**

**Assistant Legal Officer, Bhutan Narcotic Control Authority**

Democracy in Bhutan has given every Bhutanese above the age of 18 to feel the pride of being a part of the nation building, in his/her own ways, by being able to cast his/her vote. Unfortunately, I am still 13 and have a couple of years before

I can cast my vote to choose the leader of my choice. However, this doesn’t mean I don’t have any role to identify myself with. For instance, seeing my elder family members casting their rights during both the national and local elections made me feel belonged to a family who is enjoying the democratic rights of a new democracy country Bhutan.

Today, my role is as a youth of the country, popularly categorized as the ‘future citizen’ of the country. And in my own little ways, we youth can exercise our rights, be it in the schools or during the camps. We are encouraged to practice the art of voting in the school to choose our own school prefects and representatives whom we feel are more capable than the rest. 4th year of our democratic government and similarly the 4th year since we adopted this system in the schools.

**Lilly Yangchen**

**Class VIII, Lungtenzampa Middle Secondary School**

A citizen in true sense is much more than legitimacy, access to national wealth and practicing rights. It means attaining other critical qualifications in terms of moral values, principles and sense of responsibility that goes much beyond fulfilling individual needs. No one denies that our Kings are the true citizens of our country who will never be wiped out of the hearts and minds of this nation. But when we reflect to our reasons, we do not tend to follow the technical definitions and legitimacy, rather we reflect the qualities that our kings possess. We only reflect to their selfless services and their sincere dedication to the happiness, wellbeing and security of this nation. It is this intention that matters.

**Kinley Rinchen, Royal University of Bhutan**



We might witness alcoholic nuisance in every 5 days while a domalcoholic nuisance in every 5 mins. (Atleast i do) Being a citizen definitely doesn’t mean this. Along with Tobacco and Alcohol, Doma Ban is required too.

- Deepika Adhikari

## Democracy Requires Independent Thought

■ Lhawang Ugyel

As our young democracy matures, Bhutanese people must learn to make independent judgments that are best for themselves and the nation. The old traditional values of communalism and unquestioning loyalty may have served us well in the past but changing times demand that we step away from “groupthink” to take informed and independent decisions.

In a study I am currently undertaking, based on Dutch researcher Geert Hofstede’s Values Survey Module 2008, Bhutan scored very low on Independent Values (IDV).

But what does a low IDV score mean for Bhutan’s democracy?

It means that, in a collective and small society like ours, independent voices can be drowned out by a few strong personalities.

It can also mean that our

culture does not encourage questioning authority and that those in authority do not accept challenges (even positive ones) favorably.

In addition the strong tendency toward groupthink may lead to a desire to appease decision-makers that are strongest in a group, overriding the more balanced choices that may be more realistic and best for all.

In the IDV study we found that successful democracies like the US, Norway and India scored high on independent decision-making, fulfilling an important criteria of providing equal voice and representation for all their individual members.

In conclusion, it is important that Bhutan’s culture be nurtured but not at the cost of independent reason. In a world that is increasingly integrated and where knowledge is now easily accessible, we can learn from best practices in other societies and there is no need to reinvent the wheel!

## CSOs can play a Vital Role in a GNH Country

> *Continued from pg. 1*

help government and civil society be more targeted in their activities.”

Also speaking at the forum, the Secretary of the Gross National Happiness Commission, Karma Tshiteem said “Evolution, not revolution is how we want to bring about change.” The Secretary added that the government was doing more than most governments in scrutinising policies to ensure that they were GNH sensitive.

“We try to balance material returns with overall well-being in terms of the spiritual, emotional, cultural needs of Bhutanese society,” the Secretary said.

Among the other important conclusions reached at the forum was the fact that more needs to be done to study the possibilities of partnership between the government and civil society organisations

in achieving the common goal of Gross National Happiness.

“For too long government has focused on the hard part of development; infrastructure needs which require much more money but is in effect easier to implement,” said Karma Tsheetim. “The soft areas, such as social development, cultural and community resilience and vitality need less monetary investment but is more important and difficult today.”

It was also pointed out during the discussions that much of the work of CSOs already involve these “soft areas” of development ranging from youth development, to advocacy for people living with HIV and disabilities, the prevention of domestic violence and rehabilitation of alcoholics, as well as initiatives to address youth unemployment and media and democracy literacy.

## A New Publication for Takste

> *Continued from pg. 5*

of the publication was to be “a bridge between people and the government.”

Singye Wangchuk a second year degree student said: “Joining Dangsels gave me the opportunity to develop my confidence to speak in front of a crowd, interact with different kinds of people, and research and write reports etc...”

Dangsels will make its maiden appearance at the end of December 2011.

*Stephen R Peria is a Lecturer at the Institute of Language and Cultural Studies*



**A glimpse of the workshop at ILCS that resulted in the formation of the media club and their publication ‘Dangsels’**

## Learning to Write Creative Non-Fiction and Commentary



*Participants discussing their story ideas.*

A Creative Writing Workshop on Tradition and Modernity in Bhutan allowed participants of all ages to share their stories and experiences earlier this year.

The workshop, which went from 19th to the 24th of July 2011, boasted a total of 14 enthusiastic attendees including students, tour operators, civil servants, teacher trainees, reporters, freelance writers, engineers and private individuals. The Director of the Knight Fellowship at Stanford University, Jim Bettinger, led the workshop.

Each participant wrote a story on Tradition and Modernity, resulting in a compilation scheduled to be published soon.

On the final day of the workshop, Jim Bettinger also met with reporters and editors to discuss how to write effective commentary for newspapers and the differences between editorial, opinion, features and commentary writing.

## Stories in Photographs



*Pictures taken by participants on the theme 'what makes us happy?'*

Budding young photographers in Thimphu took pictures of scenes from their lives in a workshop titled "My Changjiji, My Home". Wee Tan Yeong a volunteer at PHOTOKidz said he was amazed by the images the young participants brought back.

The two-day workshop had more than 17 participants consisting of out of school youth, recent graduates, reporters, students and staff of the Youth Centre.

Wee Tan introduced participants to the basics of photography through live demonstrations and by allowing the aspiring photographers to

handle equipment that included both DSLRs and other cameras. The workshop closed on November 4, 2011 with a slideshow of the images captured by the young participants. Earlier in summer BCMD ran a week-long media literacy workshop at the Loselling school in Changjiji where students learnt to use photos and powerpoint to tell stories about living in Changjiji.

## Forum: Social Media and Democracy



*Participant questioning the speakers on the lack of ICT in rural Bhutan.*

The Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy and the Royal Thimphu College organised a joint forum on Empowerment with Accountability on May 4, 2011. The forum marked World Press Freedom Day and was based on this year's theme 21st Century Media: New Frontiers, New Barriers.

The 115 participants from the Royal Thimphu College, the Royal Institute of Management and the Institute of Language and Cultural Studies discussed the role of Social Media in Bhutan.

## The Potential of Broadcasting in Bhutan



*Participant expressing his view on the potential of broadcasting in Bhutan.*

About 58 people consisting of members of parliament, broadcasters and people from a cross section of society met at the WWF Conference Hall on October 21, 2011 to discuss "The Potential of Broadcasting in Bhutan".

Among the topics discussed were suggestions on how media overseers like BICMA can formalise advertising codes and regulate the number of broadcast channels entering Bhutan. The forum also resulted in vibrant debate and some vital anecdotes about failed broadcast systems from veteran broadcasters like Ms. Elizabeth Smith (TransformingBroadcasting.Org).



## What's fair?: A Children Book



Madam Carolyn Tshering reading "What's fair?", a book to the children.

BCMD launched its first in a series of children's books entitled, *What's Fair* to spearhead its initiative on "educating for democracy". The book was launched on October 22, 2011 at the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck Public Library by the Minister of Education Lyonpo Thakur S. Powdyel. The event was attended by teachers, prominent children's book authors, reporters and over 30 primary school students. Madam Carolyn Tshering kicked off the event with a lively and entertaining reading of the book which was followed by Lyonpo sharing his views on fairness. Lyonpo further encouraged the students to remember that their conduct would always be reflected in Bhutan's health as a nation – a notion that he encapsulated in the dictum: "As I am, so is my nation".

## Seminar on Media, Democracy and Civic Engagement for Student Leaders



Teacher trainees discuss on media, democracy and civic education.

*"Active Citizenship for young people implies full and complete participation in society, commitment and the ability to practice that citizenship. Therefore, it is crucial to recognise and support the various forms in which young people participate in their own immediate environment such as schools and institutions."*

- Dasho Yangku Sherpa, Deputy speaker of National Assembly

Thirty four teacher trainees from the Paro College of Education participated in the seminar on "Media, Democracy and Civic Engagement" from September 30-October 1, 2011 at the Paro College of Education. As teacher trainees and student leaders, they play vital roles as agents of change in a Democracy. The seminar aimed to improve their understanding of media and its role in a democracy and how social media can create platforms for meaningful dialogues. Participants learnt how to use social media to foster civic participation.

## Media Training for Gewog Administrative Officers



Gewog Administrative Officers discuss ways to be more transparent through information sharing.

BCMD conducted a media sensitisation workshop for the Gewog Administrative Officers from the 12th to the 13th of September 2011. The training, which was held at the Royal Institute of Management, was aimed at paving the way for an informed and participatory society in Bhutan, as it is often recognised that poorer rural population groups the world over are often left out of the rapid proliferation of various forms of media as a means of communication. The workshop trained the participants how to write news releases and engage discussion on social media sites especially designed to enable Gewog Administrative Officers to share information for good democratic governance. They also interacted with the press and had Q and A session with the press. A total of 39 Gewog Administrative Officers participated in the workshop.

## Media Literacy Training for Sherubtse and Kanglung Students



Participants learn on the five core concepts of media literacy.

Following the participation in the summer of 2011's Media Nomads Workshop a group of 2nd year students from Sherubtse College started a media club called the Sherubtse Media Society (SMS). On the invitation of the SMS, Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy did a three day workshop from September 21 to 23, covering subjects like Media Literacy, Advertising, Propaganda, & Persuasive Techniques, Media and Stereotypes and Media for GNH. The two day workshop was participated by 59 students and lecturers from Sherubtse College. The workshop succeeded in bringing active engagement among the participants as it was evident by their comments and queries. Activities like ad-deconstruction re-emphasised what the participants had learnt during the workshop. The workshop was a mix of presentations, discussions and hands on activities which enabled the participants to understand what "media literacy" is and how media can be used to create active citizenry.

# 10 Focus on Media

Media and Democracy in Bhutan

| www.bcnd.bt

| Volume 1, Issue 2, December 2011

## How Happy is your Country?

■ Sean Ang

When I asked some of my friends which country is the happiest in the world, many mentioned Bhutan. Without a doubt Bhutan is being perceived as the happiest country in the world. Enter the phrase Gross National Happiness on any Internet search, and the country Bhutan appears in Wikipedia providing a historical context of the concept and the emphasis by the Bhutanese government on happiness as the ultimate goal of its society.

However, the question remains open. Is Bhutan really a happy country? Whose happiness are we talking about? Suppose that someone wanted to reside in Bhutan, will he or she become a Happier person? While these are some high level "tough" philosophical questions, what I want to share here are examples of how social media have been and be used to measure happiness and how policy makers can adapt this to develop a cost-efficient tool for monitoring happiness.

### Social Media and the National Mood

With the introduction of Facebook and Twitter worldwide, social scientists are developing methods to use social media as a proxy to measure happiness. For example if, in a particular week, we update 5 messages which are negatives, and 2 messages which are positives, we can conclude that in that week, we are unhappy. Let's examine these two messages:  
**Status 1** : My car breaks down. Am late for work. Angry with customers. (Negative message)  
**Status 2** : An old friend visited me. We had a good time together. (Positive message)

By analysing Facebook or Twitter messages, we are able to know the general mood of the social media users. It is up to policy makers then to develop

accurate proxy indicators to measure the state of the mood of social media users.

Researchers from the Northeastern University College of Computer and Information Sciences and Harvard Medical School have conducted a study entitled "Pulse of the Nation: U.S. Mood Throughout the Day Inferred from Twitter". The researchers scanned over 300 million tweets that were sent between September 2006 and August 2009. Using the word system from Affective Norms for English Words and Sentiment Analysis, each tweet was assigned a mood score based on the number of positive or negative words it contained.

Among the interesting conclusions are:

- The "early morning and late evening" have the "highest level of happiness."
- The West coast is "significantly happier" than the East coast
- Weekends are "much happier" than weekdays.

Another initiative called Gross National Happiness was conducted for US Facebook users through the analysis of emotion words of 100 Million Facebook users since September 2007. Lisa Zhang in a blog posting entitled "A More Global View of Gross National Happiness" further expanded this to 18 countries and noted cultural differences in happiness. For example, South Africans are happier on Fridays than Saturdays. In several countries such as Spain and Germany, people are more festive on Christmas Eve than on Christmas Day. Singaporeans are happier on New Year's Day than on New Year's Eve. The results showed a strong correlation between happy moods and public holidays or a triumph of their nation in a sports event.

Is Social Media an Accurate Measure of Happiness?

The use of Social Media as a proxy tool to measure National

Happiness can only work under two conditions. First, a majority of the nations being assessed must be online and be using social media actively. Secondly the Tweets or Facebook statuses must reflect their views or report their daily activities honestly.

If these two conditions are met, then policy makers can monitor state of happiness by analysing the mood of social

media users over a particular period of time. We can then make comparisons between various districts, between societal groups, or across time. Once the unhappy group or groups have been identified, intervention plans can then be developed to address the problems faced by those groups or to eliminate the cause of unhappiness altogether.

*Sean Ang is the Executive Director of Southeast Asia Centre for e-Media, a veteran in social media for Democracy. He was our resource person for the Social media and democracy conference.*

*The Gross National Happiness Facebook page does not even mention Bhutan even through the concept of GNH originated here. Is this perhaps a reflection that GNH is now becoming a global idea?*

## Quality or Quantity: the Future of Broadcasting in Bhutan

> Continued from pg. 1

squander this.

Some at BBS would like an additional channel, so that they would have one PSB channel and one entertainment one, funded by advertising revenue. The disadvantage of this could be that it would open BBS to charges of competing unfairly and taking money from advertisers which they feel should go to the commercial sector. Additionally, many viewers would probably watch only the entertainment and would no longer be exposed to the socially beneficial output which BBS transmits.

### Policy Options:

- Organise new legislation to define the independence and impartiality of BBS. It would include 3-5 year funding and pass control of its operational spending to BBS. In return, the Government would define what it requires from BBS, including, for example the hours of news and of children's programming and

education, and full financial accountability.

- Though this seems unlikely at the moment, the Government might look again at its policy of Open Media. It will be difficult to un-license commercial TV companies, and Bhutan might find itself as a much more consumer-oriented society than it would really like. If the principle of Open Access to the media were modified, the Regulator could add a diversity and quality requirement to its licensing criteria. The Regulator could also require a low proportion of PSB content in the output of all the commercial TV stations. Some limit on the DTH channels could also be considered, to keep out the least desirable ones.
- A quota for independent local production could be imposed on all local broadcasting organisations, to encourage the independent sector.

*Elizabeth Smith was formerly Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association.*

## Upcoming Activities, 2011 & 2012

### Media Nomads 3, A peer-to-peer media literacy programme

**Tentative Date:** December 14- 24, 2011/January 2012

**Focus:** The programme is designed to strengthen youth's abilities to think for themselves communicate effectively using media, and their powerful voices to contribute to the quality of life in their families, their communities. Will also focus on building the foundations for media literacy, enabling the youth to more critically evaluate the media they consume on a day to day basis.

**For whom:** Youth.

### Bhutan Media Dialogue 2012

**Date:** February/March, 2012

**Focus:** Bring the media and a cross section of society together for discourse and exchange of ideas to develop the media in Bhutan. To discuss and explore the role of media, its identity and responsibilities.

**For whom:** Reporters, editors, representatives of civil society, government, constitutional agencies and anyone who is interested in understanding and exploring the role of media to deepen democracy.

### Journalism Workshop

**Tentative Date:** February/March, 2012

**Focus:** To give participants a better understanding of Journalism ethics and reporting for elections. It also teaches them how to visualise stories for a multimedia world with sessions on photography, video editing and organising news broadcast.

**For whom:** Journalists and Radio Jockeys.

### Media, Democracy and Civic Participation Seminar

**Tentative Date:** March/April, 2012

**Focus:** To sensitise teachers and student leaders on the role of media in a democracy and how media can promote meaningful dialogue. To explore means by which we can promote public discourse and public space in Bhutan, especially in schools.

**For whom:** Teacher trainees at Paro and Samtse College of Education.

### Media Sensitisation Workshop for GAOs 2

**Tentative Date:** January 9-11, 2012

**Focus:** To enhance the capacity of GAOs in various gewogs on how to be more effective in sharing public information for good democratic governance. To sensitise them on the important and strengthened role of media in a democracy and how to work with media organisations in public information sharing.

**For whom:** Gewog Administrative Officers.

### Creative Non-fiction writing Workshop

**Date:** June, 2012

**Focus:** To introduce the elements of creative non-fiction writing as a genre in Bhutan and to provide a platform for the writers to exchange their ideas. To enable people to speak up and share stories and to add to the diversity of voices heard in Bhutan's democracy.

**For whom:** Writers, aspiring writers, and anyone who has a passion for writing.

## Other Completed Activities, 2011

### Media Literacy Workshop at the Institute of Language and Cultural Studies

**Date:** September 19, 2011

**Focus:** The workshop introduced media literacy to the College of Language and Cultural Studies. It was also an initiative to help them start a media club.

**Participants:** 26 participants including faculty members and students of ILCS.

**Results/ Impacts:** The Institute has now started their own media club "Dangsel" which means spreading the light. The club members have already started their activities like reporting and presentations to their club members.

### Workshop at the READ Library in Ura

**Date:** September 20, 2011

**Focus:** The workshop consisted of the core concepts of media literacy. The main purpose of this workshop was also to take BCMD's media literacy activities to different regions of the country and motivate youth who can do similar activities in their schools.

**Participants:** 10 students from Ura Middle Secondary School and two librarians from the Rural Education and Development Foundations (READ) library.

**Results/ Impacts:** Students learnt about the core concepts of media literacy enabling them to analyse media environment around them.

## What it means to be a citizen?



*"A citizen is one who understands the importance of his responsibilities and fulfills them in the stipulated time."*

**Singye Wangchuk, II Year BA, Institute of Language and Cultural Studies, Taktse.**



*"Being a citizen of Bhutan for me is being blessed and finding heaven on earth which ultimately drives me to love, harness and protect my country."*

**Tenzin Norden,  
Miss Bhutan Contestant, 2009**



*"To be a citizen means to not only be critical about the country's flaws but also be constructive in approaching them."*

**Ugyen Kelzang, Teacher  
Jigme Sherubling High School**



*"Being a citizen means having the freedom and respect for others. It means having equal rights and fair treatment."*

**Sonam Choeden, Youth Worker, YDF**



*"A citizen is someone who serves the country with gratitude."*

**Bothpa, 65, Construction worker**



*"To be a Bhutanese citizen is a blessing with complexity. Blessed to be living in an era of development and prosperity but with the complexity of nurturing individual culture with modernisation."*

**Sonam Lham, Asst. manager,  
Youth Centre, Changjiji**

## The 7 Fundamental Duties of a Bhutanese Citizen

As citizens it is our moral duty to vote but our duty doesn't just stop there. As we witness our country enter its fourth year of democracy it is time to reflect on the responsibilities we have as citizens. Here are essential points that capture the essence of fundamental duties as described in Bhutan's Constitution.

1. A Bhutanese citizen shall preserve, protect and defend the sovereignty and security of the nation.
2. A Bhutanese citizen shall preserve the environment, culture and heritage of the nation.
3. A Bhutanese citizen shall foster tolerance, mutual respect and the spirit of brotherhood amongst all Bhutanese regardless of their background.
4. A Bhutanese citizen shall respect the National Flag and the National Anthem.
5. A Bhutanese citizen shall not tolerate or participate in acts that intend harm or injury to another person, and shall, furthermore, take necessary steps to prevent such harmful acts.
6. A Bhutanese citizen shall have the responsibility to provide help, to the greatest possible extent, to victims of accidents and those in need in times of natural calamity.
7. Every person shall have the duty to uphold justice and to act against corruption.