

MI-KHUNG

Media and Democracy in Bhutan

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Will media influence the voters in 2013 election?

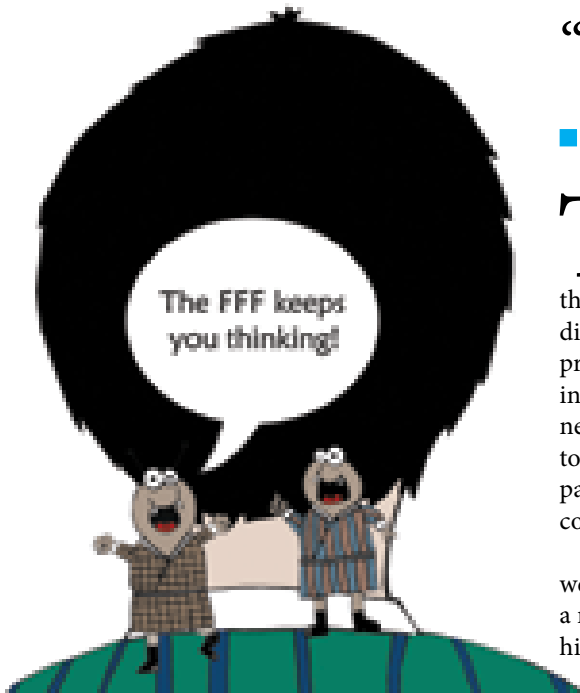
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The Sustainability of Media



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What does it mean to be a citizen?



“No Democracy without Fleas!”

■ Prof. Mark Mancall

The other day, as I was walking down Norzin Lam toward the First Traffic Circle, I felt a strong need to scratch the back of my neck. I reached behind and discovered a couple of bites and, not unsurprisingly, two fleas busily feeding themselves in the midst of the gross nutritional hairiness not far from my left ear. I was about to scratch them into the next cycle on their path to enlightenment when I heard them conversing:

“Tenzing, I’m really glad you suggested we fly up here from this guy’s clothes. What a relief from the suffocating mustiness of his gho! Why doesn’t he ever take it to the

cleaners?”

“Well, Tashi, there really aren’t enough cleaning establishments in Thimphu, much less cleanliness! Maybe they’ll include some in the XIth Five Year Plan. On the other hand, more cleanliness would not really be good news for us, would it?”

“No, you’re right. I invited myself to dinner over at the Parliament the other day. They were all too busy debating weighty matters to pay any attention to me, so I flitted from buffet to buffet, really gorging myself. But I did bump into some flies. We had a really open discus-

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“Democracy Education: Understanding Rights & Responsibilities.”

■ BCMD/ Mansoor Fassihi

To commemorate the 5th International Day of Democracy, BCMD, in collaboration with the National Council (NC) and the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS), organised a discussion forum in Thimphu on September 15.

Focusing on “Democracy Education”, the UN’s official theme for this year’s observance, the forum brought together more than two hundred high school and college-aged students to reflect on the status of Bhutan’s democratic development.

“Now that Bhutan has embarked on its journey to democracy, there is no going back,” Claire Van Der Vaeren, the Resident Coordinator of UNDP, said in her keynote address. “We need to find ways to sustain the achievements of Bhutan’s path so that progress does not falter.”

Critical to this success of Bhutan’s democracy is the citizens’ understanding of their rights and responsibilities. “Citizens need to have the right skills, knowledge, and attitudes for effective participation,” Tshewang Norbu, the Secretary General of the National Council, said.

Questions such as, “Why should I vote?”,

“How can I influence my leaders?”, “What can I reasonably expect from my elected officials?” or “What are my constitutional rights?” need to be addressed through civic institutions, in the free press and in classrooms. It is only with educated citizens that a sustainable culture of democracy can emerge.

In his keynote address, Chief Justice Lyonpo Sonam Tobgye said that the early years of Bhutan’s democracy have seen success with the establishment of democratic institutions, and the esteem held for the Constitution.

He stressed, however, that democracy was not a “spectator sport” and so people must remain vigilant in fulfilling their responsibilities. “Liberty must be guided by law,” he said. “Freedom is not free, and liberty is not a license for everyone to do what one pleases to do. Today, and in the future, we must be conscious of our sacred responsibilities to the Constitutional Democracy.”

During the English and Dzongkha panel discussions, moderated by Dawa from BBS, youth participants were given a chance to interact with representatives from the National Council, the Election Commission Board,

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Finding the Balance

■ Siok Sian Pek-Dorji

2008 was a year of excitement, apprehension, and hope. The fourth Druk Gyalpo, King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, initiated one of the most important transformations in Bhutanese history, taking us from Monarchy to a parliamentary democracy. We’ve heard this often enough. Unlike many countries around the world that made this transition through major upheavals, bloodshed and revolution, Bhutan made the change at a time of peace and prosperity.

Four years later, we ask ourselves: “Where are we? What is the state of Bhutanese democracy?” Going by the stories that appear in our media, we could get an impression of doom and gloom. News stories focus on unemployment, growing social problems like drug abuse and crime, urban gangs, allegations of government muzzling the press, corruption, and financial mismanagement. Some of these social ills began emerging before the democratic transition, and it can be argued that the media are reminding society of emerging problems. But after four years of democracy, some of our critics are portraying Druk Yul as a struggling nation

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Understanding GNH better

■ Chheku Dukpa

The philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) is undoubtedly the most noble gift to the Bhutanese people bestowed by our fourth king. If GNH is considered to be a song, then its sweet melody is being heard loud and clear, and has travelled beyond borders. Yet it still remains a song with its own complexity, in terms of its understanding and interpretation by people both within and outside Bhutan.

Although many speeches about GNH have been recorded, there is less written literature precisely defining its meaning, scope and applications. Happiness is the word impregnated into the philosophy itself, and it often reminds people more of their individual happiness than collective happiness. It can be reasonably inferred that there has been minimal effort to educate our people about GNH.

In my humble understanding, the word “Gross” sends a clear indication and message of “Collective Happiness” rather than “Individual Happiness”, which has more to do with individual priorities in life, which I assume cannot be ascertained on a common parameter. The pursuit of GNH implies the pursuit of collective happiness of society and the nation at large. But if collective happiness in a society is achieved, then the chance for individuals to pursue their individual happiness is established. Thus there is a correlation between individual and collective happiness.

In view of rising concerns and criticisms at home and abroad, it is necessary

to make some clarifications. I believe that Bhutan has never announced that it has achieved happiness, but has only recognised the pursuit of happiness as a national goal, with a unique development paradigm at its core.

In the pursuit of collective happiness, I feel that an effort to measure happiness is not so relevant at present. We should engage ourselves more in ascertaining well-defined operational strategies to create the necessary conditions for achieving happiness. I submit that the present domains deserve further examination in terms of relevance and clear connection to the four pillars, and to collective happiness itself. The methodology for identification of the domains should encompass a clear translation of the four pillars. Domains should be established by integrating GNH values into the operational systems: Each domain should clearly outline the necessary GNH values. For example, the domain of culture should focus on the preservation of our culture, which takes into account our national language Dzongkha, the indigenous people and their languages, traditional skills and crafts, Driglam Namzha and the religious festivals and other events.

Sustainable development is one of the main essences of GNH philosophy, but sadly, there is no reflection of this as a domain. It may be more sensible to have a domain for sustainable development and equitable distribution of resources, which could focus purely on sustainable growth, efficient utilisation of resources, equal distribution of resources (minimise the gap between poor and rich), and decentralisa-

tion of development (to prevent rural-urban migration). I would consider doing away with the domain of time use, as it is related to individual characteristics and preference.

We should concentrate more on two of the four pillars -- promotion of good governance, and equitable and sustainable socio-economic development -- as they have the maximum potential to contribute to happiness. Good governance would deserve the highest consideration, as it is directly related to the daily lives of people. The focus of good governance should be on the efficiency, transparency, and professionalism of our systems in the area of service delivery, administration and management, coverage and soundness of laws, rewards and incentive mechanisms at workplaces and, most important of all, the consultation and decision-making process.

It is only timely that we re-align and re-orientate our approach in putting the GNH philosophy into operation. The grooming of the people with regards to the GNH should start right from the lowest level of education, whereby GNH values are integrated well into our education systems. We should also focus more on the people at the lower income bracket, to ensure a reasonable standard of living, with respect to decent shelter, sanitation and public amenities. I believe that “a person may be far from being in a position to conceive of the idea of happiness without a reasonable access to the basic necessities of life”. I would like to conclude with the simple words, “LET’S SING THE SONG OF GNH TOGETHER AND BE HAPPY.”

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“Democracy Education: Understanding Rights & Responsibilities.”

> *Continued from pg. 1*

the Anti-Corruption Commission, and the Judiciary. Students raised questions regarding the distribution of power, Bhutan’s type of democracy, the risk of voter apathy, and the roles of youth.

“If, as it has been said, youth are the future of Bhutan, then why are we not included in the decision-making processes?” Phub Dorji, a student at YHS, inquired.

“As young, educated citizens, you can engage in the democratic process by articulating views,” Dr. Sonam Kinga, a representative in

the National Council, responded. “Express your opinions in newspapers. Invite MPs to schools. Being young may limit your ability to participate in national elections, but there are still opportunities for local government.”

At the conclusion of the event, Lyonpo Sonam Tobgye explained the challenges to Bhutan’s system of checks and balances. He described these challenges as occurring on three levels: “First, you have the people who lost power [with the transition to democracy], individuals and intellectuals who moan and groan, and are unwilling to accept democracy. Second, you have people who

have got new power, and are now adjusting themselves to the realities and expectations of the people and above all, the Constitutional principles. Third, you have the people who want to encroach into the space, and now we are all fighting for that space. It’s a good fight.”

After the event, BCMD launched and distributed their three newest publications – Institutions of Democracy, The Active Citizen’s Guide, and Forums 2011 – to all participants. The event was made possible with support from UNDP and the publications are supported by UNDEF and OSF.

Will media influence the voters in 2013 election?

■ Tharchen

Last year when I was in my village, my mother was excited that she would soon be able to watch television, because the village was getting connected to electricity. So she asked my elder brothers to buy her a nice TV set.

This trend of curiosity to have a TV set and a cell phone is a replication of the mood that was omnipresent when Bhutan opened to the TV world in 1999.

With electricity reaching out to all in the country, every Bhutanese household owns at least one TV, through which the people are exposed to a wide array of information and entertainment.

Moreover, with the government plan to make the internet accessible to the whole country in the coming years, and with internet facilities already available in major towns and many schools, most students above 7th grade, and young Bhutanese professionals, have access to the internet.

There were 99,000 internet users in 2011 and 76,500 Facebook users in 2012 in Bhutan. Most of the active internet users are civil servants, corporate and private employees, and high school and college students.

In other countries, where democracy has been in place for more years than in Bhutan, the media has definitely shaped political developments and affected public affairs. In Bhutan, the results of the upcoming 2013 election will be the litmus test of the media's impact.

Both modern media and democracy in Bhutan are evolving, and in the nascent stage of development, with a majority of young and amateur people.

Bhutan has become an even smaller place, because of the availability of newspapers, TV, radio and the internet, through which all sorts of information and entertainment are put in the public space. We can now connect with people from one end to the other, and access information faster on any matter.

Bhutanese people are now better informed, but they are also exposed to a wide range of unchecked information and allegations against some of the ruling government members, via various social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, personal or group blogs, et al, which are not regulated.

For example, recent news featured in papers about allegations against some senior

government leaders are becoming the topic of public discussion everywhere.

Often people are left to decide for themselves which side of the story is right, but without proper evidence, people are left confused and in a dilemma.

The literate populace of civil servants, and corporate and private employees is the main consumer of media, and this has given rise to rumours of the existence of a "civil servant factor", i.e., how civil servants and urbanites can influence their parents and relatives to cast their votes to choose their respective member of parliament (MP). This was seen as one reason for the landslide victory for the DPT in the 2008 election.

Only two private newspapers were established two years before the 2008 election. There were state-funded newspapers like Kuensel, and a national broadcasting channel (BBS). Both were de-linked from the government on 1 Oct, 1992. There were no stories of allegations against senior government officials or other high-profile people participating in the 2008 election.

All candidates standing for the 2008 parliamentary election were clean, without any allegation against them. The majority of civil servants had the highest regard and respect for some of the senior government leaders who were participating in the 2008 election.

Therefore, the "casting of the winning ballot" largely depended on the personalities of the candidates, and that of the presidents leading the parties, since both parties' manifestoes were similar.



Will the present flourishing and yet financially challenged media, especially the private newspapers, and social networks and online forums – which have become even more readily available and accessible through cellphones – affect the upcoming election more than during the earlier one?

Will the rumoured allegation about the "civil servant factor", and more correctly, the "literate factor", play as the last-minute tossing of the coin in the 2013 election?

While we have the liberty to guess right now, the answers about the media's impact on the election in 2013 will only be known after elections.

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BCMD welcomes readers to give us feedback on the articles / stories submitted. We also encourage readers to contribute articles for the next issue. Most articles run about 300 - 500 words. We welcome submissions that are relevant to BCMD's mission of contributing to the development of a culture of democracy.

Please send in your contribution to bcmbd@bcmbd.bt / sonam@bcmbd.bt

For more information, please call 327903. Follow us on Facebook: Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy or www.bcmbd.bt

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Tips on Media Literacy

Are you concerned about something you've heard or read? Do you feel strongly about an issue and you want to let people know what you think?

You want to bring about a positive impact and influence people to take some action but you want to reach a larger audience, beyond your friends and family. Start writing a letter to the editor because this is the most effective way to get the word out and here's how you can!

Dear [Editor]:

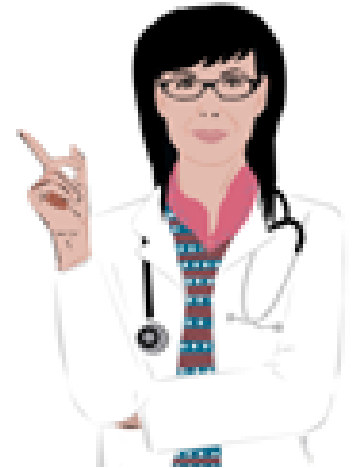
State who you are, and your reason for writing. Explain the issues first, and then explain how they relate to you personally.

Establish your credibility by referencing resources and information related to the topic, and then tie the issues to your own life. Keep it interesting, human, and brief. Most letters to the editor are 200 words or less. Anything longer usually warrants an op-ed.

Finish with a call to action. Offer some community resources, and include specific ways for people to get involved. Sign off with a positive, strong statement.

Sincerely, or Respectfully Submitted,

[Signature]



Tips on writing

Tip # 1

When you think you're finished... read through the story three times, each time with a different purpose, e.g. looking for logical flow, then grammar, or spelling, etc.

Tip # 2

Story Structure

Is the point of the story clear?

Do the opening, body and end of the story flow logically?

Does every word, sentence, paragraph anecdote advance the story?

Tip # 4

Sentence Structure

Have I written simple, declarative sentences where ever possible?

Are the verbs close to the subject?

Have I written in the active voice rather than the passive voice?

Have I favoured the direct phrasing over in-direct phrasing?

Have I varied my sentence structure?

Tip # 3

Language and Word Selection

Is every word precise and accurate?

Have I eliminated clichés and jargon?

Have I eliminated every unnecessary word?

Have I eliminated every unnecessary number?

Is every detail accurate?

BCMD wishes to acknowledge and thank the following partners

SMS (Sherubtse Media Society) trip to Sakteng

■ Karma Tenzin / SMS

SMS is spreading media literacy in the eastern part of the country. It has covered four schools and will soon cover another four. The main aims and objectives are to convey messages on pros and cons of media and the variety of media present in Bhutan.

On 27th of June, a team of Sherubtse Media Society headed towards Merak and Sakteng. It was nine hours' walk for the locals, but we took two days to reach there. Our weariness all vanished as we marched into the beauty of Sakteng.

On 2nd July, the team made a presentation at Sakteng Lower Secondary School to the students of classes V, VI, VII and VIII. Their identical traditional appearance vindicated the claim that media has not influenced them.

Our one-hour presentation was extended to two at the behest of the assistant principal. We talked on Introduction to Media, Existing Media in Bhutan and Core Concepts of Media.

It was surprising to see that no newspapers other than Kuensel were available. Recently, they have access to BBS.

In the Q&A session, the students asked

questions about how Bhutan can prevent media influence, how media is organised and how the term media originated.

Then we talked about the core concepts of media, which was new knowledge to them. We covered media construction, techniques of construction, and the purpose of media. The advantages and disadvantages of media in the country were also discussed.

Next day, we visited some households, where a few owned TV sets, and their favourite show was BBS and Bhutan Super Star.

The Gup said that there was no youth problem to date, but it is rising now.

Media, Democracy and Civic Participation Seminar

■ Haki Bumdey / Paro College of Education

Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD) organised a four-day seminar on "The Media, Democracy and Civic Participation", from 18th till 21st June, 2012 at Paro College of Education. More than 50 student teachers from Paro College of Education and Samtse College of Education attended the seminar.

Within the four days of workshops, the participants gave their impressions on the themes --waking our generation, shaping our society, educating for civic participation, and realising the potential of our generation.

The first day's discussions were on the media as an important agent of change in Bhutan, as well as the roles of the media, such as educating people about democracy, elections, and other important issues in a young democracy like Bhutan.

In the main, the discussions focused on how the media looks into truthfulness, on transparency, report on disadvantage, and provide space for people.

The participants also examined their impressions about the lack of youth engagement in a democracy, and how to participate actively as a citizen.

Wangchuk Norbu, a final year student teacher, said, "In this seminar, I learnt about who we are as citizens, and who we are as a generation. As a generation, we are adjusting to change, and we are the ones who can preserve and uphold old traditions." He also said that, as a teacher, he would like to create a space where the public in the community



Participants discuss on their roles for the role play during the second "Media, Democracy and Civic Engagement Workshop" at PCE.

can raise their voice, by creating a forum where people can post their valuable comments.

Further discussions raised a number of questions to reflect upon, such as how can teachers encourage youth in media, how to address media problems, and the concept of democracy in school.

The seminar also called upon the attention on youth, as citizens having a greater role in democracy, and emphasising their

rights to raise their voices as subjects of change. This change should be made apparent by the teachers to the youths.

Cheychey said: "I feel it's very relevant for us as teachers, because we can impart ideas about the roles of media to the youths, and let youths participate actively in society."

Tashi Penjor defines civic engagement as "participating in an open society, knowing our fundamental rights and responsibilities and knowing ourselves as a generator".

“No Democracy without Fleas!”

> *Continued from pg. 1*

sion and agreed to form a political alliance to prevent any discussion of cleanliness or garbage. The more of the one and the less of the other would not be in our interests, so we decided to work together strategically. If we keep biting and they keep buzzing, people will be so busy scratching and slapping that they won't have time to think about cleaning the place up.”

“I don't think I agree with you. The more we bite, the more self-aware our hosts become. And the more self-aware they become, the more they may talk to each other and agree to co-operate democratically, and democracy certainly isn't in the interests of the FFF.”

“The FFF?”

“The Fleas' and Flies' Front. That's the name we gave to our political alliance! We were thinking of applying to the ECB for official registration as a party. There are more than enough of us to find all the candidates we need, and several party presidents too. But we are really caught on the horns of a

dilemma!”

“I don't get it.”

“Okay, let me explain. What do we do? We go around biting people. People scratch, and become aware of the fact that we are there. Their scratching makes them more aware of themselves. They feel. They may even begin to think. And they may talk among themselves and realise that they have to work together to get rid of us, like making sure that there are facilities such as cleaners to serve their interests and that the garbage gets cleaned up. So the more we bite, the more danger there is that they will do something about us! And that would not be good for us; maybe for them, but not for us.”

“What you're really saying, is that without us around to bite them and make them scratch, they won't really start thinking, right? And if they don't start thinking, they won't ever get together and pursue their goals together, right? Because to work together, they have to agree on their goals and on the actions they want to take, right? And that requires democracy, right? So you're really

saying that without fleas there can't be any democracy?”

“Exactly! And that's our dilemma! The more we bite, the more they think. And the more they think, the more endangered we become. But if we don't bite, we'll not fulfill ourselves as fleas and flies. Without us, no democracy. With democracy, no us. What to do?”

“You know, once I was dining on an old Lam, and I heard him talking to a pchilip about the Bodhisattva ideal, that one should work for the liberation of all sentient beings and that liberation requires self-awareness. So I guess we fleas really are good Buddhists and even great teachers. Since we should always put the enlightenment of all sentient beings before our own, we should just keep biting in the hope that eventually we won't be necessary any longer. If Democracy is an enlightened way of life, then we are great Enlighteners.”

“I like your way of thinking! Okay, enough doubt. Let's get back to work! I hear there may be good food for democrats over above Ngabiphu.”

Finding the Balance

> *Continued from pg. 1*

with poor infrastructure, a larger number of disgruntled populace, eroding values, and a dis-enfranchised youth population. GNH is being described as a hollow call.

If journalism is truly a draft of history, the early years of democratisation could be documented as an unhappy period. And social media, which allows anonymity, is enhancing this impression.

But are we telling the complete story? Are the media just focusing on the negative? And is that more divisive than constructive?

Are we becoming cynical of democracy, of GNH?

Much can be learnt from George Gerbner's research on the “mean world syndrome” – a term to describe media's focus on violent content that influences people to believe the world to be more violent and unhappy than it really is. The impact of violent and negative entertainment and imagery on society has produced a sense of fear and insecurity among people. Accessibility to a 24/7 news world means we are being constantly filled with news that focus on violence, negativity and insecurity. Media can also separate us from the reality of events. They can numb us

into believing that the negativity we watch in our living rooms is the only reality.

So the question is, should the media focus largely on the failures and criticisms when there is so much that is going right? Why are we, in Bhutan, not looking at the kinder, gentler, more compassionate side of our society? Where are the uplifting stories of opportunities and hope, success and achievement that should be inspiring us?

What about volunteers, old and young, who are giving their time and energy to help fellow citizens? Or the monk who goes around the general hospital administering prayers and comforting the sick? Or students who help their families out on their farms? And youth who are learning about their responsibilities as citizens?

Bhutan is a success story. It was not always easy but, with enlightened leadership and hard work, we overcame formidable challenges. After 100 years of monarchy, we built a nation that is as visionary as it is small. Drukylul was founded on the trust in a leadership that cared for the people and placed the people at the centre of all plans and dreams.

It is time for Bhutanese to remind ourselves how far we've come, and to give our children hope for the future. We need to

fulfill the trust that our leaders have placed in us by making our democracy work, each of us with a role and a place.

What kind of future can we craft?

You are your mind

“You are your mind,” said Guru Rinpoche, giving us the basis for our worldview. Our Vajrayana masters teach us to envision ourselves in a positive space, to create the world we want. We can imagine this space as democratic Bhutan.

Bhutan's democracy is playing out before us. As we acknowledge the problems that could potentially be disastrous, let's not forget that we have much that is working out, and that we have successes to be thankful for, and of which we can be proud.

Having been granted freedom and rights without having to fight for them, we have to give this process a go, and build our future.

We have a better chance than most to take advantage of all our blessings. If this generation makes democracy a success, we will be carving a legacy that will be one of the most important periods of our history. These are the stories that we want to hear, the stories that we must tell.

The Civil Society Organisation Fund Facility gives Nu. 18.5 million to improve rural life

■ BCMD/ Tshewang Lhamo

The Civil Society Organisation Fund Facility (CSOFF) has spent about Nu. 18.5 million over a year to carry out projects in rural areas, on application from 15 Community Based Organisations (CBOs).

These include the renovation of lhakhangs, the construction of community water mills, land and waste management, and other social, cultural or environmental projects that benefit the community.

The renovation of lhakhangs is the most expensive. One lhakhang renovation typically costs Nu. 15 Lakhs. The other project is usually land and water management, which

cost Nu. 9 lakhs.

CBOs, unlike other CSOs, do not need to register with CSOA to apply for funding. They only need to fill in a standard form and submit it to CSOFF. The final approval of the project is given by a CSOFF steering Committee.

“Our monitoring process so far shows that no projects have failed, or malfunctioned,” said S.K Nepal, advisor to the CSO Fund Facility.

Recently, the Civil Society Organisation Authority (CSOA) conducted a pilot project titled “Sensitisation awareness Programme” in 5 gewogs of Thimphu to tell Mangmis and Tshogpas about the availability of funds for rural projects.

The CSOFF office receives such proposals biannually. The CSOA is expected to receive more proposals from these gewogs through the CSOFF, by January 2013.

The CSOA project also emphasised the importance and need for forming CBOs and voluntary informal groups. Such CBOs will help to promote growth and sustainability in community life.

CSOFF has also allocated Nu. 18 Million to 20s CSOs in 2011. Guidelines for funding both CSOs and CBOS are based on the principle of greater participation by the civil society. The aim is to include the local communities in poverty alleviation activities.

Bringing GNH home - a forum

■ BCMD Staff reporter

Representatives of civil society and citizens from all walks of life gathered to discuss and explore the notion of Gross National Happiness and how to make it happen at home.

The one-day forum held in Thimphu on August 30 provided an intense yet important space for the sharing of many views on GNH. Many went away feeling as if something may happen or arise out of this collective discussion, and that there is a general notion of a community that is trying to put GNH into action be it individually, in the home, at work or in the community.

The forum explored the following questions:

- What is GNH?
- How is GNH different from all the various global movements calling for a more sustainable world?
- How can we bring GNH home and create a GNH society? How would such a society look like?
- Is there more skepticism than understanding of GNH in Bhutan? If so, why?
- Is GNH in danger of becoming just a slogan?
- How can we bring GNH fully into the policy arena and into our own organisations, workplaces and families and lives?

Outcomes of the forum:

- Strengthened participants’ understanding of Gross National Happiness
- The forum encouraged the participants to explore the concept of GNH at an individual level.
- It provided a platform for participants to share & seek ideas, and give recommendations on how we can make GNH work in Bhutan.
- The participants came up with list of recommendations that will be submitted to the GNH Commission.
- Participants envisioned how a GNH society would look like in the coming years and shared ideas on how we could achieve it.
- Participants learnt about the newly formed GNH Centre which is soon to be registered as a CSO, and the kind of programmes they will be offering in future.

- A Task Force group on local buying and zero waste initiative was set up at the end of the forum.
- Participants expressed appreciation of the forum that created a space for youth and other members of society to dialogue and discuss issues of importance.
- It was recognised that civil society organisations need to deepen their understanding of their role in a GNH society, and how their work has a direct impact on creating a more GNH sensitive community, society and nation.

More than 63 people from the government, CSOs, teachers and students, and out of school youth attended the lively discussions. BCMD hosted the forum with support from the OSF. A detailed report will soon be available on our website.



Bringing GNH Home

Media Nomads V: Telling the stories that matter



Participants interviewing a farmer

When: July 4-14, 2012

Where: Tarayana Hall, Thimphu

Participants: 17 students from YHS, Jigme Sherubling High School, Sherubtse, Rinchen High School, Kelki High School, Lungtenzampa Middle Secondary School, Changjiji and teacher trainees from Paro College of Education attended the 5th Media Nomad workshop.

Outcome: Through a balance of theoretical and practical sessions, participants were led through the various stages of documentary filmmaking, including idea development, defining roles and responsibilities, script writing, planning, filming, editing, choosing appropriate music and premiering their production. Participants acquired the skills necessary to use 'Video Pad and Movie maker', basic video editing software programmes for video production.

Covering Economics and Finance

When: May 28- 31, 2012

Where: WWF Conference Hall

Participants: 14 reporters and editors from print media and broadcast attended the workshop.

Outcome: Improved technical knowledge and professional skills of journalists who cover economics, finance and business news. Participants, apart from basic journalism skills, learnt a lot on segregating various economic issues and finding links to look more at in-depth implementation and analysis. The workshop prompted the participants to think, analyse and find stories beneath the figures and financial statement and how to break elements rather than using them up all together.

Creative Non-fiction Writing Workshop, 2012

When: June 12-15, 2012

Participants: 15 participants from a mixed background – students, civil servants, from the judiciary, the medical profession, teacher trainees, reporters, freelance writers, engineers and from private institutions attended the writing workshop.

Outcome: Participants learned to review and edit their own stories. Participants learned basic interview skills. Participants learned how to write their own non-fiction stories and to share their stories for feedback. Feedback given to their stories by participants and resource person helped them to write better stories. Reading other participants stories and handouts helped them to explore different writing styles. Participants learned important guidelines to writing editorials and opinion articles along with journalists.

Piloting Debate in College

When: May 28- 31, 2012

Where: Royal Thimphu College

Participants: 35 second and third year students from RTC participated in the debate.

Outcome: Trained students in the fundamentals of debate. The training also included modules on deep listening, basic argumentation, and the four steps to refutation. On October 4, 2012, participants in the programme will debate on "Zero Tolerance" and "Tobacco Control Act"

This is a collaborative effort between RTC and BCMD.



Jim giving Sonam feedback on her stories

Basic photography workshop

Where: Youth Centre Changji

When: August 18th, 2012

Participants: 29 school students, out of school youth, media club members and students from Raffles International School.

Outcome: Participants went out for a field trip at the vegetable market area to take pictures on the theme “natural responsibility”

Bhutanese and Singapore youth learn to focus on Bhutan through photography



Old monk resting by the Thimphu Centennial Market bridge (Picture taken by a participant during the Basic Photography Workshop)



Journalists share their stories at the annual Dialogue

Bhutan Media Dialogue, 2012

When: May 9-10, 2012

Where: Terma-Linca, Thimphu

Participants: 39 participants from media fraternity, civil servants, civil society organisations, constitutional agencies, members of the parliament, judiciary and private organisations attended the two day dialogue.

Outcome: Strengthened understanding between media and various stakeholders on the idea of freedom of expression, the responsibilities and limitations that come with it, and the barriers to achieving it in Bhutan.

Participants indicated learning most about how “trust and honesty in a good democracy can come from empowered information,” the present Bhutanese media status media status”, to be conscious while expressing ones view,” and “the tension between newsmakers and the media.”

10 Focus on Media

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The Sustainability of Media

A discussion, May 17, 2012

■ BCMD Staff reporter

Bhutanese Media is growing quickly, but is this growth economically viable? Economic sustainability is hugely important for journalists to undertake their work at a high professional standard. When media enterprises are self-sustaining – financially liberated from government or business influence – they are more likely to assert and maintain editorial freedom and independence. Otherwise, they may feel or experience pressure to avoid displeasing their funders, who may be the very people they need to oversee!

For years, all media houses in Bhutan have been struggling to come up with a sustainable business model, one that goes beyond over-dependence on government advertising for survival. Now the problem is becoming more critical. Phuntsho Choden writes in *The Journalist* that “many print houses are on the verge of bankruptcy”, due to their inability to meet staff, printing, and circulation costs. So what can be done?

To explore the nature of this problem, BCMD organised an informal conversation with a publishing consultant and co-chairman of the Asian Publishing Convention, Cyril Pereira. Also present were 12 managers of media houses, members of government, and a finance professor from Gaeddu College of Business.

Mr Pereira began by emphasising the point that media must have a “mission” first, before it becomes a business. A newspaper without a committed mission – one that differentiates it from other media houses – will be unable to focus on its editorial direction. “If you’re going to have multiple newspapers, the question is ‘what are they all serving?’” he asked the audience. “If you’re switching on 11 megaphones at the same time, and they all sound the same, it makes no sense to have all of them. There has to be a clear product differentiation between them.” Mr

Pereira describes this as a story of the death of media, not growth.

To define your mission, you must clearly define your audience. Without an audience, a newspaper has nothing to trade for advertising investment from government, brands, or business houses. “Are you serving teachers?” he asked, “People from Thimphu? Youth? Or people from the countryside?” Otherwise, the purpose of advertising – delivering a message that a specific audience can respond to – will not be achieved.

Once these decisions have been made, there must be an economic framework that enables media houses to be successful in monetising their relationship with their audience. In the absence of a strong economy driven by consumerism, Mr Pereira encouraged a government-industry partnership that could act as a catalyst for long-term sustainability for all media houses at this early stage, as Bhutan is creating a pluralistic media environment: “The attitude from the government should be that ‘we’re helping you get the ball rolling, but you have to keep it going.’”

He outlined three possible areas for this partnership:

1. Set up an independent national news bureau/agency that collects hard news stories from all areas of the country. This benefits all media by avoiding duplication, and makes it effective and efficient for government to disseminate information throughout the country.
2. Develop an independent content management system (CMS) that places all stories “in the cloud”. Media houses can no longer ignore the power of online media and must adapt to and engage with it in order to survive. Creating a web-based CMS would allow all media to plug-in and avoid duplication. This

would help all independent news organisations manage online publications, enrich content, and find new audiences.

3. Establish a centralised print production centre for economies of scale. Print technology is capital-intensive, and many Bhutanese newspapers have been losing money due to inefficient printing practices. Establishing an independent print centre that prints and manages distribution for all newspapers makes sense.

Some points arising from the discussion

- Macro- and consensus-driven industry. Media houses must begin collaborating for the benefit of the industry as a whole. You can continue to have high competition between organisations, but this should not preclude co-operation where there is mutual interest. This involves a long-term plan that includes setting up a national bureau, conducting feasibility studies, and fine-tuning that agenda.
- “The man who pays the piper calls the tune.” Government can create policy that rewards quality journalism and weans media houses off funding. Like other countries, they could set up a timeline to phase out funding, conduct audits, and support those who co-operate. This could be 12 to 18 months, for example.
- Performance criteria must focus on audience reach. Why should advertising revenue be allocated to any press that does not have an audience? Media are sharing a finite amount of funds, so this is neither sustainable nor fair to the better players.

For more on the outcome and discussions at the meeting, please go to the full report on bcnd.bt

BCMD Events Calendar: Upcoming Activities

What: An introductory workshop for leaders in communications, journalism and those who influence the public discourse.

When: Oct 22- 26, 2012.

Focus: Appreciative inquiry is a change methodology that has shown impact in helping us shift how we think, feel and work. What is it that we do that is working for us? And how do we leverage our assets and strengths to move forward? Learn how AI can help us envision a more positive society and democracy. Discover how the questions we ask today is crucial in inspiring change and in releasing more positive and engaging ways to imagine Bhutan's media and democracy.

For whom: Journalists, Writers, Film/ TV producers, and others in leadership positions.

Facilitator: Judy Stewart Rodgers

What: Debate on "Zero Tolerance" & "Tobacco Control Act"

When: October 4, 2012

Why: Democratic societies thrive on dissent, discussion and debate. Too often, however, societies all over the world provide poor role models for children (and adults) trying to learn the skills to be effective, active, and responsible participants in that democratic society through the exchange of views. The debates are the culmination of 2 weeks of training conducted by BCMD on the skills of listening, argumentation, and refutation - all of which are critical to civil, reasoned, and lively debate.

For whom: RTC Students

[See chit chat section, page 8 & 9, for activities conducted]

Find out what people are saying on BhutanSpeaks!

“What does World Press Freedom mean in Bhutan and Bhutanese Media?”

Media shall enjoy complete freedom to express and right to information, they should also upheld interest of the nation and sovereignty. Their right to information and freedom of expression does not give the media the right to reflect individual opinion reflecting as the opinion of the rest of the people nor be driven by politically motivated expressions.

- Sonam Tshering ”

“Feminisation of Politics and Leadership in Bhutan

It is true that every individual needs to be judged by the character but women have yet not even been given a platform to showcase our capabilities. We have to remember society has been built by men not women. The rules of the games have been made by men not women. If women are to succeed in a highly male-dominated society only those women possessing characters of a male become successful.

- Ugyen Lhamo ”

“Updating Buddhism and secular spiritualism in Bhutan for the youth

Social pressure, crime, robbery, suicides are skyrocketing. Youngsters want designer handbags, BMWs, and the best of everything because now Bhutan is becoming a competitive zone just like every other small developing country. Capitalism has finally managed to shove its big stinky foot through our small Himalayan door.

- Ugyen Lhamo ”

Come online and join the discussion today at www.bhutanspeaks.bt

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Citizen's Guide

Media and Democracy in Bhutan

| www.bcnd.bt

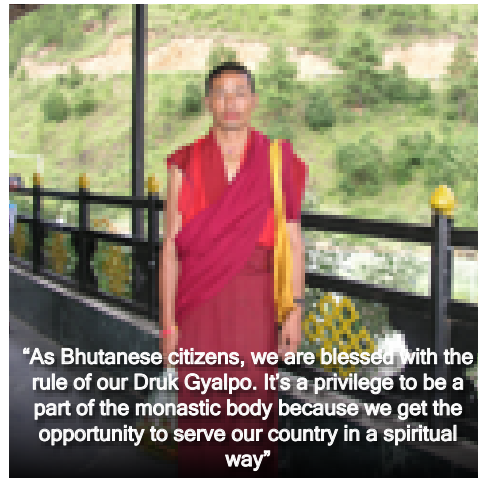
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What does it mean to be a citizen?



"Being a citizen is having individual rights"

Aum Damcho, 70, Farmer, Olakha



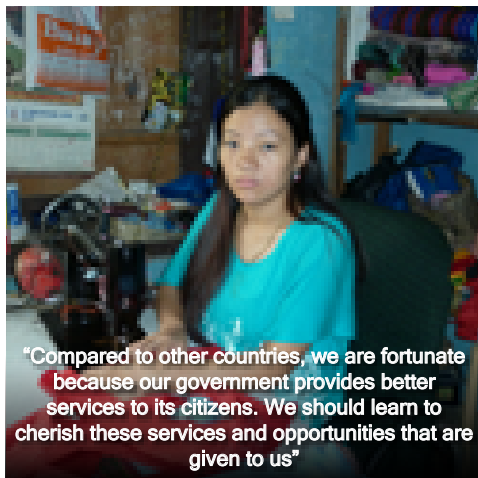
"As Bhutanese citizens, we are blessed with the rule of our Druk Gyalpo. It's a privilege to be a part of the monastic body because we get the opportunity to serve our country in a spiritual way"

Kuenga Lhendup, 35, Thimphu



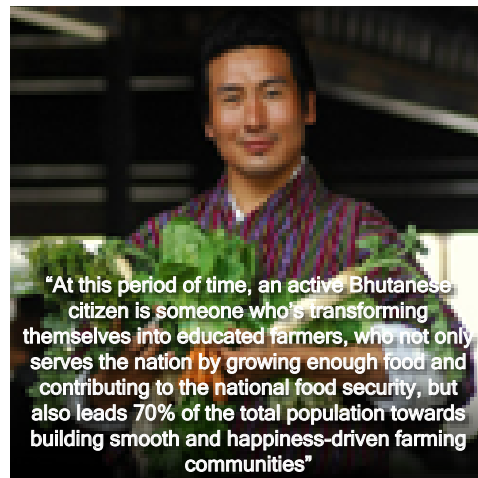
"As citizens of Bhutan, we are indeed blessed because we are given the opportunity to enjoy all the services provided by our government"

Chimi Dem, 43, Vegetable Vendor, Paro



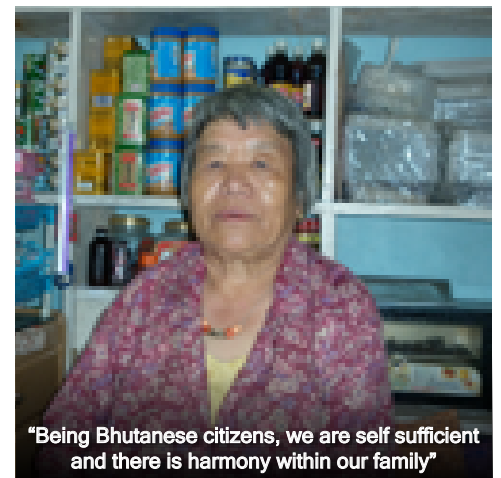
"Compared to other countries, we are fortunate because our government provides better services to its citizens. We should learn to cherish these services and opportunities that are given to us"

Santo Maya, 22, Tailor, Punakha



"At this period of time, an active Bhutanese citizen is someone who's transforming themselves into educated farmers, who not only serves the nation by growing enough food and contributing to the national food security, but also leads 70% of the total population towards building smooth and happiness-driven farming communities"

Sangay Rinchen, Educated Farmer, Happy Green Co-operatives



"Being Bhutanese citizens, we are self sufficient and there is harmony within our family"

Thinley Pem, 66, Shopkeeper, Khuruthang

The **7** Fundamental Principles of State Policy

1. The state shall endeavour to apply the principles of State policy set out in this Article to ensure a good quality of life for the people of Bhutan in a progressive and prosperous country that is committed to peace and amity in the world.
2. The state shall strive to promote those conditions that will enable the pursuit of Gross National Happiness.
3. The state shall endeavour to create a civil society free of oppression, discrimination and violence, based on the rule of law, protection of human rights and dignity, and to ensure the fundamental rights and freedoms of the people.
4. The state shall endeavour to protect the telephonic, electronic, postal or other communications of all persons in Bhutan from unlawful interception or interruption.
5. The state shall endeavour to provide justice through a fair, transparent and expeditious process.
6. The state shall endeavour to provide legal aid to secure justice, which shall not be denied to any person by reason of economic or other disabilities.
7. The state shall endeavour to develop and execute policies to minimize inequalities of income, concentration of wealth, and promote equitable distribution of public facilities among individuals and people living in different parts of the kingdom.