

MI-KHUNG

Media and Democracy in Bhutan | www.bcmbd.bt | Volume 4, Issue 3, December 2014

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Not the Usual News

Another perspective to the Bhutanese story?

■ Siok Sian Pek-Dorji
 Executive Director, BCMD

The media shape the way we see the world and has a deep impact on how we interpret reality.

The Bhutanese media, since our democratic transition, have been focusing on the negative, and increasingly, on the sensational. They highlight negative party politics, corruption issues like land scams, and complain that we lack the freedom of speech and media.

While these are perspectives seen from the point of view of ‘watchdog’ journalism – or journalism that holds people in authority accountable to the society and country – they are, nonetheless, just one view.

There are also many other stories that deserve our attention – from the resilience of our communities to individuals who contribute to change in Bhutan. Many of these stories do not make it into our daily news. The tendency of Bhutanese newspapers is to



Wang Simo village in Thimphu: The resilience of farming villages like this could be part of Bhutan’s solution to journalism

focus on politics and urban centric stories.

“The whole approach tends to be for us to find the ‘bad’ news, something’s not working so we’re sent to check it out,” said Jigme Wangchuk, a reporter.

The members of the media fraternity, who gathered for BCMD’s media dialogue in July, emerged from the three-day event with an aspiration to do things differently. They

>> *Continues on pg. 2*

Conversation Begins on Civil Society in Bhutan

A two-day dialogue tries to gain a deeper understanding of civil society

■ Joe Rivano Barros, BCMD

Civil society is a notoriously difficult concept to peg down. In a new democracy like Bhutan, it’s not surprising that the public has little idea what civil society does or what a civil society organisation (CSO) is. Even within Bhutanese civil society groups, the purview and conduct of CSOs remain unclear. Should CSOs provide goods and services themselves, like organising cleaning campaigns of Thimphu? Should they advocate that the government do this instead? What would this advocacy look like?

In an attempt to begin discussion on these questions, the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD) hosted its first dialogue on civil society issues, titled Imag-

ine Civil Society. Members of civil society, journalists, students, business people, and government representatives came together for the two-day conversation to explore the definition, history, and importance of civil society, particularly in relation to Bhutan and its young democracy.

This proved a challenging task. Unveiling the dictionary definition of civil society as the “third sector” alongside government and business is not particularly helpful, especially since the image of civil society in people’s minds is often limited to organisations like Amnesty International and the World Wildlife Fund. Groups like these are certainly part of civil society, but its true definition

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MI-KHUNG
 D U D E B

Check out our
Mi-Khung Dudeb
 (a Mi-Khung compendium
 in Dzongkha)
 coming out soon.

Youth Hold Reading Campaign for Children

“Always read something that will make you look good if you die in the middle of it” —PJ.O’Rourke

■ Sangay Thinley
Youth Initiative

The Youth Initiative (YI) held a reading campaign at the Tarayana Centre in Thimphu on 27 September for Thimphu schools.

Twenty-four participants from 12 different schools under Thimphu Thromdey participated in the event.

The campaign was aimed at encouraging school children to create a platform for young children to read, motivate them to read Bhutanese stories, and encourage them to explore the pleasure of reading.

The Education Committee of the YI,

during its summer sitting, discussed the idea of promoting reading habit among school children by hosting inter-school reading campaign as our local action. The idea was based on our research finding that the government is concerned about declining reading habit among young children.

The event was funded by the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy and the prizes were sponsored by DSB Enterprise, Pekhang Enterprise, Junction Book Store, Megah Enterprise, and Jigme Dorji Public Library.

The reading campaign was part of the YI’s local actions. We have shifted our ap-

proach from making change at the national level to taking community-based actions since our summer sitting.

Among the talented participants at the event were two disabled students from Jigme Namgyal Lower Secondary School.

We realise that a small change can have a big impact. Change need not have to be big and fast. The YI believes that change should happen small and local.

The reading campaign was graced by the education minister as the chief guest and representatives of NGOs, teachers, and some members of the public.

Not the Usual News

>> From pg. 1

learnt about emerging trends in journalism that offer an alternative approach to telling the news story – one that moves us away from the generally accepted guideline for news stories – ‘if it bleeds, it leads.’ This refers to stories of disasters and tragedies that make the headlines globally.

Some of Bhutan’s journalism challenges include the very idea of democracy itself that is highlighting competition with election campaigns and party politics. “Politics has created tensions and divided some communities,” said a reporter. Another group of reporters at the dialogue discussed the need for media to write stories that would contribute to healing these divides.

“A farmer’s experiment using stuffed toy tigers to frighten away menacing monkeys may prove to be the inspiration that will spark a reinvention of journalism in Bhutan,” said Jon Funabiki, a journalism professor at San Francisco University who facilitated the media dialogue. He uses the metaphor of a stuffed tiger to explain our challenge and the need to focus on creativity to find alternatives to local challenges.

The dialogue highlighted some of the emerging trends in journalism – from ‘constructive’ and ‘solutions’ journalism to ‘restorative narratives’ all of which focus on

telling the difficult and challenging stories in society with a different approach. Can we find that one positive example to show how the world or communities have dealt with challenges? Or that one person who has tried to make a difference?

People’s appetite for news is changing the world over, and we suspect it’s also beginning to change in Bhutan. Many in the developed world have stopped watching TV news, and restricted their news diet to just one quality newspaper, for example. The decades of focus on bad news and sensational stories, and today’s growing acceptance of 24/7 news channels that bring global wars into our sitting rooms and homes have added to the stress of keeping up with global events.

Latest media research also correlates people’s intake of daily news and their level of stress. It’s not surprising, therefore, to learn that many in the west are switching off the news and going to blogs and the internet for information – not necessarily verified information sources. Successful blogs like Huffington Post have put in dedicated pages on good news and there are a number of experiments in trying to focus on more positive and constructive stories.

In partnership with a US non-profit – the Fetzer Institute – BCMD is supporting several journalism fellowships in search of that untold rural story that goes beyond

merely looking for problems.

Today, several journalists and bloggers are trekking into the interior of Bhutan in search of that un-reported story – rural-urban migration, the threats of glacial lakes outburst floods on rural communities, balanced development, the challenges of alcoholism and the need for transparency. In the process, they’re trying to find not just the gaps and the challenges, but also the resilience of people who encounter difficulties in daily living. Their test is to find out how people in Bhutan have always responded to their own challenges and have not just waited for the authorities to provide for them.

This is where the stuffed tiger story comes in. Finding that creative solution or that opportunity for us to answer problems in our own backyards. And to make the shift from traditional journalistic focus on tragedy to recovery.

The unknown hero, the single parent who has overcome all odds, the dedicated development worker, the recovered alcoholic who’s found a new life and job, the rural youth who has overcome personal challenges... these are all stories of Bhutan that present another facet of our reality. This is an approach to journalism that warrants more consideration in the land of Gross National Happiness.

Teachers Start Co-op for Local Farmers

A group of teacher in Dagana initiates a project to improve farmers' livelihood

■ Yeshi Nidup, Teacher
Gesarling MSS, Dagana



A few well-meaning teachers are all it took for the poor Gesarling community to discover its potential to do better

The Gesarling community in Dagana has rediscovered its worth. In the past, the people of the community bought vegetables from the market. Today, they not only have enough for themselves, but earn from the surplus.

It all happened with the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy's (BCMD) initiative for social action. The initiative gave us, a group of teachers from Gesarling Middle Secondary School, an opportunity to give back to society in a small measure.

We put up a project proposal titled 'Live healthy and be happy' underlining our goal to help improve the living standard of the people in the community. Our project was approved for funding.

The people of the Gesarling community, most of whom are illiterate, live in poor conditions. Some of them do not have a proper house to live in while others have large families. The children do not have access to

a good diet and enough nutrition. Some of them are not sent to school. They do not have any source of income. Their living standard is consequently poor. This made my colleagues and I think, "What we can do to help them to break these shackles?"

Last year, we established a farmers' cooperative with 19 members to help them earn cash income. We took the members for a day-long tour to a nearby village to help them explore the ideas behind farming cooperatives.

The cooperative, now into its second year, grew a variety of vegetables and earned about Nu 8,000 from their sale. This modest earning came as a big moral boost for the group.

The group is continuing to grow vegetables and trying to get itself registered with the Department of Agriculture and Marketing Cooperatives under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests.

We have plans to take the farmers to Rural Development Training Centre in Zhemgang for basic training. Our farmers can do a lot better if they are given the right skills, knowledge, and experience.

For all its success, our journey thus far hasn't been without challenges. Most of my colleagues and I aren't able to dedicate enough time to the group's activities, being bogged down in our primary occupation, teaching. The second challenge is that our funds do not match our vision.

Today, the farmers of the community have big plans to extend their farming business. Now they look at the future with hope. When we embarked on the project, we never expected our small effort to make such a big difference to the community. It's a big discovery for us, a discovery that little efforts can go a long way.

4

Everyday Democracy

WHAT is volunteering about?

1. *Becoming happier*

Serving others makes you feel rewarded, more energetic and self-confident. Volunteerism has also a positive impact on community vitality, trust, and well-being.



2. *Exercising democracy in action*

Volunteers embody the principle of social responsibility by working for others without expectation of financial gain, and participation by promoting cooperation among community members.



3. *Expanding your horizons*

Meeting new people and trying out new things makes you stretch your limits and think out of the box.

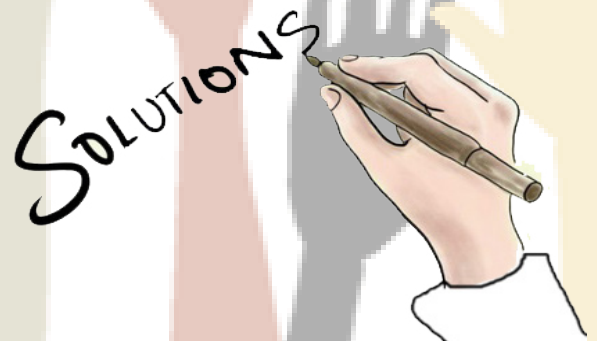


4. *Developing new skills and attitudes*

Social action builds teamwork, project management, and communication skills as well as feelings of responsibility and solidarity, sharing with others, and respecting differences.

5. *Being part of the solution*

Volunteerism means people-centred development; connecting with your community to find local solutions for local needs.



What's the difference between news and opinion pieces?



Most pages of a newspaper are dedicated to news articles or stories. The pages that carry news articles are called news pages.



At least one page of a newspaper is dedicated to opinion pieces expressed by the newspaper itself or a guest writer.



The page on which the editorial appears is called the editorial page and the one facing it is called the op-ed page.



The op-ed page usually carries opinion pieces written by people outside of the newspaper.



So, an article on an election appearing on a news page is a news story, but an editorial, a letter to the editor, or a column is an opinion.



While news stories follow certain structural format, opinion pieces come in no particular format.



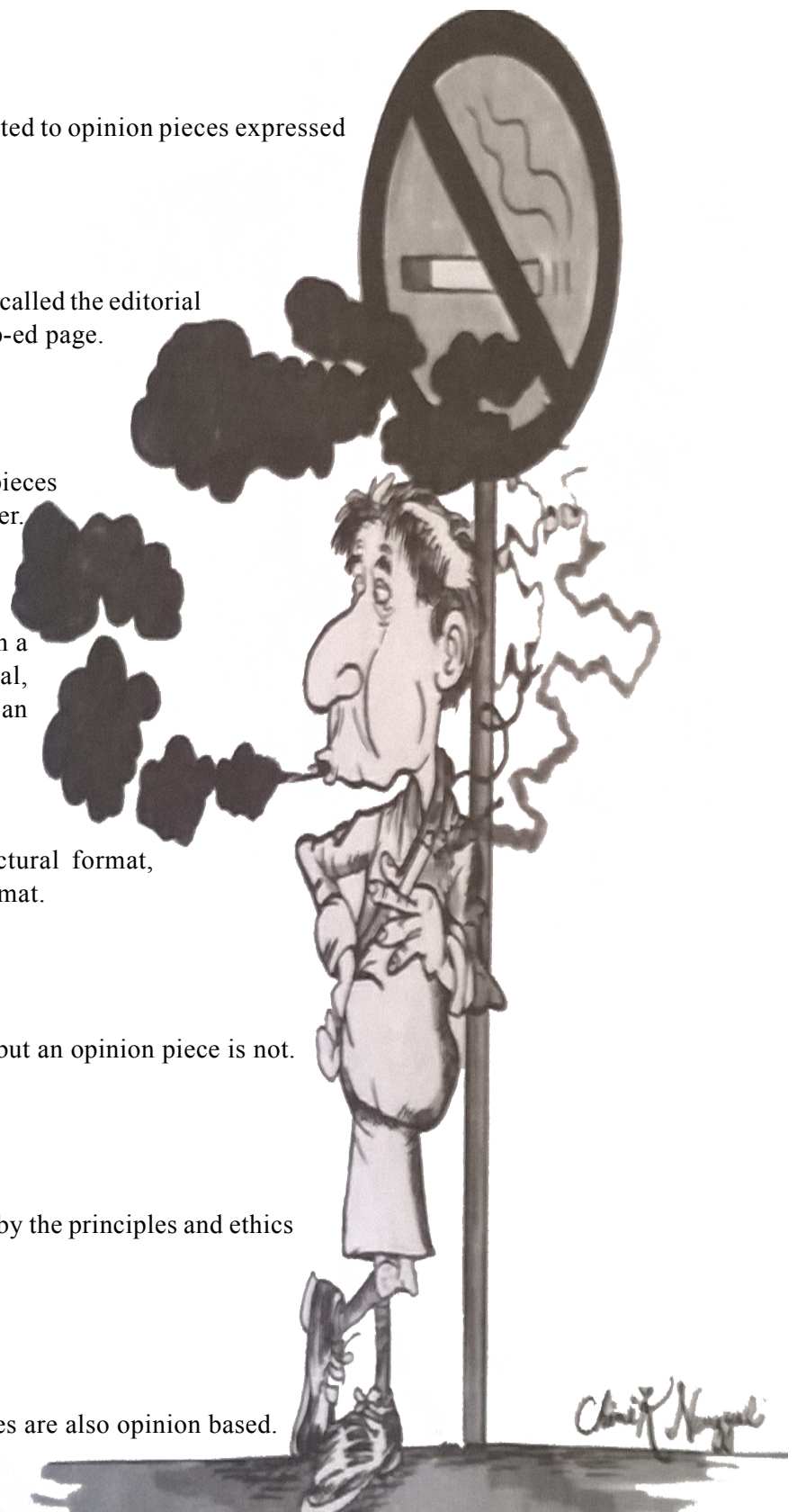
A news story is required to be objective, but an opinion piece is not.



An opinion writer is not necessarily bound by the principles and ethics of journalism like a reporter.



The cartons appearing on the editorial pages are also opinion based.



Who bothers if it's not allowed on paper?

(From 30 December 2011 issue of Bhutan Observer)

Bhutan's Democracy: Beyond the Constricted, Popular Wisdom of 'Democracy'

■ Katsu Masaki

“Whether Bhutan is a democracy is doubtful,” according to an in-house reviewer of a journal published by a major university outside Bhutan.

This remark was made with reference to my article on Bhutan's democracy, on the grounds that the case deviates from 'the spirit of democracy'; neither its monarchy nor Buddhism has receded but has taken on renewed importance with the advent of democracy.

Underlying the reviewer's comment are two major assumptions of the dominant notion of liberal democracy, regarding the state as a neutral arbiter that abstains from according a special status to any particular leader or religion.

First, monarchy is averse to democracy, in line with the conventional classification separating rule by a single individual (monarchy) and rule by the many (democracy). Second, a particular religion should not be accorded a privileged position, in order to prevent it from intruding into secular politics.

The monarchy/democracy, and religion/politics dichotomies, allegedly constitutive of 'the spirit of (liberal) democracy', originate in some historical experiences in the West. According to Immanuel Wallerstein, who pioneered world systems analysis of the modern history, the notion of liberal democracy emerged in the 20th century, as the latest rhetoric justifying the Western supremacy in the world.

The birth of political science in the 19th century has provided a fertile ground for liberal democracy to establish dominance in academic and popular thinking; political science supposedly elucidates "general" laws concerning politics, through empirical research of the 'advanced' Western present that the rest should aspire to.

Bhutan's democracy, thriving on the monarchical authority and Buddhism, can bring new cultural sensibilities to bear on the universalistic, circumscribed wisdom of liberal democracy. At the same time, one should ab-



Coronation of the Fifth Druk Gyalpo: Democracy and monarchy are not mutually exclusive systems of governance

stain from merely relegating liberal democracy to a 'global' agenda that is aimed at taking over "local" societies including Bhutan. It is imperative, instead, to shed light on similar moves towards "direct-access society" that cuts across the two.

The notion of 'direct-access society' is put forth by Charles Taylor, who points out that the process of modernisation has brought about a new moral order of society; modern citizens become less dependent on intermediaries, such as lords, traders, or churches, and involve themselves more directly in the running of politics, with better ideas about the rest of their own societies.

What is implied in the idea of 'direct-access society' in the context of the West, according to Charles Taylor, is that it is 'unrelated to any "higher points" ... , such as kings or priests.' This is where the case of Bhutan can offer an alternative, in that in the country, the move towards a 'direct-access society' has been propelled by the monarchy and religion.

The monarchy has not only ensured the stability of the country, thus facilitating the

steady path to democratisation, it has also been the prime agent of democratisation, as illustrated by the royal decree issued in 2001 to enact Bhutan's first constitution that would usher in a new era of 'democratic constitutional monarchy'.

Buddhism is democratic, in that, according to Mahayana Buddhism, everyone is potentially capable of self-development and edification. Its teachings have assigned individuals a sense of the common good, to enhance the prospects that each individual makes his or her moral choices.

When problematising the dominance of Western-derived liberal democracy, we must ascertain that modernity is far from being the prerogative of the West, but is also embedded in Bhutan and other 'local' societies. By acknowledging alternative forms of modernity, such as the one observed in Bhutan, instead of contrasting the single 'global' modernity with 'local' cultures alien to it, we will then be able to start conceptualising a multipolar world.

Chendebji Community Says No to Packaged Food Offerings

■ Tshering Norbu Uden, BCMD



The Chendebji temple doesn't accept packaged food as offerings

The small community of Chendebji in Trongsa recently adopted the policy of 'no packaged food as offerings' in temples and homes.

The idea was introduced and implemented by two Chendebji Primary School teachers, Tshewang Gyeltshen and Kinley Pem, who attended a community mapping workshop in Thimphu organised by the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD).

The teachers went door to door at first but later managed to gather everyone with the help of the chiwog tshogpa. They shared their concerns and plan during the school parents-teachers meeting.

With the support from the community, Tshewang and Kinley were not only able to stop the community people from using packaged food as offerings, but also create awareness of it among people who visited the community.

Moreover, they decided to reuse or recycle plastic wrappers, covers, and rubbers by turning them into mats, cushions, and adornments at home rather than burning or dumping them.

A teacher from Yoezerling Higher Secondary School in Paro, Karma Tenzin, also introduced the idea he picked up from the community mapping workshop and implemented it in his school.

The media club members of the school mapped their school and found four different problems – packaged food, poor sanitation, discrimination or teachers being partial to students, and water problem.

"I suggest all the media clubs in Bhutan carry this [out], because it really helps our school management to help students with a better stay in the school," he wrote on Facebook about the media club's success.

Community mapping is a biannual workshop led by the staff of BCMD for high school and college students, and teachers from different parts of the country. During the workshop, the participants go around Thimphu and map the communities to identify problems and try to solve them at the local level.

The community mapping exercise helps the participants understand better the community they live in.

Exploring Leadership Skills in Youth

■ Kinley Zepa, Graduate

A workshop on leadership skills on 15 and 16 October came as a rare opportunity for the Bhutanese to learn leadership skills.

Facilitated by the former CEO of Halogen Foundation in Singapore, Martin Tan, the workshop underlined that leadership is an art of mobilising others to fulfill shared aspirations.

While the qualities of a leader might be learnt, it's more important to discover one's own skills, capabilities, and weaknesses.

The workshop looked at Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech to guide the participants in writing down their own vision. This writing exercise not only gave the participants a chance to explore their own vision, but also think what they could do.

In Bhutan, with the institution of democracy, leadership abilities are tested every day. In addition to improving skills and abilities, an important aspect of becoming a leader is to make others like you. Building leadership is more than building character for it's not a one-person world.

It's important to create leaders among our youth for we keep saying that the youth are the future of the nation. The belief in our youth can go a long way in terms of building the leaders of the future.

What remains to be done is exploring the abilities and skills among our youth. That's the key.

CORRIGENDUM

In the last issue of *Mi-Khung*, we ran a story titled "The Space for Democracy's Growth. We would like to clarify that the comment quoted in the story "What if the youth went off to joining parties?" attributed to the Election Commission of Bhutan is not the view of the Commission but of an individual. We regret any misunderstanding that may have occurred.

How Does One Earn Right to Criticise?

“The right to criticise is earned from willingness to engage” – Howard Williamson, Prof. of European Youth Policy at the University of South Wales

■ Dechen Rabgyal,
PGDPA, RIM

Assertion of rights has become more pronounced now than ever before. It has been brought about by political and social change that has come in the form of democracy. Of late, the right to expression has gained momentum.

Within it, the right to criticise has found its place among the people to the extent that so many people, in one way or another, participate in it. In Bhutan, complaints, gossips, and anonymous comments are popular in news forums.

Criticism, for the purpose of this article, is defined as the art of evaluating or analysing with knowledge and propriety to refine a subject at hand. On that premise, a conducive environment should be created to encourage criticism. The need for this has become ever more important in today's world, where democracy happens to be the most popular form of governance.

Criticism will help keep the elected accountable to the electorate. Prohibiting citizens from criticising elected officials would mean discrimination based on content – allowing praise of government officials but not criticism.

Criticism sometimes arises from frus-

tration and envy. Is assertion of the right to criticise justifiable then? This leads to the dilemma of weighing criticism. It can be elucidated by two concepts – valid criticism and unjustified criticism.

The former is considered constructive as people criticise using reasonable standards of behaviours with adequate expertise in the subject. The latter, perceived defama-

tion, there is a thin line between the two and interpretations at times are inconsistent and become a subject of controversy.

It's important to acknowledge criticism and probe into it. Through this method, one will be able to admit and defuse one's shortcomings and explore solutions to refine it. The opposite, though, is quite true. We have the tendency to defy criticisms and get into a defensive mode even if evidence proves the criticism valid.

We sometimes criticise without knowing what the subject at hand is. Criticising others without understanding the context and one's role in it would be like going to war unprepared. Such practices breed animosity and division, threatening our vision for a cohesive society.

As espoused in several charters and constitutions, in theory, all have the right to criticise. However, in reality, the right to criticise should be accompanied by willingness to engage in refining the subject at hand as Prof. Howard asserts. The very phrase is supported by Abraham Lincoln's statement, “He has a right to criticize, who has a heart to help.”

It's important
to acknowledge
criticism and
probe into it

tory, occurs when the critic nags, recites one's failures and pretends to be smart.

In the latter's case, Dweck and Kamins (1999) say “...person criticism is inherently more negative than process criticism.” How-



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For more information, please call 327903 or visit www.bcmbd.bt

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Events

9

Media and Democracy in Bhutan

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| Volume 4, Issue 3, December 2014



Yoezerling media club members in a multimedia workshop and social media conversation
1-2 October 2014



Participants at Youth Forum at the Paro College of Education engaging in a getting to know each other exercise
21-22 September 2014



Teacher trainees at Samtse produced five multimedia clips as part of the two-day multimedia training
1-2 November 2014



Restorative narrative: A discussion to find a Bhutanese approach to journalism
27 August 2014



Learning to become safe online users: Gaupel Media Club members engage in a social media conversation
1 October 2014



Three open mic nights were held where participants discussed filmmaking, social media, and mental health among other forums



On BCMD's first engagement with Gaeddu College, students discussed the pros and cons of social media
1 October 2014



Media club members of Kuzhugchen School engaged in a social media conversation and a multimedia workshop
5-6 September 2014



Led by Martin Tan, a two-day leadership workshop was conducted for youth
15 - 16 October 2014

What Do You Know About Civil Society? Why Does CSO's Matter and How Have They Contributed to Bhutan's Progress?

I think civil society matters because CSOs bridge the gaps in the provision of social services left by the government. The government cannot reach every nook and corner of the country. That's where CSOs come in. They complement the government. The passion to do something good, I would say, is the first driving force of civil society. I believe they are driven by a passion to help people.



Suman Samal
Media Officer, DHI

Civil society is coming up in our country, but CSOs have created invisible walls between themselves. Partnership is missing. A good leader functions through partners. Unless I trust myself, it is difficult to trust you. We need a change but we have to understand what kind of change we need. That's why I feel that civil society needs to learn the art of partnering. If we learn to partner and if we learn to grow with mutual respect, civil society can be one of the most powerful forces of change.



T B Rana
Teacher, Nima Higher Secondary School

Every responsible citizen is part of civil society. By being a responsible citizen, you are always trying to improve the system. Civil society is contributing to Bhutan's progress in many ways, and it is not something that is new in Bhutan. It has been there for a very long time, at the informal or traditional level. At the grassroots level in the villages, communities themselves organise meetings to set things out, particularly in the area of welfare. This kind of practice is still there and I would call that civil society.

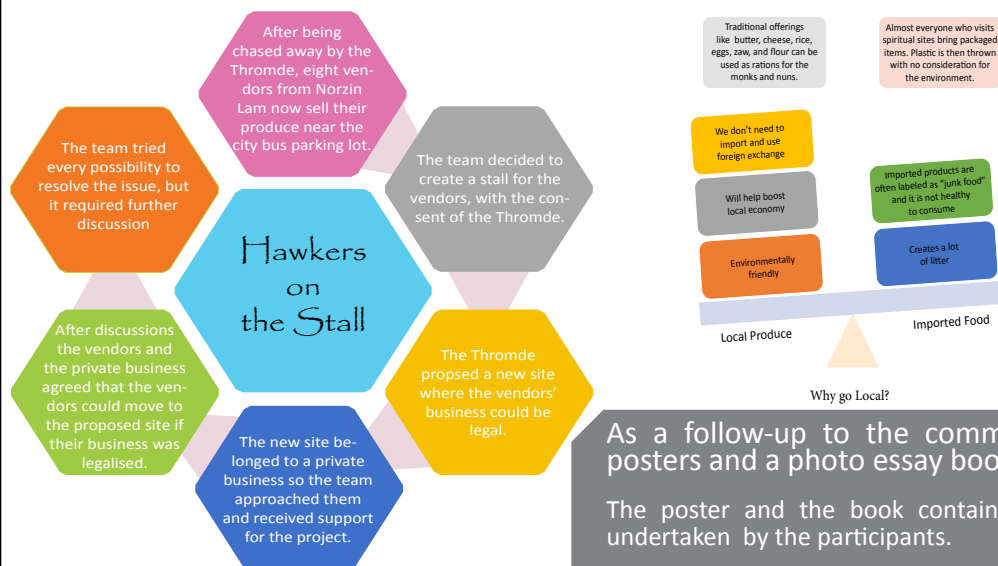


Dasho Tashi Wangmo
Eminent Member, National Council

Community Mapping follow-up

MEDIA NOMADS IX
THIMPHU Community Mapping
Be as familiar with a solution as you are with a problem!

STORIES THAT INSPIRE



As a follow-up to the community mapping workshop, roll-up posters and a photo essay book were printed.

The poster and the book contain to pictures and details of the project undertaken by the participants.

The book and the posters will be sent to all the participants of the workshop and exhibitions will be held

Conversation Begins on Civil Society in Bhutan

>> From pg. 1

true definition is much more expansive and covers all citizens who organise to solve common problems. A group of youth picking up trash on a Saturday morning is just as much a part of civil society as a large organisation like the Youth Development Fund.

On this, the participants agreed. “We at-

Without trust
you can't achieve
happiness, which is
very important for
a small country like
ours, for a country
with GNH

- Dasho Neten Zangmo

tach a high degree of value to formal structures and processes, which risks losing the value of loosely organised groups of individuals and community organising,” Tashi Pem from HELVETAS said. Being formally registered with the Civil Society Organisation Authority (a requirement to be a bona fide CSO in Bhutan) seemed a necessity for many groups, without which significant contributions might be difficult if not impossible.

Hari Sharma, Director of the Alliance for Social Dialogue in Nepal and the guest speaker at the dialogue, toiled to dispel this notion. “Civil society articulates people’s interests. Organisation is merely one of the vehicles we use to achieve our purposes, whether coming from the statist or societal perspective,” he said, adding that the formal-



Participants at the civil society dialogue discuss that civil society activities have always been part of communal support system

ity of the organisation should not be an impediment to meaningful action.

The lack of partnerships between civil society and government was also discussed, many feeling that the current climate is marked by distrust and suspicion. Most participants thought enhancing mutual respect and trust was essential to any future cooperation, and participants suggested using the tenets of Gross National Happiness (GNH) to form common ground. “Without trust you can’t achieve happiness, which is very important for a small country like ours, for a country with GNH,” said Dasho Neten Zangmo of the Anti-Corruption Commission.

The dialogue also discussed issues of a responsible media, the non-partisanship of CSOs, activism within Bhutanese society, and a host of other topics related to civil

society generally. While the importance of informal groups and the need for stronger partnerships were fairly well resolved, other issues were very lightly touched upon, creating a strong desire within most participants to have future dialogues. BCMD, for its part, was strongly supportive of continuing the conversation and offered to host an annual civil society dialogue and follow-up with civil society organisations.

In the end, most participants were optimistic that if properly understood and implemented, civil society would make a strong contribution to Bhutan’s young democracy and its experiment with GNH.

At least one student was ready to take up that challenge. “We should prove that, la,” he said. “We should prove that Bhutan is a happy country.”



This online space has been set up to keep CSOs connected by enabling all CSO members to engage in post views and provide quick updates from each CSO.

What does it mean to be a citizen?



"To be a citizen means to be loyal to our country. Merely having a citizenship doesn't fulfill the criteria of being a citizen. We should follow rules and regulations."

Sonam Tsheten, Student, Mongar



"Being a citizen doesn't mean just wearing our national dress all the time. If you want to be a good citizen, be a good person, show respect, and maintain a good attitude."

Pema Dema, Employee, Mongar



"For me, being a citizen means being part of the country."

Phuntsho Dorji, Student, Mongar



"Being a citizen means being responsible and serving one's heart."

Hema Devi, Student, Yoezerling



"Being a citizen means taking extra responsibility through good and positive manners."

Sonam Zangpo, Graduate, JNP



"A citizen is someone who is mindful of his or her actions and their its impact on the people and society as a whole."

Kinga Zam, Graduate, Sherubtse

5 Attributes of Political Parties in the Constitution- Article 15

1. Political parties shall ensure that national interests prevail over all other interests and, for this purpose, shall provide choices based on the values and aspirations of the people for responsible and good governance.
2. Political parties shall promote national unity and progressive economic development and strive to ensure the well-being of the nation.
3. Candidates and political parties shall not resort to regionalism, ethnicity and religion to incite voters for electoral gain.
4. Election to the National Assembly shall be by two political parties established through a primary round of election in which all registered political parties may participate.
5. A primary round of election shall be held to select the two political parties for the general election on the expiry of the term of the National Assembly or in the event of dissolution under section 12 of this Article.

Want to know more? Learn about all 16 sections of Article 15: Political Parties under the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan.
Read, know and understand your Constitution and keep your representatives accountable.
Stay informed, be an active citizen.