

annual report 2013

# BCMD

BHUTAN CENTRE FOR MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY



# table of **CONTENTS**

1.	A Joint Message from BCMD's Director and Chairperson.....	5
2.	About BCMD .....	6
3.	2013 Highlights.....	7
4.	Programme Area 1 .....	9
5.	INFOCUS: Community Mapping.....	18
6.	INFOCUS: My Perspective on Educating for Citizenship.....	22
7.	Programme Area 2 .....	23
8.	INFOCUS: Youth Forum .....	29
9.	Programme Area 3 .....	33
10.	Programme Area 4 .....	27
11.	JURWA- Changing Times in Gakithang: A Radio Soap .....	43
12.	Democracy Day Challenge 2013.....	44
13.	The Media Lab.....	45
14.	Youth Initiative for Debate, Deliberation and Development (YIDDD) .....	47
15.	Funding Overview .....	48
16.	Acknowledgement.....	49
17.	Resource Persons.....	50





# A JOINT MESSAGE FROM BCMD'S DIRECTOR AND CHAIRPERSON

The tension, confusion, and complexity of Bhutan's second general elections in 2013 showed that our work at BCMD, to strengthen a culture of democracy, remains more valid than ever. We have, clearly, a lot to do in Bhutan as each Bhutanese citizen learns to become a participant in Bhutan's democratic change -- and as democratic processes evolve to accommodate change.

The seeds we've planted in our early years are beginning to grow. BCMD has identified for itself an ambitious mandate -- nurturing a culture of democracy. As our democracy evolves, the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy finds itself taking on the role of strengthening civic education. We are working with all sections of society, and increasingly with youth who make up 60% of Bhutan's population. Political literacy is becoming more important by the day as we make the transition to responsible citizens.

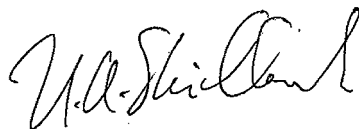
BCMD continues to incubate ideas and approaches to critical

thinking while strengthening an understanding of democracy and greater citizen action. The Youth Initiative began as an idea to model ways and means in which young people can learn to discuss, debate, and investigate issues that concern them. Our annual Media Dialogue continued to introspect on why we need journalism in a changing society and nation. With another three media sensitisation workshops in 2013, BCMD reached 185 Gewog Administrative Officers (GAOs) based in rural Bhutan to empower them to share information and to promote transparency at the gewog level.

We look forward to continuing progress in 2014 and welcome your involvement in our work.



Siok Sian Pek-Dorji  
Executive Professional Director  
BCMD



Nancy Strickland  
Chairperson  
BCMD

# ABOUT BCMD

The Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD) was established in 2008 in response to the needs of the changing times as Bhutan made the historic transition from a monarchy to a democracy. Our dedicated team focuses on building a culture of democracy by promoting and strengthening quality media, building critical thinking skills among media users, and strengthening discourse, research, and educational activities on media and democracy.

## Towards a Vibrant Democracy

Everywhere in the world, experience has demonstrated that the building of a democratic culture takes years, even generations. We seek to facilitate the process of true democratic development through focused attention on strengthening media and civil society to promote participatory democracy.

## Mission

To nurture a culture of democracy by strengthening media, expanding public discourse, and providing essential training and education for key persons who will have a direct impact on Bhutan's democratic transition as it lays the processes and institutions for a newly-formed democracy.

## Logo

The Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy logo represents the unique balance between modernisation and tradition. An abstract from referencing a lotus blossom or a range of mountain peaks, the symbol evokes fortitude, aspiration, and new beginning.

## Vision

A vibrant participatory democracy rooted in the values of the Gross National Happiness.

## Core Programme Areas

We operate with four core programme areas where we experiment with an innovative mix of activities and programmes:

1. Strengthening Media and Democracy Literacy
2. Encouraging and Expanding Public Discourse
3. Strengthening Media as the Fourth Estate
4. Resource Production



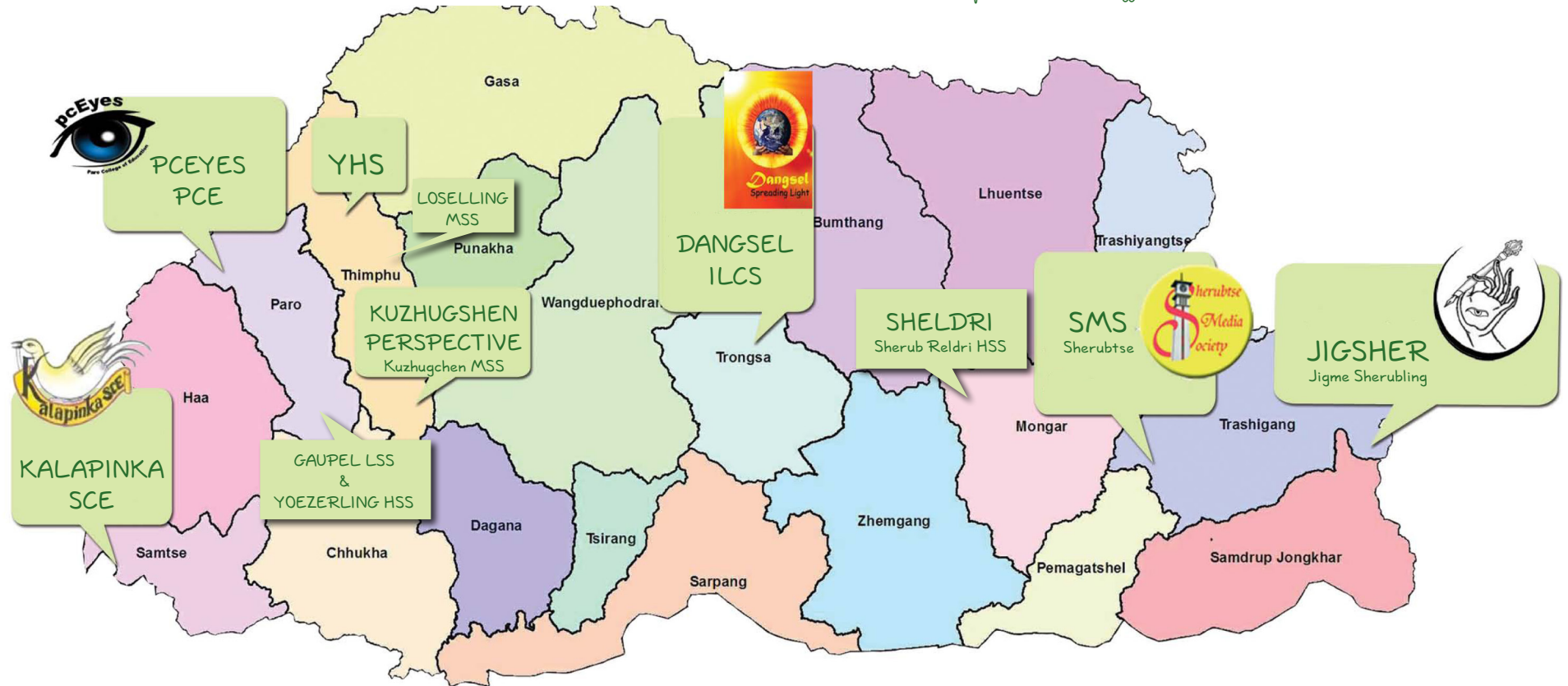
■ The core team at BCMD aided by many advisors, youth, and partners

# 2013 HIGHLIGHTS

Supports **11** Media Clubs across Bhutan.

Over **400** club members &

**10** club-publish newsletters.



Hosted a Media Dialogue and  
Five Public Forums with over 530 participants.

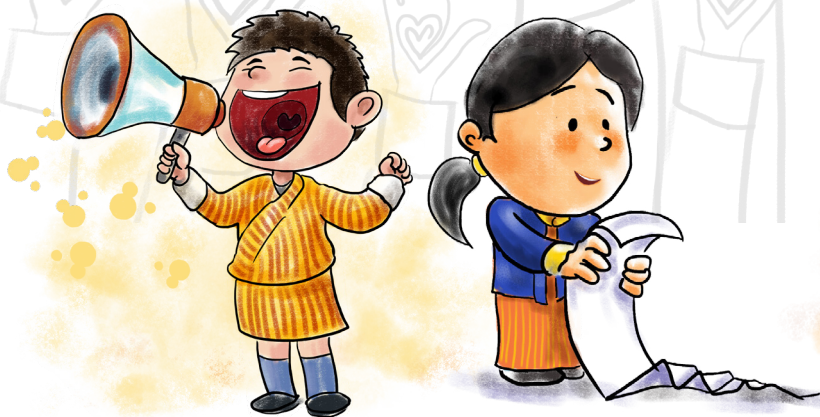


# “Democracy is an everyday exercise...”

New Projects in 2013



**Community Mapping**



**Youth Initiative for Debate,  
Deliberation & Development**




**JURWA - Changing Times  
in Gakithang - A Radio Series**

**Democracy Day Challenge**







Programme Area 1

# STRENGTHENING MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY LITERACY

“ What my community needs the most are people with positive attitudes who can move forward to make changes, and people with courage. ”

Sarala Pradhan, Yangchenphug Higher Secondary School



## ABOUT THE PROGRAMME AREA

After two rounds of parliamentary elections in the country, we see that much needs to be done to make citizens understand that democracy is more than just going to the polls. We must learn more about the democratic processes, and our roles and responsibilities in a democracy. While providing education and training programmes in democratic behaviour cannot be assumed by BCMD alone, we aim to play a critical role in training and familiarising citizens in the responsibilities and challenges of understanding democracy in a greater sense.

Similarly, in a country where people seldom question the accuracy of media, it is vital that media literacy skills are developed to encourage critical thinking among all Bhutanese. It is also important that the media is trained to think about its role in a democracy and learn the skills of responsible journalism.

The younger generations are key players in a small society. In 2013, BCMD focused our activities on young people in schools, colleges and institutions, teacher trainees, and local leaders in *gewogs*.

### ACTIVITIES THIS YEAR

- Five podcasting workshops at Paro College of Education (PCE), Samtse College of Education, Institute of Language and Culture Studies, Sherubtse Media Society and the Media Lab
- Two community mapping workshops in Thimphu
- Two news writing and interview workshops



■ An interviewing exercise during a podcasting workshop at PCE – What kind of changes have they noticed in the last five years after the coming of democracy?



■ Media club members of Samtse College engage in an icebreaker during a 'Journalism for Change' workshop



**Media and Democracy Literacy** can be understood in terms of three key competencies:

**Critical and Creative Thinking:** Democracy depends upon the voice of the people. For people to have a voice guided by wisdom, they need to be capable of thinking critically by questioning the world around them, and to express this voice creatively by way of their own, individual thought processes.

**Active Citizenship:** A democracy requires open participation – and it goes beyond just voting. Citizens must first be motivated and capable of engaging in civil discussion and take action in their communities.

**An Understanding of the Importance of Journalism in Society:** As the so-called ‘fourth estate’ of governance, media helps keep the government accountable and the people informed.



■ Youth learn to map communities and look for solutions during the 7<sup>th</sup> Media Nomads camp



## Media Clubs

Media clubs are associations of students and teachers who have a genuine interest in finding the stories of their communities and giving voice to youth. These clubs consist of student reporters who publish quarterly newspapers, host discussions and debates, produce short films, and even travel to spread awareness about media's role in society.

The activities designed for the clubs aim at strengthening their critical thinking, inquiry, and analytical skills. The students develop the ability to consume media critically by filtering information. Learning skills like photography and podcasting enables the students to share stories of our democracy from their communities.

Through this, students learn the importance of cultivating a sense of responsibility in their community and for themselves. It makes them realise that while there are problems, complaining is not a solution. Rather, taking small actions like volunteering and working together with the community can help them find solutions. All these combined encourages an understanding that for a democracy to prosper, citizens need to make small steps towards change.



■ Media club coordinators from across the country meet at the Media Lab to share the highlights and the challenges of their clubs



■ Participants during a podcasting workshop engaged in a 'Meet the Press' session with editors Needrup Zangpo of Bhutan Observer and Tenzing Lamsang of The Bhutanese



BCMD supports 11 media clubs with small seed funding and all the clubs are supported with club guides, videos, and other resources:

1. Sherubtse Media Society @ Sherubtse College
2. Dangsels @ the Institute of Language and Culture Studies
3. Kalapinka @ the Samtse College of Education
4. Yangchenphug Higher Secondary School
5. PCEyes @ the Paro College of Education
6. JigSher @ Jigme Sherubling Higher Secondary School
7. Kuzugchen Middle Secondary School
8. Gaupel Media Club @ Gaupel MSS
9. Loselling Lower Secondary School
10. Sheldri @ Sherub Reldri HSS
11. Yoezerling HSS

## ACTIVITIES WITH MEDIA CLUBS

- Five podcasting workshops held for media club members across the country
- Ten media clubs produced newspapers covering stories in their communities
- Sherubtse Media Society and Sherub Reldri adopted Kanglung Primary School and Mongar Higher Secondary School respectively spreading media literacy to additional youth



■ Kuzhugchen MSS launches its first media club newsletter 'Kuzhugchen Perspective'

*"Although it was hectic and challenging, we confronted everything collaboratively. We feel this is a huge achievement and will take it forward day by day, month by month, and year by year."*

Jigme Norbu,  
Editor/Club Coordinator,  
Kuzhugchen Middle Secondary School

**We trained**

- 170 youth in citizen journalism and podcasting
- More than 12 well-crafted podcast were produced and more are being produced

**Podcasting**

Active citizen participation is one of the key ingredients for a successful democracy. It is our mission at BCMD to work towards an open society where all citizens can think for themselves, express themselves creatively, realise their responsibilities, and generate positive change. Podcasting is a medium that allows young people to tell their stories and share their voices.

This year, we conducted a series of podcasting workshops under the theme 'Citizen Journalism' for media clubs. The workshops aimed to explore ways in which young people can engage in community-based problem-solving through podcasts and to advocate the issues using the podcasts. Selected podcasts were shared online and through radio stations to spread the issues to the public domain.

The participants learned the skills of reporting, interviewing, scripting and editing audio. The workshops resulted in a series of well-crafted podcasts featuring youth voices on democracy and other issues that communities face. The workshops were held at the Paro College of Education, Samtse College of Education, Institute of Language and Culture Studies, and Sherubste College.

**LOCAL STORIES COVERED BY OUR YOUTH DURING THE PODCAST WORKSHOPS**

- The effects of social media on the 2013 elections
- Voting rights of monks
- Waste management in Samtse
- Dzongkha - Is it deteriorating in use?
- Democracy in Bhutan

More podcasts are available on [www.bcmbd.bt](http://www.bcmbd.bt) and [www.soundcloud.com/bcmd](http://www.soundcloud.com/bcmd)



■ Participants interviewing a shopkeeper at Taktse during the podcasting workshop

## Since 2011

- We led nine Media Nomad camps
- About 200 youth were engaged during their summer and winter holidays
- Supported youth to produce over 20 short films and documentaries and share them on YouTube

## Media Nomads

Media Nomads is our flagship media-democracy literacy workshop aimed at giving young people tools and skills to express their ideas and share their stories. During the course of 11 days, a cohort of youth is trained in citizen journalism, documentary filmmaking, and research skills through which they build critical awareness about issues in society.

As they become responsible media makers, young people start communicating in different ways and understand the importance of active citizenship. At the end of a workshop, we see extraordinary growth in their communication skills, self-confidence, and critical thinking abilities.

As part of our Media Nomads programme, we piloted community mapping projects in July and December. The workshop enabled them to understand communities more broadly and be part of the solution.



## THE MEDIA NOMAD VOWS



I will strive to be an informed citizen by reading the newspapers and watching BBS



I will openly express my opinions, in a respectful manner, while listening to others



I will use media creatively, responsibly and for the betterment of the society

## We

- Led two mapping workshops in July and December 2013.
- Mapped nine different communities in Thimphu
- Engaged 62 students in findings problems and solutions in the communities

## Community Mapping: An Introduction

Community mapping involves using photography, interviewing, and research skills to explore the individual, community, and institutional assets of an area – cataloguing what’s valuable and what needs to change, while exploring opportunities and solutions that could improve their communities.

This youth community mapping project is based on the belief that if youth have the opportunity to explore and map the social geography of the areas in which they live, they become not only much more aware of the issues their communities face but also become more active advocates for solutions.

*(To read more about the community mapping, read InFocus about the workshop on page 18)*

*“This workshop has taught me more about my responsibilities towards my community and my country. I’ve discovered our potential as a team to bring positive change!”*

Lilly Yangchen,  
Luntenzampa Middle Secondary School.

## RESOURCES PRODUCED

- Community Mapping banner stands and five individual community banners exhibited in public places across Thimphu
- Community Mapping books
- Community Mapping video

Resources are available on [www.bcmod.bt](http://www.bcmod.bt) and YouTube. Read more on the resources in program area 4.



- Thimphu Thrompön, Kinlay Dorjee, stressed the importance of fairness and justice, hard work, and a proactive attitude against social ills while interacting with the youth during the first community mapping workshop



## Finding Employment for the Unemployed

A group of youth surveying the Changzamtog community came across Druk Norzin Hygiene Association, a company that employs low income people to clean buildings and drains. They felt the company was an asset in the community. During their mapping, they ran into a middle-aged unemployed woman, Dechen Zangmo Dukpa, who was living in a makeshift hut. They took Dechen to the company and got her employed. They came back and shared the story with their peers. Another group of youth found a similar person, Ap Chencho, and they found him employment with the same company.



- Good cooperation in the neighbourhood: PWD camp community members take action to make their own pit after receiving encouragement from the Community Mapping participants



*"Thumbs up guys...we helped get employment for Dechen Zangmo Drukpa, 54, and Ap Chencho, 57. These are two people who could really use the kind of opportunities Druk Norzin Hygiene Association has to offer."*

Jigme Tshewang, Sherubtse College

In July 2013, we piloted the first Community Mapping workshop for the 7<sup>th</sup> Media Nomads programme, where students from across Bhutan explored five unique Thimphu communities. By mapping these communities, they learned that anyone can bring change, thus adding to their understanding of citizen action as being at the centre of a democracy.

The participants attended a five-day theory lesson where they learned about the importance of a strong community, how to research and communicate with people, and interact with policy makers and individuals to learn more about the processes of getting involved in decision making. The youth then headed out to map the communities and get hands-on experience to learn about the strengths and issues in the communities. The ten-day workshop ended with sharing with stakeholders what they learnt through their mapping exercise.

Another mapping exercise was held at the 8<sup>th</sup> Media Nomads camp in December 2013.

One of the main objectives of the workshop was to cultivate youth habits and skills for community-based inquiry and problem solving and to build youth confidence in their abilities to express themselves and make a difference. They learnt the skills of inquiry, research, critical thinking, documentation, and using maps to come up with creative solutions for some community problems. Overall, youth learned to become advocates for community-based solutions.

During both the mapping workshops, the participants became aware of issues such as safety and security of the residents, water shortages, waste management, poor sanitation, high stray dog population, the increasing number of bars and fewer recreational facilities. Other issues explored include inadequate public transport (bus services), poor youth engagement, youth unemployment, gang fights, and alcohol consumption leading to social issues, car accidents, and the low sense of community among the residents.

As they became aware of such issues, the participants proposed solutions to the residents and relevant agencies. One proposal included the formation of neighborhood watch groups, while another persuaded the municipal authority to increase the frequency of garbage collection. Innovative ideas included encouraging the adoption of stray dogs or at least helping the municipality in sterilisation programmes, advocacy to get residents how to provide feedback to the municipality on various issues, and encouraged the house owners to organise communal cleaning.

Community mapping prepares youth to become advocates and agents of change.





■ Youth volunteers help build fencing.





- Participants of the 7<sup>th</sup> Media Nomads camp (first community mapping) show their solidarity through a performance at the final presentation after 11 days of workshop



- The workshops trained 15 teachers and designed 11 lesson plans

## Teacher Training

Realising the importance of taking media literacy to Bhutanese classrooms, we hosted the second curriculum development workshop in partnership with the Centre for News Literacy at Stony Brook University (US).

Teachers from the Media Clubs and Royal Education Council Seed Schools learned the need for teaching media literacy and the concepts involved. The group was a mix with teacher trainees and teachers who taught primary to high school.

During the workshop, the teachers brainstormed ideas on how lessons could be simple with Bhutanese examples. The participants used different mediums like songs, games, and paintings to develop the lessons. The lessons are developed in such a way that any other teacher who has not attended the workshop can teach them.

The participants demonstrated the lessons they developed. The lessons were developed in a way the teachers could use it during their club hours or use it as an exercise in class to any subject they felt was relevant for.

Lesson plans and activities were designed on the 'Information Neighborhoods' and 'Source Analysis and Evaluation'. The lessons from the first and the second workshops were distributed to the teachers to practical test and were uploaded on the BCMD website as

a resource for all.

Teachers were encouraged to facilitate and lead media clubs in their schools. Awareness was also raised on the power of information in a democracy and the necessity to empower future generations through education.

As a result of this workshop, two media clubs were started in Kuzugchen School and Gaupel Primary School. BCMD continues to support the clubs in terms of resources and training and provide support and training for teachers who will facilitate the media clubs.



■ Teacher trainees enjoy in an icebreaker during the workshop

## My perspective on Educating for Citizenship

I'd like to speak about some of the thoughts I have when I think of 'educating for citizenship' from my Bhutanese perspective.

The moment we think of our country and of being a citizen we often think of the great words of John F Kennedy. "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country." So my question is, where can the youth go to ask this question? How do they know what they can do for their country? This is where the philosophy and belief behind educating for citizenship is vital, particularly at this time when Bhutan is experiencing historic changes in its transition to democracy.

Youth get bombarded with a lot of controversial news, opposing opinions and loud views which are so different from the time that we came from. I believe that it is more important than ever to guide our youth as they are exposed to this barrage of information that is sometimes not verified and often untrue. We need to intervene before youth feel that it is alright to keep having these controversies and opposing views.

I also believe that Bhutan has an advantage to change at this point in time as we are in a position to be well aware of the lessons on how media have been capable of helping or harming people, countries, and systems.

So, basically what I am saying is we cannot just close our

eyes and ears to media because it is unstoppable and it will find their way in. So what we can do best for ourselves and our youth today is to prepare them to consume media, verify its information, and choose how to let it affect them.

Ugyen Kelzang  
Teacher at Jigme Sherubling High School  
Khaling, Bhutan



■ Ugyen Kelzang sharing his views on 'Educating for Citizenship' during the workshop



A young man with glasses and a maroon jacket is speaking into a microphone. He is smiling and looking towards the right. In the background, there is a balcony with several people sitting on it. To the right, there are large red and green banners. The overall setting appears to be a public forum or a college event.

Programme Area 2

# EXPANDING PUBLIC DISCOURSE

“

I appreciate the opportunity to raise my views and opinions in such forums where my voice matters too.

”

Tshering Denker  
Student, Sherubtse College

## ABOUT THE PROGRAMME AREA

An important way for citizens to participate in a democracy is through collective deliberation. People need to come together to reason and talk, to discuss with others about ways to approach difficult issues, and to work towards making sound public judgment. BCMD activities go beyond discussions or debate. They provide the space for people to enter into dialogues to reach a consensus on issues.

Our discussion forums, seminars, and public screenings provide opportunities for this process of collective deliberation. The discussions are widely attended by policy makers, members of political parties, civil society representatives, high school and college youth, representatives from the government and other interested individuals and receive regular media coverage, and editorial reflection. The proceedings are made available through our forum publications and website.

**Discussion Forums:** Using a panel discussion format, and taking an appreciative inquiry format, we led several forums this year on ‘The Culture of Democracy’, ‘Social Action for Social Change’, ‘Human Rights’, and ‘Youth Civic Engagement’.

The forums are widely attended and they receive regular media coverage and editorial reflection. For those who are unable to attend the forums, we share the audio of the presentations on our website.

### ACTIVITIES THIS YEAR

- Four forums engaging 507 participants
- Two seminars engaging 130 participants
- Launch of the CSO forum online

[www.bhutancsos.org](http://www.bhutancsos.org)



■ Former Minister Dago Tshering at the forum on ‘Education and Democracy’



■ Karma Tenzin (Democracy Day Challenge winner) presents his project of paving a footpath to a temple



### We engaged

- 174 participants at the democracy forum
- 130 participants at the two seminars

## The Imperative of Deepening Democracy

‘The Imperative of Deepening Democracy: Lessons we can learn from other regions of the world’ was a forum that focused on the meaning and implementation of a more profound vision of democracy. It discussed how many developing countries have come a long way to creating the political stability needed for economic development, but how they also generally suffer from a low quality of democracy.

The seminars ‘Education and Democracy’ and “The Economics of Education” reviewed the relation between education and democracy, how education can contribute to the formation of future citizens, and whether education can deepen democracy by contributing to greater equity in economic and social opportunities for young people.

*“The three most important ideas I picked up at the workshop were: the power of democracy depends on a good civil society and the rules of law placed in it, instead of political parties alone; education is the top priority in everyone’s life; and the role of media in deepening democracy. The talks were excellent, well-delivered, and very interesting.”*

Sonam Choden,  
Ministry of Labour and Human Resources



■ Professor Martin Carnoy on ‘Education and Democracy’



■ A participant shares his view on the education system and culture of democracy in Bhutan

## Social Action for Social Change

*“Democracy is not only a gift from the throne; it is a responsibility given to the people from the kings to further strengthen our country”*

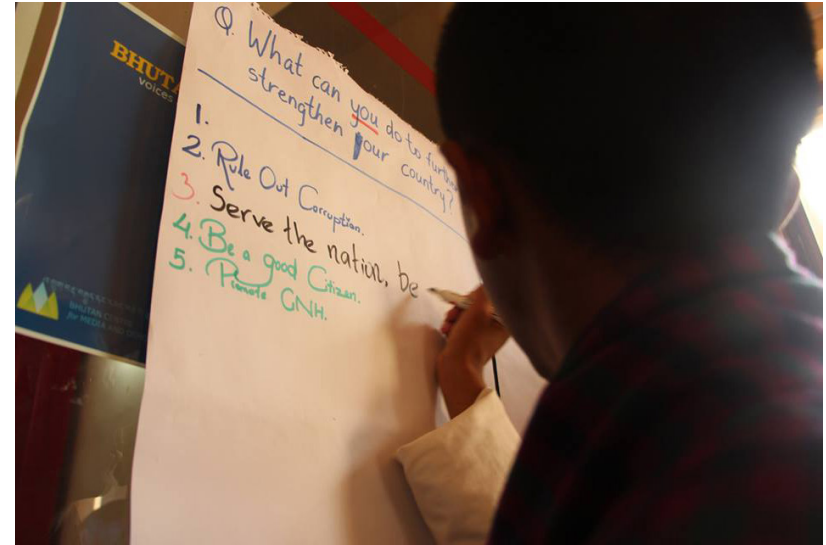
- His Majesty the King

With the above quote as motivation, we commemorated International Democracy Day with a forum on the theme ‘Taking Social Action for Social Change.’ Seventy youth and teachers from Royal Thimphu College, Yangchenphug Higher Secondary School, Loselling Middle Secondary School, and Royal Institute of Health Sciences gathered at the Media Lab to discover the potential of individual citizens to take initiative and realise their roles and responsibilities in our maturing democracy.

Participants interacted with the Bhutanese who, through their own initiative, are undertaking innovative social action projects.

A high school graduate, Phub Dorji, put forward his idea to start a youth parliament in the country. “Bhutanese youth are bored; they are not asked what they think about things such as education policy. They are sleeping. And they can wake up when they see that the system can work for us,” Phub said.

The forum also heard from four groups of young people who participated in the Democracy Day Challenge 2013 aimed at prompting citizens to take local initiatives to address needs in the communities. They spoke about activities to promote the Right to Information Bill awareness campaign, Consumer Protection Bill awareness campaign, a blood pressure drive, and an initiative as simple as paving a footpath to a monastery.



■ Participants eagerly answer what they can do to further strengthen our country



■ Sangay Tshering from the social enterprise called ‘Mops and Condoms’ shares his experience and the challenges he faced



### We engaged

- About 54 participants comprising youth, students, and members of CSOs at the Media Lab

## Human Rights Forum

BCMD conducted a forum based on the theme ‘Understanding Rights’ on the International Human Rights Day in collaboration with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The guest speakers reflected on various fundamental human rights present in international treaties like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan. It was followed by a lively discussion. The forum aimed to provide a unique opportunity in which we can create general awareness of human rights in the global context today and how they are relevant to us in Bhutan.

The forum enabled participants to gain insight into how fundamental human rights are enshrined in the Bhutanese Constitution. They also gained comprehensive knowledge on the objectives of the UDHR and subsequent international conventions, namely the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the principles and provisions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

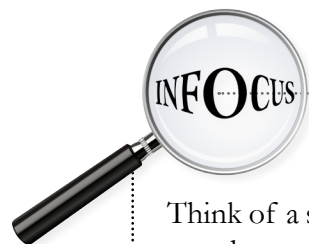
A poster on the constitutional rights and duties of a Bhutanese citizen was created and distributed to programme participants as well as organisations throughout Bhutan.



■ Participants debated the fundamental rights and their presence in our country's constitution

*“Besides knowing some of the fundamental rights as an individual, I learned that every right comes with a corresponding duty.”*

Galey Jamtsho, graduate student



## Youth Forum

Think of a setting where a passionate group of youth comes together to discuss some of the key issues in the country and start realising the potential within themselves – as individuals and as a team – to address the issues. Or at least understand them in a deeper sense.

That is the youth forum where we encourage young people to understand a simple fact that no matter where and what we do, we need to learn to co-exist and that 'we are all in this together'. We say youth have a huge role to play in the developments taking shape in Bhutan and that they are the 'future citizens'.

But what are we doing today to guide our youth to become active GNH citizens? This remains the general motivation behind our youth forums – to involve youth today so that they are better prepared for tomorrow.

The Youth Forum enables the participants to reflect on society and the opportunities to bring change. It takes young people through a series of stages to recognise their potential and to come up with one practical project to address an issue that they are concerned about. The forum takes a strength-based approach to inquiring into our challenges among youth in Bhutan.

Using a combination of Appreciative Inquiry and Parker J Palmer's 5 Habits of the Heart, the forum gave young people

a platform to set a collective vision and design projects that would enable them to achieve that vision. Over 50 young people from school and out-of-school contexts engaged in the process of deep listening and sharing.

By the end of the two-day forum, the participants confirmed that the majority of the Bhutanese youth have the potential for and are already active in shaping their local communities. They disagreed that the government was completely responsible for the well-being of the people and that other sectors such as civil society and citizenry also have responsibilities in ensuring the well-being of the people.



■ Discover, Dream, Design, and Destiny. Participants present their vision of Bhutan using the 4-D appreciative approach



## Letter to Myself: A Participant Shares His Experience of the Two-day Youth Forum

Dear me,

It is really inspiring how I have learned so much in the past two days. It was quite a memorable experience, and I think it would be unfair if I did not reflect on it further.

Firstly, it is quite impossible to imagine living a life with no one by our side. We all crave for attention and have a pathological fear of being left alone. I think that we should allow ourselves to learn and understand and appreciate the value of otherness. I feel I have come so far, all thanks to this helpful activity that has taught me so much.

Most of us are made to believe that the world is a rather cruel place, but it is in fact, a wonderful place for all of us easily-deceived earthlings. We human beings tend to be very judgmental, and this bad habit gives rise to all the negativity in our lives, and makes it seem like our existence on this planet is our curse, where we are suffering endless pain and misery.

I have also learned that challenges and struggles are necessary in life because, by overcoming such difficulties, we learn so much through our experiences.

I am so grateful to be part of this forum, because it made me realise that I do matter, and I can make a difference if I wish.

Though I do not know much about Nelson Mandela, I do know that he lived his whole life to bring peace into this disastrous world. People like him have inspired a burning desire in me to raise my voice, and stand for what I believe is morally right.

I strongly believe that we are the architects of our own happiness. We should make effective use of our powers and our rights, to give back to our community and our country that has given us a place we can call home and provided us with the chance to live a peaceful and happy life.

Love,

Kinley Rinzin

Yangchenphug High School







- Young active citizens use community mapping to explore and investigate local community issues and to offer ideas and solutions to tackle daily challenges





- Participants envision Bhutan in 2018. They dream about a Bhutan where youth engagement is happening at a very high level, and where youth views are sought for policy making and valued at home, in schools, and at the workplace.



## Bhutan Speaks

Bhutan Speaks is an online pilot forum created and moderated by BCMD. In Bhutan Speaks, we encourage users/visitors to use their real names and identity to engage rather than to be an anonymous user.

The aims of the forum are:

- To provide proactive comments and real feedback and improve the quality engagement online,
- To focus on the positive and share answers and ideas on how to resolve issues and pose queries to solicit ideas and answers from the community.

There are over 120 registered members. Past discussions have included the gewog development grants, waste management, freedom of the press, rural development and youth issues. Engage with us and register to be part of Bhutan Speaks!

[www.bhutanspeaks.bt](http://www.bhutanspeaks.bt)




## Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Bhutan

Civil society organisations identified a need to set up an online forum site to provide a platform to address inquiries, clarifications, and problems presented by the members immediately. The online discussion forum enable members to engage in active discussion, get to know each other, and to share information. The site acts as a repository of information on CSOs in Bhutan with announcements and activities updated regularly.

BCMD is the administrator for the forum and we moderate comments and membership.

[www.bhutancsos.org](http://www.bhutancsos.org)





Programme Area 3

# STRENGTHENING MEDIA AS THE “FOURTH ESTATE”

“

It's easy to get lost in a sea of messages and images from the media. Media literacy is about navigating through these messages with the skills of critical thinking. Media messages from TV, films, the internet and video games have been carefully crafted with the intent to send a very specific message and it is important to ask what values these messages are trying to send.

”

Dechen Zangmo,  
Class X, Media Club member, Kuzhugchen MSS



## ABOUT THE PROGRAMME AREA

Though media in Bhutan has expanded rapidly and is shown signs of taking on the task of being a watchdog of society, most reporters are young and lack professional training. Media reporting needs more depth and investigation, and often falls short of providing the incisive analytical reporting that we need to be informed citizens.

To help strengthen the media to take on its role as the 'Fourth Estate,' BCMD has provided forums, training, and conducted seminars to strengthen media to play its part in Bhutan's changing social, economic, and political environment.

### ACTIVITIES THIS YEAR

- Bhutan Media Dialogue
- Press Freedom Day
- Media sensitisation for GAOS and Gups



■ Participants of the Bhutan Media Dialogue in Paro included resource persons from outside Bhutan



■ Media Sensitisation workshop for gups and gewog administrative officers (GAOs) from across the country

- 185 Gewog Administrative Officers and 17 Gups trained since 2011

## Local Leaders

BCMD continues to reach out to all the sections of the country's population, including our rural population to enable them to understand the political transition taking place.

BCMD led media sensitisation workshop for three batches of Gewog Administrative Officers (GAO) from the south, east, and central *dzongkhags*. We also piloted similar sensitisation workshops for 16 gups from Thimphu and Paro. The workshop was intended to enhance the capacity of GAOs and gups to become more effective in sharing public information for democratic good governance, thus strengthening transparency at the *gewog* level.

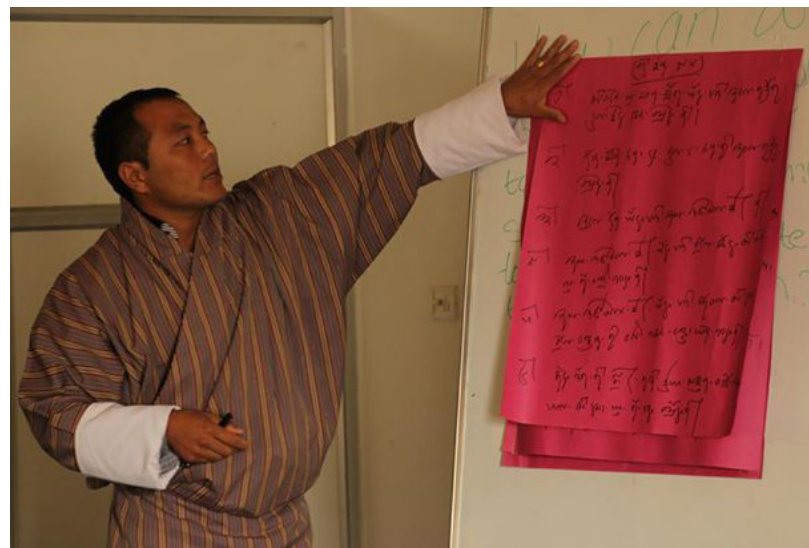
The participants learned about the Right to Information (RTI) bill, social accountability, citizen journalism and the need for fact checking and accuracy in the media. They also had a hands-on session on how to write news releases and letters to editors of newspapers. Participants also met with the editors from TV and print to discuss the state of media in Bhutan and the constraints the Bhutanese media face in getting access to information.

This growing awareness has been channelled into a pilot blog called 'Gewog Stories' where GAOs post stories from their *gewogs*. The blog is also linked to Department of Local Governance (DLG) website, which was built using the template designed by BCMD. GAOs also learnt about the code of ethics to engage on social media sites which was adopted by

the DLG in an earlier workshop. The code of ethics was designed with the GAOs.

*"I learned how to write news releases, how to verify information, and the importance of voicing our opinion for democracy to prosper"*

Lobzang Choda, GAO, Rangthangling, Tsirang



- Group presentation: Imagine that the gewog is able to share all the developments taking place and is transparent with information. How do you see it happening? What would you do to make this happen?



g+1

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More ▾ Next Blog»

# Gewog Stories

## Gewog Administrative Officer

"Committed to community, dedicated to progress"

### An Electricitiless Life! A story from the Gewog blog

I look back to last year during this time and remember how we only had candle lights to pierce the pitch black of the night. It reminds me of how we tend to take things for granted and how easy it is for us to get used to the things that technology has to offer. Electricity, television, hot shower, computer, internet. We don't think about these things much when it is readily available to us and get thrown into a frenzy when we have to live without them.

We suddenly found ourselves cut off from the outside world when two bridges and the power lines were destroyed in a sudden cloud burst that happened during the night of 20 June last year. Rumours began to spread as to when the road and the power would be restored – with people speculating the period from two weeks to a few months. The road was restored after four months and the power after six and yes that was indeed a long, long, long time.

Simple things like getting your daily essentials and gas became such a hassle and panic spread with rumours of diminishing stocks in the shops. We woke up with soot filled nostrils and had to do with makeshift stoves made of tins. As simple a thing as taking a bath became a nightmare with pressures running high when the fire wouldn't burn. Office was an equal nightmare with us duty bound to correspond but without computers. We had no idea what was going on outside of Gasa with even our mobile phones switched off.

I had to come to Thimphu in between for a training programme and you might not believe when I say I actually had tears in my eyes when I saw the street lights all lit up and how I wished I could pack some to take back home. Thank god that those times are over but that doesn't mean I have forgotten them.

Tshering Peldon  
Khamoed GAO

Visit [www.gewogadministrativeofficers.blogspot.com](http://www.gewogadministrativeofficers.blogspot.com) for more *gewog* stories.



## Bhutan Media Dialogue

Bhutan's story as a young democracy and a nation that's committed to seeking Gross National Happiness continues to unfold. As political parties emerged and candidates contended for a place in leadership, Bhutan's stories are being shaped and changing rapidly. Just as journalism has been scrutinising the change that we're going through as a country and a community, Bhutanese media themselves are coming under close scrutiny with some wondering if our media might be too cynical or even deficit at times, perhaps dampening the spirit of an early and young democracy.

The Bhutan Media Dialogue brought together 20 participants – thought leaders, journalists, writers, bloggers, and citizens in a conversation to explore the constructive role of Bhutan's media.

The three-day conversation was time for reflection and exchange on the evolving political culture and the pressing need for independent news media. We looked at ways to maximise the opportunities to shape public discourse for the greater good using appreciative lens to look at ourselves and to understand our capacity and explore the boundaries of public space.

BCMD will meet periodically to have conversations with the participants on how the dialogue has benefited them and to keep tab on the current situation of journalism in the county.



■ We all need to work together: Community building among participants



■ Sonam Pelden, the chief reporter of Kuensel, presents the group work on the idea of restorative narrative approach in news reporting

- About 158 participants attended the forum

## Press Freedom Day

As Bhutan approached its second term of general elections, BCMD led a forum to explore some critical questions on democracy and election, the fundamental rights and responsibilities as citizens, and how Bhutanese media impact the community and society at large.

In conjunction with the World Press Freedom Day on 3 May 2013, the forum was organised at the Royal Thimphu College (RTC) on the theme 'Bhutanese Media' In An Election Year'. What role will the mainstream media play? How will the online space affect the elections?' The forum discussed the elections in Bhutan, and the challenges we face as more political parties emerged. It also looked at the role of the mainstream media and discussed the concerns over the implications of uncontrolled online discussions and comments, especially on social media.

The forum led a strengthened understanding of the media's role in an election year, press freedom, the role of the media in educating the people on democracy, how the media impacts the society, and individual citizens' rights and responsibilities.



■ Panelist (L to R): Dasho Sangay Khandu, Dawa Penjor, Executive Director of Bhutan Media Foundation, Kinley Wangchuk from Radio Valley, Kesang Dema, Kuensel's chief of bureau, and moderator Namgay Zam from BBS



■ Participants at the Bhutan Media Dialogue engage in group discussions



Programme Area 4

# RESOURCE PRODUCTION





## ABOUT THE PROGRAMME AREA

Due to dearth of resources on media and democracy that are relevant to Bhutan's context, BCMD continues to produce content that can be used by teachers, parents, political parties, students, and members of civil society to deepen their understanding of these issues. BCMD ensures that as much material as possible is translated into the national language, Dzongkha, and distributed in each district of Bhutan. The publications are distributed for free for participants at our events.

### PUBLICATIONS THIS YEAR

- Community mapping book/exhibition
- Forum 2012
- Mi-Khung
- JURWA – Changing Times in Gakithang
- Public space film
- BCMD diary
- Stickers
- E-newsletter



■ Participants signing up for our publications



■ Two children's book 'What's Fair?' and 'Who's Responsible?' were launched



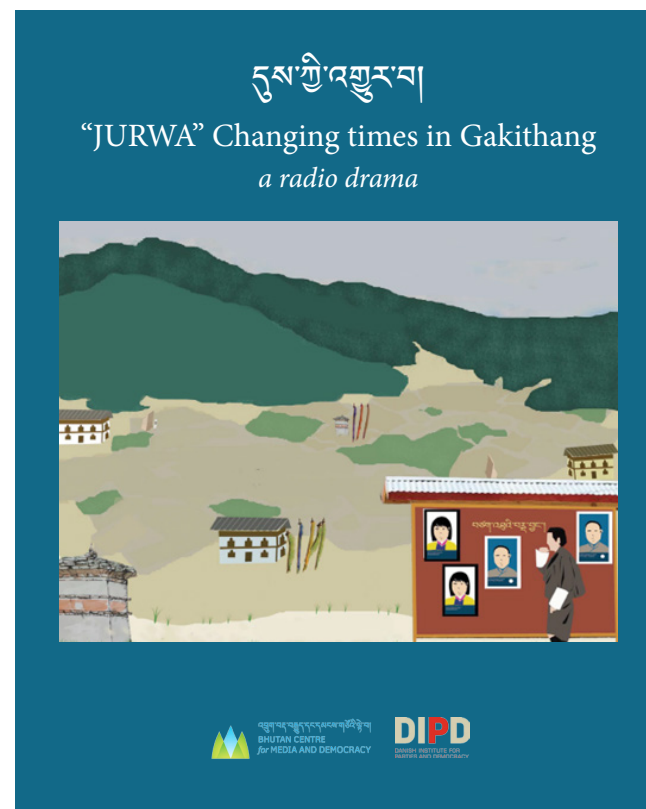
## Community mapping book/exhibition

A book and exhibition materials such as banner stands and posters were produced on the community mapping project. They contain all the stories and photos captured by the seventh batch of media nomads. The participants captured many important photos and stories that include stories of some of the problems the communities are facing today and stories of success, co-operation and inspiring individuals from the communities.



## Forums 2012

A healthy democracy gains depth through the exchange of diverse views that strengthens civil society and opens up a healthy discussion. We host regular forums to provide platforms for discussion on a wide range of issues confronting Bhutan and Bhutanese. This publication, like the previous ones, is a compilation of presentations, and talks from the various forums hosted in 2012. Speakers include reporters, political figures, academics and media specialists.



## JURWA- Changing Times in Gakithang

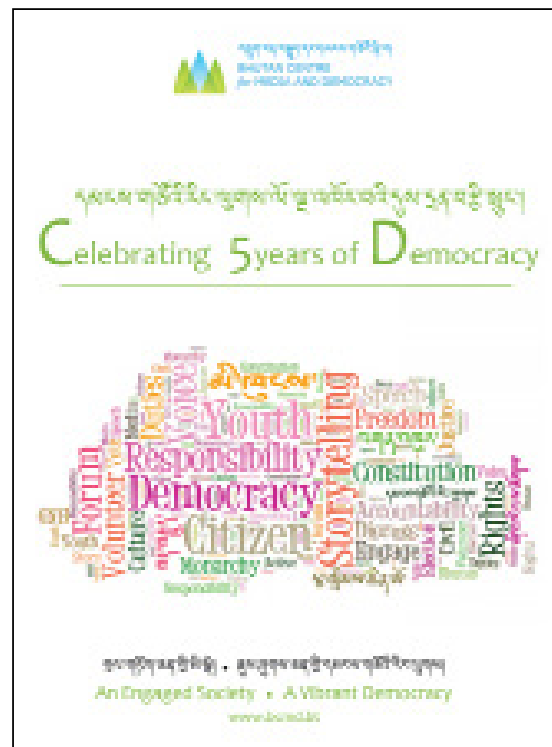
We created a 25-episode radio drama in Dzongkha targeting our rural population. We also produced audio CDs and publications of the drama and aired them on the national radio and online. These radio programmes helped prompt thinking and discussion on our democratic journey, and in the process, deepen our understanding of Bhutan today.



- ← **Mi-Khung**  
BCMD's quarterly newsletter featuring events and covering news and perspectives from citizens.



- ↑  
**Jurwa - "Changing Times"**  
A Radio Drama



- ↑  
**BCMD diary**



- ↑  
**Stickers**





### JURWA- Changing Times in Gakithang

The story of Bhutan's democratic journey unfolds. The past six years have seen the Bhutanese citizen go through democratic change that has been both fulfilling and challenging. "Jurwa" or Changing Times is a radio soap series that reflect the narrative of a cross-section of people who have been at the forefront of democratic change. We consulted with the political candidates, government representatives, youth, and citizens who generously shared their own experi-

ences and their concerns and aspirations for Bhutan's system of governance. We tried to capture some of the stories through the first series that was broadcast on national radio and shared on our website.

"Jurwa" is a story with comedy, romance, suspense, and the tensions of a small community in contemporary times. The radio drama highlights some of the challenges of creating a new democracy and prompts

thinking on several issues:

- Political candidates make realistic pledges to the people whom they can keep and that democracy is not about making promises just to win votes.
- Candidates may earn their spurs in the local government before making it to national government.
- A person who stands against another in an election is not that person's enemy.
- It is okay to have differing political views within a family.
- Differing/opposing views are not signs of disrespect.
- Everyone (both local and national representatives) is working for the same goal – the betterment of Bhutan. We are all in this together.

Audio CDs and publications of the drama were produced. The series was aired on national radio and online and has attracted much attention.

## Democracy Day Challenge 2013

BCMD commemorated International Democracy Day this year by carrying out a Democracy Day Challenge. The challenge called for proposals on the theme ‘How can you further strengthen our country?’

We sought projects that addressed a need in communities which need to be researched and that have an innovative solution to it. For that, the project proposals would identify one problem, challenge, or an issue that needs to be addressed in a community and considering the feasibility, scalability, replicability, longevity, and sustainability of the project; the projects would highlight a step-by-step strategy or an action plan for addressing the problem and its solution. The challenge attracted various groups and individuals. Most project proposals came in from the youth.

The seven winning project proposals were:

- a. Right to Information Act Campaign by RTC students (BBA 4<sup>th</sup> year)
- b. Consumer Protection Act by RTC students (BBA 3<sup>rd</sup> year)
- c. Blood pressure awareness by a group of students, Royal Institute of Health Sciences, Thimphu.
- d. Paving a path for a temple by Karma Tenzin, Yoezerling Media Society, Paro.
- e. Educating Against Teenage Pregnancy and Alcohol Abuse by Pema Dorji and his team of 20 Sherubtseans from Sherubtse College
- f. Curbing Corruption Practices in Bhutan by Gem Tshering, a fresh graduate from India.
- g. Living Conditions in Gesarling Village by Yeshi Nidup and group from Gesarling, Dagana.



■ Always felt like giving back to the community? Yeshi Nidup, a teacher at Gaeserling MSS, brings together villagers to form a farmers' cooperative

*‘We feel that there is a general lack of awareness of RTI and also that in a democracy there is always room to create transparency and accountability. RTI can be the instrument to achieve transparency and accountability. We believe that it is important to be aware and understand its features, provisions and functions’*

Chundu Wangchen (Democracy Day Challenge winner), RTI Campaign member, BBA 4<sup>th</sup> year RTC.

Each of the seven projects were given funds up to Nu 15,000 to get started.



The Media Lab is a dynamic space where youth can access all sorts of digital media equipment and learn how to use it for the betterment of the Bhutanese society. The Media lab not only provides a space where young people can come to learn, but also offer different types of events and programmes aimed at developing young people's civic and creative capacities.

With support from the Bhutan Youth Development Fund (YDF) providing space for the Media Lab, we launched our first media lab in the country on 29 March 2013. Minister of Education Lyonpo Thakur S Powdyel, our chief guest for the evening, talked about

democracy and the importance of youth voice and citizen participation in a democracy. "I would like to hope that this Media Lab grows as a powerful instrument in engaging young people to discover much more responsible forums that will enable them to articulate their voice," Lyonpo remarked.

It inspires learning, collaboration, and creativity and will aim to give youth greater confidence and ability in expressing their views and opinions in Bhutan's democracy.

### Overview of activities at the lab in 2013

- **Creating a Responsive Learning Environment:** In May, we initiated two six-week long introductory courses in photography and public speaking, both of which resulted from our consultations with youth. Twenty-five youth from high schools participated in the courses.
- **Training Advocates and Citizen Journalists:** The lab housed an ambitious community mapping project in Thimphu - a process of exploring the issues confronting communities, as well as the strengths that keep them afloat. It also housed a two-week residential training for the youth representatives of the youth initiative for debate, deliberation and development, where the youth learned how to research, debate and deliberate.
- **Training from Visiting Professionals:** Visiting professionals from Google led a two-day workshop on the Creative Skills for Innovation (CSI) process to improve the creative thinking skills for 15 youth in Thimphu. Additionally, two professional filmmakers led an intensive workshop on creating micro-documentaries, 1-2 minute inspiring documentary video stories that connect audiences to solutions that lead to the world they envision.



- **Creative Writing Session:** Two leading journalists from India, Sathya Saran, and Ratnottama Sengupta, led a short but insightful, creative writing workshop for 12 youth, journalists, and civil society members. The workshop discussed how to structure articles creatively, from hooking the reader at the beginning to leaving enduring messages at the end. The participants were also encouraged to practise their writing through blogging.
- **Building Community:** We regularly host Open Mic nights and discussion forums to give youth an opportunity to express themselves, share stories, and discuss important issues.
- **Commemorating International Democracy Day:** We led a forum themed 'Taking Social Action for Social Change' to highlight the importance of initiative of regular citizens in addressing social needs in the country. More than 70 students and recent graduates filled the lab when they attended the forum. We had young entrepreneurs and social workers talk to our participants about their experience and the kind of work they do and why they do it.
- **Media Sensitisation for Gewog Administrative Officers (GAOs):** GAOs attended a one-day event at the Media Lab to sensitise themselves to social media, citizen journalism, and creating and writing a blog.
- **Youth Parliament Initiative:** The Media Lab has helped to incubate and inspire ideas for a proposed youth parliament, which BCMD is supporting as an initiative. Two of our youth partners, Phub Dorji and Kencho Dorji, high school graduates, presented their ideas at the lab on the proposed Youth Parliament. School principals, teachers, and representatives from the Election Commission of Bhutan and youth social workers attended the discussions at the media lab. The Media Lab serves as a space for the youth to come together and work on this initiative.

Visit the media lab website as [www.bhutanmedialab.com](http://www.bhutanmedialab.com)



■ A picture taken by one of the participants during the week by week photography learner series. The pictures were then screened in an open exhibition at the media lab.



■ Open mic night during the launch of the Media Lab: Performance by Thoeppa and Yeshey

## Youth Initiative for Debate, Deliberation and Development (YIDDD)

There are two ways in which young people can disengage from a system: (1) boredom and (2) apathy. In 2013, a group of youth felt that it was time to wake up from their boredom and to go out and engage in Bhutan's maturing democracy. Democracy, after all, is not a spectator sport!

And so, they started the Youth Initiative for Debate, Deliberation, and Development (YI) modelling after a Youth Parliamentary form.

The idea for the YI was conceived by high school student Phub Dorji in 2012, who began working with Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy in 2013 to expand the idea. Models of other Youth Parliaments from other countries were examined, adapted, and filtered to match the needs of Bhutanese Youth.

After months and numerous rounds of meetings, the team went around different institutions to conduct presentation and elections. The elected members then convened and the organisation was launched on 13 December at a Youth Forum organised by BCMD.

YIDDD is an informal, non-party affiliated association that gives a select group of youth practical, hands-on experience in deliberating on national issues and taking community-based action.

In its initial year (2014), YIDDD will be based in Thimphu.

The pilot project will consist of a workshop, led by the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy, training the youth to learn how to debate and deliberate, analyse issues of youth interest and provide feedback on youth concerns and ideas. There will also be two public sittings where the youth will present proposals to address problems of pressing concern and debate solutions.

Throughout the year, youth representatives will work on campaigns in their respective committees. We believe this initiative will motivate young people to participate in Bhutan's maturing democracy and become leaders capable of bringing positive change.



■ The elected youth representatives from different walks of life present the idea of YIDDD during a youth forum in Thimphu

# FUNDING OVERVIEW

Financial Summary as of December 31, 2013

## SOURCES OF INCOME

International Development Organisations	1,572,393.18
International Nonprofit Organisations	9,403,266.01
Local Support	448,605.00
Foundations	2,206,173.89
Miscellaneous Income	56,103.00
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>13,686,541.08</b>

## EXPENDITURE

### BCMD ADMINISTRATION

Recurrent Costs	859,814.63
Personnel	811,181.03
Development of BCMD	185,407.60
Miscellaneous	169,527.00
Maintenance	53,310.50
<b>Total Administrative Expenditure</b>	<b>2,079,240.76</b>

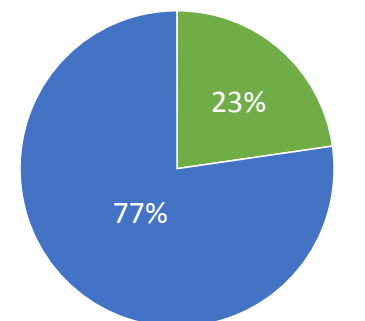
### PROGRAMME EXPENSES

A. Inspiring Active Citizens	2,050,968.19
B. Expanding Public Discourse	1,669,265.95
C. Media Lab	1,360,008.06
D. Resources for Democracy	1,992,476.79
<b>Total Programme Expenditure</b>	<b>7,072,718.99</b>

**TOTAL EXPENDITURE (Administrative + Programme)** **9,151,959.75**

**NET REVENUE** **4,534,581.33**

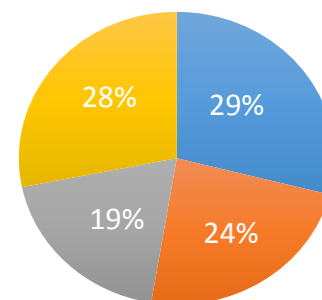
## TOTAL EXPENDITURES



■ Programme Expenses  
■ BCMD Administration

## EXPENDITURES

by Programme Areas



■ Media Lab  
■ Inspiring Active Citizens  
■ Resources for Democracy  
■ Expanding Public Discourse

Jigme Choden  
Admin/ Finance Officer

Siok Sian Pek-Dorji  
Executive Professional Director

Nancy Strickland  
Chairperson



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## **BCMD's Board of Directors**

- Dr. Tashi Wangchuk, CEO, Thunder Motors
- Nancy Strickland, Executive Director, Bhutan Canada Foundation
- Tashi Choden, Director, Secretariat for National Development Paradigm (SNDP)
- Dr. Jagar Dorji, Consultant
- Dr. Dorji Thinley, Royal University of Bhutan
- Siok Sian Pek-Dorji, Executive Director, Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy

## **BCMD's Advisors**

- Howard Schneider, Stony Brook University
- James Bettinger, Stanford University
- James H. Ottaway Jr
- Judith Brown, Consultant
- Kavi Chongkittavorn, The Nation Multimedia Group, Thailand
- Professor Mark Mancall, Stanford University
- Sonam Choki, Royal Institute of Management (RIM)

## **BCMD's Supporters**

BCMD would like to acknowledge and thank the following institutions and individuals for their support

## **Institutions:**

- Bhutan Foundation
- Bhutan Youth Development Fund (YDF)
- Civil Society Organisation Funding Facility (CSOFF)
- Danish Institute for Parties and Democracy
- Drukair Corporation
- Druk Green Power Corporation (DGPC)
- Geographic Expeditions
- Global Giving
- Meyers Charitable Fund
- Open Society Institute/Open Society Foundation
- Raffles Institution, Singapore
- The UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF)

**BCMD** also acknowledges all our valued resource persons and facilitators, both international and national. We appreciate the time and effort you all took to share your thoughts and experiences with the participants at our events.

The list of all our facilitators and resource persons are available on our website [www.bcmbd.bt](http://www.bcmbd.bt)

# STAY CONNECTED

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