

Annual Report

BCMD

An Engaged Society. A Vibrant Democracy

2014



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BHUTAN CENTRE
for MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY

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Message from the Chair and Director

In 2014, the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD) has reached thousands of people through our conversations, forums, workshops and activities in our mission to strengthen the culture of democracy. BCMD has been conducting innovative activities and producing media resources to broaden civic education, amplify the voices of the people, and strengthen discourse on our evolving democracy. We recall some of the past year's highlights/results:

- Youth are central to BCMD's work to **nurture a generation of active citizens**. Our youth-led initiatives have paved the way for greater support of youth discourse and a new interest in giving youth opportunities for engaging in parliamentary style debate. BCMD's Youth Initiative and the youth-led action programme enabled youth to learn how to become more active citizens through work with communities. The forums and training focussed on personal and group action as well as leadership. They helped to deepen understanding in the idea that democracy is about everyday actions and decisions.
- **Reaching rural residents, local officials and leaders**. Our media sensitisation workshops continued for rural residents and government representatives who learnt about the processes of democratic problem solving and how to verify information. BCMD has sensitised 200 *gewog* administrative officers (GAOs) over the years. The GAOs are now sharing important discoveries of rural Bhutan on public domain on their blog and other sites. We also piloted media sensitisation with rural women and locally elected leaders. Our lessons are shared online and with the media clubs BCMD supports in schools and colleges.
- **Social media conversations** – the growth of the internet, use of social media sites, and phone apps have made Bhutanese more connected than ever before. But there's also the potential downside of anonymous postings and the spread of unverified information (rumour and gossip) and unchecked sharing of photographs. BCMD led several conversations with more than 112 youth to highlight the best ways to use social media and how to tap social media for personal and greater good. Some schools are developing social media guidelines.
- Our **democracy dialogues** have given hundreds of Bhutanese the space within which to deliberate on emerging issues, and to explore what it means to be a democracy.

- **Resources for democracy.** BCMD's Citizen Action guide, radio series on democratic change, regular print and online newsletters are now being used in schools and colleges. Adult learners are listening to our podcasts and radio programmes. These resources provide the much-needed Bhutanese context to inspire our thinking, our reflection and our action.

Our work has been rewarding and possible because of the support of contributors who have sustained our work over the years. BCMD is grateful to all our supporters, funders, partners, and participants. We also acknowledge the dedication of our colleagues at BCMD, each of them has worked hard to contribute to the strengthening of an engaged society in Bhutan. As we enter into our 8th year of operation, BCMD continues to seek refreshing ways to strengthen a culture of democracy through engagement with youth, communities and by exploring new ways of story-telling so that the narrative of Bhutan as an evolving democracy is captured in all its diversity and richness.

Together, we look forward to an equally inspiring and fulfilling 2015.



Chairperson
Nancy Strickland



Director
Siok Sian Dorji

About BCMD



The Executive Director and staff of BCMD

BCMD

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

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

MISSION

VISION

A GNH-inspired vibrant democracy that engages all citizens.

Core programme areas

1. Inspiring Active Citizens
2. Encouraging and Expanding Public Discourse
3. Resources for Democracy

The Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy's 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.



Programme Area **1** Inspiring Active Citizens



The bottom line is, if a streetlight is kept on during the day, some people will not notice it at all, some will see and feel nothing, some will know it's waste of energy, some will click a picture and post it on Facebook or Twitter. In this workshop, we were inspired to take the next step – to call the authorities and inform them directly about it. This is one small change anyone can bring in a community.

-Passang Tshering, Teacher, a participant of BCMD's community mapping workshop

Inspiring active citizens

About the programme area



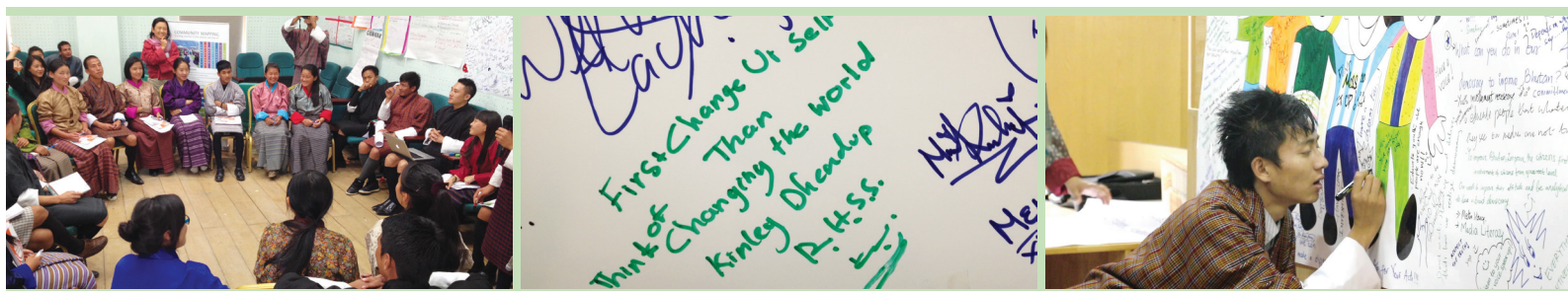
The participants of the community mapping workshop put up waste bins at Kuenselphodrang, Thimphu

BCMD recognises that active citizenship is crucial to building a vibrant democracy. The creation of active citizens involves creation of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and motivation among citizens to enable them to work towards promoting and sustaining a democratic society.

The concept of active citizenship underlines individual responsibility and initiatives in the areas of public concern such as clearing a clogged drain or fixing a broken wall. It is about every citizen taking responsibility and action for issues, challenges, and problems in his or her own community.

Inspiring active citizens is particularly relevant to Bhutan which is learning to be democratic and whose citizens are largely accustomed to expecting the government to do everything for them. This mandate of BCMD echoes what the fourth Druk Gyalpo said in his coronation address in 1974: "As far as you, my people, are concerned, you should not adopt the attitude that whatever is required to be done for your welfare will be done entirely by the government. On the contrary, a little effort on your part will be much more effective than a great deal of effort on the part of the government."

As part of inspiring active citizens initiatives, BCMD has trained 200 *gewog* administrative officers in several workshops to be better communicators. We have also trained and supported several youth groups involved in community activities.



Activities

1. **Podcasting workshop** for 19 students from the colleges of the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB). 11 to 16 January
2. **Media Sensitisation for Gewog Administrative Officers** (GAO) for 29 participants from 12 dzongkhags. 22 to 24 January
3. **Podcasting workshop** for 22 teacher trainees at the Paro College of Education (PCE). 22 and 23 February.
4. **Youth Forum** at Sherubtse College for 51 journalism students and members of Sherubtse Media Society. 24 April.



5. **Writing Workshop on Youth at Risk** for 15 members of press and civil society organisations. 6 to 8 May
6. **Interviewing and Writing Workshop for the Media Clubs** for 88 participants from the colleges of the RUB. 17 and 18 May.
7. **News Writing and Interviewing Workshop** at the Royal Thimphu College (RTC) for 15 RTC students. 24 and 25 June.
8. **Media Nomad IX** for 30 participants comprising teachers, lecturers, students. 1 to 11 July.



9. **Photojournalism for Multimedia Storytelling for CSOs** for 53 participants from Gaupel Middle Secondary School and the RTC. 5 to 31 August.
10. **Social Media Conversation** for 22 high school students. 19 August.
11. **Newspaper Designing and Editorial Team Training** for 13 participants from the PCE and the RTC. 30 August.
12. **Social Media Conversation** for 65 teacher trainees at the PCE in Thimphu. 15 September.
13. **Youth Forum** for 65 teacher trainees at the PCE. 21 September.
14. **Social Media Conversation** for CSOs. 25 September.
15. **Youth Forum – Igniting the Next Generation of Active Citizens** for 63 participants from six high schools in Thimphu. 15 October.
16. **Youth Leadership Skills workshop** for 30 youth – 20 from colleges, rest high school students, in-service candidates and youth members of BCMD.
17. **Photojournalism for Multimedia Storytelling** for 32 teacher trainees at the Samtse College of Education. 1 and 2 November.
18. **Empowering GAOs to be Effective Media Focal Persons** for 21 participants. 19 to 21 November.
19. **Youth Symposium – Inspiring and Enabling Action for Bhutan** for 30 high school and college students from around the country. 23 and 24 December.

One story from the year

The following piece was written as part of a writing exercise at the Youth Leadership Training held at the Media Lab in Thimphu on 15 and 16 October



Sonam Tshomo shares her aspiration for Bhutan at a youth leadership workshop

I have a dream

Sonam Tshomo, Graduate of Sherubtse College

I have a dream that one day babies will be in the arms of their loved ones and not in drains, bins and in the woods. A dream that they will not have to feel the wetness of the grass, but the warmth of their mother. Not the taste of drain water, but the mother's milk. Not the reality of the harsh, cruel world, but the love and tenderness of their mother's embrace.

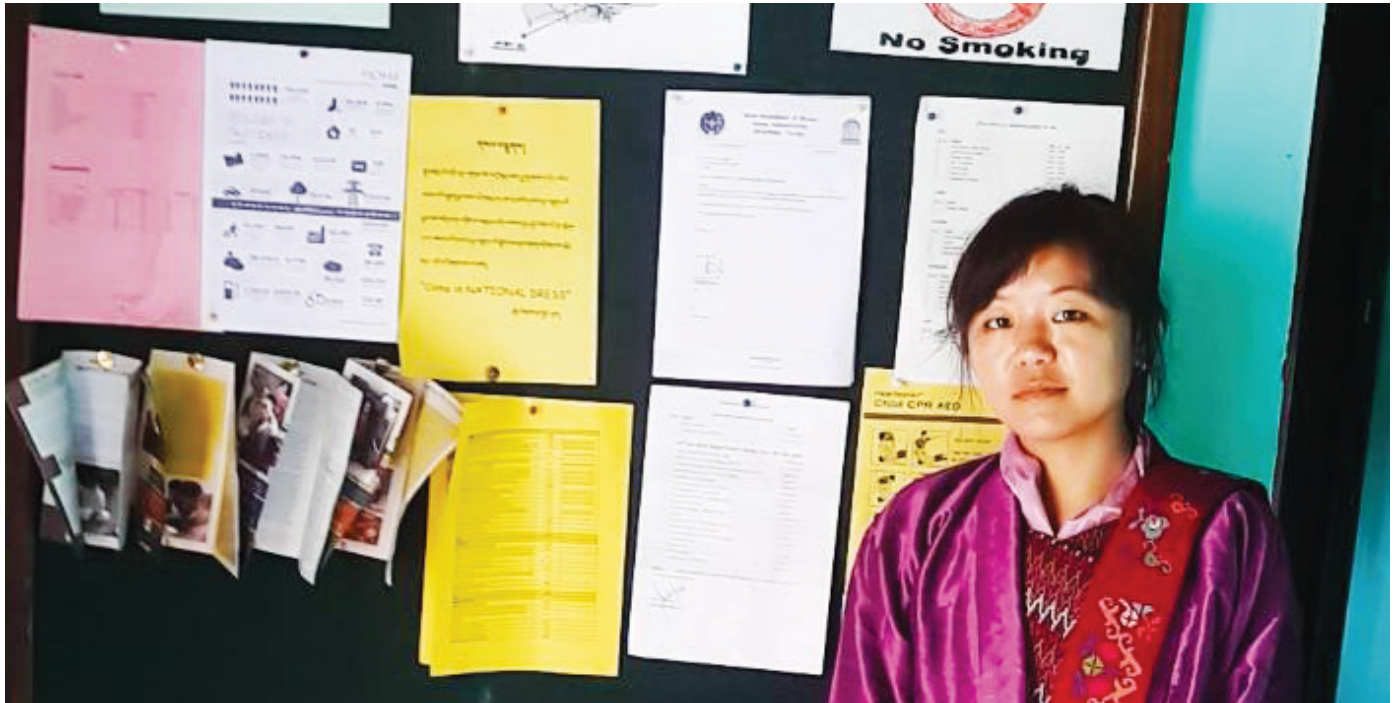
A dream that one day a single mother can seek help for a better home for her child and give the life she deserves.

I have a dream that no man will hear of an elderly person or a differently-abled person being homeless. A dream that they will be by the fireplace, warm and smiling, rather than at *chortens* or on the streets with their hands stretched out, begging.

I have a dream that one day, not one, not two, but all dogs, stray or abandoned, will be loved and cared for. A dream that they won't have to scavenge for food and water or get beaten by humans. A dream that only the sounds of their wagging tail and barks of joy will be heard.

One story from the year

Tashi Dema is one of the 50 gewog administrative officers (GAOs) who attended the Media Sensitisation workshops BCMD conducted for the GAOs in 2014



A proud Tashi Dema at the gewog office

My journey after BCMD workshop

Tashi Dema, Gewog Administrative Officer, Sergithang Gewog, Tsirang

Sergithang Gewog is one of the remotest places under Tsirang Dzongkhag. It is 42 kilometres from Damphu town with limited source of entertainment and information. The introduction of social media such as Facebook has been a great source of entertainment and information for me. I use Facebook to keep myself informed and connected with my friends.

After attending BCMD's media sensitisation workshops, I created a Facebook page to share information on the *gewog* to those who are far away from the *gewog*. I have received some comments on the pictures I have posted on the Sergithang Gewog page. I have also received messages on Facebook. This has encouraged me to share more information about the *gewog*.

SERGITHANG GEOG



Sergithang facebook page

The media sensitisation workshop has also helped me create an information board in my office. I share some *gewog* information on the board so that whoever comes to the office can have some basic information on the *gewog* from one source.

The *gewog* administration goes on regular field visits to monitor and evaluate work. For that, I have created monitoring and evaluation format for the office using the ideas I picked up from a media sensitisation workshop.

Sharing stories from my *gewog* on the *gewog* administrative officers' blog www.gewogadministrativeofficers.blogspot.com has helped me write stories and share information to 205 GAOs.

Overall, attending the media sensitisation workshops has helped me share information and my knowledge on how to share information.

BCMD's workshops have encouraged me to update more information on social media. I am able to get feedback on my work, which has helped me improve my work or motivated me to work harder.

Programme Area **Encouraging and Expanding Public Discourse** 2



I think the nature of journalists' work is much like that of the bodhisattvas' who work tirelessly for the sake and benefit of others... journalists should strive to develop both right wisdom and unconditional compassion in order to enable their audience to see the things as they truly are through their reporting and analysis.

*-Khenpo Phuntshok Tashi, Director of National Museum of Bhutan,
the spiritual resource person at the 2014 Media Dialogue*

Encouraging and expanding public discourse **About the programme area**



A student sticks up the participants' notes on what stories the media need to cover on the Press Freedom Day at the Royal Thimphu College

An important way of engaging citizens in a democracy is public discussion. People need to come together to discuss and find solutions to issues of public interest, not wrangle over them. In a young democracy like Bhutan, learning to engage in healthy discussions is key to creating a democratic culture.

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

In 2014, we conducted several discussion fora, including the yearly Bhutan Media Dialogue, Civil Society Dialogue, Youth Forum, conversations on democracy and on social media. These fora of discussion encouraged among members of a cross-section of society a wider space and process of discussion and consensus finding.



Activities

1. **Exploring Democracy Conversation: The crisis of Democracy in the 21st Century** for 40 participants comprising MPs, government officials, members of media and civil society in Thimphu. 19 March.
2. **Exploring Democracy Conversation: Social Democracy** for 39 MPs, civil servants, students, civil society members, international observers in Thimphu. 26 March.
3. **Education for a Just Society** for 119 participants from the National Council, media, business community, civil society, educational institutes in Thimphu. 3 April.



9. **Exploring Democracy: Regulating Online Media** for 40 participants from the media, CSOs, parliament, colleges. 10 September.
10. **Civil Society Dialogue** for about 90 participants for the members of civil society and media, public servants, and students from the Royal Thimphu College. 7 and 8 October.
11. **A democracy forum** for the students of Sherubtse College led by the Institute for GNH Studies (RUB) in collaboration with the BCMD, ECB and UNDP. 15 September.

4. **Media club activity** for 40 students at Sherub Reldri HSS. 27 April.
5. **Observance of Press Freedom Day** for 108 participants from RTC, media, the Royal Institute of Health Sciences, Department of Information and Media at the Royal Thimphu College (RTC). 5 May.
6. **Observance of Press Freedom Day** for 50 participants at the Paro College of Education. 7 May.
7. **Bhutan Media Dialogue** for 22 participants comprising local and international journalists, bloggers, lecturers, MPs. 19 to 21 July.
8. **Exploring Democracy Conversation: Inspiring Creativity and Community Building** for 70 people from the National Council, media houses, community police centres, Thimphu Thromde, CSOs, volunteer groups, youth groups, and gewog administrative officers in Thimphu. 11 August.



One story from the year

The following story was done as part of BCMD's Journalism Fellowship that encouraged journalists to cover rural stories. The story, published in Kuensel, won the best feature story of the year award in Journalists' Association of Bhutan's journalism award in 2015.



Jigme Wangchuk in the mountains of Lunana

Village at GLOF ground zero

Jigme Wangchuk, Literary Editor, Kuensel

The vast floodplain above Tshojo village in Lunana is endless. The sand bed is so immense it can easily fit seven Thimphu cities, maybe even 10, and it goes on, further on. At the far end, a thin mule track snakes up a mild crest. Far above, on the golden plains that stretch further up until the base of the Table Mountain, is a cluster of small houses. This is Thanza, a village at the foot of looming lakes.

The small village of about 35 households was deep in slumber when Lugge Tsho broke through with violent force on October 7, 1994.

There were no glacial lake outburst floods (GLOF) early warning systems in place then. When the village awoke, the flood had left Lunana, taking along with it a woman and her two sons, and a good chunk of village pasture, and reached Punakha.

Today, there are many flood warning sirens along the Tsangmichu, the river that flows below Thanza village, but people's fear of GLOF here is greater than ever. Snow on the mountains is melting, and lakes are swelling at their base. If there is a GLOF, people of Thanza will have little time to escape. Probably the flood will not leave even a trace of this village. GLOF experts say that if the fast-narrowing moraine ridge between Thorthormi and Rapstreng breaks, there will be a flood that is at least five times bigger than the one from Lugge Tsho 20 years ago.

Towards the end of September, when the wheat is ripe and ready for harvest, villagers are in the fields, lending each other a helping hand. Soon the snow will come and they will migrate to Punakha. But they are never certain if they will see their homes again when they return.

Nim Dorji, 33, has a shop in the village. He is constantly worried about the possibility of a flood. Moving higher up to the mountains for safety makes no sense to him, because the mountains remain under the cover of snow for the better part of the year.

"If our homeland is washed away, what's the use of going higher up the mountains? Farm roads are the priority of our government. I think that if a road comes to Lunana, lowering works at the lakes can be done," says Nim Dorji.

Like Nim Dorji, 34-year-old Khandu Dorji is always worried. He has just returned from a hillock over Tsangmichu. He goes to that hillock once a day to see if there is a flood coming.

"We're in a difficult place, both in terms of GLOF and economy. We're always worried, especially during summers," says Khandu Dorji. In summer, when

Tsangmichu grows big and rumbles down, it is a dangerous sight. Houses in Thanza shake.

It is not only Thorthormi and Rapstreng that threaten the people of Thanza. Betsho, a supraglacial lake, sits on the head of Thanza village. When Khandu was a kid, many years ago, where Betsho is today used to be a vast meadow where they used to go to collect incense with yellow flower called Sangzey Karchu that belongs to family of Asteraceae.

"Thorthormi back then was a vast plain where thorny stunted bushes grew," says Khandu. "It's a very worrying sight today."

Because the lakes are forming very fast at the head of the village, some people here see relocation as the only option. But, where will they find a place like their homeland, a place they can adapt to?

Dorji Gyem, 34, is harvesting wheat at the back of his house with a group of women. Betsho is not very far from where she stays.

"It will be nice if we can go to a place like Dochula or Phobjikha. We're not cut out for a warmer weather," says Dorji Gyem. "We have few options. We're at the verge of losing our homeland."

Come October, the passes between Laya and Lunana will be blocked by heavy snow. There is not much time to lose. The people of Lunana are stocking food items that will last until summer comes. Houses are filled with bags of rice, oil, salt and milk powder piled high up to ceiling.

As the sun goes down the mountain west of the village, all is quiet except for the noise from a runoff from Betsho that joins Tsangmichu. That could be the mouth of the ridge from where a flood will come, if and when it ever does.

Programme Area Resources for Democracy **3**



Mi-Khung is very informative and covers issues concerning democracy and participation in a style and content unlike regular newsletters. I always enjoy reading it.

*-Dawa Penjor, Executive Director,
Bhutan Media Foundation*

Resources for Democracy

About the programme area



Eight years after democracy was ushered in, Bhutan still does not have enough resources on democracy relevant to Bhutan's context. Resources on democracy for children and youth are even more scarce.

Recognising the importance of resources on democracy for building citizenship and democratic culture, BCMD has dedicated substantial efforts to producing materials relevant to people from different walks of life, such as MPs, policy makers, teachers, parents, students, and members of civil society, among others. We try to translate as much materials as possible into Dzongkha, the national language of Bhutan, to increase their reach and impact.

BCMD's audio, visual, and print resources are distributed free to schools, media houses, public offices, and relevant individuals across 20 districts. We conduct periodic review of their distribution, reach, and impact.

In 2014, besides our regular monthly newsletter and quarterly newsletter, Mi-Khung, we published Mi-Khung Compendium, the Dzongkha edition of Mi-Khung. We also produced a number of audio-visual materials, some of them in partnership with youth groups, and broadcast and distributed them.



1. **Mi-Khung** (quarterly newsletter) published an issue each in February, August, December
2. **Mi-Khung Dubeb** (Mi-Khung compendium in Dzongkha) published in December
3. **BCMD Calendar** with the theme Defining Democracy published in December
4. **Stories that Inspire: Community Mapping in Pictures** published in July
5. **Annual Report** published in September
6. **Social media bookmark** for youth

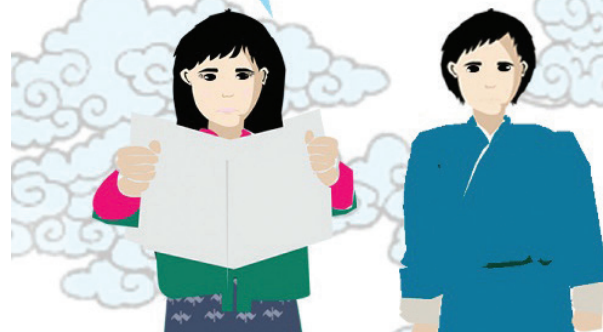
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ལེན་འཐབ་ནི་མེད་འོང།

Right (n): Rights are entitlements that every citizen enjoys without any discrimination. Citizens should not, however, use their rights to cause disharmony in the society. Bhutan's Constitution spells out the rights and duties of its citizens.



དྲམས་གསལ་(Transparency): གཞུང་གི་ནང་ དྲམས་གསལ་
དེ་ གསལ་བའི་འགལ་མིང་ཡིན། དེ་འབད་ནི་དེ་གིས་ གཞུང་ནང་
གོང་འཕེལ་མ་དངུལ་ཚུ་གི་སྒྲོར་ལས་ མི་མང་གིས་ ཤེས་པ་བཟོ་དོ་
ཡོད་པ་ད་ སྤྱི་ཚུགས་ཀྱི་ ཚུགས་ཐངས་ཚུ་གི་སྒྲོར་ལས་ཡང་ བན་
བརྒྱུད་པ་ཚུ་གིས་ གསལ་བཀོད་འབད་མ་ཡིན།

TRANSPARENCY: A necessary condition of democratic governance. The degree of democracy in a country can be judged by the amount of transparency in the government. Transparency is the opposite of secrecy in government. Hence, government and development budgets are made public, and Parliament sittings are covered by the media.



7. Videos

- Mawongpi Miser, a video on youth in action, published on 30 December
- Bhutan Going Local Tshog video published on 26 December
- Human Rights Day 2014 published on 12 December
- Community Mapping 3 published on 30 October
- A conversation between potato chips published on 19 May
- Podcasting published on 19 May
- Youth forum published on 14 August
- Go Local Initiative by YI published on 25 June
- Social Media: a Legal Perspective published on 14 August

8. Websites for CSOs, youth and other groups

9. **Posters:** a series of seven posters on democratic concepts like accountability and transparency.

One story from the year

A story from a skit created by youth at BCMD's community mapping project that resulted in a video produced for screening in schools.



Making of the *tshog* video

Resources for awareness and discourse

A group of youth is going to a temple in Thimphu. As usual, they take 'ready-made' offerings from nearby shops comprising chips, snacks and soft drinks. On their way, one of them throws a chips wrapper saying there isn't a dustbin around. A passerby, an older person, sees it and admonishes the youth. He explains to them how waste is increasingly becoming a big problem in Bhutan.

The youth are sceptical about the man's advice and challenge him. Brushing aside their knee-jerk reaction to his admonition, the man takes them through a concise lesson on waste management. He advises the group that taking packaged, imported junk food as offerings not only harms our health, but also the environment. Offering home-grown produce like rice, eggs and vegetables, he says, is far more healthy and meaningful as it contributes to our local economy.

A monk, who is initially unconvinced by the man's advice on waste management, says that temples and monasteries are grappling with waste generated by packaged food offerings. He says offering whole food to temples and monasteries is a good idea and, therefore, stopping the offering of packaged food would be good for health and the environment.

In the end, the youth, man, and the monk agree how much better it would be for people's health and the environment if everybody made offerings of locally produced food, cooked or uncooked. All is well that ends well.

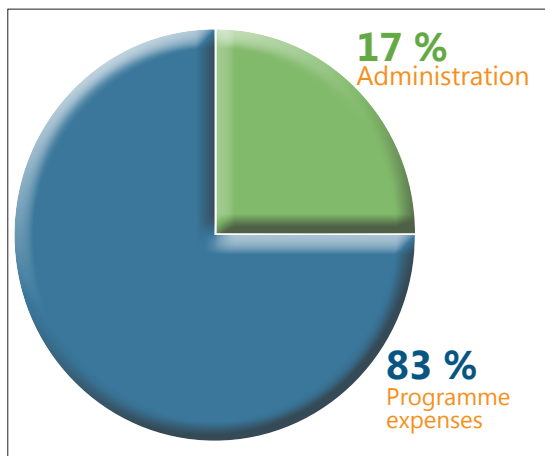
Funding and financial overview

The Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy has just completed another year of active programming thanks to the support of a number of institutions and many individuals. Your support enables us to reach an increasing number of Bhutanese youth, local leaders, and people in decision-making with civic education and to learn the skills of citizenship. Programming expenses represent 83% of expenditures in 2014. As an organisation, BCMD continues to carry out most of the designing of curricula, and implementation of the activities we offer.

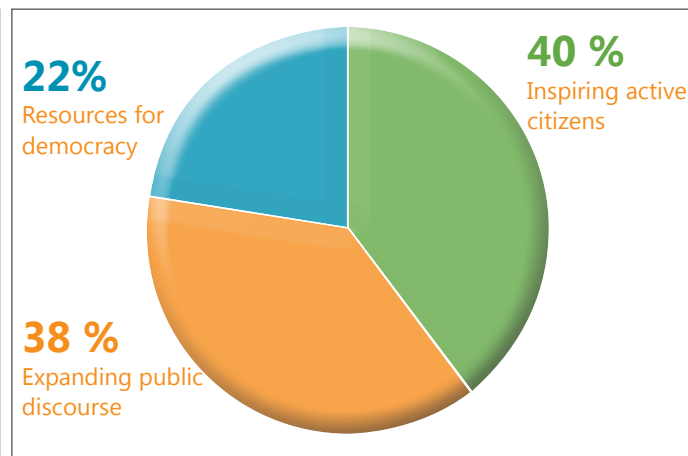
You can support BCMD's work through the following:

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

TOTAL EXPENDITURE



EXPENDITURES BY PROGRAMME AREAS



Income statement

BCMD income and expenditure statement as of 31 December 2014

Income	Amount
International Development Partners	885,131.00
International Nonprofit Organisations	8,700,665.74
Local Support	994,000.00
Foundations	4,136,150.69
Misc. Income	156,253.00
Total Income	14,872,200.43

Expense	Amount
Core Operations Costs	517,900.19
Recurrent costs	603,109.61
Maintenance	6,955.00
Miscellaneous	221,294.00
Total Administrative Expenditure	1,349,258.80

Programme expenses	6,497,343.66
A Inspiring Active Citizens	2,863,605.50
B Expanding Public Discourse	3,359,319.09
C Media Lab	378,634.82
D Resources for Democracy	1,629,344.00
Total Expense	7,846,602.46


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


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


 Nancy Strickland
 Chairperson
 Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy

Acknowledgments

BCMD's Board of Directors

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

BCMD's Advisors

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Individuals

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