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## The Bhutan Youth Parliament Project: Because Apathy is Boring!

*A Proposal by Phub Dorji and Kencho Dorji*

### Overview:

Youth form over 60% of the population of Bhutan. And, as has been said over and over again, youth are the future of the nation. It is thus imperative that youth are included in policymaking processes of the country.

Therefore, we propose the formation of a *Youth Parliament* - a democratically elected parliament consisting of high school-aged youth.

We hope this project will motivate young people to recognise and take their chances in intervening and participating in the shaping of policies and thus making their voices heard. The model will involve local and national authorities as well as civil society and provide the opportunity for students' ideas to be discussed, considered and implemented.

In this proposal, we outline the functions of the Youth Parliament, the overall operational structure, the requirements to make it a reality, and the long-term benefits of initiating such a project.

### How does the Youth Parliament work?

#### *Steering Committee*

The Youth Parliament will be coordinated and managed by a council of stakeholders in Civil Society Organizations and government. They will oversee the operations of the Youth Parliament, ensure transparency and accountability, manage funds, and ensure continuity.

#### *Elections*

In collaboration with the Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB), elections will be run to decide the youth representatives for the Youth Parliament. The inaugural sessions for 2014 will be restricted to Thimphu. However, if it proves to be a successful model, the Youth Parliament will be scaled out to other Dzongkhags.

- The Youth Parliament will be restricted to youth from Class 9 and above.
- Members of Youth Parliament (MYPs) are elected in the winter, right after exams.
- Any Class 9 or above student can vote.
- All candidates will be required to register with the school administration. There will be a campaign period (one-week) where they are given an opportunity to promote their capabilities and views.

- Elections dates will be coordinated and decided with schools and the Election Commission of Bhutan.
- The candidates with the majority vote shall be declared as winners. Only one representative can be elected from each school.
- There will also be special seats allotted for out-of-school youth and disabled youth.

#### *MYPs: Roles and Responsibilities*

Once elected, MYPs will serve a term of 1 year. During this term they will be required to:

- attend and participate in a mandatory 10-day orientation in addition to the two main sessions during the winter and summer holidays.
- support youth voice and actively engage with every student in their school
- organize events and projects in the schools using a small, discretionary fund
- run awareness campaigns and influence decision-makers on the issues which matter most to young people
- conduct official tours to other Dzongkhags to better understand their needs and promote awareness on the Youth Parliament and on youth-related issues
- serve on one of eight topic committees

#### *Orientation*

Immediately following elections, MYPs will attend a 10-day orientation in which they are introduced to and trained in the following:

- *Pursuing a GNH Democracy:* Members will critically reflect on the foundations of a vibrant, GNH democracy and what measures ought to be taken to help Bhutan realize its aspirations.
- *The Habits of the Heart:* The human heart is the first home of democracy; it is in our hearts where we find the courage to act on what we know and feel to be true. Politicians must learn to use their hearts in ways that allow us to respond more fully with what's happening. If we care about honoring the responsibility our Kings have given us - the responsibility of taking democracy forward - there are five "habits of the heart" that we can bring into our lives.
- *Parliamentary Procedure:* The procedure in Youth Parliament will mirror that of the actual Parliament. MYPs will be sensitized to parliamentary etiquette through exercises and readings.
- *Debate, Dialogue, and Deliberation:* Perhaps the most important set of skills a politician can possess are in communicating: how to deeply listen to others, to put forward arguments, to refute those arguments, and to deliberate towards solutions. MYPs will be trained in these fundamentals of political communication.
- *Engaging the Public:* MYPs will learn basic research and consultation methods, including polling, facilitating focus groups, and conducting surveys and interviews.

- *Policymaking and the Constitution:* MYPs will learn the basics of public policy, lawmaking, and how to write a bill.
- *Using Media:* MYPs will learn how to 'map' and document their communities using photography and online/social media.

### *Sessions*

Each year, there will be two 10-day sessions: one during the *winter holidays (possibly January)* and the *summer holidays (July)*. These sessions will follow parliamentary procedure and etiquette with a speaker that presides over and maintains order of the parliament. During the sessions, MYPs will:

- Review existing policies and assess their implementation;
- *Consider bills being discussed in the actual parliament.* These bills will be filtered based on their relevance to the committees in the Youth Parliament;
- *Propose their own bills as well as bills submitted by non-MYPs;*
- *Present their recommendations to members of the National Parliament on the final day.*

### *Prorogation*

In between sessions, MYPs will have certain responsibilities and obligations, including:

- *Conduct awareness campaigns both within and outside of Thimphu;*
- *Lead club activities in school, and regularly consult students*
- *Submit quarterly written reports to the Youth Parliament website*
- *Attend networking lunches with MPs*
- *Attend monthly gatherings at the Media Lab to check in with other MYPs*

### *Action Committees*

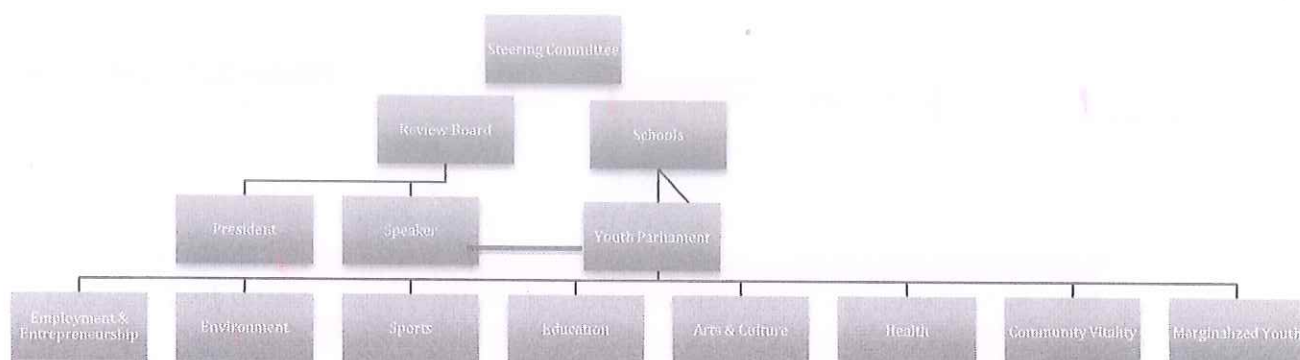
Based on their interest areas, MYPs will be sorted into action committees that will focus on policy in the following areas:

1. *Employment & Entrepreneurship*
2. *Environment*
3. *Sports*
4. *Education*
5. *Arts & Culture*
6. *Health*
7. *Community Vitality*
8. *Marginalized Youth*

### *Monitoring & Evaluation*

All MYP activity will be monitored by a review board that consists of the President of the Parliament, the Speaker, and members of the Steering Committee.

## Structure:



## What the Youth Parliament needs to become a reality:

- Full support and 'buy in' of the National Parliament and relevant stakeholders
- Partnerships with the Ministry of Education and the Election Commission of Bhutan
- A clear idea of what the MYP can and can't do and therefore establishing boundaries for what impact they can have on decision-making processes (through a Terms of Reference)
- Access to meeting rooms, premises and equipment
- A mechanism to measure the success of the MYP's involvement
- Start-up funding

## Long-term Benefits of the Youth Parliament:

### *For Youth*

- **Power and influence:** a high-profile elected representative raises the profile of issues that matter to young people and influences local opinion formers. Additional control or influence over a budget, funding community projects, translates that influence into action.
- **Getting their voices heard:** YP ensures that young people are more informed about and involved in local decision-making. They can see that they are being

listened to and that their concerns are being acted on.

- **Understanding and development:** young people gain new skills and develop valuable experiences. Representation promotes the understanding of local democracy and political processes.
- **Positive representation:** MYPs represent young people in the media, countering negative stereotypes and promoting positive images
- **New skills:** confidence, campaigning, presentation, running consultations and political education are a few of many skills MYPs will learn when involved with Youth Parliament
- **Enabling environment:** encourages young people to become leaders and emboldens them to take initiative and contribute to the strength of Bhutan's young democracy.

#### *For Authorities*

- **Informing policy makers:** an MYP helps elected members understand the issues that affect young people, as well as their needs and opinions, leading to better informed decisions
- **Developing civic identity:** voting at a young age can become a lifelong habit that leads to greater participation in the democratic process and a wider civic society. More will be interested in elections - voting or even standing as candidates.
- **Increasing legitimacy:** MYPs provide a voice for a section of the population that often goes unheard. Representation of young people lends credence and focus to the work they undertake with adult politicians
- **Improving services:** youth representation acts as a catalyst to strengthen local accountability and improve services for young people; making them responsive, user-driven, and cutting costs long-term
- **Fulfilling statutory duties:** local authorities have a duty to inform, consult, and involve people in the running of local services, as well as a duty to promote democracy - particularly to young people.

### Annex I: Budget:

| Item                        | Estimated Cost  | Remarks   |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Administration              | \$5,000         | The administration costs will include salaries for the managing director, the chief financial officer, and the public relations officer.  |
| Communications              | \$4,000         | The communications costs will include the costs to document all Youth Parliament events through photography, video, and online communications. This will also cover the cost for website development and maintenance, invitations, and advertising. |
| Orientation                 | \$3,500         | Includes the cost for hostel fees, food and tea, booklets, and certificates during the 10-day orientation program.  |
| Winter Session              | \$3,000         | Includes the cost for hostel fees, food and tea, and booklets during the 10-day program, and funds for the presentation ceremony.   |
| Summer Session              | \$3,000         | Includes the cost for hostel fees, food and tea, and booklets during the 10-day program, and funds for the presentation ceremony.   |
| Social Action Project Funds | \$6,250         | Each candidate will receive \$250 to implement a social action project in their community or school.  |
| Miscellaneous               | \$2,250         | This money will be used to support fundraising projects   |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>\$27,000</b> |   |

### **Fundraising**

To encourage fiscal responsibility and innovation, MYPs will be required to conduct at least two fundraising events during their term. These funds will go towards supporting the Social Action Project Funds. Examples of potential events could include:

- Art Shows
- Offering tuition
- Bake Sales

- Dinner parties + dance tuition
- Screenings at the Lab
- Voluntouring (conducting tours at sites in Thimphu where community service will also be performed)

## Annex II: Parliamentary Etiquette

### **1. Order kept by Speaker or Chair**

(a) The Speaker or the occupier of the Chair of the House at the time shall keep order in the House. □

### **2. Members to recognise authority of the Speaker**

(a) If the Speaker stands during a debate, any Member then speaking or seeking the call shall sit down and the House shall be silent so the Speaker may be heard without interruption.

(b) When the Speaker is putting a question no Member may walk out of or across the Chamber.

(c) When a Speaker calls order, all Members must come to order. □

### **3. Members moving in the Chamber**

A Member in the Chamber must:

(a) Take his or her seat promptly.

(b) Bow to the Chair and Mace upon entering and exiting the Chamber.

(c) Not cross between a Member and the Speaker. □

### **4. Addressing Members in the Chamber** □

When addressing the Chair a Member in the Chamber must:

(a) Address the Speaker as Mister Speaker or Madam Speaker.

### **5. Speaking in the Chamber**

(a) A Member wishing to speak shall rise and, when recognised by the Speaker, address the Speaker. If a Member is unable to rise, he or she will be permitted to speak while seated.

(b) When a Member is speaking, no Member may converse aloud or make any noise or disturbance to interrupt the Member.

(c) If two or more Members rise to speak, the Speaker shall call on the Member, who in the Speaker's opinion, rose first.

(d) Any Member in the house may seek an extension of time on their speech followed by a vote from the house. If successful, the Speaker will grant an extension.

A Member may only interrupt another Member to:

(a) Call attention to a point of order (see points of order)

(b) Move that:

I. The Member be no longer heard

II. The Member be suspended from the services of the house

### Points of Order

If a Member breaches the standing orders of Parliament, a Member may raise the point of order with the Speaker at any time. After the question of order has been stated to the Speaker, the Speaker will then decide whether to carry or drop the point of order. A Member interrupted by a point of order must resume his or her seat.

Valid Points of Order:

- Untrue Statements or Accusations
- Misrepresentation of a Member
- Relevance of Answer to the Question
- Personal Attacks/Disorder

### Speakers Sanctions

The Speaker can take action against disorderly conduct by a Member:

#### 1. Direction to leave the Chamber

- (a) The Speaker can direct a disorderly Member to leave the Chamber. The direction shall not be open to debate or dissent, and if the Member does not leave the Chamber immediately, the Speaker can name the Member under the following procedure.

#### 2. Member named and suspended

(a) The Speaker can name a disorderly Member. Immediately following a naming the Speaker shall put the question:

*"That the Member be suspended from the service of the House".*

*The house will then vote on the status of the Member in question. If passed, the Member will not be allowed to enter the Chamber until a time at the discretion of the Speaker*

#### 3. Removal of Member

(a) If a Member refuses to follow the Speaker's direction, the Speaker may order the Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the Member from the Chamber.

### Question Time

During Question Time, any Member may rise and ask a Member of the House a question. This question must be concerning the Parliament.

#### 1. Times of Question Time

(a) Question Time may occur only when:

I. No bill is present to debate

II. No motion is present to debate



III. The Leader of the House asks the Speaker

- (b) All questions must be no more than 30 seconds.
- (c) All responses must not exceed 2 minutes.

## **Motions**

### **1. Times of Motions**

(a) Motions may only occur when:

- I. No bill is present to debate
- II. Question Time is not occurring
- III. A Member rises to move a motion

(b) The Motion mover may only speak for 3 minutes.

(c) A Member from the opposing side may only speak for 3 minutes.

(d) Members can speak for 1 minute, alternating between Government and Opposition.

## **Bill Debating**

With notice, a Member may seek to introduce a Bill into Parliament.

### **1. Speaking Times**

(a) The Sponsoring Member and the refuting Member may each speak for 3 minutes.

(b) Other Members may speak for up to one minute alternating from Government to Opposition.

### **2. Voting on the Bill**

(a) After the conclusion of the debate, amendments will be announced and voted on

(b) After amendments have been voted on, the amended Bill will then be voted on

(c) All bills passed with or without amendments shall be passed on to the Legislative Council to be debated on or Governor to be signed off on

## **Voting**

### **1. Majority of Voices**

The Speaker shall put the question by stating its terms to the House and asking Members in favor of the question to say 'Aye' and those against 'No', and the question shall be resolved by the majority of Members calling either 'Aye' or 'No'. The Speaker shall then state whether the 'Ayes' or the 'Noes' have it. If the Speaker's opinion is challenged by a Member, the question must be decided by division of the House.

### **2. Divisions**

A division of the House may take place only after a Member challenges the Speaker's opinion about whether a question was resolved for the 'Ayes' or the 'Noes' and calls for a division. When a division is called, Members voting to support the motion or bill will pass to the right of the Chair and members voting against the bill or motion will pass to

the left of the Chair. The Whips and Deputy Whips will count all votes and report back to the Speaker. The side with the majority wins the vote.

### **Annex III: Bill Format**

*Explanatory Notes: This section is filled up with background information on the bill and how it will be effective if passed. Must not exceed one page*

#### **Name of Bill 2013**

To be enacted by \_\_\_\_\_, with the advice and consent of the Youth Parliament thereof as follows:

#### **Part 1 Preliminary**

##### **1 Name of Act**

This Bill shall be cited as The Name of Bill Act 2013

##### **2 Commencement**

This Bill will commence \_\_ days after Royal Assent.

##### **3 Objectives**

The objectives of this Bill are to:

- a)
- b)
- c)

##### **4 Interpretation**

In this Act, unless the contrary intention appears:

- a) \_\_\_\_\_ shall mean
- b) \_\_\_\_\_ shall mean
- c) \_\_\_\_\_ shall mean

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#### **Part 2**

Part two is the section in which the MP must state in each clause what action will be taken.

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## Annex IV: Mock Script for Bill Debate

*Everyone rises.*

**SPEAKER** (standing): We acknowledge the tsawa-sum and pay our respects to the leaders past and present.

**MEMBER** (standing): The Honourable \_\_\_\_\_. Mr. Speaker, I seek to introduce a Bill. If this bill be a bill, it shall be named the \_\_\_\_\_ Act

**SPEAKER**: All those in favour say aye. To the contrary no.

**SPEAKER**: I think the ayes have it, the ayes have it.

**SPEAKER**: This bill has now been read a first time. I call the Member for the second reading

**MEMBER**: (*3 minute sponsor speech*)

**SPEAKER**: I now call the Shadow Member to refute this bill

**SHADOW MEMBER**: (*3 minute refuter speech*)

**SPEAKER**: The floor is now open for debate. Is there any member seeking the call?

*Any member may stand and speak in favour or in refutation alternating from government to opposition. Each speaker may speak for 1 minute. The floor is open for 10 minutes.*

**SPEAKER**: Honourable members, the time for debate has now expired.

**SPEAKER**: The Opposition seeks to make certain amendments to this bill. I call upon the Members for (*electorate*)

**MEMBER**: The Honourable \_\_\_\_\_. The (government/opposition) seek to (change/remove/add) a clause to this bill. This (new/edited) clause be it part of this bill, shall be titled \_\_\_\_\_ and seeks to (name effect of new clause)

**SPEAKER**: All those in favour of this amendment say aye. To the contrary no.

**SPEAKER**: Honourable Members, the time has expired for bill amendments.

**SPEAKER**: The title of this bill, be it a bill shall be named (name of bill).

**SPEAKER**: All those in favor say aye.

**SPEAKER**: To the contrary no.

**SPEAKER**: I think the (ayes/noes) have it.

**SPEAKER**: The bill has been resolved in the (affirmative/negative).

**SPEAKER**: (rises and leaves).

*At any time of a vote, a member (preferably the Manager of Opposition Business or Leader of the House) may rise and state: "I think the (noes/ayes) have it", calling for the speaker to divide the house. In this case, a script is provided below.*

**MEMBER:** Mr. Speaker, I think the (ayes/noes) have it.

**SPEAKER:** Is a division required?

**MEMBER:** A division is required.

**SPEAKER:** A division has been called. All those in favor, to the left of my chair.  
All those to the contrary, pass to the right of my chair.

*Members may move to the side they wish to vote on. All members must be seated for votes to count. The whip will count their assigned sides (including themselves) and report back to the Speaker.*

**SPEAKER:** The result of the division: Ayes: (number of votes) Noes: (number of votes). Therefore it is resolved in the (affirmative/negative)