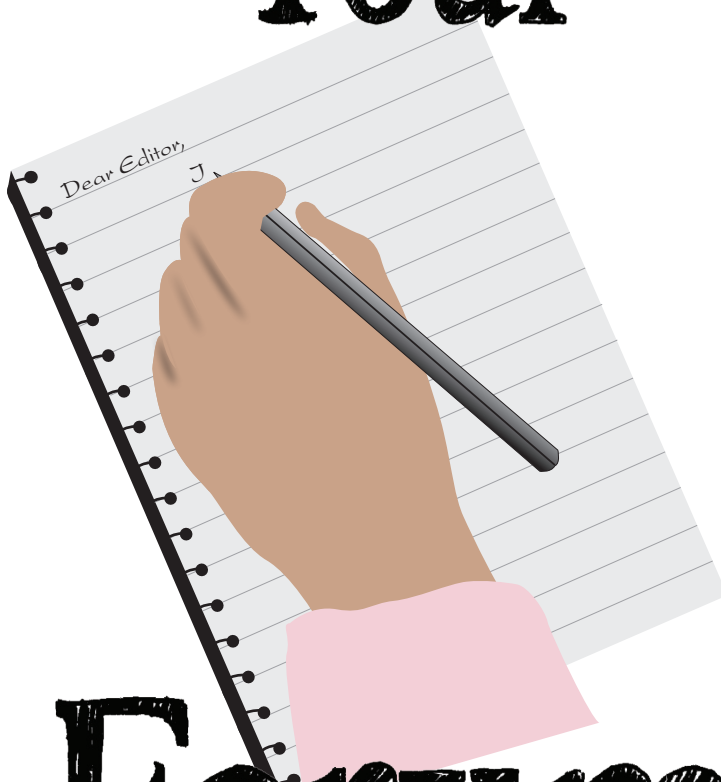


# The Active Citizen's Survival Kit



འབྲུག་བཅོམ་ལྷན་དང་དམངས་གཙོའི་ལྗོངས་  
BHUTAN CENTRE  
for MEDIA AND DEMOCRACY

# Find Your



# Forum



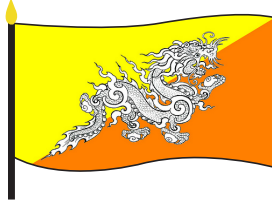
[www.bcnd.bt](http://www.bcnd.bt)

*This book belongs to*

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## National Anthem

འབྲུག་ཙན་དན་བཀོད་པའི་རྒྱལ་ཁབ་ནང་།  
དཔལ་ལྷན་གཉིས་བསྟན་སྤྱོད་བའི་མགོན་།  
འབྲུག་རྒྱལ་པོ་མངའ་བདག་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།  
སྐུ་འགྱུར་མེད་བརྟན་ཅིང་ཆབ་སྤྱོད་འཕེལ།  
ཚེས་སངས་རྒྱལ་བསྟན་པ་དར་ཞིང་རྒྱས།  
འབངས་བདེ་སྤྱོད་ཉི་མ་ཤར་བར་ཤོག། །

In the Kingdom of Druk, where cypresses grow,  
Refuge of the glorious monastic and civil traditions,  
The King of Druk, precious sovereign,  
His being is eternal, his reign prosperous,  
The enlightenment teachings thrive and flourish,  
May the people shine like the sun of peace and happiness!

The change to democracy comes with freedoms and privileges: the freedom of speech, the right to information, and, most notably, the right to vote for your leaders. Of course, these are core values of any nation that wants to call itself a 'democracy'. But democracy isn't just about freedoms, or even government; it is about citizens.

An ideal democracy is one in which people live and work together to improve the quality of a nation's life. Today, this necessity of "participatory democracy" is relevant everywhere, from the United States of America to India. Governments all over the world have failed to preserve equality, peace, and justice – conditions that lead to a society's happiness. No longer can people rely on their governments after they have voted; rather, they must become active, informed citizens that hold their elected leaders accountable. The success or failure of government is our responsibility, and no one else's.

The same is true for Bhutan. In 2006, Bhutan joined the growing number of democracies in the world when His Majesty the Fourth King formally stepped down as absolute monarch. His Majesty undertook this radical change because he believed that it would be in the best interest of the nation to hand over sovereignty to the people. In doing so, he expanded the roles and responsibilities of each and every inhabitant of the country from being strictly that of a subject to that of a citizen. But what exactly does this expansion entail?





This interactive booklet will help you better understand your roles and responsibilities as a citizen of Bhutan. Citizens of today and tomorrow must have knowledge, skills, and attitudes to fulfill our roles and responsibilities. We must **know** our rights and duties, what's going on in our communities, and our institutions of democracy. We must then be able to **use this knowledge** to improve the quality of our communities. Lastly, as citizens, we must always have the **right attitude** by upholding the values of a democracy - justice, freedom, and equality. We have all been blessed by Their Majesties to take care of our country, so let's not disappoint them!



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*To become an effective citizen, we must first consider the attitudes, or the right view, of an effective citizen. What should a citizen think and believe in order to perform their roles? Below are some examples of attitudes expected of citizens everywhere:*

**I can make a difference.** Sometimes, when we have a problem, we do one of two things: we either wait for someone else to solve it; or we complain, complain, and blame. “Why isn’t the government fixing my car?” “When will Ama clean the dishes?” “I don’t know how to make a website, what can I do?” Democracy is about empowering the people to not only choose their leaders, but to choose their future. You have the power to take initiative, to organise with other citizens, to let your voice be heard, and to make a positive difference. Martin Luther King Jr., the great civil rights activist in America, once said, “A man dies when he refuses to stand up for justice. A man dies when he refuses to stand up for that which is right. A man dies when he refuses to take a stand for that which is true.” Don’t die; live!

**We must learn to live together.** In Bhutan, we all have differences: some are from the North, East, South or West; some are old, some are young; some prefer hamburgers to ema datse; and some hate the political party we adore. We can choose to fight with these people, to ignore them, and to take everything away from them. Or we can choose to live with each other, peacefully and agreeably. While we all have differences, at the end of the day, we are all humans.

As members of the same family – the human family – we must recognise that our fate is connected to the fate of those we live with.

**The people must be informed.** The basis for all action is accurate and timely information. If I do not know that eating poison will kill me, I might drink that poison and die. Similarly, if I do not know that my government is making big mistakes when it is making big mistakes, then I will not be able to do anything to correct those mistakes. To be active citizens, we must always remain informed about what is going on in our society. How? By reading the news, by staying in touch with your representatives, by talking with your friends and family about what’s going on, by attending forums and seminars. These are just some of the ways that you can continue to know what’s going on in your society.

**Great power comes with great responsibility.** Freedom is a beautiful thing; to be free to be able to say what you want, to be able to move anywhere without fear, to be able to choose your own love partner, and to be able to stand up for what you believe in. These are truly rare gifts. But, as a citizen, you must also have the courage and compassion to



act in the service of others. Yes, you must feed yourself and provide for your family. But you must also serve your nation. As educated individuals, as individuals not in a state of poverty or ignorance, you are extremely privileged and gifted. Why keep it all for your self when others can benefit? Now and in the future, the nation

of Bhutan will face challenges. You have the power to address those challenges, to act in the public interest. But don't just act for what people want. Use your wisdom. Just because everyone wants to smoke doesn't make it okay. Think before you act.



### ✓ **TALK**

Talk with friends about issues that are important to you. Having discussions and debates can help you reflect on your positions and understand other perspectives.

### ✓ **READ**

Read the newspaper or other media sources about current issues. Citizens must be informed in order to make good decisions and hold their leaders accountable.

### ✓ **WRITE**

Share your opinions by writing letters to the editor and op-editorials – and then submit them to the relevant newspaper. Engage in online forums as a registered member.

### ✓ **BE AN EVERYDAY ACTIVIST**

Be an example for others by (1) acting responsibly and (2) bringing sustainable living practices into your life. What is a “sustainable living practice”? Any practice that uses the earth’s resources in a way that does not harm the earth: walking to school instead of driving; turning off the light when you are not using it; buying local foods rather than imported, packaged foods like Maggie noodles.

### ✓ **VOLUNTEER**

Give your time and assist in an activity to benefit the community.

✓ KNOW YOUR RIGHTS & DUTIES (See Page 19)

✓ AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST...VOTE!

Vote for the representative that YOU think can best lead the country.



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Think about the first time you played football (or any sport). Before you learned how to score a goal, how to defend, or even how to kick a ball, you had to learn the rules – principles and guidelines that all players have to agree to. The rules of a sport guarantee that everyone is playing the same game to which they agreed to at the beginning. Why do we have to learn these rules? Think, for a moment, what would happen if no one followed the rules. What if people started kicking each other instead of kicking the ball? What if people used their hands to score a goal? And what if a team came out with 40 players on the field instead of 11?

Clearly, we can see that rules exist for

many good reasons. Rules are not restrictions. They're designed to set standards so that everyone is playing the same game! Just as we need rules in games, we also need rules for the society in which we live. These set of rules that we live by are known as the law. The highest of all these laws is the Constitution. Bhutan's Constitution creates the foundation for a Democratic Constitutional Monarchy. This state is based on the principles of freedom, equality and justice. Most importantly, the Constitution belongs to all Bhutanese citizens.

The Constitution is a legal document with deep implications for all Bhutanese. In these 3 pages, we hope to explain the most important parts of the Constitution that every citizen should understand: Article 7, which defines a citizen's rights; Article 8, which defines a citizen's duties; and Article 9, which defines the powers of the Government.

## What is Justice?

The concept of 'justice' is concerned with how people are treated. In a 'just society', people are treated according to what is considered 'right' or 'fair'. For example, to feed people when they are hungry; to care for people when they are sick; to clean the environment when it is dirty; and to treat each other with kindness and respect, no matter who they are.

## Article 7

### What are rights?

The Constitution gives us rights. Rights are things that all people have just because they are alive. As long as you are a human being, you have these rights - no matter who you are, where you live, what your parents do, what language you speak, what religion you practice, whether you are a boy or girl, or if you are rich or poor. Rights are things every person should be able to have or to do in order to survive and grow to reach his or her full potential. The government has a responsibility to make sure your rights are protected.

### What rights do I have?

*You have the following rights:*

- ✓ Access to basic education and healthcare;
- ✓ Access to information and share what you think with others;
- ✓ Access to information that is important to your well- being, from radio, newspaper, books, computers, and other sources;
- ✓ Choice of your own religion and beliefs;
- ✓ Voting for the representatives that you believe can best lead the country;
- ✓ Living wherever you want in the country;
- ✓ Pursuing whatever career you want (as long as it does not break the law);
- ✓ Setting up groups, as long as it doesn't harm others;
- ✓ Ownership of all the things that you invent;;
- ✓ Ownership of your land that cannot be taken away from you;
- ✓ Under the law, you must be treated the same as everyone else;
- ✓ The right not to be tortured;
- ✓ The right to privacy;
- ✓ The right to get advice from a Bhutanese *Jabmi* and have them represent you;
- ✓ If you are accused of a crime, you are considered innocent until you are proven guilty;
- ✓ You cannot be arrested by the police unless they have a good reason;
- ✓ No one can disturb your private life;

## Article 8

### What are duties?

The word “duty” comes from the Old French word, *deu*, which means “debt” or something that we owe. As members of a free, beautiful, and peaceful society, we are extremely fortunate – so much so, that we might consider this fortune a sort of “debt”. Why? Because this society has provided us with the conditions for happiness, for justice, and for peace. These are ideals that all humans strive for. Very few, however, are able to realize these ideals due to conditions of injustice, of corruption, and of hatred. It would be very cruel and shortsighted to think, “oh, those people living there just have bad luck” or “my nation will always be this way” without feeling any obligation to repay this “debt”. Fortunately, we can repay this “debt” by fulfilling the duties listed in our Constitution.

### What are these duties?

- ✓ To keep Bhutan safe;
- ✓ To preserve and respect the environment;
- ✓ To preserve and respect the national culture;
- ✓ To treat all people of Bhutan as brothers and sisters;
- ✓ To respect the National Flag and the National Anthem;
- ✓ To not harm other sentient beings;
- ✓ To help victims of accidents;
- ✓ To protect public property (e.g. parks, national monuments, etc.);
- ✓ To pay taxes so that government can continue to provide services for everyone;
- ✓ To uphold justice and act against corruption;
- ✓ To obey the law.

## Article 9

### What should the state do?

The Constitution not only sets the duties for individual citizens; it also sets the duties, and limitations, of the government (or state). If we think of Bhutan's society as a family, then we can say that the government is like the head of our Bhutanese family. The first thing that the head of any family should be concerned about is that everyone has a good quality of life.

What is a good quality of life? Truly, it is a life in which everyone has everything that we need, including food, family, shelter, water, and electricity. It is also about having family ties and a sense of belonging to a community. Remember – needs are not the same as wants! Just because I want a new pair of shoes, a cool mobile phone, or a car, doesn't mean that I need them. Think – what do I *really* need in life? In a country that aspires to Gross National Happiness (GNH) ideals, Bhutan has always emphasised that people's contentment and wellbeing is more important than monetary and material gain.

For everyone to have everything they need, the government must ensure that society is **equal**. By equality, we mean that people have access to all the basic necessities and opportunities to realize their full human potential. This does not mean that everyone has to have the same income, personal possessions, and housing; instead, it means that there is not a huge gap between the rich and the poor. Every human being should be able to receive the same health care, the same education, the time to practice religion, and the same treatment before the law.

For a family to have a good quality of life, the most important condition is to be **self-sufficient**. This means that you do not depend on others to feed you; you can do it yourself. If we depend on others for our entire lives, we always put ourselves at risk. Think - one day, the people we depend on may leave. And then, we will have nothing left.



## Other duties of the state:

- ✓ To protect people's human rights;
- ✓ To provide justice in a transparent, or clear, manner;
- ✓ To promote conditions for Gross National Happiness;
- ✓ To treat all Dzongkhags equally;
- ✓ To encourage the development of the private sector;
- ✓ To provide employment for everyone;
- ✓ To provide fair pay for people's work;
- ✓ To allow people to rest and not work too much;
- ✓ To end discrimination of women;
- ✓ To protect the rights of children;
- ✓ To create a compassionate society;
- ✓ To promote culture, the arts, and sciences;
- ✓ To promote good relations with other countries.



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*“Volunteering is the ultimate exercise in democracy. You vote in elections once a year, but when you volunteer, you vote every day about the kind of community you want to live in.”*

*-Anonymous*

Civil society – in everyday organised life – expresses human caring. As the space where people come together outside the institutions of the market and government, civil society develops based on the understanding that none of us stands alone. As fellow occupants of this planet, our fate, and the fate of the societies we inhabit, are bound together. We have a responsibility to each other, and to the places we inhabit.

This notion of caring is not simply an *input* for the nourishing of life; it is also an output to enable the flourishing of others. In any society, this care for others manifests itself in the form of **volunteerism** – unpaid service done to promote good or improve the quality of human life. Cleaning campaigns in which people pick up garbage, tutoring children struggling in school, teaching children to read in a library, or helping rebuild damaged monasteries are all examples of people voluntarily taking action to improve the lives of their communities. Volunteering not only helps communities, but it also helps individual volunteers to integrate their own idealism and realism in a healthy way.

The commitment to care for others is not a conservative or a liberal issue. Caring

and compassion simply help to define us as being human. This impulse to volunteer is especially important in a democracy, which is by definition governance by the people. As citizens, people must recognise the rights and responsibilities that are inherent in a democratic government. A virtuous citizen is one who understands that volunteering is not merely an altruistic act, but an obligation that all of us share by being members and stakeholders of the same nation.

### Youth Volunteers in Action (Y-VIA)

The Young Volunteers in Action (Y-VIA) is an active network of young volunteers organised by the Bhutan Youth Development Fund. Initiated in March 2003, when a group of young people gathered together to support the efforts of the Bhutan Youth Development Fund and to represent youth perspectives in youth development activities. The Y-VIA is now established in 6 Dzongkhags and is fast gaining popularity and importance. More and more, young people are becoming aware of their involvement in contributing to their nation through active volunteerism.





### Tarayana Clubs

Tarayana clubs were established in sixteen high schools and a few higher institutes in 2004. There are now 85 clubs with thousands of volunteer student members spread over the whole country. The main purpose of these clubs is to help the rural communities close to the schools and institutes locally and to foster the spirit of volunteerism among the club members. It is hoped that all the club members will learn to be more socially responsible and seek ways and means to be useful to the community at large. The Tarayana Foundation provides Nu. 10,000 to each club as a starting fund to support the activities of these clubs. The choice of activities depends on the club members based on their needs. This is also to encourage innovation. Through these clubs, compassion, serving those in need and social work skills are promoted. Advocacy campaigns are also taken up by the children to create awareness on several issues of importance to the local communities.

### The Boy & The Starfish

*What difference will volunteering make?  
Consider this story:*

One day, a man was walking along a beach. As he continued walking, he noticed a figure. As he got closer, he realised the figure was that of a boy picking something up and then throwing it back in the ocean.

Approaching the boy, he asked, "What are you doing?"

The youth replied, "Throwing a starfish into the ocean. Soon the sun will set and the tide will go down. If I don't throw them back, they'll die."

"Son," the man said. Don't you realise there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish? You can't possibly make a difference."

After listening politely the boy bent down, and continued picking up starfish and threw it into the surf.

Then, smiling, he said to the man. "I made a difference for that one."

Whoever you are, wherever you are, and whatever capacity you have, you can make a difference. Sometimes, we feel that we are insignificant like the little boy. Yet, just like the little boy who picked up the starfish, we can do small things that have big results.

There are many Civil Society Organisations (CSO) throughout Bhutan that are working to improve Bhutanese society by focusing on specific issues. Spend your holiday time volunteering for a CSO that focuses on an issue that you care about! Below is a directory of the Public Benefit CSOs in Bhutan:

CSO	Focus	Website
Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs (BAOWE)	Women entrepreneurs	<a href="http://www.baowe.org">www.baowe.org</a>
Bhutan Ability Society	Education	<a href="http://www.absbhutan.org.bt">www.absbhutan.org.bt</a>
Bhutan Centre for Media & Democracy (BCMD)	Media & democracy literacy	<a href="http://www.bcmd.bt">www.bcmd.bt</a>
Bhutan Centre for Nature Conservation	Environment/ nature	
Bhutan Youth Development Fund (YDF)	Youth	<a href="http://www.bhutanyouth.org">www.bhutanyouth.org</a>
Chithuen Phendey Association (CPA)	Drug and alcohol	
Disabled Persons Association of Bhutan (DPAB)	The disabled	<a href="http://www.dpab.org.bt">www.dpab.org.bt</a>
Draktsho	Training disabled youth	<a href="http://www.draktsho-bhutan.org">www.draktsho-bhutan.org</a>
Lhak-Sam	HIV/AIDS	<a href="http://www.lhaksam.org.bt">www.lhaksam.org.bt</a>
Lhomon Society	GNH	<a href="http://www.lhomo.bt">www.lhomo.bt</a>
Loden Foundation	Entrepreneurship	<a href="http://www.loden.org">www.loden.org</a>
Menjong Foundation	GNH	<a href="http://www.menjongdfoundation.org.bt">www.menjongdfoundation.org.bt</a>
Music of Bhutan Research Centre (MBRC)	Traditional music	<a href="http://www.musicofbhutan.org">www.musicofbhutan.org</a>

CSO	Focus	Website
Phuentsholing Sports Association (PSA)	Sports	
Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women (RENEW)	Gender equality	<a href="http://www.renewbhutan.org">www.renewbhutan.org</a>
Royal Society for Senior Citizens (RSSC)	Senior citizens	
Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN)	Natural environment	<a href="http://www.rspnbhutan.org">www.rspnbhutan.org</a>
Royal Textile Academy (RTA)	Indigenous textiles	<a href="http://www.royaltextileacademy.org">www.royaltextileacademy.org</a>
Tarayana Foundation	Rural development	<a href="http://www.tarayanafoundation.org">www.tarayanafoundation.org</a>
The Rural Education Foundation	Education	<a href="http://www.refbhutan.org">www.refbhutan.org</a>



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*Want to inform the media about a story going on in your community?  
Have an opinion that you'd like to share?*

**Then be sure to contact any of these news agencies:**

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>PABX</b>
Kuensel	<a href="mailto:editor@kuensel.com.bt">editor@kuensel.com.bt</a>	324688
Bhutan Observer	<a href="mailto:editor@bhutanobserver.bt">editor@bhutanobserver.bt</a>	334891
Bhutan Times	<a href="mailto:bhutantimes2206@gmail.com">bhutantimes2206@gmail.com</a>	335006
Bhutan Today	<a href="mailto:uktenzin@hotmail.com">uktenzin@hotmail.com</a>	336804
The Journalist	<a href="mailto:creativebms@yahoo.com">creativebms@yahoo.com</a>	331653
Bhutan Youth	<a href="mailto:editor.bhutanyouth@gmail.com">editor.bhutanyouth@gmail.com</a>	332032
Business Bhutan	<a href="mailto:Kelly.shering@gmail.com">Kelly.shering@gmail.com</a>	339904
Druk Gyalyong Sharshog	<a href="mailto:bnnews@hotmail.com">bnnews@hotmail.com</a>	331677
Druk Nyetshuel	<a href="mailto:editordn@gmail.com">editordn@gmail.com</a>	326717
Druk Yoedzer	<a href="mailto:drukyoedzer@gmail.com">drukyoedzer@gmail.com</a>	340359
The Bhutanese	<a href="mailto:editor.theBhutanese@gmail.com">editor.theBhutanese@gmail.com</a>	332032
Druk Melong	<a href="mailto:drukmelong@gmail.com">drukmelong@gmail.com</a>	337683
<b>Radio</b>	<b>Email/Website</b>	<b>PABX</b>
Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS)	<a href="http://www.bbs.com.bt">www.bbs.com.bt</a>	323071
Kuzoo FM	<a href="mailto:fm@kuzoo.net">fm@kuzoo.net</a>	335262

*Before writing the letter, do some homework. Research the issue you want to talk about, and check the facts and information.*

Dear [Editor]:

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

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

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

Sincerely, or Respectfully Submitted,

[Signature]

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*“The rise in corruption in Bhutan is a challenge we face. How big the challenge is will depend on how soon and how strongly we decide to oppose it. There is no room for corruption - it is as simple as that. Not now, and not in the future.”*

*- His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo*



Corruption occurs when somebody abuses their position for his/her own personal gain. Often, this behaviour negatively affects the public at-large. When we talk about “position”, we mean someone who has been trusted with power to perform a duty.

For example, we have certain expectations of our teachers: to educate our students, to treat all students fairly, and to inspire them to learn. If a teacher were to give a student high marks simply because the student was a relative, would that be “treating all students fairly”? Not likely; in this case, a teacher is favouring the student not because of the students’ ability, but because of *who* the student is – a relative. This is not fair to the other students who may have studied harder than the favoured student.

Likewise, we trust our politicians to be honest, to work hard, and to act in our best interests. Politicians are human, however, and sometimes they make mistakes and act selfishly. Think for yourself: Are your politicians using *public funds* – money collected from taxpayers and generous donors – in the interest of the people or in the interest of themselves?

Here are some examples of **political corruption** – the use of power by government officials for personal gain:

- *Bribery*: Payment given to a government official in exchange for power. Example:

A drug smuggler giving payment to a police officer so that they may cross the border from India into Bhutan.

- *Electoral Fraud*: Interfering with the process of an election. Example: Increasing the vote share of the favoured candidate so that they will win the election.
- *Nepotism*: Favouring relatives or personal friends. Example: When politicians promote relatives to high-ranking positions without considering whether they deserve this.

Corruption damages our trust in the system and is not fair for people following the sacred law of the land. Every citizen is encouraged to report corruption to the Anti-Corruption Commission(ACC) responsibly and in the larger national interest. Your identity will be protected with absolute confidentiality. You can report corruption:

- *Online by filing a report at the Anti-Corruption Website: <http://www.acc.org.bt/>*
- *By phone (334863)*



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*"Don't think that you can't think; don't convince yourself that you aren't capable of taking the right decision. You have the wisdom, you have the capability - that's why His Majesty has trusted you, trusted us, the people. We must exercise that. We have to be responsible."*

*- Prime Minister Jigmi Y. Thinley*

The background of the lower half of the page is a photograph of the National Assembly of Bhutan. It shows a large, ornate hall with a high ceiling and colorful decorations. In the center, there is a raised platform with a throne and a large screen. The floor is covered with a green carpet, and there are rows of desks and chairs for the members of the assembly. The lighting is warm and the atmosphere is formal.

### **PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE**

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### **NATIONAL COUNCIL**

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Find your representatives at [www.nationalcouncil.bt](http://www.nationalcouncil.bt)

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Find your representatives at [www.nab.gov.bt](http://www.nab.gov.bt)



Today, an increasing number of Bhutanese are beginning to use social media. As more Bhutanese blog and go on popular social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, the channel of communication and social interaction becomes more fluid, impersonal and real-time. But social media is not just for socialising with friends; it can also be used as a space for sharing your views, advocating for causes, and creating positive change!

### *Use Blogs*

Blogs, or web logs, can be an excellent tool for citizens to engage in the democratic process. They are powerful information mediums where users can share their perspectives to the public. In many places, it has transformed the relationship citizens have with government, with media, and with each other. You can start your blog today using websites such as [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com) or [www.tumblr.com](http://www.tumblr.com)



### *Go on Discussion Forums*

Discussion forums provide a great platform where people can voice their opinions, share their views, and engage in dialogue that is both open and respectful. One such platform available to Bhutanese is Bhutan Speaks ([www.bhutanspeaks.bt](http://www.bhutanspeaks.bt))



**BHUTAN SPEAKS**  
voices and views of citizens

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

*“In a healthy democracy, citizens must be able to express themselves - individually and collectively. Facebook has provided a platform to do so. We can protest, rally, picket and demonstrate online.”*

*- Opposition Leader Tshering Tobgay*

### **Tobacco Control Act**

In 2010, The Tobacco Control Act was passed in Parliament. Many smokers and non-smokers alike were upset by how strict the act was – possession of small amounts of tobacco resulted in long jail sentences. So what did they do? They formed a Facebook group dedicated to discussing the tobacco law. The group grew to over 4,000 members and logged thousands of posts over the course of 10 months. Discussions were diverse, vibrant and persistent. And its members readily expressed their opinions and vented their frustrations.

But Amend the Tobacco Group was different from other forums, like Kuensel Online, in several ways:

One, the group’s members were not anonymous – Facebook profiles generally have real names along with real addresses, pho-

tographs, email IDs and even telephone numbers.

Two, the discussions were focused on just one topic, tobacco, and have some order and discipline – members were not unnecessarily nasty, abusive or profane.

And three, the group organised real measures to back up their virtual demands. First, they collected signatures – online and off – to petition for an amendment to the Tobacco Control Act. When that did not work, they began to write letters to their respective MPs and to publish those letters on Facebook.

Over time, politicians began to listen to and to consider the Facebook Group’s complaints. Even the Prime Minister joined the discussion online! Finally, in January 2012, the Tobacco Control Act was amended to make the law less strict.

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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

*“There is a higher responsibility - not written in any legal document, but instead enshrined in humanity and history - a natural responsibility and duty that we all must shoulder equally, irrespective of who we are. Of paramount importance to the strength of a nation is the ability of her people to live as one united family - a community in which interaction is marked by trust, understanding, and cooperation.”*

- His Majesty the King

So often, when there's a problem, we want somebody else to do something. But we all are somebody! Get together with friends to make a difference. By combining your collective talents and passions, you can:

**Conduct an awareness campaign on an issue that you care about** (e.g. recycling, the harmful effects of drinking, or the high rate of domestic violence)

**Persuade politicians to take action.** Power comes in numbers! If you want your local government to repair a road, provide more facilities, or enact a policy, let them know. It is their job to serve you.

**Start a Community Dialogue or Forum.** Community Dialogues are a great way to bring people together to address and solve problems. Host a public discussion at a school or community centre.





### Sherubtse Media Society

Sherubtse College is considered to be one of the best academic institutions in Bhutan. Yet, during the many years of its existence, they have never had a school newspaper – a source of information that keeps students, teachers, and members of the community informed about what's going on in the locality. Because of its remote location in Kanglung, Sherubtse students have less access to news sources than people in Thimphu do.

Now, thanks to Sherubtse Media Society (SMS), students in Sherubtse not only receive more news – they create it! After becoming inspired during a Summer Workshop with BCMD in 2011, students from Sherubtse came together to form a club dedicated to creating an informed and media lit-

erate society. They recognised that their community would be impaired without quality information, as well as the ability to access that information. To push the club forward, they knew they would need help, so they recruited friends, lobbied for support from their director, and asked for generous donations from a number of individuals and organisations throughout the country.

In just 6 months, the accomplishments of the club have been remarkable. They have published 5 editions of their newspaper, *The Tower*, for which they have distributed thousands of copies. Their membership has grown to 70 members; and they have begun conducting media awareness campaigns at schools in the East. The story of SMS goes to show that where there's a will, there's definitely a way!



*A member of SMS spreads media literacy to students at Jigme Sherubling HSS in Kanglung.*

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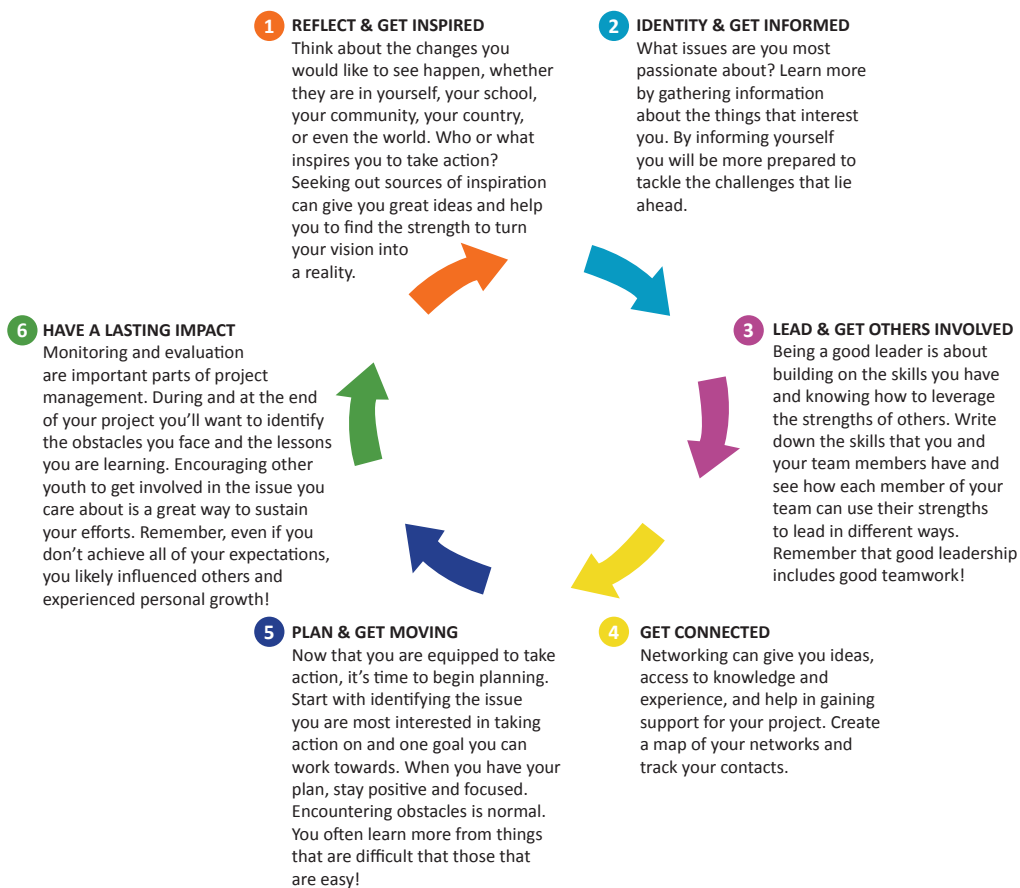
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## Reflect

Take a moment to REFLECT on the world around you. Think about what you see.

Imagine the world you would like to live in.

Now what would you need to change in order for the world to come closer to your vision?

**Can you think of some things you would like to change or improve?**



About yourself?

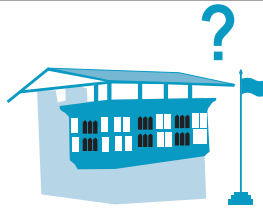
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About your school?

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About your community?

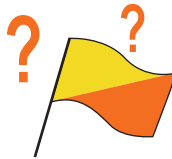
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About your country?

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About the world?

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This image shows a full page of blank, lined paper. It features approximately 20 evenly spaced horizontal grey lines across its entire width, providing a guide for handwriting or typing. The background is a clean, solid white color.

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