



Winter Training and Public sitting

Third Cohort of the Youth Initiative

*Training Dates: 15 January – 25 January 2016 at the Media Lab,
Thimphu □ Public Sitting Date: Tuesday 26 January 2016 at the RSPN
Auditorium, Thimphu.*



The third cohort of Youth Representatives of the Youth Initiative



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Background

In January 2013, about 20 high school, college, differently-abled and employed youth gathered at the BCMD Media Lab with common goal to bring changes in their communities, to talk about policies that affect them, to debate and deliberate on issues that they were passionate about. These youth were elected from each of their schools and colleges to represent youth voice as representatives of the Youth Initiative (YI) and had attended two training programmes in January and July 2013, which focused on debating, dialogue, and researching and deliberative skills.

The youth representatives of the YI in its first year, 2014, advocated for issues such as change in the education system in the country, the need for a policy for differently-abled persons in the country, and reduction of Bhutan's dependence on imported goods. Although these issues required more resources and time to be resolved, the youth representatives. They led reading campaigns to promote the reading habit among students, brought local potato chips makers and school canteens together to promote local products, and initiated the creation of a safe path (ramps and signs boards) from JDWNRH to the memorial chorten for differently-abled people, especially ones on wheel chair.

All of these initiative that were led by the youth themselves with support and guidance from the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD) has enabled them to become more active in taking part in volunteering activities to bring social change. They also become more aware and concerned about issues that affected them and the communities they lived in. After one year of pilot project, the youth representatives have now come to realise that perhaps the greatest achievement of YI would be the youth representatives themselves! Many are now more actively engaged



in their community, volunteering on various projects and are much more visibly active in Thimphu and educational institutions.

Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the forum were:

- To enable Youth Representatives to engage on issues using research, debate and deliberative communications skills. And collectively arrive at a decision through a dialogue approach to discussions.
- To represent youth voice through mock parliamentary sittings and other panel discussions.
- To enable youth to take community-based actions.

Summary

Winter Training: BCMD continues to build on the success of the YI programme. This is the third batch of youth representatives. BCMD set out to prove that with proper guidance and training, young Bhutanese are capable of taking part in the development taking shape in the country and that youth are capable of bringing change. This goal was achieved in the initial year looking at the personal development and the local actions carried out by the youth representatives. The week-long residential training for the new batch of youth representatives took place from 24 January to 31 January, 2016. The public sitting was held on 5 February following the training. The training was on Debate, Deliberation, Dialogue, Media Literacy, Research skills, Policy Making and Representation. Representation, Dialogue and



Media Literacy were three new things introduced in the winter training. □ Similar to the last two years of training, the youth representatives interacted with resource persons from different organisation on various issues. The resource persons were:

- Lama Shephen Zangpo on Mindfulness Training
- Kuenlay Tshering, National Council, on the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan
- Siok Sian Pek Dorji, BCMD, on Active Listening, Media Literacy.
- Jamba Tobden on Research skills and tips on How to get your points across and Public Speaking.
- Ngawang Gyeltshen and Sangay Thinley, Former youth representatives/ YI members
- Ngeedup Tshering, Clean Bhutan
- Karma Yonten, Greener Way, and Zuki, VAST, on Civic Sense and Responsibility. □
- Honorable member of parliament Dasho Nima, on How Policies are made and Deliberated in the Parliament.
- President of Royal Thimphu College ,Thakur Singh Powdyel, on Youth Policy
- Tim Hung on Public speaking and debate.

For the first time the third cohort of Youth Representatives of the Youth Initiative comprised members from not only Thimphu, but also from Paro, Samtse and Sarpang. They came up with 4 action plans. The Youth Initiative of the Thimphu Community were interested in establishing a Young Writer's Society. The Paro community took up waste management in Paro Tshongdue vegetable market. The Samtse community youth representatives were also interested in waste management "Project Clean Samtse". And the only Youth representative from Sarpang was



interested in conducting a Literary Fiesta.

Public Sitting: After comprehensive research on the above issues and research online and through interviewing various people from different organisation, the youth representative led a public sitting on Tuesday, 26th January.

During the public sitting the youth representatives from Thimphu community deliberated on the importance of establishing a Young Writer's Society with the aim to encourage creative writing skills and provide platform to young writers. Some of the feedbacks were to do away the age limits. They acknowledged the importance of writing, which is a vital tool in raising various issues.

The Paro and Samtse groups shared common concerns on waste management for which many of our audience agreed to be a national issue.

The only youth representative from Sarpang raised concerns on the limited access to reading resources in rural schools of Bhutan sharing based on his experience as a teacher in one of the remotest villages in Bhutan. As a reason, the youth representative proposed to conduct a literary fiesta in his community. Some members of the audience responded positively and offered help as far as possible. Kuensel, for example, was ready to assist in terms of providing books and covering the events proposed.

The public sitting was lively and was attended by members of the Parliament, representatives of government agencies and civil society organisations, some personal guests and members of the youth representatives and media organisations. Diverse views and feedbacks from all the dignitaries enabled us take the right course of action.



Impact and Results

Previously, pre & post survey along with a final evaluation were used as a mode of evaluation, however, it was found that some participants didn't take the forms seriously. Therefore, this was a test as to how reflective session could serve as an alternative evaluation of the programme just like we did in the previous summer sitting of the second cohort.

A majority of the respondents said that all the sessions during the winter training has been very informative and educational. They said they gained a lot of new knowledge through the training and offered a strong support to continue with the current structure of the training. Among other things, the respondents said that the trainings, public sittings enabled them to:

- Become a responsible citizen
- Learn to become good listener, research and analyze things before concluding
- Learning to socialise with different people and making new friends
- Greatly boost their self-confidence
- Become a team player
- Learning that every opinion matters and learning to respect every opinion
- Keep themselves abreast of what's happening in the country
- Collectively work together and represent the larger segment of the youth population and address their concerns
- Become a public speaker
- Understand that young people in Bhutan are capable of bringing change
- Identifying good role models to follow and learn from them through the speaker series imbedded in the training.



Lessons Learnt

- Most of the individual challenges faced by the representatives revolved around factors such as self-confidence, public speaking, leadership, not taken seriously by others because ³young age and so on.
- Residential training contributes to team building since youth ²Reps have to work together for a year.
- Bringing in resource person ⁴from various walks of life and organizations to talk about different issues allows the participants to get a deeper understanding of the issues. The discussions also enabled them to interact with and share their views with the representatives of higher authorities, an opportunity they never had before.
- As compared to the previous year, the current batch of youth representatives has more members from 4 districts of our country such as Sarpang, Paro, Samtse and Thimphu. This diversity of members gives an opportunity to interact and share ideas from different viewpoints keeping the difference of wide range of facilities in mind.
- In terms of facilitating the session, bringing in old youth representatives was addition to team coordinating the winter training. The old YI understood the structure and also helped take individual tasks during the training.



Annex I. Pictures



(Ice-Breaking Session)



(Trip to Buddha Point)



(Interactive session with Former Education Minister Thakur Singh Powdyel)



(Meditation for Mind and Body)



(Identifying issues that they care about from their Communities)