

Youth Initiative mid-evaluation

Youth Initiative for Debate, Deliberation and Development (YI)

Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD)

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16 June 2014

1. Introduction

Around half of the Bhutanese population is under the age of 25 years, and the amount of youth between 15 and 24 years of age is estimated to comprise one fifth of the population (National Statistics Bureau 2013: 4). Such a large number of youth has a vast potential to contribute positively to national development, while developing their own knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours as active citizens of Bhutan. Globally – such as in the celebrations of the International Volunteer Day 2013 focusing on youth volunteerism – young people are increasingly seen as agents of change and as assets instead of problems. Youth civic engagement is a process that provides an opportunity to engage young people's creativity and energy into meaningful action, to catalyse their own and their community's development. However, supporting political and cultural structures are required for effective youth participation, including capacity-building of youth themselves. (Afifi 2011.)

Youth Initiative for Debate, Deliberation and Development (YI) supported by the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD) is one of the first examples of youth civic engagement programmes in Bhutan. It is also a learning journey, during which not only the youth representatives taking part in the YI, but also BCMD as an organization aims at learning how to best support the democratic participation of youth in Bhutan.

This mid-report of the Youth Initiative is meant to improve the training, programming, monitoring and evaluation of the YI, and also to contribute to better understanding of youth civic engagement in Bhutan. Besides stakeholders involved in the YI, such as BCMD staff or members of the steering committee, the report can be of interest to other organizations or individuals working with youth engagement and participation, both in Bhutan and around the world. Although it is important to prove external funders what the results or impacts of a project were, for the organizational capacity it is even more important to strengthen internal and community accountability: what are we, as an organization, doing right? (Lennie&Tacchi 2012: loc 2427)

As this mid-report or evaluation is written only after five months since the first training conducted for the selected youth representatives, it is perhaps too early to measure the impact of the programme. Yet, the recommendations arising from the data collected during the spring of 2014 can improve the programming, such as reviewing the focus for the end of the year, and making further changes for the second year.

What kind of cause-and-effect relationship, or theory of change can be applied to a programme such as the YI? What resources and activities are expected to produce what results? What will the outcomes for the young people and for others in the community be? What do the young

people think? How do programme staff, policy-makers, or funders understand this program? (Campbell-Patton & Patton 2010: 596). These are some of the questions this mid-report attempts to answer.

Youth civic engagement

Definition

Youth civic engagement can take different approaches. Firstly, it can be mainly about *civic education*: increasing the knowledge about society, and hoping that this will lead to a more thoughtful participation. Secondly, it can include *service learning*, with the aim of developing a sense of social responsibility. Thirdly, youth civic engagement can deal with *social organizing*: engaging young people in advocacy for social change. Fourthly, it can focus on *youth development*: building competences, confidence, character and connections of young people. Different focus emphasizes different outcomes, and consequently different evaluation questions. Each civic engagement programme should also look at the needs of the youth and the local community. (Campbell-Patton & Patton 2010: 597; 601.) Nevertheless, there is a fundamental difference between being informed – learning and knowing about democratic processes – and being engaged in reflexive doing, participation and making a difference in the society. Empowerment and emancipation are central results of critical youth civic engagement that takes place through experiential education and self-reflection before, during and after the learning experience. (Roholt et al. 2008: 102-103.)

YI has aspects from all of these approaches – perhaps less from the service learning, but the components on civic knowledge, skills for organizing and advocacy, and building confidence and connections have been present throughout the training, meetings and support provided to the YI by BCMD. Based on the observations and data collected for this report, YI also included components of empowerment and self-reflection during the training organised for the representatives in January 2014, and it is important to keep these factors in mind during the future trainings and meetings as well.

Youth participation can have many different levels, starting with non-participation, such as manipulating youth or merely informing them of projects; moving on to tokenism or limited participation where youth are heard but not influencing decisions; and finally including young people in decision-making as equal partners with adults, doing youth-driven or youth-led projects. Afifi attaches the following attributes to “authentic youth engagement”:

- **Collective:** Activities are led by youth and adults together – not individually
- **Connected:** Activities embody interdependence and model it among youth and adults
- **Empowering:** Youth voice is a driving force throughout activities
- **Equitable:** Adults recognize young people have differing backgrounds that require different approaches

- Focused: Activities are appropriately outcome-driven
- Healthy: Respectful disagreement, speaking up, and other avenues that equalize disparities between youth and adults are at the core of the activity
- Learning: Young people gain skills, knowledge and tools to be effect agents of change
- Mutually Beneficial: Young people and adults acknowledge each other's dreams, actions, outcomes and reflections
- Relevant: Activities are responsive to the lives of young people
- Responsible: Adults and youth develop and sustain their capacity to be "response-able"
- Substantive: Activity design and outcomes are designed to impact individuals, organizations, communities and society
- Self-Motivated: Young people feel driven to participate

(Afifi 2011: 9-10.)

These attributes are useful analytical tools for further programming in the area of youth civic engagement in Bhutan, such as in the next phase of the YI.

Individual outcomes for youth engagement programmes identified in academic research include improved sociopolitical awareness, stronger self-expression, developed sense of control and social responsibility, feeling of hope and improved community participation skills such as planning and communication. Moreover, civic engagement programmes have been suggested to promote adolescent health issues and reduce problem behaviour. Participation in civic engagement projects has also been associated with positive identity development through the experiences of sense of belonging, integrity and efficacy. Besides these individual outcomes, youth civic engagement programmes can also impact community and societal development, but measuring this and attributing causation for social change has been deemed extremely difficult in the scholarly literature. Youth engagement in itself has been suggested to benefit communities through the transformation of social conditions when youth are engaged in decision-making processes. (Yohalem& Martin 2007: 809-810.)

As general remark, studies on youth civic engagement in other countries have proposed different ways of enhancing youth civic engagement. For example in Nepal, it was suggested that educating young people about the benefits of volunteerism and the opportunities available, or showing the impact of volunteering could inspire more youth to be civically engaged. Incorporating volunteering or service learning in the education system was seen as an effective way to expose youth to volunteering, because "once they were involved with voluntary activities, they found it so stimulating that they wanted to continue" (Etra et al. 2010: 20). Studies have also suggested that youth councils, youth-led media, youth advisory boards, youth organizing and community youth development activities are best ways to realise youth engagement. The more traditional channels for youth civic engagement include youth conferences, asking youth to consult on public policy, or involving youth in organizational decision-making and service learning in schools as potential ways to increase youth civic

engagement (Etra et al. 2010). Governments can support youth civic engagement in several ways, listed below in a table with respective information provided on Bhutan's status (adapted from Etra et al. 2010: 63, Appendix A.)

Mechanism to support youth engagement	Status in Bhutan
Adopting the relevant human rights treaties, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and particularly protecting the right of individuals to form associations, or freedom of speech	UDHR adopted Freedom of speech explicitly stated in the Constitution
Devising a legal framework for associations to function	CSO Act in Bhutan
Encouraging civic association with a preferential tax status	Non-profit tax status exists in Bhutan, but registration process for CSOs is very heavy
Establishing youth ministries or official government agencies	Department of Youth and Sports under the Ministry of Education
Forming youth bodies such as councils, parliaments or advisory boards	This is part of the action points in the National Youth Policy, but Youth Initiative is the first pilot project in Bhutan, outside the government
Appointing youth representatives to government bodies	Not aware of any in Bhutan
Creating youth policies, acts or constitutional articles	National Youth Policy 2011, Youth Action Plan drafted
Incorporating youth perspectives and foci into other sectoral or national policies and strategies	Youth mentioned in several occasions in the five-year-plan, or in other policies and strategies such as the National Entrepreneurship Strategy
Creating a positive legislative environment for civil society and volunteering	
Signing and enforcing related international conventions, eg. CRC	CRC signed in Bhutan
Creating school-based community service requirements or mandatory curricula related to youth civic engagement	Is being adopted in Bhutan, at least partly
Establishing government-sponsored and government-run programs for young people	Department of Youth and Sports runs youth centres in HOW MANY? Towns in Bhutan, as well as some winter

	and summer vacation programmes for the youth
Funding non governmental or school-based programs promoting youth civic engagement	Some, yes, but the concept of youth civic engagement is understood very differently by different actors

Governments are challenged by providing real opportunities for youth participation, beyond token representation; guaranteeing local youth participation; maintaining policies and programmes despite changes in the government; assuring cooperation across ministries and agencies; and safeguarding that programmes do not become partisan or nationalistic (Etra et al. 2010: Appendix).

On the individual level, different factors can support youth civic engagement. Supportive family background is crucial: in the FGDs conducted for this study, one of the FGD participants mentioned that her family has difficulties understanding why someone would spend her time in volunteering activities. Having mentors or role models is another important factor: the lack of young role models was evident in the FGDs where none of the participants mentioned young people among their role models. Being involved in associations or cooperative activities also further supports youth engagement, together with better awareness of moral and political issues. Values and traits such as ethics, integrity, sense of optimism and hope are needed for engaged action. Adult support was said to be lacking, particularly from the side of government officials (moral support), from families or any older authorities. In general, there seems to be a lot of mistrust towards youth in Bhutan which poses a significant barrier for youth participation.

2. Overview of the Youth Initiative pilot programme

Youth Initiative for Debate, Deliberation and Development (YI), formerly known as the “Model Youth Parliament” was initiated and conceptualized in a very short timeframe, from July to October 2013. YIDDD was based on an idea of a youth himself, PhubDorji¹, and further developed into its current form together with the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy, particularly with the help of Programme Officer Manny Fassihi.



Photo 1. Students voting for their representative at Motithang High School. Photo: BCMD

In total 19 youth representatives were chosen from different backgrounds: students in secondary schools and colleges, volunteers from civil society organizations and youth groups, differently abled people and working youth. The full list of selected youth representatives is presented below.

¹Phub participated in BCMD’s Media Nomad workshops and forums where he had the opportunity to learn about our parliament and the challenges of democratic change.

Name	Constituency	Gender	Age
Ghan Singh Ghalley	Babesa	M	Dropped out
DechenRabgyal	RIM	M	24
NgawangGyeltshen	Motithang HS	M	17
PuranBhiswa	Rinchen HS	M	21
PunashaChhetri	Pelkhil HS	F	17
TsheringYangzom	Loselling MS	F	Dropped out
TsheringWangchuk	Royal Thimphu College (RTC)	M	22
YontenPhuntsho	RTC	M	21
Geden	RTC	M	22
ZiwangGurung	RTC	M	21
KenchoDorji	Go Youth Go	M	21
SangayThinley	Go Youth Go / RITH	M	21
TsheringPelden	Go Youth Go / Employed	F	28
SumanSamal	Bhutan Youth Foundation	F	21 – dropped out
SonamJamtsho	Differently Abled	M	
KinleyDorji	Employed	M	
KezangDorji	Employed	M	
SangayBidha	Rinchen HS	F	18
Tenzin Namgay	Youth Media Center / Employed	M	21

Objectives of the Youth Initiative (YI) programme

The desired outcomes have been compiled **after** the YI training with the need to have a clearer vision and objectives for the YI programme. These outcomes have been categorized into individual and societal outcomes, the first of which can be better assessed at this initial stage as a result of the training conducted in January.

Individual outcomes (personal and social development)

Outcome 1: Increased civic knowledge and engagement

Indicator: Better understanding of political process and institutions in Bhutan

Indicator: Better planning and problem-solving skills

Indicator: Feeling of self-/collective responsibility to be actively involved in community

Indicator: Local action taken to promote selected causes

Data collection methods:

- Interviews or surveys
- Content analysis of blog posts/Facebook interaction/other communication products
- Facebook interaction (as a metric for internal communication)

Outcome 2: Improved communication skills

Indicator: Number of self-initiated blog posts, videos and editorials

Indicator: Number of requests to take part in public discussions/give statements to the media

Indicator: Quality and nature of the communication: reasoned, evidence-based, empathic, balanced

Indicator: Feeling of confidence towards debate, deliberation and argumentation

Data collection methods:

- Activity report of YIDDD
- Content analysis of blog posts/Facebook interaction/other communication products
- Interviews or surveys

Societal outcomes (positive impact on communities)

Outcome 3: Increased and improved youth representation in Bhutanese society

Indicator: Positive representation of YIDDD in the mainstream media

Indicator: Number of meetings or participation in relevant events (youth-related activities, conferences, discussions)

Indicator: YIDDD is recognized by leaders/members of authority as a viable source for youth voice

Data collection methods:

- Activity report of YIDDD
- Interviews with leaders/members of authority/media
- Setting up creative partnerships with leaders and policymakers

Outcome 4: More intentional collective action to bring about social change through youth leadership and democratic participation (this should be a long term goal)

Indicator: Number and results of collective actions taken

Indicator: Sustainability and effectiveness of the action or strategy

Data collection methods:

- Activity report of YIDDD
- Interviews and surveys
- Monitoring the progress of campaigns

First phase (November-December 2013): Youth Representative Selection

Original objective was to recruit 25 members, but only some of the schools in the Thimphu area agreed to take part. Another difficulty was finding unemployed youth to be represented, and instead the organizers decided to go through youth organizations that help unemployed youth (Bhutan Youth Foundation, Bhutan GNH Youth, Go Youth Go). Some organizations or schools might have seen that the programme lacked legitimacy, without huge banners or established government support and were reluctant to take part without an explicit approval from the official level.

Schools that agreed to participate in the YIDDD programme either held elections (most secondary schools) or selected the representatives from the school through eg. essay

competition (Royal Thimphu College). NGOs involved had their own internal selection process for the representatives.

Second phase (January 2014): Orientation and Training

The YIDDD group went through a 10-day training in January ending it with the first public deliberation session on 17 January, 2014.

Main content of the orientation training in January were the following:

- Setting a Vision: Pursuing a GNH Democracy
- Debate, Dialogue, and Deliberation
- Engaging the Public through ethnographic methods of research
- Policymaking and the Constitution
- Understanding our Parliament and Parliamentary Procedures

The content of the training was planned mainly by the BCMD, trying to find out how to build the skills and motivation of the young participants. Some of the one main focus areas in the training were communication skills, understanding the political system in Bhutan and research skills. Additionally, integrity was introduced in the programme through mindfulness and dialogue exercises, adding more reflection and self-awareness part: “who they are, why they are doing this and what they want to see in the world”. (Fassihi, interview.)

The intensive training period was also meant to build the team spirit and skills to manage themselves, to become organised and have the capacity to lead themselves, instead of BCMD having to lead or tell the representatives what to do next (Fassihi, interview).

Much of the training content was previously tested through BCMD’s debate programme at a local university (Royal Thimphu College) and in BCMD activities with youth – e.g. communications skills have been offered at the Media Lab. Basically the training programme was a condensed version of some of the trainings BCMD has been conducting – debate and deliberation, interviewing and investigation of issues through citizen journalism, seeking solutions to issues, amplifying voice through writing letters to the press and to MPs etc.

Third phase (February 2014; July 2014): First and Second Sessions

The YI aimed at holding two sessions that would simulate, to some extent, the procedure undertaken in the National Council: one during the winter holidays and the summer school break. These sessions will loosely follow parliamentary procedures and etiquette with a speaker that presides over and maintains order of the parliament. During the half-day session, Youth Representatives will:

- Focus on a bill or motion for debate (This motion will be proposed by the Youth Representatives);
- Propose and deliberate on solutions to the issue;

- Produce a finalized proposal for future action

Fourth Phase:(March 2014 – June 2014; August 2014 – October 2014): Community Action

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

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

Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD)

The role of BCMD is to guide, train and be responsible for the overall implementation of the initiative. BCMD monitors and helps evaluate the programme for lessons learned. This will be shared with all stakeholders at the end of the first year. While implementing the activity, BCMD is guided by a steering committee, but the aim is to have youth drive YI as much as possible.

Steering committee

The YI Steering committee consists of a council of stakeholders in civil society, education, and the media who coordinate and oversee the operations of the YIDDD, ensure transparency and accountability, manage funds, and will ensure continuity from year-to-year. They will meet on a quarterly basis to plan, manage and evaluate the project's activities. (YI website)

The composition of the YI steering committee in 2014:

- Dasho Tashi Wangmo, National Council
- Michael Rutland, Honorary Consul to the UK
- Namgay Zam, freelance journalist
- Karma Tshering, UNICEF
- Manny Fassihi, Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy
- Siok-Sian Pek Dorji, Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy
- Rigzin Regal, Bhutan GNH Youth
- Bharat Rana, Bhutan Youth Foundation
- Sangay Tshering, Drukhost (Green-E Solutions)

Where is the Youth Initiative now?

During the first training period, the representatives of the Youth Initiative were divided into three committees based on their interests:

1. **Social Justice:** This committee is focused on the inclusion of Bhutan's most vulnerable and marginalized populations, including women, children, minorities, and the disabled. *During the first session, the committee deliberated on a national policy for the disabled.*
2. **Community Welfare:** This committee is focused on bolstering the vitality of urban communities by taking measures that build social capital, improve cleanliness and uproot social ills, such as drugs. *During the first session, the committee deliberated on promoting local food products.*
3. **Education:** This committee is focused on improving the Bhutanese education system. *During the first session, the committee deliberated on the possibility of de-linking teacher recruitment and management from the RCSC.*

Within these areas, the Representatives will consult citizens and experts on their chosen topics and explore possibilities that can be addressed through policy-based interventions. The committees have also been working on the advocacy campaigns through short videos, podcasts, visiting schools and presenting YI and some of the themes to fellow students; and sending the proposals to the respective authorities and decision-makers.

The Youth Representatives have met during the spring several times to coordinate and discuss the progress of their advocacy campaigns. They have also been trained in advocacy and communication methods such as script-writing and podcasting by the BCMD.

3. Methodology

This chapter will briefly outline the general principles of monitoring and evaluation in social change / communication for development projects and the methods used to collect data for this study.

Monitoring & Evaluation in social change projects

YI is an ambitious pilot programme that focuses both on individual development and on social change. The complexity of the socio-political environment in which the programme is being executed makes it difficult to measure impacts – or even outcomes – through direct cause and effect. Moreover, in programmes such as YI the changes in behaviours and actions of people are more important than the direct output numbers and evaluating behavioural change is notoriously difficult. For any programme focusing on changing knowledge, behaviours and attitudes, it is impossible to look at the initiative in isolation from wider contextual factors. This is called the attribution problem in evaluation.

One of the aims of this mid-evaluation is to provide a framework for continuous project development and improvement, and to have a monitoring and evaluation process embedded in the project implementation. Evaluation should be an ongoing, mutual learning process that provides opportunities for the staff and the participants/beneficiaries to engage in critical reflection. This evaluation offers an opportunity both to improve and make necessary corrections to the YI pilot programme during this first year, and to develop the concept of YI for the following years.

Monitoring is mainly descriptive collection and analysis about the progress of development activities over time, comparing the programme plan with outcomes. *Evaluation* looks deeper into the processes to explain unexpected outcomes and to learn from failures in order to improve the programme. (Lennie&Tacchi 2012: loc. 497.) This mid-report combines both approaches, looking at the progress of activities, but also trying to provide suggestions to improve the programme.

Social change has been defined as “not linear, not predictable and always contextual” (Lennie&Tacchi 2012: loc 529). This means that evaluation approach based on linear cause-effect assumptions with measurable outcomes has little chances of capturing social change. To understand social change one has to understand local culture, context and relationships between people, groups and organizations: institutions, geography, history, culture, political systems, media and so on. These aspects are difficult to grasp through quantitative numbers, which is why ethnographic qualitative methods, such as individual and group interviews are necessary. (Lennie&Tacchi 2012: loc 509; loc 517;loc. 2009)

A set of *indicators* is needed to evaluate the success of a development intervention. Indicators measure the desired outcomes – not only physical and visible outcomes, but also changes in attitudes and behaviour. Qualitative indicators are often required to measure the attitudinal and behavioural change instead of the usual M&E approaches emphasizing quantitative indicators. (Lennie&Tacchi 2011: 101). This evaluation focuses mostly on qualitative indicators (see 2. Overview).

Indicators can be further divided into baseline, process, intermediate and long-term/outcome indicators. The *baseline* indicators are used before the programme starts to review, for example, existing attitudes and behaviours. In the case of YI, the pre-training survey of participants provides the baseline indicators. *Process* indicators can be used during training, information distribution or service provision, for example number of people reached or number of blog posts.

Intermediate indicators are those relevant at the stage of this evaluation: they are meant to be used at the short-term, post-activity stage. Intermediate indicators can measure short-term

changes in knowledge and attitudes within the target group. *Long-term/outcomes* indicators would finally measure the changed social norms in more long-term after the end of the programme. (Lennie&Tacchi 2011: 102)

Some aspects of development programmes are easier to measure, such as the amount of media coverage in the case of YI – but more important than sheer figures is the depth and quality of change, firstly on an individual level among the participants (eg. capacity to speak out and act in community), and secondly on the societal level (eg. changing cultural norms and attitudes towards youth).

Mixed methods approach

In general, using only quantitative methodologies for a social change project would not “give sufficient information on *how* or *why* people’s lives have changed”, but need to be complemented by qualitative methodologies that allow people to voice out their experiences (Lennie&Tacchi 2012: loc 2195, loc 2202).

Also this study used a mixed methods approach: including some quantitative indicators in the survey form filled by participants, but also interviewing the youth representatives and giving them the possibility to write freely about the most significant change (MSC) that they had experienced during their time in the Youth Initiative. Themes and domains from these different data were then analysed and grouped under the different aimed outcomes. Methodology for this report was agreed and developed in cooperation with BCMD, particularly with Programme Officer Manny Fassihi.

The following tools were used in the evaluation:

- a) **Focus group discussions:** Nine (9) people in two different sessions (6 male and 3 female participants; initially done as part of the Master’s thesis on youth civic engagement in Bhutan)
- b) **Individual interviews** of the steering committee members
- c) **Pre- and post-survey** for youth representatives, including question on the **Most Significant Change**
- d) **Observation and analysis** of the communication products/meetings/instances of the YI

Common problems related to the evaluation of projects is the weak design of indicators, lack of baseline information and not framing the conceptual approach to assessing impact at the start of the implementation. Also in the YI, some baseline information is missing and the collected data after the training, in March 2014, cannot be fully evaluated against the starting situation.

However, some conclusions can still be drawn from the results of the interviews and surveys done in March, as well.

a) Focus group discussions

To collect data on the perceptions of the participants themselves on the YI and on the status of young people in Bhutan, two focus group discussions (FGD) were organized: 27 January 2014 (7 participants) and 8 March (3 participants). The discussion lasted around 90 minutes.

Participants were asked some background details, such as: age/gender/origin/education level/previous volunteering or advocacy experience/motivation to join YI/expectations from YI.

First part of the focus group discussion (FGD) focused on the Youth Initiative:.

- How do you feel about the YI right now?
- What did you think of the visits to the National Council and/or the National Assembly?
- How did your parents, friends and relatives react to you becoming a Youth Representative?
- What has been the best part so far?
- Do you think this initiative can benefit your community? How?
- How do you think participating can benefit yourself?

After these YI questions, the FGDs moved on to more general questions on democracy, politics or cultural barriers facing youth participation in Bhutan.

b) Individual interviews

Nine individual semi-structural interviews were conducted with people who have been involved in the YI, either as founders and volunteers in the beginning, or as steering committee members. Again, the first part of questions focused on the Youth Initiative, its history and expectations, and the second part of the interview dealt with the opportunities of youth to engage in decision-making or in development of Bhutan. List of people interviewed:

- Michael Rutland, Honorary Consul to the UK
- NamgayZam, freelance journalist
- PhubDorji, co-founder of the YIDDD
- Manny Fassihi, Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy
- Siok-Sian PekDorji, Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy
- Rigzin Regal, Bhutan GNH Youth
- TB Rana, Bhutan Youth Foundation
- One anonymous interviewee
- KenchoDorji, volunteer

c) Pre- and post-survey for youth representatives

In total 13 youth representatives responded to the post-training survey either on paper or via online form. These responses were compared to the answers given before the training.

These five same questions were asked from the Youth Representatives both before the training in January, and after the training in early March to gauge their learning and changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour: 1) Define the word “citizenship”, 2) What makes a citizen “effective” in a democracy; 3) Would you classify yourself as someone who has a strong sense of civic responsibility? Why or why not?; 4) What are the ways young people can bring change; 5) On a scale 1-10 (1 = poor, 10 = excellent), how would you rate your communication skills? Please explain why.

Other questions used in the post-training survey consisted of attitudinal questions (scale 1-4: strongly agree – strongly disagree) related to the desired outcomes of the training and self-evaluation on how confident one is to do certain activities, such as leading a group, contacting authority or press.

Besides scales, youth representatives were asked to openly describe what had been the **most significant change (MSC) caused** by YI so far, and their thoughts on the future of democracy in Bhutan. These answers were analysed qualitatively in terms of the main themes emerging from the answers. The MSC technique has become widely used in communication for development projects, because it allows for the collection and analysis of stories, more diverse viewpoints and appreciates participants’ perceptions. MSC can also capture the expected and unexpected changes in the lives of people, communities and organisations, and catalyse reflection, discussion and learning. As a limitation for using MSC for evaluations, it can be time-consuming, complex and difficult to quantify, and may leave out important factors. (Lennie&Tacchi 2011: 88.) In this evaluation, however, MSC was used simply as one of the questions in the survey directed to the YI representatives, and not fully according to the usual directions of its usage.

d) Observation

To complement the interviews and surveys, the evaluator did some general observations on the interactions of the youth representatives during the training, internal and external meetings to see how the YI representatives express themselves with external stakeholders, for example in events and public forums.

Limitations and challenges

1. Very small and selected group

The results of this evaluation report cannot be generalised to the larger population of Bhutanese youth, as the size of the group (19) is relatively small, and the participants do not represent an “average Bhutanese young person”. The fact that most participants had to already express themselves in writing or speaking before being chosen to participate in the YI, and their general interest shown to join the programme voluntarily indicates that they already had relatively strong civic skills to start with.

2. Bias and validity

Most of the questions asked in the survey form were self-evaluative, asking how the participants felt or believed about certain things, such as their personal skills or attitudes towards statements. Usually participants of a development project tend to give a more positive representation of the project and their personal learning or benefit to please the organisation or the funders, if they wish the programme to continue, even though they might have more critical thoughts as well.

3. Language

All data were collected only in English, which is a second language for all the participants. Although most of the youth confessed having better English communication skills compared to Dzongkha, the results might have been different in oral interviews or focus group discussions held in Dzongkha.

4. Lack of baseline

Only five of the survey questions could be compared to the pre-training situation, and thoroughly analysed pre- and post-training.

5. New, ambitious initiative

Youth Initiative is still in its early phases and has been changing its format according to the needs of the participants. For such a new initiative, it is difficult to claim substantive and sustainable outcomes in the participants’ behaviour or changes in the attitudes from surrounding society at this stage. Another evaluation should be conducted after the first year.

4. Main findings

All data used for the purposes of this evaluation strongly suggest that the Youth Initiative pilot project has already had a significant impact on the individual level, strengthening the understanding of the participants on democracy, active citizenship, social change and the skills needed to participate in these processes. This section will present the main findings from the data, such as the changes in attitudes towards civic engagement, the willingness to take part in the community, and the self-reported skills development and belief in the efficacy to influence social change in Bhutan. It should be noted that these findings are only preliminary, and another evaluation should be conducted at the end of the year or in the beginning of next year to confirm the results and see whether how Youth Initiative as a pilot project has been able to contribute to also on the more societal level.

Motivation to join YI

The Youth Representatives stated the following reasons for joining the YI:

- Make a difference
- Voice out on behalf of youth
- Knowing more about my country
- Exploring about youth and coming up with resolutions
- Platform for youth to participate
- Inspiring to come together and discuss better solutions
- Experience new things
- Improve my life skills, leadership and communication skills
- Want to know more about youth in Bhutan, their activities and obstacles
- Evolve to become a better advocate
- Bigger platform to raise my concerns and be involved

Expectations for YI

When asked what they expect from the first year, Youth Representatives replied in the FGD background survey:

- Knowing more about policy making and democracy in Bhutan
- Learning more on youth issues and politics
- Solving youth problems like drugs
- Extending the Youth Initiative in other districts
- Scanning youth issues and coming up with solutions
- Research skills
- Expected it to be some kind of institution providing skills to youth/students on debate and collective problem solving but it was more
- Be better skilled debater in this democratic country
- Be involved in many levels of community development

- Debate and deliberation skills
- Motivating other youth to become more active and participate in community development

During the FGDs, the expectations and feelings towards YI were further explored, with some of the participants stating uncertainty from their own part, as well as from their families' behalf :

"[...] initially I was a bit scared, because I thought like it was just like not being happy what the governments are doing. But like it wasn't true. Because like government can't solve all the problems, you know. It is very important, that...because if you look at Bhutan today [...] literacy rate has really gone, we have a lot of skillful, talented youths, I think it is very important that youth come together, they discuss, they debate and if they can come up with a good solution, you know. And propose to the government or whatever it is. I think it is a good idea. It helps youth to engage in productive decision-making platform and I think...I feel really good now." (M21)

"[...] my family, they are all uneducated. And I told that I was elected for my school, I was elected for the parliamentary. And they do not know what is parliamentary. My father, even I was expecting some of the questions from my family, but they didn't ask anything. And they simply tell you want to go, go if it is good for you, if it can make you better life, if it can help in your future." (M20)

"[...] to tell you the truth, I had no idea what YIDDD was when it first started. I was likeok...what am I supposed to do there? We have to make campaign, and...I was totally confused. I didn't know what I was capable of, actually. When I went there, it was like embracing yourself. You knew what you are doing. You knew what are your rights. What can you do for others. And YIDDD is basically a space where you can express yourself, not be afraid of anything. Be yourself. And...bring some change, if you want to bring, and enjoy the moments you are having with friends and families." (P, F17)

The steering committee members who were interviewed stated the following expectations for the first year of the YI:

- Identify issues which they understand and where they can make meaningful interventions
- Develop confidence to interact with their leaders and communities
- Build awareness and organize themselves, feel empowered to make the changes where they want
- Get older generations to understand that young people can be a part of the solution
- Positive representation of young people, they can be trusted
- More young people encouraged to think about the problems facing Bhutan
- Doing more research to come to a position of their own and articulating it well
- Gaining the trust of the hierarchy
- Genuinely reflecting the opinions of young people
- Focused discussions and concrete outcomes

open towards others. (Samia 2011: 21-22.) This sharing and feeling of trust inside the YI group comes out clearly in a comment made by a participant:

"[I] think platform like YIDDD – I never thought youth could come from all backgrounds, come, talk [...] no, I don't remember any places where youth can come. They can share their feelings, they can share their experiences. And then we can learn from each other. I'm saying we've never seen something like that in youth [...] youth have got a lot of ideas, lot of energies, they have a lot of passion to change things." (Z, M21)

Trust to speak openly about social and personal issues was an aspect mentioned in several other MSC stories, even being surprised to see that there could "be a platform where people could be so open, considering the fact that Bhutanese hardly share their personal issues with people fearing embarrassment" (male, 21). Another participant described his internal change: "...I am growing, becoming open and receptive, confident otherwise conservative and kind of introvert..." (male, 24). This understanding what inclusive democracy means in practice – listening and respecting others – was among the self-reflective aspects participants listed when asked about their learning.

Social awareness on issues that need to be tackled to create equal, just and democratic society was developed throughout the discussion sessions at the January training. *Organizational skills* are related to being able to set specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) objectives for the social action programmes. This type of training was also provided during the January training, but could be further strengthened in later trainings. (Samia 2011: 21-22) These skills are further elaborated later under the respective outcomes set for the YI programme.

The Youth Initiative pilot project is closely related to the concept of public realm as understood by Hannah Arendt: a political space where people are confronted with the diversity of others, take action and build their power collectively (Arendt 1958). This kind of space for open, trusting, respectful dialogue between youth of different backgrounds is not typically available in regular school environments. Some of the FGD participants pointed out that the initial idea of Youth Parliament was something really "fresh" and "new", and that this was perhaps one of the reasons there were plenty of candidates running for the youth representative elections, although it was less clear what they would actually do when elected.

The main findings divided under the YIDDD objectives and outcomes are listed below.

Individual outcomes (personal development)

Civic Engagement and Active Citizenship

Outcome 1: Increased civic knowledge and engagement

Indicator 1.1: Better understanding of political process and institutions in Bhutan

Indicator 1.2: Better planning and problem-solving skills

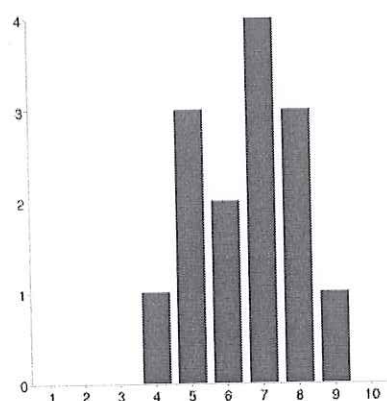
Indicator 1.3: Feeling of self-/collective responsibility to be actively involved in community

Indicator 1.4: Local action taken to promote selected causes

Indicator 1.1. Better understanding of political process and institutions in Bhutan

Youth representatives were asked to rate their understanding of Bhutanese political system on a scale from 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent). Their responses ranged from 4 to 9, with an average of 6,57.

Understanding of Bhutanese political system (1=poor, 10=excellent)



On the specific knowledge that the participants learned during the YIDDD training, following were mentioned:

- Young democracy which is still developing and people need to know more about it / become more responsible
- How young people and individuals can bring change
- How to debate and deliberate in the Parliament
- More than elections where each citizen has to understand his/her rights and responsibilities
- Technical aspects, such as how to pass bills and adopt acts, composition of the Parliament, constitution, structure and functions of different divisions
- Role of media

- Laws
- Rights, such as freedom of speech and right to information

Freedom of speech, better understanding of the political process and how to influence it were also mentioned in other survey responses and FGDs. At least on a superficial level, participants said they could not understand “[...] how democracy can work for us and how we can help in shaping the democracy in our country” (male, 21).

Future of democracy in Bhutan

When asked about the future of democracy in Bhutan, representatives had mixed feelings, both fear and hope at the same time (“slippery slope”). They also mentioned that there is a lack of information on democracy, and that there should be more CSOs advocating and educating about democracy. The importance of media and Right to Information Act were recognized as necessary for creating an open, transparent and accountable government. The inconsistent decisions of changing governments were feared to have damaged Bhutan’s image abroad.

“...mixed emotion as I feel that democracy is a gamble. Given the size of our country we can have a great democracy if we have good leaders. On the other hand I am scared if our people are not divided by politics.”

“Since democracy in Bhutan is young, people don't take it seriously. As time passes by people will know that they have also roles and responsibility to engage in political discourse.”

“Willingness and assertion for inclusion and consultation in policy making by women, youth and CSOs (on behalf of vulnerable groups) would help in ensuring inclusive and participatory democracy”

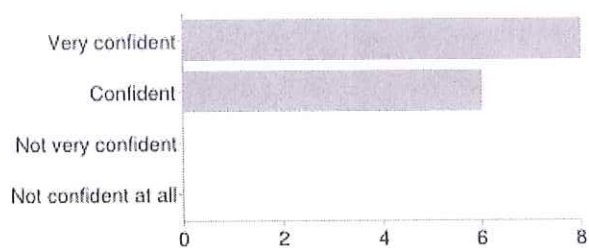
“As a young person today I see Bhutan's good future in Democracy, we are just learning to crawl right now and if you look at it properly, we have done quite well and if we keep going at this speed then I am very positive.”

Indicator 1.2. Better planning and problem-solving skills

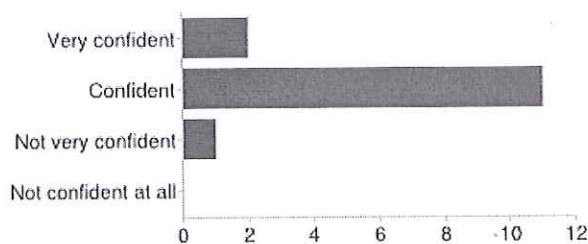
Large part of building civic skills is on teamwork, planning and problem-solving skills that are necessary if wanting to address and to solve an issue together in a group. Youth representatives were asked how confident they feel about certain organizing skills. All respondents felt very confident or confident on working in a group, and the majority stated feeling confident also on the other areas of planning an advocacy campaign, leading a group, and organizing / running a

meeting. Yet, in practice most of the internal YI meetings have been strongly led by the BCMD staff so far, from agenda-setting to practical arrangements and inviting participants. It was even uttered in one of the meetings, that if the meetings were only among the youth representatives – without BCMD staff or other “authorities”, people would not bother coming. YI being a voluntary initiative for the youth representatives, the motivation should come from somewhere else than only following the rules of perceived authorities: of their own will and desire to influence things, to function as a group, and to initiate their own ideas in practice.

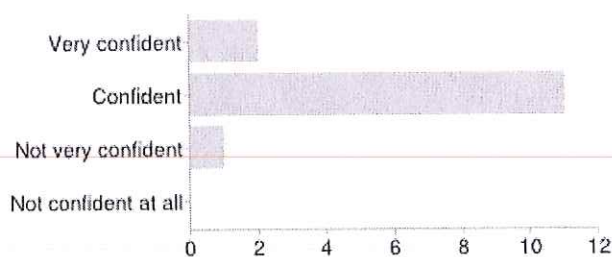
Working in a group to solve a problem



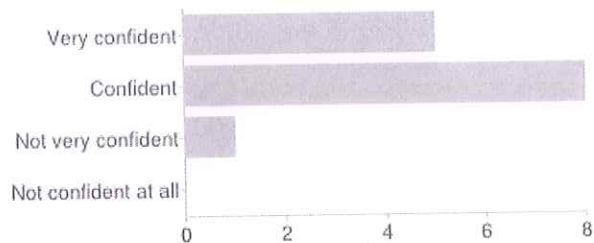
Planning an advocacy campaign



Leading a group



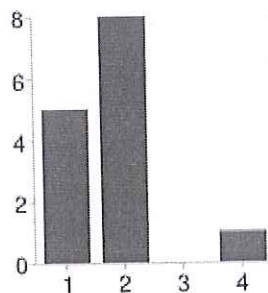
Organizing and running a meeting



Respondents were asked to answer statements on their approach to problem-solving. 13 out of 14 respondents agreed that they would think of different ways to finding a solution, and 12 out of 14 respondents agreed that they look for evidence and compare sources when analysing an issue.

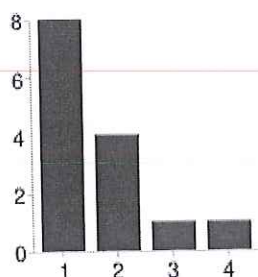
If the way I'm doing something isn't working, I try to think of different ways to do it.

1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree



I look for evidence and compare sources when analyzing an issue.

1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree

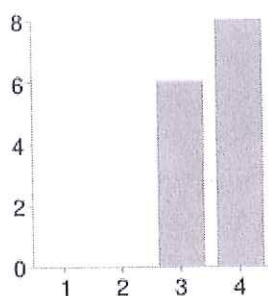


Indicator 1.3: Feeling of self-/collective responsibility to be actively involved in community

The responses given in the survey, discussions in FGDs and the stories of most significant change all demonstrated an increased feeling of social responsibility and active citizenship. All of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement “I do not believe I can make a difference in my community”. In addition, 12 out of 14 respondents strongly agreed with the statement “by working with others, I can help make things better”.

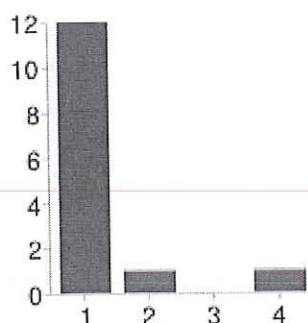
I do not believe I can make a difference in my community.

1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree



By working with others, I can help make things better.

1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree



Several statements of youth representatives both in the FGDs and in the MSC stories repeated their increased feeling of social responsibility:

"I really changed myself [...] I never used to think about the country, I just... I have just ambition, I want to be a Prime Minister or something..." (P, M20)

"...before I thought that young person should be duty-free." (G, M22)

"I have chance to explore myself, about my talent, what I know about myself. And about the nation, and youth issues, and have solution about the youth issue. Before that I was just thinking that what about the youth issue [...] I had no time thinking about solution, just the problem. After coming to know how to solve problem critically and have chance to have met many friends from other schools, and to have interaction, conversation, and to exchange ideas. That was benefit of YIDDD." (G, M22)

"Before attending the meeting of YIDDD I haven't thought about the definition or term 'citizen' to myself. After attending that meeting we have to define ourselves as a citizen, effective citizen, citizenship, what is democracy [...] YIDDD has given a platform for me to think about myself and about others." (G, M22)

YIDDD enhanced my motivation to contribute to help people. I strongly realized the need for a change in the society and the world at large. We have to lead by example. To make an impact we need to be innovative, different and very good which one shall be only by learning. So, YIDDD has made me a good learner. (male, 20)

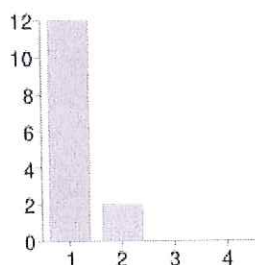
This understanding of active citizenship did not fully translate in the questions asked pre- and post-training on what a citizen or an effective citizen is. Although many of the respondents described effective citizen in more diverse terms after the training: listening to others, raising their voice/freedom of speech, or engaging in social or political movements to achieve positive social change; many of the participants still referred to effective citizen as someone who selects the right leaders through voting. When respondents were asked whether they think they are themselves responsible citizens, all of them responded "yes" after the training, compared to 12 out of 14 choosing "yes" before the training. As an example, before the training one of the respondents said "no, because I hardly feel attached with strangers", and after the training she replied "yes, I have strong sense of civic responsibilities". The answers had also become more concrete and targeted: one participant wrote before the training "yes, because I am concerned about my community and its issues", but specified after the training the need to act: "yes, I do have a strong sense of civic responsibility as I believe in raising awareness for issues which needs to be heard and most importantly the need to stand up and voice out to the Political Leaders".

The question on how can young people influence change in Bhutan yielded interesting answers. Again, there was a clear change in the quality of the answers: most answers were much more elaborate and concrete, such as this change from before (“be responsible and concerned”) to a much more action-oriented after (“initiate or support and volunteer for a cause you believe in”). Three respondents specifically mentioned joining a platform such as the YI a possible way to influence change. One participant demonstrated how her understanding of effective citizen action would include not only contacting authorities, but also media, CSOs or individuals, and working collectively in a group to achieve change.

12 out of 14 respondents strongly agree that everybody should be concerned about national and local issues. At the same time, more than half of the respondents strongly agree (2) or agree (7) that there are very few opportunities for young people to participate in Bhutan’s development. This conflict between the supposed responsibility to care for civic issues, and the perceived opportunities to participate is largely due to the cultural barriers affecting youth engagement in Bhutan. Cultural values of respecting elders and avoiding questioning or criticism are also reflected in the answers on communication (indicator 2.4.)

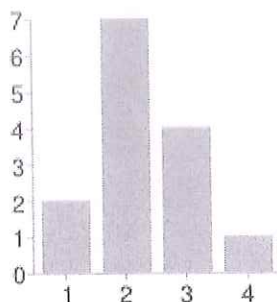
Being concerned about national and local issues is an important responsibility for everybody.

1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree



There are very few opportunities for young people to participate in Bhutan's development.

1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree



Indicator 1.4: Local action taken to promote selected causes

As of now (June 2014), there are only a few local actions taken to promote the causes of the three different committees. Besides the advocacy videos and podcasts, currently still in production for most themes, action on the local level has only taken place in the Motithang High School where one of the youth representatives is studying. On his initiative, the school canteen will begin selling local potato chips, and an educational event was organised (June 7, 2014) to inform students about the importance of going local, not only in terms of food consumption, but in all possible ways.

Besides the promotion of local food, there are several ideas on how to promote youth participation, for example through school councils. It remains to be seen how these initiatives will be advocated and implemented in schools by the youth representatives during the fall of 2014.

Communication skills

Outcome 2: Improved communication skills

Indicator 2.1: Number of self-initiated blog posts, videos and editorials

Indicator 2.2: Number of requests to take part in public discussions/give statements to the media

Indicator 2.3: Quality and nature of the communication: reasoned, evidence-based, empathic, balanced

Indicator 2.4: Feeling of confidence towards debate, deliberation and argumentation

Improved communication skills are among the clearest observed changes among the participants. Both in self-evaluation questions before and after the training, in the MSC stories, and during observations in internal meetings as well as in external events, it is clear to see how

the communication skills of the participants have improved during the past five months since the training was held in January 2014.

Indicator 2.1. Number of self-initiated blog posts, videos and editorials

At the time of writing, there are six blog posts on the Youth Initiative website, with only one of them written by the President of the YI, and rest by the BCMD staff. The first newsletter containing articles by the youth representatives is slowly being compiled. The first advocacy video of three, one on promoting local food products has been finalised so far, again with the technical help provided by the BCMD staff. The President of the YI wrote an article in K2 on the Youth Initiative (check the date!). These media texts show that there has been some self-initiated activity, but largely the work has been done by the BCMD during the spring of 2014.

Indicator 2.2.:Number of requests to take part in public discussions/give statements to the media

The youth representatives have been asked to be present themselves for the Committee of Women, Children and Youth of the National Assembly in February 2014. They have also been asked to speak in some of the BBS radio programmes. (CHECK!)

Indicator 2.3.:Quality and nature of the communication: reasoned, evidence-based, empathic, balanced

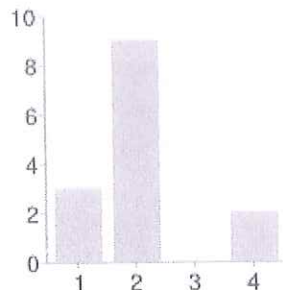
Based on the observations on the YI representatives' communication in the first sitting in January as well as after in events with people from different age groups and statutes, the clarity and reasoning of their communication has been admirable, and their English skills are sometimes even superior when compared to some of their more experienced counterparts. The understanding the complexity of issues, and the difficulty to change things in reality, outside the discussions:

"As a member of YIDDD it is very important for us to understand that while we are sitting here and discussing things, it seems very easy, you know. It seems very easy, it seems very practical. We feel like we can really, like we can really achieve those goals. But once you come out, like get out of this room and really face the reality, the challenge is really, really high. You will feel like giving it up, because just like I mentioned before, people are not the same, their mentality is different, they really are against these ideas, because they just don't want to understand..." (M21)

A vast majority of participants stated that they can work with people who have different opinions, and that they value other people's views.

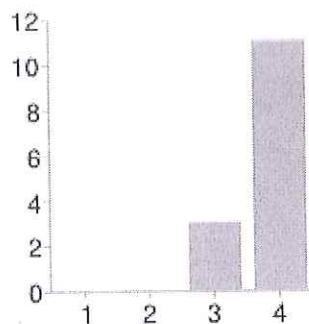
I can work with someone who has different opinions than mine.

1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree



I do not value other people's point of view.

1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree



Listening to others and respecting the diversity of the group was mentioned as one of the most important skills learnt during the training: “I could learn how to make a decision and build up the team motivations for positive change”.

Indicator 2.4.:Feeling of confidence towards debate, deliberation and argumentation

Building confidence through interacting and asking questions from different guest speakers was mentioned as a major factor in several of the 13 Most Significant Change stories written by the youth representatives, as well as in the FGDs. They described how they had learnt to argument and disagree with each other: “how to present the discourse with evidence and intelligently” (male, 22), and how to understand the viewpoints of others: “how each others views really mattered” (female, 17).

Besides guest speakers, the practical exercises on research and interviewing improved the confidence of participants to approach people in different levels of hierarchy:

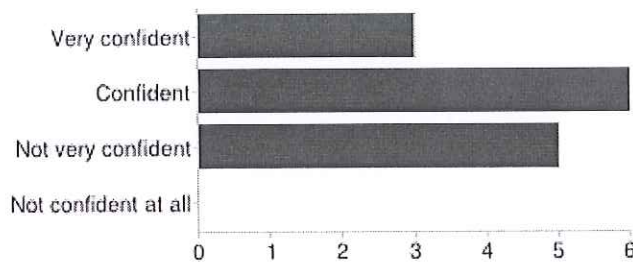
“The best part I found in YIDDD is research [...] When we had to go to different offices to meeting the bosses, we could face them and we get kind of confidence. So that was a very very beneficial experience that I got. Before I joined YIDDD I was very shy and then I couldn't face anyone, I should say. (M21)

“[...] I was very shy, I don't talk much. Even though I talk, but I don't talk in public. I'm really bad at public speaking. But they brought out your flaws and tried to teach you how to do it the right way [...] Before I attended YIDDD, if I wanted to make a change, I was like “aah, never mind, I'm too small...I can't do anything, it doesn't matter, I'm just one...” But after attending that, find out what kind of procedure you can do, how can you get people's attention, how can you make your issue public and people to help you with that. So YIDDD has bring that platform to me, and I am very proud to be one of the members” (P, F17)

Also the economy game, developed by Manny Fassihi and PhubDorji, where youth representatives formed teams as imaginary countries, was mentioned as a good way to better understand the need to hear also other people's opinions. In addition, extra-curricular activities such as the hike to Kuenselphodrang was mentioned as a memorable experience that built team work skills, leadership skills and the ability to face uncertainty.

Despite the huge advance in the self-reported communication skills for several participants (from an average of 5.75 before the training to 6.66 after training), 5 out of 14 respondents still do not feel very confident on communicating a point of view in front of a group of people:

Communicating your point of view in front of a group of people



Guest speakers, as well as the debates created among the youth representatives to practice their deliberation and dialogue skills were appreciated:

“ [...] one of the best part was when we got to meet with new people almost every day of our sessions, and they just walked in and gave us wonderful talks, and things which we needed actually learn and where we lacked platform actually. [...] also the part where we had to debate

[...] We could just reflect back upon how the person, other person says and how are our own thoughts towards that, we could just begin to make our own mind. There were lot of things like that which made us think over.” (K, M21)

Youth representatives were encouraged to ask questions from the older authority figures, the experience giving them more confidence to speak up later on as well:

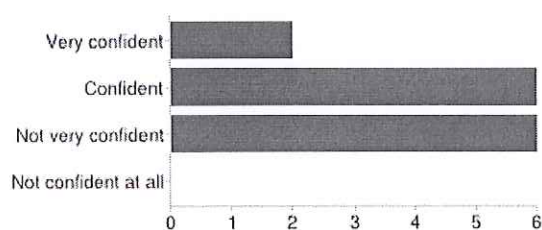
“I could shyly raise my voice to ask question...my first time to ask question to the guest. That was the milestone for me to raise my voice in public. From that time I could convince my mind that I can speak in the crowd and ask questions to powerful people.”
(male, 22)

Another youth representative described his learning in debating:

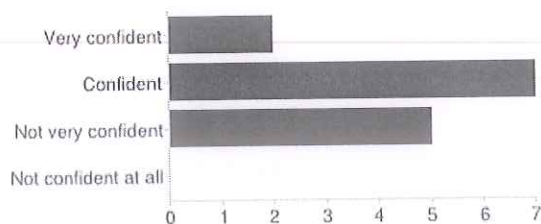
“I have reached to that level where I can, where I have courage right now. [...] especially they taught how to debate. Before I used to think, in school we used to debate, and I even participated in debate when I was in primary education, and I used...but I didn’t know how to argue. I just take the paper there, somebody writes the paper, and I just read that whatever paper given information...” (P, M20)

Yet, the self-evaluation questions show that there is still a lot to be done: 6 out of 14 respondents did not feel very confident contacting media to express opinion or an issue; and 5 out of 14 respondents did not feel very confident contacting an authority to address an issue.

Contacting media to express your opinion on an issue



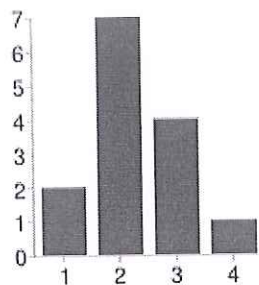
Contacting an authority to address an issue



The statement on feeling afraid to ask questions that are critical of older leaders has the greatest variety in the answers: only one respondent strongly disagrees, whereas half of the respondents agree with the statement, and two strongly agree with the statement.

I feel afraid to ask questions that are critical of older leaders.

1 = strongly agree, 4 = strongly disagree



This cultural value of not questioning authorities is still very strong in Bhutan, although one of the participants described how Youth Initiative had changed his thinking:

"...as a normal Bhutanese the value of humbleness always remained in me and I never felt the need to think and question critically. After being a part of YIDDD I have learnt to think critically in every situation and how important it is in Democratic Governance." (male, 21)

Youth representation

Societal outcomes (positive impact on communities)

Outcome 3: Increased and improved youth representation in Bhutanese society

Indicator 3.1.: Positive representation of YI in the mainstream media

Indicator 3.2.: Number of meetings or participation in relevant events (youth-related activities, conferences, discussions)

Indicator 3.3.: YI is recognized by leaders/members of authority as a viable source for youth voice

Although the societal outcomes are very much in the early phases of a more long-term process and should be properly analysed at the end of the year, all advances related to different indicators until June 2014 are listed below.

Indicator 3.1.: Positive representation of YI in the mainstream media

The first sitting of Youth Initiative was featured on BBS as a short news story. After January, the only news item has been the opinion piece of the YI President, Dechen Rabgyal in K2 (Kuensel). With more initiatives for local action and more results, it is expected that there will be more news coverage in the mainstream media as well.

Indicator 3.2.: Number of meetings or participation in relevant events (youth-related activities, conferences, discussions)

YI representatives have been actively taking part in relevant events related to youth, development, or media in Bhutan. They have also been organizing such events in their respective schools and colleges to present the Youth Initiative and start discussion on topics such as local consumption. The exact number of meetings and participation in relevant events would need to be written down in the meeting minutes or other way of documenting and tracking down the activities of the Youth Initiative. Some events where YI representatives have been prominent participants include:

- *Imagine Change!* Local discussion forums organized by the Secretariat for the New Development Paradigm in March 2014, particularly the themes of “Democracy and Active Citizenship” and “Culture and Globalization”
- WHAT ELSE? I DON'T HAVE A LIST HERE...

Indicator 3.3.: YI is recognized by leaders/members of authority as a viable source for youth voice

One supporting factor for this indicator is the invitation by the National Assembly Committee for Women, Children and Youth to come and present the Youth Initiative and what it is about. It has to be noted, however, that Youth Initiative was not the only youth group that had been asked to present themselves to the members. With more awareness-raising on the Youth Initiative, eg. through newsletter, blog posts and media coverage, it is possible that the representatives will be asked to join more of these types of events to represent the “youth voice”. If this happens, it is important to consult their constituencies (schools, associations, friends and other youth networks) to have a more inclusive and truly representative view on the matter discussed.

Aum Pek, Director of BCMD believes that youth representatives are already having an impact:

Everyone who has seen or watched them has realized that my goodness, our young people are really much more capable than we think! Wow, look at the amount of evidence and reasoning that they are bringing in. (Pek, interview)

Youth-led collective action and social change

Outcome 4: More intentional collective action to bring about social change through youth leadership and democratic participation

Indicator 4.1.: Number and results of collective actions taken

Indicator 4.2.: Sustainability and effectiveness of the action or strategy

This last outcome is more a long-term goal and can be properly evaluated only at the end of the first year. However, some general recommendations and feedback from the youth representatives on their advocacy campaigns so far are enumerated in this section.

Indicator 4.1.: Number and results of collective actions taken

As demonstrated in the section on indicator 1.4, there are already a few examples of youth-led action taken on the local level in schools. Following up on the existing actions and documenting the challenges and successes during the implementation phase is necessary in order to be able to assess their results and sustainability at the end year.

Indicator 4.2.: Sustainability and effectiveness of the action or strategy

This aspect cannot obviously be evaluated in such an early stage of the Youth Initiative, but one of the questions in the survey touched upon the progress of advocacy campaigns started by the respective committees of the Youth Initiative. When asked to evaluate their satisfaction with the progress of the advocacy campaigns, the responses were ranged from 1 to 9, with an average of 5,6 (1= poor, 10=excellent).

The respondents mentioned the following forms of support needed to realise the vision of their advocacy campaigns:

- Training on making and giving presentations
- Training on how to contact authorities, express views and deal with them
- Training on leadership
- Training on online writing skills
- Outreach to authorities: letters on the plans and proposals, talking to them about YI, organizing meetings with them

- Partnering with the media, involving media houses to reach out to more people
- More time and dedication from the youth representatives

5. Recommendations

Recommendations for the BCMD to take into consideration during the continuation of the YI are divided into four different strands: on training, communication and outreach, sustainability and improved monitoring and evaluation methods.

Training needs

- ➔ Listening closely the participants' needs, fears and wishes
 - More training on communication: how to reach to authorities and media, how to make and give presentations, how to write effective online texts
 - Better understanding of active citizenship: now effective citizenship was mainly framed in terms of rights and responsibilities and voting, but civic action was still largely missing

Communication and outreach

I think like people hardly have an idea what YIDDD is. [...] And then...if I say like "Youth Initiative for Debate, Deliberation and Development", they would be lost, you know, they wouldn't have any idea what it is about. (M21)

- ➔ Good to have named Youth Representatives in charge of this
- ➔ Communication plan with a special focus on the "sceptic" group
- ➔ More clarity needed on the vision of the YI and communicating it to others
- ➔ YI meeting agendas and memos could be posted on the website or Facebook page to demonstrate a good example on openness and transparency
- ➔ Sharing the results of this pilot phase with different stakeholders (Ministry of Education, ECB, UNICEF, other youth organizations)

Local evaluation

- ➔ Participatory evaluation methods
- ➔ Engaging the Youth Representatives in the monitoring & evaluation as much as possible to improve their skills and their ownership of the programme

- Eg. Youth Representatives could conduct interviews/surveys at the end of the year with main stakeholders, asking their perceptions on the YI and youth participation in general
 - Using creative evaluation methodologies in the future: digital storytelling, photos, images, charts
- ➔ Potential evaluation questions for the end of the year:
- Did you initiate any activities intended to improve your community? What did you do? Who did you reach?
 - What kind of interaction did you have with government representatives?
 - Attended an event where they spoke (eg. NC, NA visit)
 - Wrote a letter to them
 - Spoke on the phone
 - Spoke in person
 - Received material or non-material support for an initiative
 - Other?
 - How have the perceptions toward youth changed? (question to be asked both from decision makers and youth)

Sustainability

- ➔ Risk of losing the Youth Representatives after the Summer session
- Incentives: trainings, meetings with authorities and trainers, certificates
 - Youth Representatives are needed for the 2nd phase as advocates, trainers and mentors
- ➔ Challenge of self-organization and ownership
- Currently YI relies too strongly on BCMD and certain individuals, not a sustainable model
 - Agreeing on the time-use and responsibilities of the Youth Representatives vs. BCMD
- ➔ Clarifying the vision: what is the theory of change for YI? What are the pathways to success? Who are the catalysts?
- Establish the time span of the change
 - Determine that pathway of change
 - Understand the factors that oppose or support the change process
-
- ➔ Confirming what are the objectives of the YIDDD programme in short-term, intermediate and long-term
- ➔ Using holistic, strategical, long-term thinking for future planning

6. Conclusions

"Not only are youth doing things in public, they are showing the public that youth can do things" (Roholt et al. 2008: 114)

Young people can play different roles in civic engagement programmes: they can lead, volunteer, educate peers, plan conferences or events, research the needs of the local communities, create communication materials and so on. This has also been proven in the course of the YI: with training and support, young people are able to contribute to the debate and social action in a positive manner.

The data collected for this mid-evaluation report points towards very positive overall results so far. As the initiative is constantly changing direction as it is being shaped into its final form, both the participants and outside stakeholders can, however, be confused of the objectives of the programme. More clarity should be developed on the next steps, and communicate those effectively both internally and externally. It is crucial to try to share at least part of the responsibilities and the ownership of the programme to the youth themselves, and to accept that mistakes will happen throughout the process. Yet, it is precisely this learning from mistakes that builds the capacity for civic engagement: learning through hardship and countering resistance from individuals, organizations, or bureaucratic systems is one of the most important dimensions of learning (Roholt et al. 2008: 117).

Considering that the YI pilot programme was compiled together in a matter of few months, it has had a very impressive beginning. The YI has come at a crucial moment shortly after the 2nd general elections where there is an inherent hesitation in involving youth in democratic dialogue. Despite all odds, the youth have shown that they are able to contribute thoughtful views on a variety of issues they care about. If the Youth Representatives can also translate their thoughts in social action on the local level during the rest of the year – in their schools, neighbourhoods, friends or youth networks – the YI can become a programme demonstrating how civic engagement is not only about debate and dialogue, but also about the third D: development, such as positive social change and action for the causes the group believes in.

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Category	# of Seats	Notes
Middle School	2/25	1. Loselling, 2. Babesa&
High School	9/25	1. Rinchen, 2. Nima, 3. Pelkhil, 4. Motithang& 5. Kelki
College	4/25	1. RTC Thimphu
Special	8/25	1. Bhutan Youth Foundation 2. GNH Youth 3. Go Youth Go 4. Special Needs / Vulnerable

In the coming weeks, we will travel to the various schools in Thimphu along with a BCMD representative to make presentations on the YIDDD in hopes to garner the co-operation and support of heads-of-schools and their administrations. We will contact educational institutions outside the capital via phone and email. We will also be in contact with MoLHR, relevant youth groups, CSO Authority, ECB, NC, YDF, and other relevant organizations. We will work with all these partners to nominate and/or elect youth representatives - elections should be completed by the end of November 2013.

Second Phase (January 2014): Orientation and Training

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

- *Setting a Vision: Pursuing a GNH Democracy*
- *Debate, Dialogue, and Deliberation*
- *Engaging the Public through ethnographic methods of research*
- *Policymaking and the Constitution*
- *Understanding our Parliament and Parliamentary Procedures*

Third Phase (February 2014; July 2014): First and Second Sessions

There will be two sessions that simulate the procedure undertaken in the National Council: one during the winter holidays and the summer school break. These sessions will follow parliamentary procedures and etiquette with a speaker that presides over and maintains order of the parliament. During the

Appendix 1. YIDDD programme proposal

A Proposal by PhubDorji and KenchoDorji with BCMD support

Overview:

We propose the formation of the Youth Initiative for Debate, Deliberation and Development (YIDDD), an informal, non-partisan/non-party affiliated entity that gives a select group of youth practical, hands-on experience in deliberating on national issues and taking community-based action.

It will primarily consist of a training workshop to enable the youth to learn how to debate and deliberate, analyse issues of youth interest and provide feedback on youth concerns and ideas.

We believe this initiative will motivate young people to participate in Bhutan's maturing democracy and become leaders capable of bringing positive change.

In this proposal, we outline the functions of the YIDDD, the overall operational structure and the long-term benefits of initiating such a project.

How it will work:

Steering Committee

The YIDDD will be coordinated and managed by a council of stakeholders in civil society, education, and the media. They will oversee the operations of the YIDDD, ensure transparency and accountability, manage funds, and ensure continuity.

Focus: The pilot initiative will emphasise a non-party approach and will focus on providing learning experiences and activities that bolster participants' capacity to debate, to consult other youth using research methods, and to frame policy.

First Phase (November 2013): Youth Representative Selection

The inaugural YIDDD will be confined largely to Thimphu so that the model can be closely monitored and fine-tuned. Once all relevant stakeholders and partners are consulted (the primary ones being the Election Commission of Bhutan, the Ministry of Education, and the National Council), the YIDDD team will conduct awareness campaigns at Thimphu-based high schools and colleges to make a call for candidates.

Interested participants will register their candidacy. We are suggesting that schools either nominate or elect their candidates (could be captains or anyone interested from the student body). Elections will be held in colleges and schools where appropriate and needed.

daylong session, Youth Representatives will:

- Focus on a bill or motion for debate (This motion will be proposed by the Youth Representatives);
- Propose and deliberate on solutions to the issue;
- Produce a finalized bill that will be released to the public

Fourth Phase: (March 2014 – June 2014; August 2014 – October 2014): Community Action

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

- Conduct awareness campaigns both within and outside of Thimphu;
- Lead club activities in school, communities, and regularly consult students
- Submit quarterly written reports to a YIDDD website
- Attend networking lunches with relevant persons – academics, MPs, policy makers
- Attend monthly gatherings at the Media Lab to check in with other Youth Representatives

BCMD support: BCMD will guide and be responsible for the overall implementation of the initiative and will also train the group of Youth Representatives. BCMD will monitor and help evaluate the programme for lessons learned. This will be shared with all stakeholders at the end of the first year. While implementing the activity, BCMD will be guided by the proposed steering committee that will include a number of youth members. The spirit of the project is to have youth drive it as much as possible.

Long-term Benefits of the YIDDD:

For Youth

- **Experience and influence:** an elected ‘representative’ raises the profile of issues that matter to young people and influences local opinion formers.
- **Getting their voices heard:** YIDDD 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 considered.
- **Understanding and development:** young people gain new skills and develop valuable experiences. Representation promotes the understanding of local democracy and political processes.
- **Positive representation:** Youth Representatives represent young people in the media, countering negative stereotypes and promoting positive images
- **New skills:** confidence, campaigning, presentation, running consultations and learning about citizen’s duties and democratic change are a few of many skills Youth Representatives will learn when involved with the YIDDD
- **Enabling environment:** encourages young people to become leaders and emboldens them to take initiative and contribute to the strength of Bhutan’s young democracy.