

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.

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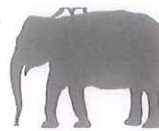
In the coming weeks, we will travel to the various schools in Thimphu along with a BCMD representative to make presentations on the YIDDD in hopes to garner the co-operation and support of heads-of-schools and their administrations. We will contact educational institutions outside the capital via phone 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.

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

- ### *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 daylong session, Youth Representatives will:

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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

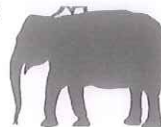
- **Experience and influence:** an elected ‘representative’ raises the profile of issues that matter to young people and influences local opinion formers.
- **Getting their voices heard:** YIDDD ensures that young people are more informed about and involved in local decision-making. They can see that 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.

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'How to Represent': Training *Final Report*

January 3– 17, 2014
Media Lab, Thimphu

Background of YIDDD

In 2014, The Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy, under the guidance of a Steering Committee, will pilot the Youth Initiative for Debate, Deliberation and Democracy (YIDDD). The mission of the initiative is *to give youth a voice on the policies that affect them and to enable them to participate and contribute to decision-making*. Our aspiration for the project is that it will facilitate youth participants' growth in becoming compassionate and visionary leaders for social change.

Here's how it will work: for one year, 20 Thimphu-based youth, selected and elected by their schools or organizations, will participate in the pilot project as "Youth Representatives". During this time, they will identify youth issues that require interventions, deliberate on solutions to the issue, and take collective action to solve the issue.

The Training

In January, BCMD led an in-depth 15-day training that aimed to deepen participants' capacities in the following three areas:

- *A selfless motivation for service guided by values:* Through daily mindfulness practices, we seek to cultivate participants' capacities for awareness, love, and compassion necessary for leading change. These practices will be followed by conversations on values and ethical issues that create a safe space for collective sharing and contemplation.
- *Deliberative communication skills:* Good communication is essential for deliberation about issues to take place. During the first three days, participants will learn how to articulate positions clearly, make cogent arguments for them, be persuasive in other ways, and to listen carefully to others.
- *Employing the democratic approach to problem-solving:* For one week, participants will learn how to monitor and influence the decision-making process in their communities by (1) conducting research on an issue; (2) identifying and weighing alternative solutions to the issue; (3) proposing a solution to the issue that requires inter-sectoral (public, private, civil society) action; (4) propose an action plan to influence the process.

During the training, we also invited a diverse group of guest speakers to talk about three key youth issues – drugs, employment, and education. We also invited leaders and MPs to talk about how the Bhutanese political system works.

Following the training, we gave participants a 5-day period for intensive, focused research on a single issue that they will seek to address through public policy. On the final day (January 17), we planned to simulate a parliamentary sitting in which the

Target Outcomes:

- To deepen habits of the heart that tune YRs motivation for service
- To enable YRs to engage issues using debate and deliberation communication skills
- To use the democratic approach to problem-solving (adapted from the Project Citizen guide)

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