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Dear Friends of Tarayana,
Happy Losar!

We hope you had a great start to the new year.

2022 has been a challenging year with many hurdles, yet a fulfilling one as we learned to navigate/handle issues with hard lessons along the way. We have an exciting year ahead with new opportunities as we secure new partnerships. As we finalize our strategic plan for the next five years (2023 - 2027) with pro bono support from the MTI Consulting, our focus areas are:

- Rural Enterprise Development
- Food and Nutrition Security
- Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation

Our annual review and planning workshop allowed us to reflect and take stock of the past year, and plan for the upcoming year based on the new strategic plan in conjunction with the 13th Five Year Plan strategy. We facilitated the donation of firefighter uniforms to the De-suung Office mobilized by the Tarayana Dragon from Australia, donated by Fire and Rescue, NSW, Australia. In the communities of Zhemgang, Trongsa, Lhuentse and Tsirang, an interesting event on Food Competition was organized where community

and schools to work with different programme divisions; one from the College of Natural Resource (CNR) shared his intimate experience of a field visit to the Foundation's project sites in Dagana in this edition.

We hope you enjoy reading this edition of our monthly newsletter.

News in Brief

- Our Field Officers at Mongar, Haa and Lhuentse districts conducted training on Self Help Group Management. The Self Help Groups were, Sertena Sanam Tshogpa (Sertena Vegetable Group) in Gakiling block under Haa district, Jurmey Sanam Dheytsen (Jurmey Vegetable Group) under Jurmey block, Mongar, Ney Sanam Tshogpa (Ney Vegetable Group), Somzhing Vegetable Group, and Kurtoe Foods under Lhuentse District and Darna Sanam Tshogpa (Darna Vegetable Group) in Lumang block under Trashigang District. The initiative is under the project "Food security in Bhutan through professionalized Self Help Groups (SHGs) funded by Bhutan Foundation.
- Under the project "Nyamdrel - Strengthen The Rights of Youth and Women in Rural communities through Human Rights -Based Approach to Development," implemented through the International IDEA and Helvetas Bhutan and funded by the European Union, the first rounds of community consultations were undertaken in four villages of Tading Gewog under Samtse District from 12th to 17th January 2023.
- A training on 'Promotion of Local Variety Crops through Advocacy and Nutrition Sensitization' and 'Advocacy on Nutrition and Health' was organized by the Foundation at Kamati & Trong villages under Bjoka block and Bardo & Khomshar villages, Bardo block in Zhemgang district; Tashicholing & Norbuthang Villages, Phuentenchu block ; and Tsirangtoe & Soentabsa villages, Tsirangtoe block in Tsirang district; Magar Samling & Ney villages, Gangzur Block; and Tshenkhar & Wangbur villages, Tshenkhar block, in Lhuentse district; and Samcholing Khatay & Khamey villages, Draagteng block; Pangzur & Phrumzu villages, Langthel block in Trongsa districts.



Annual Review Meeting

A week long Annual Review of the Foundation took place from 3rd till 8th January 2023 at the Tarayana Centre. During the review, the team conducted stock-taking of all the programmes in different sites for the year. Issues and challenges were deliberated thoroughly, and plans for the year ahead were developed.

The team also attended the following sessions;

- The findings and results of the natural resource-based assessment on Medicinal Plants; The assessment of potential livelihood-based resources was undertaken in all nine districts based on potential medicinal plants. A comprehensive report on medicinal plants available at the community level was researched, and the book, “Medicinal Plants of Southwestern Bhutan, Identity, harvest and Use Part I,” was published. The book covers 53 plant species with identification, harvest, and use. Part II Medicinal Plants of Southwestern Bhutan Assessment of Ecological Diversity and People’s Perception is also almost complete. The book covers detailed ecological studies that provide a deeper insight into the ecology of the species.
- The Springshed Initiatives in the country; Protecting the springs and reviving the drying ones is an alternative way for solving the increasing issues of water scarcity by the resource persons Mr. Jambay, Lecturer of the College of Natural Resources (CNR)
- Mr.Chukey Wangchuck, the consultant, provided the training on Traditional Knowledge and Indigenous knowledge Management and the importance of its documentation

Climate Initiative (IKI).

- On the final day, the Director of the Department of Professional Support, Anti-Corruption Commission sensitized the team on anti-corruption guidelines, the causes of corruption, and tools to prevent such corruption cases in the country. He also elaborated on how these cases can be prevented from reaching the commission through communication at the ground level.



Donation of FireFighter Uniforms to the Desuung Office

On 9th January 2023, Tarayana Foundation handed over 2,000 fire uniforms worth USD 4,00,000 to the De-Suung Head Office. The uniforms were donated by Fire and Rescue, New South Wales and initiated by firefighter Thomas Wilson and well-wisher Julia Booth. Thomas visited Bhutan in 2015 as part of his Bachelor of Sustainability course through the University of New England, and Julia is a professor and long-time friend of Bhutan.

This endeavor was realized through the generosity and vision of the Tarayana Dragons, who facilitated the process and covered the freight and transportation charges from Australia to Thimphu. Due guidance and assistance were also rendered by Catherine Harris and His Excellency Ambassador Sonam Tobgay, and Dr. Sherub Phuntsho, president of the Australia Association of Sydney Incorporated (ABAC) in Australia.

This initiative is an important development in an extended program to assist the capacity building and equipment supply for the De-suups and the Bhutanese



Food Competition

A Food Competition was organized as part of the project "Nutrition & health advocacy to help rural and vulnerable population groups eat & stay healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic & beyond" in 16 villages, eight blocks of four targeted districts of Zhemgang, Trongsa, Tsirang, and Lhuentse in January. Community influencers, youth groups, women farmer groups, and other interested members participated in the competition.

Kinzang Dema, one of the competition winners from Pangzur village in Langtshel Block under Trongsa District said, "This was a great experience for my whole village, and the first of its kind. Such competition not only energises us but also imparts useful and effective knowledge about nutrition."

Another participant, Wangdi from Kamati village under Bjoka block from Zhemgang district, stated, "Although I didn't win the competition, I gained lots of knowledge about nutrition and hygiene. After the competition, I am more mindful regarding the nutrition in the food when I cook at home".

The respective Field Officers of the Foundation in the districts facilitated the competition with support from Health Assistants, Gewog Officials, District

(two from each block) will participate in the the final round of the competition in Thimphu f in February.

The objectives of the activity are to enhance knowledge and awareness of nutritional aspects of locally available food crops, diversify diet sources at a household level, translate knowledge into behavior/practices to sustainably influence demand for healthier diets via community engagement events, and improve food preparation.



Dorji Drakpa is a final year student of B.Sc Sustainable Development at the College of Natural Resources

“I am Dorji Drakpa, currently pursuing B.Sc Sustainable Development at the College of Natural Resources, Lobesa, Punakha.

I want to extend my heartiest gratitude to Tarayana Foundation for the great experience during my internship from 2nd December to 2nd February. Being a development learner and practitioner, I could link the assigned tasks assigned to the SDG goals we studied in theory, and practically apply my book learnings. The Foundation takes interns to imbue us with the appropriate skills to prepare us for the job market. I am grateful that I got this opportunity to explore more about the ground realities, especially in rural development. I could fully implement the knowledge I learned from the module “Integrated Watershed Management.”

The field visit at Largyab and Dorona blocks in Dagana was an excellent experience for me. One of the memorable incidents was an interaction with a drunk community member that made me realize how the Field Officers of the Foundation handle such challenges on a daily basis.

In another case, during the consultation meeting with the community at Largyab, the Gup was pleasantly surprised by the attendance of the meeting. The Gup said, “I have not seen these many people even during the visit of the Ministers and Dashos, but today, I see so many people attending the meeting.” Through this, I learned what the Tarayana Foundation means to the communities. I could see it’s all because of the services that the Foundation gives to the community, and I was deeply touched to see and hear their thoughts.

Studying springshed is a great experience for me. I am happy that Tarayana Foundation is partnering with the College of Natural Resources for Research and Development activities to uplift rural communities.

As the Foundation offers “Service from the Heart,” I would like to extend my ‘Thank you from the Heart.’”

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