



Service from the heart

In Touch

Tarayana Newsletter



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Clean water changes lives

"It is our collective responsibility to ensure that where we live remain clean, safe, well organized, and beautiful, for all times to come."

~HM Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck

From the Editorial Team

The New Year is here and we are excited to celebrate it with you! In this issue we bring you success stories from the community reported by our Field and concerned Program Officers. You can find some of the achievements made under the National Adaptation Programme of Action Phase II (NAPA II) project component implemented by Tarayana Foundation in twenty villages in Monggar, Pemagatshel, Tsirang and Samtse Dzongkhags.

That "many wars will be fought over water" becomes frighteningly possible when we see what the lack of access to clean water does to people. Tarayana Foundation was selected as one of the local implementing partner in implementing one component of the three year NAPA II project funded by the Least Developed Country Fund (LCDF) and GEF and facilitated by the National Environment Commission of Bhutan (NEC) in 2014. Since its inception the Foundation continues to work hard partnership with the communities of the twenty water stressed villages selected for project interventions. By providing improved access to clean water, we are dedicated to changing lives, eliminate disease and sickness caused by consuming contaminated water and living in unsanitary conditions.

It is heartening to learn that both men and women can now work in their fields and have more time to take care of their families. Children can attend school and enjoy the joys of childhood once again as they do not have to spend long hours fetching water.

Socio-economic transformation of our target communities is taking place village after village and we are blessed and happy to see the fruit of our collective efforts in contributing to improved lives and livelihoods. Our 'service from the heart' found resonance in the NAPA-II work carried out by the team and is evident in the happy smiles and passionate stories that our communities tell.

We hope you enjoy reading as much as we enjoyed putting together these articles. Thank you for your continued support to the cause of empowering local communities.

New Year's Greetings and Tashi Delek!



"Whether rich or poor; everyone needs water."

Message From the Project

Even though Bhutan is a carbon neutral country, we have not been able to escape the effects of climate change that is apparent in the erratic weather patterns and rising mean temperatures. The rural communities bear the brunt as these changes directly affect the agriculture sector which is their main source of livelihood and they do not necessarily possess the skills and knowledge to address the rising issues. Moreover dwindling water resources due to various factors and soil erosion compound the challenges these communities face.

Through the National Programme of Action 2, the Foundation has worked towards capacitating the target communities with skills and knowledge to enhance their resilience to climate change effects, while simultaneously ensuring that local and indigenous knowledge is incorporated in the interventions. With funding support from the Least Developed Countries Fund and facilitation from the National Environment Commission and UNDP Bhutan, the project has provided access to clean water for 35 villages in four Dzongkhags; Monggar, Tsirang, Pemagatshel and Samtse.

The NAPA 2 team at the Foundation comprises of the project manager and the project assistant at the secretariat and four field officers in the target Dzongkhags; Thinley Bidha in Samtse, Passang Tobgay in Monggar, Ugyen Tshomo in Pemagatshel and Namgay in Tsirang. As a first step, a baseline survey and consultations with Dzongkhag and Gewog officials, and rural communities were carried out to assess the situation in the target communities and based on the findings; an integrated approach was designed with technical input from the project international consultant, Ms. Nirmala Nair to enhance communities' climate change adaptation resilience.

An essential component of this project is the active participation of the communities from the initial stage which has resulted in successful outputs as well as community ownership and accountability. We encourage our target communities to share the skills learnt with their neighboring communities as there is an urgent need to replicate these activities to build resilience and sustain the livelihoods of rural communities.

Roseleen Gurung
Senior Program Officer and NAPA Project Head
Tarayana Foundation



"We forget that the water cycle and the life cycle are one."

Meet the 46 year old Chairman

By the time I arrived in Tsirangtoe, a small crowd has already gathered around the tap stand, anxious to talk about the difference that clean water has made in their community.

At the front of the pack, neatly lined up are six members of the local water committee or “Thungchu Tshogpa.” They stand tall, three men and three women, as they introduce themselves and their responsibilities one by one.

I am Pema and Dorji, the Plumber.

My name is Tashi Dorji, Treasurer.

Tshomo and Sangay Chenzom, the Head of Maintenance. And then the final introduction, which comes from the seemingly shy



46-year-old woman “My name is Sonam Lhamo,” she says. “I’m the Chairman.” Hold on. The Chairman!

A note about the water committee or “Thungchu Tshogpa.

One of the main activities under NAPA II Project being implemented by Tarayana is water harvesting and management. We require communities to elect a water committee, a team of 5–8 members usually maintaining gender balance, who are responsible for the long-term sustainability of the water harvesting and management aspects to ensure sufficient water availability to the entire community. They maintain the water points, develop business plans so they can purchase parts for future repairs and expansion

requirements. They also educate community members about health, sanitation and hygiene. It’s a huge responsibility, and almost always carried out as social service with little or no monetary gains.

I look back at Sonam and notice her stance, feet wide apart, arms crossed proudly across her chest. She shoots me a pleased half-smile.

It’s 6:10 a.m., and Sonam has already had an overwhelming morning. As the mother of seven children, her to-do list is much longer than that of most: sweeping up loose sand and dirt from their home, tidying up the place, arranging her school going children’s bags, filling vessels with water, boiling water in preparation for breakfast. She’s been hard at work since 4:30 a.m. But there is a willing smile on her face.

Multitasking, she ducks into the family’s house to drop off her 8 years old son to school and emerges eagerly clenching the straps of her jacket. She’s excited because she knows that what took 20 minutes this morning used to take hours. Two years ago, before her village worked towards improving their water supply system, Sonam would’ve still been collecting water in line at this hour—waiting to get dirty water from a pond or puddle outside her village. And though she’s always loved sending her children to school, back then her children could only go after collecting water. Often, that meant they’d only get to go to school irregularly.

But not anymore

In 2016, through the NAPA II project her water stressed village was identified as one requiring intervention. Tarayana Foundation worked with the community to determine the scope of the intervention and it was decided that the village would require three reservoir tanks of varying sizes, thirty one roof top rainwater harvesting arrangements and several tap stands right within their community to facilitate easy collection of clean water they need for their households. This would save time and energy that could be used for more gainful work. Now, Sonam doesn’t wait in line. At 6:10 a.m., having already fetched water for her family, she’s on her way to send her cows to the pasture and then continue on to work in her fields. Prior to the project intervention, women and children in Tsirangtoe, lose precious time every day walking and waiting in line to fetch and carry water from long distances. Families who have less water than their needs are forced to choose between how much they can afford to use for drinking, cooking, washing and bathing.

The time committed to fetching water and poor health and sanitation conditions, it is common for girls in particular to spend far less time in school.

But all that changed when the community was empowered and worked hard in improving the situation.

Earlier in the day, I asked Sonam's husband what he thought about his wife as the community water Chairman. He said, "Our dream is for Sonam to become a Local Representative of the community."

Without missing a beat, Sonam corrected her husband, "I don't want to be an exemplary or Local Head, I want to be the root of change!"

That was the moment when it clicked for me.

46 years old. Female. None of it matters. Those things are easily overcome by Sonam Lhamo's belief in herself. Her confidence and tenacity impressed me immensely.

Sonam's is a role model in her village and opportunities are promising for women and young girls in rural Tsirangtoe. But they're even more promising for the people in her community.

I can't imagine anyone better Chairman than her.

Reported by Namgay

Senior Field Officer, Tsirang



The Water Doctor



Meet the man who keeps water flowing in Lotokuchu Singye Community.

When I met Lai Tshering Doya, he's already in the middle of a repair. He arrived early. Without pausing, he angles his head back and reveals kind eyes from under the brim of his bucket hat. His face doesn't change, and his hands keep moving. He just gives a silent nod from afar.

This is the man they call "The Water Doctor."

He's lean, slow-moving and quiet. And at 46-years-old he doesn't look like a hero. But to people in Lotokuchu Singye, that's exactly what he is.

It's not TALENT, It's PURPOSE

He grew up in a community where dirty water was a part of the past. At the age of six, he was a witness to his village being affected with water borne diseases. In fact this was common in the entire region. This promoted him to promise to bring clean water to change the lives of his family and friends. He kept his promise.

Lai Tshering Doya after improving access to clean water for his family and friends, was determined to bring clean water to other people too.

"In order for me to be where I am, someone had to help me. In turn, I want to help other."

Farmer, Family man and Local Mr. fix it.

When Samtse Dzongkhag Administration in collaboration with the Foundation gave a plumbing skills training to the interested members of Lotokuchu Jigme, Singye and Wangchuck, three plumbers from each village were encouraged to register with the Foundation for an advanced course. This course would teach them better water management skills so that their respective communities would have better water access. Lai Tshering was one of the first to register.

Most of Lai's days are still spent on farming so that he can provide for his own family. But he is also responsible for constant water supply to all the households in Lotokuchu Singye village, a responsibility he takes very seriously as he knows that many lives are impacted are positively impacted by his service. The other two plumbers also work hard in ensuring that their village continues to enjoy access to clean water. Similarly the other plumbers provide their services to their respective communities of Lotokuchu Jigme and Wangchuck. When Lai receives word that there is a breakdown of water supply, or that the water source has been damaged or the faucet broken, he drops everything he's doing, double checks his tool kit— a few wrenches, a hammer, some rope and walks to the village in need.

“I know that each moment I delay is affecting lives. I have to rush to assist them so that they can have water.”

What it looks like to save the day

When Lai Tshering Doya goes to another village where he’s been called for help, he is greeted with enthusiasm as soon as they see him. His reputation precedes him. The people here know him as “The Water Doctor” because he has never failed to fix one till date.

Keeping the Water Flowing

It’s scary to think about what happens when a water tank or tap breaks especially considering that some of our water projects are located in such remote areas. Would these 85 households in Lotokuchu still have clean water today if not for Lai Tshering Doya?

It is a good reminder that it’s not just about building new infrastructure; it’s about taking care of the ones we’ve already built. This is why we’re proud to be empowering local communities to create heroes like Lai Tshering Doya who keep the waters flowing in rural communities in Samtse Dzongkhag.

Reported By Thinley Bidha
Field Officer, Samtse



I feel beautiful for the first time

Driving down a bumpy road in the middle of Mekuri village in Pemagatshel, we were kicking up dust as we headed into the rural countryside. I was traveling to evaluate the work of our Field Officer, who looked after the water harvesting and management activities that included water tank construction and training community members in sanitation and hygiene.

I have a pretty incredible job as a Program Officer; I travel to some of the most desolate places in the country in search of a clean water. And while the landscape changes, there’s always one thing that remains the same: the women are always walking. Whether I’m trekking the mountains of Mekuri, taking cover from a rainstorm in rural communities of Pemagatshel, or tramping through the jungles, the women are always carrying water. From my vantage point in the car, I watch women gather up their children and move to the edge of the road to let us pass. Their feet are gnarled and calloused: a result of thousands of miles walked barefoot over rocks and mud. With babies strapped to their backs, their brightly colored Kira sway and their knees quiver and brace under the weight of water and children. Most balance pails on their shoulders, while some grip 80 pounds of water with sweaty palms, a bright yellow 5-gallon Jerry Can in each hand.

I’m in awe of how they manage. But of course, they have no choice. The average woman in rural communities of Bhutan walks three miles every day for water. Often, it’s water from putrid ponds or disease-infested swamps. Worldwide, women are more than twice as likely as men to collect drinking water.

Moments later, we find ourselves in a clearing and in the middle of a huge celebration. I usually prefer to surprise communities by our arrival because it makes it easier to monitor how our water projects are functioning without a number of people watching. But once you visit a few communities in the neighborhood, rumors of your presence spread like wildfire.

We jump out of the car and walk into a party. The women meet us with exuberant cheering and dancing. Pure and loud joy rocks the village.

This is when I met Tashi Lhamo. While most women hung back politely, Tashi jumped toward me and screamed two inches from my face. Technically, it was singing. But the high-pitched shrieking was so loud and reverberated with such energy and emotion, I knew I had to talk with her.

She told me about the new fresh water source and tank in her village.

“I am happy now,” she beamed. “I have time to eat; my children can go to school. And I can even work in my kitchen garden, take a shower and then come back for more water if I want to! I am bathing so well.”

A few of the men chuckled to hear a woman talk about bathing. But all I noticed was Tashi’s glowing face, the fresh flowers smell in her hair, and the lovely green kira she wore for special occasions. Touching her forearm, I replied, “Well, you look great.”

“Yes,” she paused. Placing both hands on my shoulders and smiling, she said, “Now, I am beautiful.”

That really hit me.

My job is to focus on sustainable development, health, hygiene and sanitation; to make sure that sustainability mechanisms are embedded in our projects so that these interventions are working



several years ahead after the project has ended. But nowhere on any of my surveys or evaluations was a place to write, “Today we made someone feel beautiful.”

How Tashi became beautiful is the real story.

Before she had clean water, she would wake up before dawn, take her only two 5-gallon Jerry Cans, and walk almost a mile and a half to the nearest water point, which happened to be at a school. Because there simply wasn’t enough water for the area’s population, she’d wait in line with a number of other women who also valued clean water. Tashi’s only other option was to skip the wait and collect contaminated water from a pond.

Tashi spent most of her day walking and waiting. She told me each day she’d say to herself, “How should I use this water today? Should I water my garden so we can grow food? Should I wash my children’s uniforms? Should I use it to cook a meal? Should we drink this water?” With two children, one husband and 10 gallons, Tashi had to make choices.

I saw the shame in her eyes when she described how she would return from her long trek to find her two young children waiting for her. They were often sent home from school because they didn’t complete their homework. Tashi just never had enough water and the children helped their mother in collecting water.

I saw now why she was so eager to scream out her joy and gratitude. She wanted me to understand that this gift from the Foundation: water was real. With the new water source and tank in her village, her life was transformed. She now had choices. Free time. Options. Also, Tashi was elected to be the Water Committee Treasurer, collecting nominal fees from the 51 beneficiary households, to use for the maintenance of their water tank. I noticed that Water Committees are often the first time women are ever elected to any leadership positions in these villages. Last year, Tashi was standing in line waiting for her water. This year, she’s standing up for her community. And she knows she is beautiful and capable

Reported by Jamyang Phuntsho
Programme Officer



The Man who walked for water

Life in Rural Kengkhar



There are certain parts about rural life in Kengkhar that can make a person wish they lived there forever. The warm sunshine. Wake up calls from the rooster. Basket weaving in the afternoon and the singing and dancing in the evenings.

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But there are also tedious tasks that come along with simply trying to survive — like carrying buckets of water from miles away to provide for your family. Watching loved ones suffer without proper medical care. It is difficult to see your daughter or sister start carrying water at the age of eight, when her dream had always been to go to school.

One man took notice

Even at a young age, Dawa saw it all around him. And he refused to do nothing while his mother, wife and his daughters shouldered the burden of this work, so Dawa started walking for water too.

This is Women's Work

The unfortunate reality is that water is a woman's job in Kengkhar and in the world. And it is tedious, exhausting and painful work. Women walk to locations outside their village— river beds and holes in the ground— and take turns collecting water using pans or ladles. It's a brutally slow process that can take hours especially when they have to wait in line.

Young girls learn how to balance the weight of a water bucket, with a baby on their back, while boys their age are learning how to read in school. Women and girls are making this trip, with forty pounds of water on their shoulders, no less than five times each day.

A heart bigger than his body

Having learned about equality in non-formal education, Dawa decided that it wasn't fair for his mother, wife and his daughters to be responsible for all of this work. Despite his weak bony frame, Dawa started walking for water so the women he cared about most wouldn't have to.

"I walk for water because I believe in gender equality. There must be no discrimination between men and women in relation to chores." says 49 years old Dawa.

Dawa wasn't trying to be a hero or take a stand; he just wanted to do the right thing. He wanted his mother and wife to have time to do more important things. He wanted his daughters to be able to go to school too. And not only did he give time back to his family in the same way that clean water would, but he also set an example for the other men and boys in his community.

Reported by Passang Tobgay
Senior Field Officer, Monggar



Overall water tanks constructed and Self Help Groups create

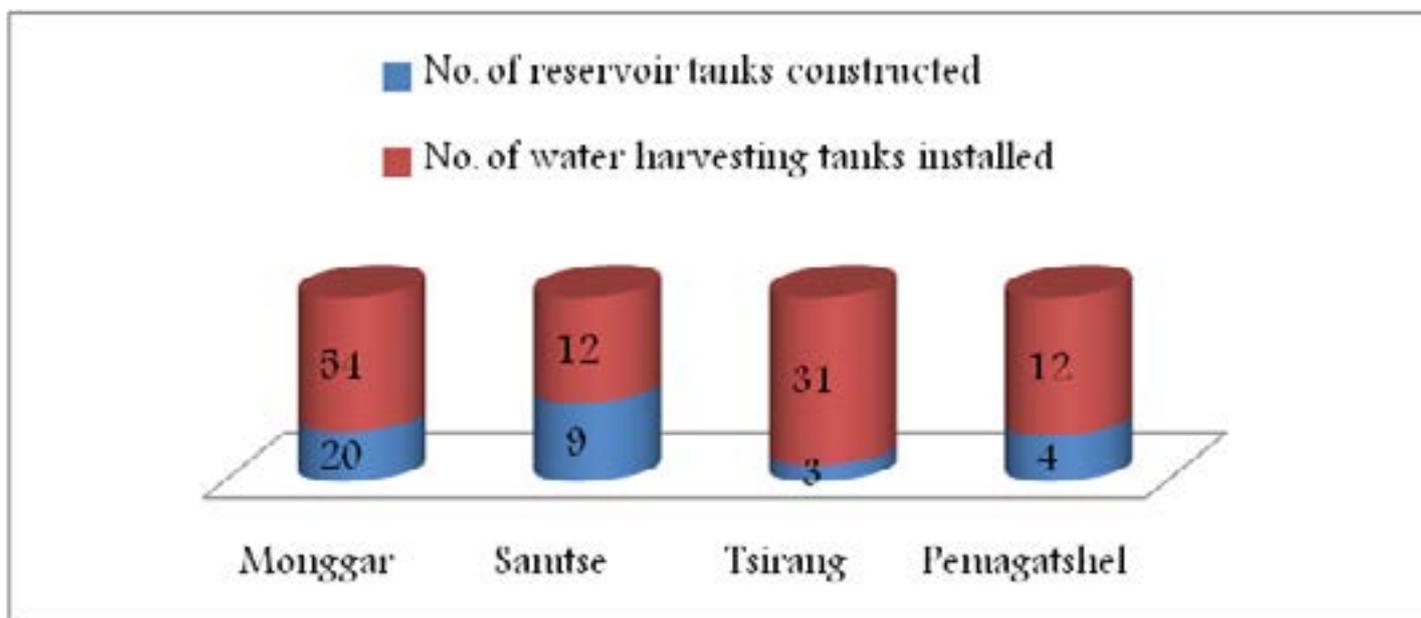


Fig.no.1 total no. of reservoir tanks constructed and no. of water harvesting tanks installed

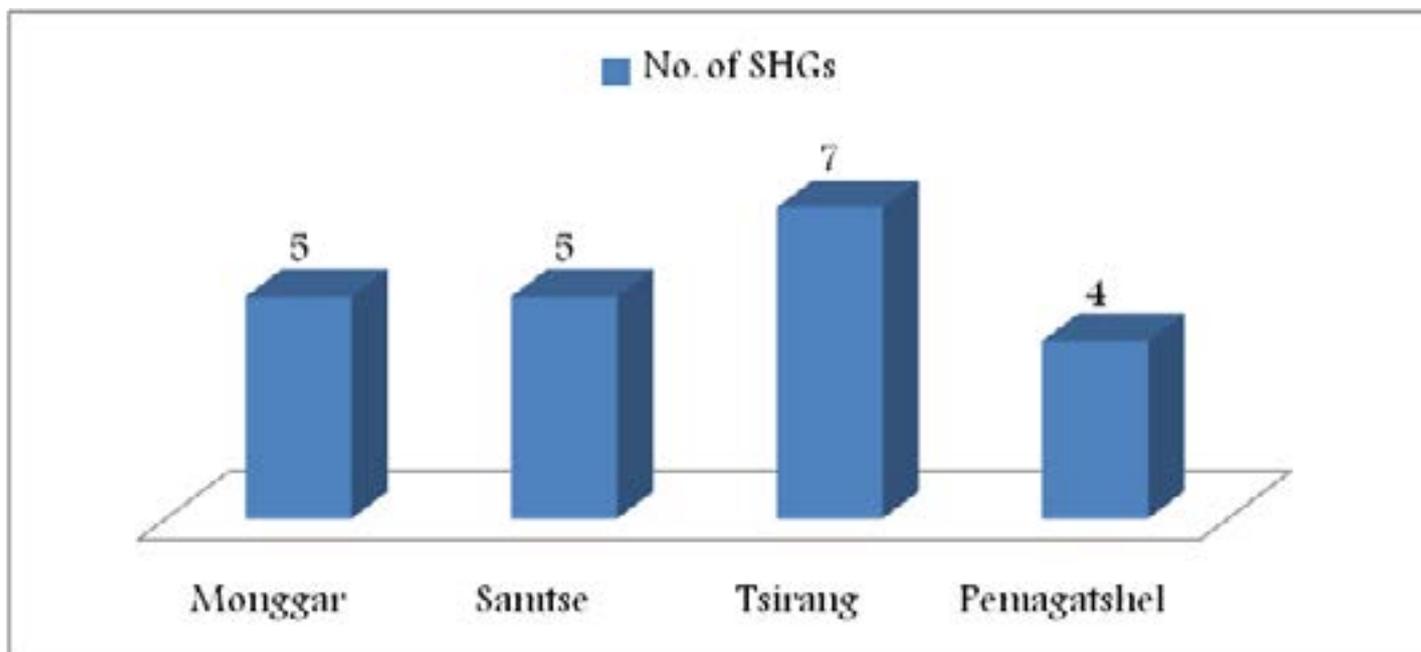


Fig.no.2 total number of Self Help Groups created

Tarayana Rural Crafts



Our new range of products at Tarayana's Rural Crafts Outlet produced by our rural artisans.

If you are interested in any of the products kindly contact us at +9752339510 or leave us an email at tarayana2003@gmail.com. We also take in orders.

The true Bhutan resides in its villages. Help us to encourage and promote our rural artisans by buying our rural products.

Support Tarayana Rural Crafts

Tarayana Rural Crafts is an initiative of the Tarayana Foundation in its efforts to improve the income earning capabilities of the rural artisans. More than thirty self help groups from different villages across the country are involved in the production of the products.

Each product is painstakingly handmade by the artisans, whose families have been involved in the craft for many generations, using locally available natural materials.



*"Giving is not just about making a donation.
It is about making a difference."*

Support Tarayana

We invite you to be a part of reaching out to the most vulnerable members of our society through your support to Tarayana. We operate with financial support of individuals and organizations, without which we would not have the opportunity of helping so many families help themselves. Tarayana complements and supplements the initiatives of the Government in empowering rural communities towards sustainable livelihoods.

The Foundation maintains its accounts in accordance with accepted financial norms and is audited annually by the Royal Audit Authority of Bhutan. An audited financial report and an annual progress report are published every year and is available for all interested individuals and organizations.

Please contact us for more information.