



In Touch

Tarayana Newsletter

Service from the heart

Vol. 7, Issue 8, Nov-Dec 2016

“There cannot be enduring peace, prosperity, equality and brotherhood in this world if our aims are so separate and divergent, if we do not accept that in the end we are people, all alike, sharing the Earth among ourselves and also with other sentient beings, all of whom have an equal role and stake in the state of this planet and its players.”

HM Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck

From The Editorial Team

This edition of “In Touch” highlights Rural Economic Advancement Programme Phase II (REAP II), a project executed by GNHC with Tarayana as one of the local implementing partners. We are happy to bring you the stories from the field from the beneficiaries of the initiatives undertaken through the project ranging from improved housing, to better livelihood options to better living standards, health, sanitation and improved food and nutrition security.

It is heartening to hear about the improvement in the lives of women and children in particular, opening up more opportunities as drudgery is reduced and overall wellbeing of the family improved as a result of all these interventions.

We have also included experiences of our field officers as they implemented the various facets of this project starting with the benchmarking, to early consultations and community mobilizations to the arduous treks they undertook in the course of their work. They tell their stories about determination and service.

Also featured in this edition is a report of feminist capacity building course on gender, sustainable livelihoods, human rights and peace that two of our colleagues attended for a month in Nepal, Sangat earlier this year in October.

We are happy to inform that Tarayana Foundation has been awarded the National Merit of Order (Gold) on 17th December, 2016 along with 23 other Civil Society Organizations coinciding with our 109th National Day from His Majesty the King, Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck.

We also share with you pictures of the wonderful December 13th 2003 commemorative Druk Wangyal Tshechu at Dochula and of the 9th batch of our senior citizens’ recent visit to the land of the Awakened, Bodhgaya, as part of the annual Senior Citizens’ Pilgrimage to commemorate the Coronation of His Majesty the King in November 2008.

Last but not the least, we welcome you to this issue to help you stay abreast of all the activities related to REAP II as implemented in 49 remote villages. We look forward to your continued support and prayers in delivering the mission of service from the heart.

Season’s Greetings and Tashi Delek!

REAP II implementation by Tarayana Foundation

The Rural Economy Advancement Programme (REAP) phase II contract agreement was signed between Tarayana Foundation and the Gross National Happiness Commission Secretariat (GNHC), on the 8th of January, 2015 at the GNHC Office, Thimphu.

REAP is a programme developed by the RGoB to target the extremely vulnerable and poverty afflicted villages. This programme is funded by the Government of India (GoI).

Tarayana Foundation has been identified as a partner to the government in implementing the REAP II. The Foundation is implementing this programme in 41 villages in 11 Dzongkhags out of the 75 villages identified by GNHC.

Overview of infrastructure constructed and SHG created as of December, 2016.

	House constructed	House renovated	Work-shed/Community Facility Centre(CFC)	Self Help Groups (SHG)	Toilet Constructed	Solar Fencing (kms)
HAA	12		1	7	1	
Sarpang	8		1	4	59	
Samtse	20	2		12	105	
Zhemgang	3		1	2		
Trongsa	4	1	1	3	22	5
Gasa	4			2		
Tsirang	83		1	13	5	
Wangdue-phordang	7	8		8	66	
Lhuentse	3	30	3	11	75	24
Monggar	11	2	3	8	73	20.6
Pemagatshel	37	22		6	9	
Total	172	65	11	76	415	50

Based on the assessment of the Foundation’s intervention in the first phase of REAP, the government has given Tarayana a bigger role in the REAP II. GNHC provided the REAP strategic framework and the list of villages that required interventions. Tarayana took up 41 villages in eleven Dzongkhags of Gasa, Haa, Lhuentse, Monggar, Pemagatshel, Samtse, Sarpang, Trongsa, Tsirang, Wangduephordang and Zhemgang. GNHC has developed Village Development Plans for each village after the consultation with the communities.

However, the consultations were carried out in 2010 and since then the ground realities have changed. Therefore, the Foundation took up its own assessment and drew up plans for each villages based on their needs and priorities. Interventions were planned based on Tarayana’s Integrated “Holistic Community Development” approach (Rukha Model) with the primary focus on addressing basic needs followed by other activities.

Success Story of Sanitation in Khempa

The small village of Khempa is situated in Samtse Dzongkhag. It has 34 registered households and total population of 186 residents of which 95 are male and 91 female. The entire community did not necessarily see the need for proper toilets and open defecation was an accepted norm in spite of all the inconveniences encountered.



The local health workers have reported that many of the diseases like chronic diarrhea, intestinal worms, bilharzias and hepatitis were directly related to the open defecation practice of the populace. There was an urgent need to make the people realize that toilets were an important part of achieving good sanitation. Without proper public understanding about why sanitation matters, and what is necessary to achieve good sanitation, the construction of toilets alone is not good enough to break the cycle of disease. To materialize this realization into action, while visiting this village, I was met with difficulties in convincing the villagers as most of the people didn't want to invest in constructing new toilets when they have been used to using open spaces.

Women and girls here have silently tolerated the embarrassment of the lack of this basic sanitation facility. They often waited until before dawn or after dark to relieve themselves. To plan for this, many women either hold it in, which leads to urinary tract infections, or drink less water, which can lead to dehydration.

I had several consultations with the community particularly with the women, the aged and the children. The long engagements paved the way for the community to recognize the need for proper facilities particularly for the aged, the infirmed and the women folk. The actual construction and use of the toilets was much easier once the change in mindset was achieved.

Today, each household in Khempa village has their own flush latrines. Women no longer need to seek the cover of darkness to answer the call of nature. The overall sanitation condition of the village has improved.

Toilet construction under the REAP II project is changing the sanitation scenario in several rural communities. The collective efforts of the villagers enabled the project to achieve 100% toilet construction in several target villages like Khempa village, where my colleagues work.

Tandin, 15 years old female recounted her bitter experiences of having to go to toilet at nights and the trouble she would impose on her elder sister to wake up from a deep slumber to accompany her to the toilet, which was quite far from their house. She is happy that she no longer has to wake her sister up now that they have their own toilet with a bathroom attached to it.

"The REAP project is giving us the materials for the construction of our toilets", she said, spreading her arms to emphasize the strategic contribution for the improvement in health and well being of the community. "We should also extend that sort of love to our neighbors in the nearby villages: you see....we always come together as one family."

*Reported by Suk Bdr. Rai
Assistant Field Officer, Samtse*

Solar Fencing and wild animals

Imagine and feel the frustrations and desperation of farmers who spent months cultivating their fields to see it all destroyed in one night by wild boar, monkeys or deer. What can farmers really do other than guard their fields all night long after a hard day's work till the harvest is in?

This is the story and reality of almost every farmer in rural communities, when their main source of income is destroyed by wild animals. This year four villages Yari, Sheripong, Changchama and Daag under Mongar Dzongkhag were identified for solar fencing.

The village comprises of 73 households and is sparsely populated with approximately 450 people. People here are subsistence farmers depending on the cultivation of upland rice, potato, maize and various vegetables. These villages are the furthest by distance under Silambi gewog and are in the midst of a lush green forest, home to many different wildlife species.

Aum Muku 42, of Yari village recounted how she would spend sleepless nights in her farm hut by



shouting-off wild animals from her maize fields. She is eagerly waiting to harvest almost 99% of her maize from her 4-acre land this year for the first time, after the installation of solar fencing as part of the project initiative.

“We could hardly reap half of what is sown in our field every year”, recalls Aum Pema Choden 39, (widow) with five children.”

Through this initiative, in four villages, community members have been trained on the installation of solar fences, preparation of insulators from PVC pipes, maintenance and operation of the fences, and safety measures. Recently the community successfully installed 20.6 kilometers of electric fence and managed to cover their entire landholdings.

The local innovation is engineered in collaboration with DAO, GEA and representing myself as Tarayana Field Officer. Mr. Khampa DAO said “I am very happy with the initial results and feedback from the community seeing their fields with potatoes and maize still intact.”

The villages also initiated a group among themselves to safeguard their crops and pool in financial resources with an initial budget starting from Nu.500, to a monthly contribution of Nu. 50 have been collected to sustain, manage the maintenance and operation of the fences. They drew up and enforced their internal management by-laws to manage the group. The electric fence was formally handed over to the four communities on 26th August 2016, in the presence of the Local Government Officials from Mongar dzongkhag.

Like Ap Gembo (28 years) of Daag village, rejoiced thinking about a good harvest and better income in the days ahead, which of course he thinks is possible with the help of the REAP II initiatives. We cannot wait to see these excited farmers in the villages with their good harvest and with better income that so richly deserve for all their hard work.

Reported by Passang Tobgay

Senior Field Officer, Mongar

Recipient of Tarayana Meritorious Award 2016

Tarayana's attempt to curb rural-urban migration

Rural-urban migration is a phase in the development process that affects all countries and Bhutan is no exception. Rural to urban migration de-populates rural areas, decreasing farming activities and leads to food insecurity on one hand and causes overcrowding in urban centers, which leads to a strain in social amenities.

Chhimoong Gewog in Pema Gatshel has seen rapid rural-urban migration in the recent years as the youth who have completed class X, XII and even graduates move to urban areas in search of work opportunities. While the youth migrate to urban areas, the ones who are left behind in the rural areas are, sadly, the aged who can no longer work in the field and thus, many farmlands in the villages are now left fallow. If this trend continues, Bhutan's main backbone of the

economy, agriculture, will lose ground.

Projects like REAP II attempts to encourage educated youth initiatives including farming and agribusiness in the villages. I am delighted to share that many educated farmers who have completed their class X, XII and also graduates are now open and excited to live and work in the rural communities, spearheading the change they want in their villages. As young individuals discover the socio-economic opportunities in the rural pockets, more are willing to stay in and further improve the socio-economic dynamics by engaging in the provision of goods and services. Several youth led initiatives were supported through the project and capacities at various levels have been improved.

Tarayana Foundation initiated such programs so that they can provide platform wherein the youth can engage themselves in experimenting with their potential in weaving, farming, construction works. The startup costs are minimal when local resources are used as raw materials.

Take the example of Jigme Wangmo, who lost her mother right when she was 17 years old, the very age when her dreams were to blossom. She had to drop out of school when she was in class nine, as studious as she was fate had a different story for her. She took responsibility for the wellbeing of her younger brother, three sisters and her maternal grandparents. Her father



left them to remarry. She is currently working with the cotton-weaving group and makes a decent living with her weaving skills. Yet Jigme Wangmo is not alone, there are many similar success stories of youth overcoming their misfortunes and living successfully. Where there is a will, there is a way.

*Reported by Deki Zam
Field Officer, Pemagatshel*

Housing Improvement



A home is generally the most important asset people will ever own. For poor families around the world, it is likely to be the only significant asset they will possess. Yet, until recently, access to housing-related finance has remained extremely limited in the developing world.

The home is important for psychological reasons as well as its physical protection against the elements. It is the environment in which most people spend the majority of their time.

To have a roof over one's head is considered a blessing and its lamented by those who do not have one. We bring you the stories of new house owners from Sarpang and Lhuntse Dzongkhags, shedding light on the realities that these owners have been exposed to before benefiting from the Government's REAP II interventions implemented by Tarayana Foundation.

Tajugang (Bhakjungay) under Jigmecholing gewog is one of the most remote small village in Sarpang Dzongkhag with only six households. With the recent farm road to the neighboring gewog of Chhudzom, it is five hours drive and four hours walk to reach this village.

Harka Badhur, 23 years old from this village lived in a one storied mud rammed house with his parents, elder brother, and sister in-law with their three children. Their house had only two rooms, a kitchen and the other where the family slept. He recounted on how he would sleep most of the time at his friend's place just to create space for the rest of the expanding family. While not having enough space was a problem on the one hand, not being able to afford better housing caused much distress. Harka and his family used thatch for their roof that could not withstand the heavy monsoon rains every year, leaving them drenched and exposed to the elements.

"It was then that the Tarayana Foundation under REAP II project changed not just my life, but my family's as well by gifting us a house which was actually beyond our means to even think of constructing it. We no longer worry about spaces and the heavy monsoon rains do not bother us as we now have CGI"

He also added that his family also received materials for the construction of a flush toilet and bathroom and that his family enjoys better health and open defecation is a thing of the past.

“I have never thought about marriages although my family insisted that I get married. But there were things to consider before marrying and having a house with not much space initially didn’t really help me to comply with my parent’s wishes. I am now married and live with my family in a new house. We are fortunate to have been the recipient of this housing program and our life has become better than it was yesterday.”

I had the privilege of attending his wedding ceremony. He has visibly changed from being a quiet person to someone brimming with confidence. It was then that I realized how having a good home transformed lives. Here was a man who earlier could not think of marrying because of the conditions of

his house but all that changed when he benefited from the Housing Improvement Programme of Tarayana funded through REAP II. He worked hard to make the best of the opportunity to improve his housing.

Today, Harka lives with his family in the new house. Whenever I pass by his new house, I think of the transformation that this family has undergone just from having adequate housing. The Housing Improvement is one of the flagship programmes of the Foundation. This particular house was built with funds from the Government of India through REAP II and the hard work of the community coming together. Hundreds of families like Harka’s have benefitted from the Housing Improvement Programme. As a Tarayana Field Officer, I have been part of all this positive transformation and this motivates me to work harder putting my heart and soul in serving these rural families.

*Reported by Karma Wangchuk
Program Officer*



Ney (known for Guru’s sacred sites), villagers among themselves call it as Ney Pemacholing under Gangzur geog, Lhuntse dzongkhag. It is 29 kilometers from Lhuntse Dzong and takes about three hours drive on the newly constructed farm road. This is also the last village in Lhuntse Dzongkhag where government initiatives have not been implemented. The villagers are subsistence farmers and depend on the paddy cultivation. They do not have market access to sell any of their crops.

Ugyen Tshogyal lived in a small hut in this village with six other family members. They continued to live in the hut as they

could not afford to construct a new house. Ugyen Tshogyal’s father is a lay monk while her mother is a housewife. Ugyen, herself has been deprived of education as her family was unable to send her to school when she was a kid. She then took charge of the welfare of her family, got married and had two children from her husband. She divorced her husband and father of her two children and later remarried.

Ugyen recalled the days when she would not invite any of the guest or her close friends to her house because she was ashamed of her hut. She remembers the difficulties her family faced during the monsoon season. Although they used bamboo mats as their roof, these had to be replaced approximately every two seasons. The roof leaked during the monsoons and the family was not adequately protected from the elements. Her family could not afford tarpaulin to help water proof her roof.

When the baseline survey and consultative meetings were conducted, housing improvement was given the most priority owing to the need of people in this village. This is how I ended up in Ugyen Tshogyal's hut where our projects have supported her family with CGI sheet, carpenter wages and sawing fuel to start the construction of her new house.

To construct a house, there was a long list of formalities to be completed involving land allocation and deed finalization, timber permit and local government approval for house construction, structural drawings, etc. It takes about one year to get a permission to extract the required timber. To construct a house itself for Ugyen, it took one year to submit the application and get it approved. Ney village falls under Wangchuck Central Park Territory and I had to submit timber permit application form to the gewog and further to range office at Dungkar which cost about Nu. 2500 for taxi fare and sometimes the focal person was not available causing delays in the constructing of the house. Once one gets the permission to extract timber, getting approval for the construction of the house from the gewog takes a long time. This is followed up with submitting the duly filled application form to the Dzongkhag Administration Office. Only after the approval of the housing drawings and site map by District Engineer, Land Record Officer conducts verification. Only after all these formalities are conducted, we are given the approval to construct the house. Even with the help of a checklist, this is one of the tedious paper process that is not even attempted by most villagers. This is a service that Tarayana provides to all our housing improvement beneficiaries.

The community formed a group among themselves to contribute collective labor to help Ugyen with the construction of her new house.

Ugyen Tshogyal was hesitant initially and worried that she would not be able to build a house of her own. I mobilized the community and using the Rukha Model, helped Ugyen Tshogyal build her house. She is now the proud owner of her own house and can ensure that her family is protected from the vagaries of nature. She is happy that she can now raise her children better and she delights in knowing that her children will not have to go through the same hardships she had encountered. She also stated that her children will not hesitate to invite their friends or guest anymore now that they no longer live in a hut. She now lives happily with her family in the newly constructed traditional two-storied house.

We have to construct 34 houses that have been approved through REAP II, of which four are completed and the remaining houses need to be completed. We lost a whole year to the villagers' belief that 2016 was "Lo Na", and not good for starting any construction work. We, however, have a strategy of teams of people working on the construction and hope to complete all within the project period.

*Reported by Sonam Jamtsho
Senior Field Officer, Lhuntse
Recipient of Tarayana Meritorious Award, 2015*

Organic Farming Training in Nepal: collaboration between Tarayana Foundation and the Federation of Business and Professional Women, Nepal

Tarayana Foundation collaborated with the Federation of Business and Professional Women, Nepal (FBPWN) and conducted a series of training on different aspects of organic vegetable farming for the women of Kaule VDC; Nuwakot District an earthquake affected area in Nepal. Passang Tobgay and Namgay, two of our very experienced Field Officers from the Foundation conducted these training sessions.

They trained 772 women and the week-long training was very actively attended and there were also several dozen onlookers at any given time. They were trained on different organic farming





methods to yield chemical free vegetables and different composting methods which will help enhance the soil productivity. The training component consisted of both theory and practical sessions where the women participants were introduced to Nautical farming methods, a skill acquired by the field officers during their training in Madhya Pradesh.

FBPWN felt such training in the post disaster context was much needed for restarting of the livelihoods and food security. The training will benefit more than 2800 households which were badly affected by earthquake. Those trained will further impact in strengthening food and nutrition security in the region.

We are also delighted to share with you that two of our colleagues, Ms. Palden Ongmo and Ms. Tashi Choden also attended a month course on gender, sustainable livelihoods, human rights and peace conducted at Sangat, Nepal.

Mr. Jamyang and Ms. Deki escorted the 9th batch of our eight senior citizens from Pemagatshel and Tsirang to Bodhgaya, the land of the Awakened. The Senior Citizens' Pilgrimage to the Bodhgaya was instituted in November 2008 to humbly commemorate the auspicious coronation of His Majesty The Druk Gyalpo, in the Tarayana way, meaningfully. This event is made possible through sponsorship of the pilgrims in collaboration with the Foundation.

13th December brought yet another exciting event as it marked the 6th Annual Druk Wangyal Tshechu at Dochula coinciding with the 13th anniversary of the successful action against the insurgents.



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.

Tarayana Foundation, P.O. Box 2003, Tarayana Center, Chubachu, Thimphu, Bhutan
Phone: 975-2-329-333 Fax: 975-2-331-433 tarayana@druknet.bt
www.tarayanafoundation.org