As I pondered on how best the Tarayana story could be told it occurred to me that if there was one community that could best represent this narrative it is the Lhops of Lotokuchu, Jigme, Singye and Wangchuck under Samtse Dzongkhag.

It was in February of the year 2001 when Her Majesty Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck first visited the Lhop villages under Samtse Dzongkhag. For many of us accompanying Her Majesty we had heard about the Doyas and their unique way of life but had not really met one leave alone visit the villages due to its remoteness. Tales of their prowess in conquering steep rock faces, their fierce loyalty and community cohesiveness were narrated with much revelry by those few officials who had been there. And so it was on a sunny February day that we went armed with leech guards and slippers since the first part of our journey consisted of crossing the river Damdum twenty three times before the ascent towards Yabala.

In high spirits, we ascended towards Yabala undaunted by the angry red blisters on our feet or even the back burning sun. Just as we reached Yabala we were greeted by the beginnings of a shower – a welcome greeting from Ap Domzap, the local guardian we were told. As we neared Sengdhen the welcome shower turned into torrential rain. We reached camp drenched through to our skin only to find that our campsite at Sengdhen had turned into a swimming pool. Luckily the headmaster’s new living quarters had just been finished so a dry night was guaranteed. That was how Tarayana (not founded then) first stepped into Lotokuchu.

The next day Her Majesty met with the members of the community in the school grounds. After explaining to the people on the purpose of the visit, Her Majesty...
then encouraged them to ask questions and talk to her. Amidst some confused looks someone quickly got up and asked “Chhoe ga mo?” (Who are you?). While the accompanying government officials gasped, Her Majesty, with a giggle, answered, “Nga Gyalp Jigme Singye Wangchuck gi nyem angay dhi ein” (I am King Jigme Singye Wangchuck’s oldest wife). Once the identity of the beautiful lady was established the requests followed fast. Two of their main requests remain in my mind to this day as they were very different. They requested to be allowed to burn unlimited tseri land (the Lhops practiced the slash and burn method of farming, growing mostly maize). The other was to be allowed to keep more than the three goats that the government permitted for environmental reasons. As Her Majesty visited the villages and interacted with the people it became evident that intervention was a dire need. Their living conditions, from see through dwellings that had no proper protection from the elements to health and hygiene were in need of help. There was only one boy in the whole community who had completed class XII and had gone on to become a teacher. Many of them were in debt to money lenders across the border. Although they grew oranges the produce would already be mortgaged to these money lenders before their harvest, therefore, creating a vicious cycle of debt. Before leaving Lotokuchu Her Majesty resolved and promised to help them. As an auspicious first step Her Majesty gifted them the sacred name of His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo. The three villages of Lotokuchu that were hitherto called Lotokuchu, A, B and C were renamed as Lotokuchu Jigme, Singye and Wangchuck. As proud bearers of this sacred name they could only progress. That was the beginning of one of Tarayana’s first projects. Since then a lot has been achieved in transforming the lives of the Lhop community. In addition to having proper housing facilities and increased livelihood options through income generating activities there are now engineers, teachers and health workers with more on the way. Their oranges are not sold anymore through the middlemen from across the border but directly to Bangladesh. The last I heard a particular Doya man is said to own 5 different types of vehicles one of which has been termed “the Lhop Express” – clearly the birth of a millionaire in the community!

For me the contrast between Her Majesty’s first visit and the most recent one in 2013 says it all. Seated in a field in the middle of Lotokuchu Jigme the people who had gathered there for the meeting were the same, albeit a little older and missing a few of the elderly members who had since passed on. This time, however, the interactions were on a different level – a very noticeable difference being in the requests being voiced. The requests now were for higher education and employment opportunities for their children. Surely the Lhops had come a long way.

The Lhop story is one that tells the story of many similar communities across rural Bhutan where Tarayana works, be it the Moenpa communities of Trongsa and Wangdi, Kengkhar and Silambi in Mongar, Langdurbi and Digala in Zhemgang, or Mikuri in Pemagatshel to name a few. Today Tarayana works in 147 villages across Bhutan and growing – reaching out to the unreached and the most vulnerable. This success story has been possible because of the inspiring leadership of Her Majesty and the dedicated and hard working team of social workers led by Aum Chime Paden Wangdi.

The Beginning
As the Founder and President of Tarayana Her Majesty has travelled and continues to travel to new and old sites assessing particular needs and reviewing progress. Lately the journeys have become much easier with access roads having reached many of the rural areas. This wasn't so when it all first started.

Her Majesty first started travelling into rural Bhutan in 1999 as the Patron for RNR and the Environmental sectors. Then, travel meant long and arduous treks on foot across some of the most difficult terrains braving the weather, distance and the most dreaded of them all – the hungry blood sucking creature called the Leech! If there is one thing in this world that Her Majesty lives in mortal fear of it is this slimy little creature. Even so the journeys continued, visiting one rural community after another, holding meetings after meetings, visiting homes, and adopting the infirmed and the most vulnerable members of the communities. As the travels progressed it was beginning to be evident that a single person, even if she were a Queen, would not be able to manage and sustain all
that was happening. The need for an organization that could deliver targeted assistance and the much required intervention in those communities was seen as a priority. And so it was that after one such visit that a one-room office in the Zomlha complex was set up with donated furniture and manned by a single person. Supported by a team of volunteers comprising mostly of civil servants the foundation began its work, targeting the most vulnerable members of society. A formal launching ceremony was held on the 4th of May 2003 in the presence of His Majesty the King who was then the Crown Prince. From then on Tarayana has not looked back and today has 33 people working for the organization full time with another 29 on project-based contract. A team of volunteers from across a large section of society support the work of the Foundation.

I am very fortunate to have had the opportunity of experiencing so much of my beautiful country up close through the Tarayana journey and offer my humble gratitude to Her Majesty for all the lives that have been transformed. In echoing Her Majesty “we should look forward to the day when Tarayana in its present form is no longer needed or relevant”. It is then we can truly say that Tarayana has arrived.

Chhimmy Pem
Director, Tourism Council of Bhutan
HER MAJESTY GYALYUM DORJI WANGMO WANGCHUCK’S VISIT TO EASTERN & SOUTHERN BHUTAN
Felicitations to
Gyalum Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck
from the Board Members

A Humble Felicitation to Your Majesty the Queen Mother on the Occasion of Your 60th Birthday,

Your Majesty the Queen Mother has had public impacts in many spheres. The impacts are diverse and each of them flows from a facet of Your Majesty’s multiple interests and wider commitments. Some of these impacts on society preceded the founding of Tarayana by Your Majesty and others became magnified through Tarayana which Your Majesty founded against many odds.

Your Majesty’s literary attainments will perhaps be the most important in the future for women, for it is a role model that has been rare to find in our history. One of the strengths of modern society will lie in women’s writings that enhance their roles and voices. Your Majesty’s books and many public talks has helped spreading of knowledge on our country allowing foreign readers not only to be well-informed, but to know that the Royalty in Bhutan has literary and intellectual curiosities.

Your Majesty’s patronage and production of temple architecture and fine arts, musicals and classical Buddhist mask dances are second category of Your Majesty’s accomplishments. In cultural productions, exquisiteness is of particular importance though it may be out of reach for most. It was the high bar set by Your Majesty coupled with clear leadership and supervision that brought all of us among the implementers to a good level.

Your Majesty's multipronged and geographically extensive humanitarian works using Tarayana as the vehicle has transformed thousands of lives. With an extremely compact and efficient staff that does things at record-low overhead cost, Your Majesty has delivered

1) education through scholarship,
2) housing for the poor,
3) solar lighting and drying of good,
4) rain harvesting for irrigation and domestic use,
5) ropeways for transportation,
6) skills development and businesses for rural underemployed,
7) formation of volunteer service groups among the students, and
8) establishments of early childhood care in numerous parts of Bhutan.

On the occasion of Your Majesty the Queen Mother’s 60th birthday, I respectfully offer my humble prayers for Your Majesty’s long life and for the continuity of Your Majesty’s beneficial activities for all people and the country.

Dasho Karma Ura
Throughout history, it is exceedingly rare that anyone anywhere recognizes the plight of those living in the most remote villages, and then takes their hardships to heart. Her Majesty Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck has done just that. It is our great privilege to thank Her Majesty for her dedicated leadership in caring for those in need.

Her Majesty has personally hiked to parts of Bhutan where very few have been, and through the targeted efforts of Tarayana, she has tremendously uplifted the quality of life in these isolated places. In this Her Majesty's 60th birth anniversary year, which she shares with her King and husband, we honor Her Majesty, founding president of Tarayana, for her unwavering dedication to the lives of those who are so easily forgotten.

Dasho Ugyen Rinzin

On the auspicious and joyous Occasion of Her Majesty Gyalyum Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck's Sixtieth Birth Anniversary, I most humbly offer my felicitations. May the Triple Gem always bless Her Majesty with Good Health and Happiness.

On this blessed Occasion, I submit my deepest gratitude to Her Majesty for all the noble causes Her Majesty has initiated and selflessly and tirelessly carried them out as the Founder and President of Tarayana – truly, “Services from the Heart”. These programmes have provided hope, happiness and enhanced wellbeing to many lives from the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities and individuals in the remotest areas of the country. I also pledge my humble services in furthering the noble objectives of Tarayana Foundation under the visionary leadership of Her Majesty Gyalyum Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck.

May I once again most humbly offer my felicitations to Her Majesty Gyalyum Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck on Her Majesty's Sixtieth Birth Anniversary.

Dasho Yanki T Wangchuk
Felicitations for
Her Majesty the Queen Mother and President of Tarayana Foundation
The members of the Tarayana Executive Committee

We offer our most humble and deepest felicitations on this auspicious occasion of the Sixtieth Birth Anniversary of Your Majesty Gyalyum Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, President of Tarayana Foundation.

We draw inspiration from Your Majesty’s wise leadership and tireless efforts in uplifting the wellbeing of the most vulnerable communities and members of our society. We consider the opportunity to serve and contribute to the vision of Your Majesty through the work of Tarayana Foundation as an honour and privilege. Having witnessed the positive transformational changes that the Foundation has brought about in these communities, we take this opportunity to thank Your Majesty for the selfless “service from the heart” for the wellbeing of our nation. We pledge our commitment towards Your Majesty’s vision for Tarayana.
Felicitations for
Her Majesty the Queen Mother and President of Tarayana Foundation
From the Queen Scholars

We, the Queen Scholars from The Regent’s International School of Bangkok would like to extend our warmest wishes for Your Majesty Gyalyum Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck’s Sixtieth Birth Anniversary. It is of great privilege to be representing Bhutan and Tarayana in an international school that dedicates so much of its time towards service. This opportunity has not only opened our hearts and minds to internationalism but also taught us the value of service. For the inspiration and compassion that Your Majesty has shown us, we remain forever grateful.

- Kuenzang Peldeon Nidup
- Ngawang Chhoedron
- Ugyen Tshering Peldon
- Chimmi Selden Namda

Felicitations for
Her Majesty the Queen Mother and President of Tarayana Foundation
From The Tarayana School Club members

On this joyous occasion of the 60th birth anniversary of Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, The Tarayana School Club coordinators and members would like to wholeheartedly express our sincere gratitude, heartfelt respect and deep appreciation for Her Majesty’s unwavering devotion in contributing selflessly towards uplifting the lives of the less fortunate and to whom we draw inspiration to live up to Tarayana’s motto ‘Service from the heart’.

May Her Majesty’s aspirations and wishes bear fruit and benefit all sentient beings at all times.

May Her Majesty’s selfless acts inspire the entire nation to join the noble endeavor to touch the lives of many.
Felicitations for
Her Majesty the Queen Mother and President of Tarayana Foundation
The Members of the Folk heritage Museum

The team at the Folk Heritage Museum would like to wish Her Majesty Gyalyum Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck a very Happy 60th Birth Anniversary. We would like to thank Her Majesty for all the encouragement and trust that she has placed in us to make this Museum the best that it can be. We take this opportunity to reassure Her Majesty of our commitment and dedication towards the fulfillment of Her Majesty’s vision.

Felicitation for Her Majesty Gyalyum Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck
Founder and President of Tarayana Foundation
From the Tarayana Secretariat

Your Majesty has given us the most wonderful platform, Tarayana Foundation, for serving our nation. Today as we gather to celebrate our 12th Founding Day, we would like to offer our heartfelt felicitations on the occasion of Your Majesty’s upcoming 60th Birthday on the 10th of June.

We would like to convey our deepest respects and humble admiration for Your Majesty’s immense compassion for the poor and the vulnerable, the extraordinary selflessness and commitment towards serving the people of our country inspires us to pursue our Foundation’s mission ‘To help the vulnerable and the poor help themselves’. It is through Your Majesty’s remarkable guidance and excellent foresight that we are able to navigate the complex socio-economic development dynamics in rural communities successfully. We are extremely privileged to be working at Tarayana.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Your Majesty for igniting our latent potentials and in raising us to be more than we could ever be. Thank you for making social work a valued career option; for supporting the traditional arts and artisan crafts; for promoting creativity and innovation; for supporting literature and the arts; for preserving folk culture; for support to academic excellence in higher education; for promoting and advocating women’s economic empowerment; for promoting clean and green technologies and the conservation of our environment to name a few areas that have benefited from Your Majesty’s patronage.

We pray for Your Majesty’s good health, happiness, long life and great achievements in all that Your Majesty set out to do in general, and in the areas of socio-economic transformation of our rural people through social service, in particular. Happy 60th Birth Anniversary to our FABULOUS Boss.
Supporting Traditional Artisan Crafts

WEAVING GROUPS
Women’s economic empowerment is often measured by their weaving skills. Tarayana promotes women’s work together in groups so as to benefit from the bargaining power of larger numbers.

POTTERY GROUP
Established a small pottery centre in Thongsa where the pottery Self-Help Group works. This SHG has diversified into producing new designs in addition to the traditional earth pots for cooking.

CAKE AND BAMBOO WEAVING
Bamboo is widely used for making household items throughout the country. The rural communities of Mongar, Trashigang and Zhemgang have taken cake and bamboo weaving to a more commercial level through the Self-Help Groups.

NETTLE WEAVING
Promoting the innovative use of alternate natural weaving materials like nettle and bamboo fibre.

Thirty women in Balung, Lungdel gewog, Trashigang, are members of a Self-Help Group and work collectively. Members of the group have been trained in bangli natural dyeing processes in addition to traditional local methods. The cultivation of dye plants have also been started by the members. The products are sold to visiting tourists and through the Rural Crafts store in addition to supplying to few high-end hotels.

TRADITIONAL PAPER MAKING
The Daphne Paper Making Centre in Lhukhaa Jigme produces beautiful handmade traditional paper and a wide range of paper products. The members of the Self-Help Group work on orders and carry out most of the marketing activities themselves. The founding members were given hands on training in Thimphu and Delhi.

WOOD TURNING GROUP
Established and supports the wood turning Self-Help Group in Galing. They specialise in making traditional receptacles, cups, plates and containers in addition to new designs.

Support to Education

‘Education is key to a better future’

TARAYANA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME
Rural students are provided full or partial scholarships.

‘How a child eats today will have a striking impact on her health throughout adolescence and adulthood.’

NUTRITION IMPROVEMENT
Most rural children suffer from micronutrient deficiencies and stunting.

Benefits
- Complementary feeding for toddlers at the Buzip Centres
- Nutrional education & cooking classes
- Promotion of backyard gardens
- Early detection of malnourished children

Collaborating partners
- USAID
- World Vision
- Food for the Hungry
- ORFS
- UNICEF
- DFID
- SNV

The early years are a crucial phase of human development, psychologically and physically

BUZIP PROGRAMME
Early Childhood Care and Development

Started in 2010 to address the early child-care needs of parents in remote rural communities.

Benefits
- Trained facilitators provide care
- Toddlers learn social skills, build confidence and prepare for formal schooling
- Centres serve as platforms for women’s empowerment through knowledge-sharing and collective action
- Mothers get more time for economic engagements
In touch | Tarayana Newsletter

Housing Improvement

BEFORE

Rural Housing Improvement is a flagship programme of Tarayana

Three demonstration houses were built in 2004, one each in Lotakuchu Jigme, Lotakuchu Singye and Lotakuchu Wangchuck villages in Samte.

Tarayana in collaboration with the then Vocational Training Institutes taught men and women from the villages carpentry, masonry and house wiring skills. They worked in groups to build each others’ homes.

Nearly 700 families have moved into their new houses and an additional 200 into their improved homes.

AFTER

Tarayana Foundation partners with the Royal Government of Bhutan in implementing the Rural Economy Advancement Programme (REAP)

Programme targets extreme poverty that may not have been adequately addressed through broad-based development programmes.

109 villages identified by the Gross National Happiness Committee. Tarayana will be working in 41 villages across 11 Dzongkhags. These include some of the most difficult to reach villages like Wochey & Yorane in Lhossa Geog - Futana, Saktane & Yosha in Gakling Geog of Hotdongkhang and the poorest ranked village Drayangpo in Jynecholing Geog of Sarjang Dzongkhag.

The interventions will be based on the following principles
- Sustainable livelihoods
- Simple, inclusive and effective mechanisms
- Eco-efficient technologies
- Participatory implementation and ownership by the communities
- Gender sensitive measures

The Foundation will intervene in the selected communities through it’s “Holistic Community Development” approach to improve their living standards and uplift them from poverty.
Green Technology

Tarayana promotes the use of appropriate green technologies thus, creating more jobs, reducing drudgery, improving living conditions and creating sufficient time for fruitful engagement.

Rain Water Harvesting

- The rainwater harvesting system has been implemented in all 35 pilot villages.
- Rainwater harvesting systems:
  - Building and surface collection.
  - Groundwater recharge.
- Strength in community parks; individual park watershed management through terraces and local and check dams.

Gravity Fed Water Supply

- Implemented a pilot community owned and operated Gravity Fed Water Supply project in the Small Watershed Program.
- Benefits:
  - Eliminated transporting goods and farm produce on peak season.
  - Less than two hours to transport 75 kg of grains, versus 4 hours.
  - More available for farm production, market safety.
  - Community can kiss annual monsoon losses from the sale of farm produce.
  - Cost effective and environmentally friendly means of transport.
  - Low maintenance and easily operated within the community.

There is tremendous scope for extending similar rainwater harvesting tanks to farmers and to create a sustainable community transport tank.

Solar Drip:

- Remote communities have easy access to farm production during the monsoon season.
- Locally fabricated solar drippers help store sunlight for consumption during off season.

Vegetable Composting

- Promotes resource conservation to rural areas to help increase farm productivity along with other sustainable and eco-friendly practices.
- Farmers are taught various green technologies and Participatory Technology Development skills using local knowledge and materials.

The National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA)

The National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) project has been conceived with the objective to enhance national, local and community capacity to prepare for and respond to climate-induced multi-hazards to reduce potential losses of human lives, national economic infrastructure, livelihoods and livelihood assets. The project has been designed to address the immediate and urgent climate change adaptation needs prioritized through the update of the NAPA undertaken in 2011.

Tarayana Foundation is one of the Implementing Partners who are responsible for enhancing community resilience to climate-induced risks through the introduction of Water Harvesting technology and knowledge to over 20 remote and hard hit villages spread over 4 Districts: Tirang, Samtse, Pemagatsa and Mongar. This will include designing and building or rehabilitating systems for water harvesting, storage and distribution in selected villages and which face water scarcity, community-level water resources inventory to create the information base for water resource management.

Duration – 01.01.2014 - 31.12.2017