The second quarter of 2012 has been both busy and rewarding. Tarayana celebrated its ninth birthday on the 4th of May. The 8th Annual Tarayana Fair was inaugurated on May 4th by Her Royal Highness Ashi Kesang Wangmo Wangchuck, the Honorable Chief Guest. Coinciding with the anniversary of Tarayana Foundation, the signing of MOU between Bussi-en Social Welfare Corporation and Tarayana took place at the Raven House, Motithang.

This year Dr. Jack Demos and the Surgicorps International team were the awardees for the Special Honor and Dr. Jack shares his thoughts on receiving the Certificate of Appreciation in this issue.

From 14th till 23rd of April 2012, Tarayana once again conducted our yearly restorative surgical camp with technical support from Surgicorps International. The Ministry of Health and Royal Government of Bhutan provided support and necessary resources for the efficient operation of the camp.

Mountain Echoes is a unique literary and cultural festival that brings together well known authors, movie makers, poets, lyricists, singers and story-tellers from the region and beyond. The third edition of Mountain Echoes saw the festival grow in diversity, participation and venues. The festival was held from 20th till 24th of April 2012 at multiple venues including the Indian Embassy, premises for the inaugural session, Tarayana Centre, Taj-Tashi and the Nehru-Wangchuck Centre. Mountain Echoes enjoy the patronage of Her Majesty, the Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the donors, collaborators for making the Tarayana events successful. Our appreciation goes to all who have sponsored, donated and volunteered your time and efforts. We were happy that SAHBA, Bhutan was able to participate at the Fair. We take special pride in acknowledging our institutional partner, the Royal Institute of Management, for their support during the Fair, and thank all the students of the Post Graduate Diploma in Public Administration for volunteering your service at the Fair. We also acknowledge the continued support we receive from the people of Thimphu – we could not have done it without you.

Partnership Agreement with Concern Universal Bangladesh

“Concern Universal Bangladesh (CUB) is an international development organization tackling poverty from the grassroots. They create opportunities for people around the world to improve their lives and shape their own futures.”

The Program Director visited Bangladesh from the 21st-29th of May to sign a yearlong partnership agreement with Concern Universal Bangladesh (CUB). Concern Universal is an international development organization tackling poverty from the grassroots. They create opportunities for people around the world to improve their lives and shape their own futures. By building skills and connecting people at all levels in society, they help communities deliver practical solutions with long term impact.

The Organizational Development (OD) Unit in the CUB plans to implement a Project on “Capacity Strengthening on Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation.” The project will entail cooperation with NGOs in Bangladesh, Nepal, and India, joined by the new partners Tarayana and Loden Foundation from Bhutan; and Shanshui, Non Profit Incubator; as well as Sichuan Haihui Poverty Alleviation Service Centre from China.

The vision of the OD unit is “self-sustaining local organization in the NGO sector throughout South Asia.” Where they provide capacity supports to their partners at four levels: (I) Individual level, (II) organizational level, (III) network / Sectoral level, and (IV) Enabling environment level.

CUB will provide support to partner NGOs in the areas of governance, participatory management, participatory community needs assessment, Internal impact assessment, thematic cross-cutting issues (i.e. gender, DRR, climate change, HIV/AIDS, environment etc.), project management including financial management, resource mobilization, development of policies, guidelines and planning, collaboration, networking and partnership.

Besides the signing of partnership agreement, participants were also introduced to the initiatives of partner NGOs in the Khulna District of Bangladesh with field trips, community meetings and a locally organized Climate Change Fair.
Tarayana celebrated its ninth birthday on the 4th of May at Thimphu’s Clock Tower Square. The 8th Annual Tarayana Fair was inaugurated on the 4th by Her Royal Highness Ashi Kesang Wangmo Wangchuck, the Hon’ble Chief Guest. The theme of the 2012 Fair was “Leveraging Cultural Heritage for Development.” The Fair was attended by their Royal Highnesses, Cabinet ministers, senior Government Officials, members of the International Corp and friends and supporters of Tarayana.

This year Dr. Jack Demos and the Surgicorps International team were the awardees for the Special Honor. Dr. Jack Demos and his father Mr. Anthony Demos accepted the citation on behalf of Surgicorps International.

Mr. Ryuusei Oya, Chairman, of Bussi-en, a Japanese Social Welfare Corporation, led a 19 member strong delegation of members of the Board and other office bearers in Bussi-en to Bhutan. They also attended the inaugural session of the Fair.

Ms. Reema Nanavaty of SEWA and her son Somnath; Monica Raina, coordinator of SABHA; and the famous designer Mr. Bhownick Subrata also participated in the inaugural session.

The Annual Tarayana Fair is one of the major events where members of rural communities sell their products and handicrafts. As part of this experience, they were able to learn firsthand which of their different products were most saleable in the market.

The Tarayana Fair, 2012 concluded with a grand dinner at the Terma Linca Resort, hosted by the Hon’ble President of Tarayana, Her Majesty the Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck. On behalf of Tarayana, Her Majesty thanked all the volunteers and members who made the Fair a success. In the spirit of volunteerism acclaimed singers joined in along with the wonderful dance performance by the beautiful Ms. Elena Vrublevskaya and a soulful Hawaiian song rendered masterfully by Ms. Kutira.

Since 1994, Surgicorps International has traveled the world in efforts to assist in and improve the delivery of health care to those in need. We’ve worked in 17 countries and have operated on over 3500 patients, and have received recognition and thanks from many different individuals and organizations. But the Certificate of Appreciation we recently received from Her Majesty Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck and the Tarayana Foundation is truly the most significant award/recognition that Surgicorps has ever received. The award ceremony attended by my Apa and I was absolutely wonderful, and is an experience that we will cherish for the rest of our lives. Our Certificate of Appreciation plaque initially spent time in Philadelphia, where my Father proudly displayed it to his employees and friends. When it arrives in Pittsburgh, it will assume a place of honor in our office, to be viewed on a daily basis by all our volunteers and visitors.

Message from Surgicorps’ Dr. Jack

I’d be happy to share my thoughts on our award from Tarayana. Here goes...

“The Annual Tarayana Fair is one of the major events where members of rural communities sell their products and handicrafts.”

But although the award and recognition are fantastic, even more important for Surgicorps is the special bond that has developed between our organization and the Land of the Thunder Dragon. We’ve made six mission trips to Bhutan thus far and on each trip we’ve thoroughly enjoyed working with members of the Tarayana Foundation and with our fellow Bhutanese counterparts--nurses, doctors, and other hospital personnel. We’ve been welcomed into your country, into your homes, and into your hearts with warmth, affection, and love, as we’ve become involved in the lives of so many of the wonderful people of your country. We’ve laughed with you, we’ve cried with you; we’ve shared hugs, tears, and smiles with you and your children; and we’ve watched as bodies have been mended, spirits lifted, and dreams fulfilled. You’ve allowed us to participate in the care of your loved ones, and we accept this responsibility with thanks and pride, as we treat each and every one of you as we would a family member. The trust that you’ve shown in our volunteers is yet another example of the wonderful relationship that exists between Surgicorps and all of Bhutan.

It was a pleasure and an honor for my Father and I to spend the weekend of May 4-6 with all of you at Tarayana’s Annual Fair. My only regret is that our entire Surgicorps International Family could not have been with us to receive such a meaningful award. On behalf of Surgicorps, I thank you again for the privilege of working in Bhutan. We look forward to a continued long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationship between two families that are indeed one--Tarayana and Surgicorps!!
Surgicorps’ 6th Mission to Bhutan

Surgicorps’ 6th mission to Bhutan resulted in 59 surgeries and 125 knee injections. The camp was held from 13th to 23rd of April 2012. In addition, Surgicorps’ first Dental Camp in Bhutan dramatically increased the number of Bhutanese served during the team’s week-long stay. Volunteer dentists made a difference in the lives of many school-age children from rural areas by teaching preventive care and providing treatment to many children who otherwise would have had no access to dental care. By week’s end, nearly 1,000 Bhutanese had been screened by the team.

Paro 2012 Day One – Reunion

Normally our first day of surgery is a bit hectic as we all get to know each other and settle into our respective roles, making sure that all of the equipment is functioning and patients are all scheduled, checked in and ready for surgery. However, this year our first day has gone very smoothly—almost too quiet. But then this afternoon we were treated to yet another remarkable Bhutanese moment.

Surgicorps has been coming to Paro, Bhutan every year to perform free reconstructive surgery since 2007. During that time, 314 patients ranging in age from 5 months to 72 years—although most are children—have benefited from the work of Surgicorps’ dedicated volunteers. One of the benefits of returning each year is the ability to perform needed follow-up procedures on the same child, and on occasion to experience the gratification of seeing the dramatic physical and functional changes that can occur as a result of the surgery. Today we had a double dose of Surgicorps smiles.

Wangdilla first came to the Paro Surgicorps Camp in 2007 when he was 51, several years after being viciously attacked by a bear. While the bear held his head in its mouth Wangdilla managed to pull his knife from his Gho and kill the bear. He was lucky to survive, but his face and head were very badly deformed and scarred as a result. That year, the surgeons were able to reconstruct his eye-sOCKET and provide some symmetry to his face. In 2010 he again made the three hour trip from his home village in central Bhutan for additional surgery. That year the surgeons did a staged reconstruction of his nose with a bone graft to provide shape, and additional eye reconstruction to create better symmetry between his eyes. The following year in 2011, the team reconstructed his eyelids and helped reduce the constant tearing. The surgeries went successfully, and we sent him off with a Surgicorps cap. To our surprise he made the trek again this year—and not for more surgery. As he explained, when he heard that the team was back in the country he wanted to come see us again to personally thank us for how we’ve helped his life, and to have his picture taken again with “Superman Jack”.

Not more than an hour later, we receive a message that Kinley Tshering was outside and wanted to see us. He first came to us in 2009 when he was 9 years old with serious burn scars over his chest and arms that severely constricted his arm movements. When he came into the room to see us, he raised his arms over his head with a big smile to show us all what a difference the surgery had made in his life, explaining that he wanted to come in person to thank us. All of us broke into big smiles and spontaneous applause. Once again the kind people of Bhutan reminded us that what we do, no matter how small, is very much appreciated and can change a life for the better forever.

The next day, as we were walking to the hospital from our hotel, we came upon a rock beautifully painted with the 8th century teachings of Guru Rinpoche. One passage in particular captured these experiences and the true spirit of Surgicorps volunteers:

Do not take lightly small misdeeds, Believing they can do no harm. Even a tiny spark of fire can set alight a mountain of hay.

Do not take lightly small good deeds, Believing that they can hardly help! For drops of water one by one, in time can fill a giant pot.

Tarayana sent ten participants under Joint Support Program, project titled “Capacity Development for Mainstreaming Environment, Climate change and poverty concerns in Policies, Plans and Programs” to train on Solar water heater and Solar cooker. Training on Solar thermal system was organized by Solar Energy Systems Pvt. Ltd, Kathmandu, Nepal in association with the Center for Energy Studies/Institute of Engineering/Tribhuvan University, Nepal and Tarayana Foundation, Bhutan.

The training sessions included overview presentation on Center for Energy Studies (CES) and ZERO Energy House and Introduction of Solar Thermal Energy System. An overview on Renewable energy technology in Nepal, as well as the development and present status of solar Thermal System in Nepal was also shared.

Different types of solar cooker construction and application, solar water heater, its components and basic knowledge of solar water heater plumbing, hot water distribution systems and insulation were presented to the trainees. The participants visited ZERO Energy House where staff demonstrated how a solar water heater works and were very enthusiastic and interested to learn. They mentioned that they had seen solar panels but didn’t know how they worked. At the end of the day, they understood how solar panels effectively heat water.

Training on Solar Thermal System

They visited the Renewable Energy Test Station (RETS) an autonomous body governed by Renewable Energy Test Station Rules framed under Nepal Academy of Science and Technology (NAST).

Trainees were divided into two groups in had hands-on experience in fitting and fixing of each system. They had opportunities of clearing their doubts while putting theory to practice. The participants found it easy to fabricate a solar dryer, providing that the materials would be available in Bhutan. But it was also noted that machines were needed to cut and shape the aluminum sheet metal, and the measurements must be accurate during the production. The participants travelled to Bajra Academy and Raji Bazar, where they viewed the Academy’s industrial solar cooking system and toured the school.

Later, participants received hands-on training in general assembly process, assembly of solar water heaters and interconnecting of solar water heater components and general plumbing layout for household purposes. Participants then went to Swamii Anand Arun’s residence at Osho Tapoban, Kathmandu to install an entire solar water heating system by themselves as an assignment and that was completed successfully.
The day at Tarayana was concluded with a lovely round of readings by three writers from different countries, Navdeep Suri, Shaiya Omar and Ali Asadi. Along with writings, films, music Mountain Echoes also packed in textile narratives, poetry, political boundaries and the stories planted at every step of a mountain path.

The two organizations will work in the areas of creating employment opportunities with the establishment of range of local industries using local materials. Learning through exchange of personnel will also be taken up to ensure rapid transfer of skills and hands on learning opportunities. Social inclusion will be focused upon and training of trainers will also be taken up in the areas of specialized care giving to senior citizens and people with special needs.

The mountains in Bhutan reverbereated again when Mountain Echoes came back with its 3rd edition.

Her Majesty Ashi Dorji Wangchuck, an author in her own right, His Excellency Prime Minister Lyompo Jigme Y Thinley, and Festival Directors Namita Gokhale and Pramod Kumar KG inaugurated the festival, while His Excellency Ambassador Pavam K Varma delivered the welcome address.

Pavam Varma then gave his welcome address, where he spoke of how the festival, which started as an experiment to bring together the best of creative writing from both India and Bhutan, has grown in three years. Mountain Echoes is now a landmark event on the literary calendar.

An important consequence of the festival has been that it has created a bridge between cultures. Since the time that the festival began, the participation of the Bhutanese counterpart has increased tremendously. Also, the festival has led to the discovery of the beautiful royal kingdom of Bhutan, a country still so deeply rooted in its culture.

The opening session of Mountain Echoes startet with an engaging and frank conversation between HM Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck and Indian Ambassador Pavam Varma. They discussed various aspects about the country starting from the roots of Bhutanese culture to rural empowerment, women as conduits for social change, the existential dilemmas faced by today’s generation, the relevance of Buddhism in daily life, and the future of the country’s unique concept of Gross National Happiness.

The Queen Mother spoke of all the efforts being made by the Tarayana Foundation towards the welfare of the Bhutanese people and said that as a nation they want the youth to inculcate the spirit of compassion and volunteering Kunzang Choden followed up on the subject of the youth and the Bhutanese spirit. The younger generation according to her is walking the razor’s edge and it is important for the elders to help them find the true Bhutanese spirit. On 21st may Directors Namita Gokhale and Pramod KG launched Mish’s Saran’s book, The Other Side of Light.

Mountain Echoes was packed with much to watch and learn for everyone. From cooking, films to photographs, from spirituality to music there was something for every person present at the festival. The first evening Delhi band Eka rocked the Clock Tower as they performed for an enthusiastic crowd cheering them song after song.

The conclusion of the day’s events took place at Taj Tashi with His Majesty launching Pramod KG’s book, Posing for Posterity; Royal Indian Portraits. The launch was done by His Majesty Ashi Sangay Choden Wangchuck.

In the lap of the beautiful Himalayan valley the next day of the festival began with a conversation on a forgotten film away in the busy suburb of Mumbai by Kajalina Swaminathan and Ishrat Syed. The second session for the day was an engaging and intimate discourse on the status of local Bhutanese languages. Dr. Karma Phuntsho introduced Kunzang Thinley. They talked of the efforts being put in to preserve the literary wealth of Bhutan, which has about 23 different languages spoken there.

The last session of the day aptly titled, Blessing of Bhutan summed up the festival as Dr. Karma Phuntsho and Sonam Jatso with Swati Chopra talked of Buddhism and how it guides every aspect of Bhutanese life from routine activities to national policies. They talked of Buddhism as an educational system that makes you look inward, at the psychology of the ordinary mind and how that mental state can slowly be transformed. The development policy of Bhutan follows the Buddhist philosophy of the middle path, achieving a balance between roots and wings, tradition and modernity.

The day moved to a lighter note as the audience tuned into a conversation on music between Vishal Bhwardaj, Rekha Bharadwaj, Ugyen Pande and Sonam Dorji. Sethya Saran asked all of them how music bridges the gap between the popular and the elite, between classical and contemporary traditions. Sonam Dorji spoke of traditional Bhutanese music and sang a small bit from the central and western parts of Bhutan classical music while Ugyen Pande spoke of how he was influenced by Bollywood music.

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The festival drew to an end but the authors, audience and organizers were all gear up for the next edition.
The school was closed for the day, but members of the Tarayana Club and The Scouts gathered together in the school parking at 10am in the morning on Monday, 23rd of April 2012. Along with the members, a lot of things that were to be given away to the less fortunate were stacked up and under the supervision of the team leaders ma’am Namkha Lhamo and ma’am Pema Choiden, students and Scouts loaded these items onto our school bus. Together we drove to the Junglee Camp, a few miles away from the Thimphu Gate. The camp inhabitants crowded around the bus as students and Scouts distributed the give-away clothing and other day-to-day necessities into their eager hands.

After the give away, the members, each carrying a sack, picked up the litter in the area to ensure the healthy living of the people there. The collected litter was later brought to our school and disposed off properly. The members also visited the homes of camp residents and came to learn about their living and working conditions, the hardships they have to face with every rise of the sun. The members also listened to what the people there had to say and promised to help them as much as possible.

The first ever Tarayana-Scouts joint campaign with 15 students and 2 teachers, not forgetting the driver Pemba, a total of 18 people in action was a tremendous success.

Ms. Dechen
Tarayana Club Member
Yangchenphu Higher Secondary School