



Service from the heart

# In Touch

## Tarayana Newsletter

Vol 1 Issue 2- July 2009

### *Monpa Community Development Initiatives:*

Skills up gradation is an essential part of human resources development and as we face new issues and challenges in facilitating holistic development from village to village, we have often had to shift gears and fortify ourselves with the required skills and capacities. All Tarayana Field Officers and Programme Officers recently spent a week at the Rural Development Training Institute in Zhemgang attending an intensive residential needs based management training. It is hoped that the need for good proposals, smart strategic interventions and measurable indicators are met now that this training has happened!! It is also hoped that the documentation and reporting from the field is improved.

The group also revisited various tools used to ensure participatory rural development, learnt new ice breakers and community mobilization as well as coordination skills. The main role of Tarayana as a facilitator in taking up holistic rural development initiatives was emphasized. The importance of really listening to rural communities and working together with them in planning realistic project activities in an inclusive manner was highlighted. Various non verbal tools to ensure the full participation of the community members was also practiced and deliberated upon.

These training sessions also help in fostering team spirit and sort out any project implementation difficulties. In addition, it also gives the group time to learn and grow together in the service of those who need a helping hand.

We take this opportunity to thank Mr. Chhimi Dorji, the Director, RDTC, who facilitated the workshop and gave his unstinted support. We also thank Mr. Kesang Wangdi, Director General of the Tourism Council of Bhutan for his support. This training session was a big success and we thank all the staff of RDTC for making it possible.

The Monpa Community consists of three very vulnerable villages, Wangling, Jangbi and Phumzur in Langthel geog, Trongsa. These villages fall within the Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park and their way of life has changed drastically in the last decade and a half. The Monpas have been described as the "People of Darkness" or those living in the absence of compassion generated by the Buddhist religion. It is believed that their ancestors refused hospitality to the Great Indian Saint Guru Padmasambhava who passed through the area in route to Bumthang. The Monpas were animists that predated Buddhism and were hunter gatherers, totally dependent on the forest resources for their food shelter and livelihood. The Monpas are very simple people and traditionally paid taxes to the Central Government in nettle ropes and fabric for bags. They still live simple lives and do not use new technologies in improving their agricultural yields. Their lives have changed with the nationalization of the forest resources and with the declaration of the National Park that imposed several rules and regulations in the utilization of their natural resources.

The Monpas began to cultivate crops by gradually clearing some parts of the forest lands and settled down in designated villages. The old practice of slash and burn agriculture had slowly been replaced by permanent cultivation. Recently with the implementation of small projects and the opening up of the winter trekking route through their community the Monpas are witnessing tremendous economic and social changes.

Tarayana has been working with the Monpas for the last six years. The community send their children to Jangbi Community Primary School, where Tarayana provides the third meal in the informal boarding to ensure that the children stay in school. In addition, the children were also supplied with blankets, mattresses and sheets. A hostel matron was placed briefly as it was felt that the small children needed better supervision and care. However, this was discontinued when the trained matron was absorbed into a contractual agreement with the Department of Education and placed elsewhere. Tarayana Foundation has carried out needs assessment and have started promoting organic kitchen gardening, straw mushroom cultivation, and awareness of nutritional health and personal hygiene. The Monpas have also been introduced to the principles of natureco farming and given skills in soil management and natural methods of composting and improving soil fertility



*"We believe that our failure in serving the Guru Rinpoche when he passed through our villages in the 8th century has resulted in our remaining backward. Legend has it that one compassionate Khandum will spearhead our development. Our time has come, our Khandum is none other than Her Majesty Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck"*

- Late Tsampa Toula



*"Happiness is ...*

*... when your heart is content in others' happiness.*

*Tshewang R. Wangchuk, Wildlife Biologist, Bhutan*

## Small success makes a big difference in the lives of rural community

*From dependency to provider the humble stinging nettle broadens livelihood opportunities in Beling, Trongsa*



Aum Tshendu, a 47 year old woman from Beling, Trongsa, is now a professional nettle weaver. Initially Aum Tshendu worked with her family on the farm that they share cropped. In addition she learnt how to weave from her mother from an early age as most young girls in

the eastern part of the country still do. She wove cotton and teri-cotton fabric during the off farm season to supplement the family income. She, however, had not woven nettle before. Aum Tshendu is the eldest in her family, she has two sisters and one brother. Her husband Dorjila is a farmer; they have three sons and one daughter. Two of her sons are studying in Varanasi, India, the third son is a monk in Kalimpong, India and her daughter is studying in Langthel Lower Secondary School in Trongsa. Aum Tshendu said she is able to bear all her children's expenses by marketing her nettle fabric.

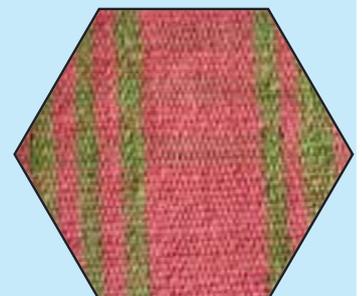
In 2005, Dawa Tshering, the Tarayana Field Officer, nominated her as one of the candidates to be trained in nettle weaving. Dawa himself had undergone an intensive hands-on training in natural dyeing and nettle weaving in Almora, India. A consultation process was initiated with the Beling community and the interested people were trained in sustainable nettle raw material collection, processing these into nettle fibres, spun into nettle yarns using drop spindles and finally weaving the dyed yarns

into rough nettle fabric that could be used as bed runners, place mats and traditional luggage bags.

Today, twenty one women from the community actively weave nettle fabric. To make their work productive they have formed a self help group where Aum Tshendu is the chairperson. She directs and organizes the activities related to nettle weaving in Beling village. She is also responsible for the dissemination of nettle weaving and natural dyeing processes. The community also use the work shed as a meeting as well as an entertainment venue. They receive visitors and guests to their community at the community workshed. The weavers are also trained in natural ways of dyeing using commonly available plants, herbs and fruits. The installation of two large looms donated by the Department of Trade has become one of their main sources of income. Aum Tshendu feels that her life has become more comfortable after being a member of the nettle weaving group.

Aum Tshendu and two other members of the self help group were trained in the use of these large looms. The training was organised by the Department of Trade and the Handicraft Association of Bhutan jointly. One of the main objective of the training was to increase the efficiency and production capacity of Bhutan Textile Weavers. Aum Tshendu wishes that she was young so that she has more time to learn new methods of weaving and enhance her skills further.

Let's hear it for grassroots leaders like Aum Tshendu who in their own ways are bringing about great socio-economic transformation of their village.



## Management Training for Tarayana Staff

*Mr. Chhimi Dorji, Director of RDTC facilitated the training programme.*

*Rural Development Training Centre is where the Tarayana staff found the most beautiful and calm place to recharge.*



A week long management training was conducted at the Rural Development Training Centre (RDTC) for all Tarayana Field as well as Programme Officers. The course was facilitated and organised by Mr. Chhimi Dorji, Director, RDTC. The topics and modules were selected after a special needs assessment of the group. The residential training opportunity allowed for better team building through the joint participation of both field and programme officers. They were better able to understand the importance of consultation, planning, implementation as well as monitoring, and evaluation processes better. The newer staff at Tarayana also managed to imbibe quickly the ethos, philosophy and work culture adopted for better synergies. All appreciated the great sense of appreciation for the work being done every member of the team in reaching out to our target villages.

The training included sessions on reviewing PRA techniques and tools that could be used in the remote communities to ensure inclusive decision making processes. The modules included some theoretical and many practical sessions. Team building and appreciation exercises were also included so that the important role played by all members of the Tarayana family was better understood and appreciated. It was noted that for the smooth functioning of Tarayana, every individual had an important role to play in helping to realise the dreams and objectives of our villages.

One of the biggest challenges was that of proper reporting and documentation. It was noted that the field reports coming in was not adequate to capture all that was going on in the implementation of various project activities. Hence the documentation at the head Office was also found to be lacking. It is also hoped that the field team will be able to send in better reports and that the overall documentation will be improved with the added skills gained from this training with special emphasis on correct reporting of both the constraints as well as achievements. Process reporting was also encouraged.

Tarayana is grateful to the Director and staff of RDTC for their hospitality and for hosting this training. We also take this opportunity to thank the Director General, Tourism Council of Bhutan and Ata Lobsang for helping out with the transport arrangement.



## Tarayana Fair 2009

The 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Tarayana Fair was organized at the Clock Tower Square from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> May 2009. The fair was inaugurated by Her Royal Highness Ashi Kesang Wangmo Wangchuck; the fair was also attended by Her Majesty Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck, HRH Ashi Sonam Dechan Wangchuck and HRH DASHO Jigyel Ugyen Wangchuck. Many officials from the government, representative of international organization, members of parliament, Tarayana Board of Trustees, members and the local business community in addition to the friends and volunteers of Tarayana and representatives of the remote communities where Tarayana works, were present.

The fair featured games stalls, silent auction, jumble sale, a snacks bar and information centre. The trainees of Post Graduate Diploma in Public Administration at the Royal Institute of Management volunteered and ran the stalls. Other volunteers included the talented face painters and young professionals who had volunteered in the past years too. Representatives from the communities exhibited and marketed their products and collected market feedback first hand.

“In Touch - Tarayana Newsletter” was also launched during the inaugural session of the Fair.



## *In Brief*

### *Six matrons trained by Tarayana placed in Government schools*

The six matrons trained by Tarayana were selected and placed in schools in different Dzongkhag on a two year contract with the Department of Education. They are placed at Langthel Lower Secondary School in Trongsa, Thongmizangsa Lower Secondary School in Tashiyangtse, Khoma Lower Secondary School in Lhuentse, Kamji Lower Secondary School in Chukha, Sengdhen Community Primary School in Samtse and Bjishong Middle Secondary School in Gasa.

### *Training on new loom*

Three Nettle weaver of Beling attended a training conducted jointly by the Handicraft Association of Bhutan and Department of Trade with financial support from UNDP. The objective of the training was to increase the efficiency and production capacity of Bhutanese textile weavers. The seventeen days of training was started from 7<sup>th</sup> and ended on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2009. The training also included Basic Production and Cost Management System. The Department of Trade kindly provided the weavers group of Beling with a Loation loom.

### *Cane and bamboo planting completed in Kalapong*

Sonam Jamtsho, Silambi field officer accompanied by three other Tarayana staff recently completed planting cane and bamboo at the Kalapang site that has been ear-marked for the establishment of the Cane and Bamboo Development Centre. The team was there for 21 days



## Why I volunteer for Tarayana.



When I was asked, why I volunteer for Tarayana, I was dumbfounded by the question. Even when I sit to pen down, my mind goes blank. However, upon deeper contemplation, I realize that I have several reasons.

First and foremost, is the inspiration drawn from the Founder, Her Majesty Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck's noble and tireless efforts to bring light and hope for people literally living in darkness of poverty and hopelessness. I met beneficiaries who expressed gratitude not in words but through honest drops of tears.

I do volunteer for this charitable foundation as members and volunteers consistently come and work together to learn and share values of humane endeavour that brings lasting and positive change in far-flung communities of the country – 'service from the heart'.

I volunteer mostly during the annual Tarayana Fair as people of different generations flock for fun and friend. I feel the wave of positive energy and pure spirit in the air engulfing the congregation. What more of Tara's compassion can we ask for? What more for a Volunteer than to be a part of a meaningful and happy celebration.

Yet still, I cannot answer why I volunteer in a nutshell.

Tashi Tshering  
Volunteer

## AP PHURBA



Ap Phurba is one of Tarayana's beneficiaries. He is 86 years old, has no family or close friends and is from Dagana.

Growing up, he never had anyone that he could count on and look upto. His parents died when he was young and his grandparents looked after him. He joined the army when he was a teenager and served for 23 years. He had a wife and 3 children who died under unfortunate circumstances and has ever since then, been working here and there with no one by his side. He worked in other people's villages building houses and farming for food and shelter.

He came to Thimphu to look around and decided to stay here. It has now been 12 years since he last saw Dagana. He suffers from chronic depression and was admitted to the JDWNRH hospital. He was bought to Tarayana by Tshering Yangzom, the then Executive Director of the Foundation. As a beneficiary, he lived with Ap Jochu in Mothithang for two years. He now lives at the Guest House at the hospital and eats from there. His companions comprise of the different patients that come to stay at the guest house. He has some Shar chop Aums and a boy in a wheelchair who he is close to; the only people in his life that he can talk to and be comfortable by in addition to the Tarayana staff.

## In Brief



### **Solar lights installed the Barefoot way**

200 solar home lighting sets were received from the Barefoot College in Tilonia through a project funded by Foundation Ensemble and GEF-SGP. Thinley Bidha and respective members of the Barefoot Women Solar Engineers Association of Bhutan recently completed installing in Nagor and Silambi (Mongar) Phushina (Chukha) and Rukha (Wangdue Dzongkhag)

### **Book into third edition and selling well**

Meiko San, a long time friend and sponsor of Tarayana is contributing all proceeds from the sale of her new book. As of now the book is selling well in Japan. The Nikkei News paper (Financial Times of Japan) recently published a very good review that accelerated the sales to the top 17<sup>th</sup> in sales at Amazon.com of Japan beating all the comic books. Tarayana has earmarked this donation for the midday meal programme for students in community schools.

### **Tarayana Centre, Chubachu**

Tarayana Secretariat finally moved into the Tarayana Centre at Chubachu on the 14th of July 2009. The new Tarayana Centre was sponsored by Jaiprakash Group of Companies and was contracted to Damchu Constructions. The work took more than three years to complete at a cost of Nu.3.6 crores. The Centre will be formally inaugurated as soon as all the small finishing touches are completed in making the Centre functional. All furniture procurement for the new centre was sponsored by Ms. Serena Chopra, a long time friend and sponsor of Tarayana. We are grateful to both Jaiprakash (for the buildings) and Ms. Serena Chopra (furniture) for helping us.



## *Cane and Bamboo Products*



Bamboo is a very versatile material with a short growth cycle. It can be harvested in two to three years versus ten to fifty years for most softwoods and hardwoods. Some species grow as much as four feet a day. Bamboo can be harvested and replenished with virtually no impact to the environment. It can be selectively harvested annually and is capable of regeneration without being replanted.

Cane and bamboo products commonly known as Tsharzo in Bhutan have been very useful and popular in the country. These products have been woven in different designs like Bangchung, Lackchung, Bangthra, Bekhur, and Boelo for different uses and are still being woven by most Bhutanese farm families. Bamboo is becoming an increasingly important resource as a wood alternative. Cane and Bamboo are two important resources for almost all the rural people.

Silambi Geog, one of the most remote geog under Mongar Dzongkhag is now actively involved in weaving Cane and Bamboo products. Tarayana has been working with the local communities under Silambi geog for the past three years as Bamboo and cane resources are being used extensively at the household level. At present there are two hundred thirty household under Silambi geog in five different villages (Nagor, Gyalgon, Wama, Dak and Silambi). The villagers own very limited land and the output from the land is very poor. Besides subsistence farming Cane and Bamboo products bring in cash income. To make their work productive community work sheds with solar lighting was provided in every village. The provision of skills training and distribution of simple tools in collaboration with the Department of Industries have contributed to improving the finished products. The cane and bamboo work sheds have made significant strides in product standardization. All the participants come to the work shed after the field work and during off farm season and work together. They always try to come out with new designs and products such as bamboo basket that would be more attractive to the customer and they share ideas and learn among themselves. They made alternative days to work in the field and in the work shed, they also appointed the master craftsman to coordinate and facilitate skills transfer activities. The current revenue scheme at the work sheds results in the profit from each products going directly to the farmer. The work sheds are also being used as community meeting venues and for other purposes pertaining to community development training and get together.

To ensure sufficient raw materials availability and to avoid the difficulty in collecting the raw materials from the forest, the community members started planting Yula, Cane and Bamboo in the community forest. The communities have taken up Cane and Bamboo plantation in fifty four acres. In addition, Tarayana has five acres of land on long term lease in Kalapang, Mongar, which would serve as the site for the construction of the bamboo and cane development training centre.

Today, one hundred forty three individuals from Silambi geog are actively involved in weaving Cane and Bamboo products as the main cash income source. The end products are marketed through the Tarayana Rural Craft outlets in Thimphu and Lobesa. The products are also promoted and marketed during the Annual Tarayana Fair, National Craft Festival and other festivals and local Tshechus.

## *Transforming bamboo into beautiful bangchungs in Silambi Geog*



Tashi Tshering is 28 year old cane and bamboo weaver from Gyelgoan village, Silambi geog under Mongar Dzongkhag, one of the most vulnerable and hard to reach communities in the country. It is three days walk from the nearest road head. He started learning Cane and Bamboo weaving from his father when he was eleven year old. His first products included traditional Bangchungs, Lachungs, bamboo baskets and ropes.

His family owns limited land and the yield was very poor due to which they had to go through seasonal food shortage and the possession of cane and bamboo weaving did not bring them any financial relief due to transportation difficulties. Having to carry their products to Mongar was an arduous task with them not able to hire people to carry the products nor meet the transportation fare. They marketed their products within the community, not a very viable option with the community members also having more or less no income source.

Tarayana Foundation stepped in with a cane and weaving project funded by the Small Grants Project in 2006 with a field officer

based in the community. Based on the needs expressed during the consultative rounds, Tarayana provided training to improve skills in weaving cane and bamboo to those who were interested in weaving; they were trained to make different design to meet the customers' demands. They were also provided with agricultural hand tools and seeds to improve their food security at the household level. Moreover the Foundation helped them market their cane and bamboo product during the Tarayana Annual Fair and other festivals initially. Now the community is able to take up marketing initiatives on their own. Today most of the community members are engaged in cane and bamboo weaving. He says "I did not believe that it was achievable for a poor community to sell their products in the Capital and improve our living conditions by our cane and bamboo weaving skills".

Tashi Tshering happily notes the dramatic changes coming about in his community with the recent implementation of the housing improvement project initiated based on popular demand from the community. The installation of solar sets recently by the Barefoot Solar Engineers, trained and equipped by Tarayana with support from SGP and Barefoot Collage, Tilonia was very welcomed by the communities. Tashi Tshering considers himself very fortunate to have Tarayana working at the grassroots to help them help themselves.



### *Profiling Sonam Jamtsho, Field Officer, Silambi, Mongar*

Sonam Jamtsho was born on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1984 in Gyelposhing, Mongar Dzongkhag. He started going to school at the age of five and was known to be a good student. He was known to be a hardworking and diligent student. He studied till class ten but was not able to continue further due to economic reasons. He served as Non-Formal Education Instructor for five years and was posted in Broksar, a small village in Saling geog, when Tarayana found him. The Secretary General and a member of the Tarayana Executive Committee was on a consultative visit to Silambi Geog before the start of Tarayana's intervention in the geog. They were impressed by the serious intent of this young man in the service of the rural community that went over the call of duty.

In 2006, when he approached the Foundation for an opportunity to serve, Tarayana nominated him as the Field Officer in Silambi geog, Mongar Dzongkhag and empowered him to work on behalf of the Foundation in serving the larger communities of Silambi geog. He has been working in Silambi geog since then. Today he is well known and highly regarded in the villages under Silambi geog as he has been working in close collaboration with the people.

Sonam Jamtsho has attended several training and skills up gradation including hands on training in organic farming principles, cane and bamboo product designing and quality standardisation, project proposal writing and reporting. He is also the Officer-In-Charge of the Kalapong Cane and Bamboo Development Centre that is in the planning stage.

Sonam Jamtsho is happily married to Ms. Thuji Wangmo of Lhuentse. They have two children Jigme Dechen Dorji aged five Tshering Lhamo aged two. All of them live in Nagor, Werelingla Dungkhag, Mongar, where he is stationed and lives a simple humble lifestyle in helping rural households help themselves. The nearest road head is three days away from Nagor and life is hard in general but more so for Sonam who takes it upon himself to show others the way of selfless service. Tarayana salutes our diligent Field Officer.

“ Working with the community and making them self sufficient  
is my happiness ”

- Sonam Jamtsho

## From the Tarayana School Clubs

The day looked glorious with bright sunshine and a pleasant atmosphere. My heart was filled with immense happiness; we were going for a trip to the dog pound in Meme Lhakha.

I thought we would enjoy our trip. We the Tarayana Club Members gathered in the school and at around 11:30 am we started our journey in a bus to the dog pound in Meme Lhakha which is about ten kilometres outside Thimphu town. We took some cooked rice and some uncooked rice, on the way we asked for food stuffs from the nearby shops and households so that we could take for those poor hungry dogs who were residing in a prison like pound at Meme Lhakha.

We did enjoy our journey; there was singing and chatting amongst ourselves in the bus. After an hour we reached the dog pound. My thoughts of a great time faded as we stood in front of those dogs in the large iron cage. My heart became so cold that tears started to flow from my eyes. For a moment I felt as if I was in hell.

We saw that the dogs were suffering bitterly from great hunger. Unless we visit the area we would not have any compassion, kindness and generosity for the street dogs. The stray dogs were locked up separately in different cages according to their size and health. Healthy and big dogs were kept at one side whereas weak and small ones at another side. There we could see many problems arising due to hunger. The big dogs tend

to bite up the small ones for the food which we threw to them. They were so hungry that they all rushed up and in the process some weak ones were stamped and some were even killed. For a while I was shocked to see the condition and then I thought that this is how poverty leads to death.

We fed the dogs with rice and breads but we are not very sure whether every one of them got their share or not. Then we did some cleaning of the place. The pound was so dirty so we helped in thorough cleaning of the pound.

We washed our hands and embarked on our journey back to home. Our trip had been fruitful but my heart still aches when I think about those poor hungry dogs, who cried after us when we were returning. I never thought that the day which started so cheerfully would end this way.

The pound at Meme Lhakha has been closed with all the dogs transferred to Serbithang, where members of the Jangsa Trust, RSPCA and the Department of Livestock help provide care and shelter for these dogs. Now the dog pound is provided with full time workers by the members of the Jangsa Trust.

**Tandin Namgay**  
**Tarayana Club Member**  
**Jigme Namgyal Lower Secondary School**



### Upcoming Events

#### July, August & September 2009

- July 4- Aug 3 : Student interns from Santhigiri College, Kerela
- July 14 : Move into the Tarayana Centre
- Sept : Lhops in Focus: a photo exhibition
- Sept 24-11 Oct: Organic production hands on training facilitated by Vanya Orr
- Sept 25-30 : PeaceComm 4 Monitoring and Planning Meeting hosted by Tarayana

### Support Tarayana

You can help the most vulnerable members of our society when you support Tarayana. We operate on the financial support of individuals and organizations. No contribution is too small for Tarayana as we are work at the grassroots level.

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.