In Touch
Tarayana Newsletter
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Service from the heart

Happiness is ...

.....exploring inner-self, understanding peace of mind and being content mentally, physically and spiritually ”

Karma Norbu
Volunteer

As thousands of young men and women graduate from the formal education processes and enter into the job market there seem to be a disproportionately high number left without suitable employment. This is true for rural youth who have completed various levels of education and are trying to break into the job market. There is a serious dichotomy between what is available in the job market and the expectation of the aspirants. In this connection Tarayana would like to salute all the young men and women who have taken up various Government positions to serve in the remote corners of the country as well as those who have taken on the task of providing basic amenities in their communities as private micro-entrepreneurs.

Tarayana works in some of the most remote and difficult to reach areas of the country. This is possible because of the services of young individuals who are willing to take on the adventure of learning more about the rural communities, willing to live, learn as well as share what they know, thus working together with local communities to make a positive impact creating a win-win atmosphere for one and all.

It is possible for sincere dedicated service when they are young, physically able to take on the challenges of a rugged terrain and mentally prepared for self learning and discipline. It is also in this connection that we notice more young men and women coming forward to take on the challenges of providing basic services in remote villages while earning a small income. Simple services like the skills of a good tailor, a trained hair dresser, a barber, a daycare unit, a good baker, and the list could go on to include computer skills and photo studios as electricity reaches them, would all add to making the village more livable and vibrant. It is generally the absence of even the basic services apart from what the Government provides that have contributed to the push factor of educated youth out of the rural areas.

There is policy support, political will and donor commitment in developing rural enterprises. It is the right time to take charge of development initiatives as private citizens to make our rural communities vibrant and we hope that many more youth will follow the example set by these young men and women.

In consultation with the community members, it was identified that the cultivation of Medicinal, Aromatic and Dye plants like indigo, turmeric and ginger would greatly benefit them as they have suitable soil and climatic conditions for such an operation as well as a ready market at the Institute of Medicinal Service as well as in the local weavers. Cultivation of the plants is being done with technical assistance from the National Organic Programme, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

The Monpa community members constructed the sheds needed to house the Natural Dye Unit at Tongtongphey. The Dyeing Unit equipment have recently been installed. The dye unit was set as a pilot to help local communities use natural resources that are abundantly available around them to earn cash income and to provide gainful employment. The concept of using primary metabolites like leaves to extract dyes is significantly more sustainable and cost effective when compared to using secondary metabolites from fruits and roots. Dr. Sharda of Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University and her team installed the equipment and also conducted a basic handlers training.

Dr. Sharda visited the Weaving SHG in Beling on 13th August 2010 to share her skills in natural dyeing. Several natural dyes produced from India were shown to the weaving group that stirred their interest. She mentioned that natural dyes can be extracted from most the plants that are available in Trongsa. Dr. Sharda also mentioned about the fiber being produced from the Banana Trees. This was new knowledge for the weaving group. She showed some product samples made out of banana fiber and suggested that the weaving group consider this as another fibre to work with. The group showed their great enthusiasm as they pointed out that it would be easier to collect banana trees than nettle barks! With those she also taught the weaving group how to make shirts, jackets and other cloths from nettle fiber from which they could earn more than bed runners and table mats.

Dr. Sharda also noted down the available trees in the vicinity so that she could check if these could be used for dyeing purpose and teach them when she come back from India in October. The training on collection, processing and packaging of the natural dyes will be undertaken by Dr. Sharda during her next visit in October. The Unit is slated to be fully functional by the end of October 2010.
Exposure Visit and Hands-on Training Program in India

Nine Tarayana staff attended a training program at Jhansi, India, to enhance their aptitude in making low cost environmentally friendly building materials. They were also trained in the use of Multi-purpose Flying Shuttle Loom and Handmade paper making machines.

The training was conducted at TARAgam, Development Alternatives, Orchha, in India from 28th August till 5th of September 2010. It was facilitated by Mr. Shrashtant Patara, Vice President, Mr. Vijay, Director for Business Development, Mr. Madhuan Pandey and Mr. Vivek, Program Managers of Development Alternatives.

Development Alternatives (DA) is a non-profit research and development organization involved in innovations, social enterprise and action. Established in 1982 in New Delhi, India, the organization develops Eco-Solutions and implements programmes for poverty eradication and environment regeneration.

Technology and Action for Rural Advancement (TARA) is a social enterprise of The DA Group that pioneers business approaches to help local entrepreneurs for the improvement of rural lives.

The team visited TARA Nirman Kendra- a center engaged in manufacturing and marketing of eco-friendly building materials like Mud Block, Micro Concrete Roofing Tiles, Paper production and designing paper product, Interlocking Tiles and Solid concrete bricks. They were provided with hands-on learning on making building materials. The team was excited to learn so many relevant new skills that has great potential for immediate adoption in their respective field sites.

The team also visited a Community Radio Station in Bundelkhand. Through the community radio, they broadcast information about agriculture, culture and heritage, the importance of reading and many more from which the community members can learn new lessons and enhance with awareness of many socio-economic as well as political and legal issues. They also introduced folk singers to encourage them to continue singing. Through the community radio, they were also provided a platform from where the voice of the community members could be heard on pressing issues within their community, region and the country at large.

The team visited the Shire Ram Raja Gaushala- Renewable Energy (bio-gas) formed by Women Self Help Groups. The SHG produce electricity for nearby households by using Biogas. From that electricity, the community members were able to fulfil their basic needs like home lighting, watch television, use fans and refrigerators at their homes.

The team also visited the Paper factory and Paper Product Designing Centre where they learned recycled paper making process and new paper product designs. The team was briefed about TARAhaat and TARA Akshar. TARAhaat is a Vocational Training Institute where they train the community members in computer skills, they offer Diploma course to the students. Under TARAhaat they also have TARA Akshar which offers Non-formal Education to illiterate women in the communities so they can learn how to read and write in Hindi.

The facilitators took the team to visit TARA loom weaving. There they had an opportunity to learn how to setup TARA loom and how to weave on that loom. The team noted that the way of weaving on the TARA loom was the same as our traditional weaving (Trutha). The team also had an opportunity to see how they make TARA machines in their factory in Delhi.

The team found the training course to be very helpful for them. They noted that it will be cost-effective if the building material machines introduced to them will be used in the field. It will help cut down the cost spent for building materials and CGI sheets for housing construction.

The Facilitators Mr. Madhuan Pandey and Vivek, Program Manager of DA Group awarded the certificate of participation to the Tarayana team on 5th September 2010.

The team returned with great enthusiasm and passion to put their learning into practice. Each one brought a valuable skill that will contribute towards the enhancement of rural development in the remote corners of our country.
Ms Wangmo, Program Officer, attended a training program on “IT Capacity Building for Women” in South Korea. The two-week training course was jointly organized by the Ministry of Gender Equality & Family, Korea Productivity Center and International Women and Family Foundation from 23rd August to 3rd September 2010.

The training program was specifically designed to reduce the gender digital divide and enhance the competitiveness of women in developing economies in the Asia-Pacific and Africa region. It also presented a women-centric informatization education model to train women policy officials and IT managers and staff in the digital era, and operate an IT application training combined with management activities to support the efforts in enlarging the role of women in the society.

The participants were taught about the responsible use of internet. They were enlightened on internet addiction as a social problem and the harms caused by it. In one case story presented, a woman could not live without communicating with her cyber husband as she was addicted to the internet to the point of even neglecting her everyday life.

They learnt the importance of IT and its application in their own respective country/organization. With the advances achieved by Korea in the field of e-government, the participants were very impressed at the transformation of government services delivery and how it has brought these services right to their finger tips.

The participants thoroughly enjoyed both the study visits and lecturers on IT development in Korea. The training was found very useful and educative. It was a whole new experience and a great exposure for them in the field of ICT and its applications. The participants also had networking opportunities and were happy to share and learn from each other. Participants were overwhelmed by the commitment and support rendered by the KPC and its members during their 12 days of stay in KOREA.

Upon her return Wangmo has been entrusted to various office processes more efficient through the use of IT wherever possible. She is also in the process of creating reliable database for the Tarayana School Clubs as well as for the various communities that Tarayana serves.
Tarayana Rural Crafts Updates

Tarayana Rural Crafts was recently renovated and extended to give it a new look this season. It is geared to strengthen sale of rural craft products on behalf of our communities in remote villages.

The Rural Crafts had been temporarily moved to the Alaya Gallery while the renovation was going on. This moved back to its old location on the 10th of September, 2010 after the completion of the renovation. Asha Karma of VAST Gallery helped design the lay-out and product display.

Early this month, a Tarayana Rural Crafts counter was set up at the Paro International Airport. This was officially launched by Her Majesty Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck on 25th September, 2010. The counter is managed by Ms. Pema, our recently recruited sales person, as graduate from Nazhohn Petri Skills Centre, Punakha.

Tarayana Rural Crafts participated in the Annual Craft festival which was held from 14th -19th September, 2010 at the Changlimithang parking. The festival was organized by the Textile Museum in collaboration with UNDP.

A team of 35 people comprising of artisans, artist, performer & volunteers will attend the Dastkar Nature Bazaar exhibition which is scheduled for 21st-31st October, 2010 in Delhi. The main objective of participating in this event is to promote the arts and crafts made by rural communities of Bhutan as well as to provide an opportunity for them to gain exposure through interaction with various artisans from India.

In Brief

Book Keeping Training Given to The Community Members

A basic book keeping and cost of production calculation training was conducted for various Self Help Groups in Langthel jointly by the Marketing Officer and the Field Officer in June and a follow up was conducted in July by the Finance & Program Officers. They went to the field to teach the self help groups about keeping proper accounts of the work they do, and also to track their production costs so that they are aware of their actual costs and work towards proper pricing. This would also make them understand whether their activities are cost effective or not and work towards being more efficient as well as setting realistic prices based on the market rates for their products. They were also informed about wholesale rates and retail rates and how these worked. The Nettle Weaving group from Beling & Candle and Soap making group from Endocholing showed so much enthusiasm and repeatedly mentioned that they looked forward to these training as it helped them improved their business sense and that the previous training given by our Marketing Officer had benefited them already.

Finance Officer started off by going through the book of accounts that the group had maintained. It was kept simple and understandable for themselves. The people from Jangbi and Phumzur mentioned that they would like to form saving scheme for the natural dyes and organic farming. She also familiarized the members about the Micro-credit scheme of Tarayana. They were excited and said that they will form a group and start saving before availing the micro-credit loans as this was a pre-requisite.
Basic Marketing Skills Training For Rural Craft Staff

Tarayana Rural Craft Staff were trained on marketing and general selling techniques on 3rd September at the Alaya Gallery. It was facilitated by Lars Voskuil, a Hollander working as a volunteer for “The Journalist.” With the help of Tarayana Marketing Officer, Karma Choden and a volunteer from America, Akayah, the marketing team were also trained on inventory keeping for a more organized tracking of product supply, sales and revenues.

Familiarization of Tarayana’s vision, mission and programs implemented across all project sites were done to ensure each staff can articulate what Tarayana is doing whenever they’re asked by a local or foreign customer.

Mr. Voskuil stressed the importance of interacting with the customers. As a foreigner, he would be interested to know the story behind every rural craft product. Providing more information on what material a product was made of, how it can be used, how long did it take a villager to finish one, and how each product sold can make a difference to the lives of community people will help in marketing an item to a potential buyer.

A role playing was initially sampled Karma Choden and Akayah to demonstrate the different kinds of customers and the strategies to approach them. All staff took turns in playing the role of a sales attendant as part of the practical application.

The one-day workshop is a great learning experience for them. The enhancement of their marketing skills and increased knowledge on Tarayana’s programs have given them much confidence in dealing with the customers during this year’s tourist season.

Tarayana office staff have started weekly staff meetings to enhance communication, co-ordination and planning of tasks more efficiently. They are also revising office systems and putting in more efficient protocols to help handle all the increasing programmes and activities more effectively. During these meetings issues impending effective implementation are thrashed out and mutually agreed upon solutions sought and applied. Everyone shares their ideas on how to improve work productivity and efficiency to enable the team to help more people in the rural communities.
A two-day Workshop on First Responder and Disaster Preparedness was held on the 12th and 13th of July at the Tarayana Conference hall. Two American medical volunteers through the Bhutan Foundation, namely Nicholas Manice and Taylor Nelip facilitated the workshop.

Dr. Katherine Jones, an American Psychologist, also shared some information on how to deal with victims of disasters mentally and emotionally. She mentioned that severe trauma would disrupt normal mental and emotional conditions, thus, requiring the responder to be attentive and equipped to handle these conditions as well.

The workshop was quite comprehensive and covered the essential procedures to be followed during various disastrous situations including earthquakes, floods, storms, landslides and fires. Basic First Aid and Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) was also taught. The difference between conducting CPR on children and adults were highlighted. Emphasis was given on translating theoretical knowledge into practice. Afternoon sessions were spent on performing the procedures on each other until all were confident in splinting a fractured bone, moving a badly injured person and treating burns without instructions. Dummies were also used to ensure we know how to execute CPR correctly.

Field Officer from Zhemgang, Passang Tobgay, was able to attend the workshop and has already trained the members of the Tarayana School Club in Zhemgang. Laminated handouts were provided by Bhutan Foundation for the other six Field Officers who were not able to participate due to their field obligations.

The team who went on a solar project monitoring visit two weeks after workshop came across a fresh accident scene on the way to Lobesa and was able to apply some of the techniques learnt. They were able to help one of the ladies who had sustained multiple broken bones by correctly splintering the broken bones while waiting for the ambulance. The team also felt better able to handle the blood at the crash scene as a result of having attended the training.

The workshop was conducted to equip all the staff and field officers with basic skills to enable them to be first responders as their work involved working closely at the community level. It is hoped that the transfer of knowledge and skills to the communities in our project sites will enable the villagers to be better prepared during any man-made or natural disasters.

As this was found to be a very useful training, it has been proposed that a week-long first responders training be organized early next year.
Ap Ngedup is a 58 year-old farmer from Jangbi Village in Langthel Geog, Trongsa Dzongkhag. He is married with 4 children and all of them are now of school age.

He and his wife work on a small farm that does not often yield enough produce to help make ends meet. Ap Ngedup spends most of his time on his farm. But after his farm work, there was nothing else he could do. Dawa, the Field Officer for Trongsa said he understands why Ap Ngedup and other farmers would often resort to drinking local wine after doing farm work. They had time on their hands and nothing constructive to do, thus they ended up wiling away their time. Dawa worked with the community to look for positive interventions that will convert their time use and energies into productive output for the community. This process started slowly but has led to big changes in their way of life, changing it significantly. The housing construction initiated and solar electrification in 2008, and the various skills training ranging from carpentry skills, cane and bamboo weaving, organic farming and the installation of a natural dyeing unit provided them more opportunities for enhanced living.

For Ap Ngedup, the skills training encouraged him to develop his personal resources wisely. Learning carpentry skills is one thing. But the empowerment that accompanies the learning is another.

Ap Ngedup was nominated by his community as project coordinator for the Monpa community in 2008 when Tarayana approved their housing project, and since then he not only chairs the project but also coordinates all community development activities in the absence of Field Officer in the three Monpa villages of Jangbi, Wangling and Phrumzur. The community is happy with Ap Ngedup’s commitment to serve them and the continuity he provides. He is sincere as he explains that “somebody has to be there to guide them.”. A hardworking and dedicated person, he gets up early every morning to go around the village and call the people to work. His responsibilities made him realize his abilities are not limited to farming and carpentry alone. He can lead the community and oversee the projects being implemented in the villages. Ap Ngedup serves as a good example for the rural people to emulate.

Field officers are placed in the villages to mobilize the people and facilitate the development in the community. Ap Ngedup, being the Chairperson for Monpas, became instrumental to the change in his village. Tarayana provided the opportunities for them to improve their lives. Through our Field Officers, the community members gained confidence in their capabilities. Their enthusiasm and determination have empowered them to have better living conditions and increased livelihood options.
From the Tarayana School Clubs

It was on 28th July 2010, the terrible night I should say, when we lost all our belongings in a fire. We were only able to save our lives. The only place where my family and I got shelter was at the village “Lhakhang”. I don’t know what caused the blaze and I simply saw everything burned to ashes. Back to school, I realized that I had nothing to put on and nothing to carry and I was unable to approach my parents who had already gone through great pain with the loss of our house and all our material possessions.

The Tarayana Club was compassionate and helped us in many ways. They even consoled my disheartened parents in various ways. I am very thankful and grateful to the school teachers, other officials and villagers who supported us and helped and also called police to put off the fire. The Tarayana Club was a great help every time to everyone be it to the community, students or vulnerable people. I have seen the Tarayana Club supporting many vulnerable individuals but I never thought that one day I would be one of them.

Tarayana club supported me by purchasing new set of school uniform including gho, shoes, socks, lagay and even school bag. Today I am here in the school wearing new school dress and that was possible because of the Tarayana club members. We are very fortunate to have Tarayana club in the school and I wish Tarayana club the best of luck to continue with its work.

Sonam Tobgay
Class V
Meretsemo Community Primary School

Activities carried out by the Tarayana School Club Members in Meretsemo as reported by Ms. Karma Yangdon, School Club Coordinator

1. Cleaning campaign in and around school and village.

2. Provided financial support to underprivileged students to meet their basic needs.

3. Displayed green dustbins near the shops and on the way to Lhakhangs to promote cleanliness. The members empty the dustbins during weekends and in the process, the villagers and the shopkeepers were also encouraged to help keep the environment clean.

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.