As we bid farewell to 2010, we note that it has been a very eventful year for all of us at Tarayana. There were many achievements both large and small in the field of holistic rural development. Many families in some of the poorest villages in our country are living improved lives as a result of all the various initiatives that they have undertaken, facilitated by us. We have also had a few hiccups that dislodged some of our original plans. These have provided us with the opportunity of stepping back and relooking at our strategies and helped us incorporate useful ‘lessons learnt’ factors as we take on the year ahead.

2010 also brought us in touch with many local and international volunteers interested in giving selflessly of themselves in helping those who needed a helping hand. We have been fortunate that many hands worked together lightening the load being carried by our rural communities. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our volunteers and supporters. We are also happy to have had this opportunity of working with GNHC in Lamthang, Chaibi and Pam.

There were also several incidences of grief and tragedy at both the local as well as national level that we have experienced which has fostered closer bonds within the communities and brought about better understanding of the nature of interdependence and impermanence.

Here’s wishing all our readers a Very Happy New Year and hope that 2011 will bring us closer to our goals of a Happy and Prosperous Nation.

Tashi Delek

“Happiness is ...

..... having a peace of mind and is satisfied with oneself ”

Yeshi Yamtsbo
Volunteer

Most community–based organizations largely depend on the support of International funding agencies, which makes fund raising a valuable part in strengthening community development initiatives.

With Tarayana’s expansion to two more Dzongkhas in the east, a two-day Basic Fundraising Workshop was organized on 12th-13th November at the Tarayana conference hall. It was facilitated by two American volunteers Mr. Erik Detiger and Meghan Arakelian, Managing Director and Program Associate respectively for Philantropia in New York City, U.S. A.

Philantropia is a consultant company specializing in international fundraising and philanthropy, advises and supports non-profit organizations around the world. They provide strategic advice, organize trainings, improve organizational capacity, and ensure financial support for client programs.

Policy planning, program and marketing officers from different organizations attended the workshop. They learned about fund raising fundamentals, finding funding opportunities and developing fund raising strategies.

Ms. Jigme Choden, Program Officer for Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy finds the workshop very helpful as it increased her knowledge on drafting grant proposal. She looks forward to writing improved letters of inquiry and drafting a winning proposal that matches the funder’s objectives.

Ms. Sonam Yangden, Accounts officer for Tarayana, shared how grateful she was for learning practical and appropriate tools to raise funds successfully.

Strategies for fund raising are critical for sustainability. Mr. Detiger noted the importance of developing strategies to ensure the implementation of projects and planned activities. The activities gave each organization the opportunity to assess their fund raising capacities, determining their goals and creating their action plans.

Fundraising is a task to which all should contribute, and for which all should be responsible. Tarayana is set to intensify fund raising activities in the next years to come that will promote donor loyalty and build new partnership with clients for more extensive rural community development projects.
Tarayana facilitated and supervised the team of eight Wheaton College students during their hands on community service experience organized in Jangbi and Wangling villages of Lanthel Geog, Trongsa. Their community immersion experience was organized as part of the program Wheaton College in Massachusetts entered into with the Royal Thimphu College (RTC), Bhutan’s first private liberal arts college. They were joined as well by Peace Comm5 exchange participants Myra Sioco and Hkam Awng. During this week long programme, the students helped the community with the construction of a house as part of the ongoing housing improvement programme. They also took time to learn the local culture and way of life of this small community living within the outer fringes of the Jigme Singye National Park.

Although most of them did not have experience in construction work, they showed great interest in helping and working with the community. Field officers Passang Tobgay and Karchung supervised the team’s activities and each one was tasked to carry out different responsibilities such as lifting rocks, leveling the ground and preparing timber for the construction.

The group had the opportunity to witness and participate in the house inauguration with the senior village monk performing religious rites. Community members offered local wines and performed traditional folk songs and dances.

One of the highlights of the trip was their visit to Jangbi Community primary school where students from all class levels performed short drama role plays, traditional songs and dances. The Jangbi Primary School Principal and staff were thankful and felt very honored that the Wheaton students spent time with their staff and students. The Tarayana School Club was officially inaugurated during this time with foreign guests.

For Ap Sonam, the house owner, words are not enough to express his joy and gratitude because soon he and his family will move in to the new house. He considered it as a timely gift this winter season.

"Our trip to the Jangbi Primary School melted the heart of each and every Wheaton student"

Raffi Sweet
Wheaton College, Massachusetts, U.S.A.
Chencho Found His True Calling Through Taryana

“I am very grateful to Tarayana for the big change in my life. The skills and knowledge I acquired will always stay with me until I grow old”

Chencho

Going out of one’s comfort zone is not very common for some men living in rural villages. Chencho used to be of them. He enjoyed helping his parents with agricultural work when he was young. His daily needs were met and he never thought of leaving his village. Things have changed ever since he joined the basic carpentry course and found that he had a natural affinity to this trade that he began looking beyond their family farm and his village.

Chencho is now a 23-year-old, experienced head carpenter in Jangbi, Trongsa. He is from Rukha Village and married to Sonam Wangmo from Jangbi Community. He realized that he was interested in taking up carpentry as his professional trade.

In 2007, Tarayana, in collaboration with the Dzongkhag Engineering section, conducted basic carpentry skills workshop in Adhang gewog. Chencho came to realize his aptitude as well as interest in building houses after attending the training program. Within a year and a half of working as a labourer, he became more skilled in other essential skills such as measuring, layout, roofing and use of common tools. In 2008, he was nominated as an apprentice to the head carpenter.

An opportunity came for him to be head carpenter in Samthang Village. He was a bit reluctant to move to other communities. His parents were against his decision of shifting to carpentry work. Being the eldest son, his parents counted on him to perform all household tasks and farm duties. But he still followed his heart and knew he made the right decision. After the project, more opportunities came to his door. He traveled from one village to another until finally moving to Jangbi where he met his wife.

Chencho is very grateful to Tarayana. He no longer depends on his parents for his personal and family needs. He is even able to help his parents financially when he started earning an income as a dependable and capable head carpenter.

He said everything fell into place when he opened himself to change. He found his calling in life: helping other people through his skills. People from Rukha were inspired with what he has achieved. He’s happy to know that his small contribution to these remote communities will make a big difference in improving the living condition of the Poor families.
Month Long Training in Basic Tailoring

The basic tailoring training program is being held at the Tarayana Rural Crafts and is being attended by twelve young men and women aged 16-30 from Langdurbi, Lamthang and Digala in Zhemgang and Lotokuchu Jigme, Lotokuchu Singye & Lotokuchu Wangchuck in Samtse. This training is made possible through a UNDP/AGFUND project being implemented by Tarayana in providing income generating and livelihood skills to rural communities. These young trainees will be able to provide for themselves and help their communities by setting up tailoring shops in their respective villages providing a much needed service to the community while ensuring a small income. These will also be the first tailoring shops in their villages that would be able to make ghos, kiras, wonjus and tegos.

Mr. Rinzin Dorji is facilitating this tailoring program and remains very optimistic about the training and the trainees. “These young men and women are working very hard and enthusiastically to learn and grow. It has just been two weeks and they have already shown tremendous progress. I am more than pleased with them and am happy to contribute and pass on my expertise to these young men and women,” says Rinzin.

The trainees were very happy and proud to be participating in this program and feel very much at home in Thimphu.

“As I was coming to Thimphu, I was anxious and excited about our prospects and participation in this skills development training. When we began the training session, I was intimidated and so were the rest of my colleagues. Our families and friends have full faith in us, so there is that pressure on us to succeed. After just a day of learning I gained confidence in myself knowing that I can and will do it. It would not have been possible if it wasn’t for the support I’ve received from my colleagues and especially from my teachers,” says one of the male trainees.

“Project support will allow for the establishment of small tailoring shops in the villages with the provision of one sowing machine, a small start up grant and supervision for the first six months after operationalising these units.”

In Brief

Biogas Hands On Training At Hangay Village

Ms. Thinley Bidha and Mr. Namgay from Tarayana attended a hands-on training program on Biogas organized by the GEF-Small Grants Programme in collaboration with Hangay Farmers’ Group. A month long training was started from 15th October to 6th November 2010 at the Out Reach Clinic (ORC) Hall at Hangay Village under Samtse Dzongkhag.

The participants were taught about proper Site selection, Biogas layout, Digging the digester pit, Stone foundation casting, Digester round wall construction, Dome construction, Cleaning soil from digester, Inlet construction, Construction of manhole, Construction of outlet, Outlet slab construction, Layout of pipeline and Construction of compost pits.

The participants thoroughly enjoyed both class and practical work on the biogas. The training was found very useful and educative for the participants. It was a whole new experience and a great exposure for most of the participants in the field of biogas hands on training. There were many new things that the participants have learned from the training program through exchanging and sharing of ideas with other participants implementing the same activities. Participants were impressed by the commitment and support rendered by the GEF-SGP team.

Mid-Term Review Of The Peace Comm Exchange Project

Ms. Roseleen Gurung, Officiating Programme Director, was in Manila, Philippines from 25th to 27th October to participate in the mid-term review of the Peace Comm Exchange Project, which was also attended by other partners from Indonesia, Myanmar and Philippines. She reported on the progress of the exchange participants from Philippines and Myanmar who are currently with Tarayana. She was happy to learn that Tarayana’s field officer, Dawa Tshering, who is with Environment Broadcast Circle in Manila is making the best of the opportunity and keen on learning as much from the experience as possible.
Tarayana Senior Citizen Pilgrims From Zhemgang in Bodhgaya

For the past three years Tarayana Foundation with the help of generous donors have had the opportunity to help and assist senior citizens from different remote villages in Bhutan to enable them in their pilgrimage to Bodhgaya (Dorji Den).

The most recent group who visited Dorji Den was from the villages of Langdurbi and Digala in Zhemgang. On their return to Bhutan this is what they had to say: -

“We cannot express enough our gratitude to the sponsors and the Tarayana Foundation in their efforts in being able to successfully fulfill our dream of visiting Dorji Den.”

“I’ve never seen a plane in my life even from afar, let alone fly in one,” says Ap Tshangtsela.

“Her Majesty’s kindness in giving us this once in a lifetime opportunity of visiting a sacred place such as Dorji Den has truly blessed our hearts and our souls. We feel revived and content with the blessings we’ve received. Our belief in the strength and power of spirituality has grown even stronger than ever before. Her Majesty remains in our hearts for She is like Sangay (God) to us. We pray for her wellbeing everyday.”

“The two Tarayana staff who traveled with us throughout the journey, Pema Gyalpo and Passang Tobgay and also Omzey (Monk) Khandu from the Bhutan Temple in Dorji Den looked after our every comfort and need for which we are ever so grateful.”

“Doing good deeds in our lives and helping whom ever we can has shone a light upon us and blessed us with this opportunity to give back to the community and take these wonderful seniors to see Dorji Den. We feel spiritually rejuvenated and realize the true meaning of the existence of our lives,” says Passang Tobgay and Pema Gyalpo.

Online Journalism Workshop

Two Tarayana staff attended a 4-day Online Journalism workshop at the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) conference hall organized by Bhutan Center for Media and Democracy (BCMD). It was facilitated by Ms. Jody McPhillips, Mr. Dave Bloss, Academic Consultants from International Media Institute of India (IMII), and BCMD Director, Aum Sioksian Pek. The workshop was aimed at equipping the participants on essential skills on basic reporting, interviewing, news writing, blogging, video shooting and editing. The last two days were devoted to preparation and presentation of individual projects of short audio or video clips and blog stories for practical application of theories and techniques on good journalism.

Aum Pek noted the importance of online tools which we can use for empowering the communities in expressing themselves on issues related to our democratic system. She also emphasized the need for changing the current systems and institutions to be more open and responsive to participation.

Participation At The 5th Sambhav Festival

Three physically challenged Bhutanese participated in the 5th Sambhav Festival in New Delhi, India. It was organized by Sambhav Association for Learning, Performing arts and Normative Action (ALPANA), an organization which looks after the welfare of physically and mentally challenged people. Their mission is to promote performing arts and facilitate holistic human development.

Lhakpa Dorji from the Royal Institute of Health Sciences (RIHs), Sonam Choden from Draktsho, and Duptho Zangmo from the Royal Academy of Performing Arts were led by Pema Gyalpo, Tarayana Administration Officer. Participants from 24 countries gathered to create awareness and appreciation of their talents and to discuss how the government can help prepare the physically challenged to be intellectually and socially fit in the society. This is the second year that Tarayana facilitated the participation of a small delegation from Bhutan to the Sambhav Festival through the sponsorship of the Indian Council for Cultural Relationships.
Monitoring Visit to Mongar Project Sites

A journey to Mongar from 9th to 26th November, 2010 was a memorable one as it was my first visit to the eastern part of Bhutan. The trip was an eye opening experience to the fascinating unspoiled nature in our country.

Accompanied by the site field officer, Sonam Jamtsho, he elucidated project sites of Resa, Bangbala, Chaibi & Pam, Pangthang, Nagor, Dak, Silambi and Broksa. The visit to the construction site of Chaibi & Pam acquainted me with the ongoing housing improvement projects. Thirteen houses were completed; two under construction and seven would be finished by December 2010. The lack of manpower has been a concern in the village since there are fewer households. This has hampered the progress in the construction of houses. We immediately called for a community meeting in Chaibi & Pam to resolve the problem. They came to a decision that a member from each household should help in the construction for five days and would do the same for every household. This agreement is expected to foster stronger community team spirit and full cooperation among community members that would hasten the completion of the project in these villages.

We also organized a community meeting on Micro-credit, and cane and bamboo weaving for the people of Chaibi and Pam villages. We gave emphasis on quality production and new designs of cane and bamboo products. It is hoped that the villagers will earn more income with the improvement of products on quality and design. A group was formed with 18 community members and named themselves “Cane and Bamboo Self Help group of Chaibi & Pam”.

We also visited Nagor, Gyelgoan and Silambi construction sites. I learned that twenty houses were completed, five are in progress, and 47 houses are still to be constructed in Nagor. In Gyelgoan village, one house was completed and 18 are still under construction, while 13 houses were completed in Silambi.

A group meeting was also conducted to discuss the plan to set up Community Radio Program in one of the villages. They understood the purpose of having a community radio and how it will help in the advancement of their community. But villagers were quite apprehensive with the project because they could not afford to buy a radio set. They also mentioned that they may not have the time to listen to the radio as most of them are busy with their farm duties.

The visit to Mongar project site was a three-day trek. Going around the Gewog entailed 6-7 hours walk from one village to another. It was a tiresome monitoring visit to eight villages in 12 days. I’m happy to be sent immediately to this project site because it has given me a better understanding of the projects being implemented at the grassroots level. The opportunity I had to interact with the community members has inspired me more to serve them from the heart.

Dhendup Tshering
Program officer
Tarayana was invited to bring a team of rural artisans and skilled craftsmen to the NATURE BAZAAR held from 21st to 31st October 2010 in New Delhi, organized by Dastkar.

A society for crafts and craftspeople, Dastkar, is a registered society that aims at improving the economic status of craftspeople, thereby promoting the survival of traditional crafts. It was founded in 1981 by six women, who had worked in the craft and development sector.

Ms. Pema and Ms. Wangmo from Tarayana led a team of 28 members including community artisans, a few volunteers and cultural performers to the NATURE BAZAAR held at the ground of the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi. The event was an opportunity to promote Bhutan’s rich cultural heritage and to create new markets through establishing contacts between Bhutanese craftspeople and Indian consumers.

The response from the people of India was good. They liked our cultural performance very much as it was very unique and something they had not seen before. Most of the Bhutanese delegation members were in India for the first time and we were happy to have had this opportunity. We considered ourselves very fortunate at being given this unique chance of learning and experiencing many new things in the capital city of our closest neighbor and biggest donor.

Yeshi Gembo, Cane and Bamboo weaver from Silambi, Mongar mentioned that he was amazed at the varied and rich culture and tradition of India. He was able to pick up a few new designs of cane and bamboo products produced by the Indian artisans which he will share with his self help group back home. As it was the first time to participate in such events, most of our participants were not sure about how their products would be received in the Indian market. He also mentioned that after taking part in the exhibition, he knows now what kind of products to take if they get similar opportunities in the future.

Taking part in the event enhanced the skills and product diversification for crafts people in our country and they had an opportunity to learn new ideas about crafts and culture of India. On behalf of all the participants I would like to express our gratitude to the India-Bhutan Foundation and the UNDP for sponsoring our participation. As a volunteer, I had the opportunity of studying firsthand how hard the Tarayana staff work to ensure that rural artisans and community members are centre staged. They have my full appreciation and I will continue to gladly offer my voluntary services whenever required. Lastly, on behalf of the whole delegation I would like to thank the Coordinators and Tarayana for this wonderful learning experience.

Sonam Choki
Volunteer

“I would like to thank Tarayana for providing this opportunity through which we were able to learn and experience many new things in India”
Rinchen Wangchuk, Zhemgang
Upcoming Events
January, February & March 2011

January 4-17: Crafting Friendship at Dilli Haat
January: Project Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting
January: Basic Training on Furniture making in Zhemgang
February: Training on TARA Machines (Mud Block Making Machine, Interlocking Tiles Making Machine and Hand Loom)
March: Debriefing of PeaceComm5 Participants in Bangkok

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.

From the Tarayana School Clubs

The Wangchhu Middle Secondary School (WMSS) formed Tarayana Club with the aim of providing basic necessities to the needy children who otherwise will not be able to continue their education. Many of the children are orphans and those of single parents with no income. The Tarayana Club was formed with membership consisting of teachers and students who share the common goal of helping those who are in need. There are 15 members from the teaching faculties which included the WMSS Principal and the club coordinator. In addition, about 70 students formed the bulk of the membership. The memberships were completely voluntary and based on individual interest.

In the Chhukha Dzongkhag, there is a good number of students who are from poor family background. Because of the situation, they may not be able to continue their education if no help is extended. Some of them are raised by very old grand-parents who themselves stand in need of help. In all, there are 10 children supported by this program.

For the 10 beneficiary students, as and when required, school uniforms and stationaries were provided. The co-coordinator had also donated clothes to the children and their parents. Items like rice, oil and other essential edibles were also purchased and provided to them. All those items which are required to be bought were purchased through a committee and the items were handed over to the beneficiaries. Account settlements were carried out based on the purchase cash memos at the end of year against which amounts were reimbursed by the School Authorities from the Tarayana Association Funds maintained by the School. Some of the funds over and above the seed money would be utilized for purchasing uniforms and other requirements of the beneficiaries at the beginning of the year 2011 session.

Since the formation of the Tarayana Club, many activities were launched based on the action plans 2010. In the years ahead, the Tarayana Club hopes to increase the number of activities to maximize the benefits for the individuals who stand truly in need.

Sheka Choden
Tarayana Club Coordinator
Wangchhu Middle Secondary School