In keeping with the Mission Statement of Tarayana to help the vulnerable and the disadvantaged help themselves, we have been training our community members in various relevant skills to make them self-sufficient and efficient. Tarayana has provided training for the people of Dechenpelri, Gelephu and Lotokuchu under Samtse Dzongkhag on TARA machines imported from India. Interested community members in Digala and Langdurbi were trained in furniture making, members of the nettle weaving group have been trained in natural dyeing and capacity development continues to be one of regular features of both the staff as well as the communities we serve.

True empowerment of small communities ensures that they take a more active role in deciding their own development. They are aware of their needs and are better able to articulate the same at community meetings and during consultations with local government authorities. It is hoped that all the small and scattered remote communities will be equal partners in the implementation of the targeted interventions being put in place to mitigate poverty.

We are happy to share with our readers that the Hon’ble President recently completed a 10 day monitoring visit to our project sites in Zhemgang and Sarpang. It was heartwarming to see the difference that small interventions have made in improving the lives and livelihoods of our communities. The Hon’ble President acknowledged the conducive environment created by all the different agencies working together in serving the communities and thanked all for their support in the service of our rural communities.

Tarayana has made significant positive contributions in improving the lives of the communities we serve as was evident from the monitoring visits to all our project sites during the first quarter of 2011. We would like to thank and acknowledge the generous support received from our donors and development partners in our efforts to help the vulnerable and the disadvantaged help themselves.

“Happiness is ... 
...... a mental state of well being characterized by positive emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy”

Kuenzang Gelay Yonten Volunteer

Community Based Enterprises-for Self Help Group Through TARA Machines Technologies

TARA Machines & Tech Services Pvt. Ltd is a commercial wing of leading NGO Development Alternatives Group working in creating large scale sustainable livelihood through providing the most suitable and affordable technologies worldwide.

Tarayana facilitated and conducted a basic level training programme on Stabilized Compressed Earth Blocks, Concrete Pavers Technology at Dechenpelri, Gelephu and handloom Technology at Lotokuchu, Samtse from 9th-17th February 2011, with technical assistance from TARA Machines and Tech. Services.

Mr. Hriday Ray, Mr. Amrik Singh and Mr. Pritam Singh Technical Experts from TARA Machines, Ms. Pema, Mr. Karma Wangchuk and Ms. Thinley Bidha from TARAYANA were the key persons to organize the training programme in both places.

The Stabilized Compressed Earth Block (SCEB) has been compressed in a hydraulic press; it has been designed to enhance the strength and durability of earth construction. Houses made from these earth blocks are strong and have a longer life. The bricks are as good as the burnt clay bricks in terms of load bearing capacity and durability, stabilizing 8-10% cement.

More than 18 personnel including the 3 coordinator were trained on TARA MechBalarm–MV and Concrete pavers machines for production. Unemployed local youth and keen learners were selected as trainees. The trainees were more interested in practicals rather than classroom lectures and accordingly more time was devoted to hands on practical sessions. Training program was well managed and was mainly focused on the product manufacturing, quality control and equipment repair and maintenance.

After the training program the trainees expressed their gratitude towards Tarayana for providing them with such opportunities. Most of the community members have never seen those machines in their lives before. Ap Jurmey, the Tarayana coordinator said “it is so amazing to know that the bricks and the decorative pavers are very easy to make with the help of machines”.

“Now I can see my dream of proper shelter coming true with the introduction of such machines in our community” said Aum Rinzen Paldon. The participants also promised to work hard as a cooperative while working to produce the best eco-friendly building materials in Bhutan.
TARA Handloom at Lotokuchu

TARA handloom is an ingenious manual operated machine that incorporates many advance features to improve the efficiency of the weaver and the quality of woven fabric with existing levels of operational skills. It is one of the first of its kind in Bhutan. TARA technology package caters to weaver engaged in production of cotton, wool, silk and polyester fabrics. The skill needed for operation of TARA handloom can be easily imparted to weavers and non weavers alike.

TARA Loom has found widespread acceptance among the weavers. A traditional weaver can learn to operate this machine in less than two hours making the transition to the improved loom at no extra cost in terms of time and money.

More than 17 personnel including the coordinator were trained on TARA handloom at Lotokuchu, Samtse. Mostly local women attended the training. Most of the trainees came from the weaving community with knowledge and skills in the use of traditional backstrap handlooms. Trainees were happier to work on TARA handloom, due to the higher productivity and ease of operation.

Ms. Penden Lham, one of the trainees said “I am happy to be one of the lucky people to have this opportunity to learn weaving on the TARA Handloom. I look forward to weaving as many different patterns as I possibly can. It has made weaving much simpler and faster compared to the traditional method.”

The TARA Loom was provided to the Lhop weaving community so that the young weavers both men and women could be self-employed through their self help group while increasing their income earning potentials significantly. The TARA Loom was purchased from TARA Machines a subsidiary of Development Alternative, India.

They look forward to be self sustained in the near future by providing school uniforms to the local school there.
My Visit To Lotokuchu Jigme, Singye & Wangchuck Villages

My first visit to three Lhop villages in Samtse was a great experience. The journey started on the 6th of February from Thimphu towards Phuntsholing. We could only make it to Jigme on the 8th of February. The visit lasted from the 8th to 18th Feb, 2011.

Ms. Thinley Bidha, Solar Focal Person, Mr. Leki Dawa, Field Officer and Mr. Pritam Singh, the instructor from India were my company during this visit.

The village of Jigme, Singye and Wangchuck is a remote place in the Dzongkhag of Samtse. A few years back people had to hike about six hours from Samtse to reach there. But now there is a farm road right up to Sengdhen village. From there it’s a thirty minutes hike to Lotokuchu Jigme and Lotokuchu Singye while Lotokuchu Wangchuck was a bit further away at about an hour and half’s walk. The people there are believed to be the true inhabitants of Bhutan. They share a common way of dressing with the Monpas. They have their own traditions and language. They are known as Lhaps or Doyas.

On our arrival to Lotokuchu Jigme we were lodged at the “Tarayana Paper Factory” a community workshed where the Lhaps gathered to carry out several initiatives. We started our work of installing the weaving machine on the day we arrived. The weaving machine a “TARA Fly Shuttle Loom” was purchased from TARAmachines, a subsidiary of Development Alternative, an NGO in India. This equipment was one of the first of its kind in Bhutan. Mr. Pritam Singh a Master Weaver was really at his best while explaining the functioning and parts of the weaving machine to the girls who had come to help install the machine and who were going to learn to weave on the machine.

The weaving training for the training of the trainers (TOT) started from the second day. As there weren’t much time for the trainer to be in Bhutan, we could only choose a few people to be trained in depth with the help of the community. The person chosen were those who were fast at catching what was taught. This was done through observing them work on their traditional weaving loom and during the first training session of installing the loom and setting up the accessories. As our time for departure drew near the girls and a guy were well groomed to use the machine and they could weave two to three kinds of cloths.

During my stay there I was asked to carry out a house to house interview together with Mr. Leki Dawa to help get a better understanding of what had been done and how the development interventions had been perceived.

The people in Lotokuchu Wangchuck reported that they still faced the problem of water shortage and was the hardest hit with this problem as their source would dry up often compared to the other two villages. What I also learnt was that the vegetables they grew there didn’t reap well due to insect pests and poor soil quality. They still practiced shifting cultivation to some extent. Most of the people there had no other means of income other than as porters of oranges during the orange season and selling their agricultural products which did not fetch much. People there were thankful to Tarayana for providing them ways to earn income through paper making and weaving.

As we went around I observed that a few houses were incomplete. On inquiry I came to know that most of them were poor and didn’t have the money to pay for the raw materials and the labour charges. Even the structure being built for the Buzip Program was incomplete and on inquiry from the “Tshokpa” I was informed that the permit for timber and building was not approved yet by the local authorities resulting in the delays. What I felt was needed at that point of time was that the community should help each other during the construction of their houses as it would reduce the cost of labour as was being practiced in other villages that Tarayana supported.
The Annual Tarayana Retreat was held from 28th to 30th of December 2010 at the Tarayana Centre. It was facilitated by Mr. Chimmi Dorji, Director of Rural Development Training Centre, Zhemgang and Dasho Pema Lhamo, National Council member. The annual retreat provides a platform for the Tarayana staff to reflect, share experiences, study implementation challenges and foster better team building.

A summary of projects completed in 2010 was presented by Ms. Roseleen Gurung, Officiating Director of Programmes, with a status update on the development activities in all project sites. Field officers also reported in detail the work progress in their respective sites. The Retreat gave everyone the opportunity to share the implementation challenges and issues and also spent time on analyzing strengths and weaknesses of the various projects being implemented. The facilitators noted that all project activities are on track and with that all plans for the year 2011 has also been finalized during the retreat.

The Retreat concluded with all the participants re-dedicating ourselves to the goals and Objectives of the Foundation and to serve our communities from the depths of our hearts to the best of our abilities.

Kuenzang Gelay Yonten
Volunteer

The highlight of my visit to these villages would be during my visit to the village of Lotokuchu Wangchuck where the teacher of the Buzip program of that village had initiated her activities of looking after the small children in a private house while the Buzip structure was being built and that the children there were really enjoying themselves. On our arrival there they greeted us with the traditional Bhutanese gesture of greeting. I was impressed as most people there didn’t know Dzongkha and was impressed by the initiative taken by the teacher to help these children learn the national language of our country. I had not seen this being done in the other two villages.

As my visit came to an end I felt thankful towards Tarayana for giving me the opportunity to experience the life of the people of these three villages which showed me the diversity of our country and the life of the rural people.
In Brief

Study Tour in Thailand

The study tour was organized by Sustainable Land Management Project, Ministry of Agriculture. The tour started on 20th February, 2011 with nineteen participants from different agency like Local government, Ministry of Agriculture and Tarayana Foundation.

The visit started from the Northern part of Thailand, Changmai. The tour there included visits to the Royal Agriculture Park initiated by His Majesty the King of Thailand; Agriculture Research Centre; Agriculture Production Centre and the Changmai Handicraft Market.

Visits to these places taught the participants on working towards the adoption of new technologies balanced with manual usage of traditional technologies. In addition, the Royal Park had initiated Eco-tourism with advance facilities for income generation to improve the livelihood options of the rural people.

After five days in Changmai, the team visited Bangkok. The tour there included visits to several organizations of the Ministry of Agriculture including Research, Land Management Centre, Seed Production Unit, Maize Hybrid Unit and Agriculture Extension Program. The visit to the various agencies was an important one as the participants were taught on how to do primary sorting, washing, drying, packaging, storage, documentation and transportation of cash crops. After their research and identification of cash crops the program extended to community level practice of agriculture followed by the farmers in Thailand.

My-Say

Majority of us are blessed, for we have delicious food to eat, comfortable house to reside in and fancy attire for us to portray our rich smooth livelihood. Yes, we are the fortunate ones but what about those who work in rain and shine, the one who are drenched in the flood of despair. Yes, I regard them as the unwanted one. How many of us have any sympathy or empathy towards them? I bet that some may have the former but the latter quality is usually absent.

The human values of selfless love and service to others are promoted by all realized beings. These are also important values and norms of Buddhists. So let us work together and replace our own shoes with those belonging to the ones in need and learn to be better givers of ourselves, our energies, our service, our dedication in helping them help themselves. This is the land of Gross National Happiness; let us take active parts in spreading a little happiness along the way, one household at a time till the whole nation is truly Happy. There need be no separate path for our Buddhist practice; our compassionate service from the heart may also achieve the same.

Karma Wangchuk
Program Officer
Training On Natural Dyes In Hyderabad

A group of six members attended a three days training at the college of Home Science, Hyderabad from 31st Dec 2010 - 2nd Jan 2011 where they were taught various natural dye making, identification of dyes, dryings, preserving and store ring of natural dyes. The training was a fruitful one that they had attended on Natural Dye making.

According to Tshendu Choden, a mother of four, who is currently working with the Nettle Weaving self help group at Beling under Langthel geog, Trongsa, said that “I have never dreamt that I would get an opportunity to step inside a flight, not even in the Druk Air aside international air. But we did get the opportunity.”

Training at Hyderabad has really encouraged her and has made her work even harder so that she would be able to share her experiences with her families, friends and neighbours. She has always been encouraging her friends about not missing an opportunity when one is available. She advises her friends that when faced with challenges in life, not to stop there; go ahead seek advice from other knowledgeable person who would help ease those challenges with good advices. She stands proud among her friends but she believes it is because of her hard work. Moreover her friends have added that they were simply farmers who never even dreamed of such opportunities to be theirs, yet they were lucky to be part of this empowering programme.

Their travel by car to Paro was a giddy one as they felt sick and had to stop the vehicle often. They were very worried on how to get to the flight which they had heard about but had never seen before. According to them, even as they boarded the plane, they were very nervous and were really afraid and worried about whether they would be able to meet their families and friends back home as the recent tragedy about the air crash in Nepal was still in their thoughts. Travelling for the first time in an aeroplane made them a bit air sick and unable to walk properly as their heads were spinning.

They expressed their gratitude to Tarayana and the IFAD funded project with technical support from FAO, for providing them this training program and enriching experience. They assured that the training would not be in vain and that they would teach all the members of their self-help group as soon as they got back to their village. They are convinced that hard work pays and that it was their hard work that was noticed and rewarded through this special training.
Natural Dyeing Training in Trongsa

Five days training in natural dyeing was conducted in Beling, Trongsa where members from Beling, Wangling and Jangbi participated. The training program was lead by Aum Tshendu Choden, Aum Singye Wangmo and Ms. Dechan who were trained in natural dyeing in Hyderabad through the IFAD funded project (Medicinal and Aromatic Dye Plants) implemented by the National Organic Programme and Tarayana with technical support of FAO. This field training program was facilitated by a team from the Tarayana Secretariat.

Twenty one women from the three villages participated in the five days training program. All the trainees were very excited and interested in learning that they were very attentive throughout the training period with full attendance at every session. The women were very fascinated to discover the multitude of beautiful colours that could be achieved with natural dyes that were locally available. While most plants gave beautiful hues some did not give the desired effects, so the trainees were able to experiment the use of these local plants to increase their colour range.

The yarns so beautifully dyed as part of the training will be used by these women to weave kiras that they will test market in Thimphu. The market feedback will be used to take their production cue and they are excited to be able to prepare for the forthcoming annual Tarayana Fair where they will be able to sell their fabrics. Aum Tshendu, the coordinator of weavers in Beling said ‘if the natural dyed colours were liked by the people in Thimphu, we are going to weave textiles which are naturally dyed’.
From the Tarayana School Clubs

By keeping the motto of Tarayana Foundation—“Service from the Heart”, Tangmachu Primary School from Lhuentse formally started the Tarayana Club on a day with good Zakar on the 26th July 2007. The Club was initiated with the vision to help the venerable and needy people in the community of Tangmachu as well as to look after the disadvantaged students.

Continuous support from the Principal and teachers of Tangmachu Primary School has made it possible to sustain the Club and support the disadvantaged students to continue their studies from 2008 onwards.

Mr. Sangay Tshering the Club Coordinator has played a pivotal role in disseminating information about the Tarayana Foundation and instilling a strong sense of voluntarism among the youth in Tangmachu community since the initiation of the Club. The club has a total strength of thirty-six members of eighteen boys and eighteen girls.

After the initiation of the Club in 2007 the Club has come a long way benefitting the vulnerable and needy people.

The Club aims to act as a forum to disseminate information about the Tarayana Foundation and promote the activities of the Foundation, encourage social services in the community and inculcate a sense of voluntarism in the club members. It also aims to make students a valued and productive citizen of our country and inculcate the values of GNH through club activities.

The Club has been providing financial assistance to children from disadvantaged families for their education. They have also been providing guidance and counselling services to the children coming from abusive families, problem ridden homes and disadvantaged school students to help them develop positive self esteem and value for oneself. To encourage social services and model respect for dignity of labor the club has been carrying out cleaning campaigns in selected areas and has been rendering labor force to the disadvantaged farmers during the busy agricultural labour seasons of transplantation and harvesting of Paddy. The club has also been supporting people especially the vulnerable individuals who are unable to sustain their life with basic needs. The club has been collecting and donating cloths/footwear to people who cannot afford new clothes or shoes. The club has been conducting visits to religious places to instill in students the values of our tradition and culture.

In order to raise funds for the clubs activities the club members make badges/button holes at each and every occasion celebrated in school, spot lottery Draw, and organize open volley ball and Khuru tournaments.

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.