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In this issue we would like to share progress updates from our project sites and some interesting stories from Lotokuchu, Samtse.

Tarayana has expanded its support in Kengkhar and Mikuri villages this year. In Kengkhar village under Mongar Dzongkhag we have initiated housing construction replicating the Rukha model, the first ever housing project initiated by Tarayana, followed with more than five hundred houses constructed in the rural villages in Bhutan with the help of various projects.

In Mikuri under Pemagatshel Dzongkhag, community mobilization has taken place and some groups have also been formed after identifying the activities.

We also have initiated the formation of Self-Help Groups to encourage income generation and to enhance the skills of community members so as to facilitate future earnings. Promotion and diversification of handicraft products is also one of the core activities initiated by Tarayana in the rural villages to help the vulnerable help themselves.

We are happy to inform our readers that many rural communities have benefited from these activities, both socially and economically. We look forward to fostering further positive changes in the lives of rural community members now that we are expanding our activities to 87 villages in nine Dzongkhags as of September 2012.

From the Editor

Mikuri, a village of 52 households under Dungmin Geog of Pemagatshel, is one of the remotest villages in Bhutan where people have limited opportunities to make their lives better. They spend most of their time drinking and merry-making, which is evident from the stacks of Druk 11000 (brand) beer bottles that grow larger than their modest houses.

The Royal Government of Bhutan, through different programs, is striving to bring this kind of small community in far-flung areas into the mainstream development. Yet, it still remains a huge challenge.

For instance, this particular village is two days walk away from the Dzongkhag headquarters, but is accessible (not always pleasant) from Ngalam which requires travelling via the Indian route.

In our own small efforts to reach the unreached ones, we have started working with the communities of two Geogs, Dungmin and Chimung, under the Japan Fund for Poverty (JFP) ADB Project: Advancing Economic Opportunities of Women and Girls. This project will also cover the geogs of Tading, Dumtay, Namgaycholing, Denchukha and Bara of Samtse Dzongkhag. Through this project, women will form Self-Help Groups to initiate activities that will enable them to generate income and improve their standard of living.

In both the Dzongkhags, several rounds of consultative meetings have been carried out and groups have also been formed with office holders elected. These groups have started working together to produce various marketable products.

These products include: Cardamom, ginger, pickles, chips, wool weaving, vegetable production, and fruit pulping. The Tarayana Foundation plans to work towards registering all the groups with the Department of Agricultural Marketing & Cooperatives (DAMC) under the Ministry of Agricultural and Forestry once they are completely functional.

“Happiness is...
...... Living in harmony with everyone and everything around you.”

Aum Tshendu,
Self-Help Group, Trongsa
Since the consultative meetings in February of this year, members of fifteen villages in Kengkhar Geog have worked hard and accomplished a great deal in a short span of time.

Housing Improvement
A total of sixteen new houses have been completed and more are under construction. Adopting the Rukha Model, Tarayana hires skilled local carpenters and masons to work with the community members in building their houses. In the process, community members learn basic carpentry and masonry; later these skills will help them earn extra income when they find paid employment in other communities. The rest of the labour is offered on a volunteer basis. Families take turns building each other’s houses and in the process they build a sense of community, enhancing village coherence and vitality.

Marketing of crafts
The artisans producing Jandom and Masks got their first opportunity to market their products in the capital by themselves during Tarayana’s annual Fair. It was also an opportunity for them to understand the market scenario and network with potential customers. Out of all the artisans from different sites who took part in the Fair, the ones from Kengkhar were the highest earners. The positive experiences gained through the Fair encouraged many others back in their villages to join the craft groups. Earlier, they had eight members and after the Fair, they now have 25 members.

Construction of Community Facility Centre/ Work shed
Four community facility centres (work-sheds) have been built in different villages that are now in use as multi-purpose halls, where different groups come to work together in producing their crafts such as Jandom, mask-making and weaving. These halls provide a venue for skilled elders to teach younger enthusiasts. They are also used to showcase the products made in the community for visitors.
Self Help Groups

A total of Six SHGs have been formed in six villages for different activities. Office bearers were also elected and all the groups are now functional. Leaders of these SHGs will undergo management training in SEWA, India this November.

Savings Groups have also been formed in different villages; where members contribute a certain amount each month and later make loans to their members at a minimal interest rate. The main motive of introducing savings is to inculcate the importance of saving among the members, so that their activities become more sustainable. It also enables them to learn the basic techniques of how financial institutions operate their micro-credit and savings schemes.

Support to Agricultural Productivity

Varietal seeds were supplied to groups growing vegetables, who in turn planted these seeds in their gardens and farms. These groups will first concentrate on self-sufficient vegetable production and later focus on selling the excess produce to generate income.

The groups also aim to market their excess produce to Mongar Hospital and Gyelposhing Market. They have also supplied vegetables to Kengkhar Lower Secondary School immediately after the harvest.

Trainings

Two women from the SHGs have attended a food processing training at Mysore, India along with other members from different Dzongkhags. They learned basic techniques of producing ginger and turmeric. They will undergo some further training on product diversification until they become trainers for the other SHGs.

All these activities continue, despite the acute shortage of water that poses great challenges to these communities.

This project is being implemented under the third phase of HELVETAS Swiss Inter corporation support to Tarayana.
Follow-up Survey for Eco-Stoves in Dagana

The team from Tarayana embarked on the journey on 24th of July 2012 to Goshi Geog under Dagana Dzongkhag to conduct the follow-up survey for eco-stoves provided to the communities under the Eco-stoves Project funded by ALSTOM Foundation, Austria.

A meeting was held with the beneficiaries of the eco-stoves project from upper, lower and middle Goshi, Dokhar and Balagang villages. The Gup oriented the community members on the goal of the meeting, which was to conduct the follow-up survey. The Tarayana staff next requested the beneficiaries to share their experiences and provide feedback on the eco-stoves, as they have now been using the stoves for six months.

One of the major points that all the beneficiaries agreed upon was that a larger stove would be more beneficial to them as this would enable them to use the stoves to cook for large families and animal fodder. There were positive remarks with regard to their cleanliness and health benefits. Due to minimal smoke emitted from the stoves, the people’s houses are not blackened anymore and eco-stove use has decreased smoke inhalation leading to improvement of health with less incidence of headaches, colds, coughs and eye pain.

The people voiced their concern that the stoves produce a sound when in use, the inner part of the stove is not very durable and tends to fall apart; and that the chimneys get rusty very fast. They are worried that the stoves will be unusable after a year.

The communities were advised of the need to train people from each village in the fabrication, maintenance and repair of the eco-stoves. People nominated for the training must be capable of operating a small workshop and be able to live at the training facility for at least a month. The community members along with the Gup and Tshogpas decided that they would nominate good candidates for this training and send the list to Tarayana for review.

In Brief

Asian University for Women (AUW) Scholarship

Tarayana sent three Scholarship candidates from Tarayana Project sites to the Asian University for Women in Chittagong, Bangladesh. The Asian University for Women (AUW) is an international college that helps women attain their degree and become well-informed citizens. The University not only concentrates on the academic part but also offers network-building, as well as internships for international students to Asia and a few to the United States, depending on the student’s academic performance. The University also gives students the opportunity to spend their three month summer vacation engaged in research projects, internships and academic programs in different parts of the world.

The University accepts students from thirteen countries including Bhutan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Vietnam and Sri Lanka.

Horizontal Learning Exchange

Ms. Pema, the alternate member of Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) from Tarayana attended the horizontal learning exchange visit organized by CCM Bhutan. The meeting was held in Jakarta, Indonesia from 24th-26th of September 2012. The objective of the meeting was to build knowledge on CCM oversight working mechanism and management of multiple grants.
Positive Changes Brought About by Micro Finance

The word “Micro” means very small and the micro-loans that Tarayana provides are a very small loan amount of Nu. 10,000 (Ten thousand) for individuals and maximum amount of Nu. 60,000 (Sixty thousand) for groups. For community members like Mr. Lodree Gyeltshen from Digala, the micro loan made a big difference in his life. With the benefit of this very small loan, he was able to buy a horse and now earns a much better living with the help of his horse.

Mr. Lodree says, “Ever since I became a father, I dreamed of owning a horse like other villagers do but I had no money to buy one. In our village, if you have a horse you can make lots of money in a day, perhaps Nu.850 -1000, whereas a person only earns Nu. 500-600 by carrying things for people visiting the community and carrying loads for the Chamkhar Chhu project.”

He says, “Whenever I carried loads, I always wished to have a horse but could not buy one since I have many children to feed.” He believes the loan and the horse are blessings that god rewarded him for his daily prayers.

He has five children, and he being the only worker in the family, they lived hand to mouth and faced difficulties due to insufficient earnings.

Now that he bought a horse with the help of Tarayana’s Micro-loan, he earns enough to support his wife and children.

Mr. Lodree Gyeltshen is a volunteer Tshogpa for Tarayana. He is a coordinator and assists all the Tarayana activities although he is not village Tshogpa. Small things can change the lives of many families. Like Mr. Lodree Gyentshen, there are many who have not only benefited from micro-loans but also improved their living standards.

Another beneficiary of the loan program, Mr. Choedrup has started a small business selling necessary items going door-to-door in the village. He always wanted to own a small business but he couldn’t do so until he received a micro loan from Tarayana. He sells items such as tea, sweets, noodles, soap and cold drinks. He does his shopping from the village at the road head, Rindibi and carries the goods on his back all the way to his village of Langdurbi, which is a 9 hour trek. In future, he hopes to buy a horse and to set up a permanent shop in the village.

In Brief

Ginger Candy and Pickle Production

Producing ginger candy and pickles is one of the activities sponsored by the AGFUND project to help generate income for rural community members. Digala and Langdurbi communities have cultivated medicinal plants for their own consumption. The community members were trained in ginger candy and pickle production by the Tarayana Field Officer, to be utilized when they produce ginger in excess of what they need for their own use. The self-help groups learned how to process ginger into candy and pickles that are more marketable than fresh ginger.

As expected, the ginger growers collected excess amounts of ginger which they processed into candy and pickles and sold in small quantities during the Tarayana Annual Fair. Their presence at the Fair resulted in many orders for ginger candy and pickle. The ginger-growing group is currently filling orders for ginger candy to clients such as Aman Kora and various local shops in Thimphu.

FK Midterm Review Meeting

Phase II midterm review and planning of round 3 of the FK funded project “Promotion of Appropriate Green Technologies to bring about Rural Prosperity” was held in Pokhara, Nepal from 17th to 19th September, 2012. With Tarayana as the coordinating partner, the meeting was attended by partners of the project; TARA from India, PEEDA from India, and Practical Action from Bangladesh with facilitation provided by FK officials. A Project agreement for round 3 for the period 2013 -2016 was signed between the four partners.
The Story of Ap Dankachen

Half a century ago, Dankachen Doya from Dorokha Dungkhag under Samtse Dzongkhag did not have a proper house to live in let alone three meals a day. His life was constantly filled with worries.

He worked as a *Mangup* for Lotokuchu Jigme, Singye and Wangchu for almost six years and as *Chipoen* for almost eight years. During this time, these jobs never had paid incentives but it was a majority’s vote and he felt compelled to work. He married at a very young age of 18 when his wife was 25. He was living in constant fear, wondering and worrying how he could provide for his family, when misfortune struck. Four out of his seven children passed away when they were only toddlers and he lost his wife, Lhazam Pemo Doya, to a sickness they could not identify as they had no access to basic health facilities. She was just 41 years old.

Dankachen remarried to his wife’s sister, Tashi Pemo Doya, and had five children with her. He had hoped his life was changed for the better but did not realize that misfortune was just around the corner waiting to strike him again. He again lost two of his children to an unknown sickness.

Things only started to look good for him when, at the age of 76, Tarayana Foundation introduced him to carpentry skills.

Tarayana has undertaken many projects targeting the vulnerable groups in Dorokha Dungkhag, trying to bring them the benefits of development while ensuring that new choices do not erode their traditional values and cultural integrity. The progress made since that initial shared vision has accomplished wonders. Today Dankachen Doya has a decent house to live in. His children are no longer deprived of their education. Not just him but the whole community is very grateful that the children of their village now have opportunities that are far beyond anything they can imagine. Dankachen Doya is a firm believer that the Lhops are as capable of success if only they work hard and seize the opportunities that are available. He is now 84 years old and has never in his life before encountered such change, both socially and economically. Five of his children are still with him in Lotokuchu helping him and one of his children, Karpa Doya, is a teacher in Lhuentsé.

Projects such as the introduction of carpentry skills have benefited not only Danka’s family but also the whole community.

Some of his fellow villagers have also been given the opportunity to learn natural farming practices. This has brought immense change in helping them become self-reliant. They now not only grow organic vegetables, oranges and cardamom for themselves, but also sell these crops in order to earn income. The traditional paper factory has also provided additional opportunities for gainful employment.

He acknowledges that Tarayana Foundation has shown them the way to lead a dignified life, a life filled with happiness and meaning. According to him, the Foundation has also helped them preserve their age-old culture and traditions, especially important in times of rapid modernization.

Like Dankachen Doya, many villagers have similar stories of success that would not have been possible without Tarayana Foundation’s help, which he describes as both wholesome and holistic.
Omchu Doya, 43, is from Lotokuchu Jigme and has been working at the Tarayana Paper Factory for the past eight years. She has been married two times, but both marriages did not last. She has two children from the first husband and three from the second one; two sons and three daughters. Her eldest son, who is 22 years old is in Taktse, Trongsa undergoing a four year job training (already been two years) and except for her eldest daughter who helps her at home, the rest study at Sengden Primary School.

Paper making has been her only income source which is why she continued despite the objections of her ex-husbands. In the tradition of Doyas, after a woman marries, her husband is likely to restrict her from doing any work outside of the home. Many women left their paper factory jobs after they married, the reason being the objection from their husbands. They can no longer pursue their dreams of generating income from work they enjoy doing.

“My husband gets angry when I go out to work and earn. That is also the reason why my marriages failed.”

It could also be that men in her community feel they should be the bread-winner and not their wives, perhaps because some men see themselves as inadequate if they are not the sole support of their family.

When asked why Omchu, who is also the eldest member of the paper-making unit, continued until this age? She responded by saying that since she doesn’t have any other source of income to support her family, she kept this job even though most of the other female employees left after getting married.

The money she generates from selling her products helps her feed her children as well as meeting the family’s other living and travel expenses.

Even as the oldest member, she shows much interest in paper making and she has been the most active member.

Unlike Omchu’s ex-husband, Tshering Wangchuk, who recently joined the paper making group after seeing the benefits his wife enjoys from being a member. His wife, Dorji Pemo is one of the most experienced members of the paper production unit.

This couple has set an example and helped to dispel the stigma attached to a female member going out to work after getting married. He also works as an Instructor and he finds time after teaching his classes to work at the centre. Now that there is a Day Care centre, he says he and his wife have more time to devote to any activities that come up in their village.

Tshering has brought more energy to the team, as he has creative ideas about marketing their products. He has attained the highest level of education of all the members and has the maximum exposure that will help the group market their products. So far, the group has been marketing their products at the Tarayana Rural Crafts outlet and the Tarayana Fair. They find it difficult to sell their products in Samtse, as the Dzongkhag has easier access to cheaper products from India. However, the group hopes that in future, all their products will be locally sold in the Dungkhag and the Dzongkhags.
Cleaning Campaign

5th August, 2012: Tarayana Club Members went for a cleaning campaign escorted by the school club coordinators, Mrs. Pema Choiden and Mrs. Namkha Lhamo. Adorned with the Tarayana Club Members’ T-shirts, we began the cleaning campaign from the school parking lot, cleaning our way to the bus parking lot along the Lungtemzampa Bridge. We also cleaned the taxi parking area near Chang Lam Plaza before heading to clean the Centenary Farmers’ Market.

Chubachu Charity Work

12th August, 2012: Guided by Mrs. Pema Choiden, we arrived at Chubachu Labor Camp and started our work with the distribution of sweets to the children. We then called the people of the camp to take the donations of clothes and shoes we had brought with us. We also gave away stationery to the children of the camp.

Changidaphu Camp

19th August, 2012: Having collected clothes and many other things from the student body and teachers, a group of 25 students and three teachers reached the camp. We displayed the clothes, toys and shoes. Many people and children gathered around to take the things they wanted. While children rushed to take the toys, the elders took the clothes.

Visit to Junglee Camp

26th August, 2012: Three teachers, Mrs. Namkha Lhamo, Mrs. Sonam Lhamo and Mrs. Pema Choiden, and nine Tarayana Students’ Club members went to visit the Junglee camp along the Thimphu-Phuntsholing Highway some 10 km south of Thimphu City. We distributed chocolates, clothes and toys to the children. The children were very happy and excited. This time we distributed kitchen utensils too. Then we went around visiting the houses of the people talking to them.

Pem Tshering Yonjen
11 Com “D”, Yangchenphug HSS

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.

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