Tarayana Foundation has come a long way in helping the needy and underserved people of the society. With many of our projects based in the remotest regions of the country, we stand a proud organization as we enter our 10th year of mobilizing the resources of our poorest citizens and communities to help themselves.

Even as we are faced with greater challenges to bring about development in our communities, we are motivated to reach more communities in order to guide them to stand tall and improve their quality of life.

Tarayana has again teamed up with ALSTOM Foundation to enable many households to make use of solar drying technology as a means of improved food preservation. With this second initiative, we are expecting great results as the first initiative with ALSTOM Foundation was a big success.

Some of our long-standing and new community members have received trainings and exposures that expand their skills to earn their daily income. They have received trainings on weaving, eco-stove fabrication, food production and Self Help Group management.

We hope you will enjoy our articles on some of the women’s self-help groups and their experiences as first-time visitors to Thimphu. You will also find updates on some of our project sites and the progress these projects have made thus far. We are happy to inform our readers that we will soon be focusing on themes and program-based stories in order to make our newsletter as interesting as possible. So please do look forward to seeing these changes in our next issue.

We hope our readers enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed compiling and presenting it to you.

The honorable president, Her Majesty The Queen Mother Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck visited Kengkhar gewog on the 26th of November 2012, in conjunction with a monitoring visit. Enroute to the gewog, Her Majesty inaugurated the 28 kilometer farm road leading to the gewog centre at Zimzore.

On the way to the gewog centre, Her Majesty visited Ap Penjor’s house, one of the newly constructed houses at Tongla, where she personally greeted the family members. Her Majesty also visited the work shed at Yuldarig, one of four such centres in the gewog. The artisans demonstrated their skills in different crafts such as Jandob (traditional flask-making), altar making, weaving and wood carving. A wide range of products, including handicrafts, textiles and vegetables, were on display and for sale. Her Majesty also met and interacted with community members of Tikpari, Lapthangrey, Tongla, and Shajulay villages at the centre. Her Majesty expressed her appreciation and gave words of encouragement to the villagers for their efforts to improve their income-generation skills and self-sufficiency.

At the gewog centre, Her Majesty was received in a Chipdrel procession by the geog officials and the monk body. The community members of Shingchori, Nanari, Murung and Olekyed chiogs gathered at the school grounds to meet Her Majesty. Her Majesty spent the whole day with the community members, hearing their views on the Foundation’s support and also their needs and suggestions on the way forward. A cultural programme including mask dances was also organized for the entourage. The activities in Kengkhar gewog are supported by the HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation as a part of their third phase of support to the Tarayana Foundation. To date, a total of sixty new houses have been completed out of the 172 that are planned. The support also includes facilitating the sale of the villagers’ products, support for agricultural productivity, and promotion of traditional arts and crafts.

“Happiness is...
...a self-sufficient and healthy life.”

Lhaden
Member of Self Help Group
Digala, Zhemgang
This year Ms. Ugyen Tshomo, Tarayana Field Officer, and I had the opportunity to escort the 5th group making the Tarayana Senior Pilgrimage to Bodhgaya. Our pilgrims included seven senior citizens from Kengkhar, Mongar and Bumthang, and a physically challenged man from Haa Sangkari. All of them came from economically under-privileged families.

The Senior Citizen Pilgrimage Programme was initiated in 2008 to commemorate and gratefully acknowledge the dedicated service rendered by our monarchs for 100 years and to celebrate the Coronation of the 5th Druk Gyalpo. Since then, Tarayana Foundation, with the help of generous donors, has had the opportunity to enable senior citizens from remote villages in Bhutan to make this meaningful pilgrimage to Bodhgaya (Dorji Den).

The flight to Bodhgaya on 2nd November was an experience our group will never forget, as all of the pilgrims had never been on a plane before. They were not able to hide their excitement at taking their first and perhaps last journey by air. They seemed as delighted as children, peering out of the windows and laughing with excitement, especially when the plane took off and landed. It was a pleasure to see them in such high spirits.

We were warmly received by Lopen Rinchen Khandu (Omzey) and his team from Royal Bhutan Monastery in Bodhgaya, followed by lunch. During our stay in Bodhgaya, the group visited many sacred places that have religious significance in relation to the Buddha and his enlightenment, in and around Bodhgaya. The group members were thrilled when they visited the sacred places and speechless when asked how they felt.

Phub Tshering, the man whose legs were paralyzed and who has lived as a social outcast, began to feel confident and content with his life after seeing so many other physically challenged people in India. He said that he felt lucky compared to them and though it took him this trip to find out, he was very glad to have made this discovery.

Our senior citizens returned home having fulfilled the wish of a lifetime. As the flight landed at the Paro International Airport after the 14-day tour, they could not stop smiling. Their faces expressed deep contentment and gratitude. Some had tears of joy in their eyes.

We will forever be indebted to the Lam, Lopens and friends from the Royal Bhutan Monastery for the support and hospitality they extended to us during our stay. We would also like to thank all our donors for making the successful trip to Bodhgaya possible.

Ms. Wangmo
Marketing Officer
Eight women came from the Tarayana project sites to attend the Grass-roots Forum for Women, a side event for the Bhutan+10 Gender and Sustainable Mountain Development in a Changing World.

They came with their handmade products and many of the guests were very interested in their work. Amongst the eight women who came here, three of them - Kelzang Wangmo, Karma Dechen and Monlachi Rai – were visiting Thimphu for the very first time.

Kelzang Wangmo, 25, from Mongar, Kengkhar, had studied until the fourth standard and was compelled to drop out of school when her mother passed away and her father re-married. Since then, she has been living with her grandparents. Kelzang always wanted to study and she jumped at the opportunity to continue her education through non-formal channels. She is now part of the Vegetable Production Group and earns her livelihood from it.

She said it was hard to explain how she felt when she was asked about the forum that was held at the Taj Tashi Hotel. She said that she was glad to have been given this opportunity. "If it weren’t for this time, I would have never been able to leave my village even once...this was such an interesting experience, I look forward to sharing it with everyone back home,” Kelzang Wangmo said.

Karma Dechen, 18, from Zhemgang, Langdurbi, said that Thimphu is fascinating and scary at the same time. She said that it (Thimphu) tempts her to walk around and explore but the cars and traffic stands like a “huge boulder” in front of her. She got married at the age of 15 and has a son. Her husband is in India pursuing his higher studies. She says she never got the chance to study but she’s content with how her life has turned out.

Monalachi Rai, 41, from Samtse, Lotokuchu, had only been to Samtse and Phuntsholing before this opportunity was presented to her. She and her husband both work in the fields and the Vegetable Production Self-Help Groups enable them to earn their livelihoods.

She says she has never seen so many different faces and heard so many different languages. From the time she left home, everything has been like a dream. At the forum, she said that she had never known so many fascinating products were available in this country and that people would be so interested in local products. She says she would love to return to Thimphu and experience it all over again.

As for the rest who had been here before, they said that Thimphu always manages to amaze them in so many ways and that the capital city is ever-changing.

Some of the products displayed during the event included: homemade pickles, the ever-so-famous ginger candies and wooden carved products.

The forum was a great platform for them to interact and display their products to the rest of the world.
The charity ALSTOM Foundation and the TARAYANA Foundation of Bhutan continue their cooperation to support rural communities in remote areas of Bhutan in order to complement the hydro power investment projects in Dagana (Goshi) and Sarpang (Jigmeling).

With a kick-off meeting on November 22nd, the two charitable Foundations have started work on their second initiative of this kind, under which the households will be able to make use of solar drying technology as a means of improved food preservation. Geogs near the Dagachhu Hydro Power Project site and in the vicinity of the runner refurbishment workshop being set up by Druk Green Power Corporation and ALSTOM in Sarpang Dzongkhag will be the beneficiaries.

Dagana and Sarpang regions are blessed with favourable climatic conditions for the cultivation of fruits and vegetables. However, much of the fruits grown go to waste, particularly during the months of peak production as there is a lack of a proper market within a reasonable transport distance.

The communities suffer from food shortage during leaner seasons as they do not have the capacity, or the technology to store their agricultural produce. The difficulty in finding markets make farm incomes unreliable, with prices falling to almost nothing when there is a glut of fruit and vegetables. Using simple, solar-heated dryers means that no fuel or electricity is required. The drying can be carried out on the farms where the fruits are grown.

Besides enhancing food security and income-generating capacity, the objective of the project is also to build the skills of members of the communities.

ALSTOM Foundation, the charitable wing of the electrical and mechanical equipment manufacturer ALSTOM, has pledged to grant Nu. 3.3 million in support of the project which is slated to last two years, TARAYANA will utilize its experience in working in the remotest regions of Bhutan while implementing this project independently.

The solar-dryer project is the second such joint initiative. In the first initiative, TARAYANA and ALSTOM introduced ecological stoves in Dagana. Experience gained and the feedback received from that project will help to develop plans for future work.

ALSTOM is a global leader in power generation. ALSTOM supplies electrical equipment to the Dagachhu HPP project and has previously worked on the HPPs Ranjung, Basochhu I and Basochhu II. Together with Druk Green Power Corporation, ALSTOM is investing in the establishment of a hydro power equipment refurbishment center in Sarpang.
It has been three years since the Buzip Programme (daycare centre) was initiated in Lotokchu Wangchuck, with 14 children aged between two to five. The way it has been received by the people has been a huge success.

Kezang Doya, 28, who has enrolled her two children in the Buzip daycare centre, says that she has been the most glad of all since the programme was initiated. She said that it was really difficult to take care of her two children and earn a living at the same time. She said that the Buzip programme has helped not just her but all the parents with young children in her community.

“Before the programme, we would always be in great confusion as to where and with whom we should keep our children, and most of the time, we would end up taking the children with us to the fields,” said Kezang.

It was a relief for the parents as there was someone to take good care of the children while they worked. Tarayana Foundation staff had observed parents with toddlers leave their children either locked inside the house or tied to a pole. Concern for the children’s emotional and physical well-being prompted Tarayana to start the Buzip programme.

According to the parents, they say that their children get to learn so much that they cannot be possibly teach them in years. “The minute my son reaches home, he always sings me a rhyme and asks me to sing along…I try my best but I always fail,” laughs Kam Tshering Doya.

Buzip Programme, in collaboration with UNDP, addresses the early child-care needs of parents in remote rural communities. Under this programme, day care centres are established across Bhutan to provide reliable child-care, early childhood education and peace of mind to the parents in rural communities.

The Buzip programme’s most important objective is to help the farmers’ pre-school-aged children learn and explore while their parents work in the fields. It provides these vulnerable children with the same quality of care and educational opportunities as their urban peers and also empowers their mothers to seek gainful employment.

Since it was well received by the people of Lotokchu, the neighboring communities have been requesting day-care centers in their villages. Tarayana plans to set up 20 more Buzip daycare centers across the country because of the demand from many villages.

**Training on Eco-stove Fabrication**

The training program on Eco-stove fabrication was jointly organized by Agriculture Machinery Centre (AMC) and Tarayana Foundation from 3rd-13th of December 2012. The training was conducted at the Agriculture Machinery Development Centre using simple tools available at the centre in order to maintain the continuity of the work after the training program was completed. The participants were very enthusiastic and keen on learning all the aspects of eco-stove fabrication. They were provided hands-on experience in fabricating the eco-stoves, and were successfully able to master the skills required to build functional eco-stoves.

**Pottery Training**

Mr. Maiyesh Kumar Tamang, MA graduate in Ceramics from Shantiniketan College in Kolkotta, conducted a two week long training for the rural artisans producing earthen pots in Trongsa (Monpa community). Along with Karma Dorji, master traditional potter, seven unemployed youth attended the training program. This is the first time for all the participants to learn & experience pottery on an electric wheel.
Food Processing, Weaving and Self Help Group Management Training

A team consisting 15 community members from Pemagatshel and Mongar accompanied by two Tarayana staff attended a month-long training program on Food processing, weaving and Self Help Group Management in Ahmedabad, India.

The training program was sponsored by Self Employment Women’s Association (SEWA), India. SEWA is a trade union that was founded in 1972. It is an organization of poor, self-employed women workers. SEWA's main goals are to organize women workers for full employment whereby workers obtain work security, income security, food security and social security.

The team was divided in two groups, Food Processing group and Weaving group. The Food Processing group received training in procedures for making peanut butter, masala ground nut, potato chips and chakri. They also learned the process of making rice noodles.

The Food processing group learned how to conduct surveys before procurement to see what types of foods are more used by the people in a district or village and to know which foods will be cheaper and better in quality.

The participants found the practical training to be the most interesting, as they were able to learn to produce various items like pickles, fruit juice, candies, noodles and many more.

"I never knew that there were so many ways to preserve our foods let alone prepare different food products, and this training has taught all of us not to waste any of our produce," said Aum Deki Yangzom.

The weaving group was hosted in Sinhol village under Anand District for 10 days. They were given hands-on training in weaving in two, four and six pressing order looms. The weaving team noted that they have very different kind of looms compared to the looms in Bhutan. The weavers in SEWA produce towels, bed sheets, tablecloths and handkerchiefs.
Conti....

After the practical sessions, all participants received training in Self Help Group Management. The session started with an introduction to Organizing and Community Based Organization Management to help the participants understand how to organize community based self-help groups.

The team also learned about perception and how to deal with others: How anger is harmful in dealing with others and may interfere with wise decision-making. Having gained an understanding of organizational behavior and leadership traits, the participants learned to recognize and foster the qualities that make a good leader.

Ap Garab, 56, from Kengkhar said that “I have taken many decisions in my life when I was angry and in a hurry, and it always ended up being the worst decision.” He felt that this training, especially on anger management, was the most helpful as it taught everyone how to deal with their anger issues in a very interesting manner.

The master trainers in SEWA Manager Ni Schools trained the participants in such a way that all of the participants spoke and participated during the training program. The trainers narrated stories related to community based organizations; screened videos related to this topic and organized the participants to do role plays in order to help them understand the concepts.

The team was taught about Self Help Group Management, which included Characteristics of SHG’s, Formation of Self Help Groups, the Bylaws of SHG and cooperation within SHG’s.

The sessions were very interactive and the participants found them to be informative and educational. For all the participants, this was their first training in Self Help Group Management and they found it very relevant to the work they were doing. There were several group exercises, role plays and presentations.

They also received training in Financial management which some of the participants found a bit confusing and difficult, as many of them hardly know to calculate correctly. But somehow they managed to master the most important topics such as costing and keeping records of financial transactions.

The team was trained to Prepare a Business Plan, which was a very important activity for every participant. At the end of the training program, the training coordinators presented each participant with a certificate of completion.
**Upcoming Events**

**January, February & March 2013**

January 7-12: Results Based Management training for the Programme and Field Officers.

January 14-17: Microfinance Models and Operations and Financial Literacy Training.

January - March: Buzip Programme Care Giver's Training.

February 7-13: Annual Retreat

March: Debriefing of FK Exchange Participants (Promotion of Appropriate Green Technologies to bring about Rural Prosperity)

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**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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**In Touch Tarayana Newsletter**

**From the Tarayana School Clubs**

I joined the Tarayana Club because I love to help others and I feel that it is the best way to help others and everyone through what the club does. One other reason for me to join the club was because my former school did not have a Tarayana Club and I felt it would be an interesting experience to learn and grow from the club. It was the best decision I ever made!

Our Tarayana School Club helped a lot of disadvantaged people. We collected hand-me-down clothes, toys, books, and we made creative and attractive arts, bags, and decorative pieces. We were able to sell all of the things we made. We then contributed the money to the Tarayana Foundation, a non-profit organization working to help and enhance the lives of the poor people of Bhutan.

We also organized a lucky draw game and sold snacks during all of our school’s big events. The most fun activity we ever did was when we organized a cleaning campaign. It was great fun cleaning up some of the communities as we were able to instill the value of a clean and safe environment and to experience what it was like to work together as a community, helping the society at large.

I am very proud to be in this club as we were able to reach out to the needy people in our own small ways and to make a difference in their lives. The club’s activities were all about helping and bringing positive change to the community but overall, it is a really interesting club as all the club members had fun doing all these activities.

I feel very proud and happy being Bhutanese and I am very lucky that I got to help others and be there for the ones that needed my help. I am a proud citizen of Bhutan and most of all I am lucky to have teachers who have taken the initiative to help others. They are the ones who have inspired and motivated us students to help others. It is also a great learning experience for us and I value my participation in the club for all these reasons. Thank you very much, my dear teachers, leaders and each and every citizen of Bhutan who believe in helping others.

Thank You.

Sonam Deki
Lungtenzampa Middle Secondary School
Thimphu