ANNUAL REPORT 2018

An Engaged Society • A Vibrant Democracy

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Message

from the Chair and Executive Professional Director

After a decade of impactful programmes, BCMD is poised to take our mission forward with a new strategic plan for the next five years.

In the year of general elections in 2018, which also marked the first decade of Bhutan's democracy, BCMD 's work became more focused on deepening democracy and people's engagement. We started work on a 40-minute film 'Democracy: a Decade On'. Our bi-annual publication the Druk Journal dedicated an issue to the 'Democratisation of Bhutan' with contributing articles from political parties. The Druk Journal was used to lead conversations with a cross section of citizens prompting thinking and discussion much needed in an election year.

The first Bhutan Democracy Forum was conducted amid much excitement, and widened the space for democratic deliberations. Representatives of the four political parties spoke on 'The State of Bhutan's Democracy' to more than 490 citizens from all sections of society. Among our many activities, several highlights come to mind:

- More than 140 youth from across Bhutan were inspired to reflect on their role as citizens in Bhutan through a residential Summit facilitated by youth. They learnt new skills to share their views as citizens and what youth could do to contribute to their communities. Our Youth Initiative programme enabled youth about governance and how to research policy issues;
- Our Building Community project with the Paro and Samdrup Jongkhar Municpal authorities grew in impetus. Paro residents and decision-makers drew up a Vision and Mission for their town, and residents in Samdrup Jongkhar discovered the strength of community action. Youth, civil society members and residents also learnt how to map their communities and take action to address local challenges;
- A retreat and a leadership summit for Civil Society Ogranisations enabled the fraternity to finalise a strategic way forward for CSOs' core committee, and identified key issues that civil society is now taking up as a sector;
- We promoted news literacy and trained teachers of special needs students, nuns, and women in the remote communities. This prepared people to learn how to seek verified information as opposed to fake news, especially needed in a year of elections; and
- BCMD's media lab conducted a series of trainings and workshops including training a local high school's media students weekly for over 10 months. Film-making, photography and news literacy helped youth and civil society members become smart consumers and producers of media.

Looking Ahead

BCMD will continue to create a stronger civic and public space in Bhutan and enable Bhutanese to fulfill their potential as engaged citizens. We will step up efforts to reach the unreached and vulnerable sections of society including persons with special needs. We will focus on reaching members of political parties, civil society, media, private sector, youth and teachers and the bureaucracy to ensure a resilient and active citizenry. Together, BCMD and our partners and constituents have accomplished and learnt much in 2018. We thank you for your kind and generous support for all these years and count on everyone's continued partnership in the year ahead.

Nancy Strickland
Chairperson

Siok Sian Pek-Dorji
Executive Director

BCMD **Profile**

As Bhutan completed its 3rd general elections in 2018, the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy's (BCMD) activities became even more important as we continue our work to widen civic space and strengthen citizen voice and action.

The BCMD continued to create safe spaces for reflections and debates to prompt critical thinking and to contribute to informed decision-making. As BCMD also marked its 10th year of operations in 2018, the centre initiated a number of multi-pronged strategies to educate citizens, expand public discourse, and create Bhutan-centric print and audiovisual resources to stimulate thinking, reflection, and discussion on democracy. Engaging the underserved youth and people in conversations, a Youth Summit, and community building initiatives enabled citizens to develop greater consciousness on the importance of citizen's engagment in our own society, and on another level, the nation.

Our Team

Siok Sian Pek-Dorji
Executive Professional Director

Chencho Lhamu,
Director (Programmes and Development)

Ashok Moktan,
Deputy Director

Tempa Wangdi,
Communications/ Programme Officer

Pasang Dorji,
Asst. Programme Officer

Meenam Nepal,
Asst. Programme Officer

Karma Yonten,
Asst. Programme Officer

Yeshey Choden,
Finance Officer

Karan Katwal, Asst. Accounts/Admin Officer

A GNH inspired vibrant democracy that engages all citizens

To nurture democracy in Bhutan through civic engagement, public discourse, and media-literate citizens

MISSION

VISION

OBJECTIVES

- Create responsible citizenry that will actively engage in the practices of democracy
- Strengthen media professionalism and help educate both journalists and media consumers on the role of media in building a democratic society
- Create public space for civic discourse
- Create multimedia resources for/on media and democracy
- Strengthen the institutions of civil society, many of which are newly created.

Programme Area 1

Inspiring Active Citizen

Citizen participation is at the heart of democratic culture. Democracy comes alive only when citizens engage in governance, policy-making, decisions, and when they question societal issues and hold their elected leaders accountable. Citizens are also required to constantly give feedback to their elected leaders so that a diversity of views and ideas are integrated into decisions. A stronger and more resilient community then emerges.

Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD) is dedicated to strengthening of an engaged and informed citizenry, able and open to share their views and feedback to improve society. We do this through three programme areas: Inspiring Active Citizens; Encouraging & Expanding Public Discourse; and Resources for Democracy.

Activities under Inspiring Active Citizen are aimed at inspiring youth and citizens to actively engage in the practice of democracy. Through programmes such as the Building Community Initiative in Paro and Samdrup Jongkhar, the Youth Summit, and Youth Initiative, youth and citizens learn to be agents of change in their communities by engaging with policy-makers and local leaders in tackling policy and social issues in their communities.

Youth Summit

A teacher from Gomtu Middle Secondary School, Laxman Bista noted the remarkable transformation his students underwent at the 4th Youth Summit (YS).

"These are children I have never seen participate in debates or quiz in the school. After four days at the Youth Summit, they were making presentations to more than 100 people. That's a great achievement," said Laxuman Bista at the Youth Summit.

YS is an annual youth programme that takes youth through reflection, self-discovery, and understanding of socio-economic and political issues. "The best part of the Youth Summit was reflecting on myself and thinking about otherness and kindness towards others," said Sonam Zangmo, a student of Yebilaptsa Central School in Zhemgang Dzongkhag (District).

Students from across Bhutan become empowered at the 4th Youth Summit in 2018.

The summit aims to nurture and mould young minds into socially and politically conscious, and responsible citizens. In 2018 over 139 students from schools and colleges in the country participated in the 4th Youth Summit held at the Royal Thimphu College in the capital city. By the end of the summit, students in groups identified projects to tackle issues in their communities.

Students proposed projects to tackle rural-urban migration, waste management, violence against children, women empowerment, and growing organic food. "We want to advocate on child abuse in our communities back home where spanking children is perceived as normal parenting technique," said a student from Gomtu Middle Secondary School, Tsheyang Lhazom.

YS also trained and enabled 11 youths to facilitate the summit. Pema Tashi, a high school graduate said, "I learned to engage patiently with a variety of children of different age groups without sharing my personal opinion to influence them."

139
Students Participated

12
Schools & Colleges Engaged

11
Youths Trained in Facilitation

Inspiring Community-based Change

Together, our experience in the Paro and Samdrup Jongkhar towns show that collaborative efforts between civil society and local municipal authorities can help trigger greater ownership and interest in town development. More importantly they model a more inclusive approach to decision-making in Bhutan's growing townships and to building stronger and more resilient youth and community members who are aware that each action and decision they make will have a greater impact in their neighbourhoods.

Samdrup Jongkhar

- **Rikhay Group: Construction of Marketing Shed**
- **Menchari Group: Maintenance of Farm Road**
- **Samdrup Jongkhar Group: Development of Wasteland in Thromde**

Paro

- **Karma Academy: Advocacy on Reusable Sanitary Napkins**
- **Utpal Academy: Sensitisation on Waste Management**

166
Participated

7
Town Hall Meetings Held

5
Projects Completed

4
Training of Trainers

Dzongkhag officials inaugurate the market shed in Rikhay, Dewathang - the result of a community mapping project.

Box Story

Stronger Inclusive Community

Villagers of Rikhay in Dewathang, Samdrup Jongkhar are now able to sell vegetables, cereals, and fast food from their village after the students of Jigme Namgyal Engineering College and community members constructed a market shed.

The opening of the new shed has reduced transportation costs and doubled farmers' income from the sale of their produce. "We came to know that democracy isn't just about voting and it is important to work and collaborate with government to resolve issues," said a Rikhay tshogpa (village coordinator) Chojay Norbu, a participant in the project.

Youth mappers from Menchari in Gomdar Gewog repaired a farm road and opened up access to market for their community produce. "The project has helped us gain the trust of our village elders on young people," said Yonten from Menchari.

The Local Action Plan in Samdrup Jongkhar thromde (municipality) improved a polluted spring water source and prevented residents from further consuming the contaminated water. The area is now turned into a resting place with canopy and benches, and a pool. The project also prompted the thromde to further improve the areas.

In Paro district, students of Karma and Utpal Academies conducted a sensitsation campaign to promote awareness of reusable sanitary pads and waste management respectively. "If condoms are distributed freely even sanitary pads should be because menstration is natural, too," said Dechen, a teacher coordinator from Utpal Academy.

More than 90 residents, civil society members and thromde and dzongkhag (district administration) officials gathered to co-create a vision and a mission for Paro Town, "a safe, green, clean and culturally vibrant town".

Celebrating Youth Voice

10 Years of Citizen Education

By our 10-year mark thousands of school and college youths, teachers, civil society organisations, policy-makers, and many more have crossed their paths with Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD).

We took this opportunity to bring together over 150 youth alumnus to reflect on how what they learned with BCMD and how their past affiliations have impacted their lives and has enabled them to become a better person as citizens today. Our 10-year celebration "Celebrating Youth Voice' at the Royal University of Bhutan with youth leaders on 19 May 2018 attracted youths, civil society organisations, international donors, and Members of Parliament.

"... I came to know how students like me can take simple actions to solve simple issues in our community ... and take part in decision-making to solve issues in our communities," said a student from Shaba Higher Secondary School, Tshering Chophel.

During the event six youth leaders shared their journey to be a responsible and socially conscious citizen. A social worker and a musician Kezang Dorji talked about BCMD's influence on him to use his songs for a social cause. "What I have done so far and a lot of what I will do in the future will be because of what I have learned through BCMD," Kezang Dorji said.

The other youth leaders spoke about transformations they underwent as individuals, community members, and citizens after being part of the BCMD. "... I came to know how students like me can take simple actions to solve simple issues in our community ... and take part in decision-making to solve issues in our communities," said a student from Shaba Higher Secondary School, Tshering Chophel.

Continuity of Youth Initiative

The Youth Initiative (YI) was formed in 2013 by a group of youth in collaboration with Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD). The YI has been instrumental in stirring young minds to voice their opinions and concerns on important policy and social issues.

In 2018, YI Summer and Winter Camps focused on training youth to bring on community-based actions, and to be smart and sensible news and information consumer.

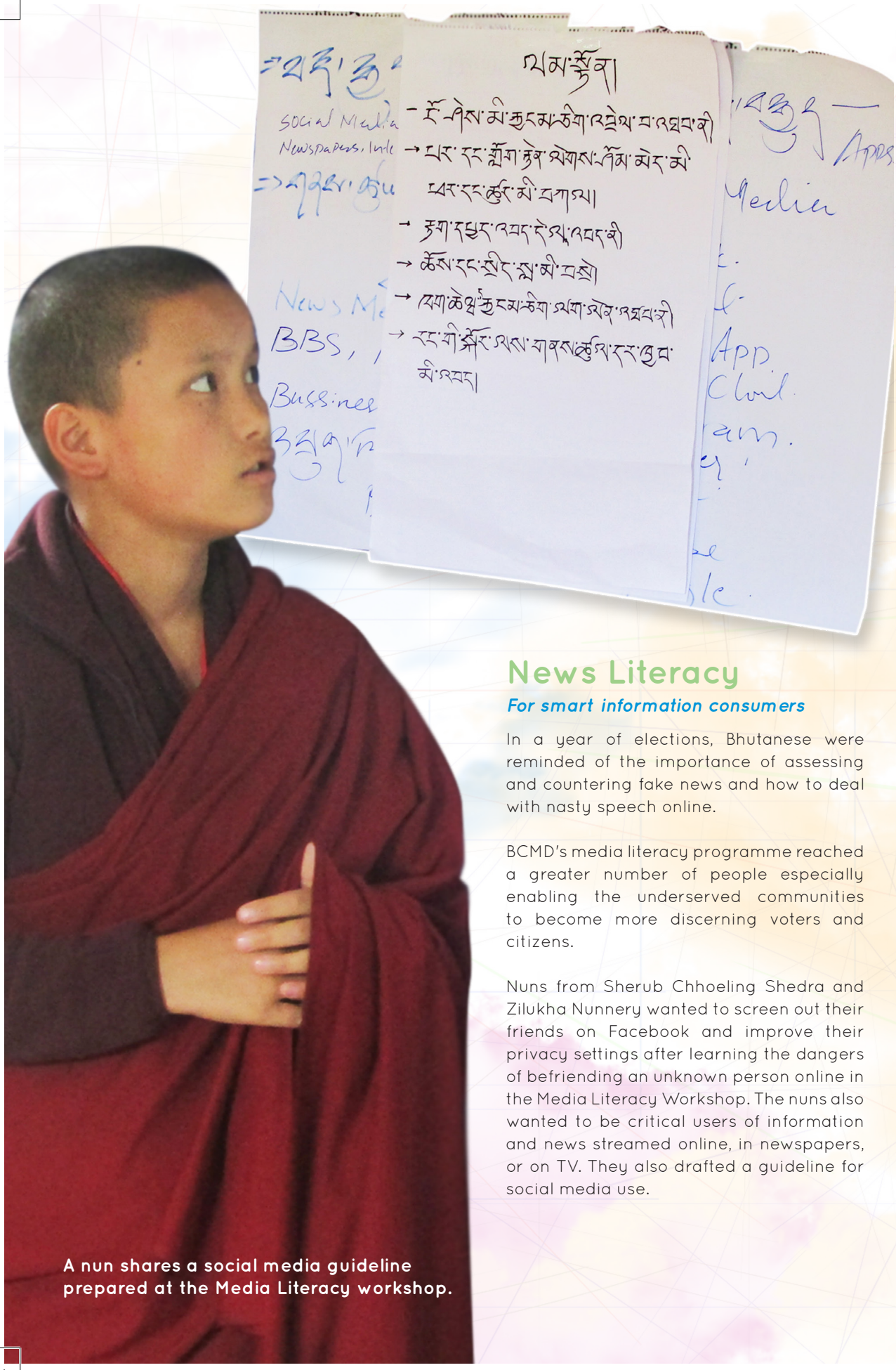
Youths from Winter YI Camp carried out five projects to bring about change in their communities after a residential training on research, dialogue, debate, discourse on policy-making, and civic education.

The Summer YI Camp in July focused on enabling young people to learn the values of good citizenship and enhance knowledge and critical skills to process and gauge, and fact check news and information. "This taught me that we should not believe everything we read and see online and on TV but use our judgment to discern the credibility and reliability of information," said a participant from Gedu College of Business Studies, Yeshi Nidup.

Projects Undertaken

- **Waste Segregation in Schools of Thimphu**
- **Sensitisation on ill-effects of alcohol in Kanglung, Trashigang**
- **Recycle of paper at College of Language and Culture Studies**
- **Zero Food Waste in Samtse College of Education**
- **Youth and Climate Change Discourse in Wangdue Phodrang.**

Participants of Youth Initiative work to tackle issues in their locality.



A nun shares a social media guideline prepared at the Media Literacy workshop.

News Literacy

For smart information consumers

In a year of elections, Bhutanese were reminded of the importance of assessing and countering fake news and how to deal with nasty speech online.

BCMD's media literacy programme reached a greater number of people especially enabling the underserved communities to become more discerning voters and citizens.

Nuns from Sherub Chhoeling Shedra and Zilukha Nunnery wanted to screen out their friends on Facebook and improve their privacy settings after learning the dangers of befriending an unknown person online in the Media Literacy Workshop. The nuns also wanted to be critical users of information and news streamed online, in newspapers, or on TV. They also drafted a guideline for social media use.

Teachers of Special Needs Schools read case studies in braille at the Media Literacy Workshop.

Women from Gomtu in Samtse that BCMD trained in Media Literacy wanted to now spend fewer hours online than before and wishing to advise the same to their family members. "I told my 12-year-old son that he cannot have a Facebook account until he's older," a housewife from Gomtu, Tshering Wangmo said.

In 2018 BCMD conducted five rounds of Media Literacy training for at least 110 people including, underserved and disadvantaged women, nuns, monks, and teachers for Special Needs Education. The workshop aimed to enable participants to develop deeper analytical skills, knowledge and capacity to gauge and verify news, information and fake news. They learnt to check news reports for fairness, balance, and biases and to evaluate its sources, credibility, and reliability.

Besides learning critical skills, Media Literacy Workshops stimulated much online behaviourial change among the participants. "I asked my group chat friends to refrain from sharing inappropriate and disturbing images of accident victims and we all agreed on it," said a housewife from Gomtu, Kinga Wangmo.

But for many who use media, BCMD's Media Literacy programme helped participants understand the difference of being "media savvy" and "media literate". "Most of us here thought that we already knew about media but after being here we just realised that many of us weren't clear about so many things. It really helped us reinforce our understanding and knowledge about media," said a member of a civil society organisation.

110
People Trained

26
Schools & Colleges Covered

5
Media Literacy Workshops Held

2018 in Numbers

Youth Summit

140
Students Participated

12
Schools & Colleges Engaged

11
Youths Trained in Facilitation

Media Literacy

110
People Trained

26
Schools & Colleges Covered

5
Media Literacy Workshops Held

The Druk Journal

3,100
Copies printed

700
People Attended Conversations

262
Institutes Receives the Journal

Community Mapping

166
Participants

6
Town Hall Meetings Held

5
Projects Completed

4
ToTs Held

Bhutan Democracy Forum 2018

490
Participants

71
Political Party Members

15
Schools & Colleges

13
National Council Members

Strengthening Civil Society

3
CSO Activities

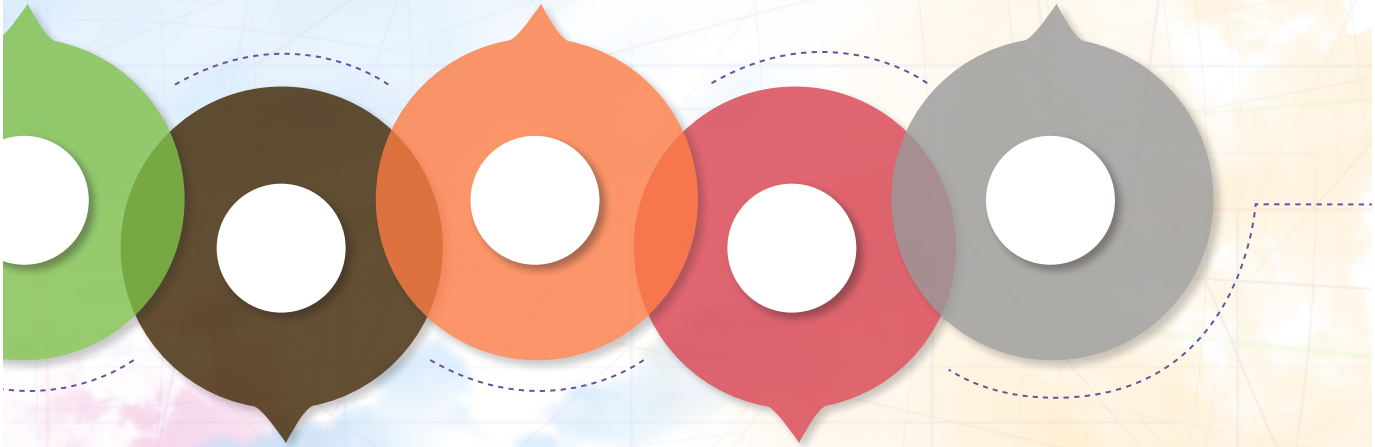
106
CSO Memebers & Government Officials

Media Democracy Resources

6
Publications

3
Documentaries

1
TV Series (JURWA)



2
Youth Initiative Camps Held

49
Youths Participated

5
Projects Executed

Media Lab

327
People Trained

35
Schools & Colleges Benefited

13
Activities

Programme Area 2

Encouraging and Expanding Public Discourse

Bhutanese people are gradually learning to express their views openly. Efforts, however, should be continued to create a more open and free space to encourage more people to share their diverse perspectives and ideas on important issues.

Doing its bit to **encourage and expand public discourse** Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD) continued creating **forums, seminars, and conversations to widen civic space and to amplify voice.**

Our activities to bring together voters and political parties **and to empower young people to express their views on important issues through multimedia production** continued with the same spirit and vigour. We are hopeful that our contribution to open up minds and thoughts will go a long way in creating a stronger "democracy" founded on the values of a small and open society.

Strengthening Civil Society

Civil society, a growing sector, in Bhutan's democracy is **charting a direction for itself as an organised fraternity that remains relevant to the needs of society**. On 28-30 March, 43 civil society members met for a three-day retreat at Kharbandi, Phuentsholing. Taking into account the common challenges and aspirations, **the retreat resulted in the formulation of a draft strategic framework to advocate for an enabling and conducive policy environment for civil society in Bhutan.**

The Senior Leadership Summit in Paro from 5-6 October brought together 27 civil society members with seven government representatives to **focus on leading and creating a vibrant, resilient, and effective civil society**

in the spirit of collaboration. The Summit helped **clarify and articulate the fraternity's approach in positioning itself as a valued partner in Bhutan's nation-building and as collaborators as opposed to competitors**. It provided further clarity to the fraternity's strategy to engage with the government for an enabling working environment.

A three-day personal leadership workshop from 21-23 May based on Steven Covey's habits of highly effective people was held for 24 mid-level civil society managers. The workshop **stimulated reflection on their strengths and weakness in the participants and helped them reflect on how each can grow individually and to contribute to organisational effectiveness.**

CSO members at the retreat in Phuentsholing focused on charting a direction for the civil society fraternity.

The Media Lab

Youths and individuals continue to benefit from the BCMD's Media Lab at Nazhoen Pelri Complex in Thimphu by learning to use photography and filmmaking to capture important stories affecting youth and their communities.

While photography, filmmaking, and editing for 46 students of Motithang Higher Secondary School continued for 10 months, a number of trainings, workshops, and dialogues were conducted at the lab. With the lab opened on Fridays and Saturdays, registered members and youths passionate about photography and filmmaking drop in regularly to learn new skills or review their photographs and filmmaking.

Trainings on multimedia, basic and intermediate photography, caption writing, filmmaking, and podcast provided people an opportunity to showcase and share their views on a number of issues of national importance. "Such training helps us develop resources like audio visual that could be used to advocate and get our message through" said Chey Chey from Ability Bhutan Society.

Intermediate photography training for youths from schools and monastic schools also improved their storytelling abilities and mindful photography. The lab since its introduction in 2013 has become an important and safe space for expression through podcasting and audiovisual production.

Media Lab Activities

- Filmmaking
- Media Literacy
- Youth Initiative Camps
- Basic Photography
- Photography Refresher Course
- Peer Facilitation
- *Suja Dzow* Conversations

327
People Trained

35
Schools & Colleges Benefited

13
Activities

Bhutan Democracy Forum 2018

Representatives of the political parties at the Bhutan Democracy Forum 2018.

In a democracy where civil servants and students abstain from joining any of the political campaigns because they are conscious of being "apolitical", Bhutan Democracy Forum 2018 on 11 May provided a much-needed space to interact with the political parties in the election year.

The forum, on the other hand, provided the political parties an opportunity to talk to and understand people's expectations. The People's Democratic Party representative, Lyonpo (minister) Damcho Dorji quoting the former Chief Justice Lyonpo Sonam Tobgay said that Bhutan's democracy is unique in the sense that it's an evolutionary process and not revolutionary. The minister also cautioned against divisive politics. "The politicians must join hands to take a constructive approach...," he said.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa representative, Aum Lily Wangchhuk urged people to engage, connect, understand, and work in the spirit of harmony and respect. Bhutan Kuen-Nyam Party President, Dasho Neten Zangmo said that there is a need to educate people on democracy. "We need to advocate that democracy is not only about elections...Everyday people have to be important – citizens have to be important ...," she said.

490
Participants

71
Political Party Members

15
Schools & Colleges

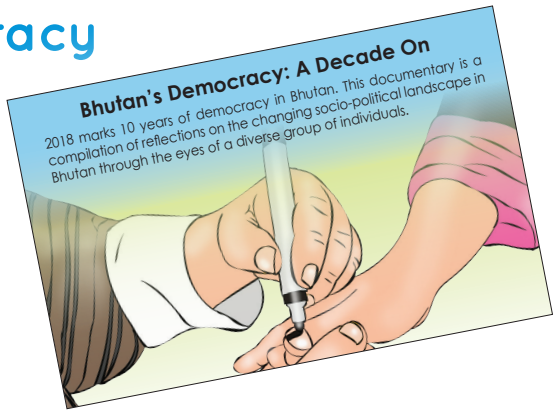
13
National Council Members

Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa representative, Dr Tandin Dorji raised concerns over the existing practice of Bhutanese populace voting entirely based on the promises parties make during the campaign period. The speakers responded candidly on a number of issues including the widening gap between the rich and the poor, sustainability, sovereignty, civic education, media, and foreign relations during the question and answer session. Two programmes were produced and screened on Bhutan Broadcasting Service and shared on BCMD's YouTube and Facebook page.

Programme Area 3

Resources For Democracy

Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy continues to produce print and audio-visual resources on democracy to promote new ideas and knowledge and to prompt more discussion in an evolving democracy.



JURWA TV Series

With an aim to facilitate and prepare the voters of a young democracy for the 3rd parliamentary elections, Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD) produced and screened a 16 episode JURWA TV Series on national television from 30 April 2018.

The series was well recieved in both rural and urban centres as people were preparing to choose their leaders for the third time. "Every night I wait to watch JURWA because it helps us understand more about democracy," said an elderly woman from Thimphu.

Set in the background of elections, young Sangay Penjor's political journey has as much challenge as the prospect of becoming a young leader. His political ambition puts his own love life at stake. Amidst this is a nosy reporter trying to unravel truth from the piles of lies and misinformation as people in the idyllic village on the outskirts of Thimphu are caught up in a dramatic political change called "democracy". This is JURWA, the story of "Changing Times in Gakithang".

Resources

- JURWA II Graphic Novel
- JURWA TV Series
- Bhutan Democracy Forum 2019 TV Programme
- Bhutan Democracy Forum 2018 Proceedings Publication
- Inspiring Stories of Civic Consciousness: A book on impacts of Community Mapping in Paro and Samdrup Jongkhar.
- Through the Lens of Adolescents: A photo compendium capturing works of adolescents from schools and monastic institutes.
- The Druk Journal: Publication & conversations on Democratisation of Bhutan & Transforming Bhutan's Economy.

The Druk Journal

The Druk Journal is a journal of thoughts and ideas. As a non-partisan publication, The Druk Journal aims to create space for conversations around important national issues to serve Bhutan's larger interests.

The journal published two issues on 'Democratisation of Bhutan' in Spring 2018 and 'Transforming Bhutan's Economy' in Winter 2018. Political parties, Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa, Druk Phuensum Tshogpa, and People's Democratic Party contributed an article sharing their stance on politics, democracy, and governance.

The 9th issue 'Transforming Bhutan's Economy' helped generate much discussions and debate on the Bhutanese economy. Three seminars at TechPark Thimphu, Gedu College of Business Studies, and Sherubtse College covered over 700 people including college students, entrepreneurs, youths, CSO members, bureaucrats, and policy-makers.

With The Druk Journal picking up as a credible publication, both the issues were distributed widely to schools, colleges, public libraries, ministries, departments, parliament, judiciary, dzongkhags (district administration), and constitutional bodies. In 2018, a total of 37 people from across the globe contributed to The Druk Journal.

3,100
Copies Printed

700
People Attended Conversations

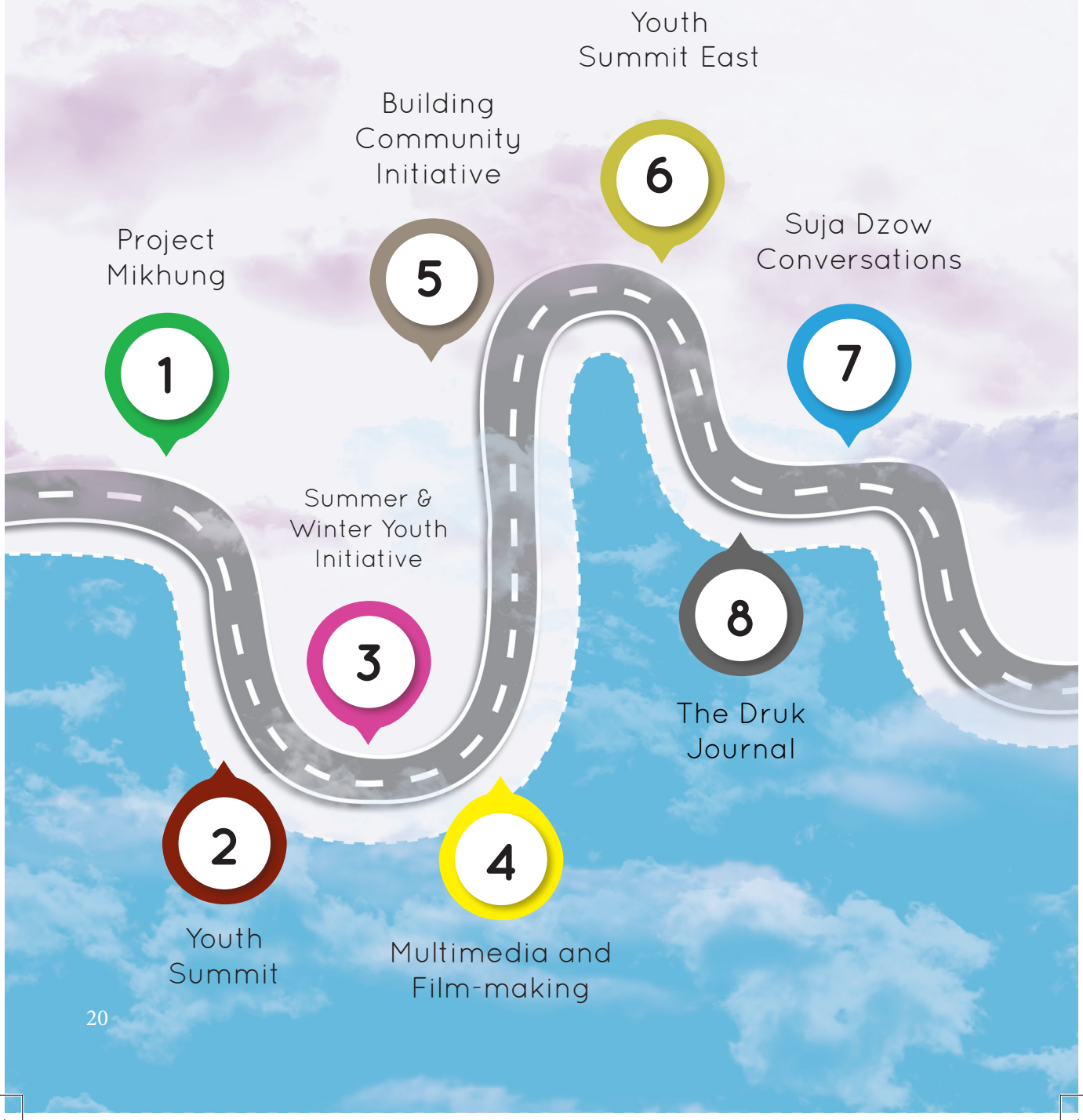
262
Institutes Received the Journal

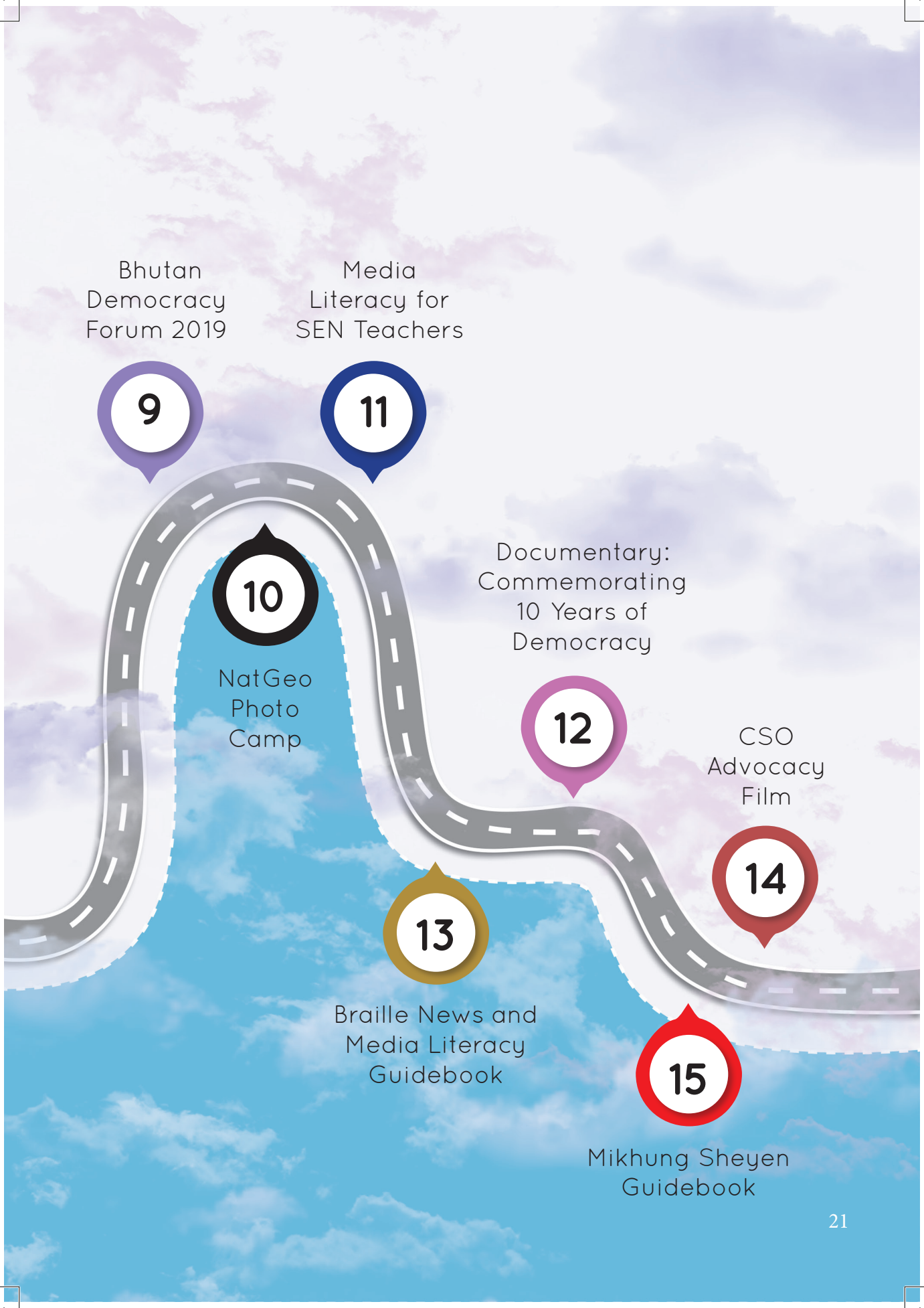
4
Conversations

2
Issues Published

The Royal Monetary Authority Deputy Governor, Yangchen Tshogyel interacts with students after the Seminar at the Gedu College of Business Studies on changes needed to encourage entrepreneurlism among the youth.

Looking Ahead
2019




Bhutan Democracy Forum 2019
9
Media Literacy for SEN Teachers
11
10
NatGeo Photo Camp
Documentary: Commemorating 10 Years of Democracy
12
CSO Advocacy Film
14
13
Braille News and Media Literacy Guidebook
15
Mikhung Sheyen Guidebook

Audited Receipts and Payments Statement as of 31 December 2018

RAA Financial Report

Receipts	Schedule	Amount (Nu.)	Payments(Nu)	Schedule	Amount (Nu.)
Opening Balances:			**Expenditures:**		
Cash-in-Hand		-	i. Administration	2	5,425,002.65
Cash at Bank		7,592,520.98	ii. Programme Expenses	2	6,887,170.01
			iii. Refund to Donors		
Fund Received during the Year:	1		iv. Purchase of Assets	3	185,087.09
i. International Development Organizations		12,072,955.04	v. Fixed Deposit	4	4,000,000.00
ii. International Non-profit Organizations		2,279,802.34	vi. Advance to staff	5	60,475.00
iii. Foundations		15,798.97			
iv. Interest Earned		1,284,170.84			
v. Individuals		1,669,760.00	**Closing Balances:**		
vi. Local Supports		625,000.00	Cash-in-Hand		
vii. Miscellaneous Income		1,136,518.34	Cash at Bank		10,118,791.76
Total		**26,676,526.51**	**Total**		**26,676,526.51**

(Kinzang)
Audit Team Leader
Brandon Kinzang& Associates Pvt. Ltd.

(MsManishaKhawas)
Asst. Officer
Adm/Finance

(Ms. Rosy Chettri)
Finance Officer

(Ms. Siok Sian Pek Dorji)
Executive Professional Director

Acknowledgement

Board of Directors

- Nancy Strickland, Former Executive Director, Bhutan Canada Foundation
- Dr Jagar Dorji, Consultant
- Dr Lam Dorji, Consultant
- Tashi Choden, Consultant
- Pem Lama, Consultant
- Sangay Khandu, Consultant
- Siok Sian Pek-Dorji, Executive Professional Director, BCMD.

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