



*Towards Economic Empowerment of Women since 2010*



**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2014**

# OUR MISSION & HISTORY



Our History



Our Mission

Ms. Damchae Dem (Executive Chairperson of Pelden Enterprise Ltd., and Vice Chairperson of SCWEC – the SAARC Chamber of Women Entrepreneurs Council) Bhutan inspired and conceptualized to establish Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs (BAOWE) in 2010. Now, it is a registered non-profit organization, incorporated under CSO Act Bhutan 2007.

BAOWE was initiated with the mission to develop a social-consciousness-driven private sector and promote women entrepreneurs at the grassroots level thereby contributing to poverty reduction, self-reliance, business from a GNH perspective to achieve the economic empowerment of women.

BAOWE will work to develop a social-consciousness-driven private sector and promote women entrepreneurs at the grassroots level thereby contributing to poverty reduction, self-reliance, and business from a GNH perspective to achieve the economic empowerment of women.

BAOWE will provide a common platform through which the needs, concerns and aspirations of women entrepreneurs are collectively and effectively advocated, voiced and addressed by facilitating meaningful dialogues with relevant stakeholders, key partners and business community in general.

## A Message from CEO/Founder, Ms. Damchae Dem

2014 was another fantastic year for BAOWE. BAOWE remains a closely knit Organization with strongly shared values and commitments to the families and communities we serve. Ultimately, what holds us together is our belief that people have the power to change their own lives. Our role is to mobilize and unleash their own capabilities, leadership and resources to build healthier, economically productive and more hopeful lives.

I want to thank all of those involved with BAOWE, including our generous partners & donors, gracious interns, and our tremendous staff and Board. Your continued commitment and support is vital to the lives of our women.

Damchae Dem  
CEO/Founder

## Board Members

The BAOWE Board functions as the Organization's final policy and decision making body. Led by the Founder and CEO, the Interim Board has five members as follows:

- Ms. Damchae Dem (Founder/CEO)
- Ms. Lily Wangchuk
- Jamyang Mipham Gyeltshen Rinpoche
- Ms. Chuki Om Dorji
- Ms. Phuntshok Choden (Strategic Advisor Consultant)



*"I challenge every person to do something for the economic empowerment of women in their community until there are no women who's dependent on their spouses, a victim of domestic violence, and resorting to prostitution"*

Ms. Nima Lhamu, Manager, BAOWE

# OUR BEST YEAR YET



Although this year was not without letdown, BAOWE reached our most ambitious and challenging goal. - We touched the lives of more than thousands of families throughout Bhutan. And that's incredible! We helped women access the markets, improve their businesses. We helped them save pennies a week that added up to real, lasting change. This year's annual report spotlights some of the positive change we're working so hard to deliver throughout, as we economically empower women and make them, along with girls, boys and men, more resilient.

## *OUR COVERAGE*



## ***MOMOS AND THUKPAS-A GREEN MARKET- A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS FOR THE THIMPHU STREET VENDORS UNDER THE PROJECT “WOMEN OWNED OPEN MARKET”***

One of the main manifestations of urban poverty is the increasing number of ‘footpath vegetable vendors’ on a daily basis on the busy streets of Thimphu. It is a common sight in the capital city of Thimphu to see rural women from all parts of the country selling agricultural produces and goods on the streets. Of late it has been illegal to do so, and yet many rural folks especially women and girls can be seen nervously sitting with their produce on the pavements, playing hide and seek with the City Corporation Inspectors whose job is to keep these petty vendors off the streets. These poor and mobile vendors apart from being women entrepreneurs in their own right, represent large sections of Bhutanese society, and come from all over rural Bhutan in search of a better opportunity to live more dignified lives, and when they see no hope they resort to all sorts of undignified jobs. Hence BAOWE as a women’s group focusing to empower women through strengthening entrepreneurship initiated “Women’s Own Open Market” Project in 2014 in various parts of Thimphu, namely Jungshina, Hejo, Hospital and bus booking, as its way of taking action to make a difference in the lives of women, men and children, everyone of who has a dream to make it happen for themselves someday-One day!

This Project addresses urban poverty and women’s economic empowerment through a pilot vendors market for, of and by women in urban nerve centers of Thimphu whereby the hawkers at the roadsides has now proper place to sell their products-All in all a green market where the vendors sell only home made goods and Bhutanese products. This project to some extent has addressed waste management issues in Thimphu. We have 64 women registered under this project as of now. In 2014, these women were provided with food handling and hygienic training conducted by BAFRA and F & B training by RITH. Towards the end of 2014, BAOWE conducted a survey to monitor and understand the economic growth of these women, and it didn’t surprise us to see that their incomes have increased threefold than what they were earning on the streets, and not to forget the boost in their self-esteem.

### ***From Crisis to Recovery-A Success Story***

Ms. Phub Lham, a 50 year old divorcee with 3 kids, once too poor to support her children’s schooling, BAOWE enrolled her as one of the beneficiary of the project “WOOM” in 2014. Today, she has hired a helper to assist her in preparing the products, and plans to send her daughter to College. Having worked for nearly 2 years to move out of her dirt-floor hut and into 4 bedroom apartment, an empowered Phub Lham still sells momos and thukpas near the hospital. A woman, who was once considered unbankable, today has her own personal savings account with her weekly savings.

Phub Lham says “After my divorce, fending for my children was very difficult. But the day BAOWE took me in, I became independent, self-sufficient, free and started to dream big. Live has become much easier for me now. I always dreamed of living in a well furnished clean apartment, and that’s what exactly happened” She said smiling.



## “Advancing Economic Opportunities for Women and Children”

In Bhutan, despite an absence of overt forms of gender discrimination in Society, women and girls continue to lag behind and do not yet play significant roles in the society and economy as they should and could. Physical and geographical inaccessibility coupled with low levels of education, low self image and traditional stereotyped gender roles inhibit women from active participation in all spheres of development- Socially, politically and economically. Female headed households, in particular, tend to be poorer than male-headed ones and in the economically worst-off Dzongkhags such as Zhemgang and Trashigang, a vast majority of rural households tend to be female headed.

Hence, BAOWE implemented a project called “Advancing Economic Opportunity for Women and Children” in rural areas of Zhemgang and Trashigang Dzongkhags, funded by Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR-9155)-Asian Development Bank. This Project has been working towards facilitating and strengthening both participation and contribution by women and girls in the economy of Bhutan by becoming owners or co-owners of small, cottage and micro-enterprises at the village level. 18 SHGs and 6 SHGs were formed under Zhemgang and Trashigang Dzongkhags respectively.

Gewogs (Zhemgang)	Self Help Groups	Activities	Trainings Provided to the SHGs	Chiwogs (Trashigang)	Self Help Groups	Activity	Trainings Provided to the SHGs
<b>TRONG</b>	5 SHGs	Vegetable, cardamom, Dairy	Record Keeping, Conflict management, leadership, group management training, dairy management and processing training, Organic farming, mushroom cultivation, seed-making, F&B training	<b>Dubkhang</b>	107 farmers	Poultry Feed (layer) and Cattle feed (milch Ration) production	Poultry and cattle feed production, Members trained on every aspects of feed milling which includes feed mill operation, safety measures, maintenance of machines, stacking of materials and finished feed, preparation of slack (feed additives/ micro ingredients) storage and packing the feeds.
<b>Shingkhar</b>	2 SHGs	Poultry, Vegetable		<b>Tshogonpa</b>	(85 female, 22 male)		
<b>Phangkhar</b>	5 SHGs	Mushroom, Dairy, Restaurant, Vegetable		<b>Moshi</b>			
<b>Nangkhor</b>	6 SHGs	Beekeeping, Vegetable & Rice, Mushroom, Poultry		<b>Kharpnu</b>			
				<b>Resarboo</b>	6 SHGs		

Table 1: Zhemgang activities in a nutshell

Table 2: Trashigang activities in a nutshell



Feed Mill Unit in Lumang, Trashigang



Cardamom group in Trong, Zhemgang



Vegetable group in Nangkhor, Zhemgang

## ***Sustainable Rural Biomass Energy-Installation of Improved Stoves in Zhemgang District***

Bhutan is known to have highest fuel wood consumption in the region, perhaps in the world with the per capita fuel wood consumption of staggering 1.2 tons per annum. Fuel wood is considered as elixir of life in rural Bhutan, since it has served as main source of energy for cooking, heating and lighting purposes since time immemorial. Despite some inherent merits of electricity and gas, they have failed to provide a complete package solution to cater the requirement of all rural energy spectrums in rural Bhutan. Therefore, provision of improved stove technology which is energy efficient, clean and smokeless becomes one of the very important solutions for sustainable and self-reliant rural energy supply in the country. This is where the Project “Bhutan Sustainable Rural Biomass Energy (SRBE)” comes into picture. The project funded by GEF, UNDP, Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation, executed by DRE, MoEA and implemented by BAOWE, works towards reduction of greenhouse emissions through the sustainable production and utilization of biomass through the promotion and dissemination of efficient cooking stoves in Zhemgang. Under this Project, around 430 improved stoves were constructed in 8 gewogs of Zhemgang namely; Bardo Gewog, Nangkhor Gewog, Shingkhar Gewog, Trong Gewog, Ngangla Gewog, Goshing Gewog, Bjoka Gewog and Phangkhar Gewog.



***BAOWE team and village technicians- In the making of improved stoves***

## ***FK Norway Exchange Program-“Assisting small scale farmers to adapt to climate change through sustainable agriculture techniques and appropriate technology”***

Climate change and variations have become an important issue in Bhutanese rural sectors, especially for agriculture producers. Their livelihoods are sensitive and vulnerable to climatic changes. This project is an exchange of young people and professional between organisations, Institutes and companies in Norway and other countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia.

We have completed 3 rounds of participant exchange for year 2013; we received one Traditional Doctor from Thailand and one Food Processing Advisor from Cambodia. Both shared knowledge in their respective fields and learned best agricultural practices and culture from Bhutan. In 2014, we received Mr. Herath Ashoka Sooriya Bandara, Dairy and Food processing expert from Sri Lanka. He shared his knowledge on home based food processing, packaging and marketing techniques with the Bhutanese farmers and in return he learned about Bhutanese milk product processing techniques mainly fresh cheese and butter, local food processing methods, like, Bhutanese pickles and other natural products used in Bhutan. The farmers were also taught about organic farming practices



***FK participant training the vendors on dairy products***



***FK participant training the farmers of Zhemgang on new and improved techniques in organic farming***



***FK participant training the members of youth Business Cooperative on dairy products***



***FK Participant training the farmers of Paro on dairy products and its diversification***

## RORUM Credit Cooperative-Small initiative with a big impact!

**R-Respect:** Our work with the marginalized in the community is characterized by mutual assistance and empowerment, and not by paternalism. Everyone must be treated with respect and dignity.

**O-Ownership:** Jointly-Owned and democratically controlled enterprise

**R-Reliable:** The security for availing credit services from RORUM is the character of the members. Members should be trustworthy.

**U-United:** The heart of which is the concept of human development and the brotherhood of man expressed through people working together to achieve a better life for themselves and their community.

**M-Members:** To avail the services of RORUM someone should be an active member of the Cooperative.



What can you do with little income and no access to banking services — much like 2 billion people around the world without banking services? Waste it on unproductive purposes? Resort to gambling? Hide it under the trees where there are high chances of theft?

RORUM Credit Cooperative is the first registered Savings and Credit Cooperative in Bhutan launched officially in 2014 to develop and promote savings habit among the low income groups and those who are denied access to financial services from Bhutan's mainstream financial institutions. Nearly 70 people like Phub Lham have joined the Cooperative. People with no collaterals, no bank accounts, and today have their own personal savings accounts with RORUM where they save it on a weekly basis. Every Monday, one of the staffs goes for their savings collection throughout Thimphu, where all the members save between Nu.100/- to Nu.500/- weekly. The members are also allowed to apply for a loan, to revive their alternative businesses, if their small businesses fail or if they want to expand their micro businesses, in case of farmers, if their crops fail.

Positive impacts were observed after the initiation of RORUM:

- *A new attitude towards savings*-Members understood the benefits of savings
- *A positive change in women's fatalistic attitudes*- The women began to make plans for the future and express interest in experimenting with new kinds of income-generating activities.
- *Reinforcement of women's solidarity*- Women has begun to seek common solutions to their common problems
- *An encouragement of self-reliance and entrepreneurial spirit.*



*"Give a man a fish, and he'll eat for a day. Give a woman microcredit, and she, her husband, her children, and her extended family will eat for a lifetime"*

*Bono Lead singer for the band U2 and humanitarian advocate*



# OUR FRIENDS

Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs would like to thank all our institutional partners and donors for joining us in inspiring women's participation in economic activities, poverty reduction and livelihood improved thereby moving forward towards a just and equitable society.



Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction routed through Asian Development Bank provided funds to implement project titled: Advancing Economic Opportunities of Women and Girls



ICIMOD is co financier for Project: "Medicinal Plants and herbs: Developing Sustainable Supply Chain and Enhancing Rural Livelihoods"



Common Fund for Commodities is the main financier for Project: "Medicinal Plants and herbs: Developing Sustainable Supply Chain and Enhancing Rural Livelihoods"



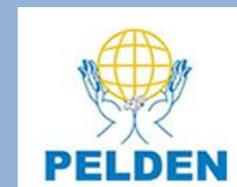
FK Norway is a Norwegian Government institute funding FK Exchange Program.



Department of Agriculture Marketing and Cooperatives  
National Feed and Fodder Development Program  
Horticulture Division  
RNR- DC  
National Post Harvest Centre  
National Organic Program  
National Mushroom Center

## CSO Fund Facility

CSOFF Funded project WOOM- Street Food.



Since inception BAOWE has always been receiving Institutional grants from Pelden Enterprise Ltd. to meet administrative expenses as well as program expenses.



**BAOWE Office,**  
**P.O. Box 903,**  
**New YDF Building, Phendey Lam,**  
**Thimphu, Bhutan.**  
**Phone: +975-2-329125; Fax: +975-2329126;**  
**Email [baowe.bhutan@gmail.com](mailto:baowe.bhutan@gmail.com); Website: [www.baowe.org](http://www.baowe.org).**



**Damchae Dem, CEO/Founder**

She completed her High School from St.Helen's Convent, Kurseong, Darjeeling. In 2006 she pioneered Steel Manufacturing in Bhutan, Pelden Enterprise Ltd.



**Dhan Maya, Project Coordinator**

She joined BAOWE in April 2011. She has Masters Degree in Environment & Ecology from ELLIM University, Sikkim, India. She is responsible for implementing and coordinating the livelihood project in Zhemgang.



**Tshering Wangmo, Project Coordinator**

She joined BAOWE in April 2011. She has Degree in B.A. Economics & Environment from Sherubtse College, Kanglung, Bhutan. She is responsible for implementing and coordinating the livelihood project in Tashigang.



**Nima Lhamu, Manager**

She volunteered for 12 months before her appointment in the Organization. She has a degree in Electrical Engineering from CST, RUB, Bhutan. She has wide range of experience working with international Organizations.



**Namgay Wangmo, Finance Officer**

She is a Certificate holder in Tally 7.2 from Info Tech Learning Centre, Thimphu. She has been an employee of BAOWE since October 2010. She manages BAOWE's financial accounting, monitoring and reporting System.



**Tshering Pelden, Project Coordinator**

Completed her Degree in Bachelors in Business Administration from Sikkim Manipal University, India. She joined BAOWE in 2012 as Thimphu WOOM Project Coordinator. She is currently looking after the activities and project under WOOM.