



Bhutan
FOUNDATION

Update 2021

Enhancing Farming and Food Security

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Bhutan's food system in 2020, the Panbang Youth Co-operative (PYC), a co-operative farming group founded by five childhood friends, quickly initiated the development of 14 acres of farmland to increase local food production. Their team of now 16 youth from the Panbang community worked to cultivate a number of crops, especially green vegetables like chilis, with the Bhutan Foundation's support.

In the midst of the pandemic, the PYC set up two greenhouses along with a water reservoir tank and provided equipment for irrigation of farmland. The Foundation's support also helped procure a farm tractor, seeds, and other farming tools and equipment. Over the winter months, in response to food shortages across the country, the PYC harvested and supplied over 220 kg (485 lbs) of chilis, 30 kg (66 lbs) of tomatoes, 100 kg (220 lbs) of beans, 400 kg (881 lbs) of cabbage, and 800 kg (1,763 lbs) of radishes to the Panbang community at costs far below market rates in cities like Thimphu.

The pandemic revealed a need for the agriculture sector to reassess and increase food supplies through local production. Necessary precautions and restrictions surrounding the pandemic have led to job losses in various sectors, especially in tourism, hospitality, and food and vegetable import industries. This resulted in the layoffs of close to 50,000 employees across Bhutan.

Under the same program to support food security, the Bhutan Foundation supported Tarayana Foundation, a local civil society organization, to work with 249 households in south-western Bhutan. The support includes the development of 36 acres of farmland, setting up proper water supply systems, and organic mulching. All 36 acres of land are currently under cultivation, and produce are expected to hit the market in a few months.

Along the way in south-eastern Bhutan, the Lhomon Society worked with 30 households to produce 300 kg (661 lbs) of beans, 30 kg (66 lbs) of eggplant, 90 kg (198 lbs) of broccoli, 30 kg (66 lbs) of cauliflower, 30 kg (66 lbs) of chili, 300 kg (661 lbs) of cabbage, and 350 bundles of spinach early this spring. Our partners at the Lhomon Society brought 8 acres of farmland under cultivation from the targeted 11 acres, which are now in the process of development. They have also set up 15 urban farms, and 15 portable water storage facilities have been supplied to the farmers. A total of 110 people are currently employed, and 350 households will benefit directly from this program.





14

Acres of Land
Developed

1,550 kg

Vegetables
Sold to Local
Market

16

Youth
Farmers at
PYC

These are big numbers and a great deal of progress has been made in just the past few months, but despite the fact that Bhutan's agriculture sector employs about 57 percent of the population, the country is heavily dependent on imports to meet local food needs. Outside of the pandemic, these numbers could get more dramatic as other issues faced by Bhutan's farming communities today, such as rural-to-urban migration, climate variability, access to water, and poor market linkages, are continued. Our team is hopeful that increasing support of youth and local communities in agriculture will be a start in the right direction toward sustainable food production in Bhutan.

The timely intervention and financial assistance by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) during COVID-19 greatly benefitted our partners working with farmers on strengthening food security in Bhutan. The Foundation hopes to expand these types of community-based projects focused on sustainable agriculture in other regions.



"In the beginning, it was hard to cope due to limited resources, farming equipment, and land. Nevertheless, our dream kept us moving forward. Now we are growing and working together on 14 acres of farming land. We are self-employed and welcome dropouts and other youth to work with us, creating a platform for employment. Despite the pandemic, we are still focused on our work and hopeful for the future."

—Mr. Leki Chedup, Chairperson, PYC

Supporting Women's Empowerment through Employment

The economic and social impacts from the pandemic are especially tough for women, who are more vulnerable to domestic abuse, job loss, and financial insecurities. While focusing our efforts on tackling two of the government's main COVID-19 concerns, employment and food security, our projects have taken particular care to support women and women's groups. The Bhutan Foundation and United States Agency for International Development (USAID) are supporting programs that empower women farmers, self-help group members, food production workers, and women-led microenterprises.

Regionally, women-led enterprises have successfully navigated the pandemic and have managed to tap opportunities to create jobs, contribute to economic growth, and reduce gender gaps. Even in Bhutan, women-led enterprises are leading on innovation in agricultural post-harvest value addition. We believe it is important to highlight the achievements of successful women entrepreneurs to motivate and highlight their contribution to the economy.

Chuniding is a women-led social enterprise with the mission to preserve and promote Bhutanese food culture. Although a small-scale enterprise, Chuniding Food incorporates all principles of the Royal Government of Bhutan's policy to substitute import, increase export, use local products, and generate employment. During the pandemic, Chuniding is working with farmer groups and the Food Corporation of Bhutan. In particular, Chuniding takes in the surplus produce from farmers that would otherwise rot and go to waste and produces innovative food products. The Foundation is supporting Chuniding to expand their production facility by purchasing commercial kitchen equipment and increasing working capital of food products in order to increase the absorptive capacity of the surplus produce during the pandemic. Despite cutdowns across industries in Bhutan, Chuniding Food, with the support of the Bhutan Foundation and USAID, has managed to not only retain their original staff, but also hired three new full-time and two part-time women workers.

Another organization the Foundation and USAID are supporting on food product development is the Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs (BAOWE), a civil society organization that reaches out and empowers women and girls (particularly single mothers, unemployed youth, and women working in the informal sector) through entrepreneurship programs. BAOWE has over 4,000 members across 13 districts in the form of self-help groups and cooperatives. These women's groups are engaged in a plethora of agricultural activities ranging from rice, cardamom, turmeric, vegetables, mustard, and aromatic plant plantation to production of mustard oil, dairy products, and feed.





21

Women
Employees

4

Districts
Served

10

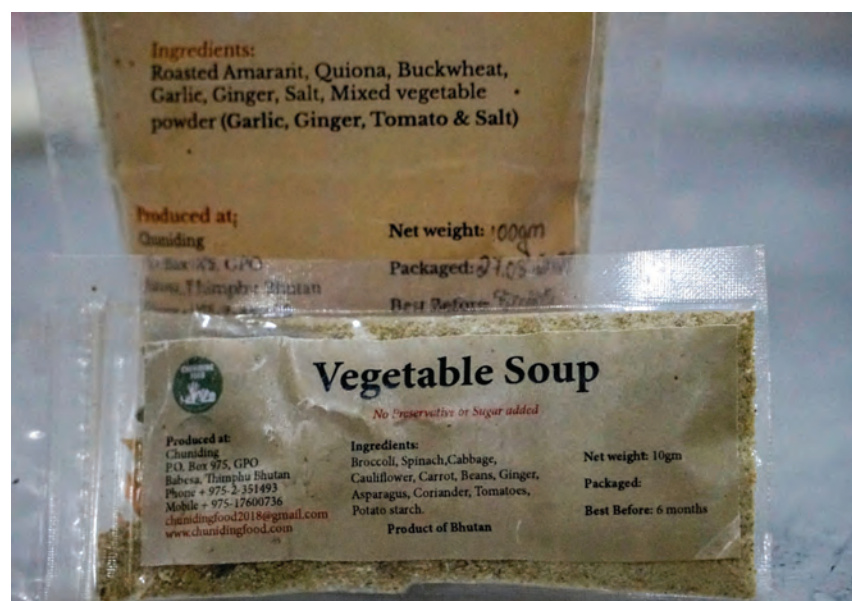
Self-Help
Groups

420

Women
Farmers

BAOWE helps women's groups with product development, labeling, branding, and marketing, focusing on assisting women farmers in reducing their post-harvest loss. The Bhutan Foundation and BAOWE plan to work with 420 women farmers in 10 self-help groups located from Zhemgang in south-central Bhutan to Bumthang in north-central Bhutan, all the way to Trashi Yangtse in eastern Bhutan to Haa in western Bhutan. The Foundation will also purchase equipment such as dehydrator machines, flour mills, mustard oil expeller machines, deep freezers, and turmeric grinders to support food processing and packaging. The project aims to promote value addition for women farmers and provide employment opportunities for women to alleviate poverty during the pandemic and beyond.

These programs are made possible with the generous support of the American people through the U.S. Agency for International Development in partnership with the Bhutan Foundation.



"I am a new employee at Chuniding Food. I was working at a resort in Trongsa, but was laid off because the resort closed due to the pandemic. Finding work was hard, and since I am the sole provider of my family based in Wangduephodrang, getting hired here has been a blessing."

—Ms. Sonam, New Employee at Chuniding Food

Capacity Building: Scholarship Recipients in Special Education and Environmental Conservation

One of the Bhutan Foundation's missions is to continue to build local capacity in areas of need where there are capacity gaps in our program areas. This year, we supported four scholarships in two distinct fields identified through our programs in environmental conservation and special education.

Since completing their master's degrees in inclusive education and special educational needs from Miriam College in the Philippines, Mr. Ugyen Dorji and Ms. Sangay Lhamo have been making a difference through their roles as special education needs (SEN) teachers in Kamji Central School and Zhemgang Central School. Sangay says the master's program has made her more confident, as she now has a more extensive network of international teachers and professionals with whom to consult. Both Sangay and Ugyen are now confident in their abilities to provide better interventions for their students and provide the school with new teaching and learning strategies to foster an inclusive environment for their students.

Understanding the need to enhance agricultural programs in Bhutan, we have supported two scholarships for bachelor of science degrees in livestock and agriculture at the College of Natural Resources in Bhutan. According to recipient Janga Bdr. Gayal, "supporting professional development in agriculture will make a lasting contribution to achieve the goal of poverty alleviation and food security." Both of the recipients are government employees, and having a bachelor's degree will not only help advance their careers but also allow them to acquire knowledge and skills to take their work to the next level.

In their final semester next year, they will be required to conduct original research. Our team will continue to work with these students to help identify a research topic within our existing program areas on food security and livestock diseases. Through your support, we hope to continue building our local professionals' capacity by continuing our scholarship program and broadening our scope to other relevant areas.





4

Scholarship
Recipients
since 2019

1

BS in
Livestock
Supported

1

BS in
Agriculture
Supported

2

MA in
Special
Education



“Teaching children with special needs and giving them the appropriate intervention has always been my passion. However, without the proper background, I was not fully confident in my ability to lead. My dream became a reality when I was selected for the Bhutan Foundation scholarship to pursue a master’s in special education and expand my horizons in the field.”

—Ugyen Dorji (Pictured Left)

Special Education: Developing Functional Programs at Mongar MSS

Tshering Choden, who often ran away from school or threw tantrums in the past, now looks forward to joining her classmates each day at Mongar Middle Secondary School (MSS). It's been a strong turnaround with help from Anu Alex to develop strategies for children with special needs. In just a period of five months, Tshering is engaged in all her activities with excitement and pleasure and shows a dramatic improvement in her behavior and relationships with her family and peers.

Though much of the academic year remained closed due to the nationwide lockdown caused by COVID-19, the situation sparked opportunities for our special education expert, Anu Alex, to work with the teachers in Mongar to help students like Tshering see themselves as capable and responsible individuals in society. This started by introducing a series of activities and processes, such as “person-centered planning,” a systematic process designed to help participants look beyond the immediate barriers and visualize for the future. In Tshering's case, this process was handled start-to-finish in partnership with her parents, teachers, and her own contributions. Working together with the student and her support system ensured the selection of meaningful goals and activities for Tshering, enabling strong coordination between activities and learning at home and school.

This same process went into place for 13 other children at Mongar MSS. In each case, a functional activity was identified for students with complex needs, based on their interests, strengths, and family priorities. The functional activities ranged from gardening, to baking simple cakes and selling them in the school, to making paper bags and greeting cards. Roughly 55 educators were trained on incorporating academic goals into these functional activities, such as teaching the concept of measurement through baking. Teachers were amazed to see how these students became more open to learning and developed knowledge and skills while being enrolled in the activities they enjoyed.

The process ends with the teachers learning how to document and evaluate each student, enabling teachers to assess their student's progress to incorporate and adapt goals to enhance their learning further.





13

Children in
Program

55

Teachers
Oriented

6

SEN Teachers
Using Program

This program was implemented in partnership with the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) & Special Education Needs Division, Ministry of Education, and Perkins International in continuation with our ongoing program to improve the lives of and ensure positive educational outcomes for children with complex needs.



"Earlier the tasks we gave to Tshering were just to keep her busy, so there wasn't much learning happening. After having her in the Total Life Curriculum (TLC) program, we could see a lot of improvement and she could learn skills—her focus on the activities have increased. She was engaged meaningfully. The Total Life Curriculum has helped a lot in making a difference in her life."

—Dechen Pelzom, Mongar Teacher

Wangduechoeling Palace: Bridging the Past with the Future

Sonam Tashi is the Conservation Engineer of Tashi Deling Construction and Consultancy Company, managing and supervising the Wangduechoeling Palace conservation work since 2016. With a career background specializing in traditional construction, restoration, and conservation of heritage sites, he is one of only a handful of engineers in Bhutan with such expertise.

Despite the challenges the pandemic posed in the last year, Sonam and his team managed to keep work on the ground moving. Currently, landscaping work and restoration of the ancillary structure on the palace grounds are in progress. Even with these challenges, Sonam is confident that the conservation and restoration work will be completed as planned by the end of 2021. During the pandemic, the work at the palace has provided immediate temporary relief to those people and families who have lost jobs from the tourism sector. For the landscaping work, local youths and 15 people who were laid off from the tourism industry were employed.

While the structure itself is conserved in its original elements, we plan to modernize the museum by tapping into the potential of interactive multimedia to enhance the museum's interpretation and communicate the palace's artifacts' rich histories and stories. This museum will also boast being the first one to have considered universal design in a heritage site. The museum's ground floor is wheelchair accessible with a newly installed elevator for easy access to upper floors. The signage and museum interactives are also planned for release in braille, among other essential considerations for visitors with disabilities. Such considerations will ensure that people with disabilities and seniors can also enjoy and appreciate this beautiful site.

The palace project is now entering the final and most exciting phase, in which experts across fields will work together to help translate the historic building from an old run-down site into a beautifully restored museum. Once completed, the palace will serve as a vibrant cultural complex that exhibits Bhutan's history, arts, crafts, and architecture. It will also create employment opportunities and boost the local economy by promoting local and international tourism.





256

People
Employed

22

Artisans
Restoring
Paintings

11

Interviews
Conducted
on Artifacts

1,000+

Artifacts
Found Inside
Palace



"Wangduechhoeling Palace is one of the most important heritage monuments in the country which bridges the pre-modern era in history. It is exciting to implement the adaptive reuse concept on the restoration of Wangduechhoeling Palace which will help the local community in maintaining the cultural heritage, slow urban sprawl and create a new community beacon. I feel extremely fortunate for having got an opportunity to work on this important project."

—Sonam Tashi, Principal Architect of Tashi Deling Company

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World Wildlife Fund Bhutan

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The Bhutan Foundation has received a platinum rating from charity watchdog GUIDESTAR which holds the highest standards for evaluating non-profit organizations. This rating advises supporters like you so that you know every dollar is making the largest possible impact.

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BEQUESTS

"I love the Bhutan Foundation. I am inspired by the work they are doing to make an environmental, cultural and social impact for the future. That is why I have chosen to include the Bhutan Foundation in my will. It is an honor to support the meaningful work they are doing."

—Rebecca Winsor
Board Member at the Bhutan Foundation

Some of the most meaningful gifts to organizations like the Bhutan Foundation come in the form of bequests. Estate gifts are good for the donor because they allow for full flexibility and access to one's assets as long as needed. For the recipient organization, bequests may help build strategic reserves, enable growth, or fund special projects.

There are several ways to make a bequest to the Bhutan Foundation through your will, trust, insurance policy, or other plan:

- Residual bequest – take care of others first and leave what is left to the Bhutan Foundation.
- Percentage bequest – specify that a certain percentage should go to support work in Bhutan.
- Specific bequest – plan to give a certain fixed amount.
- Contingent bequest – name Bhutan Foundation to receive a bequest only if other beneficiaries are not available.

Whichever type of bequest you choose, please use our full legal name:

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