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One Million Trees to Help Restore Forests and Farmland

Bhutan is highly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change due to its location in the fragile mountainous ecosystem and has strong sensitivities to environmental changes. In particular, Bhutan is increasingly challenged with threats from climate hazards and extreme events such as flash floods, glacial lake outbursts, floods, windstorms, forest fires, landslides, and more.

More than 70% of the country's total geographical area is under forest cover, with a sequestration capacity of greater than 9.42 million tons of carbon dioxide. Forests, however, are subject to both anthropogenic pressure and climate change-related stress and remain susceptible to degradation. Current estimates show that degraded forest areas account for more than 1.6 million acres across Bhutan and are found within the country's Protected Areas and Forest Management Units (FMUs). In addition to degraded forest areas, a significant portion of arable drylands remains fallow.

Amid the global COVID-19 pandemic, the Bhutan Foundation, in partnership with the Bhutan Ecological Society (BES), launched the One Million Trees initiative in April 2021. The initiative's main objective is to restore degraded forest areas and rehabilitate the fallow and arable drylands across the country by planting both forest and fruit trees. The million-tree initiative not only will increase carbon storage capacity to keep Bhutan on a carbon-negative trajectory but will also help increase incomes for smallholder farms through sales of fruits, nuts, and carbon offsets in the long run.

The Bhutan Ecological Society will implement the project in collaboration with the Department of Forests and Park Services, Natural Resources Development Corporation, Green Bhutan Corporation Limited, and volunteers and private individuals. The aim of the project is to plant a million trees over the next four years and to rehabilitate more than 5,000 acres of degraded land, including 2,000 acres of arable farmland.



1.6 million acres
of Bhutan's forests
are degraded



1 million fruit and
forest trees to be
planted in 4 years



The project will
restore 5,000
total acres of
degraded land

Her Royal Highness Princess Chimi Yangzom Wangchuck at the Million Trees opening ceremony alongside Dasho Paljor Dorji (left) and Lyonpo Yeshey Penjor, the Minister for Agriculture and Forests (right).





Wangduechhoeling: More Than a Palace Museum

With more than 20 acres of land secured within its compound, the Wangduechhoeling Palace will ensure that this space is preserved for posterity to be enjoyed by Bhutanese and visitors alike. Coalescing with the Jampa Lhakhang and Kurje Lhakhang monasteries through hiking trails and riverside walkways, a much larger area in the heart of Bumthang will offer a spiritual, historic, and cultural reprieve even as Chamkhar urbanizes as an important town in Central Bhutan. The Palace will therefore form a critical space in the town planning of the spiritual heartland of Bhutan.

In addition to the painters, artisans, and builders who were trained on the Palace project, a team of Bhutanese architectural conservationists have put in years of detailed restoration work on the Wangduechhoeling Palace and have gained valuable in-house skills, which they can tap to restore other Bhutanese heritage structures. Already, the Tashi Deling company has restored the Tseto monastery in Paro and have also been asked to inspect the restoration of the Kuenga Rabten Palace in Trongsa.

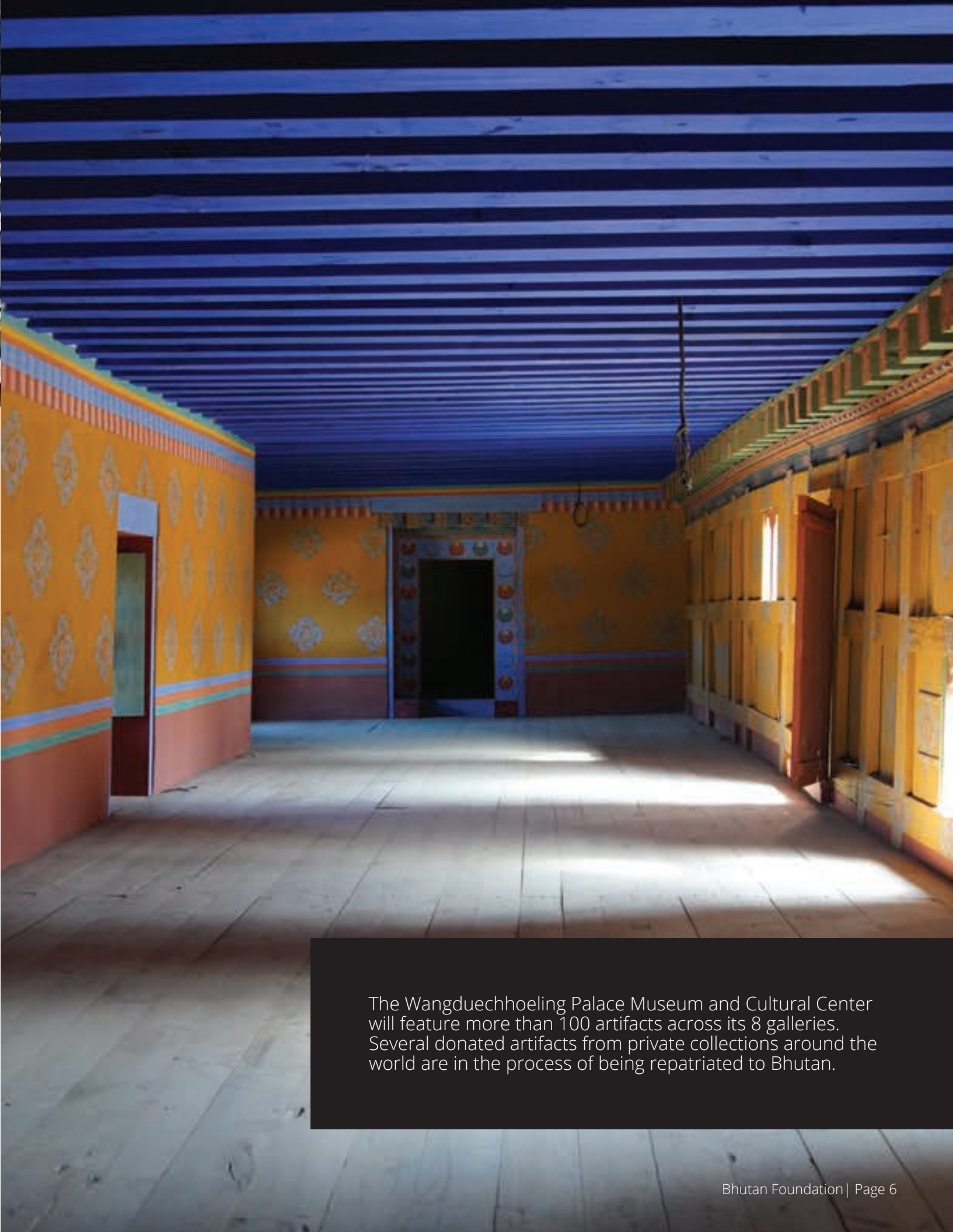
The curatorial team for the Palace has been digging into the annals of Bhutan's rich history to extract exciting narratives, identify artifacts, and work with the museum design team to establish galleries that will evoke the history of Bhutan, Bumthang, and the Palace. Each gallery will showcase a unique collection of artifacts, manuscripts, paintings, religious relics, and more. The museum will also include hands-on activities for young visitors to interact and explore, along with an audiovisual section bringing the Palace's history to life. Most importantly, the visitor experience at the Palace is intended to send visitors on a journey of inquiry and investigation into the history and culture of Bhutan.

As the Museum and Cultural Center comes together, teams in Bhutan and abroad are preparing new lighting and signage and are also working to repatriate artifacts to Bhutan. We look forward to welcoming you at the Wangduechhoeling Palace soon.



Samten Yeshi
Curator
Wangduechhoeling Palace

“
We cannot hold on to the traditional idea of a museum as the deposit of memory, but a cultural institution and a center for history and culture. Therefore, the exhibits one can expect to see in the Palace will not be restricted to artifacts but an institute that engages with the local community and students alike to not only tell stories of the past, but how it intersects with the present.



The Wangduechhoeling Palace Museum and Cultural Center will feature more than 100 artifacts across its 8 galleries. Several donated artifacts from private collections around the world are in the process of being repatriated to Bhutan.



A New Bus for Children Walking 16 Miles to School in Tiger Country

The chance to study tigers in the jungles of Royal Manas National Park (RMNP), Bhutan's oldest park, is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for many of the 25 staff at the new Bhutan Tiger Center (BTC). With live-in facilities for families and ample wildlife in Panbang, the teams have been excited to begin work since the opening in August 2021. But concerns about child safety quickly became the number one cause for hesitation for staff as challenges around school for the nearly one dozen children living there became apparent.

Due to the remote nature of the facility, a crucial aspect when studying wildlife in its natural habitat, children living within the Park with their families between 6 and 15 years of age were forced into a difficult commute to school. Each day, the children walked nearly 16 miles to and from school through the jungles of the RMNP. This journey added hours of travel time and left the children vulnerable to monsoon rains and dangerous wildlife such as wild elephants and snakes.

In response to the concerns of parents and staff at BTC, the Bhutan Foundation supported the purchase of a minibus to provide a safe, comfortable, and convenient journey for the children of families working at the new headquarters. This support will not only shave off hours of travel time, but also ease worries of parents as schools in Panbang begin to open in earnest this April, 2022.

At an official ceremony this past December, the minibus was donated to the Department of Forests and Park Services. The children are thrilled about their new bus and are looking forward to reliable and safe transport in their next academic season. This was possible thanks to the support of all the donors and supporters of the Bhutan Foundation.



103+ adult tigers live in Bhutan's forests



25 members of staff and their families to live at the center



children at the center walked 16 miles to school daily



School children aged 6-15 at the Bhutan Tiger Center used to have to walk 16 miles to school each day in the jungles of the Royal Manas National Park. Today, the students are able to get to school quickly and safely with their new bus.



Beyond Vaccines: Strengthening Bhutan's Capacity for Research and Pandemic Preparedness

It's no secret that the past two years have seen Bhutan make a name for itself on the world stage as one of the nations with the most effective pandemic response. In just one week in 2021, Bhutan managed to vaccinate 90% of its adult population in what UNICEF called, "arguably the fastest vaccination campaign to be executed during a pandemic." Part of that success came as the result of a multifaceted partnership with Moderna Inc and the U.S. Government to provide 500,000 vaccines to Bhutan—a partnership that has led to a new opportunity to expand research capacity for public health to a new level.

Over the next two years, the Bhutan Foundation will support a partnership between Moderna and the Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences in Bhutan to conduct a study on the efficacy of vaccine mixing in adults and children from 12 to 17 years old. This project will help provide groundbreaking research on COVID-19 to help influence the future of vaccine efficacy worldwide. As part of this project, effective vaccine research capacity and pandemic preparedness in Bhutan will be strengthened through upgrades to lab technology and equipment, scientific training, and expanded international research collaboration on the most pressing public health issue.



Dr. Sithar Dorjee

Director and Asst. Professor of Epidemiology
Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical
Sciences of Bhutan

“

The most exciting part of this collaboration is the opportunity for our university to work with one of the leading biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies to build Bhutan's capacity to conduct research related to vaccine efficacy and also to advance our vaccine technology. This project will immensely benefit Bhutan as it can be applied to other diseases and to similar pandemic situations that may arise in the future.





Sibjam: A Digital Platform to Aid Bhutan's Agri Supply Chain

Border closures in Bhutan highlighted a broken agricultural supply chain back in mid-2020 when it became apparent that significant barriers still existed in connecting produce to local markets. In response, a local startup *Sibjam* developed an online marketplace for farmers to sell their products and for buyers to purchase local products at wholesale rates. They offer marketing and logistical services to farmers, allowing them to focus on production, and freeing up their time and resources from supply-chain issues.

The idea for *Sibjam* came to a local entrepreneur, Kinley Wangchuk, during the first lockdown in Bhutan in 2020 as he noticed the difficulties producers and consumers had with markets. Most of the farm products were left to rot due to supply-chain issues and farmers often incurred losses. *Sibjam* was officially launched in 2021 to ensure that there was an effective logistic linkage between the farmers and consumers to reduce waste of farm produce and to eliminate the middleman.

After the launch and appearing on Bhutan's national television, there has been a surge of interest from farmers, farm cooperatives, and consumers from across the country. For now, *Sibjam* delivers to major cities in Bhutan including Thimphu, Paro, Gelephu, Punakha, and Chukha districts once a week. In the coming months, they plan to expand their delivery service to other districts throughout Bhutan.

With the success of the online platform, the team is also set to open their first physical outlet alongside two shops, one for dairy, poultry, and meat, and one for grains and value-added products in Thimphu. They are also exploring a door-to-door delivery service on a subscription basis to establish a supply chain network, and starting a mobile vegetable shop using electric vehicles. *Sibjam* is one of six entrepreneurs supported through the USAID Covid Support to Bhutan grant facilitated by the Bhutan Foundation and the Loden Foundation.



Kinley Wangchuk
Founding Member
Sibjam

“

I have come to learn about the various problems our farmers are facing and Sibjam gives me the opportunity to address and solve some of their problems. The ability to do that gives my life meaning and a bigger purpose. Our project is well received by the farmers and it seems to give them hope and positivity. To be interacting directly with our farmers and listening to their aspirations and their struggles grounds me to my roots. Now that I have started this venture, there is no looking back!



Sibjam has grown to more than 1,800 registered users with 200+ products displayed. The website completed more than 300 orders in its first months with Thimphu showing the biggest demand.



Taking Power to Bhutan's Most Remote Communities

When you ask residents of any remote Bhutanese village what their most pressing needs are, they invariably say, “road access and electricity.” However, while some remote villages will never get drivable roads due to the difficult terrain and their remoteness, these villages’ energy needs can be addressed. Bhutan is endowed with fast-flowing rivers, high solar irradiation, and reliable valley wind systems—natural resources suitable for energy generation.

The current national rural electrification rate stands at 99.97%, an incredible number, yet some communities in far-flung rural pockets still are not connected with grid electricity. This is because of the remoteness of the sites or because their locations are within national protected areas and biological corridors limited by environmental and forestry legal regulations. We are now taking power to the remaining 0.03% of the Bhutanese communities.

Aja Ney is a community of hermits and religious retreatants secluded at the sacred pilgrimage site, which is located inside Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary. Along with our partners in the Department of Renewable Energy and Bhutan Ecological Society, we are bringing power to Aja Ney in Mongar, eastern Bhutan, by harnessing solar energy. This project is well underway and we expect to complete it later this year.

The Bhutan Foundation is also seeking funds to establish a 50 kW mini-hydel and two 15 kW solar PV units in the mountain communities of Lunana, the setting for Bhutan's Oscar-nominated film *Lunana: a Yak in the Classroom*. Lunana is indeed the last frontier in the challenge to take electricity to Bhutan's most remote communities. It sits at the foot of receding glaciers, a poster child for communities bearing the brunt of climate change. Through this project, we are also exploring ways to enhance the living conditions of the residents while also identifying additional livelihood options. We are partnering with the Royal Government's Department of Renewable Energy and the local government in Lunana in this endeavor.



Aja Ney to receive
80kW solar PV
power plant



Power to Aja Ney
will effect 40+
households



Lunana contains
13 villages and
185 households





Katsho Eco Camp Offers New Opportunities in Haa

While many affected by the COVID-19 pandemic turned to farm businesses as an alternative income option when the country shut down in 2020, a group of out-of-work tourist guides from Haa in western Bhutan had a different idea: bring tourism back with them. The group, consisting of 21 members, started by developing an 11 km (~6.84 miles) hiking trail called the *Haa Panorama Hiking Trail* in 2021 with funding support from the local government.

With the popularity of the *Haa Panorama Hiking Trail* with local Bhutanese, the group realized the full business potential of establishing an eco camp at Damtoe, under Katsho Gewog, as a resting place for travelers. This area is the midpoint connecting all gewogs (sub-blocks), villages, and two significant monasteries of Haa. The campsite, covering an area of around 3.5 acres, is situated at an elevation of about 2,750 m (~9,022 ft.) and promises tourism products like trekking, camping, fly fishing, birding, and cultural visits. The Haa local government fully supported the group by approving their land lease, and the community of Katsho Gewog gave their full support by giving the rights to use the land.

To complement the Royal Government of Bhutan’s efforts in supporting affected individuals in the tourism sector, the Bhutan Foundation funded the establishment of the Katsho Eco camp under our Small Grants Program. The project aims to boost tourism in Haa while helping communities gain income and curb rural-to-urban migration. The project also aligns with the local government’s vision of *Destination Haa: Tourism Action Plan*—toward sustainable local tourism development. Haa District receives some of the lowest numbers of tourists in the country.

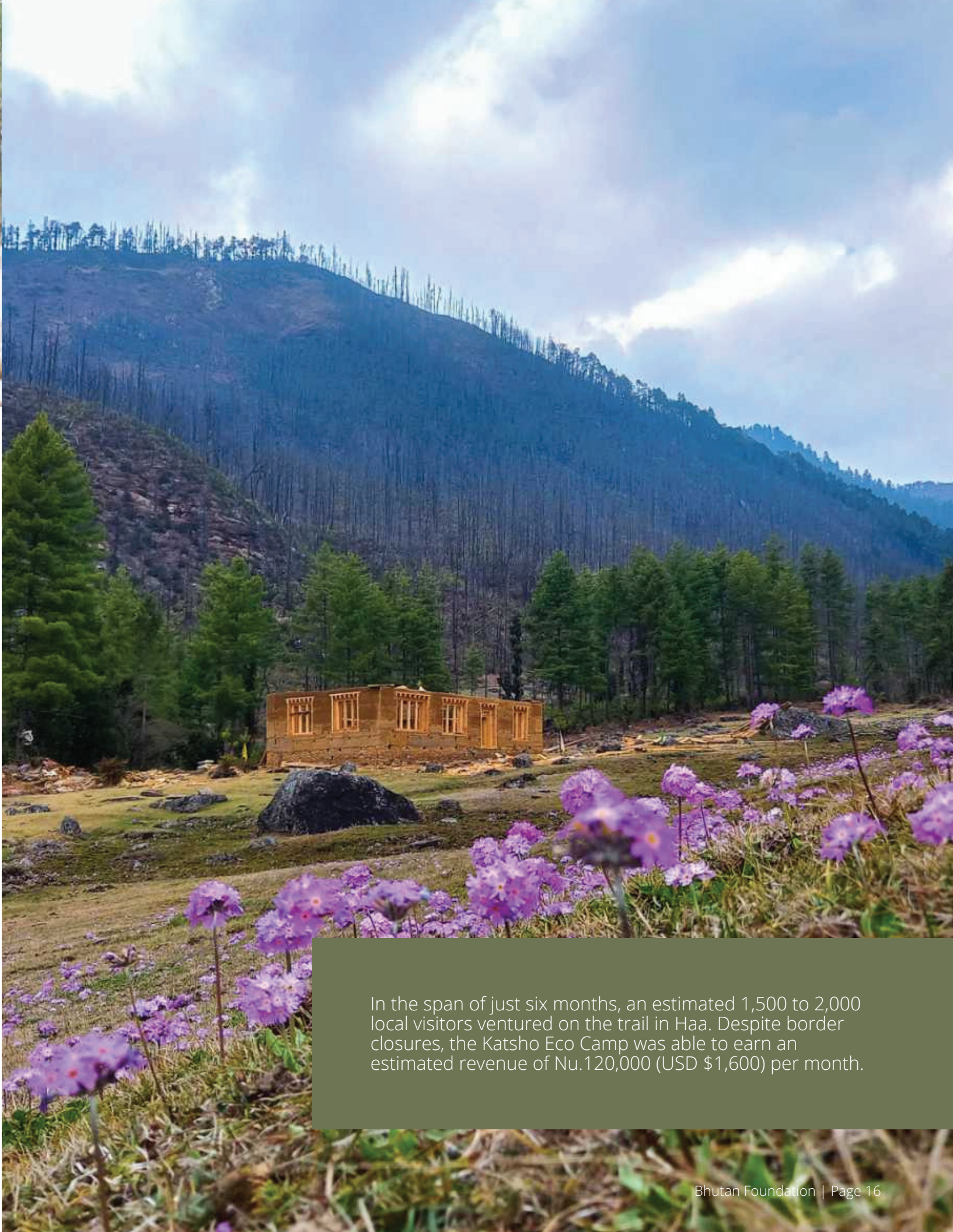
The Katsho Eco Camp will consist of seven tented camps, offering food and accommodation services for all travelers. To date, the project has provided temporary jobs to unemployed youth. This spring, the team is working on landscaping and wood and stone collection for its establishment, and anticipates the camp will be in full swing before the end of 2022. The Bhutan Foundation is excited to support the reboot of tourism in post-pandemic Bhutan and hopes these projects encourage local and international tourist visits.



Sangay Tshering,
Founding Member
Katsho Eco Camp

“

The journey of establishing a tourism product in Haa became a shared goal among the 21 team members, with the hope to permanently settle down in our hometown. The Foundation’s support will help us in creating a unique tourism product in Haa, contributing towards youth employment, curbing rural-urban migration, benefiting the community in revenue generation, and boosting tourism in our local Haa district. Thank you, Bhutan Foundation.



In the span of just six months, an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 local visitors ventured on the trail in Haa. Despite border closures, the Katsho Eco Camp was able to earn an estimated revenue of Nu.120,000 (USD \$1,600) per month.

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CONSIDER MAKING A BEQUEST

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.



"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

When making a bequest, please use our full legal name:

Bhutan Foundation, Inc.
Federal Tax ID #13-3376290
The Bhutan Foundation is an Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3)
organization incorporated in the State of Delaware.

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Phone: +1 (202) 340-5595

WAYS TO GIVE

With your support, the Bhutan Foundation and its Bhutanese partners can make a bigger impact. Here are some ways to give:

Donate Online www.bhutanfound.org/donate

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1050 Connecticut Ave NW
#66013
Washington, DC 20035

Make a Wire Transfer
or a Stock Gift
Please contact the Bhutan Foundation at
+1 202.609.7363 or email us at info@bhutanfound.org



The Bhutan Foundation has received a platinum rating from charity watchdog GUIDESTAR, and a perfect score from Charity Navigator, both of which hold the highest standards for evaluating non-profit organizations. These ratings advise supporters like you so that you know every dollar is making the largest possible impact.

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