



RSPN ANNUAL REPORT
JUNE 2003 – JULY 2004



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MESSAGE FROM THE ROYAL PATRON

The Kingdom of Bhutan is blessed with an exceptional and largely intact natural environment. I have joined RSPN in its mission to raise awareness of the challenge that faces us now. We must all accept our individual responsibility to conserve the rich diversity of Bhutan's plants and animal species, for the benefit of both the natural world and our children's future.

**His Royal Highness The Choetse Penlop,
Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck
The Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Bhutan**

MISSION STATEMENT

"To inspire personal responsibility and actively involve the people of Bhutan in the conservation of the Kingdom's environment through education, applied research and information dissemination; in collaboration with concerned agencies and indigenous institutions."

RSPN Goals 2004 – 2009

- **To conserve Endangered Species outside the Protected Area System**
- **To develop Ecosystem based approaches to management in areas outside the protected areas system**
- **Support Management of emerging urban environmental issues**
- **To enhance institutional capacity for environmental education , ecological research, and community-based natural resource management**

Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) is the first and only national non-profit NGO (non-government organization) in Bhutan working in the field of environmental conservation.

Since its establishment in 1987, it has evolved as a complementary partner to the Royal Government in its endeavours to conserve Bhutan's rich natural resource base. Its conservation strategies now include awareness building, environmental education, species conservation and promoting alternatives to solve environmental problems. A Board of Directors regulates RSPN's management. The organization is headed by an Executive Director who reports to the board bi-annually.

The Royal patronage of His Royal Highness, the Crown Prince of Bhutan, coupled with a team of dedicated staff make RSPN a transparent, accountable and experienced organization that has gained credible recognition in terms of addressing environmental issues at various levels of the society.

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Technical report

RSPN Strategic Plan Revision

Since the first strategic development in October, 1998, RSPN has focused its activities with the goals and objectives laid out in the document. The organization was able to achieve tremendous success in implementation of the projects. In 2004, RSPN secured the voluntary assistance of David and Jen bowes Lyon from the United Kingdom to facilitate the revision of the strategy. The revised strategy was developed through two workshops with RSPN staff in February, 2004. A meeting was conducted in March, 2004 to obtain feedbacks from stakeholders.

The RSPN Strategic plan was revised due to enhancement of RSPN activities in recent years. A landmark achievement was the grant of leased areas outside the Protected Area Systems (PAS) in September. The royal government leased out eight biodiversity significant conservation areas to RSPN in recognition and support of RSPN's conservation initiatives. The endorsed conservation areas are:

1. *Phobjikha, Wangdue Dzongkhag*
2. *Dochula, Thimphu Dzongkhag*
3. *Chelela, Paro Dzongkhag*
4. *Punatshangchu covering the areas of Goen-shari (Punakha Dzongkhag), Ada and Kamechu (Wangduphodrang)*
5. *Womrong/Kagnpara, Trashigang Dzongkhag*
6. *Tri-junction of Chhukha, Ha and Samtse Dzongkhags*



The boundaries will be demarcated with close consultation with the Department of Forestry Services. Three areas lying outside the Protected Areas System of Bhutan have been selected for the initial phase. These areas are designated

as prime areas for conservation due to their level of exposure to human influence and its potential impact on the biodiversity in each area. The three areas are:

Chelela: An alpine ecosystem lying at an altitude of 3984 m, the place contains many endangered as well as endemic species. Almost all flora species are medicinal. The area is spectacular in summer when the wildflowers are blooming. Some of the important species found in this region are *Meconopsis horridula*, *Mecopnopsis grandis*, *Fritillaria chirhosa*, *Aconitum* spp, *Rhodendron anthopogonon*, *Rhodendron nivale*, *R. setosum*, *Primula* spp, *Juniperus*, etc.

Dochula: The multifaceted ridge alignments represent different forest types on either side. The area has a significant altitudinal and associated changes in vegetation in short distances. The east facing slopes harbours cool temperate broad-leaved forest at the higher elevation and *Pinus roxburghii* (Chirpine) in the lower elevations while the west facing slope consists of conifers from *Abies densa* (Fir) and *Juniperous recurva* down to *Pinus wallichiana* (Blue pine). Endemic species like *Rhodendron kesangiae* and *Bhutanthera himalayana* (Orchid) are undergrowths of the *Abies densa*. It is also an important migration spot for forest birds and animals including the Satyr Tragopan and Red Panda. With the national east-west highway passing through Dochula, it is a popular resting/picnic spots for Bhutanese travelers and tourists alike, making it vulnerable to human induced encroachment and degradation.

Phobjikha: Situated at an altitude of 2900 m is the largest wetland in the country covering an area of 2,227 hectares. It is ecologically and biologically diverse area. It is representative of alpine, wetland and temperate ecosystems. Phobjikha is ecologically important as the winter home to more than 272 rare and endangered black-necked cranes. Besides, it is also the life-supporting bowl for many wetland species. With the official declaration of Phobjikha as a conservation area, the organization will be able to implement its activities more efficiently. At present, the main programs under the Integrated and development Program in Phobjikha are:

- *"Strengthening the Management and Protection of Phobjikha Conservation Area" funded by Macarthur Foundation*
- *"Community Based Ecotourism" funded by UNESCO*
- *"Alternative Energy" funded SELF, USA*
- *"Women in Energy" funded by ICIMOD*

Environment Education Program

The RSPN EE Program aims at enabling the people of Bhutan to enhance their understanding about the environment and provide knowledge and skills to actively participate with local communities in environmental conservation.



One of the reasons for increasing environmental problems in Bhutan is attributed to the low level of people's understanding of environmental issues. Besides, the traditional non-material values of the vast majority of the Bhutanese are being challenged by a growing demand for material wealth and its associated attractions and comforts. Enabling people to become better informed about these issues has become an increasingly important aspect of environmental education. Such education empowers people to take informed decisions towards solving the problems.

Therefore, the **RSPN Environment Education Program** aims at helping the people of Bhutan enhance their understanding about the environment, providing them with knowledge and skills to actively participate in conservation at the grassroots level.

Activities under the EE Program

- *EE program with school/institution based Nature Clubs*
- *Action Research Projects*
- *Environmental Camps/Study Tours*
- *Trainings/Workshops for environment educationists*

- *EE Program for Wang Watershed Management Project*
- *EE Programs for National Parks*
- *Development of educational materials*

Nature Clubs

The involvement of today's youth in conservation is critical to the long-term success of Bhutan's *Middle Path* policy of sustainable development. With this rationale in mind, the RSPN Environment Education (EE) Program is specifically targeted towards children and students from schools and institutions in the country. It involves students at all stages in the process of increased understanding, clarification and judgment of values, critical and reflective thinking, experiential and cooperative learning, meaningful empowerment and ownership contributing to overall improvement of the quality of life.

School nature clubs were first established in Bhutan in 1989. Over the years the number of clubs have grown under the RSPN EE Program with as many as 80 nature clubs affiliated under the RSPN nature club network.

Environment education is implemented through schools and institution based nature clubs in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Education and various conservation agencies of the Royal Government.

School Greening Approach

Nature clubs initiate activities through a concept called the **School Greening Approach** which focuses not only on changing the attitude and behaviour of the student (**attitude greening**) but also gives an opportunity to translate this knowledge into actions that bring about positive changes to the local environment (**physical greening**).

Attitude Greening helps students to gain knowledge and skills through the following activities:

- *Literary: debate, quiz, essay writing, story writing, painting/art, morning speech; video shows; Environmental books/publications; maintenance of environment bulletin board; environmental games*



- *Observation of World Environment Day*
- *Field Study: bird watching, study of animals/plants/trees, earth science*



Physical Greening: Environment Education would be incomplete if we just stop at enhancing the knowledge and skills of the student. Therefore Physical Greening involves students in organizing environment awareness campaign among the local community through exhibitions, skits, drama, cultural programs and cleaning campaigns.

Action-oriented projects are also included in this phase where the students get an opportunity to work on a project focusing on one particular environmental issue and actually see the result of their efforts at the end of the one year project period

- **Activities inside the School Campus**

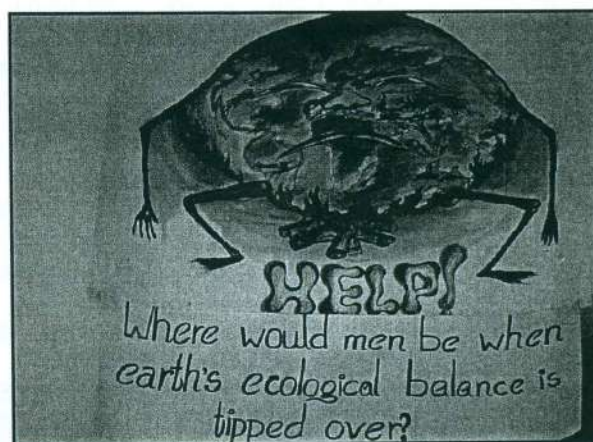
School landscape development: Nature park development, school nature park, flower gardening, Nursery raising, composting, rock gardens, composting, bird feeding tables/nesting boxes, identification & labeling of tree species, pest and weed control

- **Projects**

1. *Solid waste Management Project*
2. *Water pollution projects*
3. *Fuel-wood project*

Each project is divided into three phases:

- *Investigation*
- *Action Research/Analysis*
- *Exhibition of findings to local public and authorities for advocacy purposes*



. Action Research Projects

“**Follow That Stream**”, a Water Pollution and Solid Waste Management Project, was reinitiated in school nature clubs in the year 2000 with funding from UNICEF, considering the high incidences of water borne diseases in Bhutan.

Students are encouraged to investigate on their own and find out where and how water pollution takes

place in their local environment. From the observation of human activities, students can infer that toilets over the stream, household drainage and dumping of animal and domestic waste can severely pollute the river.



Under Solid Waste Management, school children study the source of different types of waste – where it

comes and where it goes finally. They follow the 3 Rs (Reuse, Recycle and Reduce) in managing their school waste and organize cleaning and awareness campaigns in the local community.

The schools participating in the project:

1. Jakar High School, Bumthang;
2. Phuentsholing High School, Chhuka;
3. Chhuka High School, Chhuka;
4. Damji Community School, Gasa;
5. Lhuentse Junior High School, Lhuentse;
6. Mongar High School, Mongar;
7. Lango Junior High School, Paro;
8. Nangkhon High School, Pema Gatshel;
9. Khuru Junior High School, Punakha;
10. Samdrupjongkhar High School, Samdrupjongkhar;
11. Samtse High School, Samtse;
12. Sarpang High School, Sarpang;
13. Changangkha Junior High School, Thimphu;
14. Trashigang Junior High School, Trashigang;
15. Trongsa High School, Trongsa;
16. Bajo High School, Wangduephodrang

Monitoring Visit to Nature Club schools

The annual nature club-monitoring visit to schools was carried out from 18th September to 5th October 2003. During the support visit, Environmental Education Officer (EEO) met the school authorities, nature club teachers and members and discussed the progress made and other related issues. It was found that most of the nature clubs had successfully completed most of their annually planned activities though some schools were yet to complete their activities. It was very encouraging to observe varieties of activities carried out in line with their local environmental needs. Some of the activities had achieved outstanding results. It was also noticed that the success of the project was more evident in schools where there was strong support from the head-teachers. Another factor that led to a successful project was the commitment and interest of the club coordinator in carrying out environmental activities.

Some of the positive impacts of the nature club activities in schools are:

- *greener school environment*
- *eco-friendly waste management systems*
- *cleaner school surrounding*

~~A total 75 nature clubs were visited.~~

Environment Education Workshop

Environment Education workshop for 2004 was held at Goenshari Community School, Punakha from 2nd to 7th February 2004. The workshop

was attended by District Education Officers, fourteen teachers from Drugyal Higher Secondary School, Dharla Middle Secondary School, Wochu Lower Secondary School and Changzamtok Lower Secondary School and two lecturers from National Institute of Education, Paro. The 2004 workshop focused



on the management of local watershed. Besides that the workshop also discussed how to use watershed management activities as Extended Learning Activities (ELAs) for different subjects in schools. During the workshop, the participants were introduced about the Wang Watershed Management Project (WWMP) and its aim to ensure that the development activities in the four concerned Dzongkhags are watershed friendly.

Sessions were held to demonstrate the concept of watershed and the participants made to perform the investigations.

Celebration of World Environment Day

The theme of World Environment Day in 2004 was 'Wanted! Seas and oceans, dead or alive!' Bearing in mind the relevance of this topic for Bhutan, RSPN chose to modify the theme to encompass the streams and rivers in the country.

Schools throughout Bhutan organized activities to coincide with this event. In Thimphu the National Environment Commission, in partner

ship with RSPN and the Department of Forests, organized a day of activities at Changzamtog which was graced by Her Royal Highness Ashi Sonam Dechen Wangchuck as the chief guest. Trees were planted around the Changzamtog area. A week earlier, proprietors and



employees of the automobiles workshop together with the staff from the NEC, DoF and RSPN had cleaned the workshop areas. Later in the afternoon, a plantation program was also held near office premises in Zilukha. During the celebrations, the schools of were awarded to Chhoden Lower Secondary School, Rinchen Kuenphen Community Primary School and Changangkha Lower Secondary School in the

"Follow that Streams" project where the students investigates the conditions of the local environment. Another significant event of the day was the Abraham Clean Dzongkhag Award which was given to Gasa, Bumthang and Mongar Dzongkha.



In Wangdue the Wangdue Lower Secondary School hosted the regional celebrations which was

attended by Dasho Dzongdag as the Chief Guest, government officials, teachers and students of Wangduephodrang. In his address the Honorable Chief Guest acknowledged that scarcity of drinking water and management of rubbish were the main environmental issues in the region, and urged for serious action on these issues.

Environmental camps

This year again marked yet another stiff competition between the nature clubs to win the coveted "Best Nature Club" award. The Jarogdongchen Nature Club of Jigme Sherubling Higher Secondary School identified as the best nature club year 2003 based on their outstanding performance.



Some of the positive impacts of the nature club activities in the school are:

- higher level of environmental awareness, understanding and positive attitude among students
- nature clubmembers made several trips to study and survey bio-diversity
- created Dzarogdongchen mini forest in the school
- effective environmental awareness campaign conducted for the khaling town and encouraged proper waste management among the community

In recognition of their effort, a weeklong environmental camp was organized for the nature club members in the Thrumshingla National Park, Bumthang. The purpose of the camp was to familiarize the students about national park and its significance. It was also aimed to make the students to know about the different rhododendron species and identify birds in the area.

The sessions held by the Park staff greatly enhanced the understanding of the students regarding the National Parks and Protected area system of Bhutan. After their visit to In-situ rhododendron garden, the students were able to identify various species of Rhododendron and were also able recognize some of the trees species found in the region. On the way back students collected waste like plastic, paper, rags etc thrown by the travelers. Every day a morning session was dedicated to bird watching. The students were able to identify some of the birds in the region and were really surprised to know they were not aware of the some species of the birds.

The students were also taken to Shingkhar logging site to make the students learn the impact of logging and learn about forest management. The trip ended with the students visiting some of the historical sites in Bumthang.



Environment Education Program for the Wang Watershed Management Project

RSPN has been conducting the WWMP Environment Education Program from 2002. The program supports the schools in investigating environmental issues and helping in conservation of the Wang Watershed. The program activity encourages nature clubs members to identify environmental issues, its sources and conduct action research and finally present the results of their investigations to the local community to find means of reducing the negative impact. Presently there are 11 schools which are as follows:

1. *Gedu Middle Secondary School, Chhukha*
2. *Chapcha Middle Secondary School, Chhukha*
3. *Ugyen Dorji High School, Ha*
4. *Damthang Lower Secondary School, Ha*
5. *Drukgyel Higher Secondary School, Paro*
6. *Shaba Middle Secondary School, Paro*
7. *Dechenchholing Lower Secondary School, Thimphu*
8. *Khasadrapchhu Lower Secondary School, Thimphu*
9. *Woochu lower Secondary School, Paro*
10. *Dharla middle Secondary School, Chhukha*
11. *Lango lower Secondary School, Paro*

Presentation programs for the local community and concerned government officials and private individuals are held to make them aware of the issues. The results revealed during the presentations program this year were as follows:

1. Shaba Middle Secondary School, Paro

The students found out a sudden level of deforestation at the catchment area. They discovered some level of pollution in the water and the quantity of water has reduced after the construction of the High School in the vicinity. The local community pointed out that an alternative water source for irrigation has to be explored to reduce the possible drinking water scarcity. The students recommended that water management committee has to be formed within the communities.

2. Community Meeting at Drukgyal, Paro

The Jetsuphu area was identified for the project activity. The students mentioned the Personnel from the Army camp above the school use the forest for firewood and other purposes. They discovered that garbage are usually disposed in the stream and open defecation is common. It was noticed that the toilets are located over or nearby the stream. The local community mentioned that plantations program has to be initiated in the deforested areas and discourage the army personnel from extracting firewoods from the forest. They said that the toilets near or over the stream has to be removed and new pit toilets to be constructed at a safe distance from the stream.

3. Community Meeting at Gedu

They mentioned that they saw a lot of waste disposal sites mainly at the second and third sections of the stream. Besides, they found out signs of open defecation, toilets and sewerage connections right from the first and second sections of the stream, which have contributed to the pollution of stream. With regard to the soil erosion, students said that they found signs of grazing, road construction and bamboo collections. The members suggested that awareness program has to be conducted among the residents and proper toilets and waste disposal sites to be identified. They recommended that a committee has to be formed to look at the all these problems.



4. Community Meeting at Chapcha

The students presented their finding to the communities highlighting that the water quality of Chapcha has no problem except some degree of deforestation going on in and around the source which may have some impact on the source. Community representatives who attended the meeting also said that the locals do grazing and collection of timber. Students and teachers demonstrated in form an experiment how deforestation can cause soil erosion and result to drying up of the streams, as there is no vegetation to retain water into the soil. The community suggested that the water source has to be protected by fencing and appointing a village caretaker to look after the concerned issues. It was decide that a legal agreement will be developed to protect the source from further degradation.

5. Community Meeting at Damthang

Through the study, the students found out that deforestation, overgrazing, open defecation, disposal of garbage in the stream were major issues on the area. Some of the participants expressed that all these issues emerged due to poor infrastructure and lack of education among the people living in the area.

6. Community Meeting at Ugyen Dorji HSS

The students' investigation on Katsho Rongchu stream highlighted soil erosion and water pollution as main local environmental problems. They justified the cause of soil erosion as grazing and felling of trees by the villagers. Students also expressed their concern that the erosion will be more in rainy season, as rain will wash down more soil. With regards to water pollution, students observed open defecation and disposal of waste into the stream. This observation was supported by both chemical tests and insect survey. The local community said that the forest resources like timber extraction and firewood collection, etc has to be controlled at the source and proper toilets has to be constructed for the labourers working there in coordination with the contractors.

7. Community Meeting at Khasadrapchu LSS

The students presented their finding to the communities highlighting that the water quantity and quality of Khasadrapchu area is deteriorating year by year because of various issues. The students expressed that during their survey, found that lots of deforestation activity in the catchment area. The survey also revealed that as the stream enters the settlement, there was construction of toilets over the stream. In some cases even if there was no toilet over the stream, the end pipe of the toilet goes to the stream. Students also observed open defecation and disposal of waste into the stream. Both chemical tests and insect survey supported this observation.

8. Community Meeting at Dechencholing LSS

Students' analysis revealed water pollution as the single most local environmental issue. The presentation highlighted various types of human activities along the river which contribute to water pollution. Some of the most common causes are open defecation, construction of toilet over and near the river, disposal of waste, piggery and cattle shed and kitchen sewage. The students showed all the sources of pollution on the map. Besides, they also showed the water quality results, insects and land use pattern along different sections of the river.

Improving the urban environment - pilot project to manage waste

Any recent visitor to Thimphu over the last few years will have noticed that the rapid socio-economic development that the city has experienced has led to a rise in living standards, but unfortunately has simultaneously led to deterioration in the urban environment.



The combination of inadequate infrastructure and unethical behavior of the general public have combined to create a significant waste problem in Thimphu. Water pollution and land degradation have taken place at an alarming rate. Solid waste collection has now become a major challenge for the Thimphu City Corporation.



To tackle this issue RSPN this year joined with the Thimphu City Corporation (TCC) to pilot a waste management project in two schools - Changangkha Lower Secondary School and Changzamtok Lower Secondary School - and also in the RSPN and TCC offices.

New dustbins have been installed at each institution and the students and staff have been encouraged to segregate their waste into biodegradable and non bio-degradable items.

The latter waste is further segregated into recyclable and reusable products. The project also promotes waste awareness among the school children, who record the amount of waste produced. The project has proved successful as some of the waste has been sold to local scrap dealers. Some of the children are also taking the waste message back home, and trying to encourage their families to also manage their waste responsibly.



Profits from the project are used by the institutions to save expenditure, and by the schools to invest in their nature clubs. RSPN and TCC have been pleased with the success of these pilot projects, and now intend to consider how such initiative can be expanded to cover a greater proportion of Thimphu.

Integrated Conservation & Development Program (ICDP)

The RSPN Integrated Conservation and Development Program aims at making Phobjikha into an area of economically prospering human population living forever in perfect harmony with the Black necked Cranes

In 1999, RSPN initiated the Integrated Conservation and Development Program (ICDP) in Phobjikha, Wangdue Dzongkhag, the largest wintering habitat of Black necked Cranes in Bhutan.



The program focuses on biodiversity conservation as well as the economic enhancement of the local community. It has been initiated as a model from which lessons can be learnt for replication in other environmentally sensitive areas.

Goals of ICDP Phobjikha

- *Promote positive attitudes especially on part of the local community and on general toward the conservation of rare and endangered Black necked Cranes.*
- *Empower the local people in the decision making process and enhance their skills and knowledge in conservation and sustainable development.*
- *Familiarize the local community with the importance and utility of different alternative sources of energy and technology for mitigating negative environmental impacts.*

- *Provide alternative economic opportunities to the local people in order to: promote the economic well-being of the community*
- *promote positive attitudes towards the conservation of the cranes*
- *prevent depletion of natural resources that can lead to degradation of the wetland habitat.*
- *Develop Phobjikha into a model Eco-tourism destination*
- *Build and strengthen the capacity of the local community and project personnel for sustainable development and efficient management and conservation of natural resources.*
- *Study/Research on the Phobjikha Wetland System and associated flora and fauna species*
- *Develop and incorporate effective Research, Monitoring and Evaluation components into the project in terms of crane conservation, their habitat, agricultural and social practices and community well being.*

Projects Components under ICDP-Phobjikha

Conservation Education

Conservation Education for the local community is one of the most essential components for the success of the ICDP. It helps the local community in understanding their role in the Phobjikha ecosystem and the various project activities that would assist them in continuing to live in harmony with the cranes in the face of modernization.

Community Development & Organization

In order to ensure the participation of the local community in all ICDP activities in the valley, a committee called the Phobjikha Conservation Area Program (PCAP) Committee has been formed comprising representatives of the Gangtey, Phobji, Bjena and Sephu communities of Phobjikha together with representatives from the monk body, school, agriculture, animal husbandry and forestry sectors.

Capacity Development/ HRD

This component intends to concentrate on capacity building of the local community in terms of project management, alternative income generation and alternative energy.

Ecotourism

The Eco-tourism component is one of the main components of the ICDP to achieve the goal of making Phobjikha into a model Eco-tourism destination. It has the potential to make the biggest difference, both to the economic well being of the people, and conservation of the significant wetland and its associated species.

Alternative Energy

With grid electricity yet to reach Phobjikha, the Alternative Energy component assists individual households to set up solar lighting systems through the availability of soft loans. A pilot renewable energy program has also been introduced using Peltric set/turbine in three important institutions viz. Gangtey Monastery, Crane Information Center and Gogona Monastery .

Wetland Conservation

Phobjikha is the biggest wetland eco-system in the country hosting as many as two hundred fifty black-necked cranes every winter. This component looks at conducting a detailed study on the wetland, its potential threats, carrying capacity and development of a management plan for its conservation.

Crane Monitoring & Research

Even before the initiation of ICDP in Phobjikha, one of RSPN's major activities was the counting and monitoring of Black-necked Cranes in Bhutan. Under the ICDP, this has been enhanced with the addition of Research on ecology, Trans-boundary conservation and migratory routes, and study on threats to the Black necked Cranes. This component is being carried out in collaboration with the International Crane Foundation and the Department of Forestry (Ministry of Agriculture, RgoB).

Women in Energy and Water Management

The project aims to promote integration of women in decision making, implementation and management of household energy and water initiatives that are environmentally safe and sound. RSPN have been developing case studies, guidelines and training manuals and conducting trainings. In order to enhance the mainstreaming of gender concerns and environmental sustainability in energy and water management at the community level, guidelines for policies are being proposed.

ICDP activity update

1. Ecotourism

The present Ecotourism project is a part of UNESCO's project framework on "developing Cultural and Ecotourism in the mountainous region of Central Asia and the Himalayas". RSPN has received a grant to initiate Eco-tourism for Conservation and Development of Phobjikha Valley in Wangdue District. The primary focus of this pilot project is on achieving conservation and development objectives through :

- *developing community based eco-tourism enterprises,*
- *building capacities of local communities,*
- *enhancing greater participation and coordination,*
- *developing essential eco-tourism services and products and*
- *promotion of equal benefit sharing amongst all stakeholders*

The project has adopted the Royal Government's Policy of Decentralization as an integral aspect and the policy of "**High Value Low Impact**" as its guiding principle. Numerous activities were carried in the past year to enhance the ecotourism in the valley.

Study tour for PCAP Committee to Yuksom in Sikkim, India

A seventeen member team went to visit Yuksom Ecotourism Program in West Sikkim, India. The objective of the tour was to:

- ◆ *Build the capacity of the participants by exposing them to Ecotourism project activities at Yuksom and develop their skills through participation in workshops and meetings, and interaction with the local community involved in the Yuksom Ecotourism Program*
- ◆ *Give an added impetus in terms of active community participation in implementing the Ecotourism Project at Phobjikha*

Coordinated by the Ecotourism Conservation Society of Sikkim (ECOSS), the tour participants visited the various project sites at Yuksom including the Nature Interpretation Centre, Model villages, Home stays, Community managed camp sites, Community Health Center and the Community Information Center. They also met the staff of the Kanchenzonga Conservation Committee (KCC) and other stakeholder groups who are carrying out the Yuksom Ecotourism Program. It was a good opportunity for the tour participants to interact with the local people and exchange information and learn from each other about Ecotourism programs in their respective regions. This was the first visit outside Bhutan for many of the members, and they were very excited during the trip. The tour officially ended at Thimphu with a presentation by the participants. They expressed that the Yuksom tour was an eye opening experience and they were able to gain a lot of knowledge and ideas related to community participation in Ecotourism activities.

"We have seen the activities at Yuksom and are very happy and encouraged. But what is important for the PCAP Committee now, is to work hard, hand in hand, towards the goal of making Ecotourism a success in our valley of Phobjikha. We hope that we will be able to make Phobjikha into an ideal Ecotourism destination"

-Mr. Phub Dorji, the Mangi Ap
(Village Elder) of Phobjikha

Cooks Training Program

Six local people were imparted with cook's training in Thimphu to encourage them to open new food and lodge facilities in Phobjikha. With number of visitors increasing every year, the few food and lodge facilities available are unable to fulfill the needs of the visitors. The six local people were imparted with basic skills on preparing simple menus, general disciplines on attending guests, table arrangements, etc. At the end of the training program, the participants felt confident and were eager to utilize their knowledge and skills in starting a business venture.

2. Annual Black Necked Crane Festival

The year marked the 6th annual Black necked crane festival. Graced by the Hon'ble Dasho Dzongdag of Wangduephodrang as the Chief Guest, the audience were treated with various visual feasts like the Black necked crane dance performed by the students of Phobjikha Primary School. The Visitors and guest were also treated to an enchanting and colorful cultural program which included the mystical gyrations of the Gangtay masked dancers and numerous traditional songs and dances by the local people.

In addition to games and food stalls by the local people, women groups from Limukha (Punakha), Ha and Phobjikha (under the Women in Energy and Water Management Project), set up an exhibition stall on alternative energy. The nature club students of Bajo High School, who greatly assisted as volunteers in organizing the festival, also set up an environment education stall. A new game was introduced this year,



which proved to be quite popular among the local people. Titled "The Strongest Crane", the participants had to wear a crane mask and carry a log to the furthest distance possible. In the inter-geog traditional archery match, archers from Bjena lifted the winners Rolling Trophy. The festival was jointly sponsored by UNESCO, the Felburn Foundation, the International Crane Foundation and Bhutan Heritage Travels.

Black-necked crane count

(The annual winter crane count was done by Mr. Jim Rogers, International Crane Foundation), Tshewang Norbu, White Bellied Heron Researcher, Dago Tshering, Field Coordinator, Phurba (RSPN caretaker, Bumdeling)

Winter of:	Phobjikha (1)	Bomdeling (2)	Khotokha (1)	Bumthang (3)	Paro [4]	Total
1998-99	240+	146	7	18	—	411+
1999-2000	244	155	6	10	—	415
2000-01	248	151	4	6	—	409
2001-02	262	169	4	7	—	442
2002-03	269	155	8	9	2	443
2003-04	270	150	-	5	-	425

Alternative Energy

Pilot Solar Energy Project (PSEP):

Solar Photovoltaic (SPV) electrification being the cheapest, quickest and most efficient way of providing non-polluting renewable energy, the PSEP aims at improving the living conditions of the people by introducing SPV lighting system in the valley.

Objective:

- *Make the Solar Photovoltaic (SPV) Home Lightning System easily available and affordable to the people.*
- *To build the capacity of the local people by identifying and developing a local network of personnel trained in maintaining solar home light system for the rural households availing the credit*



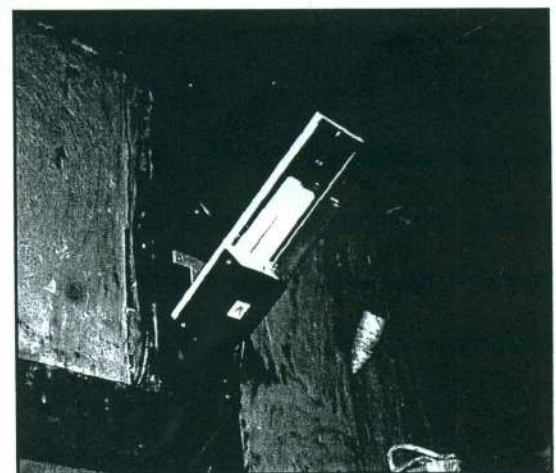
Under the project (funded Solar Electric Lighting Fund (SELF) USA) a total of 151 households were electrified. The Solar Photo Voltaic (SPV) lighting systems ranging between prices of Nu. 16,500 to Nu. 21,500 were provided to the people through soft loans with an interest of 7%. No interest were charged if the loan repayment was fulfilled within 1 year. Technicians from SELF (USA), SELCO Solar company (India) and Tshungmed Solar Inc. (Bhutan) jointly conducted a training program for 6 people from Phobji, Gangtay and Bjena Gewogs. The training consisted of two parts:

Technical concept:

Solar energy principles and use of solar systems components, fault findings, basic problem, trouble shooting, operational and maintenance requirements

Technical training:

House wiring, Assembly, installation and maintenance of system and batteries. The trainees were also given practical trainings by involving them in solar installation works in Crane Information Centre and in some of the village households.



Women in Energy and Water Management

Water supply for Haal and Kumbu villages

The villages of Haal (Phobji Geog) and Kumbu (Gangtey Geog) were supplied with a water supply at their doorsteps. The project, funded by UNEP-ICIMOD and carried out in collaboration with the Rural Water Supply Scheme of the Royal Government, has built water tanks at the source, provided piping and installed taps at the villages. The women from the 10 households in Haal and the 9 households in Kumbu have previously stressed their needs for such a resource to reduce drudgery.

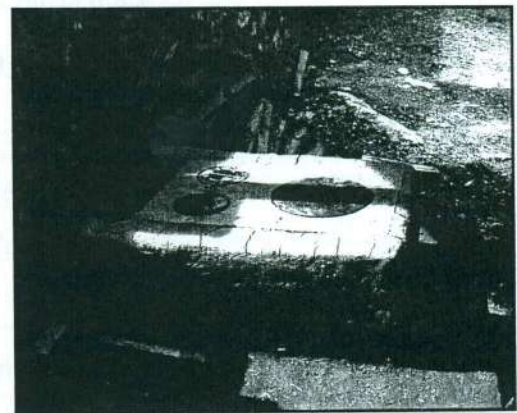


An official inauguration was held to officially open the water supply, during which the Executive Director of RSPN symbolically handed over a toolbox that the local community can use for the future maintenance of the water supply. The ceremony also consisted of a speech from a health official from the local Basic Health Unit who stressed the importance of hygiene and sanitation for healthy living, and an engineer who provided information on the basics of maintaining the water facilities.

To ensure the future maintenance of the scheme a small committee has been formed in each village that will take responsibility for the water sources. Each household in the villages will be expected to contribute Nu. 100 annually and this money will be handled by the committee for future repair costs.

Technological training for the women's groups

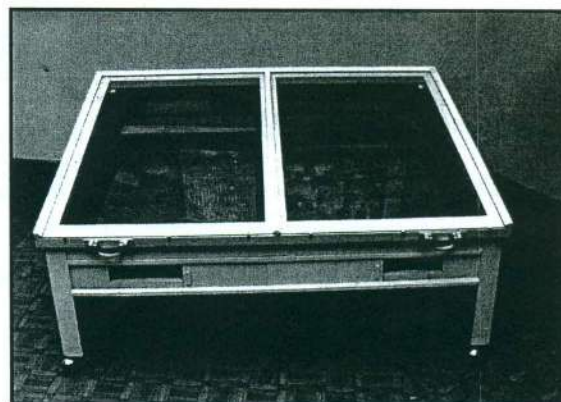
A training cum exhibition of alternative energy and Water technologies took place during the year in a three day workshop at the crane information centre. Women from the three project sites of Limukha, Ha and Phobjikha attended the training which helped to raise their awareness of what technologies are available.



The workshop was run by a wide variety of facilitators, including representatives from the Smokeless Stove Unit of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and from the Renewable Natural Resources Centre of the Ministry of Agriculture.

The following products were displayed:

- *Improved metal cooking stoves*
- *Improved mud cooking stoves*
- *Parabolic solar cookers*
- *Solar Dryers (for drying food inside using passive solar heating)*
- *Solar water heaters*
- *Plastic greenhouses*
- *Rainwater harvesting systems*
- *Water sprinklers*



After a preliminary introduction to all the technologies and their benefits the groups' drafted action plans to prioritize which technologies were most relevant to their respective regions. The women from Limukha focused on the solar dryer, the Ha group on the improved metal stove and the Phobjikha participants chose the mud cooking stove. Based on the choices made by the different groups RSPN will provide further training to the women on their specified technologies, and will put the groups in touch with local entrepreneurs so that they can purchase the raw materials. This will be the first step towards the ultimate aim of helping the women become specialized dealers in their chosen technologies.

Women's groups go on tour

Members of the Ha, Limukha and Phobjikha women's groups went on tour to Thimphu, Paro, Wangduephodrang and Punakha to familiarize themselves with various useful technologies – including solar technologies, farming machineries and agro processing. It is envisaged that by building the capacity of the participants in these issues it will help them to take initiatives back in their local communities. In Punakha the participants met Ap Namgay Wangchuk, who is the owner of the Pico Hydrel Project. He has devised a way to use the locally available renewable resource of water to run his agro-processing operations and for home lighting. The study tour was an eye opening opportunity for most of the participants as it was their first time outside of their villages. The participants felt that they had learned a lot, and were hopeful of replicating some of these initiatives back in their own villages.

Group management training

Under a different component of the ICDP, a community fund will be established by the women's group for the use of providing small scale loans to help the women start up small enterprises to hold them produce their own incomes.

It is therefore important that the relevant members of the women's groups received grounding in group management and basic financial skills, and much of the training focused on the concept of a village bank and simple accounting techniques.

Both the women's groups at the training worked on the details of their proposed establishment of a gas depot in Phobjikha (to make gas cylinders more widely available so that households do not have to rely on firewood for cooking), and the solar dryer production venture in Limukha. Also during the training the groups devised their constitutions, to formalize the arrangement under which they operate.

A major achievement of the workshop was the establishment of the Board of Committees for the two areas. The new representatives were then briefed on the roles and responsibilities that they would have to play to ensure the success of their relevant business ventures.

The participants expressed that they had gained a clear understanding on the formation of an association and its management and benefits, and as valuable knowledge on efficient financial management.

White-bellied Heron Research

RSPN initiated a project on the study of the white-bellied herons in Bhutan from March-April 2003 with a grant of US\$ 7000 from Felburn Foundation (Florida, USA). Tshewang Norbu, an amateur birdwatcher and an active RSPN volunteer was recruited for the study. The aim of the two-year project study is to conduct a preliminary research study on the population, distribution, and habitat of the White-bellied herons in Bhutan.

The first heron study was conducted along the Pho chhu river (alt: 1290m). The vegetation cover here is mostly Chirpine forest. There are two villages (Tshekhathang and Gumjithangkha) in the area comprising 23 households.

4 herons had been reported in the area by residents and forestry officials. However, during the field study, only 2 herons were spotted feeding along the Pho-chhu river shore. Remains (only a few feathers) were also found of a dead heron. According to the Forest Guard of Punakha Range Office, the heron had died about two weeks before and some labourers had thrown it into the river. The cause of death was unknown though the residents claimed that it might have died a natural death. . Asked about the migratory patterns, the residents said that they see the birds from October to April and they have no idea where they go for the rest of the year.

Breeding Habitat (along tributary of the Punatsangchhu, Wangduephodrang Dzongkhag. Altitude: 980 m)

On 23rd April 2003, a forest guard reported that a heron nest had been spotted along one of the tributaries of the Punatsangchhu (alt: 980m) in Wangduephodrang. These were a different pair from the ones at Punakha. The RSPN Researcher, Tshewang Norbu, went to the area the same day and confirmed the report.

The nest was located in Zawa, a village consisting of eight households. The nest was not located in the immediate vicinity of the village but about forty minutes of walk from the last house. The nest was situated in a tall chirpine tree overlooking the whole valley. The vegetation in this region is sparse with scattered Chirpine trees and other shrubs. On the other side of the stream, there are paddy fields and a cowshed.

The nest was made up of leafy branches and twigs on the branch of an isolated tall Chirpine tree (approx height: 25m). From a distance, the nest camouflaged quite well with other branches of the Chirpine. It was hard to see the number of eggs in the nest since the heron (presumably the female) was on the nest. The male heron would stay vigilant most of the time on a branch of the same tree or on another tree a little distance away.

Incubation Period

During the incubation period, the male and female herons would take turns on the nest so that the other could go for feeding. The herons would fly south for feeding. A few days later, one of the herons was sighted feeding at the Punatsangchhu river shore.

It was noticed that the female has a slightly grey body and was smaller as compared to the male. The heron (either male or female) would perch on the nest motionlessly with only its crest fluttering in the wind. However, about every 20-25 minutes, it would stand up, stretch its wings and work on fortifying the nest. During this period, no calls were recorded. The exact period of incubation could not be recorded since the eggs had already been laid when we received news about the nest. After interviewing Ap Sangay Dorji (the first one to sight the nest), we've made an estimate of roughly 12-14 days.

Hatching: On 29th April, the first egg hatched. On close observation through a spotting scope, a young chick could be seen. It was only at this time that a second egg was spotted which had not yet hatched. During the first week of hatching.



Heron habitat

During the first week of hatching, the color of body and head of Cheychey (Heron chick named by the Researcher) was whitish. It started feeding from the fifth day. Cheychey was feed with 9-10 fishes regurgitated by the parents. By the third week the belly of the chick had turned yellowish and the legs pinkish. At this time, the crest has not developed and it was not possible to determine the sex of the chick. The fourth week after hatching, the chick had started flapping its wings but did not venture out of the nest. By that time, the wings had turned darkish gray. By the sixth week, the frequency of feeding has decreased. It was observed that the chick was feed with 9-10 fishes once in a day.

After 45 days of hatching, the chick was often left unguarded by the parents. The chick was able to venture out of the nest and stand unsteadily on an adjacent branch. After about two weeks, the chick was able to hop on to nearby trees. The size of the body have become equal to that of the parents. During the following weeks, the chicks was seen going for feeding with the parents. After 72 days of hatching, the heron family left for good. A weeklong vigil over the area confirmed that thee have migrated to another habitat.

An attempt was carried out find the heron family after their migration. After considering the various heron habitats in the area and going over their routes on a map, surveys were conducted along the river shores of Pho chhu & Mo Chu (Punakha), Hoko Tsho Lake (Punakha), Samtengang Lake (Wangduephodrang) and Ada Lake (Wangduephodrang). No herons were sighted in the first three places but in Ada Lake, 2 herons were spotted. The researcher was of the speculation that the family had abandoned Cheychey to fend for itself. However, after a few days, the heron family was spotted flying North from the breeding area. This means that the herons at Ada Lake was not Cheychey's family. The 2 heron from Ada Lake could be the ones that was sighted along the river shores of Pho chhu in April. The heron family might still be roosting somewhere in the breeding area.

After the historic discovery of the first nest, we were lucky enough to discover another nest in the same region. The Nest was perched on the chirpine trees and was located at the opposite hills of the valley. This time, the nest consisted of three chicks. Although the nest was not discovered during the hatching period, we are positive that we will be able to discover more about the herons.

Preliminary Population survey

A preliminary population survey was conducted in February, 2004 with support from the Wangduephodrang Forest Division. The entire region around the Punatshangchhu and its tributaries were combed and the survey revealed a total population of 9 herons. With the three chicks from the new nest discovered, the total counts of heron in the region has become 12. At present , RSPN is monitoring the heron habitat around the Punatshangchhu region and searching for other probable nesting sites. The regions around the Tshekhathang gewog, which is about 30 minutes walk from the Punakha town could be another nesting place for the Herons. The villagers have observed that at least three herons have been seen after the glacial flashflood of 1994.

Fundraising Program

“Becoming an efficient,
effective and financially self reliant
conservation organization”

The RSPN Endowment Fund

With the goal of becoming an *efficient, effective and financially self reliant conservation organization*, RSPN initiated the Endowment Fund with a target of US\$ 1 million to be achieved by the end of 2003. The Endowment Fund will finance operational costs through annual investment income.

In support of this goal, the Bhutan Trust Fund for Environment Conservation (BT FEC) agreed to match contributions to the Endowment Fund on a dollar-to-dollar basis up to a maximum of US\$ 450,000. Therefore, RSPN needs to raise US\$ 550,000 to reach its target. Successful realization of the Endowment Fund will strengthen RSPN's capacity as a complementary partner to the Royal Government in conserving the environment of Bhutan.

Although we have not achieved our endowment target at the end of June 2004, the Bhutan Trust Fund has been kind enough to extend the matching grant period till June 2005. The slump in the global economy was also setback to the organization. However, many of our well wishers supported us during the lean phase and we were able to raise quite an amount.

Source of Contribution	Year 1: Dec. 2001		Year 2: Dec. 2002		Year 3: June 2003		Year 4, June 2004	
	Target	Raised	Target	Raised	Target	Raised	Target	Raised
Mr. Gary Hirschron		25000						
Swiss Agency for Development and Co-operation (SDC)		50000						
RSPN Internal Reserve		25000		15794.76				40000.00
Gold Quest International				2500.00		3278.00		2500.00
Fundraising Trip to USA and Canada				38658.00				
Tourist Group from Harvard University				6656.26				
Membership/Guardian Subscription Fees				7601.20				2426.00
William Tacon (RSPN Guardian)	100,000		175000	3000.00	275000	100.00	275000	
Consultancy Work for other organizations/agencies				3730.00				
Donations from individuals (members, guardians, honorary members) directly to the Endowment fund				3650.00				575.00
Tourism Development Fund						3000.00		
International Crane Foundation						1500.00		
Japan Bhutan Friendship Association						1489.00		
SCB Landan, Kanavakatu								21,274.50.00
Mr. Williams B. Russell								2,500.00
Ms. Motoko Odyamari, Japan								
Mr. Judith Brown & Michael Mayer								500.00
Havar University								2814.00
		100000		81590.22		70187.00		72589.50

Contributors to the RSPN Endowment Fund (in alphabetical order)

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Mr. Willaim B Russel USA
Ms. Kathleen Ryan USA
Ms. Regina Ryan USA
Mr. Raptan Bhutan

RSPN Membership Program

The RSPN Membership program plays an integral role in the Society's conservation efforts. Be it in the form of volunteer activities, campaigns, nature hikes or simply keeping our members informed about the environment, the Membership Program ensures citizens participation in conservation. RSPN Members comprise school nature club members, students and individuals from Bhutan and Overseas.

Membership Categories

Students (including Nature Club students)

- Subscription Fee: Nu. 10/year or **Nu.40/5 years**

Individuals

- Subscription Fee(Bhutanese and SAARC): Nu. 200/year or Nu.800/5 years
- Subscription Fee (Foreign): US\$ 50/year or US\$200/5 years

RSPN Guardians

- Subscription Fee: US\$500 & above/year

Benefits

- *Quarterly RSPN Newsletter*
- *RSPN Library*
- *Camping Gear for hire*
- *Nature videos for hire*
- *Treks/day hikes*
- *An opportunity to be a part of RSPN's conservation efforts in Bhutan*

Membership Enrolment FY as of June, 2004

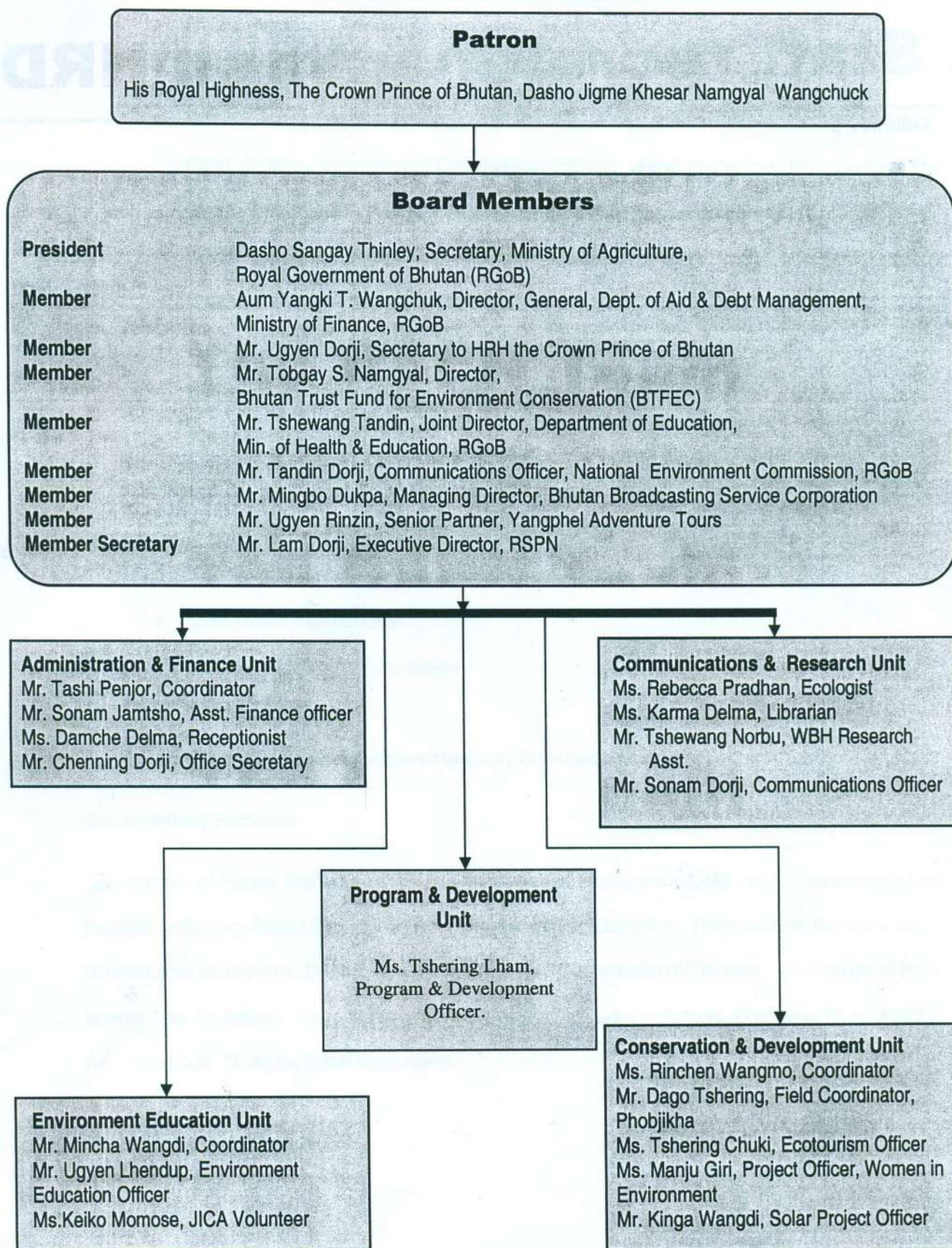
- ◆ Students: 3000
 - Individuals
 - Bhutanese/Expats./SAARC: 80
 - Foreign: 257 (Includes one year honorary members)
- ◆ Guardians: 8
 - Daniel Pierce, USA
 - John and Marcia Harter, USA
 - Judith Brown, USA
 - Marian Phelps Pawlick, USA
 - Paul King and Gail Murray, UK
 - Sabine Liebherr, Switzerland
 - Vicki Sant, USA
 - William Tacon, UK

Membership contribution in FY 2003-2004:

US\$ 2128, NU. 12,827

(This amount is utilized in printing newsletters/ annual report, postal charges and buying books for the library. The remainder is directed to the RSPN Endowment Fund.)

The RSPN Team



RSPN Office :

Staff recruitment and HRD

Volunteers

Ms. Keiko Momose joined the office as volunteer from July, 2003. She is assisting the Environmental Education Program in developing a solid waste management program for urban areas in Bhutan.

New Staff Recruitment:

With the resignation of four staff from the office, four new staff was recruited:

- Ms. Rinchen Wangmo, C & D coordinator
- Ms. Tshering Chuki, Ecotourism Officer, ICDP Phobjikha
- Mr. Kinga Wangdi, Solar Project Officer, Alternative Energy, ICDP
- Mr. Sonam Dorji, Communications Officer, Communications Unit

RSPN Ecologist, Ms. Rebecca Pradhan completes her one year study on Ecological Statistics from Harvard University.

RSPN supporters

- ◆ **Office Rent and Annual Audit:** Royal Government of Bhutan
- ◆ **Institutional Support:** Bhutan Trust Fund for Environment Conservation
- ◆ **Environment Education Program:** UNICEF, WWF, Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund, National Environment Commission (RGoB), Wang Watershed Management Program (MoA, RGoB), JICA/JOCV, Individual sponsors
- ◆ **ICDP Phobjikha:** MacArthur Foundation, UNESCO, International Crane Foundation, Bhutan Heritage Travels, Felburn Foundation
- ◆ **Women in Energy & Water Management Project:** ICIMOD/UNEP
- ◆ **White bellied Heron Study Project:** Felburn Foundation
- ◆ **Alternative Energy, SELF**

Endowment Fund

- ◆ Bhutan Trust Fund for Environment Conservation
- ◆ Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
- ◆ Gold Quest International
- ◆ International Crane Foundation
- ◆ Individual Donors
- ◆ RSPN Guardians/Members/Honorary Members

Conservation Partners

Department of Forest, National Parks, Royal Institute of Management, National Environment Commission, Voluntary Artists Studio Thimphu, Department of Education, Thimphu City Corporation, Schools and Institutions, Department of Civil Aviation, Department of Tourism, Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators, Royal Society for Protection and Care to Animals, Wangdue Dzongkhag Administration, Thimphu Local Volunteers

Financial Report

Disclaimer Note

The coverage of this report is based on the facts, figures and information made available and accessible to the audit team by the Management of the Society. The opinion of the auditors shall confine to the period covered and the facts made known at the time of issue of this report.

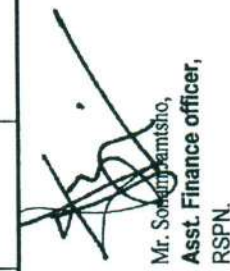
**ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF NATURE
THIMPHU : BHUTAN**

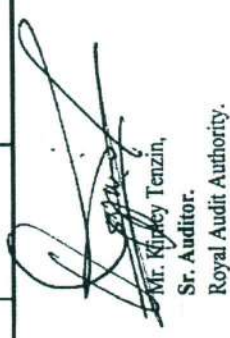
Schedule to Accounts

III. Fixed Assets

SL. NO.	PARTICULARS OF ASSETS	RATE	GROSS BLOCK (AT COST/VALUATION)			DEPRECIATION				NET BLOCK		
			As at 01.07.2003 (In Nu.)	Additions during the year (In Nu.)	Sales/Adjustment during the year (In Nu.)	Total Cost as at 30.06.2004 (In Nu.)	Upto 30.06.2003 (In Nu.)	For the year (In Nu.)	On Sales/Adjustments (In Nu.)	Upto 30.06.2004 (In Nu.)	As on 30.06.2004 (In Nu.)	As on 30.06.2003 (In Nu.)
1	Furniture & Fixture	10%	564,743.52	16,662.56	-	581,406.08	134,110.16	56,872.02	-	190,982.18	390,423.90	430,633.36
2	Office Equipment	10%	2,088,525.61	301,490.00	-	2,390,015.61	691,714.05	226,171.27	-	917,885.32	1,472,130.29	1,396,811.56
3	Trekking Equipments	15%	1,004,994.26	-	-	1,004,994.26	658,171.88	150,749.14	-	808,921.02	196,073.24	319,822.38
4	Vehicles	15%	843,183.00	-	-	843,183.00	534,514.38	126,477.45	-	660,991.83	182,191.17	308,668.62
5	Communication/Other Equipments	15%	745,961.27	-	-	745,961.27	310,147.77	111,894.19	-	422,041.96	323,919.31	435,813.50
6	Building (Observation Center)	3%	1,897,958.81	-	-	1,897,958.81	113,877.52	56,938.76	-	170,816.28	1,727,142.53	1,784,081.29
	Total :		7,145,366.47	318,152.56	-	7,463,519.03	2,442,535.76	729,102.83	-	3,171,638.59	4,291,880.44	4,675,830.71
	Previous Year		6,910,854.47	234,512.00	-	7,145,366.47	1,778,686.05	690,849.71	-	2,469,535.76	4,675,830.71	5,132,168.42


Dr. Lam Dorji,
Executive Director,
RSPN.


Mr. Sonqunpamtsino,
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