

# THE JOURNEY

30 YEARS IN CONSERVATION

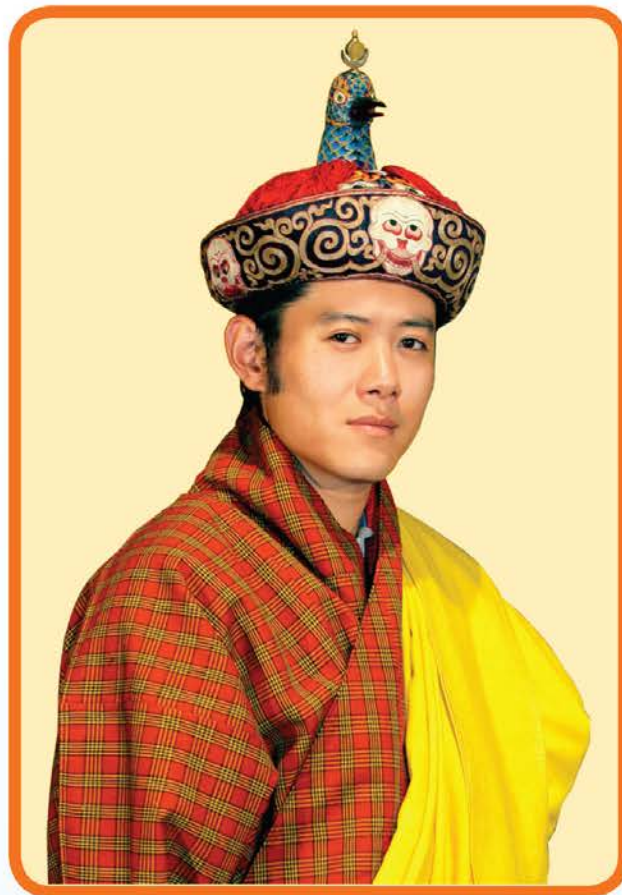


## ANNUAL REPORT

ROYAL SOCIETY FOR PROTECTION OF NATURE

JULY 1, 2016 - JUNE 30, 2017





14/2022/099

*“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 plant and animal species, for the benefit of both the natural world and our children’s future.”*

*Jigme Khesar Wangchuck*

**His Royal Highness Dasho Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck**  
**the Crown Prince of Bhutan, Royal Patron of RSPN**



5<sup>th</sup> August, 2013

**Statement by Her Majesty Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck**  
Queen of Bhutan

*The Kingdom of Bhutan has inherited pristine ecosystems and natural resources. We must, as individuals, personally strive to preserve this endowment through our own sustainable actions. It is our responsibility to ensure that this rich biodiversity abounds for generations to come. I join the RSPN in its efforts of environmental conservation, which remains a pressing concern of our time, and encourage every citizen to embrace the path to a greener future.*

**Her Majesty Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck**  
Queen of Bhutan

*Patron of Royal Society for Protection of Nature*

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# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

MR. DECHEN DORJI



**S**ince its establishment in 1987, the Royal Society for Protection of Nature has been an ardent witness and active contributor in addressing some of the environmental challenges facing Bhutan. This year, as RSPN completes 30 years of dedication and passionate engagement in nature conservation, it is a moment to reflect on how the organization has evolved and grown over the last 3 decades and how it continues to make a difference for the well being of the environment and communities. RSPN's commitment and contributions are increasingly being recognized both locally and globally. Starting from the simple monitoring of black necked crane population in Phobjikha valley every winter, RSPN's species research has advanced scientifically into studying ecological patterns, breeding biology and genetics of the white-bellied heron. RSPN has indeed come a long way!

Over the years, partnership building with donors, stakeholders and institutions have steadily grown, and RSPN's efforts in improving rural livelihoods through community based projects have brought in many positive changes. At the same time, RSPN has been a strong advocate in bringing conservation message into rural households, schools and institutions across the country. The journey of 30 years has indeed been an amalgam of success stories, and we are confident that much more will be achieved as RSPN pursues its mission to realize its conservation vision of the Bhutanese people under the most esteemed patronage and farsighted leadership of our beloved, Her Majesty the Gyaltsuen.

It is a moment of great delight to see RSPN bring out its annual report coinciding with its 30 years of service to conservation in Bhutan. The report adds one more significant milestone to RSPN's conservation journey and reflects the collective effort and hard work of the entire team, well wishers, donors and members of RSPN. I am sure all readers will enjoy and get inspired by the beautiful conservation stories, narrated in this report, for the benefit of the present and future generations.

Thank you all for your continued support, goodwill and friendship.

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

DR. KINLEY TENZIN



It is a privilege to submit to you the annual report for 2016-2017, which has been a great year dotted with major achievement and recognition. The year saw the Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) honored with the National Order of Merit (Gold) by His Majesty the King during the national day celebration on December 17, 2016, and the ADB Civil Society Partnership Award during the 50th Annual ADB Meeting held in Yokohama, Japan on May 5, 2017. Our joy compounded when our very own Rebecca Pradhan was awarded the National Order of Merit (Gold) and recognized as one of the biodiversity 'Hotspot Heroes' by the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund for her valuable contribution towards conservation in Bhutan. Further, our work at RSPN culminated in me being recognized as one of the "50 Most Impactful Green leaders" during the sixth edition of 'The World CSR Day held in Taj Lands' End, Mumbai, India on February 18, 2017. The recognitions have strengthened our resolve to do more for conserving our natural wealth.

2016-2017 saw us make major strides in conservation whereby new partnerships were forged and old ones renewed. The establishment of White-bellied Heron Endowment fund with the support of MAVA Foundation and the construction of White-bellied Heron Captive Breeding Facility Center with the support of the Royal Government of Bhutan and Punatsangchu Hydroelectric Project Authority (I and II) were some of the major highlights of the year.

As I write this, RSPN is venturing into its thirtieth year of service. We have come a long way in the past 30 years and this annual report is in recognition of the dedication and hard work of our staffs (both current and earlier ones) and the support of our partners.

As our organization embarks on a new chapter, we hope you will continue to support RSPN.

# OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**MR. DECHEN DORJI**  
**CHAIRMAN**

Mr. Dechen Dorji is WWF's Country Representative for Bhutan. Prior to joining the WWF, he served as a Public Policy Researcher in the areas of social and welfare assistance for disadvantaged communities and students under His Majesty's Secretariat office. He has a Bachelors (hons) degree in Forestry from University of Wales, UK and a Master of Environmental Management degree from Yale University, USA. He started his career in the Forestry departments as a forestry and environment management planner. At the end of 1996, he moved to Khangma, Trashigang for seven years to work on the World Bank, SDC and IFAD funded regional forestry and agriculture development project covering the six eastern Dzongkhags. Mr. Dorji is also the Founding Director of Ugyen Wangchuck Institute for Conservation and Environment based in Bumthang, a project initiated as a tribute of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests during the Centenary Celebrations of the monarchy in 2008.



**DR. PEMA CHOEPHYEL**  
**BOARD MEMBER**

Dr. Pema Choephyel is the Director for Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation having joined the Fund in July 2010. He began his career with the Royal Civil Service Commission; as a civil servant he held various positions as the Principal at Royal Veterinary Institute, Department of Animal Husbandry, Pedagogic Head (VP) at the Natural Resources Training Institute, Chief Research Officer, Chief Extension Officer, Director at the Council of RNR Research of Bhutan and recently as an Advisor to the Bhutan Development Finance Corporation Limited. He has held various professional membership such as the Permanent Representative of World Meteorology Organization (2004-2007), member of the Project Steering Committee of various area Development Projects in Bhutan. (1997-2007), Board Director for Bhutan Development Finance Corporation Limited (2002-2007), Druk Seed Corporation, (2001-2007), Bhutan Agro Industry Limited (2001-2003), and Food Corporation of Bhutan. A graduate of Bombay Veterinary College, Bombay, India Dr. Pema Choephyel received his master's degree in Rural Development and Communication from Lincoln University, New Zealand in 1991.



**MR. KARMA TSHERING**  
**BOARD MEMBER**

Mr. Karma Tshering is the Director General for Department of School Education, Ministry of Education. He started his career as the Assistant Planning Officer, Royal Institute of Management in 1987 and has been with the Royal civil service for over 25 years having served as the Lecturer and later as the Senior Lecturer at Royal Institute of Management, Deputy Director at National Employment Board, Director at Department of Employment, Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, and most recently as the Director General at Royal Institute of Management. He is the Executive Board Member, AMDISA, and a Governing Board Member, SAARC Documentation Centre (SDC). He graduated with a Bachelor's degree in commerce from Sherubtse College in 1986 and received a Post Graduate Diploma in Business Administration from Cardiff Business School, UK in 1989 and a Master's degree in Business Administration (MBA) from Cardiff Business School, UK in 1990.



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## MR. PHENTO TSHERING

### BOARD MEMBER



Mr. Phento Tshering is the Director for the Department of Forests and Park Services, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests. He began his career with the Royal Civil Service Commission; as a civil servant and has been in the service for last 22 years. He held various positions as the Chief Forestry Officer at Gedu, Wangdue and Thimphu Territorial Forest Divisions. He has held various professional memberships such as the Chairman of drafting committee of Forest and Nature Conservation Act and Rules, served as Board of Director in Bhutan Power Corporation and currently serving as Board of Director of Natural Resource Development Corporation. He is currently the Chairman of Green Bhutan Corporation. A graduate of Sherubtse College, Kanglung in Forestry (Life Science), 1992, Mr. Phento Tshering received his Master's degree in Forestry from IGNFA, Dehradun, India in 1998. Further, He received his Master's (MSc. Mountain Forest Ecology) from the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna, Austria in 2005.

## MR. TASHI

### BOARD MEMBER



Mr. Tashi Joined His Majesty's Secretariat as Zimpon Wom in July 2009. He is on deputation from the Royal Audit Authority where he holds the post as Deputy Auditor General. Currently he looks after the Queens Project Office under His Majesty's Secretariat. Zimpon Wom Tashi obtained a Bachelor of Commerce from Sherubtse College in 1993 and is a finalist in Chartered Management Accountancy from the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, U.K..

## DR. KINLEY TENZIN

### MEMBER SECRETARY



Dr. Kinley Tenzin served as the Program Director at Renewable Natural Resource Research and Development Center, Yusipang under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests before taking up the new responsibility as the Executive Director of the Royal Society for Protection of Nature. He went to University of the Philippine at Los Banos for B.Sc. in General Forestry and got M.Sc. in Resource Management from the University of Edinburgh in UK. He obtained his PhD in Forest Ecosystem Dynamics from University of Boku, Vienna, Austria in 2008.

He started his career as Forestry Research Program Officer in RNR-RC, Jakar in March 1997. In 2005, he was transferred to RNR-RC, Yusipang as Deputy Chief Research Officer and back to RNR-RC, Jakar in the same capacity in 2009. Considering his capacity and vast experience in research, he was appointed as the Program Director at RNR-RC, Yusipang in 2010. Besides attending numerous national and international conferences, seminars and trainings, he has made several important publications.



I want to congratulate the Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) on completing 30 years of active involvement in the preservation and conservation of Bhutan's environment. Reflecting on the path it has traversed, the initiatives it has undertaken, and the hurdles it has overcome, it makes me proud to have been a part of it. Over the last 30 years of existence, RSPN has attained the status of an advanced organization with demonstrated institutional set up and program implementation capacity. This achievement of RSPN emanates from the blessing of His Majesty The Fourth King, and the Royal Patronage of His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, then Crown Prince and Chhoetse Penlop of Bhutan, and the current Royal Patronage of Her Majesty Queen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck.

RSPN has truly been a pioneering partner to the Royal Government especially in the area of environmental education, conservation of endangered species, ecosystem conservation and promotion of conservation and sustainable livelihoods. Amongst many others, some of the significant interventions of RSPN in sustainable development of Bhutan include: **i) Environmental education and advocacy :**

The instrumental role in advocating and working closely with the Ministry of Education in institutionalizing nature clubs as part of school co-curricular activities and in integration of environment science in school curriculum. Some 23 years ago when I began my career with RSPN, it was its environmental education program and its activities with the network of nature clubs around the country that inspired my interest in environmental conservation.

**ii) Conservation of endangered species and their habitats through a) research and b) promotion and demonstration of environmentally friendly development:**

Through management planning and implementation of community based 'Conservation and Sustainable Livelihoods Program', RSPN has not only succeeded in garnering community stewardship and government support for protection and

preservation of endangered species such as the Black-necked crane and White-bellied Heron, but also demonstrated through its decades of engagement in Phobjikha that environment and development can go hand in hand. Today, Phobjikha valley boasts a relatively progressive local economy amidst maintaining its environmental significance as the largest winter habitat of the endangered Black necked crane. Likewise, RSPN has also successfully demonstrated the viability of captive breeding as a possible alternative to recovery of the dwindling global population of the critically endangered White-bellied Herons.

**iii) Addressing emerging environmental issues:**

It is also worth mentioning that RSPN pioneered the 'Clean Bhutan' initiative in which RSPN played a vital role in sensitizing the government and Thromde authorities on the need for proactive policies and public private partnership in urban solid waste management. The current system of door to door collection of household waste began with RSPN's advocacy for the shift from disposal of solid waste into scattered concrete structures towards which RSPN supported the Thimphu City Corporation with waste collection trucks from Japan. Further, the organization has also helped communities address emerging water

and energy related needs through water and sanitation interventions. As the host institutions to Bhutan Water Partnership (BhWP), RSPN has also facilitated BhWP cooperation with concerned government agencies to address water scarcity issues in selected communities.

In the process of planning, mobilizing resources and implementing its conservation programs, RSPN has attained organizational maturity through constant institutional development initiatives. Amongst many other supporters, the constant and continued institutional support provided by the Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation (BTSEC) and the US based MacArthur Foundation have helped build a strong organizational foundation that brought global recognition to RSPN as a creative and effective institution. In 2010, RSPN received the most prestigious MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions with a prize money US \$ 350,000. From an institution that barely had the resources to support its operational cost, RSPN is today an organization with permanent headquarter building, an expanding endowment fund to support its operational and programs, and manned by dedicated staff and an effective board.

On this occasion of thirtieth anniversary, I wish RSPN continued success in its efforts to preserve the rich natural and environmental heritage of the Kingdom of Bhutan.



Dr. Lam at Phobjikha

# PROGRAM AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

The PDD endeavors to ensure achievement of strategic goals and objectives of the organization in alignment to the Five year RSPN strategic plan. The core functions are resource mobilization, project development, maintenance of donor and stakeholder relationships, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of RSPN projects and programs.

## BHUTAN WATER PARTNERSHIP (BHWP)

The Secretariat Office of BhWP is housed in Royal Society for Protection of Nature. Through its multi-stakeholder partnerships, the strategic priorities for BhWP is to:

- address poverty through increased agricultural productivity.
- provide safe drinking water for health and sanitation.
- encourage practice of IWRM principles for sustainable management of water resource.
- address the impacts of climate change on water resources.
- provide education and awareness on draught management.

## GREEN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT (GPP)

The Green Public Procurement in Bhutan project (GPP Bhutan) is an EU-funded project under the EuropeAid SWITCH-Asia Programme. It establishes a strategic approach to scale-up public demand for environmentally and socially preferable goods, services and infrastructure. It provides a cross-cutting industrial strategy to support Gross National Happiness and the stewardship of natural resources in Bhutan. The project aims to increase the positive environmental, social and economic multipliers of public consumption; provide an incentive for sustainable production among suppliers, particularly CSMEs; and build demand-side and supply-side capacity to write and respond to GPP tenders.

The project is being implemented by a consortium of five government and non-governmental organizations, namely the International Institute for Sustainable Development (Project Lead, Canada), the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Bhutan), the Royal Institute of Management (Bhutan), the Collaborating Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (Germany), and the Royal Society for Protection of Nature (Bhutan). Three and a half year partnership agreement between IISD and RSPN was signed in May 2014.









# RSPN-GPP PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS (2014 – 2017)



The year saw the completion of the three year Green Public Procurement project. RSPN was one of the implementing partners and the RSPN team have achieved all the targets such as creating awareness on the importance of procurement manual favouring the green products, development of the procurement manual and assisting in procurement procedures of the Royal Society for Protection of Nature.

The government of Bhutan did not have any statistics for the public spending for purchase of goods, services and works. RSPN team in its activity 1.1 under work package 1 generated the awareness to the public and people of Bhutan through the research report on how crucial is the public procurement and its contribution to global climate change. The research report on this will serve as starting point for the government's planning and fact collection point for the future national and international projects.

In the similar line, the report on institutional arrangement and procedure highlights and gaps which also derived recommendations for institutional streamlining and created the awareness on the need of the addressing the gaps in the institutional arrangement. This work of RSPN established referencing materials for the government in the planning which may favour the green

procurement practices amongst the public agencies.

The potential of CSIMs in supplying goods and services, and willingness of public procurers in procuring local goods and services has been studied. Based on the finding, recommendations were drawn to facilitate the long term gap analysis between the procurers and suppliers which serves as a guiding materials towards promoting the local products across the region of the country.

In addition to major works, RSPN have coordinated the newsletter publication and created the visibility of the project amongst the national and international readers. The team also shared the two articles in national context for the newsletter, gathered the case studies from Bhutan and SAARC regions for development of hand book for public procurers of goods, services and works. The project team also facilitated some session of training during training of procurers 3 which trained more than 30 government procurement and finance officials and engineers to responds towards green products in the country. The team also achieved the awareness of public by supporting the sensitization program in Gelephu and Phuentsholing where more than 20 participants each location attended the awareness program.

WASH Project - Samtse



SAP Project - Wamrong



Buli Project - Zhemgang





# CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD DIVISION (CSLD)

The Conservation and Sustainable Livelihoods Division (CSLD) was created in the late 1990s as a regular program unit of RSPN to focus on conservation, development and enhancing sustainable livelihood in Phobjikha. After recognizing that community participation is an integral part of conservation efforts, the program was upgraded as a division with several activities fostering environmentally viable livelihood options implemented in other regions. Such programs have enabled local communities to make sustainable choices and have rendered communities support for RSPN's conservation initiatives.

Currently, CSLD besides overseeing the Black-necked Crane Visitor Center at Phobjikha has four ongoing projects: Buli Project, Sustainable Agriculture Program, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene and Community-based Sustainable Tourism Project in Haa.

## Black-necked Crane Visitor Center – Phobjikha

BNCVC 2016 - 2017 Performance Summary Highlights



**BNC Count**

**555**

**Average guest per month**

**599**

**Average guest per day in a year** **20**

**Highest no. Of guests in the month of October and November**

**1476**

**1432**

**Lowest no. Of guest in the month of August** **182**



# Community Perception Study on **BLACK-NECKED CRANE CONSERVATION IN BHUTAN**

Jigme Tshering



The Black-necked Cranes (BNC), because of their rare and threatened status have received considerable global attention. In Bhutan, the cranes have always been a part of the life of people and respects for these birds is embodied in their culture and tradition. However as much needed development takes place, changes in the people's attitude towards crane conservation cannot be avoided. Local people may feel that the Black-necked Crane conservation has limited their economic opportunities, and is an obstacle to their future prosperity. This changing attitude of the local community can affect the long-term survival of these birds. To avoid this, there is a need to strike a balance between the conservation of the Black-necked Crane's ecosystem and the use of the local environment for economic development.

RSPN has embarked on a three-year research project which aims to identify threats, pressure and opportunities in all the winter habitats of BNC in Bhutan. As

a first approach to this project, community perception study was carried out in all the major wintering grounds (Bumdeling and Yangtse in Trashiyangtse, Choekhor, Tang and Chumey in Bumthang and Phobjikha in Wangduephodrang) beginning June 2017. The study was carried out to understand and document the status of social environment influencing the conservation of BNC. By understanding the type of interactions they have with the human society, proper planning and mitigating issues will enable the success of BNC conservation and management initiatives.

To collect data and other information, questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and oral narrative data through the proxy of maps/mapping landscape perceptions were used. Questions ranged from the human population dynamics and their association with the cranes to the identification of conservation issues and probable measures. The study was also designed to understand

the prioritization of livelihoods and crane conservation by the local communities. Focus group discussions were conducted with different groups of farmers, geog (blocks) officials and other relevant stakeholders. The selection criteria of the participants were their age, gender and spatial locations of their villages to represent all generations, address gender equality and locational representations.

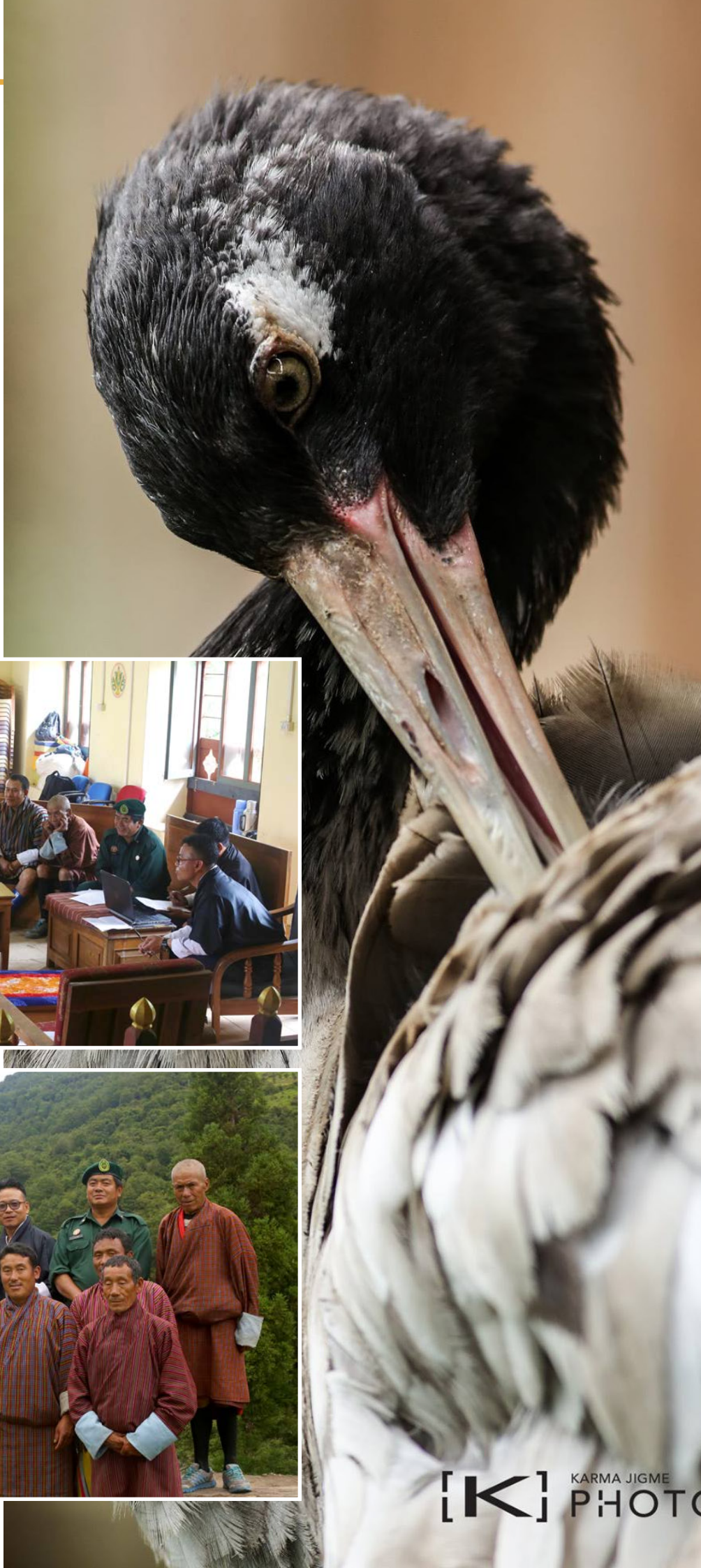
Preliminary data analysis indicates community's strong support and affinity towards the BNC conservation in all the habitats. The community at large does understand the important interlinkages between the BNC conservation and their livelihood activities.

In Trashiyangtse, the ever-reducing feeding areas due to natural calamities and absence of a proper roosting area are attributed to the declining population trend of wintering Black-necked Cranes in the valley. The identified restoration activities by the

participants included reclamation of flash flood eroded paddy fields and abandoned fields due to crop predation by wildlife, development of a proper roosting area and encouraging farmers to leave farmlands fallow in the winter months for cranes to forage in.

In Bumthang, the steep decline in crane visits from more than 100 in the past, is noted to be caused by the developmental encroachment into their habitats. Community suggested mapping all the important feeding and roosting areas and designating them as protected from any further developments or encroachments.

In Phobjikha, where the annual census shows an increasing BNC population trend since the mid-1990s, locals acknowledge the importance of having the conservation program. RSPN's conservation and sustainable livelihood program continue to influence positive change in the valley.



Bumdeling focus group discussion in session



FGD participants

# Sam BOMDELING

Hishey Tshering



Hishey Tshering (middle) holding a BNC for tagging

Having worked for the RSPN for close to a decade, I resigned in 1999 to start my own business. As the country's first NGO, the organization was engaged in groundbreaking environmental conservation work that threw up a variety of challenges and opened up some pretty unique opportunities for its staff members. Of the many notable moments that remain etched in my memory, one particular event that occurred during February of 1998, is my fondest memory of my stint at the RSPN. It has to do with the first ever radio-collaring and color-banding of the Black-necked Cranes carried out in Bhutan, an endeavor designed to enable us to study the cranes' migration route.

It was in November 1996 that I first got to meet the inspirational Dr. George Archibald, a giant among conservationists, and Co-Founder of the International Crane Foundation. He had come to Bhutan to teach us the techniques of baiting cranes,

in preparation for the radio-collaring and color-banding project scheduled for the winter of 1998.

The preparatory work began during the winter months of 1996-97 and 1997-98. The preliminary phase involved the identification of a set of crane families to capture and band - in each of our premier crane wintering grounds: Bomdeling in the East and Phobjikha in the West. We began by enticing the identified families of cranes to feed on the grains we would put out, at some select areas in the feeding grounds. Bomdeling being a rice growing area we fed them rice, while in Phobjikha we fed them wheat. It was important to get them used to feeding on those grains - in order that we can complete our final entrapment of the birds.

George Archibald, accompanied by Dr. Kuni Momose, a professional crane catcher from Japan arrived in Bhutan during February of 1998. The third member of the

team was Mrs. Eleanor Briggs, who would document our work. We were all set to carry out the first ever radio-collaring and color-banding of cranes in Bhutan.

It was planned that we would arrive at Chorten Kora on the third night of the team's arrival in Bhutan and, thereafter, hike to Bomdeling the next morning. However, George would have none of it - he insisted that we make it to Bomdeling, on the third night itself. So we started from Bumthang for Trashiyangtse, in the wee hours of the morning of the third night, determined to arrive Chorten Kora early in the day, so that we could continue straight for Bomdeling - a three hours hike from there on. But that wasn't to be - we got held up en-route and by the time we arrived Chorten Kora, it was way past sundown. The pack pony drivers were unwilling to make the journey to Bomdeling in the dark. With no option but to halt at Chorten Kora for the night, I offered a compromise: we would start very early next day to ensure that we were in

Bomdeling roosting areas before the birds left the roost.

Next day, we were on the trail by 2.30 AM. By the time the clock struck 5.30AM, we were in Bomdeling, in time to see the birds flexing their wings for taking flight from out of their roosting grounds, to forage for breakfast. It was really cold and it was not until 6.10AM that the first cranes started to leave the roost. The family that we had been baiting was a couple with two chicks - they left the roost around 6.25AM and, much to our delight, headed straight for the feeding station where our care-taker Ap Phurba Wangdi had been sprinkling the rice grains for the past two winters. George was hugely encouraged - he felt confident that we would be able to bag the cranes the following day. By mid-morning Eleanor Briggs and our horsemen arrived with our gear. We set up camp and spent the rest of the day observing the cranes and their activities. During the night George began his preparation, which was no more than soaking copious amounts of rice grain in cold water. He explained that the rice needed to be soaked so that when mixed, the powdered drug would stick to the rice grains.

Early next morning we prepared the concoction that would, when consumed, put the subject cranes to sleep. We walked to the feeding area and carefully sprinkled the grains in the same spot where Ap Phurba had been doing for the past two winters. Then the wait began.

We were all perched atop a mound overlooking the area where the drug coated rice grains were sprinkled. Each of us was assigned a specific job. George was supposed to catch the male crane; Kuni would target the female and a forester and me were assigned the task of capturing the two juveniles.

Well, the weather was good, conditions were perfect, the trap was all set and all that now remained was for the birds to come flying in and feed on the nicely doused rice grains – and collapse in a heap. We would pick them up, tag them, band them and let them regain their conciseness and go about their routine business, clueless about our flurry of activities - as simple as a snap of the fingers.

And we waited. As if on cue, our target family of cranes took flight from the roost at 6.25AM and, to our joy, headed straight for the spot that we had hoped they would head for. As they landed and started their dainty stroll towards the spot that was carpeted with our drug doused rice grains, something completely unexpected happened. The birds seemed to be startled by the rice grains – as soon as they noticed the grains, they walked away from the spot. It was as if the birds could smell the presence of drug on the rice grains. But George was quite certain that the birds had no sense of smell. We were nonplused by the strange behavior of the cranes. But there was nothing we could do but wait and wait and wait.

Come 9AM and we were sure that the day wasn't going to be productive. By then the birds had enough food in their system that the dosage of drug that was designed for empty stomach wasn't going to be effective – even if the birds feed on the drugged rice grains. So George headed down to the field and destroyed the bait lest the horses and other birds fed on them. We called it a day and headed to camp.

Next day was no better – the cranes simply kept away from our nicely laid out grains of rice. It was as if they knew something was wrong. But that is in the nature of nature – it is inexplicable and nothing that you do can best it. Another precious day lost – but that is how the cookie crumbles.

On the third day, George decided not to destroy the baits and let them be. Considering that the cranes were coming nowhere close to our enticement, we decided to take a nap. Deep into a restful slumber, George shook me up to tell me that the birds were feeding on our grains. I looked on in rapturous excitement as the birds fed on our grains. Even as my veins tingled with excitement, I was enveloped with a sense of foreboding. The dosage of drug used was calculated to be effective, when consumed on an empty stomach. Additionally, what is effective on the juveniles is not so in the adults – different dosage is required for adults and juveniles. But all that science was inconsequential – we looked on as the cranes fed on the grains, which is what we can do at this late hour.





As we looked on with rapt attention, we saw that while the adults remained unaffected, the two chicks started to totter and sway – indicating that the drug was taking effect on them. They were completely drugged. The smaller of the chick that we later found out had a damaged leg, flopped to the ground – out cold. To our consternation, a group of crows flew in from out of nowhere and started to barrel down on the poor unconscious chick. We pleaded with George to do something to rescue the poor crane. But George was unwilling saying that any move to catch the crane at this stage would cause the other three cranes to take flight, and even drown in the river should they lose consciousness midway during their flight. We were in complete dilemma. Even as we were confounded by indecision, the other chick that was still standing began to behave rather strangely - it headed straight for the river. As distressed as we were by its behavior, our immediate worry was for the other chick that was lying immobile on the ground and being attacked by two crows. From where we stood, it seemed like the crows were pecking on the chick's eyes. George could no longer remain indecisive and shouted to Kuni 'LETS GO!'

They ran down the slop - Kuni heading for the chick, and George towards the other chick that was headed towards the river. The two adult cranes flew off. Instead of using the clump of bush as a blind to approach the other chick, George approached the bird from the riverside; something we felt was the wrong thing to do. However George explained that he was afraid that the bird could have flown off towards the river, thereby risking being drowned. Meanwhile, Kuni caught the "knocked-out" crane.

Just as George got close to the half drunk chick, it flew off to the other side of the valley where the forest was very thick. We were extremely concerned that the bird could plummet down into the thicket and we may never be able to retrieve it. But the chick kept flying until it crashed into a tall poplar tree by the bank of the river. It was a very worrying sight. George continued to run towards the poplar tree and after a while he called us on the radio to let us know that the bird was fine. But as he approached the bird, it took off once again and, this time,

it flew towards the forest on our side of the river. We were all sweating and screaming and then we suddenly saw the bird drop from the sky and into the thick jungle. We gave George the general direction of where the bird fell and all of us headed towards that area. All the ruckus that we created had caught the attention of the farmers in the locality and over a dozen of them joined in to search for the lost bird.

As we approached the area we were very happy to find that the forest's undergrowth was sparse and easy to negotiate. Suddenly I saw the bird. By then George had also joined us and this time George approached the bird from behind, using the trees as blinds. Just as he was close enough to grab the bird, it started to run once again. Intent on not losing the bird this time, I approached the bird from the front. The chick backed off, quite obviously without any energy to run any further, right into George's waiting arms.

We took the two young cranes into our tents, put socks over their heads to prevent them from being stressed. Meanwhile our concern was for the two adults. One of

them flew into the roost but the other one flew straight up along the river. I organized a search party and we hiked for over 5 hours looking for our lost bird but to no avail.

Back in our camp we wondered aloud why the cranes did not feed on the drug-laced rice grains, as they would before being coated with drug. We theorized that it could be the altered color of the soaked rice that set off a warning bell in the birds. The rice is straw-colored when dry but when soaked, it takes on a deep brown hue. It is probably this altered color that had made the birds suspicious. However, on the third day as we had left the grains as they were, the sun had dried the grains thereby restoring its original straw-color, thus causing no alarm to the birds.

Finally our job was done - both the chicks were fitted with color bands. The stronger of the two had the additional burden of a transmitter. We kept them in our tents overnight. Next morning we spotted one adult parent of the chicks, whereupon we released the banded chicks so that they could rejoin their now lone parent. Even as we looked on we wondered if the other

parent was dead, a lone crane flew in and landed close to the threesome now happily feeding without a care in the world. The loner started calling but the parent of the two chicks would have none of it - they chased it away. We could not establish for sure if this was our lost crane or another one making its bid for a mate. But for sure I had an experience of a lifetime that to this day remains vivid and etched in my memory - singular and enthralling in its vivaciousness.

The bird with the transmitter was named Sam Bomdeling and the other chick Josie Yangtse, to honor Sam Taylor and his wife Josie who funded the project. On February 8, 1998 Sam Bomdeling migrated from Bomdeling and flew 240 km to Gyantse in Tibet where it stayed for sometime before migrating further north to Xigatse. The weaker chick and its parent stayed back for two more weeks until the chick was strong enough to fly. Based on the information retrieved from the transmitter, George organized another expedition to color-band the chicks in their summer habitat in Tibet. Unfortunately by then I had resigned from RSPN and hence was not part of that expedition.



# Project in Samtse

## WASH (WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE)



Water has become one of the scarce resources in Bhutan and more so in southern parts of Bhutan. The water scarcity is associated with various factors starting from fast depletion of upstream watersheds and aeration of water sources caused by increasing population and by farm road constructions, mining, landslides, flash floods, climate change, etc. Poor management, operation, and maintenance of water supply systems/

schemes are other attributing factors. Scarcities of drinking water in Yoeseltse Gewog and Dumsidara village under Phuntshopelri Gewog in Samtse Dzongkhag continued to be a long-standing problem despite the several attempts made in the past to connect the villages with clean and safe water supply systems/schemes. To address this issue, RSPN in collaboration with Samtse Dzongkhag Administration through

funding from SAARC Development Fund (SDF) has constructed two water supply systems/schemes. The use of gravitational technology has helped reach water to the people of Yoeseltse Gewog while through submersible pump technology to the people of Dumsidara village in Phuntshopelri Gewog. Public Health Engineering Division of the Ministry of Health provided technical support.



50,000 liter capacity overhead intake tank and 150,000 liter capacity reservoir tank at Yoeseltse

### 1. Water Pump in Dumsidara Village, Phuntshopelri Gewog

The water supply was supplied through submersible pump technology to the people of Dumsidara village in Phuntshopelri Gewog. The water supply system was constructed at the total cost of about Nu.1.9 million. A tank with a capacity of 50,000 (50 m<sup>3</sup>) liters of water on the hill top of the village has been constructed, which is connected at source collection tank by GI pipeline stretching two kilometers.

As of May 2017, residents still have to carry water from source afar walking difficult and long paths, which takes about an

hour's time. One of the oldest residents of Dumsidara, Kabiraj Gurung, 85, said the new water connection would be a blessing to the people. "I do not carry water today but my children do", he said, adding that the difficult days would be now over. Kabiraj Gurung shared that he used to carry three containers filled with water when he was young.

The Phuntshopelri Gewog Administrative Officer (GAO) Sangay Penjor commented that the project was "a historic one". It is a success story as water can be pumped from the source unlike the earlier system, he said, adding that although the project is going to benefit around 42 households of Dumsidara

Chiwog immediately, GAO Sangay said the number of benefited households would only increase later.

Dumsidara is located atop a hill, 15 kilometers away from Gomtu Township. There are more than 100 households including the periphery villages. The project was designed with carrying capacity of safe drinking water enough for next 15 years for over 5000 households.

"The project is designed with a carrying capacity enough for more than 5000 individuals for next 15 years but with proper operation and maintenance, the water sufficiency can be assured for even 20 years." - Mr. Damcho, Engineer, Samtse Dzongkhag



## 2. Rural Water Supply in Yoesletse Gewog

The water supply was supplied through gravitational technology to the people of Yoesletse Gewog. The water supply system was constructed at the total cost of more than Nu.17 million. A huge reservoir tank with a capacity of 150,000 (150 m<sup>3</sup>) and an overhead intake tank with capacity of 50,000 (50 m<sup>3</sup>) liters water on the hilltop of the village has been constructed, which is connected by two main pipelines to Collection cum Treatment Tank at the water source at a distance of 12 kilometers towards north.

The Gup Ganga Prasad Limbu said that shortage of drinking water in the three lower Chiwogs was a long-standing

problem and several attempts were made in the past to connect the villages with clean and safe water supply without much success. Until recently, the residents carried water from different sources afar walking difficult and long paths, and the water they fetch are not clean and safe for drinking, he said. The Gup said that the project was a milestone that will ensure 24 hours water supply to more than 500 households from three lower Chiwogs.

The former water Chairperson, Mr. Chendra Dorji said the new water connection would be a blessing to the people. "My wife and my children will no longer have to carry water from the nearby sources", he said. Mr. Chendra shared that health and hygiene in the area have improved since the

initiation of WASH program by RSPN and will further improve with the connection of water supply. The Health Assistant, Mr. Norbu Jamtsho said that the number of people visiting Basic Health Unit related to waterborne disease has been declining over the years and this could be due to the impacts of the WASH program.

The water supply will immensely benefit the communities, school, institutions and government offices in the Gewog for the promotion of better health and hygiene, which will have greater benefit in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 6. "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all".



50,000 liter capacity submersible pumping system station and collection tank at Dumsidara



90mm, 10km two main pipe lines





# A decade of association with **ROYAL SOCIETY FOR PROTECTION OF NATURE**

Tshering Phuntsho



**O**n December 17, 1992, as an eight-year-old boy, I was one of the randomly selected boys to perform the Black-necked Crane dance for the celebration of National Day in my primary school. As we performed the crane-dance, crows hovered in the sky over looking us. Never did I, in my wildest dreams, dreamt of starting my career at an NGO working on Black-necked Cranes 14 years later, and would be writing my master's thesis and other research papers on Black-necked Cranes.

On August 6, 2007, I joined the Royal Society for Protection of Nature as a Program Officer for the Bhutan Water Partnership Secretariat becoming one of the ReSPiAnNs . RSPN was housed in a two-storied traditional Bhutanese house at Lower Changangkha amidst apple trees. It was 10 to 12 roomed, compact office with 19 full-time motivated staffs with Dr. Lam Dorji as the Executive Director. RSPN had one field office in Phobjikha with three staffs and the Wamrong, Tashigang field office was opened with one officer in late 2007. I shared a small dusty room with Mr. Kinga Wangdi and Mr. Ugyen Lhendup who were looking after the Environmental Education Program of RSPN. As if, it was not enough, we had a young Swidish high school graduate lad Victor Ekelund

interning with us squeezed in with us. TRSPN moved to another rented space in mid 2008, this time to a concrete building and had plenty of rooms to accommodate all the staffs comfortably.

Bhutan Water Partnership was housed at RSPN since 2006. At that time, the former Secretary of Ministry of Economic Affairs, then the Director General of Department of Energy, Dasho Sonam Tshering was the Chairperson of the Steering Committee. In 2008, the current Secretary of National Environment Commission, Dasho Chencho Norbu who was then the Director of Department of Agriculture took the Chairpersonship.

At that period, the secretariat concentrated on accreditation of Bhutan Water Partnership to Global Water Partnership. The Secretariat use to receive 10,000 Euros as annual fund and most of it was spent on small activities such as water source protection and inventory of water quality data at the national level.

It was fun working as a young officer in a NGO environment and there were many learning platforms. I fondly recall those monthly staff meetings, the quarterly planning and reporting meetings, the retreats and other meetings which were

filled with laughter, debates and sometimes frustration and brawl. The annual Black-necked Crane festival which happens in November each year, was another big event which the ReSPiAnNs never missed. The entire ReSPiAnNs use to travel to Phobjikha and prepare for the festival without any allowances or perks. It was simply a tradition and a retreat-like event. This year it will be the 19th edition of the festival and it is also one of the most sustainable festival in terms of cost involved in organizing the event. During those days, the MacArthur Foundation, USA was RSPN's largest donor and concentrated mostly in Phobjikha Landscape Conservation Area. In January 2010 RSPN received the prestigious MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions (MACEI) for protecting Bhutan's rich biodiversity. RSPN was among the eleven organizations from six countries to receive the MACEI award for its conservation works and its impacts in the country. The award also included a cash prize of USD 350,000 which were later judiciously used in the construction of RSPN Head Office, human resource

development of four officials and partially contributed to RSPN's endowment fund.

Sadly, I had to resign in 2008 as I had to leave to pursue my master. Upon the completion of my masters, I re-applied for a position at RSPN in 2011. I was lucky to be selected as the coordinator of Conservation and Sustainable Livelihoods Program where I had the opportunity to work for the MacArthur Foundation's last lag of the project in Phobjikha. I am glad that those projects in Phobjikha has culminated in recognition of Phobjikha as the third RAMSAR wetland for Bhutan in May 2016. 2012 was a great year as RSPN celebrated its 25th Anniversary with the Queen of Bhutan, Ashi Gyalsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck assuming the Royal Patronage from His Majesty the King. RSPN partners gathered from across the globe to celebrate its Silver Jubilee. It was a moment of pride to be ReSPiAN and tell the stories of RSPN's work in the areas of environment conservation in the country. Dasho Paljor J. Dorji, Dr. Lam Dorji and my dear friend, late Tshewang Norbu (posthumously) were awarded mementos for their selfless contribution to the growth

of RSPN as an institution and as an effective and credible national organization. But, more than that, it was a great achievement to all the staffs (past and present), members of the board and those associated with RSPN.

In early 2014, RSPN opened its third field office in Zhemgang in pursuant of a request from the district desiring RSPN's presence and for the effective implementation Asian Development Bank's regional project "Improving gender-inclusive access to clean and renewable energy in Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka (JFPR Grant 9158)". I was proud to be the Manager of the project which Dr. Lam, in full confidence, handed it to me. The project got an appreciation certificate in recognition of the good gender outcomes within the ADB portfolio promoted through energy based livelihoods and entrepreneurship for rural women. In May 2017, the project won the ADB Civil Society Partnership Award. Dr. Kinley Tenzin, Executive Director RSPN received it during the 50th Annual ADB Meeting. One of the greatest recognition, however, was when His Majesty the King, conferred the national Order of Merit (Gold) to RSPN on 17th December 2016. Such

national recognition was very important to RSPN and its staffs not only in terms of boosting the morale but also in terms of the role it played in the field of environmental conservation in the country and how much the nation appreciates its work.

RSPN has worked with a wide range of partners and supporters in myriad field. RSPN has worked with international institutions, foundations, multilateral organizations, individual donors and the community at large. RSPN's greatest strength lies in its core values; leadership in conservation, innovation, proactive towards environmental issues, accountability and transparency, and efficiency.

In a nut shell, the past 10 years was very meaningful for me to allow me to grow professionally. At an individual level I met great leaders and co-workers, willing to mentor and work in team. If I am to describe RSPN in one word, I would choose "resilient". I thank all my wonderful friends who worked and who are working at RSPN for their wonderful comradeship. I wish RSPN Family a very happy 30th Anniversary and I hope we will celebrate more such anniversaries.



Community consultative meeting in Kangpara

# Watershed Management for **BULI CHIWOG**



Through funding support from GEF/Small Grants Program, UNDP, RSPN successfully implemented the project on Conservation and Sustainable Management of Wetlands in Buli village under Nangkhor gewog in Zhemgang district in 2017. The project was implemented with a prime objective to develop a long-term management strategy for watersheds and wetlands in Buli as per the management plan in close consultation with communities and stakeholders. Another objective of the project was also to institutionalise local conservation committee to garner support from communities and to instil the sense of stewardship for environment conservation. Awareness and advocacy on the importance of ecosystem services provided by wetlands were equally important to disseminate to the communities.

Wetlands and watershed play a pivotal role in supporting diverse ecosystem service both tangible and intangible. Likewise, Buli wetland is endowed with pristine surrounding watersheds and wetlands. It is one of the low altitude wetlands of the Bhutan Himalayas located at 1670 masl. Preliminary study shows that Buli watershed is ecologically rich with diverse flora and fauna recorded through the assessments conducted by the project. These wetlands are the water reservoirs and play an important role in the hydrological processes in the ecosystem and the traditional conservation values and local norms of sacred grove and forest have added to the contemporary conservation system of these watersheds. The community also conducts annual local festivals to worship the local deity, which is believed to be the protecting deity of the community. The current project started with an objective to further strengthen the conservation effort through participatory decision making in developing a watershed management plan. With technical assistance from Watershed Management Division (WMD) under Department of Forests and Park Services, and Buli territorial Division



field office, Buli watershed management plan was successfully prepared. The new watershed management plan which is endorsed by Department of Forests and Park Services (DoFPS) is developed with an overall goal to provide strategic direction for ensuring conservation and protection of watersheds, particularly wetlands and associated biodiversity, and Support sustainable local livelihoods linked to conservation and protection of the watershed. The management plan is

designed to be implemented by diverse stakeholders and sector heads under district and gewog. Also to mobilize fund the activity implementation will be attuned to the 12 Five-year Plan (FYP) and proposed activity is expected to complete implementing by end of the 12 FYP period.

Besides this, the Buli wetlands are also designated as wetlands of national importance which will further strengthen the conservation status of the area given

the rich ecological significance and diverse ecosystem service supported by wetlands and watersheds.

To this end, RSPN sincerely acknowledges all our valued donor and technical partners both at the field and national for extending their support in achieving the project goal. We would also like to extend our gratitude to Zhemgang Dzongkhag administration for their support and cooperation in successfully implementing the project.



# Sustainable Agriculture Program in **WAMRONG AND THRIMSHING DUNGKHAG**



Sustainable Agriculture Project (SAP) was initiated by the Royal Society for Protection of Nature with the support from the NORLHA in 2013 covering four pilot villages from two Gewogs (Maduwa & Passaphu under Kangpara Gewog and Tshogoenpa and Moshi under Lumang Gewog).

The project started with 10 households each from four pilot villages. The motives for the project was to train and enhance farmers with the knowledge of sustainable agriculture practices and to expand the number of farmers applying the proposed measures for sustainable agriculture by involving other farmers into training and support activities.

Since its initiation, RSPN has trained farmers for various methods of slope management such as stone bundling, Napier plantation, check dam construction and terracing for sloppy agriculture land in the pilot villages. Although all the methods have been demonstrated to the farmers, the plantation of Napier plant was most successful out of all. The farmers are of the view that plantation of Napier plants is less laborious with multiple advantages over the other methods.

The preparation of organic pesticides using locally available materials such as cow dung, urine, Artemisia plants, etc. was taught to the farmers during the course of the project. Three types of pesticides preparation were taught for both short term and long term uses. Some of the farmers have started to use the mixture as

the organic pest repellent. In addition to the technical training and advocacies, the farmers were provided with the improved vegetable seeds and also helped with the construction of the cowshed. A total of 19 cowsheds has been constructed in two pilot villages (Maduwa and Tshogoenpa).

RSPN has also provided two pilot villages (Tshogoenpa and Passaphu) with electric fencing. The approach to the electric fencing was the first of a kind in the pilot villages as an alternative method to curb the problem from the wildlife and domestic animals. The electric fencing has covered 2.35 Km of dry land in Passaphu and 3.5 Km of dry land in Tshogoenpa. Since both the villages are isolated from the other villages with thick forest, guarding the crops against the wild animals has been challenging over the years. However, with the installation of the electric fencing, guarding the crops in the night has been significantly cut down.

Within three years, the SAP project has benefited the people of the pilot villages at large. The farmers have already begun to practice the sustainable approach to agriculture. The people of the area wish to have similar support from the RSPN and NORLHA in the near future



Electric fencing curbs human-wildlife conflict







Consulting with the local community of Zhemgang





# Congratulations

## RSPN

Jesper Saxgren , Organic Denmark



While our cooperation has just begun, we think we have something to commemorate and some future perspectives to celebrate. We would like to congratulate RSPN with your 30-years anniversary.

The main focus of our cooperative partnership is to support the goal of Bhutan in its transition to become 100% organic. For this, we need to develop a participatory organic agro-ecological extension method, which can help foster food security, climate resilience and sustainable livelihoods among small-scale farming communities.

To develop this approach, we must combine experiences from nature and biodiversity conservation and a deep understanding of the specific context of nature and culture of the different regions of Bhutan, which are the core competencies of RSPN.

We aim to inculcate conscious usages of organic farming methods and practices that Organic Denmark have from projects in other countries, where we have worked with farmers and communities to improve yields, food security and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Normally agriculture and nature conservation are seen as conflicting positions, but in our approach, we see it as interrelated parts of the same ecosystem, where the aim is to design and develop integrated agro-ecological landscapes and sustainable food systems as multifunctional agro-ecosystems that are both sustained by nature and sustainable in their nature.

By joining the expertise from our two organizations we see great future perspectives in developing organic agriculture from a more holistic landscape/village/farm approach that promotes, protect and enhance the life-supporting ecological processes through landscape design and conservation of nature and biodiversity.

And we therefore see and wish for a long-term cooperation between our two organizations to enhance both our capacities to work for and demonstrate that the protection of nature can go hand in hand with the objective of Bhutan of going 100% organic “as the finest recourse to alleviate rural poverty” as the former Minister of Agriculture has put it.



## Explore Splendid **HAA WITH THE LOCALS**



**A**s Bhutan creates a niche as an exclusive tourist destination, more regions in Bhutan are opened up to tourism. One of the recent places to be opened to tourism is the Haa valley, located in the western region of Bhutan. Haa is the smallest state in the country and despite the rich cultural heritage and pristine environment, it is one of the least visited places in Bhutan.

Opened to tourism in 2002, today it is easily accessible and has become an affordable holiday destination that will satiate any soul. The 82 km journey from Paro International airport through the snaking roads is a thrill in itself. The highlight remains the highest road point – Chelela pass at 3988m. Chelela with its pleasant chills and a splendid view of views of Mount Chomolhari and Jichu Drakey rejuvenates the soul. It is only halfway mark and few km down, you can get the bird's eye view of Haa valley.

The first story you might probably get treated to in Haa by the local guides is the story about Meri Puensum. Meri Puensum translates as three brothers and is referred to the three towering mountains overseeing the valley. The three mountains



- Jampelyang (Manjushri) to the north, Chana Dorjee(Vajrapani) in the middle, and Chenrezi (Avalokitesvara) to the west are seen as the protector of the valley ensuring peace and tranquility. The locals believe that the virtues of these three deities namely the wisdom of Manjushri, the compassion of the Avalokitesvara; and power of the Vajrapani emanate in the people of the valley adjacent to each mountain.

Namgay Chencho, 28 years old certified local guide says, “The people of the northern region are known to be wise, central to be authoritative and the west compassionate.” He caters to about two to three guests in a month, and during lean seasons drives a taxi to make ends meet. One being quizzed about what value-addition he can provide to the services provided by national guides or what separates them from other guides, he proudly claims, “I have grown in this valley, and while the national guides would know about significant places, we know each and every corner of the valley.”

The sentiment is shared by Yeshey Lhaden, a 25-year-old local guide. She adds, “I would like to thank RSPN and JEEF for the training. I cater to around three to four guests in a month and I simply love guiding for them. I am a talkative person and that helps. After catering to guests for the last one year, I see that I need to upgrade my skills. Therefore, I am trying to learn more about birds and with the help of Akane, the JEEF representative, am learning Japanese.” Namgay Chencho and Yeshey Lhaden are two of the 16 certified guides who were trained and certified through the Community-based Sustainable Tourism (CBST) Project of RSPN in Haa. Ecotourism has the potential to not only help a destination but also the environment and the local communities. Therefore, the CBST project was implemented in Haa with an aim to introduce sustainable tourism by focusing on the welfare of the local communities and preservation of the rich natural and cultural heritage of Haa.

Inspired by the success story of CBST in Phobjikha, RSPN in partnership with the Japan Environmental Education Forum (JEEF) with the financial support from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and in collaboration with Tourism Council of Bhutan and HAA Dzongkhag Administration replicated the project in 2013.





Japanese students experiencing the process of Hoentay making



Kinley Tshering in front of his ancestral home that was converted into a homestay

As Haa opened to tourism late, one of the main constraints regarding tourism facilities in Haa has been the lack of accommodation with only one 3 star hotel and few other accommodation options. To address this issue homestay program with the assistance of Tourism Council of Bhutan and Haa Dzongkhag office were initiated. Today there are 16 approved homestays, which has become an alternate accommodation option whereby even the local communities directly benefit from tourism.

Sustainable tourism needs the involvement of the locals and more importantly for them to take stewardship of it. Tourism remains the highest foreign revenue generator in the country after Hydro-power. However, CBST program is not solely implemented as a business model but as a means of promoting and showcasing the genuine and authentic traits of the valley. Like an ideal ecotourism model, the program aims not to exploit but promote and make sustainable use the rich resources at the place.

The homestays owners are already reaping the benefits from the project. Kinley Wangchuk 45, runs a homestay and is the leader of the homestay group. He has catered close to 100 guests since he got the approval to operate a homestay. According to him, the secret mantra for successfully operating a homestay is preparedness and treating the guests to the best of your capabilities. He adds, "It is kind of a family business that helps generate additional income, and which later on can be passed down to my children. Rural-urban migration happens when your options of earning a decent livelihood are limited in your native place. Programs such as this will not only help improve the livelihood of the community but also present an opportunity for our youth to earn a decent income at their own place."

Similar to Kinley, all homestay owners share the same opinion that the homestay program has helped them earn supplementary income without having to put in extra work. Nima Tshering, a homestay owner says, "We were scared in the initial stages as to how we could accommodate our foreign guests. Now after catering to few guests, it seems simple and is similar to how we welcome our relatives and friends." The homestay program also presents an avenue for cultural exchanges whereby new friendships are formed. Gaki, a 67 year old woman, still remembers an

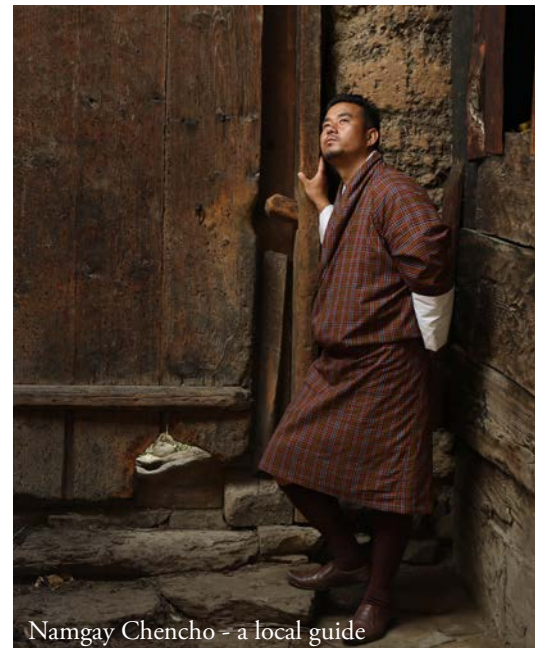
American guest who she named Dorji as she could not pronounce or remember his actual name. She remembers, “Dorji helped me with the harvest this year. Poor lad had blisters all over his palm but he seemed happy. I treated him with Ara (locally brewed rice wine), which seemed to help him relax after a hard day’s work.”

At the homestay, the guests can participate in the normal daily work of their hosts and gain firsthand experience of the rural lives. Most of the homestay also offer traditional hot stone baths at nominal rates. Kinley Wangmo, who operates a homestay in Wangsa is one the few who don’t have hot stone bath facilities. Due to the demand for such a facility, she, however, has already begun constructing one. “I hope the number of guests would increase after the addition of hot stone bath facility. Such facilities are much sought after given the cold weather conditions,” she acknowledges.

To diversify tourism activity and to promote local products, a souvenir development group was also formed. The group showcased the local products during the sixth Haa Summer Festival and were encouraged by the great response from the tourists. Yeshey Dhendup, the leader of the souvenir development group and a member of Haa Valley Cooperative shared his enthusiasm, “The program from RSPN helped us in innovating new souvenirs and we feel encouraged by the good sale of the products during the festival. We need to further diversify the products.” The group looks forward to the completion of the construction of a visitors centre, which not only will provide an avenue to showcase the product but will serve as an information centre and shall oversee the operation of the CBST activities in Haa.

Haa today has become an ideal tourist destination, whether your preference is to visit some of the sacred temples, indulge in the local delicacies such as Hoentay (Buckwheat dumpling), Haapi Ruto (dried cheese) and Maa Sha (fermented Yak meat), hike to some of the least travelled trekking routes, take leisurely evening walks amidst the pristine surrounding, or simply enjoy the traditions and unchanged lifestyles of nomadic Bhutanese herders. Now you can do all that by availing the CBST services provided by the locals of Haa.

Yeshey Lhaden is one of the most active local guides in Haa



Namgay Chencho - a local guide

Gaki shares fond memories of her guests



# Growing with RSPN

Tshering Choki



For someone who had always aspired to work in a non-governmental organization, I was very lucky to have had the opportunity to work for the Royal Society for Protection of Nature. I still remember the time when I first joined the RSPN in early 2004 as the Ecotourism Project Officer posted in Phobjikha valley. I faced an array of questions from many of my friends about why I was opting to live in a rural area, and how I was going to adjust living in a place that had no convenient source of communication or transportation, had very bad road condition, and no electricity. On top of these, Phobjikha was reputed to be a very cold place, especially in winter, after all it is a winter home for few population of the vulnerable Black-necked Cranes. My answer was simple; I wanted to contribute in conserving our pristine nature and make a positive difference by working for RSPN. So, undaunted by the probable hardships, I moved to Phobjikha. The place became a home where I have lived for over nine years, and during the time I developed close friendship with the community. I was able to understand community views in conservation and development programs initiated by the RSPN, as well as represent and advocate RSPN's initiative for addressing conservation issues in Phobjikha. Although I was managing the ecotourism project, I had the opportunity to get involved in several of the programs that was addressing research programs, conservation activities and livelihood programs. From my 12 years of work experience with the environmental organization, I know that it is not necessary to have specific education background in environment if we have the zest and zeal to follow through our dreams. For someone without a science background, I landed up learning a lot about the ecology, the wetlands, the Black-necked Cranes and other fauna and avi-fauna species. For me, it was not just about project management and



implementation, it was also about constant learning with and from my colleagues, the local communities and other stakeholders. Having served as a field coordinator and tourism project officer, I am proud of my achievements with the RSPN family in the approach of conservation and livelihood program in Phobjikha. The success of several of our education and advocacy programs, the valley being designated as a Ramsar Wetland Conservation site, the sustainability of the annual Black-necked Crane festival and the participation of the local communities in our project sites providing community-based sustainable tourism products and services, I would say, are some of the major success stories. Although there had been challenges during my early years of working and in living in Phobjikha valley, joining the RSPN team has been one of the best decisions of my life. And if the clock turns backward, I would still make the same decision. The best part of the organizational culture at the RSPN has been the team work, the family like bondage and good mentorship from my seniors. The experiences and the knowledge that I have gained during my years with the organization has been very valuable and RSPN shall forever have a special place in my heart. Happy 30th anniversary!





## RESEARCH DIVISION

RSPN continually strives to cement its place as a premier science-based institution in the country. Through research, we intend on providing a platform for generation and dissemination of science-based information as a means to advocate for environmental education and support informed decision-making. The overall responsibilities of the research division are to generate science-based information and support other programs requiring research under various priority areas as mandated in the strategic plan.



## ENVIRONMENT EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY DIVISION

Environment education is integral to promoting conservation ethos in the country and therefore, the Division aims to contribute to RSPN's vision of inspiring personal responsibility and active involvement of the people of Bhutan in the conservation of the Kingdom's environment through education, awareness and advocacy programs.







# White-bellied Heron

## CONSERVATION

### COLLABORATING WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES

As the dawn breaks, a man sits motionless with his eyes transfixed at the river. Suddenly a smile adorns his wrinkly face. He has spotted a White-bellied Heron (WBH). “Finally,” he smirks and notes down the specifics of the sightings in his notebook.

Mr. Penjor, 52 years, is one of RSPN’s Local Conservation Support Group Member (LCSG) for the conservation of the critically endangered WBH along the Hararongchu area under Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park. To support monitoring and regular observation of WBH, Local Conservation Support Groups (LCSG) and Resource groups were formed in prime habitats. While LCSG comprises the local community, resource group is from the Department of Forest and Park Services (DoFPS). LCSG and Resource group regularly assist in monitoring and keeping records of the WBH in the area. All the legal and illegal issues within the WBH conservation sites are reported to RSPN and DoFPS.

It has been more than a decade, that Penjor first came to know the WBH through late Mr. Tshewang Norbu, the then Research assistant at Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN). Prior to that, he had no idea of what actually WBH was though he could sight three to four individuals daily. Today, he can boast of located three nests over the years. He proudly articulates, “Three chicks fledged from the first nest I spotted.”

Including Mr. Penjor, most of the villagers along the WBH habitats are farmers depending on subsistence farming and cash income generated through legal fishing, mainly Nya Dosem – a highly demanded smoke-dried fish of the region. A total of 27 kilometers along the stretch of Hararongchu is legally allowed for the community for fishing. Moreover, RSPN

also supported them with provision of additional fish ponds through project fund to enhance their livelihood and the WBH feeding habitat. Penjor has also been one of the beneficiaries who was provided fund for fish pond, fingerlings and piglets.

RSPN would like to thank all LCSG members and Resource Group like Penjor for their invaluable and continuous contributions to the conservation of WBH.

### EXECUTING THE RECOVERY PLAN

Based on the recommendation of the international strategy for conservation of White-bellied Heron (*Ardea insignis*), 2015, a national strategy focusing on specific national requirement is being developed in consultation with national and international experts. The international strategy has a specific chapter for WBH conservation in Bhutan; it clearly outlines the specific actions Bhutan should embark on to save this critically endangered species. This outlines the priority actions required to save and increase the population of the critically endangered species in Bhutan.





## WBH IN NUMBERS

The nationwide White-bellied Heron population survey is conducted for five days in the month of February and March annually. 2017, the annual population survey was conducted from March 7 to 11 with the support from local conservation support groups, forestry officials and many other enthusiast birders across the country. Among many probable habitats, two major river basins; Punatsangchu and Mangdechu and their tributaries below 1500m were intensively surveyed. As per the 2017 annual population survey, only 26 White-bellied Herons were recorded from 11 locations.

## FOLLOWING THE TRAILS OF WBH

In 2016, two juvenile White-bellied Herons, HERO1 and HERO2, at Burichu nest were tagged with satellite transmitters. We could receive the data inconsistently until October for HERO1 and until December for HERO2. The last location of HERO1 indicates the bird has flown down more than 35 kilometres from its nesting area in four months. No data was received after that from HERO1. However, it is expected bird is still alive within Punatsangchu basin. Based on the location received from HERO2, the bird reached Kalikhola, Karmaling on or before 18 December 2016, however, upon verification it was found that the bird dropped the transmitter at the Setibagar, Kakikhola.

The greatest drawback of Satellite transmitter was the issue of solar charging. The transmitters are designed with solar panels capable of charging when exposed to the sun. When mounted on WBH, the bird with more than two meters of total wingspan, the panels are covered by feathers while they are not in flight. Moreover, WBH flies less and most of the time stands on rocks and trees under the shade while resting and fishing. Such behavior of the bird has limited the functioning of the transmitter. Mounting transmitters on WBH was at an experimental stage. In future, we have plans to use different equipment with better reliability to get more information of movements and life history of the least understood bird.

## GENETIC STUDY OF WBH.

Genetic assessment of White-bellied Heron in Bhutan: Phase I & II is being conducted in collaboration with Aaranyak Wildlife Genetic Lab, Guwahati, India. The Phase I of the study, funded by Bhutan Foundation in 2014-2015, found that the population of different regions are genetically different in Bhutan. Maximum Likelihood phylogeny generated from the sequence data confirms that White-bellied Heron is a sister species to Purple Heron (*Ardea purpurea*).

## GENETIC DIVERSITY ANALYSIS

Haplotype and nucleotide diversity were calculated from the total 1989 bp of combined ND and Cyt b sequences. From the sequence data, 3 mitochondrial DNA haplotypes (WBH1, WBH 2 and WBH3) were observed in the sequence dataset from 5 individuals. A high haplotype diversity of 0.7 (+0.22) was observed, whereas a low nucleotide diversity of 0.0007 (+0.00059) was observed. WBH1 haplotype seems to be more predominant, representing individuals Phochu 150/151 and Ada nest 145/155 individuals. WBH2 haplotype represents Kamechu 152/153 individuals and WBH3 represents Hararongchu 157 individuals.

The Figure 1 represents the parsimony network showing relationship between the mitochondrial haplotypes and their frequency (circle size).

The phase II is particularly focused on selecting microsatellite loci from other sister Heron species or to develop novel markers if required and to use a set of selected loci to assess the contemporary and historic extent of genetic diversity of the species, to quantify the loss of genetic diversity if any. The study will also enable to quantify inbreeding and other associated founder effects in the Bhutan population and to access the finer level population genetic structure of the species in the wild. Partial fund is provided by BTFEC, Synchronicity UK, Bhutan Foundation and other funding agencies.

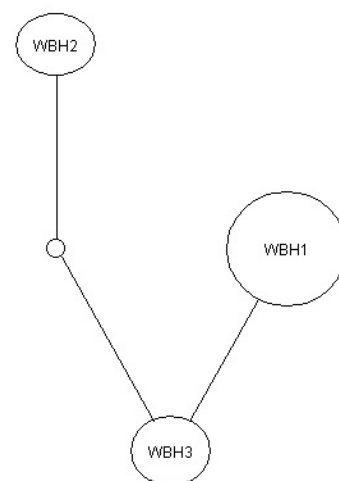
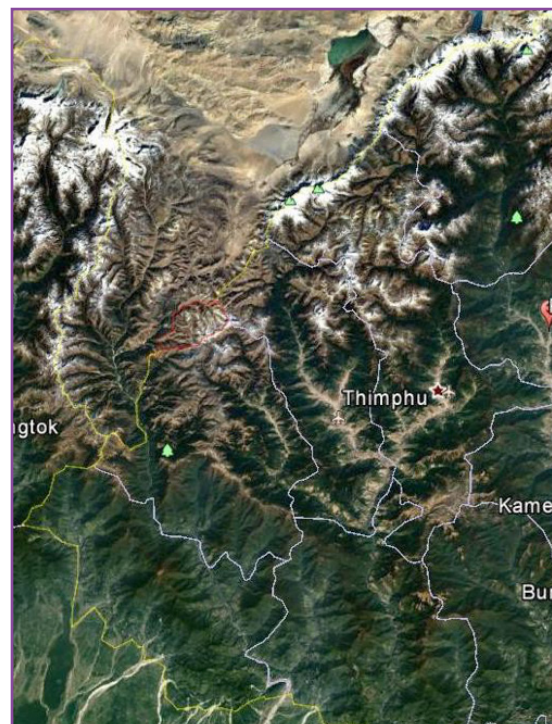
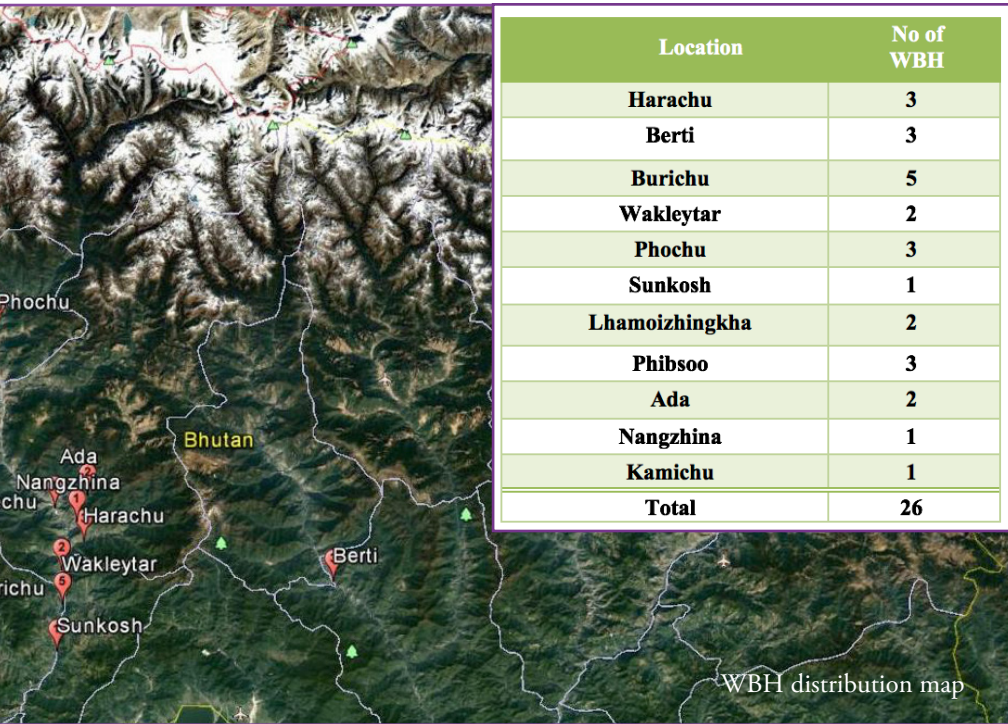


Figure 1: Parsimony network of mitochondrial haplotypes, White-bellied Heron population of Bhutan



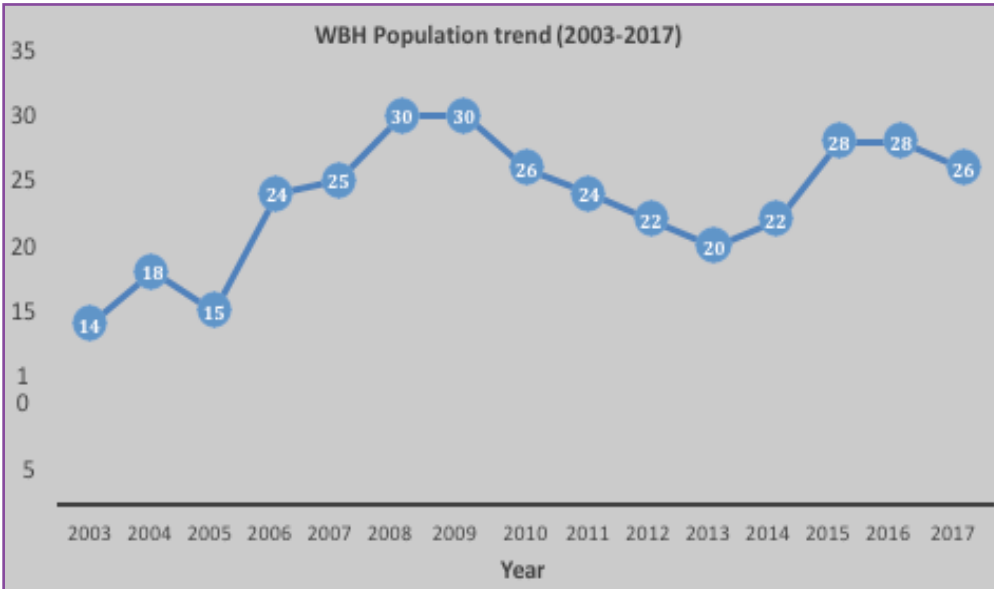
Community sensitization program



## PROMOTING STEWARDSHIP

To promote stewardship of the local communities' education, awareness, and community sensitization programs for the conservation of White-bellied Heron are routinely conducted. Awareness and Advocacy program is a daily basis task. In 2017, field level program was conducted at Taksha Range office under Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park with the forestry officials and local communities.

During ground-breaking ceremony, members of the parliament and national council, government officials, local leaders, representatives from Punatsangchu Hydropower Authority, National Environment Commission and religious institutions, sectoral heads from Tsirang dzongkhag, and local communities were made aware on the conservation importance of the critically endangered bird. Apart from scheduled awareness programs, several sensitization activities were conducted in the communities in Kalikhola, Sunkosh, Doksum, Panbang, Pantang and Tingtibi.



## UNDERSTANDING THE ECOLOGY AND THE THREATS

Assessing and identifying a particular threat, driving the decline of WBH population is challenging. For last 14 years, RSPN has been working on understanding the cause of critically low population of WBH in Bhutan. Through rigorous field surveys, research and monitoring, we have been assessing and identifying major threats. Through the field knowledge and understanding from research, it is understood that the low population of WBH is caused by cumulative effect of multiple factors including, loss of feeding habitat, roosting habitat and breeding habitat due to natural and manmade factors (Refer; Pradhan, 2011, Wangdi, 2016 & 2017, Rabten, 2016, Yonten, 2016, Dendup, 2016, Dorji, and Rinzin, 2016,

Dorji, 2017 and Lhendup, 2017). Some of the natural threats, egg sterility, predators and juvenile mortality are also contributing to the declining population of the species. From July 2015 to June 2017, two studies pertaining to fire ecology and its impact on WBH habitat have been conducted and three studies on feeding frequency and dietary composition have been completed by researchers from College of Natural Resources, Lobesa and from the Department of Forests and Parks Services. Through their research findings, it is clear that wildfires are severely impacting the breeding of WBH during peak breeding seasons. In 2016, nest at Harachu was completely destroyed by forest fire while the bird was incubating. The bird abandoned

the nest and area due to fire and has not returned to the same nest for last one year.

Studies on feeding preferences and food availability also show that the frequency of feeding success is very low and it is further threatened by disturbances and competition from other species and humans. Similar studies will be conducted in key habitats to have a clearer understanding of the impact of such factors on the survival of the bird in Bhutan.

In 2017, five studies pertaining to habitat preference, vegetation structure of nesting sites, community perception and habitat usage have been completed by researchers from College of Natural Resources, Lobesa and forestry officials stationed at different habitats of WBH.



## HOPES FOR THE REVIVAL

The most urgent mitigation measure to protect and conserve WBH gene pool is to establish safe and reliable captive population. It was also recommended by international experts and endorsed by more than 40 conservationists from nine countries during the White-bellied Heron international workshop held in Bhutan in December 2015. The meeting confirmed that the global population of WBH is only 60 individuals of which 28 was present in Bhutan.

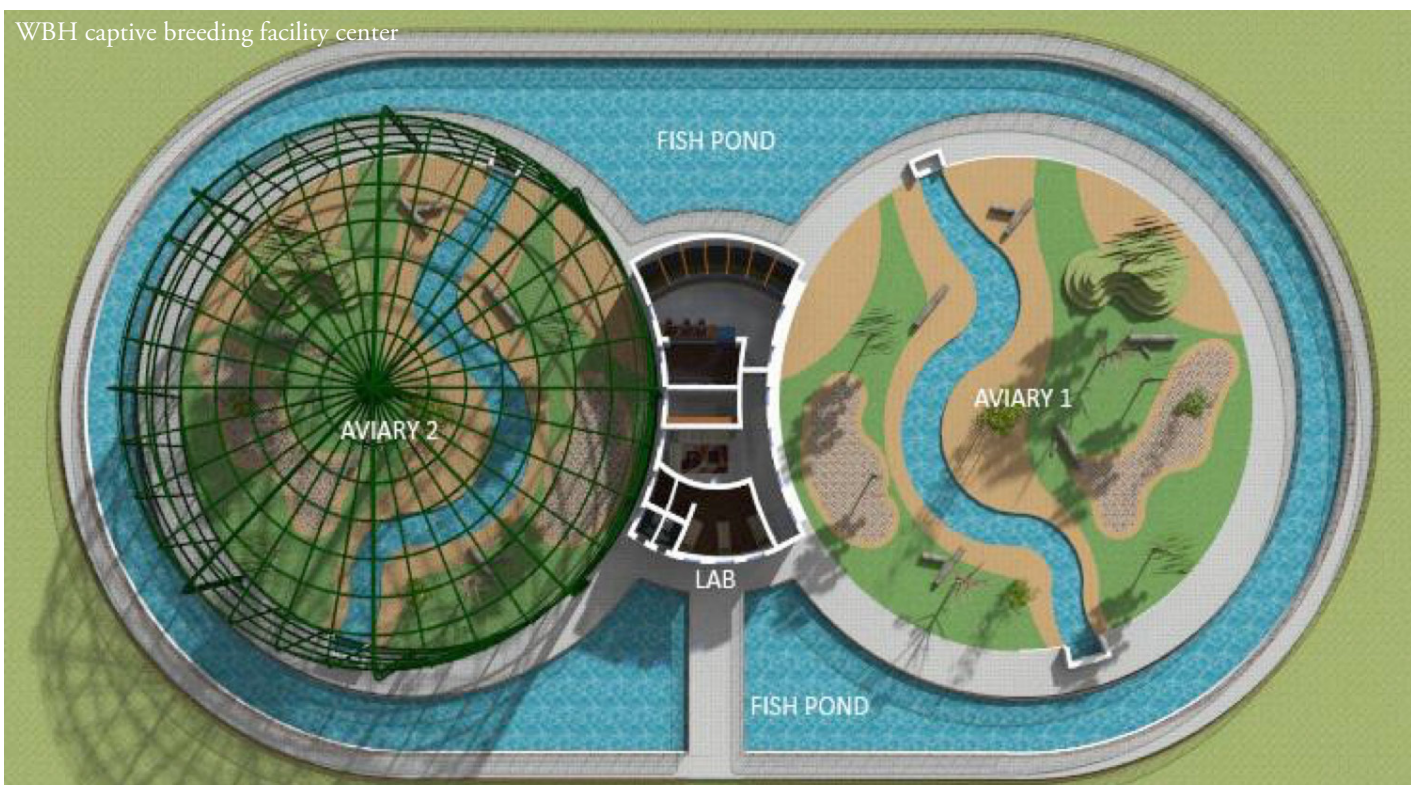
The Middle Path Policy was adopted to revive the declining population through captive breeding. The construction of captive Breeding centre is kindly supported by Punatsangchu Hydropower Project Authority I and II, Department of Forest and Park Services and MAVA Foundation, Switzerland while in-situ conservation of WBH is supported by Bhutan Trust Fund for Environment Conservation (BT FEC).

The ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of White-bellied Heron captive breeding facility centre was held on January 27, 2017. The WBH captive breeding centre will be established on 18.224 acre of land at Changchey, Tsirang Dzongkhag and is expected to be completed by the end of 2019. The centre will breed WBH in captivity and the birds will be released into the wild for building up the declining population.

Hon'ble Speaker opening the ground breaking ceremony of the WBH captive breeding facility center construction



WBH captive breeding facility center



## ADVISORY COMMITTEE

White-bellied Heron Advisory Committee was formed to provide strategic direction for management of funds, disbursement, and utilization for both in-situ and ex-situ conservation of White-bellied Heron.

The Committee comprises of:

1. Dr. George Archibald, International Crane Foundation
2. Mrs. Gemma Goodman, Synchronicity Earth
3. Dr. Thierry Renaud, Mava Foundation
4. Mrs. Cathy King, Heron and Crane Specialist
5. Mr. Jonathan Charles Eames OBE; Bird Life International, UK
6. Dr. Kinley Tenzin, Executive Director, RSPN
7. Mrs. Rebecca Pradhan, Ecologist, RSPN



I would like to congratulate RSPN on reaching the mature age of 30 years. As the first nature NGO in Bhutan, RSPN has led the way in conservation of the splendid fauna and flora found in this country. Tenacious is a word I would use to describe the RSPN approach to conservation of the White-bellied Heron, the project I know most about. It is clear that RSPN won't give up fighting until the future of this magnificent, unique bird is secured. Through the cooperative agreements RSPN has forged with Bhutanese governmental departments it has shown that it is possible to tackle conservation together. Such commitment by all parties will be needed as Bhutan, along with the rest of the world, struggles against ever more difficult challenges to conserving nature. I look forward to seeing what RSPN will be able to achieve in the next 30 years, and thereafter!



Best wishes,  
*Cathy King*



“



Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN), Bhutan, have made an amazing contribution to the conservation of White-bellied heron over its thirty years of existence. Within RSPN are many highly committed, knowledgeable and skilled individuals. RSPN is increasingly reaching out to the international community to ensure lessons can be shared and their work can be integrated into wider conservation plans which will only strengthen its impact. I have every faith that RSPN will continue to be a strong leader in wildlife conservation in Bhutan and continue to be a vital driver in the avoidance of extinction of the White-bellied Heron.

*Gemma Goodman-Hattie*

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Congratulations to RSPN on reaching this important milestone. The conservation issues of the next thirty years will doubtless test the resolve of RSPN to a far greater degree than those of the past. With a continued focus on clear, achievable conservation outcomes, by working in partnership and with continued strong leadership I know RSPN can meet and overcome these challenges.”

Best wishes  
Jonathan Charles Eames OBE

”

# During THE PAST TWO DECADES

George Archibald



“During the past two decades, I have had the privilege of meeting my colleagues at RSPN almost every year. In 1996, friendships with then-employees of RSPN and my hosts, Hishey Tshering and Lam Dorji were forged, and it has continued to this day. Through them I became involved in birthing the Visitor’s Center and the Crane Festival in Phobjikha Valley, and through a speaking tour across the USA, we helped built an endowment fund for the long-term security of RSPN. Through RSPN’s diligent work, the crane population at Phobjikha Valley has increased to more than 437, the annual Crane Festival gained international fame, and the endowment fund has continued to grow.

During the early years while visiting Bhutan, I took for granted the few White-bellied Herons we observed on the rivers near Punaka. Later I was surprised to learn from a heron specialist in Europe, Dr. Heinz Hafner, that these were the rarest of all herons and considered by many to be extinct. When I brought that news to Bhutan, RSPN swung into action to learn more about what is now considered to be one of the rarest and most endangered birds in Asia. Although there are only 26 herons in Bhutan, and perhaps fewer in India and Myanmar, I am encouraged that programs now being developed by RSPN to provide

for a safer future of these elegant birds.

In former times, subsistence living, a small population and a reverence for all living things, blended to create harmony between humans and nature. As Bhutan modernizes, nature is assaulted by roads, dams and expanding urbanization. Under the wise leadership of Bhutan’s kings, nature was strictly protected. This responsibility now rests with the leaders of a new democracy and a growing population that places increased pressure on natural resources. RSPN faces the daunting task of maintaining the traditional balance. RSPN needs continued support both from both the Bhutanese and from outsiders who come to Bhutan to enjoy its charms.



Maintenance of the BNC roosting ground in Phobjikha Valley





# OPERATIONS DEPARTMENT

Under the supervision of Executive Director, the Operation Department oversees the overall functions related to administration, human resources, Finance and Investment management, procurement, and communication to ensure consistent services delivery to RSPN programs and operation.



# COMMUNICATION AND MEMBERSHIP DIVISION

The Communications and Membership Division strives to strengthen communications, outreach and the visibility of RSPN by facilitating the organization with necessary tools in educating, motivating, and mobilizing people's participation in environmental conservation activities.



RSPN along with its partners, the Faculty of Traditional Medicine, Bhutan Toilet Org, Royal Audit Authority, Ministry of Health, Royal University of Bhutan (RUB), National Land Commission, Royal Monetary Authority and WWF Bhutan adopted the half kilometer Chubachu stream stretching from RUB office till Bhutan Telecom boundary wall on March 22, 2017.

# Membership

RSPN's membership has been growing stronger from the initial 21 members in 1994 reaching 265 in 2016-2017 making our voice stronger.



## Impression of being ReSPiaN

I feel extremely overwhelmed and privileged to be a member of the Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) since July, 2013 and supporting conservation effort of Bhutan's environment. I feel proud to say I am a ReSPiaN, a part of RSPN which is one of the top performing environment conservation NGO at National and International level.

RSPN has taken a lead in environmental conservation through innovative technologies and methods. I hope the organization continues to be proactive towards environmental issues and contribute towards the realization of one of the four pillars of Gross National Happiness; conservation of our pristine environment.



*Karma Dorji  
Sr. Program Officer  
TVET Professional Services Division  
Department of Technical Education  
Ministry of Labour and Human Resources*



# Jigme Khesar Environmental Resource Center

The Environmental Resource Center, one of its kind in Bhutan, is equipped with online environmental resources, journals and other materials; a mini auditorium and a furnished working space for visitors and researchers. The Library portal for Online Library Catalogue was developed using Koha and over 3200 books catalogued this year.

Nature expedition to Chelela



# “Environmental Education” THROUGH THE LENS OF RSPN

Ugyen Lhendup



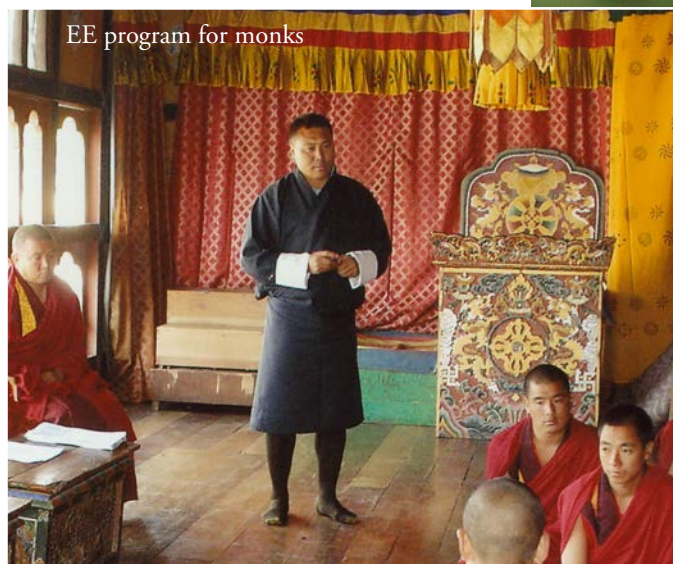
February 2015, was the moment of achievement for the Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) when the first batch of class IX students in the schools in Bhutan opened the “Environmental Science Textbook”. The then Minister of Education in 2014 remarked, “Bhutanese students will now have the opportunity to learn about Environment in details and grow up to be environmentally conscious citizens”. He thanked RSPN for initiating the Environmental Science Curriculum Development project in close consultation with the Department of Curriculum, Research & Development (DCRD), now the Royal Education Council.

As I recollect the journey of Environmental Education in RSPN, I certainly enjoy and cherish recollecting the forward steps taken by RSPN in the promotion of Environmental Education in Bhutan. The time goes back as far as 1987 when RSPN first worked with few schools in Thimphu. The activities then were limited to writing some essays, painting environmental posters and delivering speeches to students on the environment. In the later years, few schools initiated river cleaning, waste collection, and school greening activities. The major shift came when RSPN first instituted the “Nature Club” (NC) in schools. RSPN then developed NC manuals, supplied

equipment, trained teachers, and provided funds for projects. On June 2, 2009, RSPN handed over a network of 102 NCs to Ministry of Education who formally institutionalized NC in all schools of Bhutan.

Besides schools, RSPN was also very active promoting EE programs in tertiary institutions, monastic schools and in local communities. EE resource packs for Teacher Training Colleges, training for Forestry Institute, EE program for monastic schools and nunneries, Clean Bhutan program for urban residence, environmental awareness and watershed education for communities were some of the other highlights of EE programs.

EE programs of RSPN was one of the preferred activities among schools, institutions, monastic schools and communities and I am very proud to be a part of the team, and to have had the opportunity to take a lead in it. My 16-year service for EE in RSPN has been extremely satisfactory dotted with much achievements. The success of RSPN’s EE program has been felt and recognized by the Royal Government of Bhutan and beyond.







Birdwatching trip for nature club members



Waste segregation implemented by nature club





# ICTization RSPN

Pema Gyamtsho



I graduated with B.A. (Hons.) in English from Sherubtse College in 2005 and joined RSPN as an Assistant Communications Officer in 2006. As I had keen interests in Information Communication Technology (ICT), I was tasked to oversee ICT for the organization. I had no formal training or course on ICT having explored and learnt the basics of ICT on my own while in college.

When I joined RSPN, the organization had limited exposure to the new technology of information and communication. Like any other organizations in Bhutan, it was trying to catch-up with latest trends with the limited manpower.

My foremost task was to upgrade the official website of RSPN, enriched with latest news and activity updates. RSPN had registered [www.rspn-bhutan.org](http://www.rspn-bhutan.org) and had a static HTML-based website then.

In a static website, it is very tedious to update information as it requires an individual HTML file for every content or page. Therefore, with access to the internet, I researched on the latest trends of the website based on Content Management System (CMS).

I read reviews, endless tutorials and also learnt some basic web languages in the process. With these, RSPN was finally able to switch to a dynamic website based on

one of the most popular CMSs. The web host had very limited facilities for website and webmail. We would frequently run out of online storage and delete or download emails of individual mail clients.

The other hurdle RSPN had was the domain name with hyphen, [www.rspn-bhutan.org](http://www.rspn-bhutan.org). It confused many while corresponding over e-mails. Although there won't be any underscore for a domain name, many would mistake hyphen symbol for underscore. As a result, the staff faced frequent trouble in correcting e-mail addresses.

To have those confusions solved, I proposed for a new domain name without any symbols. That's how we got a new domain [www.rspnbhutan.org](http://www.rspnbhutan.org) and signed a contract with new web and email service provider. It became much easier for correspondences with a reliable website and e-mail system.

As RSPN progressed, projects and activities were increasing too. The demand for more reliable and seamless communication tools also increased.

As the focal person overseeing ICT and website related affairs in the organization, all colleagues expected some new initiatives from Communications and Membership Division. With increasing interests in the digital world, I explored many effective communication tools which were easy to manage, even by non-technical staff.

I researched and found a free service from Google called Google Apps. It has now been renamed as G Suite. There were attractive features of seamless communication and document management tools. There were also some critical requirements for such dynamic and free service from Google. I took time to learn and explore.

When I was confident to handle configuration and management of new services, I proposed the integration of the new service to the management. After approval from Management, I proposed to Google for integration and it was approved. Therefore, RSPN could be one of the foremost organization that availed Google's free service which included Gmail, Google Docs, Google Drive, YouTube, Contacts and Calendar services.

Google was kind to accept RSPN's proposal to upgrade to Education Edition, which had unlimited storage. Most of the RSPN staff, by then, had been using Gmail. It wasn't so difficult to switch from Gmail to custom e-mail. It had the same interface and features like Gmail. The only difference was that all services were configured to the official domain name of RSPN. After few years since the first activation, Google commercialized all edition of its G Suite services. The application for non-profit and education edition became more stringent.



Currently, any staff can use RSPN webmail without fear of losing old emails due to the limitation in storage. One can easily store and share pictures, documents or video among colleagues and any event can be planned and shared on the organizational calendar to collaborate. A Google Form can be easily used to collect any data online. RSPN can create online video archive using YouTube which is one of the most popular video platforms in the world today.

Along with the evolution of website and webmail system in the RSPN, many publicity materials saw the evolution from a simple Microsoft Publisher to latest graphics and image editing software. After working in RSPN for about a decade, I learned and brought in latest ICT related technologies. It helped in effective communication among staff, donors, stakeholders and partners. RSPN was able to disseminate its activities through the updated and user-friendly website.

I had little knowledge in ICT before joining RSPN, and the organization gave me the right platform to learn and enhance my skills. I enjoyed every moment in RSPN, doing whatever I was assigned. It gave me new knowledge and skills. When I left RSPN a year ago, I had every reason to look back with gratitude for what RSPN has given me. It had not only sustained me and my family for a decade but also gave all tools and skills required to continue my passion.

Thank you RSPN and may you continue to nurture many more individuals in years to come!



# ADMINISTRATION AND HUMAN RESOURCE DIVISION

The Administration and Human Resource Division strives to ensure efficient management of RSPN property, human resources, store and procurement process in line with existing policies, and to ensure legal compliance and operational efficiency.

## OUR TEAM



Dr. Kinley Tenzin  
Executive Director



Rinchen Wangmo  
Program Manager



Rebecca Pradhan  
Sr. Ecologist



Tshering Dorji  
Coordinator - ADM/HR



Indra Prasad Acharja  
Research Officer



Khachi Wangmo  
Project Officer



Narayan Ghallay  
Project Officer



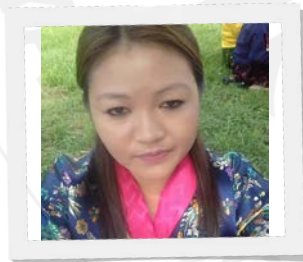
Dhendup Wangchuk  
Project Officer



Sonam Tshering  
Research Asst.



Tshewang Lhendup  
Asst. Research Officer



Kinley Gyem  
PA to ED



Namita Kafley  
Asst. Finance Officer



Dechen Wangmo  
Cleaner



Pem Dorji  
Caretaker



Tenzin Wangmo  
Cleaner



Kelzang Tobgye  
Caretaker



Sonam Jamtsho  
Coordinator - FD



Kinga Wangdi  
Coordinator - CSLD



Tashi Phuntsho  
Coordinator - CMD



Tsheten Dorji  
Project Officer



Deki Dema  
Asst. Communications Officer



Sonam Rinzin  
Asst. Communications Officer



Ugyen Choden  
Asst. Communications Officer



Kuenzang Zhenphen  
ICT Officer



Sonam Wangmo  
ADM Assitant



Tshewang Choden  
Receptionist



Phurpa Dorji  
Dy. Chief Program Officer



Santalal Gajmer  
BNCVC Manager



Tshering Dendup  
Driver



Tshering Zangmo  
BNCVC Asst.



Tenzin Nima  
Driver



Dawa Mith Lepcha  
BNCVC Caretaker



RSPN would like to remember and acknowledge the invaluable contributions of Late Tshewang Norbu who expired in an unfortunate car accident in 2012 while on duty. He was a fine man and a true conservationist. We will always remember him as an honest and cheerful person. RSPN is privileged to have known him.



**ROYAL SOCIETY FOR PROTECTION OF NATURE  
UN-AUDITED STATEMENT OF AFFAIRS (BALANCE SHEET) AS AT JUNE 30, 2017**

Schedule	For the year ended June 30, 2017				For the year ended June 30, 2016			
	(A)	(B)	(A+B)	(A)	(B)	(A+B)	(A+B)	
	NU.	Equivalent NU.	TOTAL (NU.)	NU.	Equivalent NU.	TOTAL (NU.)	TOTAL (NU.)	
	US\$			US\$				
<b>Assets</b>								
<b>Fixed Assets (Net Block)</b>								
Furniture & Fixture	1,864,252.22	-	1,864,252.22	2,071,391.35	-	2,071,391.35	2,270,466.95	
Office Equipments	5,160,199.80	-	5,160,199.80	5,733,555.33	-	5,733,555.33	4,771,996.04	
Trekking Equipments	177,642.11	-	177,642.11	208,990.72	-	208,990.72	245,871.44	
Vehicles	2,765,767.48	-	2,765,767.48	3,253,844.09	-	3,253,844.09	2,728,763.88	
Communication/Other Equipments	114,203.62	-	114,203.62	134,357.20	-	134,357.20	158,067.29	
Building (Observation Center)	1,202,999.84	-	1,202,999.84	1,240,206.02	-	1,240,206.02	1,278,562.91	
Building (Head Office & JKERC)	36,962,704.58	-	36,962,704.58	38,105,881.01	-	38,105,881.01	39,284,413.41	
Investment with BT FEC		1,540,711.12	99,190,981.91			99,190,981.91	92,002,330.49	
Investment with BDBL	102,747,500.00	-	102,747,500.00					
Investment with BIL	684,000.00	-	684,000.00					
<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	<b>151,679,269.65</b>	<b>1,540,711.12</b>	<b>250,870,251.56</b>	<b>50,748,225.72</b>		<b>92,002,330.49</b>	<b>142,740,472.41</b>	
<b>Current Assets</b>								
Cash	2,953.94	59.50	6,784.55	2,160.00	59.50	4,012.68	6,172.68	
Bank	4,889,928.63	57,928.28	8,619,351.30	3,294,501.39	49,155.52	3,315,048.27	6,609,549.66	
Receivables & Prepayments	3,973,033.36	-	3,973,033.36	1,337,842.23	-	-	1,337,842.23	
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>8,865,915.93</b>	<b>57,987.78</b>	<b>12,599,169.21</b>	<b>4,634,503.62</b>	<b>49,215.02</b>	<b>3,319,060.95</b>	<b>7,953,564.57</b>	
<b>Liabilities</b>								
<b>Less:</b>								
<b>Long-term Liabilities</b>								
(for 20 yrs. From May, 2013)								
<b>Endowment fund</b>								
<b>Current Liabilities</b>								
Recoveries/Remittances	51,232.78	-	51,232.78	13,141,491.69	-	-	345,942.99	
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>51,232.78</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>51,232.78</b>	<b>13,141,491.69</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>13,141,491.69</b>	
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>160,493,952.80</b>	<b>1,598,698.90</b>	<b>263,418,187.98</b>	<b>42,241,237.65</b>	<b>1,413,425.14</b>	<b>95,321,391.44</b>	<b>137,552,545.29</b>	
<b>Financed by:</b>								
<b>Capital Fund</b>								
(Surplus/deficit)	105,835,825.77	185,273.76	113,438,669.51	(15,226,287.81)	(93,412.02)	(6,299,706.63)	(21,525,994.44)	
Opening Accumulated Fund	54,658,127.03	1,413,425.14	149,979,518.47	57,467,525.46	1,506,837.16	101,621,098.07	159,088,623.53	
<b>Total Accumulated Fund</b>	<b>160,493,952.80</b>	<b>1,598,698.90</b>	<b>263,418,187.98</b>	<b>42,241,237.65</b>	<b>1,413,425.14</b>	<b>95,321,391.44</b>	<b>137,562,629.09</b>	

Note: Dollar equivalent calculated at exchange rate of USD 1= Nu. 64.38 as of June 30, 2017 (Bank of Bhutan Ltd.)

NATIONAL ORDER OF MERIT



RSPN was awarded the National Order of Merit (Gold) by His Majesty the King, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck during the 109th National Day celebration in Trongsa on December 17, 2017.

DR. KINLEY TENZIN HONORED WITH THE “50 MOST IMPACTFUL GREEN LEADERS” AWARD



Dr. Kinley Tenzin, Executive Director of the Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) was honored as one of the “50 Most Impactful Green Leaders” during the sixth edition of The World CSR Day held at Taj Lands End, Mumbai, India on February 18, 2017.





## SENIOR ECOLOGIST OF RSPN HONORED AS BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT HERO



Rebecca Pradhan was honored with the recognition as one of the 'Hotspot Heroes' by Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) at the 6th IUCN World Conservation Congress on September 4, 2016. The honors as "Hotspot Heroes" were conferred to 15 conservationists from around the world during the celebration of the 15th anniversary of the CEPF at the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, Hawaii, USA.

She was also one of the four individual recipients of the National Order of Merit (Gold) by His Majesty the King, Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck during the 109th National Day celebration in Trongsa on December 17, 2017.



## RSPN WINS ADB CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNERSHIP AWARD



Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) was awarded the ADB Civil Society Partnership Award on May 5, 2017, during the 50th Annual ADB Meeting held in Yokohama, Japan.

## BIRDLIFE PARTNER

RSPN Bhutan became the 122nd Partner organization of BirdLife International, the world's largest conservation Partnership. The approval as a full BirdLife partner was announced after the Global Council of BirdLife International meeting held on November 19, 2016 in Sri Lanka.

# OUR PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION





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