

FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR ECO-TOURISM OPPORTUNITY IN BULI UNDER NANGKHOR GEWOG IN ZHEMGANG DZONGKHAG STAKEHOLDER VALIDATION ON ECO-TOURISM PRODUCTS



ROYAL SOCIETY FOR PROTECTION OF NATURE
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ACRONYMS

ABTO	Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators
BC	Biological Corridor
BC	Bhutanese Calendar
BDBL	Bhutan Development Bank Limited
BHU	Basic Health Unit
CIC	Community Information Center
DoFPS	Department of Forests and Park Services
FYP	Five Year plan
GAB	Guide Association of Bhutan
HELVETAS Swiss Intercoperation	
NCD	Nature Conservation Division
RNR	Renewable natural Resources Extension Center
RSPN	Royal Society for Protection of nature
RLP	Rural Livelihood Program
TCB	Tourism Council of Bhutan

GLOSSARY

<i>Bar Lhakhang, peling gi densa</i>	Temple
<i>Buli Chotpala</i>	Annual local festival
<i>Buli Tsho</i>	Lake
<i>Chenrizig Drupchu</i>	Spring water in the name of god of compassionate
<i>Chiwogs</i>	Lowest Administrative block
<i>Chootan/dengo</i>	Made from millet and maize flour
<i>Donga Khedrub Phendeyling Shedra</i>	Monastic institution
<i>Duekhor Chorten</i>	Stupa
<i>Dunkar-Ney. Dunkar-Ney</i>	Pilgrimage site
<i>Dzongkhag</i>	District
<i>Gomdey Drup</i>	Local festival
<i>Khando Sethab</i>	Spiritual Ritual
<i>Khuribu/khule</i>	Local backed cake made of wheat flour
<i>Kheng</i>	Refers to local name for Zhemgang and people of Zhemgang
<i>Nangkhor gewog</i>	Administrative block
<i>Pang lakhang, Dorling gi densa</i>	Temple
<i>Peling Gartshang</i>	Blacksmith
<i>Praichola</i>	Ritual where villagers conduct wild potato offering
<i>Semling Lamchey Zhabjay</i>	Footprint of religious practitioner
<i>Ser-nga along berpang chu & Bhur-gang chu</i>	Name of water tributaries
<i>Subungla</i>	Local egg festival
<i>Ter Do</i>	Frying pan
<i>Tshendren map Ara</i>	Locally brewed alcohol added sandalwood to provide fragrance and colour
<i>Ugyen Gongphu</i>	Pilgrimage
<i>Tsho dam and Redam</i>	Traditional Practice where people is not allowed to visit lake and associated forest
<i>Bab-dud Menchu</i>	Natural hot spring water

BACKGROUND

This report summarizes the outcomes from baseline information collected on eco-tourism through consultations and stakeholder workshop, gathering community and stakeholder views on eco-tourism development in Buli and overview of study methodology, and weaknesses and limitations on ecotourism in Buli, Zhemgang. Importantly it also outlines and identifies products/resources and actions on the feasibility of eco-tourism for Buli chiwog under Nangkhor Gewog in Zhemgang.

The information is gathered/identified through consultation program with local government and community representatives and additionally through field visits. Information available with Zhemgang Dzongkhag pertaining to eco-tourism has been also included in the report in communication with Mr. Thinley Jamtsho (Sr. Planning Officer) who also is a Community Based Tourism Committee Focal person.

Ecotourism, being a potential non-carbon benefit as enshrined under the Framework on Benefit Sharing Mechanism under REDD+, this report also sets the baseline on ecotourism related information in Buli in the event REDD+ program happen to be implemented as a pilot program in Buli.

Administratively, Buli village constitutes one of the chiwogs (lowest administrative block) under Nangkhor gewog (administrative block) which falls under upper kheng (local name for people of zhemgang) of Zhemgang Dzongkhag (district). Zhemgang district is divided into two parts, upper kheng and lower kheng which further has four gewogs under each region. Nangkhor Gewog which has 13 villages and 5 chiwogs has a total area of 494 sq.km, altitude range of 500-1700 masl and total population of 2,602 (Source: Zhemgang Dzongkhag website). The total registered household in Buli village is 89 and population of 750 individuals. The village is dotted with traditional two-story Bhutanese houses.

It is situated in an open valley with the Gewog Administration office, Renewable Natural Resources Extension Centre (RNR), Community Information Centre (CIC), Agriculture

Machinery Centre, Bhutan Development Bank Limited (BDBL) and the Basic Health Unit (BHU) situated in the center surrounded by the three settlements of Trong, Pang and Langbi. Whereas most of the houses in the village are surrounded by small orchards and gardens, the paddy fields are located on the outskirts of the village. The Bar Lhakhang in Trong village is dedicated to Terton Pema Lingpa and the Pang Lhakhang is dedicated to Terton Dorji Lingpa. There are stories that relate the history of the village with these two saints. Some of the relics associated with these saints are well preserved in the community. Although the village is the center of Nangkor Gewog administration, it has still maintained its traditional aesthetic value. The village is still dominated by presence of houses with traditional structure that could be suitable for homestays and there may be possibility to identify potential sites for community lodges. There is presence of people of different generations in the community who could provide tourism services in form of myth/storytelling, local guides, craft making and sharing farm life experiences.



Buli Village in Zhemgang District



OBJECTIVE OF ACTIVITY



To validate the potential ecotourism resources and community perception and acceptance.

METHODOLOGY



Two primary method was carried out to gather and validate the information on ecotourism. First, stakeholder consultation was carried out with officials from local government, district ecotourism focal person including field visit and second, through community consultation.

FINDINGS

Past tourism interventions

The discussion with local government officials began with outlining the past interventions carried out to promote ecotourism in the Gewog, specifically in Buli village. Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) was carried out to stock take past eco-tourism development interventions in Buli.

Year	Eco-tourism activity
2103-2018	Nangkhor gewog has maintained eco-trail in 11th Five Year Plan (FYP). The eco-trail was maintained between Dakpay and Buli.
2015	Zhemgang Dzongkhag Tourism Development strategy in place.
2016	20 farmers from Buli participated in a study tour organized by RSPN and the Dzongkhag on homestay
2017	Rural Livelihood Program (RLP), Helvetas has prepared a Community Based Eco-tourism action plan for Zhemgang Dzongkhag, 2017
2010-2017	Climate fund assistance from Department of Local Government was utilized for village climate resilient adaptation programs
2019	Through the initiative of Zhemgang Dzongkhag, awareness on ecotourism was carried out.
2019	15 households form Buli have submitted their names to Dzongkhag for developing homestay.

Table 1: Past ecotourism development interventions in Buli

Local government plan (2018-2023)

Similarly, the discussion also led the local government officials to outline the plan that they have proposed in the 12th Five Year Plan for ecotourism development in their gewog. The following plan was shared during the discussion.

Timeline (2018-2023)	Activity
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Budget allocated for maintenance of eco-trail between Dakpay and Buli. They shared that it was significant both culturally as well as environmentally to maintain the eco-trail which was once used before road infrastructure was introduced. Environmentally the area has rich biodiversity especially the avian diversity.• Budget allocated for development of eco-trail for Dunkar-Ney. Dunkar-Ney (pilgrimage site) is believed to be one of the scared place to visit and it is found that increasing number of national tourist visit the site.• Dzongkhag has also instructed all Gewog to submit report on potential tourism (Annexure I & II)

Table 2: Nangkhon Gewog 12 Five Year Plan on ecotourism development in Buli

Potential Eco-tourism resources

The following are resources recorded which are specific to Buli.

Cultural Resources	Environmental Resources	Major Festivals	Food and Delicacies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buli as a heritage village • Buli Tsho (Lake), • Donga Khedrub Phendeylin Shedra (Monastic institution), • Bar Lhakhang, peling gi densa (temple) • Pang lakhang, Dorling gi densa (temple) • Peling Gartshang (black smith) • Khando Sethab, • Andey Ney (Dungkhar Ney) • Ugyen Gongphu, • Chenrizig Drupchu, • Duekhor Chorten, • Semling Lamchey Zhabjay, • Ter Do • Frying pan of terton pemalingpa • Ruins of Drongsep Singye Namgyal's fort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural wet land • Tsho dam and Redam practice (1st day of 8th month to 13th day of 10th month BC) • Recorded 49 diverse bird species • Endangered Rufous necked hornbill • White capped langur • Biological corridor • Tiger and leopard • Natural springs • Heritage forest identified • Bab-dud Menchu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gomdey Drup (7th -10th day of 3rd month BC) • Praichola (wild potato offering) (10th day of the 2nd month of Bhutanese Calender) • Subungla (egg festival) (15th day of the 5th month of BC) • Buli Chotpala (14-16th day of 10th month BC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chootan/dengo made from millet and maize flour • Khurbu/khule local backed cake made of wheat flour • Tshendren map Ara

Table 3: Eco-tourism products in Buli (Annexure II)

Current Situation

Activity	Remarks
12 Five Year Plan (2018-2023) budget for promoting ecotourism in Buli (Annexure IV)	Government funds has been allocated
15 households identified for village homestay	
Basic facilities supported by Gewog administration (Annexure III)	
Homestay members participated in village homestay study tour	15 individuals from each homestay participated in education tour to Haa village homestay with support from District.
2 homestays in Buli certified by TCB	The homestay receives and cater services specially to visiting national/domestic tourist
Community Based task Force Committee at district level	

Table 4: Current Eco-tourism initiatives in Buli

Visitors recorded at Buli Lake

Buli Lake has been one of the most famous sites for visitors coming to Buli. So far there has been good record of visitors visting the Lake. The record maintained with Nangkhor Gewog as follows:

Year	No. of visitors	Income generated (Nu.)
2017	500	25,000.00
2018	800	96,000.00
June 2019	800	40,000.00

Table 5: Visitors Record at Buli Lake

This gives the overview of visitors especially the national tourist visiting Buli. There is no record of international tourist who have visited Buli village.

Rufous-necked hornbill (Male)



Rufous-necked hornbill (Female)

Tourism Services and Facilities

Accommodation

In-order to promote eco-tourism in Buli village, the district, Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB) and the Local government are currently assessing the potential to introduce village homestay. Currently, 15 households have submitted their names and showed interest to register for a village homestay. A homestay has to have basic facilities approved by the Tourism Council of Bhutan to cater services to national and international tourists. By the end of 2019, 15 households will have basic accommodation facilities according to the local government.

Food and Cuisine

The practice that has been ongoing on in the village homestays in other popular districts such as Paro, Punakha, Wangdue and Bumthang, is the food and cuisine that they serve to tourists are from the locally available products. They do not serve the western continental food items to tourists as prescribed in the village homestay guideline. This will be no different for Buli village as well, moreover this is done in order to promote culture and tradition as prescribed in the guideline. The food items and cuisines are mentioned above (food and delicacies).

Travel and transportation

This has been the most challenging factor in the past to promote tourism for the entire district. Nonetheless, there has been tremendous progress made towards addressing travel and transportation. This includes the introduction of domestic airports in the Sarpang District and Bumthang District. Sarpang District is the closest neighbor of Zhemgang and travel by air has significantly reduced the travel time for visitors. Visitors can now reach the district in one day from the capital city of Bhutan. Both domestic airports are connected to the Paro International Airport in Paro District. The road facilities within the district has also improved and travel time has significantly decreased. Any tourist coming to Zhemgang or Buli can contact a travel agent based in Thimphu or Paro who can easily arrange the travel to the district.

Opportunities

In an effort to upscale community-based tourism in Zhemgang Dzongkhag, a Community Based Tourism Plan for Zhemgang Dzongkhag has been prepared in November 2017. It was prepared with the support of HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation coordinated by the Rural Livelihood Project phase III.

Tourism products inventory has been successfully compiled by the Dzongkhag for all the 8 gewogs under Zhemgang Dzongkhag. Tourism inventory for Nangkhor Gewog attached (Annexure I).

In the 12 FYP a sum of Nu. 69 Million has been proposed by the Dzongkhag under a flagship program to support community-based tourism in the district.

Infrastructure like road connection and communication facilities are well established especially in Buli.

Weakness

There are frequent road blocks during the monsoon making access to the Dzongkhag and communities difficult.

There are no professional trained chefs in the homestay and eco-lodges.

Lack of facilities and amenities in the community makes the place un-likeable for the visitors.

No proper marketing strategies.

At the moment, visitors are led by guides provided by the tour operators since there is lack of local guides in the community.

Lack of proper guidelines from concerned authorities.

No proper town planning with inadequate human resources.

There is also an issue of immigration permits for the visitors.

Source: Community based tourism plan for Zhemgang Dzongkhag

Resource Requirement

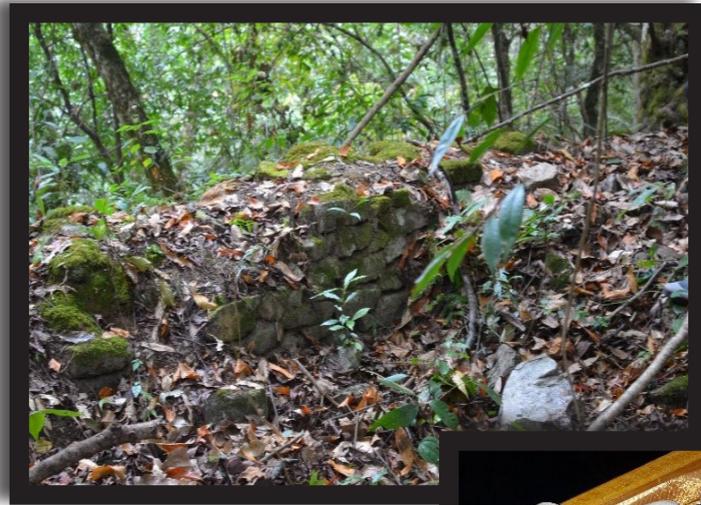
- Homestay development in Buli and training on homestay catering.
- Human resource development and increased awareness programs.
- Support tourism infrastructure.
- Need for proper marketing strategies.

Stakeholder Consultation and Outcomes

A separate stakeholder workshop was organized with the following objectives:

- To promote ecotourism as a benefit sharing mechanism under REDD+
- To validate information collected on ecotourism and identify gaps to determine feasibility of eco-tourism in Buli
- To collect recommendation on eco-tourism development in Buli
- To identify factors impeding tourism development in Buli

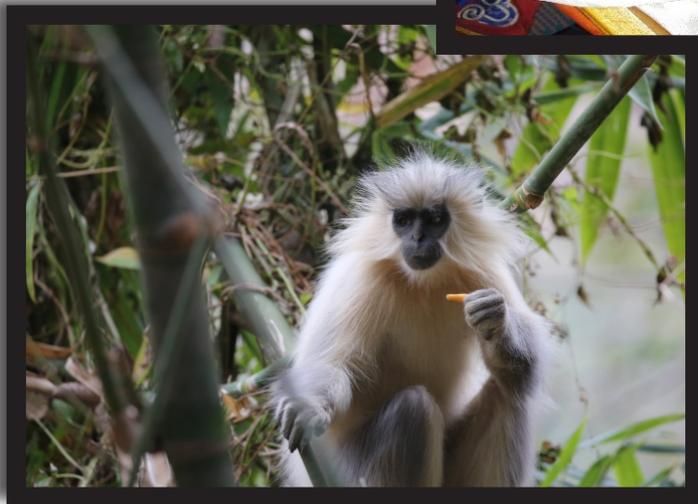
The eco-tourism session was facilitated by resource persons from the Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB) and the Nature Conservation Division (NCD) in-order to clearly prioritize and categorize the potential ecotourism cultural and environmental products. The participants were divided into two working groups (cultural group and environmental group) and each group was instructed to identify eco-tourism feasible products and separately identify actions to promote the product. The stakeholders' recommendations and feedback are summarized in the tables below.



Ruins of Drongsep Singye Namgyal's fort

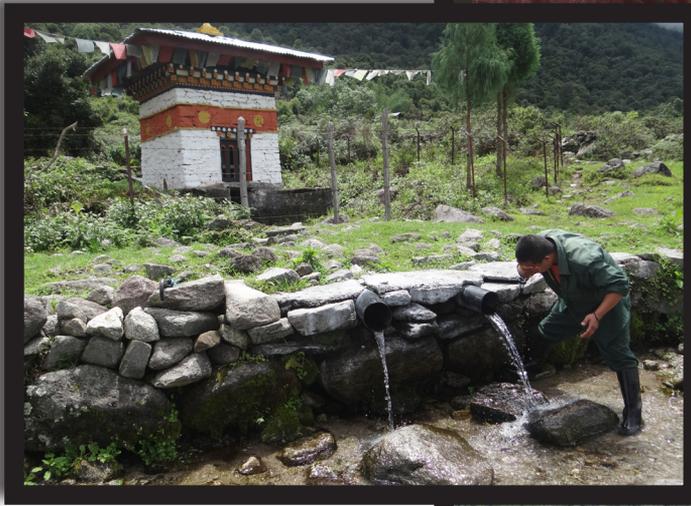
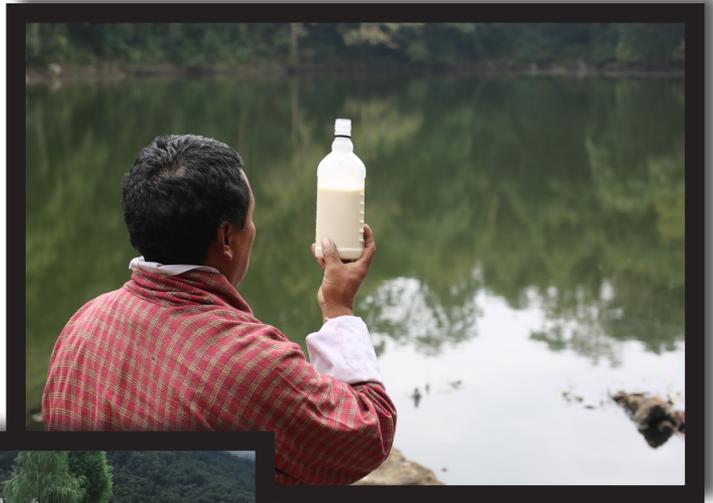


A frying pan, a relic of Terton Pema Lingpa



White-capped Langur spotted in Buli

Popular Buli lake (Tsho)



Holy spring water (Drupchu)

Ap Dorji from Buli



Cultural Resources for Eco-tourism Development in Buli

Sl no.	Plans/products (Prioritize based on feasibility)	Opportunities/Gaps	Actions
1	Buli as Heritage village	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Employment for Youths (10) 2. Income generation. 3. Preservation and promotion of local culture and tradition. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintain the traditional architecture. 2. Improvement of footpaths. 3. Installation of fire hydrant. 4. Roofing painting (Green colour) 5. Construction of mini visitor/information center 6. Marketing and promotion 7. Capacity building
2	Buli Tsho	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Income to the community. 2. Increase number of homestays. 3. Preservation of local sacred site. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improvement of approach road. 2. Improvement of foot path. 3. Site beautification. 4. Resting place. 5. Butter lamp offering house. 6. Construction of waste disposal pit. 7. Installation of signboard 8. Marketing and promotion 9. Construction of Milk booth and supply cool chain equipment's 10. Capacity building

Responsible Agency	Collaboration
Gewog Administration, local committee	Dzongkhag, Department of Culture, TCB, ABTO, GAB, RSPN, DoFPS.
Gewog administration, Local Eco-tourism management committee	Dzongkhag, Department of Culture, TCB, ABTO, GAB, RSPN, DoFPS.

3	Lhakhangs (Bar, Pang)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preservation and promotion of culture 2. Donation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintenance of courtyard, footpath 2. Renovation of main structure 3. Construction of butter lamp offering and waste disposal pit 4. Installation of description board, signboard 5. Fencing 6. Product packaging, marketing and promotion 7. Capacity building
4	Peling Gartsang	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preservation and promotion of culture 2. Income generation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Installation of description board, signboard 2. Fencing 3. Marketing and promotion 4. Capacity building
5	Khando Sethab	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preservation and promotion of culture 2. Income generation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Installation of description board 2. Marketing and promotion 3. Capacity building
6	Andey Ney (Dungkar Ney)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preservation and promotion of culture 2. Income generation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of footpath 2. Construction of restroom and resting place 3. Construction of offering shed 4. Marketing and promotion 5. Capacity building

<p>Gewog administration, Local Eco-tourism management committee</p>	<p>Dzongkhag, Department of Culture, TCB, ABTO, GAB, RSPN, DoFPS.</p>
<p>Gewog administration, Local Eco-tourism management committee</p>	<p>Dzongkhag, Department of Culture, TCB, ABTO, GAB, RSPN, DoFPS.</p>
<p>Gewog administration, Local Eco-tourism management committee</p>	<p>Dzongkhag, Department of Culture, TCB, ABTO, GAB, RSPN, DoFPS.</p>
<p>Gewog administration, Local Eco-tourism management committee</p>	<p>Dzongkhag, Department of Culture, TCB, ABTO, GAB, RSPN, DoFPS.</p>

7	Ugyen Gongphu	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preservation and promotion of culture 2. Income generation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of footpath 2. Construction of restroom 3. Installation of signboard and description board 4. Marketing and promotion 5. Capacity building
8	Chenrizig Drupchu	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preservation and promotion of culture 2. Income generation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Construction of shed 2. Installation of signboard and description board 3. Marketing and promotion 4. Treatment and bottling for commercial purposes
9	Duekhor Chorten	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preservation and promotion of culture 2. Income generation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improvement and blacktopping of approach road 2. Marketing and promotion 3. Installation of sign board and description board
10	Ruins of Drongsep Singye Namgyel's fort	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preservation and promotion of culture 2. Income generation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Maintenance of site 2. Installation of signages

Table 6: Potential cultural resources identified as feasible for Buli

<p>Gewog administration, Local Eco-tourism management committee</p>	<p>Dzongkhag, Department of Culture, TCB, ABTO, GAB, RSPN, DoFPS.</p>
<p>Gewog administration, Local Eco-tourism management committee</p>	<p>Dzongkhag, Department of Culture, TCB, ABTO, GAB, RSPN, DoFPS.</p>
<p>Gewog administration, Local Eco-tourism management committee</p>	<p>Dzongkhag, Department of Culture, TCB, ABTO, GAB, RSPN, DoFPS.</p>
<p>Gewog administration, Local Eco-tourism management committee</p>	<p>Dzongkhag, Department of Culture, TCB, ABTO, GAB, RSPN, DoFPS.</p>

Environmental Resources for Eco-tourism Development in Buli

Sl no.	Plans/products (Prioritize based on feasibility)	Opportunities/Gaps	Actions
1	Buli Tsho (Lake)	Employment Income generation Improvement of livelihood Capacity building	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve foot path/ nature trails from Buli village till Tsho area via chengrizhi drupchu 2. Caretaker shed & sale counter 3. Habitat study of water bird 4. sign board 5. waste management 6. Village viewpoint at Remuya and below Buli shedra
2	Bird Watching	Conservation Awareness creation Capacity building	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Train Local guide in birding 2. Mapping of Birding trails and inventory of bird observed along the trail (Dapkai-Buli & Buli-Gonglathang area) 3. Developing of brochures 4. Develop bird watching height (viewing deck) 5. Signages at entry and exit point 6. Waste management

Responsible Agency	Collaboration
<p>Gewog Adm, DoFPS, Dzongkhag administration, Community</p>	<p>RSPN</p>
<p>Zhemgang Forest Division, Zhemgang Dzongkhag</p>	<p>RSPN, Nangkhor Gewog</p>

3	Wetland	Conservation Tourism promotion	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Waste management 2. Night safari 3. Habitat management for water birds (Back-tailed crane, White-breasted water hen) 4. Plantations (trees) in the periphery of the wetlands
4	Rufous necked Hornbill & Ruddy shelduck	Conservation Awareness creation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Survey and study on habitat management of Ruddy s helduck 2. Hornbill festival 3. Sign board 4. Information center for flora and fauna (includes the information of Rufous necked hornbill breeding, behaviors, etc.
5	Fishing sites	Tourism promotion Employment generation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inventory and survey of fishes 2. Catch and release of Ser-nga along berpang chu & Bhur-gang chu 3. Sign board 4. Development of resting places

Zhemgang Forest Division, Zhemgang Dzongkhag	RSPN, Department of Forests and Park Services
Zhemgang Forest Division, Zhemgang Dzongkhag	RSPN, Nangkhor Gewog
Zhemgang Forest Division, Zhemgang Dzongkhag	RSPN, Department of Forests and Park Services, Department of Livestock.

6	Mushroom festival	Tourism promotion Employment generation	1. Inventory and identification of economically & high valued mushroom
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Table 7: Potential environmental resources identified for Buli

Recommendations

Holistic Planning

- Participants raised the concern that the present planning on eco-tourism is only for Buli. The planning should be however holistic covering maximum areas of Dzongkhag. Workshop participants also suggested to have a guideline for both the cultural and environmental tourism.

Product packaging and marketing

- Tour package for both groups is not clear. To this, the participants shared that making tour package for Buli village alone is often difficult without connecting to neighboring area. The Dzongkhag is already in the process of preparing eco-tourism package for promoting eco-tourism in District.

Catch and release Fishing as Tourism Opportunities

- The group included fishing-catch and release of Ser-nga along Berpang chu and Bhur chu in Buli. It was suggested that Zhemgang Forest Division can do the proper survey and inventory of the fish with the help from the fishery in Haa.
- With the clear guidelines for catch and release of Golden Masher, it can be one of the opportunities for eco-tourism package.

Zhemgang Forest Division,
Zhemgang Dzongkhag

National Mushroom Center, RSPN,
Department of Forests and Park Services.





Eco-tourism consultation program with Bali community



Resource mapping on Eco-tourism

Wetlands of Buli

