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NEWS IN BRIEF

As part of the Capacity strengthening of civil society in the Least developed countries on Adaptation to Climate Change (CLACC) programme, the Executive Director and the CLACC fellow of RSPN attended the CLACC regional workshop from 21 – 23 April, 2008 in Kathmandu, Nepal with CLACC teams from Bangladesh and Nepal.

The workshop primarily discussed and exchanged experiences in the adaptation field and the importance of civil societies in mainstreaming adaptation to climate change. The workshop also gave an opportunity to discuss future plans on adaptation agenda in the respective countries.

The meeting was organized by CLACC and International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and co-hosted by Li-Bird and Practical Action – Nepal.

RSPN has been the CLACC partner since 2005. For more information please visit www.clacc.net

Commemorating World Environment Day in Bhutan



> Various schools exhibited on environment related issues as a part of day's event

World Environment Day is a global event celebrated all over the world to focus global attention on the importance of the environment and to enhance political attention and action. The event is also intended to sensitize people on emerging environmental issues that could threaten humanity and the earth's biodiversity. Mostly, World Environment Day aims to bring about positive changes in people's attitude towards the environment.

The slogan for WED 2008, "Kick the Habit! Towards a Low Carbon Economy," reminds individuals, communities, regions and nations of their roles and responsibilities in

reducing carbon emissions and thereby their carbon footprints.

Here in Bhutan, World Environment Day 2008 was celebrated in Punakha. Punakha was chosen as the venue for WED 2008 to sensitize the people of Punakha and Wangdue Dzongkhags on the adverse impacts of climate change. Punakha and Wangdue Dzongkhags are highly vulnerable to Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) and WED 2008 was an opportunity to educate the inhabitants of these two Dzongkhags on how climate change can exacerbate the risks of

>> *Contd. on page 3*

Community Awareness on the Impacts of Chemical Fertilizers



> Participants of awareness program

RSPN, in collaboration with the Renewal Natural Resource Centre (RNRC) in Phobjikha conducted an awareness program on the impacts of agrochemical fertilizers for the local community of Phobji and Gangtey Gewogs. The awareness workshop was conducted

for two days with the following objectives:

- to create awareness on the effects of chemical fertilizers
- to sensitize the local community of the effects of chemical fertilizers on the environment and human health
- to expose farmers to alternative methods of farming and undesirable situations around the world resulting from the excessive use of chemical fertilizers

A documentary, "The Slow poisoning of India," was screened to demonstrate

>> *Contd. on page 2*

World Environment Day in Schools

With financial support from the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature, Bayta Community School joined Phobjikha Primary School to commemorate World Environment Day on 5th June 2008. About 500 people from the local community, religious personnel and government officials participated in the program. The schools hoped to convey environmental messages to the gathering and make them aware of the importance of preserving it.

Khenpo Tandin Sithub of Gangtey Shedra graced the occasion as the chief guest. The program started with a traditional marching ceremony. The chief guest and the RSPN representative emphasized the importance of conserving the environment.

Students from the two schools staged a cultural show that focused on environmental conservation. Members of the

community participated in a debate on the effects of waste on the environment”.

Two hundred and eighty students, teachers and RSPN representatives took part in a cleanup campaign around the host school. Cleanup campaigns were also conducted at Tabading and Gangtey. Slogans on “Manage Your Wastes” were also read during the campaigns.

Elsewhere, Ramachen Community Primary School in Phobjikha joined the world community in celebrating World Environment Day. The venerable Taphu Lam was the Guest of Honour at the function. The School Nature Club Coordinator welcomed the guests after which the school principal spoke on importance of the occasion and highlighted the role every individual could play in conserving our natural heritage. The

guest speakers from RSPN and the RNR sectors highlighted the importance of preserving our pristine environment by following the “Middle Path” strategy to sustainable development.

The school organized a debate on “Nature as Life” between the two villages of Phobji Gewog. The hundred and fifty spectators were also entertained with a cultural show that was jointly organized by the students and instructors of the Non Formal Education Division.

Prizes were awarded to the winners of the of the debate competition. The school expressed its heartfelt appreciation to the RSPN for supporting the program by providing a fund of Ngultrum eleven thousand three hundred and fifty and expressed its hope that RSPN would continue to help it organize such programs in the future.

>> *Contd. from page 1*

Awareness on impacts of chemical fertilizers

the impacts of chemical fertilizers on human health. At the end of the workshop, some farmers gave their commitment to try organic farming on some of their plots. Farmers also began to understand the impacts of using fertilizers in their valley, which is designated as a Conservation Area.

RSPN becomes member of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

RSPN becomes a Member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

In its 69th Meeting held on 10-12 March 2008 in Gland, Switzerland, the Council for International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) approved RSPN’s membership to the IUCN in Category b (c) national non-governmental organizations. As a member, RSPN can now forge partnerships and expand its network through international contacts with the Union’s governmental and non-governmental members, its staff of a thousand people, and eleven thousand experts in various fields.

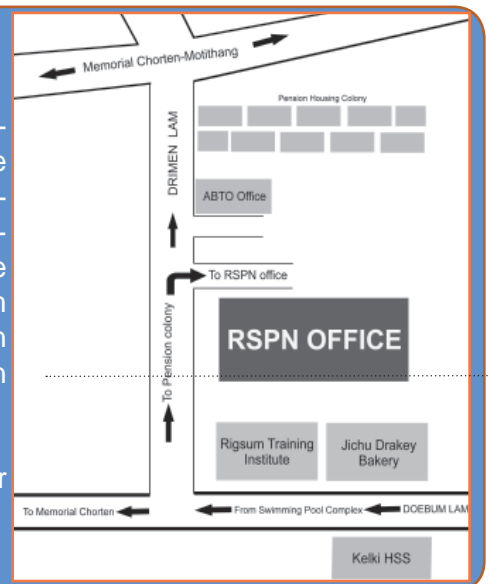
The World Conservation Union, IUCN was established in 1948 to bring together states, government agencies and a diverse range of non-governmental organizations in a global partnership. Today, IUCN has around one thousand members spread across some hundred and forty countries.

The IUCN also has a volunteer network of around ten thousand technical and scientific experts working in its global com-

NEW RSPN OFFICE LOCATION

The Royal Society for Protection of Nature would like to announce that its head office based in Thimphu is being shifted to new location. We are located just above Rigsum Training Institute in Drimen Lam. Other contact information will remain same as before.

Please refer the given map for more details.



missions on protected areas, species survival, ecosystem management, environmental education and communications, environment, economics and social policy and environmental law. RSPN applied for its membership in early May, 2007 and is currently the only Bhutanese organization that is a member of the IUCN.

Resources on the Web

SOURCE: GLOSSOPEDIA (<http://www.globio.org/glossopedia/>)

Tropical rainforests are warm, wet forests with many tall trees. In most tropical rainforests, it rains every day. Tropical rainforests grow in a narrow zone near the equator. They are found in Africa, Asia, Australia, and South and Central America. The largest rainforest in the world is the Amazon rainforest in South America. Tropical rainforests are home to a huge number of different plants and animals. All tropical rainforests are endangered.

CONTRIBUTE

Please send in your articles to be featured in our quarterly newsletter and on our website.

Your articles may be sent to : news@rspnbhutan.org

>> *Contd. from page 1*

Commemorating World Environment Day in Bhutan



> *Visitors observe exhibitions*



guest of honor. His Excellency Nicholas Rossellini, Resident Coordinator, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); representatives from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); Dasho Dzongdag, Punakha; Dasho Drangpons from Wangdue and Punakha; Executive Director, Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN);

GLOFs.

Dasho Nado Rinchen, Honorable Deputy Minister, National Environment Commission, graced the occasion as the

Gups; sector heads; teachers and students attended the programme.

Speeches by the chief guest, UNDP, RSPN and a student representative focused

on the effects of climate change and its potential effects on Bhutan. The need to change human behavior and the responsibilities that every individual should shoulder in combating climate change were some of the key highlights of the speeches. The speeches also expressed gratitude to the visionary leaders of Bhutan for the current state of Bhutan's environment, which has become a global model.

Schools organized an exhibition and displayed models, artwork, stories, poems, write-ups and slogans on the theme, "reducing carbon emission." There were also a number of interactive games, which the guests and visitors enjoyed. The guests, teachers and students exchanged views and thoughts on climate change and its effects. Brochures, newsletters, magazines, pamphlets, posters and booklets from UNDP, NEC and RSPN were displayed and distributed to the people as a part of the program.

The program was jointly organized and sponsored by UNDP, NEC and RSPN.

Strengthening Local Conservation Support Group (LCSG)



> *LCSG meeting in session in Bumthang*



> *Members sensitized on important bird area (IBA) in Bumthang*

In an effort to mainstream conservation activities in the country, RSPN has initiated the establishment of Local Conservation Support Groups (LCSG) in Bumthang, Trashignag and Wangdue Dzongkhags. LCSG members comprise of government officials, local leaders, educationists and businessmen who will propagate environment conservation messages to the grassroots. The main objective

of having LCSGs in the Dzongkhags is to promote conservation activities in rural areas. It is expected that the LCSG members will have a better understanding of local environmental issues and will be motivated to seek support from various agencies in addressing these issues. The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), UNDP and WWF Bhutan are funding the LCSG project.

Nature club coordinators and LCSG members can now submit report on the state of their local environment via our website.

Log on to our website and click on "Submit report on state of your environment" and fill up the required information.

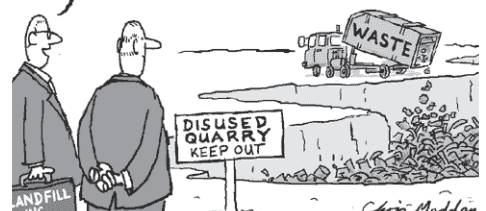
**FOOD
for
THOUGHT**

Courtesy: <http://www.cagle.com>

CHOPPING DOWN ALL OF THE TREES GIVES YOU A CLEAR VIEW OF THE DEVASTATION CAUSED BY CHOPPING DOWN ALL OF THE TREES.



The original inhabitants of this land had a saying - 'Every time you take something from the Earth, you must give something back.'



Straight from the Heart!

An article contributed by Peter Van Glabbeek

During my trips as a long distance cycle tourer, I passed through thousands of little villages and met many people. Every man and village has his own unique story and it is these stories that make traveling, meetings and life very special. Usually I keep these stories for myself or share them with a small group of people. But this time I want to tell a story to all of you. I believe it is a scandalous history that everyone should know, even more because it is an excellent example of problems that occur all over the world and not everyone knows about it. I would be very grateful to you if you read the following story.

Francisca and I have already crossed the impressive Andes three times, over high passes between Argentina and Chile. The extensive salt lakes full of flamingoes, the ice-cold turquoise mountain lakes where, among others, the puma comes to drink, the red and green cliffs where condors build their nests, the almost 7000m high volcanoes covered with blue glaciers and the diverse wildlife in this thousands of kilometers long range form a huge nature reserve that is unequalled in the world. In the valleys on both sides of the mountains we find old little villages with beautiful adobe churches. The people live from agriculture and small-scale tourism. Here traditional dances, songs, art and stories are kept alive by the proud people. It is in one of these villages, Tinogasta in Catamarca province, that we found great hospitality with a Dutch/Argentinean couple with three beautiful daughters.

Tinogasta welcomes us with open arms. We visited many English classes in three different schools, learned to dance folkloric dances, went horse riding as real gaucho's, worked on the land, gave two radio interviews and visited a lot of people at home. Besides these interesting activities we have found out a shocking fact. At 10km! from the center of the village an Australian company, Jackson Global, started an open uranium mine. The inhabitants of Tinogasta only know this since a few months and all the permits and paperwork have been signed already. Of course there are protests and demonstrations, but it is quite late. Newspapers, radio and television have been bought or threatened and don't say anything about the mine. Some schools got unpleasant phone calls and even some children have been warned individually by government officials after they joined the protests. In this way the protests don't become more than a small local struggle against the very mighty and rich.

Even organizations like Greenpeace are of no great help here. Greenpeace Argentina is sponsored by the World Bank in exchange for the promise not to interrupt with the mining. I have not been able to verify this information, but it would be shocking. In this part of Argentina the villages are far apart and there exists not much communi-

cation between neighboring communities. But our cycling trip and a search on *Google Earth* have taught us that similar stories can be told about almost all villages on both sides of the Andes over the length of thousands of kilometers. Gold, silver, copper, zinc, lithium, and many other mines leave terrible traces of destruction in the beautiful Andean landscape. The very scarce water has been heavily polluted and when mines run out of ore the companies disappear and leave huge mountains of waste behind. Lead-, cadmium- and zinc poisoning is common and in the case of Tinogasta there will be the problem of radioactive radiation too (in uranium mines the main polluter is radon gas that escapes from the rocks and causes lung cancer).

All mining activity is done by foreign companies. I already mentioned the relatively small Jackson Global, but there are bigger ones, like Barrick Gold from Canada. This kind of companies has billions to spend and with enormous machines hectares big and hundreds of meters deep craters are being blown in the mountains. Mines of these dimensions use about 10 million liters of water per day. The damage is unimaginable, you have to see it yourself to believe it. All recovered metals are exported to Australia, North America and Europe. Argentina only receives 1% of the profit and all the damage and contamination. Safety rules and environmental measurements are ignored and there is no control. Small communities first experience a small increase in employment, but later it decreases dramatically because land and water are contaminated and agricultural products become useless. Cancer and poisoning become common. Finally people start moving away, poor and broken, because they can't sell their properties.

To conclude this letter, I would like to give my opinion about who are the most important players in this dirty game. First the corrupt local, provincial and national governments form a big problem. For pure personal gain of a few individuals, enormous amounts of natural resources in the Andean countries are being sold to foreign companies for ridiculous low prices. The laws about mining have not been changed since 1880 and politicians prefer to keep it that way. Government officials make quick deals, sign all paperwork, receive the money and disappear (or in the case of Tinogasta repress the press about the subject). Before small communities learn that there will be a mine next door it is already too late to do anything.

Second, of course, there are the mighty and incredible wealthy mining companies. Without caring for natural beauty, cultural riches or human health, thousands of tons of ores are extracted from the earth and sold against high prices on the international market. An open uranium mine, 10km from a village, is unthinkable in western countries,

but here you can do whatever you want. Again just a few individuals become very rich at the cost of human lives and the loss of vast ecosystems.

Third, I believe that the consumer is responsible. Still most people in the rich countries are trying to get more. Economic growth is still the key word in national and international politics. For example in Holland, we are twice as rich as in 1980! I don't notice a difference, life was good then and it still is, but the damage we cause elsewhere is twice as big. Why we still want to buy more, eat more and spend more? The price of the consumer's society has been and is still being paid by the third world countries like Argentina. This is not just in the mining area, but also in oil industry, forestry, agriculture and cattle industry (for the last two categories a lot of native forests are cut to create space). But all we can think about is complain about rising fuel prices, but really a liter of fuel should cost 7 dollars to cover the damage that is done in the production process.

I call for a (increase of) consciousness to everyone. Eat less meat and more local vegetables and fruit, use clothes, furniture and electrical machines for a much longer time and buy second hand whenever possible, drive less in your car and think twice before using airplanes, buy responsible wood, be scarce with the use of energy and water in daily life and take conscious (political) decisions that are not influenced by TV commercials. Believe me, the damage and personal suffering are incredible big here, and that is not only the case in the Andes, but also the Amazons and big parts of Africa and Asia. Just indignation is easy and cheap. We need to change! Inform others, but also try to change yourself, everyone.

I and thousands of people in Tinogasta would appreciate it very much if you can spread this story, or your own version of it. Also I think that members of Greenpeace should write to the organization they are supporting to ask about the problems in Argentina and why they don't do anything. If you have ideas to give more publicity to this story, I would love to hear it. Feel free to use this text or parts of it in newspaper articles, letters or emails.

Thank you very much, also in the name of the people of Tinogasta, for reading about this problem that concerns us all.

I wish you good luck, love and health,

*Peter van Glabbeek,
Amsterdam.*

<http://petervanglabbeek.googlepages.com>

Send your inspiring entries to be featured in our quarterly newsletters and on our website to:
news@rspnbhutan.org

Nationwide Water Quality Test (WQT)



With technical support from the National Environment Commission (NEC), the Bhutan Water Partnership (BhWP) based in RSPN conducted the third nationwide wa-

ter quality test (WQT) for the pre-monsoon period (May-June 2008). Water quality data was collected from more than fifty sites across the country. The sites were tested for PH, dissolved oxygen, nitrates, phosphates and Benthic Macro invertebrates. Besides, tests were

also carried out on physical parameters such as water temperature, turbidity and conductivity.

Water quality tests carried out so far have shown a high abundance and diversity of benthic macro-invertebrates in the upper reaches of the rivers, particularly in the headwaters; indicating pristine water quality. However, in the downstream areas, a high abundance of macro-invertebrate species that are tolerant to polluted water indicates poor water quality in these areas. This is especially the case in urban centers where sewerage water, household drains and household wastes were disposed directly into water bodies.

The BhWP has the raw data for WQT for the following periods:

- Pre monsoon period May-June) 2007
- Post monsoon (August - September) 2007
- Pre monsoon (May-June) 2008

WQT data collection will continue till 2009 when the findings will be made public

A Buddhist perspective on environmental protection

Environmental groups and societies often ponder how they can encourage people to protect the environment? From a Buddhist point of view, the question is perhaps better reversed: Why is it that people do not protect the environment?

In Buddhism, we talk of emptiness. Due to the ambiguity of this word (not only in English, but also in its Dzongkha equivalent), it is often mistaken to mean some kind of void where nothing exists. This is incorrect. The word actually means that nothing exists independently, but only in relation to other things.

This is a difficult concept, so I'll use an everyday item, like a piece of paper, to illustrate it further. If we look deeply at the paper, we will see that it is made from wood. In turn, we understand that wood comes from a tree, and that a tree develops from a seed through interaction with soil, nutrients, moisture and warmth. In short, paper exists only as a temporary gathering of elements and conditions that humans from a similar culture recognize and label as paper. If we think about the subject in more depth, we will realize that all phenomena, including our own body and emotions, are likewise only a temporary amalgamation of causes and conditions.

So, how does this understanding help benefit the environment? Well, Buddhists believe that disharmony arises only

when beings do not recognize that all things exist in interdependence. This is the root of selfishness and so the cause of problems, such as lack of care for the environment. Therefore, rather than only using education and laws as a means to protect the environment, a Buddhist master would instead focus on teaching the truth of how things exist.

That is not to say, however, that education and punitive measures have no value. They do, but at best they are only like a dam built to contain a fast flowing river. It has to be constantly maintained to function well. However, when people understand their intrinsic connection to the world around them, they not only cease damaging it, but begin to actively protect it.

A Chinese children's story about a human body illustrates this idea in a simple and clear way. Once the heart became proud and claimed that as the purifier of blood it was the most important organ in the body. Agitated by this assertion, the liver and kidneys protested, stating that their given tasks were of equal importance. The dispute continued to rage until finally the organs stopped co-operating. The heart no longer pumped blood to the liver and the kidneys refused to purify the fluids. The result is obvious. The whole body, which includes the heart, kidneys and liver, died.

From a Buddhist point of view, the

position of the organs is similar to humans who likewise don't realize that they are an intrinsic part of an interdependent system. Like the organs, we have individual names, such as Tashi or Pema, but in reality we exist only in dependence on other phenomena. In this respect we are no different from the piece of paper. If part of the equation, such as moisture, heat or nutrition, is missing or damaged, we cannot exist.

Therefore, people who have some understanding of emptiness will naturally preserve their environment. They do not need to be persuaded or threatened, but instead act in the same way that two hands work for the benefit of the body – naturally and effortlessly.

Perhaps it is pertinent to end this short article with a quote from HH Dalai Lama: "We can say the theory of interdependence is an understanding of reality. We understand that our future depends on global well-being. Having this viewpoint reduces narrow-mindedness. With narrow mind, one is more likely to develop attachment, hatred. I think this is the best thing about the theory of interdependence – it is an explanation of the law of nature. It affects profoundly, for example, the environment."

Shenphen Zangpo
shenphenzangpo@yahoo.co.uk



Download RSPN's Annual Report 2007 from our website: <http://www.rspnbhutan.org>

Did you Know?



Earth Day is the largest, most widely celebrated international environmental event. Earth Day helps celebrate Earth's unique place in the universe. It

is the only planet in our solar system teeming with incredible biodiversity. Learning about and protecting this biodiversity is what Earth Day is all about. People all over the world celebrate our efforts to protect plants and animals and to clean up the world we live in. Most people celebrate Earth Day on April 22nd each year. In some countries, it is celebrated a month earlier on the vernal equinox.

Source: <http://www.globio.org/glossopedia/>

WORD SAFARI

In the following table, you will find ten species of butterflies found in Bhutan. It is from the book titled *Butterflies of Bhutan* by Piet van der Poel and Tashi Wangchuk. The scientific names are in *italic* and habitat altitude range in the bracket (). You need to look for the names that are typed in **bold** which are part of the common names.

1. Bi-spot Royal

Ancema ctesia
(1400-2000m)

2. Common Flash

Rapala nissa
(800-2000m)

3. Azure Sapphire

Heliophorus androcles
(1300-3500m)

4. Common Copper

Lycaena phlaeas
(1500-4000m)

5. Metallic Cerulean

Jamides alecto
(< 1500m)

6. Chapman's Cupid

Everes argiades
(1400-2800m)

7. Common Pierrot

Castalius rosimon
(< 1500m)



R	G	J	K	B	C	X	S	L	F	P
F	O	L	I	L	A	D	Y	U	C	F
Z	P	Y	S	T	O	R	A	L	I	S
Q	M	D	A	F	W	I	G	I	F	N
M	A	S	P	L	L	E	Y	P	U	K
R	L	V	P	A	X	L	T	I	S	H
R	A	B	H	S	B	B	I	E	O	G
I	B	A	I	H	U	I	Z	R	N	G
F	O	U	R	I	N	G	E	R	P	I
I	R	R	E	A	C	P	N	O	C	E
K	I	N	G	E	P	I	Z	T	Y	O
O	C	E	A	O	N	C	I	E	A	P
T	U	L	C	E	R	U	L	E	A	N
U	S	V	M	L	O	P	O	D	U	K
T	H	R	E	E	R	I	N	G	R	I
H	Y	P	E	R	Y	D	H	R	U	S

8. Painted Lady

Vanessa cardui
(< 4400m)

9. Himalayan Fouring

Ypthima parasakra
(2000-2700m)

10. Large Threering

Ypthima newara
(< 2000m)

CONTACT INFORMATION

Royal Society for Protection of Nature
Post Box: 325
Drimen Lam
Thimphu
BHUTAN

Telephone: +975 2 322056 / 326130

Fax: +975 2 323189

E-mail: rspn@rspnbhutan.org

Web URL: http://www.rspnbhutan.org



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