

# GNH CENTRE NEWSLETTER



Vol. II

June 2016

“Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross Domestic Product.”  
His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck,  
The Fourth Druk Gyalpo

Welcome to the second edition of the quarterly newsletter from the GNH Centre!

The newsletter is a small effort to share with you the world of Gross National Happiness.

Wishing you a very happy read!

## Earth and Human Conflict



Dr. Saamdu Chetri, PhD  
Executive Director

We all know that we are a part of the nature, like we know we will die one day or another in an unknown time and situation...we take both nature and life for granted and never think or reflect on them. As we do not contemplate on these most important aspects of our existence, they become the very reasons to propel us to do things that are not desirable at all or beyond humanity. We have complicated our simple life for greed of fame, power and wealth. None of these brings happiness to oneself, rather it acts as a means to distance us from ourselves and the truth of interdependence (or 'interbeing' as Zen Buddhist Master Thich Nhat Hanh says).

We have entered into the Consumerist Age that is not sustainable at all. The Maslow law of hierarchical needs is a good way to explain a GNH life: Psychological/physical needs are food, clothes and shelter; loving and belonging is automatic if we lived in interdependence; Esteem is recognizable through living with innate human wisdom and values and serving others, understanding and respecting the co-existence; and Self Actualization is the path to enlightenment.

We blame GDP too much as the culprit for global warming that has hit the climate very hard and is rapidly changing its normal course. GDP is nothing if we let our egos go away that brings greed for recognition/ fame /name, power and richness. Simply because we will not run for bigger and bigger material things and so called better products. Rather we will start to focus on our own products and really look into simple and sustainable way of living....GDP will graduate into a history and become unknown like it was before the end of the Second World War.

Let us see how we are connected to our nature. Earth has 70 percentage of water so does our human bodies. Water is proven scientifically to be alive. That is why we are alive with so much fluid in our bodies. It acts according to the behaviour of we people; both bodies and the earth. If we cut a tip of a finger, the blood oozes out and the happening is not only localized but it rushes from all parts of the bodies to refill the oozed fluid. Imagine when hundreds of oil fields extract oils in any part of the world, would it not create vacuum under several thousands of km below our earth? To fill these vacuums, either earth shifts or liquids flow in reducing the water table below the surface and movement of the earth takes place. This is one of the reasons for earthquake and reduction of ground water. Water is becoming minimal due to human greed. The war on water has already started beginning in Darfur, Africa a few years ago.

Here is another example of our interdependencies. In my early childhood, we would pray for the rains so that we need not walk hours to collect water for drinking, washing, cleaning and so on. I returned home after 34 years end of 2005 and wanted to collect the rain water for bathing. During the act, my mother asked me, "Why are you collecting the water?" I told her for taking a bath. She said, "Forget it!" I asked her why and she explained that for many years, they do not use the rainwater even for cleaning. "It is slippery and tastes acidic", she said. True, after collecting the rainwater, the bucket full of water was kept for ten minutes, there was a lot of settlement at the bottom of it. I thought it must have been the dirty roof. For the next five days, every day I collected rain water to see when it would come clean. On sixth day I finally collected ash-less water. It was probably ash less to our naked eyes. I started to wonder why. And there was the answer in my mind. The vapours arising from Bay of Bengal, cross as clouds over the industrially populated North Bengal and Bangladesh collecting all the ash from the atmosphere and pour down in rain at the foothills of Bhutan. We used to grow and eat smallest varieties of chillies, known as Jerray in the south. The Jerray attracted the most colourful parrots which came from the mountains to feed on them. Today, we do not see much or grow Jerray and thus no parrots fly down from the mountains. Jerray has become a very rare sight in few households. Our ecology is changing and so our body constitution is changing and we human beings become more susceptible to diseases.

In my birth place called Nichula, today we see more peacocks than during my childhood. The eggs of these birds are not eaten by the responsible animals (e.g. foxes) as they have become extinct or less in numbers. Similarly the population of wild fowls are stagnating or rather reducing because their eggs are picked by increasing number of squirrels whose babies are not eaten by bigger birds that are also reducing, resulting in imbalance in biodiversity and ecology and calling out for human attentions and that is 'noninterference in the nature'.

A time, within 200 years, will come with the present trends of destruction (so called growth/development) on nature that every species will become a dinosaur... it will be read in history. Children then will become alien to their own parents and earth because the nature will not console and rejuvenate as it will have died out.

We still have the chance to strengthen and nurture the earth following the principles of GNH and only consume for living a life and not life for living – by using less electricity for lighting and heating, using public transport or electrical cars for transport, stopping to eat packaged food, not buying what is not necessary including clothes because we can afford, stopping use of coal but using sustainable energy, not eating meat and supplementing dairy products with other natural products.

**“ Today, GNH has come to mean so many things to so many people but to me it signifies simply - Development with values. Thus, for my nation today GNH is the bridge between the fundamental values of kindness, equality and humanity and the necessary pursuit of economic growth.”**

**- His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.**

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## GNH-wise & kind

Tshering Lhamo  
Entrepreneur, Phuentsholing

This is modern Bhutan now; the old farmer is this new father following the same footsteps that the oldest good farmer did in the pasts. We can him 'GNH'. GNH has his mission, his mission is to provide growth in happiness, and he chooses growth as happiness instead of gross domestic product. GNH is a wise and kind man. GNH knows that if he intended gross in domestic product, he knows it is short lived. He knows that being rich in quantity is not always quality rich, and therefore he considers gross happiness as his ultimate goal. Happiness is a feeling of warmth of the heart while desires have no end. Greed has no end. GNH is far sighted protecting his family, his culture and heritage. GNH in its essence means development with values. GNH is a follower of Buddha.

As a citizen and a patriot of my country, I feel each one of us make a contribution to our nation each time we are selfless, compassionate and helpful starting from how we deal with people from all walks of life. In this way, the positive crux is that we broaden our minds and open out to new solutions to bring about more happiness and contentment to the people who trust in GNH. I believe that when you pay respect, we earn respect. Definitely and for the very matter, charity begins from home; if one must really think and feel deeply. We want a Government that can show their good governance, one who can bestow our nation's good reputation to the highest potential level. Our blessed country, our kind and beloved king, our father who gave us this opportunity to make a change, change that make a real difference to lives, to be able to walk with humble pride, for The Land of the Thunder Dragon.





## The Purpose of the GNH Club in my school

Bida Tamang  
GNH Club Coordinator  
Yangchenphug Higher Sec. School

Gross National Happiness is an inspirational philosophy. GNH is largely an intuitive insight and guiding light. It reminds the government and people that material progress is not the only, and not even, the most important contributor to well-being. As we are increasingly engaged in the materialistic world and the country (in particular) is engaged with global community and international organizations, efforts have been made to explain and measure GNH. And in the recent years development of GNH has seen its practical implementation in government become a living reality.

We are deeply committed to pursuing happiness. But it is not that we have achieved it. We have certain strategies, certain policies in place, to pursue this goal of happiness. But we are certainly mindful and aware of the possibilities of enriching our knowledge and understanding of happiness itself; and further, how much we can improve and refine the processes that we have adopted.

For this very reason, I as GNH Club Coordinator (YHSS), have every confidence that this club will generate greater knowledge and further wisdom on the subject of happiness to my students. Currently, there are 15 members and we wish to attend the GNH programmes, volunteer, invite guests for GNH talks and live by the values of GNH.

“Our country is called GNH country because in happiness, we celebrate together and when we grieve, we grieve together as if we were all members of one family. If there are works to be done, we share equal responsibility in carrying out the work and when we face problem, together we solve the problem.”

- His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.





## CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL HAPPINESS DAY

Drona D. Chetri  
Youth Programme Coordinator

March 20,2016: To mark the International Happiness Day, the GNH Centre celebrated the event with 33 teachers and 186 students of Norbuling Central School,Gelephu, Sarpang Dzongkhag.

The celebration started on March 19 with guided meditation, walking meditation, presentations and learning sessions on GNH by Dr.Saamdu Chetri, Executive Director. On March 20, the students presented their views on GNH and what they learnt. By organizing an interdependence circle students shared their insights, self reflection, played games and celebrated the day.

March 20 has been celebrated as the International Happiness Day and adopted by 193 United Nations member states. This initiative to declare a day of happiness came from Bhutan's guiding philosophy of Gross National Happiness, propounded by the Fourth Druk Gyalpo His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck.

The GNH Centre also celebrates the National Happiness Day on November 11, the birth anniversary of the Father of GNH, the Fourth Druk Gyalpo His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck.

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## Educating youth on the values of GNH

**Wesel Dema**  
**Programme Officer**  
**GNH Centre**

A two day workshop on Inner Transformation through GNH and Mindfulness, in partnership with the VITA Foundation (Germany) was conducted at the Sonamgang Middle Secondary School, Phuentsholing, on 1st and 2nd June, 2016. A total of 140 students from Sonamgang Middle Secondary School and 130 students from Phuentsholing Higher Secondary School, including 5 teachers attended the two day program.

The event started with guided meditation, followed by learning sessions on mindfulness, GNH and on mindful consumption. The students practiced mindful movements and walking meditation and also experienced inner peace through the practice of deep relaxation. Formation of student groups for role play and presentation were conducted after each session, to help them understand the importance of teamwork and unleash their inner qualities, and to demonstrate what they have understood.

The GNH Centre team also conducted the Raft Game. Each team has a raft which can be used to get to the other side of an ocean to a continent. The rafts are the only way to cross the ocean. With the fire raging towards the coast and ocean filled with hungry sharks, teams have to be careful and be able to cross the ocean in 10 minutes. This game intends to make an impact on decision making, participation, collaboration, leadership and power dynamics.

The students felt journaling was helpful because it gave them an idea of planning their future and also reflecting on their life so far.

Taking GNH forward by the students was very enriching, and they came up with their own ideas on how they would apply GNH in their schools. Some future actions include how they would save and plant more trees, restrict the consumption of junk food to once a week in school, thereby promoting home cooked healthy meals. They would participate in advocacy by sharing what they have learned in school at home.

Ms. Maita Subba, a teacher from the school said, "it was a very interesting and informative program for the school students. They were very interested to have more of such programmes in the future. Some students also wanted to become a members of the GNH Centre Bhutan." - She also suggested that future programmes could be longer in duration to

enable students and facilitators time to connect and bond. Students and teachers were extremely happy for this initiative and opportunity.

Nim Lham, a class 9 student said, “the programme was very educative. I learnt about the principles of GNH principles. I also learnt that we have to save the environment and be mindful.”

Barsana Gurung, class 9 student said, “ from this programme, I learnt about GNH values, mindfulness and also about organic food.”

The purpose of the programme was to educate students on GNH values and mindfulness, to support them in organizing GNH activities and programmes in the school and to initiate conscious mindful behaviors through the GNH values. It was also a platform to educate them on waste management, recycling, and agricultural practices engaging in social responsibility, and also being a mindful consumer. The programme gave them an opportunity to prototype (co-design) how the GNH Centre can work with them to deliver such programs in the future and also help their school become a model of change.

“Today we have great aspirations – the peace, stability, security and sovereignty of the nation; strengthening of our new democracy; equitable socio-economic growth to achieve GNH and; nurturing our youth to one day lead a nation greatly strengthened by our hard work and commitment. To achieve all this we need trust and faith in our relationships – between the government and people; between institutions of government and; between people ourselves. With the harmony and unity born these relationships, we will achieve our aspirations and find peace, prosperity and GNH.” His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck



## Productivity vs Wellbeing

**Sophie Weldon**  
**Australia**

One of the most dangerous wars going on in the world right now is the one between **compassion and capitalism**. The world is becoming increasingly more industrialized while mental health and wellbeing are declining. Yes, our economy needs to be strong to ensure that there are enough jobs, but we know that MORE money does not equal more happiness.

Bhutan established an intentional protection of the cultural integrity of the country, only opening up its doors to foreigners in the 1970s and not introducing the internet until 1999. Gross National Happiness is now taught in schools and discussed everywhere as a way of reminding the country of its innate values and ultimate goal of wellbeing. The impact this has had on young people is incredible. I met dozens of humble, kind, compassionate, generous young leaders who are helping to keep driving the GNH mission and secure their cultural values.

But of course Bhutan has its challenges. They have struggled to keep up with the changes that opening their doors have presented, and their youth are now influenced by the image of a western lifestyle with very different portrayals of success, beauty and happiness. Many are moving from the villages to the capital, Thimphu, to find a job, buy a car, eat imported packaged foods and save money to go overseas.

Although small, Bhutan has had a powerful influence on the UN including successfully lobbying them to incorporate social measures in the development indicators. These measures represent a new development paradigm and principles which Bhutan has stood by time and time again.

*Enduring happiness, GNH believes, is a state of compassion for yourself and others. Happiness can be seen as 'coming home to yourself', accepting yourself (the good and the bad) and in Buddhist terms, 'remembering who you really are'.*





**Ross Hill**  
**Australia**

## **GNH Centre Program**

We raise our fists in the air and shout Lhagelo!! This means we have achieved victory over the mountain as we reach the 3700m Chelela Pass without suffering from altitude sickness. After turning down the “Sorry Wai” song we were singing along to on the radio, we step outside the car to explore. Prayer flags are everywhere, vividly fluttering in the wind as clouds fly up the hillside. Bells ring as monks dedicate the new flags being raised today. We make some coffee before continuing on our journey.

What was I doing here? I was looking for new ways of living and working. While the rest of the world measures success by GDP (the amount of product a country is producing), Bhutan has chosen to measure happiness. Their constitution actually says that “The State shall endeavor to apply the Principles of State Policy set out in this Article to ensure a good quality of life for the people of Bhutan in a progressive and prosperous country that is committed to peace and amity in the world and that the State shall strive to promote those conditions that will enable the pursuit of Gross National Happiness.”

Yes, you can measure the conditions for happiness. There are traditional indicators for living standards, health and education, and then more subtle indicators like time use, psychological well-being, environment and community vitality. Surveys are run to measure progress, and a policy screening tool ensures that all new government policies are considered through the lens of GNH. By integrating the perspectives of society and environment as well as the economic impact, they are able to produce a more holistic outcome.

The GNH Centre program was an opportunity to explore this system in a very practical way, by exposing our group to people from schools, businesses and government in the cities, all the way through to monks and farmers as we hiked the mountains. Everyone shared their own perspective on GNH, and we could begin to form a personal understanding of what it meant to each of us too.

One of the monks shared a story from the Buddha that people would often come and say to him “I want happiness” and that he would say that it is really quite simple. If you first remove the I (that’s ego) and then you remove the want (that’s desire) then you are left with only happiness! That happiness comes from within, not from your wallet, from your clothes, from your car, or your partner.

It begins with you and then ripples out to those around you. We walked back down the mountain refreshed and uplifted, ready to implement these ideas into our lives and our projects. Kaadinchey la GNH Centre!

“GNH is the philosophy that acts as our National Conscience, helping us as a nation in making better and wiser decisions for our future – it reminds us to uphold the well being and work for the happiness of every single Bhutanese at all times.” His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck





## Bhutan and GNH

**Rama Arya**  
**Founder & Executive Director at The Communique, India.**

I have a quiet smile playing on my lips. My eyes are content. This is through a daily dosage of countless hours on the road, wake up alarms by wee hour sunrises, and often dodgy plumbing and basic meals. I am in the land of happiness.

Whilst the rest of the world chases gross domestic and national products, the Kingdom of Bhutan has veered towards the road less trodden, in every sense. It chose happiness. And somewhere along the way, this translates to happiness for those who travel through it. This I assure you is no marketing spiel by PR or advertising honchos. It is for real.

In 1972, Bhutan's fourth King, Jigme Singye Wangchuck coined the term Gross National Happiness (GNH) built on the premise "Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross Domestic Product."

You may well ask what is GNH. I did. The King described it in 1972 as wherein "development should enable human beings to unfold their potential of becoming better human beings socially, economically and morally." Bhutan's fifth King calls it "Development with values." Intrinsic to Bhutan, GNH is the core belief holding the Kingdom together and guiding it forward. It represents the country's commitment to building an economy based on Buddhist spiritual values instead of material development.

Is it all subjective hogwash then? "Happiness" is different things for different people. It is also relative. I get happy looking at the sun set over the ocean. Another may get happy on a shopping binge. My happiness is low budget. A shopping binge needs loads of goodies and cash.

GNH, measured using the GNH Index, is a fine balance between economy, happiness and other key areas critical for overall well-being, and is based on nine indicators. These are: psychological well-being, health, education, time use, cultural diversity and resilience, good governance, community vitality, ecological diversity and resilience, and living standards. Psychological well-being is the only one composed of subjective indicators, namely, life satisfaction, positive and negative emotions, and spirituality. The GNH Index was first used as a measure in 2010 and, thereafter, in 2015.

2015 data showed 91.2 percent of Bhutanese enjoyed sufficiency in at least half of the nine areas. From a growth perspective, GNH increased from 0.743 in 2010 to 0.756 in 2015—the Bhutanese could, hence, be said to be happier today than five years back. Constantly monitored and evaluated, the GNH Index helps the Bhutanese government design its policies and better understand its populace's needs.

Fortunately for the rest of the world, national, regional and international governments and agencies have not been impervious to Bhutan's pioneering governance practices. Europe has established its "Beyond GDP" initiative and OECD is working on how to "measure what we treasure." In 2012, the United Nations declared 20 March International Day of Happiness and adopted GNH (albeit without compulsion) in its draft Sustainable Development Goals in 2015.

So what does this mean for the traveller, such as you and me, who have Bhutan on our bucket list and take the journey to the Land of Happiness? Is it really any different from any other homogenised destination in this world? Is everyone one meets going to have a batty grin plastered on their faces? I took a nine-day road trip through Western Bhutan earlier this month and this is what I discovered:

The culminated whole, dear reader, is "Bhutan". It invites you to just "be"—with yourself, nature, and god—and that is its biggest happiness quotient for the traveller in you and me. Would you not agree?

"We must always remember that as our country, in these changing times finds immense new challenges and opportunities, whatever work we do, whatever goals we have – and no matter how these may change in this changing world – ultimately without peace, security and happiness we have nothing. That is the essence of the philosophy of GNH. Our most important goal is peace and happiness of our people and the security and sovereignty of the nation." His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck



## Bhutanese students' perceptions about GNH and sustainable development

**Paivi Ahonen**  
**University of Oulu, Finland**

As part of my doctoral theses “Strategies of Bhutan in implementing the GNH policies- How is GNH philosophy applied in the context of education for sustainable development?” for the University of Oulu in Finland, 124 Bhutanese secondary school students from three schools participated in the study. The aim of the study was to find out how students view the GNH and sustainable development. The task of the students was to draw a picture on one A4-size paper about the main principle/s of the GNH and sustainable development. During the time of the data collection GNH focused education, by well trained teachers, had been implemented for about three years. There has not been earlier studies focusing on students' perceptions about GNH oriented education. Environmental values and protection of nature are seen by students as the most important areas of GNH and sustainable development. Traditional values systems connected with the Bhutanese way of life, and well planned GNH –related education at schools can be seen as the main reasons for students' good knowledge about GNH and sustainable development.

The items which students chose to draw most often illustrate trees being planted next to trees being cut. As often as “plant trees don't cut”, the students liked to draw snow covered mountains, rivers and green forests with beautifully growing trees. The second favorite items were drawings of Bhutanese men and women in their national dresses Gho and Kira and the scarfs Rachu and Kabney, needed as part of the official dress code. A common theme in the drawings was also the systematic change in Bhutan from fuel cars to electric cars. Fifteen pupils drew a picture with titles “cars using electricity, not fuel. The change from fuel to electric cars has been discussed widely in Bhutan and it is supported by the government. Bhutan's zero emissions target expressed in 2014 requires sustainable and environmentally friendly zero emission transport. The aim is to provide the country with electrical cars and eventually change all vehicles using fuel to electric cars.

Students draw several items and themes about clean and healthy nature and people looking after the forests or fields. These themes appeared in 65 drawings. Cleaning of the nature was also well represented, appearing in the drawing of 15 students. Many schools have followed the practice of classes deciding to adopt a nearby river or mountain, for students to learn about nature. Through this method pupils learn about the conditions and positive changes in nature, find out information from the people living in the adopted area. Students also share their experiences with other students at the schools. Students also draw images related to the traditional Bhutanese festivals. One student has drawn the figure of 'Atsara' the funny masked man, entertaining people during annual festival called **Tsechu**. The

Atsara is considered to be an important part of the tsechu making people laugh and happy when entertaining the crowds.

In the Figure 1 there are several most popular drawn elements: cleaning of nature, taking care of nature and animals, planting the trees and enjoying picnic with happy family.

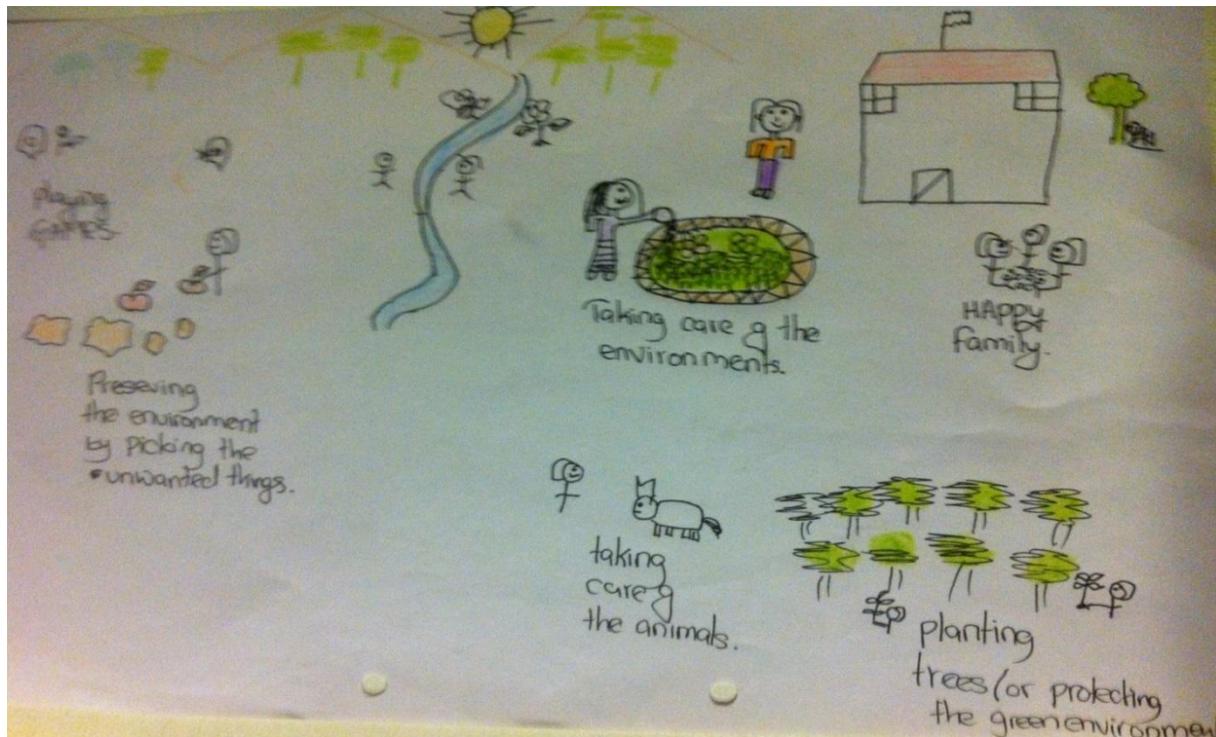


Figure 1. Caring nature, caring animals

Based on the instructions some students included global sustainable development into their drawings. These students created images with hands holding the globe as in Figure 2. The face of the earth in the figure has sense of humor - well-being with smile and global sustainable development consciousness.

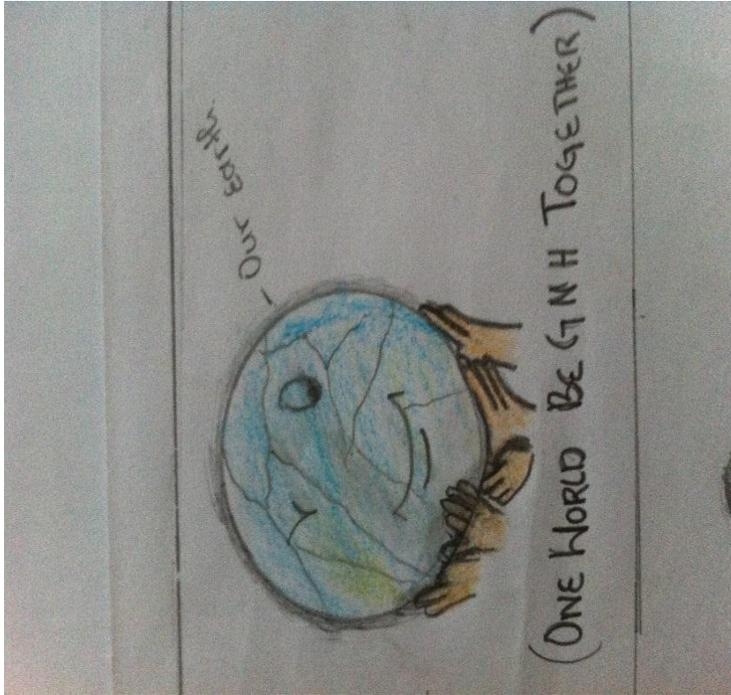


Figure 2. Our earth

The most important finding of the study was that secondary schools students of the tree Bhutanese schools are well aware of both the GNH structure and sustainable development principles. The findings clarify that sustainable development values connected with the Bhutanese culture have been well supported by education. Environmental values and protection of nature are seen as the most important areas of GNH and sustainable development. Main explanations for the findings, drawn from students' drawings are:

- Bhutan's traditional value system and good introduction of GNH principles in education and
- Out of class, nature connected teaching methods of the Bhutanese schools.

Recommendation for educators focusing in their teaching on sustainable development, is to bring the students close to the nature as much as possible.





## Be a part of the GNH Centre – Become a member!

Nima Tshering  
Communications Officer  
GNH Centre

Our membership drive is also a platform to learn about the values of GNH, join our activities and programmes, and help us to advocate the importance of GNH in today's chaotic world. The Centre's intended goal is to create an environment people may be inspired to pursue a good and meaningful life not only for their own happiness but for the well-being of all sentient beings with whom we share this planet.

Further, members can avail services on integrating GNH values in their work places and homes. Furthermore, for Bhutanese nationals and organizations, a tax exemption shall be applicable for any contribution made to the Centre under the exemption registration No.E62 of the Department of Revenue & Customs, Ministry of Finance.

Some of the benefits in the pipeline among many are to organize exclusive programmes for the members, undertake a variety of service projects with members, award members with the certificates and souvenirs, engage and encourage members' involvement in community services, take prompt action to address the concerns of the members so that their experience is positive, involve members' families in meetings & social activities, establish connections and lasting friendships. People interested to become a member may visit the office or register online through our website.

Today's world demands economic excellence and I have no doubt that during our lifetime we will be working towards building a stronger economy for Bhutan to further consolidate and secure our own future. In doing so, no matter what our immediate goals are, I am confident that the philosophy of GNH will ensure that ultimately our foremost priority will always be the happiness and the well being of our people. In other words, I believe that GNH today is a bridge between the fundamental values of kindness, equality and humanity and the necessary pursuit of economic growth." His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck

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