



# Annual Report 2019

# Table of Contents

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4

Message from the Honorable President

6

Spain embraces GNH

7

GNH in Action: Improving wellbeing in community schools

8

GNH Advocacy & Outreach

9

Support from Singapore's One Love

10

GNH Youth Club coordinators meet

11

Rites of Passage training

12

National Day of Happiness 11 November

13

GNH Winter Youth Leadership

14

International delegations visit GNHCB

15

GNH orientation workshop for the tour guides

## MESSAGE FROM THE HONORABLE PRESIDENT



Her Royal Highness Gyalsem  
Kezang Choden Wangchuck, President

Today, both in Bhutan and beyond, Gross National Happiness is taken into serious consideration. Since being put forth as the guiding philosophy of Bhutan's development in 1972 by the Fourth King, GNH continues to inspire and motivate the Bhutanese people. GNH stands for the holistic needs of a human being - both physical and mental, it recognizes that happiness can be realized as a societal goal. It is far too important to be left to individual effort without collective endeavor. The GNH Centre was thus created to complement national and international efforts and to further nurture this royal vision.

The work of the Centre stresses collective happiness to be addressed directly through its small projects and programmes. We believe that if happiness is the main value a GNH nation tries to promote, the institutional structures and processes of a society must reflect this value. We have a moral obligation to nurture that vision and work unwaveringly towards its fulfilment. The Centre has also successfully built friendships with various partners in the international sphere such as the Small Giants Australia, Young Presidents Organization, Rites of Passage Australia and more that allow foreign participants to understand GNH and live by its principles. It is through these partnerships the Centre is able to generate a modest amount of revenue so that we are financially independent and carry on with our national efforts. It gives me great pleasure to share that the GNH Centre Spain was launched in March 2019. Under the passionate leadership of Mr. Ian Triay I have no doubt that the GNH Centre Spain will serve as an authentic GNH partner in Europe and represent true GNH collaborations. We welcome them to the GNH family and look forward to working together in taking GNH to wider audiences. The Centre now has two internationally based GNH bases in Thailand and Spain. On the national front,



the Centre has ensured every Bhutanese high school student is aware of what GNH is and what means today to be a Bhutanese citizen. Covering over 30 high schools across the country, the Centre has been able to create GNH activities for students.

A key highlight of the report is the Centre's ability to raise funds for small projects as seen with the renovation and construction of a rural community school in Punakha. This project directly improved the lives of 20 children and the condition of a school through the construction of new bathrooms and improved classrooms.

It gives me great pleasure to see that as a civil society organization, the Centre has also been able to partner with fellow organizations such as the Youth Development Fund, the Bhutan Ecology Society, Guides Association of Bhutan and others in joint youth programmes.

I congratulate the Centre on its endeavors on the ground. I am pleased to share that the work of the Centre in 2019 has continued with successful efforts as you read through the 2019 Annual Report.

## SPAIN EMBRACES GNH

On March 20, 2019, coinciding with the International Day of Happiness, the only European center officially linked to the GNH Center in Bhutan was launched in Madrid. The GNH Centre Spain was established formally and saw the attendance of almost 300 people, including politicians, businessmen, personalities of Spanish public life and citizens.

The event was chaired by the Ambassador of Bhutan to Europe and Spain, Her Excellency Mrs. Pema Choden and the Honorary Consul General of Bhutan in Spain, Mr. Ian Triay, who will also serve as the President of the Center. Mr. Triay has been Honorary Consul General of the Kingdom of Bhutan in Spain for over 12 years. He has known Bhutan for two decades and has witnessed the most relevant milestones in its recent history, actively participating in the establishment of diplomatic relations between Spain and Bhutan and in projects of mutual interest to both countries.

The launch also witnessed the delivery of a session on GNH and Mindfulness by Dr. Mario Alonso Puig, who also attended a programme in Bhutan. Members of the GNH Spain team include Mr. Antonio Gonzalez as Vice President, who is passionate about promoting transformative and innovative projects with social impact and Mr. Nicolas F. Calvo as Treasurer.



The GNH Centre Bhutan is confident that under Mr. Triay's guidance the GNH Centre Spain will flourish and share the true values of GNH in Europe and to a wider audience.



## GNH IN ACTION: IMPROVING WELLBEING IN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

The Yebesa Community School is perched on the opposite hilltop facing the Khamsum Yuelay Namgyel Lhakhang. It is managed by one Principal who also serves as the teacher for both pre-primary and grade 1. When the GNH Centre Bhutan approached the school for an international visit, we noticed the condition of the two classrooms and toilets for the little students who attend the facility. Students are as young as five years and the oldest was eight years of age.

The classrooms were sparsely furnished and the floors were dusty as they had no concrete or plank cover. The two toilets for the children were basically hole in pits and had no running water for basic hygiene. It was clear there was a dire need to improve conditions that would directly make life easier for both the Principal and his students.

The GNH Centre put up a small project proposal to our international network and secured funding to construct the most needed facilities for the school. Together with Dr. Kimchi Moyer's help and the generosity from our American participants, for the electrification of three class rooms, flooring works, and to obtain a stable water supply for the school. The Centre also funded the construction of two new toilets with water supply to improve the sanitation of the school. The project was successfully completed in August 2019.

Today Yebesa Community School proudly boasts improved facilities and happier students, speaking to the Principal, he says "Had it not been for the GNH Centre's visit, we would not have been able to do all this. The students are happier and the community also came together to build improved facilities for the school."



## GNH ADVOCACY & OUTREACH

The GNHCB set out on the second phase of the GNH Advocacy and Outreach Programme that started in May 2019. Targeting Gasa and Punakha as the first visit the team covered 10 schools and from the mid of August till September, the team visited 5 Dzongkhags (Bumthang, Trongsa, Zhemgang, Gelephu and Sarpang) covering 16 schools. Over all 37 High and Middle secondary schools were visited including the Technical Training institute in Punakha, reaching over 1000 students.



As part of the drive to reach out to as many students as possible in the country with the message of GNH and how it can be implemented in our daily lives, a team from the Programme and Communication division of GNHCB set out on an in- country journey of rugged roads and difficult terrains so that we get a step closer to fulfilling our objective of “GNH in action”.

Planned to take place in stages targeting different districts and areas in the country, the activities are part of an ongoing “GNH Youth in Action Project” that also includes bi-annual workshops for students aimed at honing their knowledge on GNH and encouraging them to come up with their own GNH project prototypes in their respective institutions.







## SUPPORT FROM SINGAPORE'S ONE LOVE

During our advocacy drive in May, we distributed books and clothes to some schools. Those items were sent to us by a Singapore-based donor called One Love Ltd that has been hosting gifting days to collect gifts to fulfill the wish lists of many children's home and school development accompaniment projects for Philippines, Africa and Bhutan.

Ms. Peng-Ean Khoo, the Co-Founder and Director, has been in touch with the Centre for the last few years with the donation drive called the One Love: Bhutan.

Here are some pictures sent to us from Tashidingkha Central School in Punakha, one of the schools that received the donation.



The GNHCB appreciates and thanks the One Love family for their beautiful work and the generous contribution aimed at making a difference in children's lives.



## GNH YOUTH CLUB COORDINATORS MEET



A workshop for all GNH club coordinators from various colleges who have adopted GNH club/activities was held in August. Over 20 participants from Sherubtse College, Gaedu College of Business Studies, College of Language and Culture Studies, and Samtse College of Education came together to brainstorm how best to apply GNH in action in their institutions. Together, amazing ideas on the application of GNH were born that will be taken forward. We can't wait to share the outcomes of these in our future issues.





# RITES OF PASSAGE TRAINING

The Rite of Passage to support young people through their transition into the next stage of their lives – young adulthood. This training is for anyone seeking guidance on how to become a better mentor, parent or leader. Our ethos aligns firmly with the GNH multi-dimensional development approach seeking to achieve a harmonious balance between material well-being and the spiritual, emotional and cultural needs of society. The Rites of Passage Institute Leadership Training program in Bhutan from September 17th and 18th will be a two-day intensive aimed at training participants in the framework of a Rite of Passage. The process is based on research into the common elements of Rites of Passage that exist all around the world and will clearly outline the steps in a Rite of Passage for people to move



in a healthy way to the next stage in their life. Dr Arne as he presents the latest research from around the world and explores how to support Bhutanese youth to maintain their cultural heritage whilst growing up in a rapidly changing world, increasingly influenced by the introduction of the internet.







## NATIONAL DAY OF HAPPINESS 11 NOVEMBER

Since 2016, the Centre has adopted 11 November as a tribute for Drugyal Zhipa and the profound vision of GNH. Over the years, the Centre has organized various events to commemorate the day.

In 2019, the Centre led a prayer and butter lamp ceremony for Drugyal Zhipa's health and long life in the heart of the capital at the Memorial Chorten. The ceremony was graced by Gyalum Tseyrim Pem Wangchuck, HRH Ashi Kezang Choden Wangchuck, members of the international community and Bhutanese citizens. To conclude the ceremony, the Centre hosted a lunch for the community of elderly citizens who circumambulated the chorten.



The event was followed by a visit of Chinese students studying sustainable development for a two-day interaction. The students received GNH sessions and interacted with youth members who helped them design their own GNH related projects at their respective schools



## GNH WINTER YOUTH LEADERSHIP

The six -day GNH Winter Youth Leadership programme was conducted to support Bhutanese youth towards positive transformation and the importance of building communities, projects and lifestyles guided by GNH principles .20 participants who were GNH club members from four different colleges joined the programme.

The Winter Youth Leadership programme was also the first of a kind to have implemented the ROP framework of storytelling, visioning, transition and honoring with the aspects of GNH values. During the week-long programme they were introduced to GNH values with detailed sessions on understanding the 9 domains and its application in their daily lives. Guest speakers were also invited from the Bhutan Ecological Society, social entrepreneurs and included a site visit to the Bhutan Toilet Organization and Chithuen Phendey Association. As a part of the cultural and spiritual experience the students also visited Chimi Lhakhang. The programme also covered various aspects on how to sustain and improve GNH clubs in their colleges. The students also shared their respective club activities undertaken so far while also reflecting on lessons.



## INTERNATIONAL DELEGATIONS VISIT GNHCB



The GNH Centre Bhutan welcomed a sixteen-member high level delegation from the Government of Thailand led by Mr. Danai Moosa, Deputy Secretary General, National Security Council, Prime Minister Office, Thailand.

One of the key areas of interest expressed by the delegation was to visit the Centre and learn more about GNH. The discussions included an overview about GNH and its history, the works of GNHCB and our alliances with various international organizations including GNH Centre Thailand.

Mr. Moosa commended the Centre's efforts, the relationship with Thailand and stressed how important the goal of happiness is both in Bhutan and Thailand.

The delegation's visit was facilitated by the Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, the Royal Government of Bhutan. The GNHCB is humbled and encouraged by the visit and interaction.

The GNH Centre Bhutan also welcomed 15 Mayors representing the Miyazaki prefecture association of towns and villages of Japan on 1st October, 2019. The team was led by Mr. Takashi Betsumiya, Executive Director, Miyazaki prefecture of towns and villages. The organization deals with stimulating the local town's economy and as a part of their overseas technical visit, their visit to Bhutan included a familiarization session about GNH and how happiness is measured in Bhutan.



## GNH ORIENTATION WORKSHOP FOR THE TOUR GUIDES

Close to 70 tour guides attended a one-day GNH Orientation Programme organized by the GNHCB and the Guides Association of Bhutan. Topics included history of GNH, its four pillars and nine domains, the GNH survey and GNH impact beyond Bhutan.

