Build a Future For the Less Fortunate

Thimphu Rotary Club’s “Positive Future” Initiatives

Rotary Club of Thimphu
RSNP Building, Kawajangtsa, Thimphu, BHUTAN
Mobile: +975 77190182, Telephone: +975 2 323242
Email: rotarybhutan@gmail.com

www.rotarybhutan.org
EDUCATION & LIFE SKILLS FUND

At the most practical level, education enables people to calculate expenses and incomes, fill out job application forms, and convey medical information. It opens up opportunities to earn a livelihood, and feed and care for one's family. It helps people interpret government documents and make sense of news reporting. Put simply, education empowers people in daily life.

More broadly, a sound education contributes to nation building. It makes citizens conscientious caretakers of the environment. It nurtures healthy lifestyles and responsible behavior. It enables people to read about historical events that have molded their present lives, and to comprehend scientific breakthroughs that will shape their future. It helps us effectively communicate across cultures, in the process becoming engaged contributors in an increasingly globalized world. Most transcendentally, education equips us to grapple with life’s most enduring questions.

For all of these reasons, Bhutan has committed to providing free education to its children—from primary until high school, and in some cases even college. But while the Royal Government of Bhutan is doing a commendable job of providing free and holistic schooling to its children and citizens, there are gaps that need filling.

This is where the Rotary Club of Thimphu wishes to step in and do our part. In December 2016, the Club instituted an “Education & Life Skills Fund”. So far, we have generated a total of Nu.6,000,000.00 (a little over US$ 9,000.00). By the end of this Rotary year (June 30, 2017), we hope to raise US$30,000.00 for the Fund.

Our ultimate aim is to reach a target of US$500,000.00. The Club will invest this sum in our banks and, with the annual interest accrued thereon, provide financial assistance to deserving children, so that they may acquire the education and life skills that will ensure them a safe future, while also making them responsible and mindful citizens.

Please contribute to this important humanitarian initiative.

Target fund: US$ 500,000.00

SUPPORTING SCHOOL FARMING & YOUTH AGRICULTURE COOPERATIVES

Agriculture is the single largest sector that provides livelihoods to 56.6 percent of the Bhutanese population. The total agricultural area is only 2.93 percent of the country’s total land area of 38,394 sq. km.

In the recent past, agriculture production has been on a steady increase, resulting in drastic increase in imports of agriculture produces. Agriculture’s share of GDP decreased from 24 percent in 2004 to 16 percent in 2013. To worsen matters, the incidence of human-wildlife conflicts (HWCs) is on the rise, causing many traditional farmers to abandon their farm lands and move to urban centers.

Despite the government’s concerted efforts towards creating job opportunities and employment through investments, unemployment remains a challenge.

Therefore, this project seeks to enhance/reinvigorate agricultural production in rural Bhutan, create jobs, address youth unemployment issues, reverse rural-urban migration, and be the forerunner to Bhutan’s Green Revolution by supporting school farming and youth agriculture cooperatives to self-sustain in rural areas of Bhutan.

The project will support 3 rural schools and 3 youth Cooperatives - to enhance/reinvigorate effective protection against animals, provide financial assistance to deserving children, and help the forerunner to Bhutan’s Green Revolution by supporting school farming and youth agriculture cooperatives to self-sustain in rural areas of Bhutan.

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1. Provision of 20 Kms of solar fencing to protect farm yields from wildlife predation and minimize damage to crops. With effective protection against animals, farmers will be able to reclaim land previously abandoned, and expand the area that they cultivate.

2. Provision of 4 farm machinery (tractors and power tillers) to achieve economies of scale, improve productivity of agriculture related activities and create long-term, sustainable farming/jobs.
3. Provision of farm equipment and accessories (Green houses and farming tools) to enhance food security and improve crop yield and quality, and create employment opportunities for young and educated youth, in agriculture and encourage more youth to stay in the rural areas.

4. Provision of livestock and vegetable seeds to promote dignity of labour among students and make students ‘work, produce and consume’ healthy organic vegetables, meat, eggs and dairy products while at the same time making a living.

Project Amount: The total project cost is US $ 59,462.00

Ways of giving:

- a. Sponsor 3 farm machinery for 3 youth cooperatives  
  US $ 22,000.00

- b. Sponsor 2 farm machinery for 2 youth cooperatives  
  US $ 14,667.00

- c. Sponsor 2 farm machinery for 1 youth cooperative  
  US $ 7,334.00

- d. Adopt a school  
  US $ 6,970.00

- e. Sponsor farm equipment (green house, vegetable seeds and farming tools) for 3 schools US $ 4,405.00 or 1 school for  
  US $ 1,469.00

- f. Sponsor farm equipment (green house, vegetable seeds and farming tools) for 3 youth cooperatives or 1 youth cooperative for  
  US $ 4,405.00

- g. Sponsor diary farming for 3 schools US $ 8,850.00 or 1 school for  
  US $ 2,950.00

- h. Sponsor poultry farming for 3 schools US $ 4,650 or 1 school for  
  US $ 1,550.00

- i. Sponsor building of 20 Kms solar fencing  
  US $ 15,152.00

The Rotary Club of Thimphu believes that promotion of organic farming within and around the periphery of urban centers can increase healthy food production. Thus, this project is aimed at small-scale organic farming by unemployed women.

Benefits of organic gardening in the urban areas:
1. Provide adequate and better food diversity for families
2. Generate extra income for the urban families
3. Curtail buying unsafe imported food
4. Improve health and nutrition of the lower income group
5. Reduce illness and nutritional related problems
6. Cleaner greener city in place of weeds and unkempt bushes

This project will provide in:
1. Awareness and training for organic production.
   a. The DOA can be requested to provide sensitization and training through the National Organic Program

2. Support in setting up gardens:
   a. Fencing to protect the gardening areas from stray animals
   b. Irrigation system with water tanks, pipes, sprinklers etc.
   c. Small tillers, tools, equipment and hand tools
   d. Green houses and shades, to raise nursery and produce off-season vegetables
   e. Supply of seeds and other inputs such as soil fertility management and plant health management materials.

Target fund: US$ 50,000.00
RURAL SCHOOL LIBRARY PROJECT

The Rural School Library Project will donate books and libraries to schools in rural Bhutan where most often schools are poorly stocked with library books, if at all. We believe that education is the key motivator to breaking the cycle of poverty. Education is a big leveler and can bring tremendous change in society.

The goal of the project is to enhance children’s literacy and knowledge, to be delivered through three dedicated approaches: donation of library and library books, literacy programs and training of librarians.

The project will provide a wide range of age appropriate English and Dzongkha language children’s books including history, science, short stories, fairy tales, books for young and older readers, children’s dictionaries, children’s reference books, and an assortment of comic books. Each of the target schools will also be provided with full sets of children’s encyclopedias. Easy access to fun and interesting materials that this project is intended to provide, it is hoped, will spark the children’s imaginations and promote independent learning, intellectual curiosity, and a lifelong passion for reading.

Once a library is in place, it is essential to properly introduce children to a world filled with books. Thus, the literacy programs and training of librarians will follow suit. An important component of the Rural School Library Project will be the training of librarians, in order that they are skilled in the proper management and maintenance of the libraries, loaning or books to students, use the children’s books in a classroom setting, and how to get the students involved in the maintenance of their library. A well-maintained library is a well-used library.

Fund required: US$ 45,000.00 for a total of 10 schools

SAFE DRINKING WATER FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN

Nearly 70% of Bhutanese people live in remote villages and settlements. In recent times, the incidence of rural-urban migration has seen marked increase, thereby putting pressure on services and the environment, including safe and hygienic drinking water supply. While diarrhoea is no longer the top killer of children under five years of age, it is still one of the country’s top ten diseases, as reported by the health centres. During the monsoon season, outbreak of water-borne diseases are frequently reported in schools and villages, mainly caused by contaminated drinking water.

The Royal Government of Bhutan recognizes supply of clean and drinking water as one of the highest development priorities. Unfortunately owing to limited resources, the target of 100% safe drinking water supply remains a distant dream. With Australian assistance, the past three years has seen the implementation of water safety plans (WSPs) in most of the urban as well as in rural areas of Bhutan. Unfortunately, many schools have been left out. Research has shown that 88% of diarrhoeal diseases can be prevented through safe water, sanitation and good hygiene.

Recognizing the important role that WSPs play in the effective allocation of limited resources to improve and sustain water safety, the Rotary Club of Thimphu in collaboration with the Ministry of Health wishes to assist 10 schools in helping them improve their drinking water quality through implementation of water safety initiatives.

Objectives:

1. To finance minor infrastructure improvements identified through the WSP process in order to improve and sustain drinking water safety in schools, for at least 10,000 students in total.

Activities:

- Institute WSP committee in each school
- Provide training on WSP to school WSP committees, draw up plans to implement water safety in schools
- Train school water caretakers on operation and maintenance
- Procurement of U&M equipment, filters, and water quality testing equipment

Target population: 10,000 students in 10 schools

Total budget required: US$ 20,000.00

WASH-VACUUM TRUCK FOR BHUTAN TOILET ORGANIZATION

This project will help procure a vacuum truck for the Bhutan Toilet Organization (BTO) to maintain the public toilets.

Open defecation is still very prevalent and poor maintenance or public toilets, general awareness on proper use and clean public toilets, are still low in Bhutan. Bhutan Toilet is a Civil Society Organization that is committed to improving toilet and sanitation conditions within the country. Through their education and awareness programs they have been able to bring the issue of public toilet use and sanitation into national focus. As of date, they have successfully revamped more than 50 public toilets and works towards providing clean and hygienic environment to the users. They also provide portable public toilets, free of cost during national and local events.

However, all of these public toilets do not have access to sewage facilities and most of them are located in areas with inadequately and erratic water supply. The BTO often has to hire human scavengers or manually scavenge it themselves to empty the clogged septic tanks/cess pools or wash off the overflowing human excreta. This is a big challenge for BTO not only in terms of maintaining clean and hygienic toilets but also for their own health and safety.

In order to address these issues, the BTO is in dire need of a sewerage cleaning truck to empty the cesspools/septic tanks, provide water for cleaning purpose and fill over head tanks during emergency and times of shortage of water. The vehicle will also help empty the portable toilets.

The project will provide a 1,000~3,000 liters sewerage cleaning vacuum truck to Bhutan Toilet Organization. The geographical coverage of this project will extend to all the 20 districts of the country.

Fund required: US$ 30,000.00
BUILDING A 21ST-CENTURY HOSPITAL EMERGENCY CARE SYSTEM

Emergencies and disasters can strike quickly and without warning. Hospitals, therefore form the bedrock of continuum of emergency care services that include Health Help Center (HHC-112) and ambulance services, pre-hospital emergency medical care and transport, hospital-based emergency and trauma care, and inpatient services. While today's emergency care system offers significantly more medical capability than was available in the past, it still continues to suffer from severe disintegration, lack of professional capacity, absence of systemic coordination, etc.

To address these challenges and chart a new direction for emergency care, the Ministry of Health, Koyat, Koyat Government of Bhutan envisions a system in which all communities will be served by well-planned and highly coordinated emergency care services through the existing 3 regional referral hospitals.

LOW COST HOSTEL FOR KAGTONG PRIMARY SCHOOL

Kagtong Primary School is a community school with a student strength of little over 200 children. This remote school in rural Zhempang is in dire need of hostels to accommodate students who have to walk for hours to get to school. The intention is to build two low cost hostels - one each for boys and girls - to accommodate about 100 students.

Kagtong Primary School is set in a remote community in the lower region of the district of Zhempang. It caters to about 400 households spanning across 15 villages that are scattered far away from each other. The children have to hike almost 3 hours every day, to attend classes, through conditions that are dangerous and unsafe. Due to the need for long distance walking to get to school, the students end up spending more time on commuting, rather than studying. This has resulted in poor performance of the students, marked by high incidence of dropouts.

As a temporary solution to avoiding long distance commuting, some of the students are currently housed in makeshift hostels/huts, managed by the school and some stay with their relatives and family friends, living in the periphery of the school.

Most of the parents of the school children are uneducated and among the most impoverished in the country. As a result, the children do not have the benefit of parental tutoring and guidance at home. Girls are more vulnerable than boys.

According to the government’s education policy, in place, no hostel facility is provided to schools with enrolment lesser than 300 students. Thus, Kagtong Primary School is outside the ambit of government support system.

This project in intended to provide two units (1 female and 1 male) of low cost fully furnished student housing to accommodate 100 students along with an attached guidance teacher residence.

Total funds needed: US$ 25,000.00
1. Full sponsorship - US$ 25,000.00
2. Sponsor hostel/housing only - US$ 16,000.00
3. Sponsor one student housing (male or female) - US$ 8,000.00
4. Sponsor building of toilets and kitchen/dining hall - US$ 5,000.00
5. Sponsor hostel furniture - US$ 4,000.00

CONTROL OF RABIES

Project Proposal to address: Rabies - A Serious Public health and safety concern for the nation’s capital city – Thimphu.

Rabies is an acute viral disease, which affects all warm-blooded animals including human beings. It is fatal and therefore considered as the most dreaded disease transmission from animal to humans and animal-to-animal. In over 80 countries, rabies is still in its most dangerous reservoir, the dog population. As per the World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates, between 35,000 and 50,000 people die every year around the world while more than 10 million people undergo post exposure treatment (WHO, 2004).

In Bhutan sporadic cases of human rabies are reported from time to time. Rabies in animals occurred frequently throughout the country prior to 1992. The incidence of rabies decreased in the inner parts of the country after the launch of a nationwide rabies control program in 1992. In 2005-2006, eastern Bhutan reported rabies outbreaks for the first time in a decade, indicating that rabies is re-emerging as a serious public health and economic problem, particularly in areas with high stray dog population, like in Thimphu.

In the past five years the government spent over Nu. 6 million on anti-rabies vaccines. Some of the treatment costs could have been avoided since not every dog bite victim is a necessary victim of a rabid dog. But this has not been possible, given the huge stray dog population – Thimphu alone accounts for close to 7,000 stray dogs. Recorded data reveals that in 2000 Monggar, Trashiyangtse and Trashigang (eastern Bhutan) reported 107 dog bite cases, three of which resulted in deaths. The highest incidence of dog bite occurred in 2004, with 1,400 dog bite cases, followed by 940 cases in 2002.” (Source: Kuensel National Newspaper, 2007).

Proposed Project Activities
1. Public awareness and advocacy program on Rabies, prevention, control and management 5,000.00
2. Community based surveys (KAP Study) 2,000.00
3. Anti Rabies vaccination and dog sterilization program 15,000.00
4. WHO approved vaccine procurement 10,000.00
5. Laboratory diagnostics workshop and training 5,000.00
6. Animal trendy dog pound construction in Thimphu 15,000.00
TOTAL (US$) 50,000.00
LOW COST SANITARY NAPKIN PROJECT

Brief Overview of the Project:
Menstruation for women is a normal physiological process, but due to ignorance, illiteracy, socio-cultural taboos, poverty, and lack of adequate health facilities; menstrual hygiene of women was always neglected, resulting in many avoidable diseases.

The majority of women in the rural areas of Bhutan face great challenges in terms of personal hygiene and sanitation due to non-availability of soap and sufficient water. In many villages, the toilets are either non-existent or if any are insufficient in numbers, which are often poorly designed and maintained. For rural women who are menstruating, these problems compound the difficulties posed by the inability to afford sanitary towels as well as cultural taboos surrounding menstruation. As a result, many rural women miss work in the farms and are constrained to contribute effectively to household food production.

Proper menstrual hygiene management is one of the most important and basic aspects of feminine health that is unfortunately neglected not just in rural areas but throughout the country.

Through this project, the Rotary Club of Thimphu aims to help establish a manufacturing facility to produce low-cost sanitary pads that can be afforded by poor rural women and girls. Concurrently, as part of advocacy and awareness initiative, the Club will organize training and question-and-answer sessions for women in rural Bhutan. This is expected to result in improvement of menstrual hygiene among rural women.

Project Cost: US$ 25,000.00

GAWAILING HAPPY HOME BAKERY

Happy Home Bakery is no ordinary bakery. Solely run by survivors of domestic and gender-based abuse, the bakery will be situated 25 kilometers away from Thimphu in Selekha village, Wangsina. The project will not only provide livelihood skills and vocational training but also allow participants to share their personal stories to become confident individuals. The goal of the project is also to enable participants to become financially independent and productive women and girls. In addition to the employment benefits, the project will bring access to low cost and hygienic baked goods for the local residents.

How will the project benefit vulnerable women and girls?

Total Fund Required: US$ 28,000.00

Ways of giving:
- Sponsor baking machinery/equipment
- Sponsor raw materials & other operational costs

FLORICULTURE

Rotary Cause: To promote the welfare and livelihood of women home based workers and unemployed young women through a gainful floriculture programme

Beneficiaries: Local unemployed women and women home-based workers.

This project aims to introduce floriculture as an attractive employment opportunity for women and home-based workers. In order to promote the welfare of the home based workers and unemployed women, the project will facilitate, promote and provide guidance for the enhancement of skills for gainful floriculture cottage industry and strengthen market access for their products. This will result in generation of employment and income, thereby ensuring a secured livelihood for themselves and their families.

How will the project benefit women and girls?

With the growing demand for flowers among the Bhutanese and various service industry, floriculture is steadily picking up in the country. Bhutanese values of conservation and protection are also embedded in floriculture business. Hence, the project will provide a platform for women home based workers and unemployed women to gain skills in the cultivation of flowering and ornamental plants for gardens and for floristry. The members will be introduced to the thriving and dynamic world of floriculture, and cultivation technology. In addition to generating employment and economic opportunities, this project will help in promoting the culture of respecting our environment and contribute to Bhutan’s aesthetic and green development vision.

Fund Needed: US$ 30,000.00