

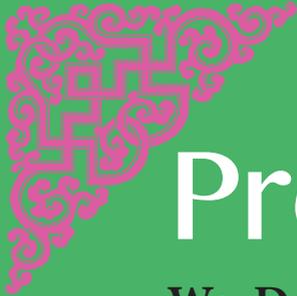


NARROWING THE GAP

DRUK NYAMRUP TSHOGPA MANIFESTO 2018

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Preamble

We, Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa:

GUIDED by the vision of His Majesty the King, bound by the allegiance to the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan and inspired by the desire to nurture and strengthen the principles of parliamentary democracy;

SOLEMNLY pledge ourselves to uphold the commitments we make in this manifesto and to work for unity, progress, security and political stability of Bhutan at all times.



FOREWORD

It is a matter of utmost pride for Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa (DNT), as it is for every Bhutanese across the country, to be part of a significant milestone on Bhutan's democratic journey.

With blessings of the triple gem, our country has been fortunate to have ventured on this journey that began 10 years ago.

We hold in high regard the role of the Zhung Dratshang in strengthening, thereby, securing our living spiritual and cultural faith, contributing to the wellness of not just the people, but all sentient beings in the country. Our respects to the armed forces, men who have sworn to guard our land and sovereignty, and maintaining continued peace that successive monarchs of the country have envisioned.

Today, on the threshold of the third parliamentary elections, DNT steps forward once more, with renewed faith in the leadership and trust in the people of Bhutan, as a choice for change and hope, to better serve the King, country and its people.

Much of the inspiration is drawn from the strong support the people of Bhutan lent us in the 2013 elections. Despite being a new party, with barely enough time to reach out to

the people across the country, DNT received 17 percent of the total votes in the primaries then.

This was also a factor that allowed us to remain relevant as a political institution outside the parliament, closely following developments in the country, raising concerns on national issues and ensuring representation of communities and people whenever and however possible.

We never ceased to engage with people from all walks of life. The travels across the country, the consultations with Bhutanese from diverse backgrounds and the developments and challenges we discerned for ourselves helped us reinforce our stance in politics.

However, today, 10 years into the country's democratic process, it is time to pause and take stock. Bhutanese electorate chose Druk Phuensum Tshogpa and People's Democratic Party to play both roles of the government and opposition in their two terms of five years each. They have both served their mandates to the best of their abilities. We acknowledge the developments the country witnessed in all spheres during their tenures.

The benefits accrued from these development activities over resources belonging to all Bhutanese of every



Dr Lotay Tshering
DNT President



nooks of the country, alas, has been a stark imbalance in distribution. For Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa, the unequal distribution of efforts is a major concern, which if neglected, could spell far wider gap to close. The growing income gap, as evident from the Gini coefficient, has held back lower and middle-income groups from prospering.

With little or no savings to propel them toward decent living, like children's education, health expenses and suitable home for instance, a significant section of the society struggle to make ends meet. We need to act now.

Growing division in communities, a residue of the sort of politics that has been in practice so far, is also a concern considering the country's size and just as small a population. Division of people along party lines is evident to this day and efforts to mend strained relationships are still expectations from the two governments.

Apolitical nature of certain institutions, like the civil service and local government, need to be protected.

Initiating regular party meetings for better collaborations and working towards common national good, and reviewing policies to prevent interference by elected governments in future are vital.

Thus, with reaffirmed conviction and genuine intentions, Druk Nyamrup

Tshogpa once again offers itself to the people of Bhutan for the 2018 Parliamentary elections. We are here to fulfill people's aspirations for change, to infuse trust and harmony in Bhutan's politics, and to initiate progress. In all our efforts, we will be guided by the overarching goal of Narrowing the Gap.

We are pleased to present this manifesto that bares our plans to do just that. It is an outcome of our consultations with people over the last five years. We declare, with the least of inhibition, that it is the people's manifesto and not so much the party's. In aligning with our country's priorities, we have also reviewed the draft 12th Five Year Plan. Our manifesto outlines plans for your every need.

To deliver the plans, Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa has a team of passionate and committed professionals with varying experiences, to offer a strong, stable and trusted government for the people. More important, it is a team that will serve the people with utmost humility and dedication to realise this manifesto put together with the vision for a better and brighter future.



Dr Lotay Tshering
President

Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa



WE HAVE A PLAN FOR YOUR EVERY NEED

རྒྱ་ལུ་དགོ་པའི་ཁས་བླངས་གསལ་བསྐྱབས།

HEALTH

Equitable, better, quality health care in every village, gewog and district

ECONOMY

A clear plan with comprehensive policies to uplift lower and middle income groups, encourage innovation and create economic opportunities

EDUCATION

Make teaching the number one profession, with better equipped classrooms and inclusive education

AGRICULTURE

Rural prosperity through strategic marketing of agricultural produce, thereby, enriching families

JOBS AND LIVELIHOOD

An employment agency with a long-term employment plan and one that assists all unemployed youth

COMMUNICATIONS

Narrowing the digital divide by enabling access to free communication and universal access to in-country online data

HOUSING

Adequate housing nationwide for all income groups

WATER

A dedicated water agency that will provide 100 percent drinking and irrigation water for all by 2021

PUBLIC SERVICES

Prompt, efficient and uniform public services nationwide

WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Six-month maternity leave and allowances for all, support foreign domestic worker and strengthen women and children services

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Safe and secure rural roads and improved public transport

CULTURE

Revive festivals, strengthen cultural heritage of all ethnic communities



PEOPLE'S MANIFESTO

མི་སེར་གྱི་ཁས་བླངས་གསལ་བསྒྲགས།

Developed through widespread consultation

As a Party solely devoted to our People, DNT has developed an entirely new process in drafting our manifesto. Our manifesto was built by the voice of our People and every decision in creating it was taken from the grassroots.

Nyamrup travelled to every district and consulted the people. At every place we met with stakeholders and people from all backgrounds. These consultations not only built our manifesto, even our candidates were selected based on the expressions of the People. Thus our candidates are already extremely familiar with their constituencies and well suited to fulfill the aspirations of our People. Nyamrup has reviewed the draft 12th Five Year Plan in detail during consultations with people in all dzongkhags.

The message from our People is clear. Irrespective of the election outcome, development related work must proceed as reflected in the Plan documents. The People state that these Plan documents were drafted based on decisions taken by GT and DT to meet the People's demands. The People strongly conveyed the

message that they do not want populist handouts and short-term gifts from the central government. They know very well that these short-term gimmicks have little impact on their long-term future and instead are



People from across the country were consulted to draft this manifesto



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very dangerous for Bhutan because in the last 10 years of democracy the government has built a mountain of debt for future generations to bear. The People still uphold the motto of ***Rang-go Rang-drup*** (Self Reliance) and will not tolerate politicians compromising this vision.

The People want strong policy decisions, fair and equal opportunities and government projects that are equitable. As the country develops rapidly the growing divide between rich and poor is their biggest concern.

Therefore, this is the central theme of our manifesto. Ours is a People's Manifesto.

Before it is too late, we must provide equal opportunities for all, so that Bhutan grows to benefit all our People. As we strengthen our economy we must also give serious thought to how we can provide better health care and education to our People. DNT is not a political party, we are a People's Party and we will shoulder the responsibility.





OUR VISION

Over 100 years ago, our successive monarchs and forefathers charted a course for the country. His Majesty the fourth Druk Gyalpo guided the country and its people through the course and during his more than 30 years of reign, ensured that it was on a democratic journey that we all boarded.

A young visionary King, who

soon took over the reign with nation-wide consultation of the draft constitution with his people, oversaw the successful conduct of the first parliamentary elections and the subsequent adoption of the Constitution by representatives of the people from across the country.

His Majesty the King, on several occasions, reminded the people of both opportunities and challenges of a democracy. Unfortunately, the process



DNT president with the people of *Sha-Dhar-Gye* during a familiarisation meet in July

our first two political parties initiated was at total variance with the kind of democratic transition our visionary monarchs envisioned.

The last 10 years of the country's democratic journey was anything but GNH-guided one, or driven by national Self Reliance in the face of escalating debt, division of the society and widening income gap.

Nyamrup's vision is clear. It is for a stronger Bhutan, united, self-reliant and a thriving developed country by 2045.

Such vision cannot be achieved in five years. We must have a long-term plan and direct policies and programs towards fulfilment of that vision. Nyamrup will initiate a Vision 2045 document in consultation with all stakeholders and under the guidance of our great Kings.

Our main desire is for an inclusive and sustainable growth, fuelled by hydropower, agriculture, service sectors and other industries. Our focus will be along the lines of social democracy with firm belief in justice, freedom and solidarity. While entrepreneurship and enterprise must be encouraged and supported, we believe that no one should be left behind. There must be policies and strategies in place to ensure that national wealth is more equitably distributed.

WE ENVISION AN EQUITABLE SOCIETY where poverty is eradicated; the middle class is not only vibrant but prosperous and; the gap between the haves and have-nots inconsequential.

WE ENVISION A BHUTAN where decision-making power is devolved to the grassroots in chiwogs, gewogs and dzongkhags; where every Bhutanese play a part in the development process and; where every Bhutanese can shape their own destiny.

WE ENVISION A BHUTAN where people live in harmony, pursuing contentment, not materialism; where *tha-damtshi* and *ley-jumdre* are a why of life and; where peace thrives amid unity and harmony.

WE ENVISION A COUNTRY where the government exists to serve the people by taking services to them. Equity and opportunity for all, love for the nation and a promising future for our children will be our shared aspiration with the people.



Health is DNT's top among many priorities for the country



HEALTHIER NATION

Taking free, equitable and quality health care to people

Health care is one of the most important services offered by the government. While we are fortunate and grateful that it is free, we are concerned about the inequities in health care across the country and over the quality of services. We want to ensure that you and your family receive best care ensuring good health for all.

OUR COMMITMENT

- ✓ To establish a separate multi-disciplinary super specialty hospital to cater to all out-country referrals
- ✓ Institute mechanisms to ensure access to specialist services at gewog level, including deployment of medical doctor and ambulance services
- ✓ Upgrade strategic hospitals to enable every Bhutanese to avail of specialist services within half-day travel time
- ✓ Improve working condition of health workers through better incentives, allowances and recognition of service
- ✓ Promote our indigenous medicine system as a center of regional and global excellence

We are fortunate to have free health care system that is accessible to all across the country. We are mindful of the constitutional provision of Article 9.21 that mandates the state to “provide free access to basic public health services in both modern and traditional medicines”. We will ensure that this is protected. We acknowledge the commitment of all health workers across the country, who work round

the clock, often at the risk of their own health and under immense pressure from the public to ensure care for those who are ill and injured.

Compared to the past, immense strides have been made in health. People are living longer, have less number of sick days, childhood immunisation is universal, polio and measles are eliminated, maternal mortality is declining and medical technology and equipment is improving.



“..we will send more doctors to hospitals with higher patient load to ensure efficient service.”

Despite these progresses, our health care system is posed with numerous challenges and it is usually the common people who are faced with obstacles in availing of health services.

Lifestyle diseases such as cancers, kidney diseases, cardiovascular accidents, mental health and ageing population are major emerging public health afflictions.

Despite free health care, inequity in health services is a growing concern. While super-specialty medical services are available for those living in Thimphu and to some extent in Mongar and Gelephu, the large majority of our people have to do with less than basic services. Facilities at district hospitals and BHUs are deficient and have not been improved and upgraded for decades.

District and BHU health care workers have remained the same and we have not invested in upgrading their skills and category. A majority of patients travel long distances to avail of services at the national and regional referral hospitals only to spend a good chunk of their hard earned savings, or borrowed money. They often wait for weeks, or months just to complete a simple medical procedure.

Over the years, concerns have been raised over quality of medical care,

need for gentler patient care and most important of all, timely medical response.

The concerns of our health workers need to be addressed and our fellow citizens must be served with quality medical care that is convenient and timely. Given their numerous years of experiences in the field of medicine, DNT President Dr Lotay and founder Dr Tandi will ensure that healthcare and its related services are a priority to be fulfilled should DNT come to power.

Narrowing the gap is DNT's guiding ray and, therefore, ensuring equal access to quality specialist services for all people, wherever they are, is top priority.

OUR PLAN OF ACTION

1. We will make health care convenient for you.

We want you to have access to quality health care wherever and whenever you need it. We will review staff strength in all health centres, weigh it against patient load and ensure that we have enough doctors, nurses and medical staff to meet patients' needs. Instead of promising three doctors in every district, we will send more doctors to hospitals with higher patient load to ensure efficient service.

We will reduce waiting time in hospitals and enable you to complete your visit in the shortest time possible.



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We will institute mechanisms in every hospital to provide preferential attention to senior citizens, monks, retired armed force personnel and people with special needs.

We will establish and implement online patient record system, following which the responsibility of looking after and following up on patients' health will be with the hospitals. We will build a system that enables the hospital to track a patient's health and ensure they receive timely medications, especially for those on long-term treatment, at a place convenient to them.

2. We will ensure you and your family stay healthy.

We are aware of the rising epidemic of non-communicable and lifestyle diseases and its threats on the sustainability of our health system. Breathing life into the adage, of prevention being better than cure, we will invest in prevention programs. We will implement the following programs towards supporting your health:

- ❖ Make flu vaccine available for everyone to reduce sick days from common cold.
- ❖ Review and strengthen tobacco and alcohol policies.
- ❖ Implement evidence-based diabetes program nation-wide.
- ❖ Invest more in cancer prevention and management. Support implementation of the cancer

registry and the work of cancer society.

- ❖ Use patient record system to identify those with health risks. As a preventive measure, provide follow up services and institute annual health check ups for early intervention of diseases.
- ❖ Expand and strengthen community geriatric care to enable good health for senior citizens. We will support and work with the Royal Society for Senior Citizens to enable our senior citizens, irrespective of age, to have a meaningful life and with dignity after retirement from service.

3. We will establish a multi-disciplinary sub-specialty hospital for tertiary care.

We are aware of the difficulties, patients referred abroad for treatment, face in terms of meeting living expenses, language barriers and absence of social support that is integral to Bhutanese health care.

The government also spends millions of Ngultrums sending patients out of the country for treatment. We will, therefore, establish a standalone multi-disciplinary super-specialty national referral hospital that provides

“Provide follow up services and institute annual health check ups for early intervention of diseases.”



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tertiary care in all branches of medicine.

The new hospital will have facilities for kidney transplant, cardiac surgery, comprehensive cancer treatment, nuclear medicine, fertility centre and other facilities for which patients have to be referred outside the country today. Mechanisms will be put in place for efficient referral system to make services equitable and sustainable.

We will tie up JDWNRH with KGUMSB to serve both as a medical training institute and as a western region referral hospital. Provided with facilities similar to the existing JDWNRH, Mongar and Gelephu hospitals will be upgraded to provide equitable medical care across the region.

4. We will upgrade a few strategic district hospitals with specialist services, which people can avail of within half day.

A majority of our citizens live in the Dzongkhags and we understand the need to improve medical care in district hospitals. Therefore, we will

“The new hospital will have facilities for kidney transplant, cardiac surgery, comprehensive cancer treatment, nuclear medicine, fertility center ...”

undertake the following programs to make health care better for you and your family at district levels:

- ❖ Establish specialist services in strategic hospitals based on disease pattern and location.
- ❖ Upgrade and strengthen laboratory and diagnostic facilities in all district hospitals so patients don't have to travel to regional and national referral hospitals for simple medical procedures.
- ❖ Strategize human resource deployment to enable better delivery of medical care.
- ❖ Ensure availability of medical equipment and supplies in adequate numbers and ensure their efficient use.

5. We will upgrade medical care in BHUs and make specialist services available in gewogs.

Picking from the success of mobile medical camp experience, DNT will institute a well equipped permanent mobile medical team who will routinely travel to gewogs to offer people specialist services. That way, we will ensure that people in the gewogs, who are unable to travel, receive equal access to specialist services.

We will start upgrading facilities at BHUs by posting doctors and ensuring availability of routine blood tests and medicines. We will also ensure that specialist diagnostic



facilities such as Upper Gastro-intestinal endoscopy, Pap smear and ultrasound are regularly available in the gewogs.

6. We will upgrade skills and category of health workers in district hospitals and BHUs.

We will train, recruit and send doctors specialised in general practice and family health to the districts.

All categories of health staff will have opportunities to upgrade their skills. We will review and revise the criteria for in-service courses in nursing, public health and other health disciplines, make it flexible and available to all that are interested.

We will work closely with KGUMSB to design and introduce courses that build skills critical in our health services.

7. We will build and promote indigenous medicine system as a center of regional excellence.

Our indigenous medicine system has benefitted our people immensely by providing an alternative source of healing based on ancient Buddhist knowledge and skills. Our country has always been hailed as a rich source of medicinal herbs. We will build on our existing indigenous medical system, strengthen and launch it into a world-class institute to make it into a regional centre of excellence in traditional medicine. To that effect we will:

“We will train, recruit and send doctors specialised in general practice and family health to the districts.”

- ❖ Build the capacity of the faculty of traditional medicine and improve teaching and research skills to raise them to international standards. We will work closely with KGUMSB to consider enrolling foreign students in the drungtsho course.
- ❖ Enable the department of traditional medicine to build partnership with private entities to standardise and establish wellness centers and healing spas.
- ❖ Grant Menjong-Sorig Pharmaceutical complete autonomy to enable the unit to produce high quality indigenous medicinal and wellness products, both for internal consumption and export. We will aggressively market these products to build the sector into a thriving industry. We will also work closely with the department of forests and related agencies to safeguard the ecology and make harvesting sustainable.
- ❖ Strengthen collaboration between traditional medicine and allopathic medicine by designing internship and placement programs among professionals across disciplines. We will institute research grants to encourage research and



“We will review and provide incentives and allowances for extra hours of work, hazard and health risks, night duties and emergency services.”

learning on subjects and themes that interlink between these two disciplines.

8. We will take better care of our health workers and address their needs.

- ❖ We have deep respects and immense pride in our health staff, who are extremely committed and dedicated to their responsibility. We will review and provide incentives and allowances for extra hours of work, hazard and health risks, night duties and emergency services.
- ❖ We will recognise the contributions of our health workers and institute annual awards and performance-based incentives. We will encourage research and support knowledge upgrading to build best practices.

9. We will help families care for relatives confined to bed with terminal illnesses.

- ❖ We will implement a program to provide medical and social

care to assist families who have a relative confined to bed with chronic disease, terminal illness or disability.

10. We will strengthen and invest in public health programs.

We are currently faced with the triple burden of disease – infectious, lifestyle related and nutrition, environmental and maternal conditions – that need speedy redressal. An epidemic of diabetes, cancers, mental disorders, substance abuse, road accidents is claiming lives of people in their most productive ages.

- ❖ We will target these conditions aggressively and make greater investments in strategies to prevent these conditions and promote healthy life.
- ❖ We will build capacity of public health professionals and expand programs to reach everyone.

11. We will upgrade and improve nursing services.

Nurses are a critical part of health services. Towards upgrading the nursing services we will:

- ❖ Create a nursing department.
- ❖ Start masters program in nursing.
- ❖ Establish a nursing college in the south.



“ In today’s world, it is more important that we worry about haves and have-nots – economic disparity. I always say, in the past, we were all equally poor. Today, with growing prosperity, we in Bhutan must be mindful of the threat posed by economic disparities within society.”

*His Majesty the King
Graduates orientation program in
Thimphu, 2011*



Nyamrup will legalise and promote informal businesses that make up 70 percent of Bhutanese workforce



INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

An economy that narrows growing income disparity

OUR COMMITMENT

We want to ensure that all Bhutanese live a contented life accorded by a strong economy. We pledge to keep our economy secure by developing an inclusive, sustainable and equitable economy that contributes to GNH. Our everyday life starting from jobs, home, school and health all depend on a strong economy. One of DNT's plans is to create a vibrant economy and a fairer society with decent livelihood opportunities for everyone, irrespective of backgrounds. Given Bhutan's limited financial sector and its currency being pegged to the Indian Rupee, our attention will be to build a robust economy that, in the long run, contributes to the country's long-held vision of self-reliance.

- ✓ Recoup Nu 10 billion by strengthening tax collection and regulating tax evasion
 - ✓ Increase PIT ceiling to Nu 300,000
 - ✓ Exempt BIT for businesses and firms that have less than Nu 200,000 turn over
 - ✓ Generate additional 5,200MW of hydropower through Sankosh, Kuri-Gongri and other projects
 - ✓ Strengthen tourism sector by establishing Tourism Development Board to spearhead the sector. Invest 10 percent of tourism royalty in promoting and marketing tourism and enhancing connectivity
 - ✓ Work towards a vibrant private sector by implementing recommendations of the *Private Sector Development – The Way Forward, 2016*.
 - ✓ Legalise informal sector and establish an agency to protect, promote and support approximately 70 percent of the workforce engaged in it
 - ✓ Draft *Bhutan: Vision 2045* document in close consultation with all stakeholders
-



ECONOMIC SCENARIO

Bhutan has a small domestic market with limited domestic consumption capacity for a population of 779,666 (2017). GDP at current market price reached Nu 148.7 billion, while GDP growth reached 7.99 percent in 2016. Production of goods and services to meet internal requirements and export of locally produced goods and services grew increasingly important to help sustainable economic growth and national development.

The country today, faces challenges with increasing current account deficit, which has reached over 30 percent of GDP in 2015/16, on the account of immense trade imbalance. Over the years, total imports increased over 200 percent from Nu 21.74 billion in 2010 to Nu 68.5 billion in 2016, while exports increased only by about 25 percent during the same period. Bhutan's import value reached Nu 68.5 billion while its export value reached Nu 32.7 billion in 2016 resulting in account deficit of Nu 35.8 billion. However, the trade deficit still remains at 29.7 percent in 2017 as per the State of the Nation Report, 2018.

Due to low productive capacity, export of goods and services have always been significantly lower than import, leading to relatively huge trade deficit, exerting pressure on the current account and limited hard currency reserves. Trade deficit can

“We will develop *Bhutan: Vision 2045* in close consultation with all stakeholders including, political parties.”

be a serious cause for concern and the only effective and sustainable solution is to diversify our economy, by building our productive capacity to increase exports and reduce imports.

The composition of the export basket is even more worrying. Hydropower alone accounts for more than 30 percent of the total exports. The very high concentration of export with top 10 constituting about 85 percent of the total export, Bhutan's external trade situation is very fragile and highly vulnerable to exogenous shocks. In terms of direction of trade, share of trade with India to total trade constitutes more than 80 percent.

Domestic trade value is Nu 104 billion, while domestic credit value stands at Nu 105 billion. Inflation is around 5 percent. Foreign exchange reserves have reached USD 1.2 billion, including Indian Rupee reserve of Rs 18.6 billion.

A similar concern in parallel with trade deficit is the huge external debt, which currently stands at Nu 170 billion as of today. Of this amount, as per the State of the Nation Report (2018), Hydropower loan comprises Nu 132 billion, while the rest is non-hydropower loan of Nu 37 billion.

Today, hydropower loans are paid



from the electricity revenue generated by hydropower projects themselves. Although electricity is, by far, given huge importance in the country's economy, there are limited youth employment opportunities in the sector, especially in view of the nature of jobs.

Endowed with pristine environment, abundant natural resources and a huge base of rural population (more than 60 percent of people), tourism, agriculture, hydropower, mining and mineral resources sectors have huge export potentials. In recognition of the country's macro-economic situation, we need to diversify our economic activities and enhance productive capacity for export of goods and services, in the larger national interest of self-reliance.

OUR PLAN OF ACTION

1. We will write the *Bhutan: Vision 2045* document.

The *Vision 2020* document that guided the country's development process for the last 20 years has been crucial for planning country's progression. The document did not envision the ushering in of democracy, or take into account the influence of political parties on the country's development. Therefore, it is critical that we have a new vision document that will guide us for the next 20 years.

We will develop a new vision and economic plan for the country,

Bhutan: Vision 2045 in close consultation with all stakeholders, including political parties.

This will ensure that economic plans follow a trajectory that will take this country forward with sustainable development goals. Most important, it will secure the nation's future by providing a clear direction for any political party that comes to power in future to align themselves with the vision.

2. We will diversify our economy.

We acknowledge the central role of hydropower sector in our economy, however, since it is a climate sensitive sector and considering possible geo-climatic hazards in future, it would be unwise to hinge the country's economy solely on a single sector.

Since Bhutan's economy has been driven by investments in the hydropower sector, economic growth remains narrowly based, thus unable to create adequate jobs, especially for the growing youth population. We are determined more than any other party to diversify the economy by accelerating private sector growth and investing in agriculture, mining, manufacturing and service

“We will establish business incubation centres in the four regions... to enable aspiring entrepreneurs to shape and develop their business ideas.”



“... improve and expand PSL scheme by generating awareness, open information centres at gewog and chiwog levels and keep procedures simple and minimal.”

sectors. This will ensure sustaining high economic growth, generating employment opportunities and creating regional balance through optimum identification project sites across the country. To realise that we will:

- ❖ Establish business incubation centres in the four regions of east, south, central and west with enough space to enable aspiring entrepreneurs to shape and develop their business ideas. These centres will boost employment opportunities, mainly in small and medium enterprises and economic growth.
- ❖ Conduct feasibility studies, identify opportunities and establish Dzongkhag Industrial Estates for manufacturing industries, mining and agriculture in various Dzongkhags, in addition to the existing industrial estates. Incentives and support for skills development will be provided to those investing in these sectors.
- ❖ Priority sector lending (PSL) scheme is a good opportunity for enhancing income of farmers and youth. We will improve and expand PSL scheme by generating awareness, open information centres at gewog and chiwog levels and keep procedures simple and minimal. We will establish support centres to assist clients complete paper works for ease of access to loans equally.
- ❖ Establish POL (petroleum, oil and lubricant) distribution network at various strategic locations and regions of the country to meet growing demands from business centres and communities.
- ❖ Conduct comprehensive national geological mapping and exploration of industrial minerals to boost national revenue through export of minerals. The demand for industrial minerals is likely to increase for the next decade as the socio-economic development process picks up. Exploration of industrial minerals will have to be carried out with priority of auctioning the mineral deposits. Mining and mineral-based industries have been an important source of foreign exchange and fiscal receipts for the government and will be further strengthened.
- ❖ Promote modern scientific methods and management practices in mining, such that it promotes progressive fiscal regime, shares benefits and adopts global industry best-practices. We will establish an independent and autonomous Minerals Regulatory Authority to address conflict of



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interest, avoid corruption and improve accountability in the mining sector. It will also enable regulation and monitoring of mines and quarries more effectively in the country.

- ❖ Facilitate and attract FDIs in various sectors through creative business promotion strategies. We will strengthen the FDI division and review its policy to improve and enhance simpler and smoother mechanisms to attract FDI projects.
- ❖ Conduct export promotion activities in view of Bhutan's small domestic market and limited capacity of domestic consumption. We will promote export of locally produced goods by securing better market access, capacity building

of traders, improving business environment, providing trade facilitation services, promoting brand Bhutan, conduct value chain analysis for high value handcraft textile and horticultural products, including organic ones.

- ❖ Expand manufacturing sector to make it an equal contributor, as the hydropower, to the GDP. Its additional benefit will be generation of jobs. This sector has remained weak with limited growth despite establishment of several industrial estates. While, recognising the challenges of a small domestic market, logistics and economies of scale, there are opportunities that can be used, such as brand Bhutan, enabling policies, access to finance and regional markets.



DNT will work towards generating the already planned additional 5,200MW of hydropower



3. We will expand the manufacturing sector to make it an important contributor to GDP.

It is important to partner with private sector so that it contributes to the GDP within the five years of our government. Towards achieving this we will:

- ❖ Support establishment of import substitution industries such as construction materials, wood-based industries, paper and agro-industries among others. Green procurement policy will be implemented to encourage green technology. We will consider protecting these industries through preferential procurement by reviewing all trade agreements.
- ❖ Establish joint ventures with private sector to consider investing in manufacturing products for export. There are several opportunities such as in manufacturing health and medicinal products, cosmetics, essential oils, wood-based products and agro-products. These will all be studied and, at least, five such manufacturing industries will be established. Private sector investors will receive technical and administrative assistance and fast-track procedures will be instituted to accelerate their establishments.

“We will implement *gumba ray lu la-yo ray* scheme, which will ensure each poor household receives an employment opportunity...”

4. We will eradicate poverty.

The PHCB, 2017 has provided us with the opportunity to identify poor and vulnerable households. Poverty has been reducing incrementally with every Five-Year-Plan and today, approximately 8.2 percent of the Bhutanese are poor. Overarching policies and programs can reduce poverty further, however, DNT pledges to eradicate poverty within the next five years. To realise that we will:

- ❖ Use PHCB, 2017 and PAR, 2017 data to identify all households and individuals who are poor. We will make targeted interventions to lift them out of poverty. We will implement *gumba ray lu la-yo ray* scheme, which will ensure each poor household receives an employment opportunity, livelihood opportunity, food subsidies and access to credit. The proposed interventions can be refined in consultation with all stakeholders.
- ❖ Review resource allocation framework to enable Local Governments with high levels of poverty and absence of infrastructure to receive additional development funds. Targeted



area development projects will be implemented in Dzongkhags and gewogs where poverty is high.

5. We will provide realistic salaries and allowances to civil servants.

The cost of living is increasing every year making it difficult – especially for those in the lower and middle income groups – to meet expenses for house rent, buying essential food items, educating children and other incidental costs. Salaries have not kept up with these increasing costs. We will ensure our civil servants are paid the salary due to them, including incentives that are in keeping with market inflation. Towards this we will:

- ❖ Increase salaries of civil servants twice during our tenure.
- ❖ Institute a mechanism to provide realistic salaries that take into account the national economy and increased costs of living. We will ensure that the increase is fair, especially in consideration of those in the lower and middle positions of the PCS.
- ❖ Institute fortnightly salaries to enable flexible use of it for those that need them.
- ❖ Review salaries annually taking into account the state of the economy and inflation in the market. As a responsible government, we want to identify salaries that need revision regularly rather than waiting for change in government.

- ❖ Save for executives, provide uniform travel allowances (TA) and daily subsistence allowance (DSA) to all civil servants.
- ❖ Review and revise employment status and pay, or allowances of those in General Service Personnel (GSP) and Elementary Service Personnel (ESP) levels so that it is adequate and they benefit from pension and provident funds.
- ❖ Institute appropriate allowances for civil servants, such as those with special skills in need, for extra hours of work, risk allowances and high achievers at national and international forums.

6. We will strengthen hydropower development projects.

In recognition of the abundance of water resources with a potential of tapping over 30,000MW electricity, hydropower sector will continue to be the backbone of our economy in achieving sustainable and equitable socio-economic development.

The total hydropower capacity developed till date is 1,606MW (excluding small/mini/micro-hydro capacity of 8MW maintained and operated by Bhutan Power Corporation), which is about 6.75 percent of the techno-economic

“We will provide realistic salaries and allowances to civil servants.”



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potential. The average annual growth of energy consumption is around 14.17 percent, expected to double in the next five years.

The peak demand recorded in 2016 was 336MW, as against the available firm power capacity of 320MW from existing projects in the winter months. Therefore, construction of hydropower projects has become critical to meet the overall domestic energy security for the winter months.

We will reform and strengthen the manpower and institutional capacity in hydropower development to ensure domestic energy security (through enhanced generation and robust grid connectivity) and the export of surplus hydropower for revenue generation. We will:

- ❖ Complete the ongoing construction of Punatsangchhu I and II, Nikachhu and Kholongchhu projects of a combined capacity of 2,326MW. This includes the 720MW Mangdechhu hydropower project due for completion in November 2018. With inclusion of Sankosh and Kuri-Gongri projects, which are already in the pipeline the total generation capacity grows to 5,264MW resulting in more than 100 percent increase for export.

“**Enhance in-country capacity building of hydropower construction.**”

We will engage timely services of GoI agencies for implementation of remedial stabilisation measures for Punatsangchhu I dam and underground power house complex for Punatsangchhu II.

- ❖ Engage Bhutan Power Corporation Limited to implement the transmission network, strengthening and capacity augmentations based on the system requirements and in keeping with the provisions of domestic electricity tariff policy.
- ❖ Enhance efficient public service delivery through promotion of private sector participation in the urban distribution sector, a feasibility study for such initiatives will also be carried out.
- ❖ Revise the Electricity Act of Bhutan 2001. In keeping with the socio-economic development pace of the country and hydropower being an evolving sector, the revision of the Act is overdue.
- ❖ Enhance in-country capacity building of hydropower construction by enabling CDCL to undertake hydropower constructions and develop in-house capacity. To diversify the higher-value-chain of hydropower related industries, DGPC will be strengthened in its capacity to establish hydropower-related manufacturing units such as Bhutan Hydropower Services Ltd. (BHSL) in Jigmeling, Gelephug



and the Bhutan Automation & Engineering Limited in Chhukha. Such facilities will promote cutting edge manufacturing industries, provide construction services and enhance employment opportunities. For maximum benefits from these facilities, policy interventions and management strategies will be developed. These facilities will curtail the flow of funds and resources out of the country. We will also undertake a feasibility study on establishment of manufacturing transmission towers and conductors.

- ❖ Establish an independent Bhutan Power System Operator for efficient coordination & operation of the national and interconnected complex power systems.
- ❖ Implement the inter-governmental projects of 2,585MW Sankosh and of 2,640MW Kuri-Gongri hydropower projects. DPR for Sankosh is completed. DPR for Kuri-Gongri, the largest hydropower project in the country so far, is ongoing. The projects will provide additional benefits like flood control and water security.
- ❖ Conduct various reconnaissance and feasibility studies for HEPs, technical and financial assistances will also be sought from donor agencies.

7. We will reform the tourism sector to make it more vibrant.

Second only to hydropower,

“Reform the tourism sector... and consider all recommendations of the *Bhutan Tourism Review, 2016*.”

tourism sector plays a significant role in our economy in generating revenue and creating employment. Absence of a comprehensive tourism policy, inappropriate management structure, lack of coordination among stakeholders, limited government investment in marketing and promotion, inadequate infrastructure and inconsistent, or weak monitoring are some of the sector's challenges. We will reform the tourism sector collectively with key players in the industry and consider recommendations of the *Bhutan Tourism Review, 2016* (ABTO) and the *Special emphasis on Services and Tourism* (BCCI). We will:

- ❖ Develop and implement a comprehensive tourism policy in collaboration with key stakeholders and widespread consultation.
- ❖ Restructure and reform management by considering the formation of an intermediary committee (tourism development board) comprising government and private sector representatives to spearhead tourism development activities.
- ❖ Review tourist tariff system, including waivers to expand the



“Recover approximately Nu 10 billion by streamlining and strengthening tax collection.”

sector and spread its benefits across 20 Dzongkhags.

- ❖ Streamline and regulate regional tourism to improve services and reap the benefits from this segment without compromising the established tourism principle of high value, low impact.
 - ❖ Diversify tourism products by investing through PPP model in building facilities such as wellness centres, amusement and recreational parks and sports training centres. For this we will build the following:
 - A world class high altitude sports and training centre in Thimphu.
 - Amusement, recreational and water park in Gelephug and Phuentsholing.
 - A wellness centre offering various courses in Buddhism, meditation and packaged retreats.
 - ❖ Invest 10 percent of all royalty earnings in marketing and promoting Bhutan as a tourist destination in high value markets, for research, analysis and product development. A dedicated office will be established to undertake
- this activity, which will report to the tourism development board.
- ❖ Improve access and make it more efficient by expanding connectivity through all modes of travel. For this we will:
 - Enhance air connectivity by expanding both internal and external linkages.
 - Allow establishment of private helicopter services.
 - Build ropeway systems to selected tourist sites.
 - Build railway connection in the south.
 - ❖ We will build appropriate road side amenities such as rest rooms, rest places at scenic spots, information and safety centres at strategic locations and build facilities especially for tourist with special needs and the elderly.
 - ❖ Delink RITH from TCB and upgrade it to a higher level institute offering multiple courses in tourism and hospitality.

8. We will build a stronger and more transparent tax system.

DNT wants to build an economy that works for all, not just for those at the top segment of the society. The tax system should enable everyone to pay their fair share for the good of everybody and the country. We will:

- ❖ Recover approximately Nu 10



billion by streamlining and strengthening tax collection. Income and taxes will be monitored by developing linkages between financial sectors and services to enable more transparent information sharing and ensure everyone pays their fair share. We will strengthen revenue and customs department to monitor and act on tax evaders and institute penalties that deter such practices.

- ❖ Review prevailing taxes and tax bands to ensure the wealthiest Bhutanese do not pay less than hard working middle class to bridge the gap and sustain the economy. We will consider instituting progressive taxes and benefit systems as part of our strategy to narrow the gap. We will adopt appropriate tax policies and consider instituting luxury and inheritance taxes.
- ❖ Exempt low and middle income families from paying Personal Income Tax up to Nu 300,000.
- ❖ We will exempt BIT for business establishments and firms that have less than Nu 200,000 annual turnover.
- ❖ Recognise and formalise the significant importance of the Real Estate, Land Transaction and online retail business and regulate their functions.

9. We will make private sector a partner and strengthen its contribution to the economy.

Our private sector despite being the vital machinery for economic growth, has not been receiving adequate support as of now to harness its full potential to be able to contribute significantly to the economy. The obvious challenges and issues of the private sector are, by and large, lack of policy coordination and harmonisation, legal constraints (labour laws) and lengthy bureaucratic procedures (for FDI), poor infrastructures and financial constraints with unstable liquidity issues.

For the private sector to be vibrant, some of the critical roles are import substitutions through export of high demand goods and services, achieving self-reliance in agriculture, efficient operation of trade and industry, intelligent entrepreneurship and creative indigenous enterprise development. Towards this we will partner with BCCI in implementing the suggestions and priorities outlined in the *Private Sector Development – The Way Forward, 2016* and in particular, we will invest and encourage businesses related to agriculture and food security, manufacturing and services sectors.

In 2016, Bhutan was ranked 73rd out of 190 economies in the ease of doing business by the World Bank. This is a good indicator of the



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country's investment climate on the ease and speed with which small and medium-scale enterprises, that are predominantly operated currently (SMEs), can be established. We will:

- ❖ Improve investments and business climate by create conducive environment for businesses. We will make efficient and well-regulated public services, with active engagement of BCCI in policy making. We will cut red tape, promote transparent decision making on procurement, framing consistent and uniform policies and deregulate unnecessary bureaucratic procedures. We will take public services online, which is to be embraced by all concerned government agencies. Over 90 percent of businesses in the country are small and medium enterprises. Thus, improving the *Ease of Doing Business* will have significant impact on thousands of businesses that will provide employment opportunities to a large population and socio-economic development in the country.
- ❖ Expand access to social and economic infrastructures through better, efficient and more reliable communications and transport, supporting integration of local markets, accessing regional and global markets and investing more in public-private-partnership initiatives .
- ❖ Issuance of trade licenses will be made efficient by eliminating and reducing unnecessary bureaucratic procedures for small enterprises through effective regulatory and monitoring systems.
- ❖ Improve essential public services delivery such as kerosene and LPG among others in both urban towns and rural areas. Besides developing an efficient delivery mechanism of such essential services, we will strengthen existing services such as banking and POL services by strengthening Community Service Centers in each gewog.
- ❖ Promote enterprise development by collaborating with financial institutions and enabling easier and more reliable access to finance. While considering the increase in ceiling for large industries and enterprises, we will also push for greater investment in funding small, micro and cottage industries. We will support incubation centres and invest in potential start-ups. We will develop business development services, build capacity in financial literacy and expand agro-industries and rural enterprise.
- ❖ Create regional balance by stimulating economy in the eastern

“We will push for greater investment in funding small, micro and cottage industries.”



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and central regions through relocation of few institutions to these regions and establishing projects and manufacturing industries. This will create economies of scale and will decongest Thimphu city.

- ❖ We will review rules and regulations for employing foreign workers in hotels and restaurants and also consider allowing foreign workers in the agriculture sector. We will continue to monitor the availability of jobs and opportunities for Bhutanese and will institute mechanisms to ensure that foreign workers do not crowd out opportunities for Bhutanese.

10. We will strengthen and expand small and cottage industries.

Small and cottage industries are important for the economy as it engages significant number of people, generates employment and livelihood opportunities for many and contributes towards maintaining our culture and identity. Strengthening and expanding this sector will be key to boosting economic activities in villages and communities and creating wealth and prosperity in rural areas. Towards this we will:

- ❖ Promote products of our traditional craftsmen by strengthening APIC (Agency for Promotion of Indigenous Crafts).
- ❖ Support industries that produce

import substitution products and uses green technology.

- ❖ Promote Brand Bhutan
- ❖ Increase Rural Enterprise Development Scheme (REDS) fund ceiling from Nu 200,000 to Nu 500,000 and expand it to reach targeted populations.
- ❖ Ease processes to access priority sector lending (PSL) loans and establish support centres to assist completion and submission of applications.
- ❖ Support formation of cooperatives and farmers groups and enable them to take up collective farm activities.
- ❖ Collaborate with large industries and business houses to source from rural areas and to establish subsidiary units in the villages.

11. We will legalise, protect and support informal sector.

Informal economy is a combination of economic activities, enterprises and jobs that are not protected or regulated by the state. An estimated 75 percent of the workforce contribute to the economy through such enterprises as street vendors, temporary workers in the orange export sector, roadside fruits and vegetables vendors, home-based women weavers and home-based bakers to name a few.

They all face numerous problems in selling their produce, which is ignored



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and often restricted. Most important, they face the problem of low income and low social status. Selling on the streets is hard but it is harder when the society at large does not give street vendors human dignity they deserve for making their own ends meet.

We supported the *thukpa* sellers in 2016 and stood in solidarity with them. DNT recognises that street vendors are here to stay and instead of banning them, we must institute appropriate regulation, protection and promotion strategies for the benefit of sellers, buyers and for the economy in general. We will:

- ❖ Identify suitable market design and location for the operation of informal markets and sale of food and other goods and services. We will come up with innovative market location such as rotating location of markets to reduce impact on traffic.
- ❖ Develop legal framework to legitimise street markets at public meeting places. This will enhance community vitality and promote street markets as a place to socialise.
- ❖ Ensure that existing stationary

vendors with no other livelihoods get priority to sell on the street. We will evaluate the progress of these schemes and expand it across the country with positive changes.

- ❖ Come up with Social Protection Mechanisms for street vendors in close consultation with local governments, thromdes and related agencies.
- ❖ Establish an agency for informal economy (similar to APIC) within MoEA that supports, monitors and regulates the informal sector.
- ❖ Promote street vendors by providing space in strategic locations (where there are crowds and social gatherings) and during major events while ensuring that proper standards are followed and that monitoring quality, sanitation and hygiene is maintained.
- ❖ Review all relevant laws, policies and regulations to incorporate aspects related to informal economy.
- ❖ Consider loan provisions for those in the informal sector and also support them with crime protection and childcare support.





A dedicated agency will be established to better manage water resource



SUSTAINABLE WATER

Ensuring water for all by 2021

Although access to safe drinking water in the country has improved over the years, drinking as well as irrigation water shortages have been one of the growing challenges. It is attributed mostly to poor water distribution networks despite the abundance of the resource and lack of proper regulation and enforcement.

Druk Nyamrup Tshogpa will address the water needs of every Bhutanese, ensuring availability to all within three years of our government.

OUR COMMITMENT

- ✓ We will have a dedicated agency to manage water distribution
- ✓ We will map all water sources for proper management of water
- ✓ We will explore conversion of wet land to dry land in cases where there are absolutely no water source for agriculture purposes
- ✓ We will protect watersheds and sources to sustain water supply

CURRENT SCENARIO

Although Bhutan has one of the highest availability of water per capita in the region, reading at 109,000 cubic meters, scarcity of water is reportedly a serious challenge in most of our rural villages and urban towns.

It is an irony that there is acute shortage of water, primarily drinking and irrigation, in the communities despite abundance at the drainage basin. The health ministry reported in 2014 that 17 percent of the households in rural areas faced drinking water problems. Our capital city Thimphu is troubled with lack

of clean and safe drinking water and across the country, reports of water disputes surface every now and then.

Water availability varies and subsequent challenges depend on geographical and climatic conditions. Settlements that are scattered and located on mountain slopes experience immense difficulty in drawing water from small, sometimes distant, streams and springs. In valleys, broken pipes and taps, parched water sources, empty tanks and abandoned irrigation channels are common sights.

The case of Thimphu resounds poor management of water and apathy on the government's part to address



“We will establish a dedicated agency to manage water resources...”

it. Thimphu produces more than 20,036 cubic meters of water every day, while the requirement is 19,287 cubic meters. Yet residents face erratic supply throughout the year with some making do with just an hour of running water.

The Five Year Plan documents and annual plans highlight importance of water management but setbacks emerge in implementation. Past governments have claimed more than 90 percent access to adequate drinking water, which is not even close to the ground picture.

Being a mountainous country, Bhutan has limited tract of seven percent land that can be used for agriculture, of which only 2.9 percent of our land is being used.

Although Bhutan has been aiming at achieving food security by increasing the production of cereals, especially rice, the effort has been mired with many challenges, including lack of adequate irrigation water. This has restricted the country from achieving self-sufficiency, nutritional improvement and income generation by the farmers.

The Water Act of Bhutan 2011 states that “every individual shall have access to safe, affordable and sufficient water for basic human needs.” To implement the Act, the NEC has been

tasked to coordinate the management of water along with other stakeholders such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Forest, Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Works and Human Settlement. A National Integrated Water Resource Management Plan (NWIRMP) has been developed in 2016 along with five river basin management plans.

However, in absence of a dedicated agency that would shoulder responsibility to manage water, the implementation of the plans has been compromised. In the backdrop of all these issues, an urgency is sensed to establish a dedicated agency for coordination and management of water resources more efficiently. Doing so would not just safeguard and sustain the resources but enable harnessing of water that reaches all.

OUR PLAN OF ACTION

1. We will adopt and include water security as a national key result area (NKRA) in the 12th FYP.

Upholding the recommendation in the integrated water management plan of 2016, we will give utmost importance to water security by including it as an important objective in the 12th FYP. Achieving water security is aspired in order to:

- ❖ Satisfy household water and sanitation needs in all communities;
- ❖ Support productive economies in agriculture, industry, and energy;



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- ❖ Develop vibrant, liveable places;
- ❖ Restore healthy rivers and ecosystems; and
- ❖ Build resilient communities that can adapt to change.

We will review and coordinate with the GNHC to incorporate the Key Result Areas (KRAs), Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Strategies identified in meeting the Bhutan Water Security Index (BWSI). We will make necessary investments and allocate required funds to ensure successful implementation.

2. We will establish a dedicated agency to manage water resources and related functions.

We will prioritise establishment of a dedicated water management agency that will provide effective governance. The agency will review and implement the National Integrated Water Management Plan 2016 and the River Basin Management Plan for ensuring equitable water distribution and sustainability of water resources.

The autonomous water management agency will report to the Prime Minister. It will function under the Board of Directors and work closely with all other stakeholders to ensure that adequate water for all is achieved by 2021. To facilitate the work of the agency, we will streamline all relevant Acts, regulations and policies.

For a better informed approach, one of the initial ventures would be to carry out comprehensive survey and

mapping of every community while understanding the vulnerability.

The agency will ensure that the water resources are protected, conserved and/or managed in an economically efficient, socially equitable and environmentally sustainable manner.

The agency will work and coordinate closely with the Dzongkhags and local governments to construct water reservoirs and distribution systems that will provide storage for adequate and equitable water supply to every household.

It will assist in strengthening the management capacity of Water User's Association at the local government level. We will maintain an inventory of water sources in each chiwog and village. Depending upon the location and number of water sources in a particular village or chiwog, a master plan will be formulated.

Alternate sources such as bore wells, bore tubes and water pumps would be explored in communities that are deprived of water sources. If not, migration to more suitable land would be considered.

3. We will ensure all thromdes and urban areas have 100 percent access to adequate drinking water.

We will review the water supply systems of each thromde and urban areas and develop a comprehensive water distribution plan.

We will grant greater authority and financial resources to carry out



activities related to ensuring supply of adequate water to the residents. We will assist the thromdes in building capacity and aligning rules, regulations and policies to make water equitable, adequate and available for all.

As per the revised water distribution plan of each thromde and urban areas, we will prioritise and provide additional funds to ensure that infrastructures such as distribution systems and reservoirs are constructed and developed.

4. We will ensure safe and clean drinking water.

In partnership with the Royal Center for Disease Control, the water management agency will monitor water quality and treat all drinking water sources. Mechanisms will be put in place to monitor water sources, reservoirs and distribution systems on a regular interval. We will build capacity of local governments and communities to take care of their water sources.

5. We will strengthen and provide adequate irrigation water.

Just as drinking water, we will survey and map all water sources for irrigation purposes and categorise agricultural land according to water availability. We will then allocate adequate funds to develop irrigation channels wherever necessary and ensure that irrigation water is equitably distributed.

We will explore different irrigation

“**We will survey and map all water sources for irrigation purposes.”**

systems and methods depending on crop varieties to enhance productivity levels. We will work with National Land Commission and enable land substitution or allow conversion of wet land to dry land in cases where there are absolutely no water source for agriculture purposes.

6. We will ensure uninterrupted water supply for all.

We will provide adequate resources for research and investment in latest technologies to harvest ground water and rain water. The dedicated agency will also be entrusted to work closely with related agencies in monitoring water sources and taking timely action to ensure uninterrupted supply of water.

7. We will ensure conservation, protection and management of water catchment areas.

The national climate change adaptation strategy will be further strengthened by fostering public private partnership for enhancing the sustainable water resource utilisation. All the critical water shed areas and sources of water will be identified and protected. All stakeholders will be involved in the decision making process to enable more advocacy and generate greater ownership over the protection and sustainability of the water sources.



An employment and livelihood corporation will be created to address country's unemployment issue





JOBS AND LIVELIHOOD

Better opportunities, assured employment

OUR COMMITMENT

Being gainfully employed and engaged in productive livelihood activity is a right. We will accord the highest priority in creating employment and livelihood opportunities for people and ensure they have a decent job. We will:

- ✓ Establish an employment and livelihood corporation to employ, contract, create and manage employment in the country
- ✓ Support private sector to create 5,000 jobs annually, especially for youth, to achieve full employment
- ✓ Increase minimum daily wage to Nu 450
- ✓ Reintroduce one-year national service program for all graduates to gain experience, understand national issues and plan careers
- ✓ Make agriculture attractive for livelihood and employment through our *Sonam Gongphel* project, thereby, motivating thousands to take up farm activities

The time for empty promises and rhetoric is over. Unemployment, underemployment and lack of livelihood opportunities for our youth are a major concern leading to despondence, social disharmony and insecure future.

Unrealistic promises marked by unfulfilled political pledges of the past governments have exasperated our youth resulting in distrust for elected officials. Addressing this ongoing issue with short term, unplanned sporadic programs have meant for our youth to be exposed to risky work

environments abroad, often under poor working conditions without security. No attempts have been made to prioritise unemployment as the government's top agenda as represented by the complete absence of a long term, realistic plans with clear strategies and activities.

It is time to invest wholeheartedly in our youth and reap the demographic dividend. We have already lost 10 crucial years and if we do not invest now, then it may be too late. This generation of young unemployed and underemployed people will forever remain dependent. We have to be serious about the need to prioritise



investing on our youth (between 18 and 35 years) today, to help them gain work experience and to start their careers and contribute fully to our economy.

OUR PLAN OF ACTION

1. We will prioritise and allot the highest investment in employment generation and livelihood programs.

In the next five years, we will commit to investing more in generating employment and implementing livelihood programs to reap the benefits of the demographic dividend.

We firmly believe that people, especially the youth are the nation's biggest resources and we will ensure they contribute to nation building rather than be dependent citizens. Despite repeatedly acknowledging the need to address unemployment as a national emergency, there has been no long term targeted intervention nor investment. Towards this we will:

- ❖ Organise a national multi-sectorial committee chaired by the Prime Minister to draw up a long-term plan of action to ensure employment and livelihood programs for all.

“**We will guarantee credit, provide incentives, simplify processes and develop schemes to enable trained entrepreneurs to start businesses immediately.”**

- ❖ Undertake detailed study on the current mismatch between unemployed youth and available jobs in the construction, manufacturing, agriculture and service sectors. The recommendations from the study will be actively taken up to address the mismatch in addition to other plans of action as enumerated below.

- ❖ Expand entrepreneurship programs across the country and support incubation centres with funds and space. We will guarantee credit, provide incentives, simplify processes and develop schemes to enable trained entrepreneurs to start businesses immediately.

2. We will establish an employment and livelihood corporation to ensure youth employment.

MoLHR currently is unable to provide full employment because by itself, the ministry is unable to create jobs. For it to be effective, it has to work with various agencies – government, corporate and private sector - to identify the skills needs of employers and coordinate with educational and training institutes to develop skills among our youth for those jobs. It needs to revise and institute regulations that ensure good working conditions, including appropriate salaries and career progression. We will put in place the following to ensure that over the next three years, all Bhutanese youth are gainfully employed, or are engaged in



meaningful livelihood projects.

- ❖ Establish an Employment and Livelihood Corporation to address unemployment issue in the country. As a corporate body, it will be tasked to recruit, create, contract and manage jobs and livelihood programs for youth. It will work closely with educational and training institutes to develop programs to equip youth with necessary skills required by employing agencies. It will sign MoUs with government agencies, corporates and private sector, including manufacturing and service industries to develop a system of announcing vacancies and subsequent placements. Similar agreements will be drawn with CSOs and small and cottage industries.
- ❖ The corporation will function as one-stop-shop, linking employers with job seekers for all employment types. It will study the job market and negotiate with all employers (government, corporate and private) on placement of employees and institute attractive pay packages and allowances to encourage enrolment.
- ❖ The corporation will establish centres in major urban towns such as in Phuentsholing, Gelephu, Samdrupjongkhar and in regional centres like Trashigang, Bumthang, Samtse and Tsirang. These centres will link job seekers to employers and livelihood opportunities

“... ensure that over the next three years, all Bhutanese youth are gainfully employed or are engaged in meaningful livelihood projects.”

and will ensure no one remains unemployed for more than a year. A program will be developed to ensure youth are gainfully engaged, for instance, like in community services for which they will be paid until they find a job. Should it succeed, the program will be implemented throughout the country.

- ❖ The corporation will liaise with TVET institutions to build capacity and skills needed for local and global markets to guarantee employment. One important consideration in encouraging youth to take up available jobs in the market is to make pay and allowances attractive and enhancing dignity in labour. We will, therefore, invest on these aspects and partner with employers to support the additional pay and allowances.
- ❖ The corporation will manage a job portal and ensure all formal employment is routed through the corporation. It will institute processes and mechanisms to make recruitment fair, transparent and protect the rights of both employers and employees.



- ❖ The corporation will have a division within it to initiate and implement a youth livelihood program that will be taken across the country. The program will impart skills to youth so it helps them find gainful employment. This will include communications and financial skills, accessing credit, conducting market assessments to identify employment or self-employment opportunities.

3. We will identify skills needs of the country and strengthen vocational institutes to create those skills.

We will study, identify and list all skills in demand in the country and coordinate with government and private training institutes to build capacity and develop those skills among our youth. Jobs for those with skills in demand, in accordance with the list, will be made attractive by providing better salaries and incentives.

TVET institutions in the country will offer courses that build skills required in the country. It will do away with courses that are irrelevant and have no employment opportunities for graduates in the market. The courses will be reviewed periodically as per market demands.

To strengthen and improve quality TVET in the country, the existing institutes will be upgraded with better facilities and equipment to match the best in the world. Partnership with

first world TVET institutes will be prioritised and exchange programs will be organised to improve quality of training. Teaching and training quality will be rapidly improved by recruiting Master trainers and highly skilled craftsmen to provide hands-on training to students.

Linkages will be established between TVET institutes and business houses to encourage learning through consultation, internship and exchange programs. All graduates will be provided a holistic package of relevant technical and transferable skills, opportunities for apprenticeships, mentoring and connections to employers, as well as access to financial services. All TVET institutes will include business management and financial training as part of their curriculum.

We will support skill-based cooperatives to enhance employment and livelihood for graduates from TVET institutes. These cooperatives will be supported and monitored by the dedicated agency for employment as described in plan 2. The agency will assist these cooperatives to network and have memorandum of understanding with construction agencies and contractors to supply required skilled manpower.

“TVET institutions in the country will offer courses that build skills required in the country.”



4. We will create more jobs by investing in agriculture and manufacturing sectors.

Our *Sonam Gongphel* project will incentivise and attract many to return to agriculture and take up livelihood and employment opportunities. The guaranteed purchase of farm produce from farmers by the State at prevailing floor price will accelerate agriculture production, contributing to our goal of self-sufficiency and self-reliance. The project will be further supported with capacity building in business management, training and subsidised farm equipment, seeds and fertilisers.

Similarly, our commitment to establish five manufacturing industries and many more through public private partnership will create 5,000 additional jobs annually. We will provide all necessary support to build skills among our youth to take up jobs in the manufacturing industry.

5. We will expand apprenticeship program and institute guaranteed employment.

The current apprenticeship program will be further expanded and all youth, who graduate from TVET will be placed as apprentices in reputable firms in collaboration with the private sector. We will guarantee employment for those that complete the program and institute incentives and allowances for the employing agency.

6. We will reintroduce the national

service program for all graduates to gain experience.

The national service program for graduates is an important arrangement designed to instil volunteerism and to enable young graduates to understand national issues, observe ground realities and learn about the government machineries.

We will reintroduce the national service program and evaluate its benefits and effectiveness in the third year of our government. This will enable graduates to gain work experience for employment and it will also allow graduates to plan their careers accordingly.

Graduates will be encouraged to work at local government levels, besides other government agencies.

7. We will ensure youth detained by law for substance abuse are considered for reformative measures.

Realising that detention centers are not always the best way forward, we will review the policies that will enable youth to return as productive citizens into the mainstream society. We will subsequently introduce re-integration programmes.

8. We will increase the minimum daily wage to Nu 450 a day.

In keeping with our goal of narrowing the gap and mindful of periodic inflation, we will increase the



“...we will increase the minimum daily wage to Nu 450 a day.”

minimum daily wage to Nu 450 a day. We will track inflation, cost of living, GDP and revise rates accordingly.

9. We will review and amend overseas employment program to improve it.

The government in its haste to send Bhutanese youth overseas for employment have overlooked security and living conditions for them. Coupled with poor regulations, destinations for such jobs were not scrutinised, exposing Bhutanese youth to several job scams and their families to cons. We will review and amend the overseas employment program to make it attractive in the following manner:

- ❖ Draw up agreements and MoUs with select countries to recruit Bhutanese workers in identified sectors. We will ensure attractive salaries, secure work places and decent living conditions for our Bhutanese. As far as possible we will target first world countries in Europe, America, Canada, Australia and Japan.
- ❖ Train and build skills among our youth in collaboration with partner agencies in identified countries so our youth can take up good paying jobs.
- ❖ We will draw up a monitoring mechanism and have the dedicated employment agency to work with our embassies and consulates to ensure agreements are honoured. They will track the wellbeing of every Bhutanese sent abroad and provide assistance wherever required.



The government will procure identified farm produces from farmers at a floor price announced a year in advance





SONAM GONGPHEL

Exploring new prospects to improve rural livelihood

We have always been a farming society and even today, a majority of our people are engaged in and depend on agriculture as their main source of income. Despite its importance, the sector's contribution to the national economy has been insignificant. Our farmers, likewise, have not reaped the benefits of an improved national economy. We want agriculture to become an important sector in the economy, enable our farmers to enjoy the fruits of their labour and benefit from the growing economy.

OUR COMMITMENT

The government will buy agriculture products from farmers at market price and provide subsidies to produce more and earn better. Henceforth, our farmers can rest assured that their local farm produces will be sold. We will:

- ✓ Procure farm produce from farmers at a price announced a year ahead
- ✓ Ensure the state introduces new crop insurance schemes for farmers
- ✓ Install cold storages at strategic locations

In 2016, agriculture contributed 16.52 percent to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Over 58 percent of the population depended on agriculture for livelihood according to Labor Force Survey of Bhutan, 2015. Given the nature of our topography characterised by steep terrains only seven percent of the Bhutanese land is cultivable. Of that, only 2.9 percent of the land is actually cultivated, indicating that four percent of the available cultivable land is left fallow.

Shortage of labour, lack of adequate irrigation, particularly in winter

months, pests and diseases, human-wildlife conflict and lack of post-production facilities are some of the challenges in agriculture sector.

However, ineffective agriculture marketing policies and systems continue to be the dominant factor in low agriculture production and rural income.

In 2016, Bhutan produced only around 85,090MT of paddy and 91,674MT of other cereals (wheat, barley, maize, buckwheat and millet) and imported around 51 percent, or 87,671.2MT of rice requirement and



24,576.8MT of other cereals, with import of almost 97 percent of oil for the country.

There is acute shortage of essential food items like chilli, which had to be imported through cargo planes to meet the internal demand. Bhutan has a huge potential for increasing vegetable production to provide continuous supply throughout the year because of favourable micro-climatic conditions and various altitude ranges. However, in 2015, Bhutan imported 12,841.2MT of vegetables, which is four folds the quantity it exported (3,209.3MT). Besides, Bhutan imported 3,666.92MT of fruits, 6,009.7MT potatoes, 1,264.6MT of cheese and 215MT of butter (2015) as per the NSB report, 2017. Currently, farmers sell their agriculture produce through auction system, which does not normally fetch good price.

OUR PLAN OF ACTION

1. We will establish a network of agriculture marketing centres through outlets.

Currently farmers are unable to grow and sell much because of lack of confidence in agriculture marketing system. To establish an effective food distribution system and support agriculture marketing, we will review the responsibility of the Food Corporation of Bhutan and the Department of Agriculture Marketing Services under Ministry of Agriculture and Forests.

“We will procure farm produce from farmers at a price announced a year ahead.”

We will institutionalise a chain of agricultural marketing system across the country that will purchase farmers' agricultural produce. The outlets will be wholesale shops to redistribute the farm produces to schools and colleges, other institutional bodies, and retail shops, including for export through value addition.

We will ensure all farm produces that are left unconsumed internally will be exported and sold through innovative marketing strategies.

We will support with marketing of most essential commodities such as rice, maize, cash crops and vegetables that have the potential for market both within and outside the country.

2. We will establish cold storages and warehouses in strategic locations.

We will enable our farmers' produces to be preserved for longer duration by establishing cold storages at strategic locations, which will serve as stores for distribution internally and also for export. The storage systems will provide continuous supply of agriculture produce even during lean seasons.

We will build adequate warehouses at strategic locations like Phuentsholing,



NARROWING THE GAP

Samdrupjongkhar and Gelephu to adequately store farm produce to enable their export. We will develop a **modern auction yard** with appropriate facilities to make it easier for both buyers and sellers.

3. We will make farming easier and cheaper by supporting farmers with essential facilities.

To help our farmers, we will provide subsidies for:

- ❖ Supply of good quality seeds and fertilisers for increased productivity of essential crops like rice, potatoes, maize, cardamom, oranges, ginger, peanuts and vegetables.
- ❖ Farmers to protect farms from wildlife depredation through electric fencing and other effective measures.
- ❖ Farm mechanisation

4. We will remove tax for farmers on income generated from primary agricultural produce.

We will cut red tape and enhance ease of doing agro-business and agricultural farming. We will remove taxes on income generated from primary agriculture producers.

5. We will support employment in agriculture.

Despite majority of our population working in the agriculture sector, we have been unable to gainfully provide employment opportunities. We will

turn agriculture into an attractive sector for Bhutanese to invest and work in, through:

- ❖ Improved agro-business and processing technologies for agro and dairy products.
- ❖ Micro-credit loans made available for establishing small businesses at low interest rates.
- ❖ Building of capacities of farmers' by training them in specialised areas such as horticulture, potatoes and dairy.
- ❖ Fiscal incentives for farmers.

6. We will enhance agriculture productivity and reduce imports by:

- ❖ Increasing the area under cultivation and devise strategies to lease fallow land to farmers, cooperatives and farming contractors. In addition, we will devise "user rights" to allow farmers to lease government land.
- ❖ Investing in science and technology to boost production levels. We will encourage and support double cropping, even triple, per year in all the possible areas of the country.
- ❖ Reviewing and strengthening Farm Machinery Corporation limited and expand mass commercial farming on unused government land. The corporation will work closely with farming cooperatives, unemployed youth and farmers in initiating contract farming



activities. This project will also coordinate with farmers across the country and support them by providing training opportunities, enable field visits and provide hands on experiences. Through this project alone, we expect to generate 1,500 jobs.

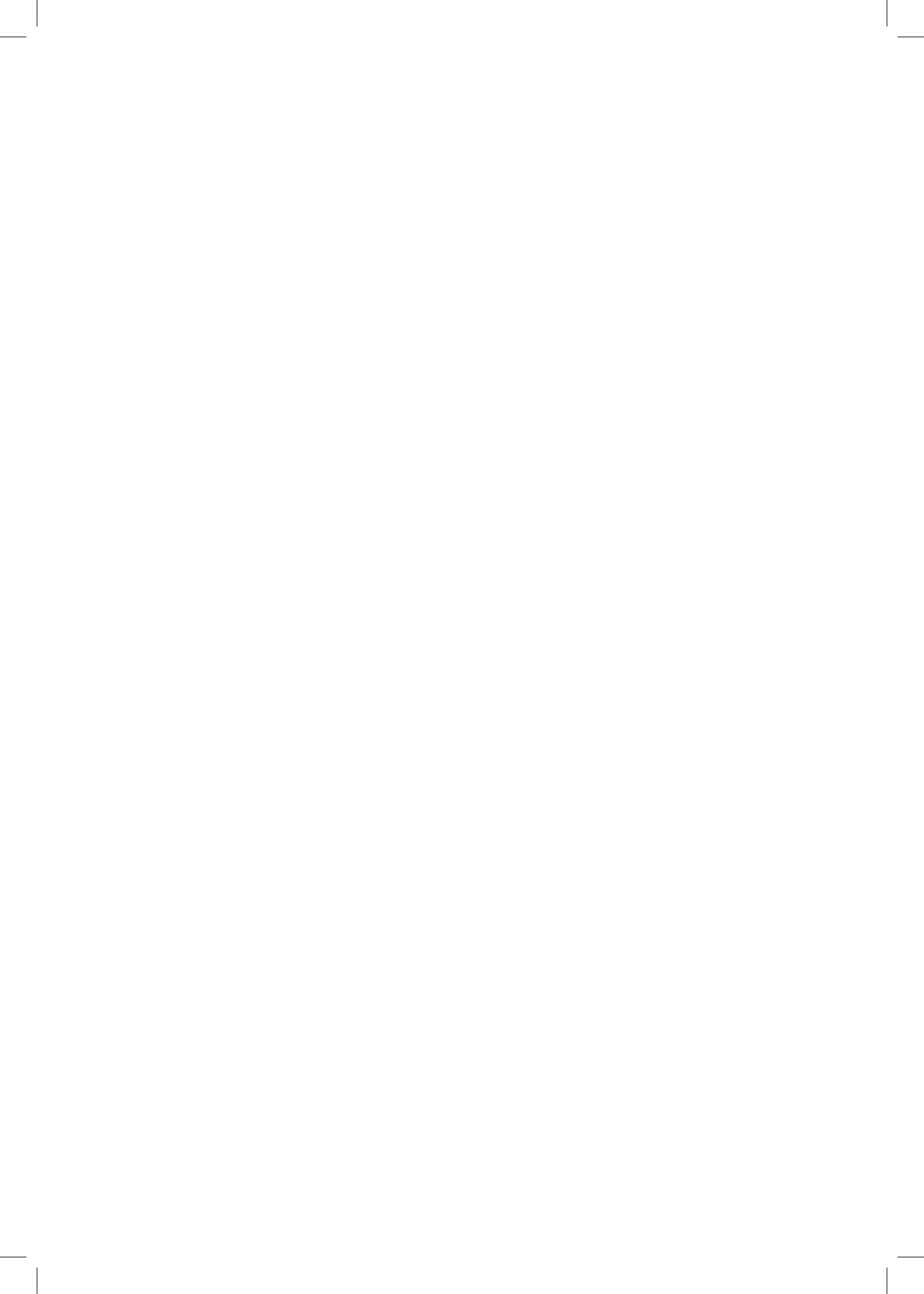
7. We will ensure irrigation throughout the year.

Where it is not possible to provide irrigation because of lack of water source, we will consider allowing conversion of *chuzhing* (wet land) to *kamzhing* (dry land).

“**We will remove taxes on income generated from primary agriculture producers.”**

8. We will provide crop insurance.

Due to adverse climatic conditions such as windstorms, crops are highly vulnerable to destruction and farmers to heavy losses. Insurance schemes will be introduced for compensation, or in certain instances, we will facilitate for appropriate compensation.



Community lhakhangs will be provided an endowment fund to conduct annual rituals and festivals





VIBRANT CULTURE

A timely intervention to reinforce identity and sovereignty

The strong culture we inherited from our parents has contributed immensely to our sovereignty. The Bhutanese identity we are so proud of today, has been founded through centuries, beginning with the arrival of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel and prioritised by Their Majesties the Kings and the Zhung Dratshang. It is of paramount importance that they not only be protected, but promoted to be sustained for generations to come.

OUR COMMITMENT

- ✓ Convert Samrang project into a vegetable farming project
- ✓ Provide endowment fund to community lhakhangs to conduct historical rituals and timely festivals without having to raise funds from common people
- ✓ Support renovation and insurance of community lhakhangs
- ✓ Promote Dzongkha further and create opportunities for Dzongkha language specialists
- ✓ Support livelihood and promote nomadic culture of our highland residents of 10 dzongkhags
- ✓ Encourage vegetarian meals at official functions

The country's development philosophy of GNH emanated from His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo which must be encompassed in all our plans and programs.

This in turn must be aligned with our nation's foundations which are based on Mahayana Buddhism. Altruism

and compassion are intrinsic to Bhutanese culture and we can grow as a nation only when these are enthused into our national programs.

We will ensure that our rich culture, unique identity and overarching goal of GNH are prioritised and practiced through national policies and programs.



OUR PLAN OF ACTION

1. We will close Samrang meat processing project and turn it into a commercial vegetable venture.

We will respect and heed the appeal of our Zhung Dratshang, various religious organisations, life-saving (*tsethar*) groups and vegetarian tshogpas to abandon Samrang meat processing project.

We will listen to the concerns and voices of more than 200,000 Bhutanese to not initiate any killings within the country, a regard for another life emanating from Buddhism and its core teaching of compassion. His Holiness the Je Khenpo and the Zhung Dratshang has been advocating nation-wide reduction of meat intake and encouraging vegetarian menu during festivals and ceremonies.

We will ensure that plans to establish slaughter houses in the country is discouraged and that our country will not be used to process meat for export to neighbouring countries. We will not build our economy by activities that are contradictory to our core national beliefs and religious principles.

We will instead convert the existing Samrang project into a mega-vegetable farm, which will enhance employment and boost income of our people. We will add value to all farm products through branding, packaging and processing. We will develop Samrang into a centre of

“We will provide adequate funds to all community-managed lhakhangs to conduct traditional festivals.”

excellence for commercial farming, which can serve as a training ground for our farmers from across the country. It will have all facilities including cold storages for marketing purposes.

2. We will encourage vegetarian menu on all official occasions.

To put our beliefs into practice, DNT has already adopted a policy of not serving meat during any of our official gatherings. As a responsible government, we will carry this policy with us. We will not serve meat during official occasions. We will encourage all agencies to follow suit and demonstrate that we truly respect and practice what we believe.

3. We will provide funds to community-managed lhakhangs to sustain their age-old festivals.

There are numerous community lhakhangs around the country that have been preserving their rich, age-old customs and festivals for the benefit of the community and the country. Many of them depend on donations and contribution from patrons and residents, which can often be a financial burden to them.

We have learnt of the difficulties in continuing to conduct festivals and are disheartened to know how some



of them have been stopped for lack of funds. Where such festivals have ceased, we will revive them and fund existing ones so they sustain. Towards that:

- ❖ We will provide adequate funds to all community-managed lhakhangs to conduct traditional festivals on a regular basis without having to worry about funds.
- ❖ We will make an inventory of all such festivals, support research and documentation and promote them.
- ❖ We will help protect and promote local culture by providing allowances and incentives to local dancers and masked dancers so they are compensated and motivated to retain their knowledge and skills.

4. We will support renovation and insurance of community-owned lhakhangs.

There are numerous sacred lhakhangs across the country that are falling apart, or have been damaged by natural disasters. Lack of funds to repair them and poor management are contributing to the loss of such sacred places. It is important we protect and promote these lhakhangs for the benefit of the community and the country. We will:

- ❖ Consult and work closely with Zhung Dratshang to develop a comprehensive inventory of all lhakhangs.

- ❖ Support renovation and maintenance of all important lhakhangs and to have insurance coverage against natural disasters.
- ❖ Support appointment of Lams and Lopens to community lhakhangs to benefit the people in performing annual rituals and providing spiritual support.

5. We will invest in promoting Dzongkha and expand opportunities for Dzongkha language specialists.

With English as the medium of instruction in all schools, our national language has not been accorded the importance it is due.

Besides the judiciary and the local government, Dzongkha is not used as the medium of communication. There is limited investment in making Dzongkha more user-friendly and enabling access to the internet for those with only Dzongkha language skills.

Graduates from Dzongkha language colleges and institutes have limited opportunities. We will reverse this and accord Dzongkha and its promotion the importance it deserves. Towards that:

- ❖ We will review the medium of communication used by agencies and, wherever appropriate, we will mandate the use of Dzongkha.
- ❖ We will establish and provide more opportunities for those



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with Dzongkha language skills to enhance their career and knowledge through scholarships, research funds and career opportunities.

- ❖ We will provide more funds to DDC to enable them to conduct research and develop Dzongkha further, to make it more user friendly and enabling access to internet using Dzongkha.

6. We will review the National holidays and national TV programmes.

7. We will establish a film, music and documentary promotion fund.

The film and music industry have contributed immensely in preserving and promoting our culture and tradition. In addition they have created jobs for thousands and opened opportunities for many entrepreneurs. We are immensely proud of their contribution and pledge to support them by:

- ❖ Establishing a film, music and documentary promotion fund that will be used to promote Bhutanese films and music nationally and internationally.
- ❖ Building a modern state-of-the-art film and music studio on a PPP model.
- ❖ Encouraging and partnering in production of films and documentaries that showcase our unique tradition and culture to the international audience. We will work closely with the Film Association of Bhutan to build capacity and enhance technology.

8. We will develop a comprehensive plan and policy to support livelihood of our nomads and promote their culture.

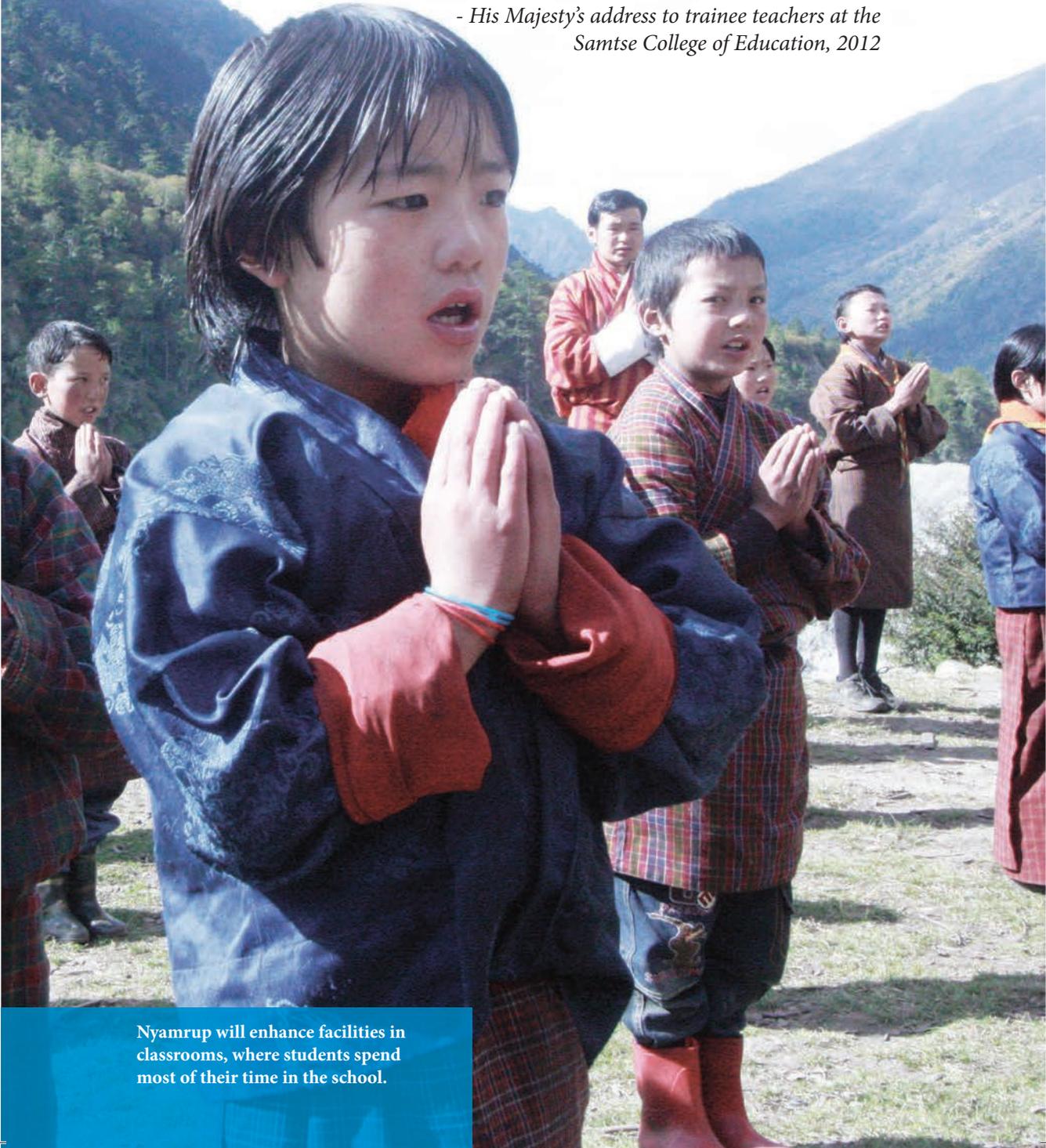
The nomadic communities on the northern frontiers of the country not only represent an important aspect of our culture but also serve to protect our northern border. For the communities up north, we will:

- ❖ Consider providing free electricity to incentivise them to use domestic appliances that run on electricity.
- ❖ Solar lights and appropriate shelter at camp sites and in locations where migrant nomads halt for long periods.
- ❖ Initiate bio-prospecting projects in partnership with nomads.



“ I will always support teachers throughout my reign. I will give you more importance and more recognition than any other sector, because you are going to make the greatest difference to the future of our country.”

- His Majesty's address to trainee teachers at the Samtse College of Education, 2012



Nyamrup will enhance facilities in classrooms, where students spend most of their time in the school.



PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION

In keeping with the need of the hour

OUR COMMITMENT

Simply providing education is not enough, it must be in keeping with time, especially in terms of quality, relevance and usefulness to meet the current and future needs of the country and the world at large. We will:

- ✓ Remove cut-off points for Class X students to enable them to continue studying until Class XII.
- ✓ Consider doing away with Saturday classes.
- ✓ Do away with examinations until Class VI
- ✓ Make teaching a profession to vie for, by offering the best and most prestigious scholarships.
- ✓ Better pay and allowances, more administrative and support staff to ease teacher workload
- ✓ Review central schools to make it better and reopen strategic community and primary schools that are useful and beneficial in certain communities

All of us have passed through our education system and we are extremely proud of the achievements made so far. School enrollment is above 100 percent, primary school completion rate is also above 100 percent and basic and secondary school completion rate is 97 percent with girls' completion rate being over 100 percent.

Despite consolidation of schools during the 11th FYP, the number of schools have increased to 90 percent. Although progress in access to education has been phenomenal, it

has resulted in more job seekers and fewer entrepreneurs. As we stated in our 2013 manifesto, there needs to be a paradigm shift from “education for all” to “education with QUALITY that is responsive to Bhutanese and global employment opportunities”.

We continue to believe that our children and youth must graduate from schools and colleges with knowledge and skills that respond to the job market in the country and internationally.

As we proceed in that direction, there is also a need to inculcate in our students the importance of and





“The present system of cut-off point in Class X will be removed to allow students continue until Class XII.”

the protection of our shared heritage and culture. There is a critical need to safeguard and promote age-old values of *tha-damtshi* and *ley-jumdrey*, respect for parent and elders, imbibing and practicing on a daily basis, shared *driglam namzha*, all of which has made us not only unique but has greatly contributed to our national identity. With the growth of digital age, there is danger of losing this heritage.

OUR PLAN OF ACTION

1. We will do away with cut-off point for Class X students, and enable all to proceed to Class XII.

The present system of cut-off point in Class X will be removed to allow students to continue until class XII. Raising the basic education to Class XII will save numerous issues for our youth. Today, more than 50 percent of students who pass Class X leave schools due to limited support from the state after that.

With this new policy, students will be exempt from tuition fees and the Department of School Education will be given the power to recognise and award accredit. A range of exciting qualifications and options will be opened, including new curriculum and apprenticeship places. Those who want to leave school to begin working

after Class X will still be able to do so, as long as they participate in part-time training.

This change would galvanise the entire system and change expectations, so young students stay on in learning beyond Class X, not just because it is compulsory, but because they can see the benefits. We must not give up on our young students who reach Class X and simply feel there is nothing out there for them. It is a waste of talent and potential and it is almost always students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds that slip through the net.

2. We will enable students passing Class X to continue until Class XII.

There are thousands of students, almost all from humble background, who passed Class X but disqualified to continue studying. We will give them the opportunity to continue until Class XII. This is in line with our overarching goal of narrowing the gap and to invest now to reap the dividend from this important demographic section of the population.

3. We will support private schools to improve standards and enhance quality.

Private schools in the country face a number of problems that prevent them from improving their standards. These include teacher recruitment, lack of space, flexibility to allow choice of curriculum and sustainability. We will take the following action to support private schools:



- ❖ With cut-off point removed in Class X, there will be thousands of students progressing to Class XI. Government schools, with limited infrastructure will be inundated, therefore, we will work with private schools to enable students to be distributed in private schools under government scholarships. This will support private schools with higher enrollment and to expand their infrastructure and improve their standards in the long run.
- ❖ Provide greater flexibility in teacher recruitment and remove existing barriers and restrictions.
- ❖ Review the policy on private schools adoption of curriculum and consider enabling private schools to choose their own curriculum and education board.

4. We will do away with school examination until Class VI.

Learning by rote struggles to deliver the best results when transforming today's students into tomorrow's innovative workforce. By developing a less formal style of teaching, young students can flourish in classrooms.

Testing, particularly the standard one does nothing to enhance knowledge but hinders the development of an appreciation for learning that should begin in schools and last a lifetime.

While grades matter and students should strive to excel, we need to stop weighing our intelligence through

grades and instead recognise that intelligence comes in all forms. We teach and study the exam, not the actual pursuit of knowledge. Examinations test a limited range of skills.

They favour students, who have good memory and techniques. They are theoretical and serves little purpose because soon after exams, students forget what they learnt. The role of primary education is to ensure the broad-based development of pupils.

This means ensuring all students are able to develop their cognitive, social, emotional, cultural and physical skills to the best of their abilities, preparing them for their further learning.

Thus, we will do away with school exams until Class VI. Students should be assessed on their class work, participation in schools and through other formative assessments.

5. We will make teaching the most attractive profession in the country.

Effective education is effective teaching. Teachers directly influence children's learning. Teachers, who are the makers of leaders, doctors, engineers, administrators and politicians, among others, determine the effectiveness of education on our children. Therefore, it is inevitable that teachers' morale are kept high. Towards that we will:

- ❖ Offer minimum five prestigious scholarships annually for teacher-training in first world universities.



“Offer minimum five prestigious scholarships annually for teacher-training in first world universities.”

We will encourage the brightest to take up teaching profession through such scholarships and also guarantee further studies and career enhancement opportunities. We will develop and implement a Master program that will attract and retain the best students in teaching profession.

- ❖ Implement a rigorous, fair and continuous teacher-training program to build capacity and give opportunity to all teachers for such programs. We will review progress and opportunities provided to all teachers till date and prioritise training opportunities for those that have not received any training, or who have served for long periods in rural and remote areas.
- ❖ Support teachers with adequate remuneration, incentives and recognition they deserve. We will review allowances paid to teachers and implement a uniform and fairer system to pay our teachers.
- ❖ Build adequate teacher quarters within the school campus and/or as close to schools for convenience of, both teachers and students.

6. We will ease workload on teachers to enhance quality of education.

Teacher workload is immense and many of the responsibilities they shoulder are irrelevant to their profession, preventing many of our teachers from giving their best. We understand this as one of the main problems.

We will make unprecedented interventions to reduce teacher-workload and improve the quality of education by recruiting adequate support staff to assist teachers and school administration, so teachers can channel their energy to teaching.

All schools will have a games and sports instructor, *driglam namzha* instructor to impart Bhutanese etiquettes, mask dance trainer, counsellors, drama and dance instructor and trained health personnel. Schools will have support staff to manage and maintain school premises.

7. We will improve learning by enhancing facilities in classrooms.

Classrooms are a place where students spend a majority of their time in the schools and where most learning takes place. We will improve classroom facilities by:

- ❖ Providing a projector in each classroom so teachers can use modern technology to teach and demonstrate better. This will be backed by our free intranet and online data to enhance teaching.
- ❖ Providing heating and cooling facilities wherever necessary to



make learning comfortable for students.

- ❖ Providing adequate funds for buying teaching-learning materials.

8. We will reopen community and primary schools that are strategically located to benefit people.

The unplanned and hasty establishment of central schools has led to closure of many community and primary schools making it inconvenient for many rural families. To ensure children stay close to their parents and acquire experiences of home values, we will reopen community and primary schools wherever necessary. When families, community groups and schools bond together to support learning, children achieve more in school, stay in school longer and enjoy the experience better.

It is evident that the themes for successful school transformation emerges from community school partnerships, parental collaboration, curriculum connected to real world experiences and cross-generation learning.

Therefore, we will review the location of central, community and primary schools, number of students, the distance among others and draw a plan for sustained consolidation as opposed to the rush, to close all schools at one go.

9. We will include enterprise, technical and vocational skills development program in schools

Numerous youth are left unemployed after their graduation. One possible reason for such unemployment would be the inability of the Bhutanese education system to impart technical and vocational skills. There are many adolescents (as young as 14 years old), who are thinking about their future career by considering a variety of occupations available to them. In the light of these issues, we will:

- ❖ Initiate inclusion in school curriculum, development of practical skills and offering apprenticeship programs. This will encourage more school graduates into a wider diversity of occupations beyond civil service.
- ❖ Ensure schools facilitate and monitor their apprentice trainees by forming partnerships and linkages with different firms in the private sector. Such experiences will stimulate employment aspirations among school leavers.
- ❖ Continue improving better career guidance at schools. Schools that already have career guidance programs should focus on giving a wider range of career information to school leavers.
- ❖ Further, schools should invite teacher endowed with local wisdom and vocational teachers for motivational talks and to their career exhibitions. Schools should



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also organise educational tours to vocational centres.

- ❖ Expand parenting education, since parental influences strongly affect career aspirations of secondary school students.
- ❖ Create enabling environment for qualified vocational teachers through appropriate incentives.
- ❖ Introduce a comprehensive curriculum for career planning from as early as at Class VI or VII to support students through this important process.
- ❖ Work towards reviewing school curriculum to include development of good human beings and incorporate spiritual and cultural learning.

10. We will establish more special needs school.

Research findings of Stage-Two Child Disability study, (2010-2011), shows that more than one out of five children in Bhutan has at least a mild disability.

Since not all disabilities can be prevented, it is important to make the society inclusive, so all its children have the opportunity to fully participate in the society. We will establish at least one inclusive school for 20 Dzongkhags. In addition, we will also:

- ❖ Establish three to four special schools in different regions for

severely disabled persons with caregivers (such schools will be attached to a hospital).

- ❖ Build friendly environment for differently-abled children in towns, hospitals, banks, hotels and religious places.
- ❖ Provide special facility counters at hospitals, banks and other relevant service centres.
- ❖ Establish vocational schools for differently abled children in strategic places.
- ❖ Put supporting mechanism in place to support special needs children living with single parent, who are unable to support education of his/her special children.

11. We will enhance ICT programs in all schools.

In the 21st century world, use of ICT has become inevitable. Therefore, all schools will be provided with basic ICT kits. A skilled and competent classroom helper will be recruited. Students with special needs will be encouraged, have the same ICT entitlement as all other pupils and will be offered the same curriculum.

In addition, particular applications of ICT will be used for students with difficulties in learning, whom we need to motivate to practice basic skills regularly. Students with physical or communication impairment will be



provided specially adapted machines for use in communication.

12. We will review the central school project to improve facilities, ensuring adequate infrastructure and human resources.

While consolidation of schools is in line with our manifesto of 2013, our concern is over the manner in which central schools were established. Without adequate facilities for students and teachers, the schools have been opened in haste causing immense inconvenience to parents, teachers and students.

The well-meaning concept is rife with challenges on implementation. We will review the project to improve facilities so it lives up to its noble intent. We will turn every failing policies of central school into success by consulting relevant stakeholders and strengthening resources.

We also note that while students in central schools receive facilities, there are others in non-central schools, who also require similar support. We will consider providing similar facilities to other students based on needs, thereby, narrowing the gap.

13. We will provide buses for every school and ensure transport for

students in rural areas.

We will provide a bus for every school in rural areas to facilitate transportation of students. Our schools and students of rural areas are deprived of such crucial facilities.

14. We will establish a university level college in Gelephug.

The number of students travelling outside the country is growing due to limited colleges within the country.

This is both inconvenient for many students and parents over issues of affordability. We will establish one college that offers degree programs in Gelephug besides expanding and strengthening existing colleges to offer various degree programs.

We will review the needs of the country to identify required degree programs for the country and identify those that will enable our graduates to secure jobs abroad.

We will collaborate with all stakeholders to draw up an action plan to institute appropriate programs. We will explore and pursue partnerships with regional and global centres of excellence in education so our youth can get the best and be able to compete at any international levels.



NARROWING THE GAP

Where necessary, students of identified schools and institutes will be provided free, nutritious lunch



FREE NUTRITION

Research has shown that children who lack proper nutrition have trouble focusing in schools compared with students who eat nutritious meals every day that fuel active lifestyles and better attention in schools.

Our schools and institutions are, therefore, on the frontline to

improving childhood nutrition, securing the future of our citizen's health and the prosperity of our nation. One of the most important steps towards that is improving meals our children eat in schools. It is also a matter of equity, with children from better families, most likely, eating better food, while children from poorer families eating non-nutritious food, or not at all.



NARROWING THE GAP

The establishment of central schools has increased the gap considering the growing disparities in terms of facilities and provisions in all other schools as compared with central schools. We believe good nutrition is a right of every child and ensuring this will be the beginning of equal opportunities.

OUR PLAN OF ACTION

1. We will provide free nutritious lunches for all children in identified schools and institutes with a minimum of 500 kilocalories per meal.

Enabling our children, the future citizens of the country, with good nutrition will guarantee a healthy start and ensure success in school. Towards this, we will provide more vegetables, fruits and whole grains, appropriate amounts of proteins and carbohydrates and limit levels of sodium,

saturated fat and trans-fat. We will improve poor diets, promote physical activity and advance the nutritional education of Bhutanese children.

2. We will have MoUs signed between schools and local communities to source vegetables, fruits and dairy products from local farmers.

We will provide technical and financial support to farmers to produce required food items that are organic, nutritious and available perennially. Our aim and focus will be to maximize benefits for children, farmers and communities by promoting agricultural development and expanding market and economic opportunities. Direct links will be created between schools that will source vegetables from farmers, while farming communities will supply fresh local products at local and national levels.



Free communication and Wi-Fi will be ensured for Bhutanese to stay connected





BOOSTING CONNECTIVITY

Enabling communications and accessing online information

We understand the need for an infrastructure that enables everyone to communicate freely within the country, to address the issue of digital divide and to access information within the country. Need is also felt to allow everyone to access online services and local content for free.

OUR COMMITMENT

The digital divide is another gap we intend to close. For that we will:

- ✓ Create **Suung-joen** app (similar to Wechat and Whatsap) that will allow every Bhutanese to communicate for free
- ✓ Establish Free Wi-Fi access points and allow free hosting of local contents
- ✓ Enhance and support online business opportunities

Today, the country has about 400,000 mobile users, that access content, information, send and receive data over the internet provided as commercial services. In recent times, many services are provided over the network like the G2C, G2B, B2B and e-commerce. Citizens access other online services in finance, banking and health, to name a few, over commercial internet on mobile phones.

We will create Free Wi-Fi access points and allow hosting of local contents for free. For that, we will provide backbone connection to content providers to make it accessible over the intranet.

The existing networks like Druk Research and Education Network and Government Wide Area Network that go up to the gewogs, can be enhanced and made to carry free Wi-Fi connectivity. That will open opportunities to make data freely available within the country.

OUR PLAN OF ACTION

1. We will develop *Suung-joen* app to allow every Bhutanese to communicate and stay connected for free.

Recently communications using online apps like WeChat and WhatsApp have become popular, especially in rural areas and it has enabled greater connectivity.



However, people have to pay to use these apps and money is deducted from their recharge vouchers reducing talk time. For many, this is expensive and often inconvenient as facilities for recharge may not be available all the time. We want people to stay connected and to use such online facilities so communities come closer. Towards that we will develop a *Suung-joen* app (similar to WeChat and WhatsApp) that will allow everyone to stay connected and to communicate freely without having to worry about recharging data, or losing talk time.

2. We will allow free access to all in-country online content including public services, entertainment and other multimedia.

There are several online public services for the benefit of Bhutanese people such as G2C, B2B and B2C. However, the requirement to use Wi-Fi, 3G, or 4G to access them have made these services expensive and inconvenient. Our free Wi-Fi service will address this issue by allowing all in-country online contents and public services, including multimedia and entertainment, to be accessed for free.

3. We will establish Free Wi-Fi access points and allow free hosting of local contents.

This will be done by providing backbone connection to content providers to make it accessible over the intranet. The existing

Druk Research and Education Network and Government Wide Area Network that have reached the gewogs can be enhanced and made to carry the free Wi-Fi connectivity over the existing network of the government. This will make in-country data freely available within the country.

Necessary changes will be incorporated to existing Acts and rules to make it possible to carry all types of data over the Free Wi-Fi network for the benefit of citizens. This will greatly promote online services of any type within the country and also help generate local content and services.

This network can actually boost online public services like G2C, B2B and B2C, making the systems more efficient and easy for our citizens. This will open up access to information and will stimulate research and give greater access of local contents.

4. We will upgrade BBS for enhanced definition and wider reach.

The only national broadcast television, BBS will be made 100 percent available nationwide. We will make BBS TV available in KU-band so it is available in small dish. Support will be rendered for BBS to go HD (high definition). We will also make BBS FM radio reception available across the country.



5. We will strengthen the Bhutanese news media and extend necessary support to media organisations.

As in any democracies around the world, the news media in Bhutan is one of the most important democratic implements for an informed society. The news media continues to play the traditional, yet vital, role of being the conduit between the people and their elected government. They relay aspirations of the people to its elected representatives and keep them in check by informing the people about the conducts of elected and public officials. Among others, we will:

- ❖ Review standing policies that were initially created to engender a vibrant news media.
- ❖ Extend necessary assistance to institutions and organisations, including CSOs, established to assist and ensure a robust Bhutanese media.

- ❖ As far as possible, encourage a free media that is in the interest of the public, especially in view of proliferation of unverified news on social media, and for the purpose of healthy political discourse.
- ❖ Strengthen media authorities like BICMA to better carry out their responsibilities.
- ❖ Review the Right to Information Legislation that was drafted since 2007 and consider it for enactment

6. We will narrow the digital divide and promote online business opportunities.

Using this technology we will encourage and boost business opportunities through online commerce and trade, like selling and buying online. We will develop various apps for the convenience of every Bhutanese. This will also help close the digital divide.



All farm roads will be base coursed to make it traversable throughout the year



BETTER ROADS

Improved road network leading to better public transport

OUR COMMITMENT

Roads are key to Bhutan's socio-economic development and poverty reduction. Roads are vital to enhancing businesses and creating jobs for all and to narrow the gap between rich and poor. Road is the foundation of all development activities. It is almost of a prerogative that people have access to good roads, reliable and safe. Good roads become all the more pertinent considering the number of seasonal road accidents. We will:

- ✓ Base course all farm roads and make it traversable throughout the year
- ✓ Blacktop, or concrete all roads to important lhakhangs and institutes such as BHUs, schools and remaining gewog centre (GC) roads
- ✓ Increase load carrying capacity for trucks
- ✓ Build a southern east – west road by linking towns and Dzongkhags through settlements along the way
- ✓ Build the long overdue bridge over the Mao-khola in Gelephug

We all know the importance of reliable and quality road network in poverty reduction and the subsequent boost it has on economic prosperity.

The livelihoods of farmers in villages depend on approximately 5,000km of farm roads, which are pliable only during winters. In some places, not even that. Often, the quality of farm roads is such that taxis and other vehicles refuse to drive on the road, or

charge exorbitant fares.

In absence of other modes of transportation, our economic activities strongly depend on the reliability of our road network and, therefore, building better roads is at the centre of our socio-economic and balanced regional development.

Despite its importance on the country's economy and lives of people, Bhutan's road network remains far below required standards and lacks adequate resources.



More than 50 percent of our road network is in very poor condition and about 80 percent of roads need urgent maintenance. Huge investments have to be made in the roads sector to improve farm roads and gewog centre roads to enhance agricultural marketing activities in all corners of the country.

A little more than 20 percent of our road network is in condition. Roads in urban areas, such as Thimphu and Phuentsholing Thromdes, also require attention. The road network in many parts of these towns is in bad shape making daily commuting difficult and dangerous for residents.

Rapid urbanisation has led to explosion of construction in major towns, and in absence of appropriate regulations and its implementation, has led to further deterioration of city roads.

Lack of coordination among agencies have resulted in repeated excavation works, causing inconvenience for residents. The ever-growing traffic in the major Thromdes and the subsequent challenge of maintaining them are other pertinent issues that require immediate solution.

We all deserve better, reliable and safer roads with efficient transport system to commute. We have a plan for that.

“We will pursue southern east-west highway construction...”

OUR PLAN OF ACTION:

1. We will base course all farm roads to make it traversable throughout the year.

Our villages are fairly connected with farm roads but they need improvement. Most farm roads are impassable during monsoons and are narrow and have steep gradients. This is where we come in. Farm roads are a vital tool in narrowing the gap between rich and poor and urban dwellers and countryside. We will base course all farm roads and make them pliable throughout the year. We will make this the minimum standard for all roads in the country.

We will consider tasking the DoR to maintain all roads in the country, including farm roads.

2. We will build additional roads to ensure every village and community is connected.

We will review and amend farm road policy and rules to ensure every village and community is connected with motorable road. This will complement our *Sonam Gongphel* (agriculture development) project and will be key to achieving our mission of narrowing the gap.



3. We will concrete, or black-top roads to important lhakhangs, BHUs, schools and remaining gewog centres.

Some farm roads are more frequently used and have a higher traffic because of economic activities, accessing services and pilgrimage. Farm roads leading to important lhakhangs, health centres, schools and markets will be prioritised and improved by blacktopping, or concreting them.

There are over 25 gewog centre roads spanning more than 700km, which await blacktopping in the 12th Plan, which we will complete. Gewog centre roads that are blacktopped today, will have to be resurfaced in the next three to four years and will require huge budget in 12th Plan. It is projected that over Nu 5 billion will be spent on roads alone during this Plan.

4. We will improve and make Thromde roads pothole free.

Thromde roads need urgent attention given the present growth rate of traffic volume. Almost 70 percent of urban roads, such as in Thimphu and Phuentsholing, are in conditions perilous to commuters, including pedestrians.

It is estimated that more than 70 percent of vehicles in the country are concentrated within the major Thromde areas and, therefore, we will invest over Nu 1 billion to upgrade the quality of urban roads and make them pothole free. We will also look into possibilities of rigid pavement

(cemented pavement) by using more of local materials to reduce the burden on tax payers in the long run.

5. We will improve Public Transport system in Thromdes.

Traffic congestion in major Thromdes such as Thimphu and Phuentsholing is a grave concern that requires urgent solution and a long-term sustainable plan.

We will revolutionise and harmonise public transport and reduce traffic congestion both through appropriate policies and regulations and by improving public transport services. We will introduce electric buses within Thromde areas, explore potential for introducing mono-rails in some suitable areas and make taxi use more convenient for both drivers and commuters.

To encourage residents to switch to public transport, we will develop long-term plan and make public transport system efficient and convenient.

6. We will pursue southern east-west highway construction, connecting major settlements along the foothills.

We will review the proposed southern east-west national highway, which the two governments of the past could not build, and pursue it with dogged spirit. Alternatively, we will connect all adjoining settlements along the southern belt making movement convenient for people.

This will include building roads



“We will build the long overdue bridge over the Mao-khola.”

from Lhamoizingkha to Gelephug to Panbang, Nanglam to Deothang and Samdrupjongkhar to Jomotsangkha.

7. We will explore and establish alternative transport systems like cable cars and water transport.

Being a mountainous country, it is appropriate to have alternative forms of transport, such as cable cars and water transport (in south) both to commute and for tourism purposes. It will be attractive and help to protect our environment by not scarring the hillsides.

The feasibility of building dry ports along major rivers in the south has not progressed. We will review the progress and accelerate the project so we reap the benefit from this additional means of transport.

8. We will expand air connectivity and improve domestic air transport.

To support the tourism sector, there is a need to expand connectivity and also increase the number of flights into Bhutan. We will facilitate opening additional routes and explore other destinations. We will work closely with Druk Air and Bhutan Airlines and provide all the support required to increasing flights and expanding destinations.

9. We will improve domestic air

travel by building amenities in the domestic airports and supporting civil aviation to upgrade technology.

We will study the feasibility and consider allowing private helicopters and charter flights to these airports directly from abroad.

10. We will review and revise the freight charges and truck carrying capacity.

The current load carrying capacity for trucks is 8MT based on the rule that was developed in the 1980s.

Since then there has been improvement in our roads and the new trucks come with higher carrying capacity. Therefore, to improve income of truckers and to enhance their livelihood, we will increase the load carrying capacity of trucks based on manufacturer specifications. This will be done in close consultation with the Trucker Association, RSTA and other relevant organisations.

11. We will build the long overdue bridge over the Mao-khola

Even after two governments, the much awaited and needed bridge over the Mao-khola has not been built. This bridge is critical for easy access for thousands of people and also for the prosperity of Gelephug. We will commit to building this important bridge and make Gelephug a vibrant and modern city with opportunities for all.





Chiwog tshogpas will have offices so they can better help people avail of public services



EFFICIENT SERVICES

Better, faster and convenient

Bhutanese deserve to avail any type of public services quickly and conveniently without the need to look for someone you know. Public service is at the core of our development process. If we are to develop as a nation, then it begins with the individual, the family, community and the nation. Public services must be fair, efficient and uniform for all.

OUR COMMITMENT

- ✓ Establish offices for elected tshogpas in chiwogs to assist residents avail of public services
- ✓ Control stray dog population
- ✓ Establish convenient cremation grounds with adequate facilities
- ✓ Build adequate and convenient public toilets

Today, access to public services is mired in delays and despite many of them being made available online, many are still unaware and unable to access them. In rural areas, it is even more difficult. Limited by poor internet services, community centres that were supposed to help people, remain closed and underused. People fall back on connections and, therefore, it has become a necessity to find someone you know in a particular agency to be able to access public services.

The government initiated G2C office to improve public service delivery and reduce turn-around time. The

office has so far implemented 200 G2C services from 10 ministries, autonomous agencies and Dzongkhags. Under the G2C office alone, there are 160 G2C services (155 agency specific services and five common ones). There are 49 services available online and 29 services supposedly available from community centers. Despite the good intention, the government has not invested in sensitising citizens and in creating awareness to encourage its use.

Community centres that are supposed to be at the forefront of this initiative are inadequate, and where available, are ill-equipped causing many of them to close. Monitoring, as mandated by G2C office, is weak and management



of the centres by BDBL is an added burden for the institution.

In service of the people, we will review and strengthen public service delivery to serve you more efficiently.

OUR PLAN OF ACTION

1. We will make public service delivery professional, convenient and faster.

While public service delivery has changed in many ways with the availability of technology, many continue to face inconveniences and have difficulty accessing them.

Trying to identify someone you know in an agency to assist and speed things up has become a norm. While many agencies have instituted mechanisms to step up public services, there is more that can be done to make it more reliable, uniform, fair and faster. Towards improving public service delivery we will:

- ❖ Strengthen G2C office with financial and human resources to function efficiently and to coordinate with all agencies in enhancing and professionalising public service delivery.
- ❖ Develop professional service standards and minimal turn-around time for all public services and implement them stringently.
- ❖ Institute regular monitoring of public service delivery by G2C

“Establish offices with facilities for chiwog tshogpas to expedite service delivery.”

office and reporting to the Prime Minister's Office.

- ❖ Develop effective mechanisms to ensure accountability and responsibility for delivery of services and evaluate them regularly.
- ❖ Establish several one-stop-shop (similar to community centres) in major urban areas for availing a number of public services. These service centres will be managed by G2C office and their main function will be to process applications on behalf of citizens .
- ❖ Public service providers – hospitals, banks and RSTA among others – that are beset by long queues will be supported to open more chambers and counters to expedite service delivery.

2. We will build and strengthen community centres in every gewog to cater to the needs of the residents.

Every gewog will have a community centre to facilitate and provide public services to people. We will build new centres, or consider taking public services delivery to gewog centres. Every community center will have necessary equipment and resources to efficiently deliver services.



Community centres will be supported with adequate resources to assist citizens to process all G2C services starting from applications. Minimal turn-around times will be set and implemented. The G2C office will be mandated to monitor the facilities regularly and to institute accountability and responsibility for efficient service delivery.

3. We will strengthen services at chiwogs for people.

Village tshogpas are the root of the local government. Despite immense work they do and the critical role they play in the community, they have been left wanting of facilities and allowances due to them and their responsibility.

Another concern that people express is the role of the chipoen, which has not been defined in the LG Act but continues to function without any defined terms of reference.

To strengthen public services and enhance efficiency at the chiwogs, we will:

- ❖ Establish offices with facilities for chiwog tshogpas to expedite service delivery and be responsive to the needs of the people.
- ❖ Undertake nation-wide consultation to review the work and need of chipoens, based on which to consider removing, or incorporating the cadre in the local government.

4. We will build appropriate cremation grounds and improve existing ones.

One of the most important facilities required is the cremation ground to, satisfactorily and with convenience, conduct funeral rites. The cremation ground should have basic amenities like adequate parking, clean toilets, running water, kitchen facilities and sufficient rooms for families and visitors.

- ❖ Build suitable cremation grounds where there are none.
- ❖ Improve existing cremation grounds with adequate facilities.
- ❖ Install modern thermodynamic technology for more efficient cremation.
- ❖ Support a cremation assistance agency, through PPP, to provide affordable assistance to arrange cremation and funeral rites. We will develop appropriate guidelines that outline services and ensure they are in line with religious and cultural norms. Fees will be regulated and monitored to ensure they are affordable for all categories.

5. We will build adequate and convenient public toilets.

The state of progress of a nation can be gauged by the availability and quality of its public toilets. Good sanitation not only keeps the environment clean but also



“Study and review alternative ways to dispose of solid waste instead of land refills.”

contributes to healthy living. While 74.8 percent of households have improved sanitation in the country, the number of public toilets in our cities, along highways, entertainment and sports centres and public places is inadequate and where available, the conditions are deplorable. We will improve public sanitation facilities by:

- ❖ Promoting 100 percent flush toilet for all households
- ❖ Building adequate number of toilets and sanitation facilities in all Dzongkhags, along highways and in all public places.
- ❖ Partnering with CSOs, thromdes, ABTO, TCB and other key stakeholders in managing public sanitation facilities sustainably and efficiently.
- ❖ Developing guidelines and setting standards for public sanitation in all public places and in public gatherings.
- ❖ Appointing sanitation inspectors to monitor public facilities and work closely with health authorities and other related agencies.

6. We will manage waste efficiently and more stringently.

Despite being a leader in

environmental conservation and claims of maintaining a pristine environment, we are failing in managing our waste.

In Thimphu alone, daily, 50 metric tonnes of waste is produced to be dumped in the land refill that was built to accommodate eight metric tonnes a day. It is the same story about landfills designed to accommodate waste in rest of the other urban areas across the country.

We do not have a long-term strategy and the implementation of waste prevention and management Act has not been effective. All along our highways and in every community, waste and garbage are indiscriminately disposed.

The agencies responsible for monitoring and inspecting are understaffed and inadequately funded to carry out their work. We will ensure that within the five years of our government, waste is managed effectively and that our country remains a model for the rest of the region. Towards that we will:

- ❖ Strengthen implementation of Waste prevention and management Act, 2009 and Waste Prevention and Management regulation, 2012 and 2016 (under amendment).
- ❖ Equip and strengthen NEC and thromdes to monitor and implement the regulations. Adequate manpower and equipment will be provided to enable efficient monitoring.



- ❖ Develop a long-term national strategy for solid waste and garbage management and identify stakeholders responsible for carrying out the strategy.
- ❖ Institute mechanisms and regulations that enable separation of waste at source by consumers. Support schemes and projects that recycle and reuse waste and award innovative ideas to use waste for ingenious economic activities.
- ❖ Partner with CSOs and business by establishing recycling plants, making fertilisers and generating energy through PPP model. We will put in place subsidies and fiscal incentives for such ventures and encourage small industries.
- ❖ Put in place stringent rules and regulation for garbage separation and disposal and institute more rigid penalties for offenders, such as paying for disposal and cleaning the environment.
- ❖ Carry out nation-wide advocacy programs to inform, educate and communicate the ill effects of improper waste disposal and develop healthy behavior that incorporate waste reduction at source. We will encourage schools and institutes to have programs that teach children on reducing waste, to dispose waste properly and to manage waste without harming the environment .
- ❖ Study and review alternative ways to dispose of solid waste instead of

land refills.

7. We will control and reduce stray dog population.

Stray dogs in all major urban areas are a problem to both residents and visitors. Cases of dog bites continue to increase and subsequently cases of rabies that have claimed lives. The issue requires long term planning and sustained funding and effort. In addressing the issue of stray dogs we will:

- ❖ Enact a law on animal rights that clearly defines strays, animal rights and how to manage them. Regulations will be put in place to control the number of stray dogs and to license breeding.
- ❖ Develop and implement a five-year stray dog management project that will solve the problem of strays across the country with focus in all major urban towns including Thimphu. A national committee comprising members from MoWHS, MoH, MoAF, Thromdes and CSOs will be instituted to take the project forward.
- ❖ Provide adequate funds for the project and support it with adequate manpower and equipment. We will explore partnership with professional vaccination and neutering agencies both at home and abroad.
- ❖ Thromde inspectors will be tasked and empowered to implement the regulations and to monitor dog population.



8. We will encourage alternative sources of energy and reduce fossil fuel dependence.

Bhutan imports Nu 8 billion worth of fossil fuel, which is 67 percent of our net hydropower earnings. Although past governments have pledged to reduce fossil fuel consumption, their policies have only led to increased use and import of fossil fuel. This has negatively impacted our economy, environment and our society at large.

If we do not act now, it will severely restrict our national pledge of remaining carbon neutral and most critically will prevent us from achieving self-reliance. The generous subsidy offered by India has enabled prices of fossil fuel to be lower in Bhutan than India, which in itself has caused some problems such as siphoning and increase in vehicle imports. DNT will seriously review current imports and will take following actions to reduce dependence on fossil fuel:

- ❖ Empower a high level committee to initiate a time bound energy plan that will consider developing policies and implement programs to start using alternative green energy, while reducing and discouraging use of fossil fuel.
- ❖ DNT government, including its cabinet ministers will lead by example and use electric/hybrid cars as their official vehicle and

“Regulations will be put in place to control the number of stray dogs and to license breeding.”

will maintain a small fleet of four-wheel drives for long distance travel. All government vehicles procured for personal duty purposes will be encouraged to use electric/hybrids vehicles where possible.

- ❖ Use of electric mass transport systems especially in urban areas of Thimphu, Phuentsholing and Gelephu will be studied and installed where feasible.
- ❖ To reduce traffic congestion, we will invest in strengthening public transport system in Thimphu and Phuentsholing and encourage private sector participation by providing incentives.
- ❖ We will partner with private sector in installing infrastructure required for up-scaling use of electric/hybrid cars by building convenient recharge stations and building capacity for repair and maintenance.
- ❖ To reduce import of cooking gas, we will encourage, through incentives and subsidies, use of alternative sources such as induction cooktops and stoves. We will consider lowering taxes on electric appliances and encourage its use by lowering domestic tariff.



NARROWING THE GAP

We will work closely with power agencies to bring about changes to reduce import of gas.

- ❖ Biogas plants will be further encouraged with more incentives and support for rural residents to switch to this sustainable source of energy for domestic use. Department of renewable energy will be strengthened to build a team of professionals to implement and provide technical support. Partnership will be built with national and international CSOs and other bilateral and multilateral agencies.
- ❖ We will further explore and take up projects to harness wind and solar energy that will contribute to self-reliance. We will pursue discussion and dialogue with advanced countries that are at the forefront of developing and supporting use of alternative renewable energy.

9. We will provide social security and care for our older generation.

In expression of our gratitude to the older generation, who have safeguarded and, in their own capacities, contributed to nation building before safely handing it over to us, we would like to care for them. Towards this we will:

- ❖ Work closely with the Royal Society of Senior Citizens to establish a social security

system that ensures the welfare of all senior citizens in need of social support. We will consider establishing a universal pension scheme for those above 65 years

- ❖ We will institute an elderly care program that incorporates health and social care for old people. We will collaborate with Dratshang Lhentshog and other religious bodies to build shelters for those without homes and encourage community care for them. Ministry of Health will ensure that regular health check up are carried out and timely medical care is provided through our geriatric care program.
- ❖ We will encourage the older generation to remain active by developing community programs for them. Retired civil servants will be engaged to lecture in schools and institutes and be consulted in development programs.
- ❖ We will support establishment of senior citizens clubs and initiate programs such as Buddhist teachings, meditation, exercise, reading and games for their benefit.

“We will consider lowering taxes on electric appliances and encourage its use by lowering domestic tariff.”

Policies will be reviewed to allow employment of foreign domestic workers for working mothers to enable them to participate in nation building





WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Our children are the future of our country. It is important that they are cared and nurtured in all stages of their lives. At the helm are the women, taking charge of most of the family responsibilities.

However, considering the fact that more women have entered the workforce, juggling double responsibility of childcare at home and managing work places has become a challenge. In the process, many women consider giving up their career.

Even otherwise, their career progression and productivity are compromised owing to the numerous roles women have to play. Lack of incentives and facilities have deterred Bhutanese parents from having more children.

Recent National Population and Housing Census shows that total childbirth reduced by almost 1,300 in the last 13 years. The survey also showed that women, especially in urban areas, delay childbirth for this reason. If the issue is not addressed on time, it would weigh on the Bhutanese population, which could have implication on the nation's security and sovereignty.

It has therefore become critical to offer adequate support and enabling facilities to women and children.

OUR COMMITMENT

- Review and adopt policy to employ foreign domestic workers so that mothers have a helping hand to raise their children amid right environment.
- Initiate six months maternity leave in all corporations and private firms.
- Introduce allowances that match the daily wage rate for women in rural areas during initial months of childbirth.
- Provide free sanitary pad to all the girl-students in the schools

1. We will adopt policy to employ foreign domestic workers.

The policy will be implemented in consultation with all stakeholders. Stringent regulations will be put in

place to protect interests of both the employers and workers and will be monitored at regular intervals. Both workers and employers will be mandated to sign an undertaking while entering the deal.



“...we will make available free sanitary pads in all girls’ washrooms in schools...”

2. We will introduce six-month maternity leave to all corporations and private firms.

Realising the importance of exclusive breastfeeding of babies in the first six months of life, DNT feels the need to extend the maternity leave of mothers in all corporations and private firms. This has been considered only for civil servants and companies functioning under Druk Holding and Investments at the moment.

3. We will introduce allowances for women in rural areas during initial months of childbirth.

Acknowledging the fact that rural women are also engaged in works related to domestic and farms, it would not make sense to deny allowances to those women who deliver babies. At the moment, maternity leaves for mothers to a newborn in public sectors and DHI companies are paid monthly salaries.

DNT will ensure the benefits are extended to all the women who give birth so that it contributes to childcare as well as mother’s health.

4. We will protect our women and children from violence and abuse.

Bhutan has always given high priority

to its children and women exemplified by the value placed and the progress made in health and education. Today we are confronted with challenges of a changing socio-ecological situation. As signatory to CRC and CEDAW, we will scale up women and children’s protection services and establish efficient institutional referral linkages to create a safe and secure environment for them to thrive.

5. We will provide safe shelters and counselling services to victims of violence and abandonment.

In close collaboration with the national partners including CSOs, we will fund shelter homes and implement targeted skilled-based programs for women who experience abuse, abandonment and violence and also provide necessary counselling interventions. In addition we will proactively support policies to hold accountable people who commit violence and abuse against our women and children.

6. We will develop and implement comprehensive women’s health program.

Recognising the physical, social and emotional well being of women as an essential aspect of human development, we will provide comprehensive package of health services including pap smear, breast cancer screening and counselling in all our health facilities.



7. We will proactively promote women in leadership.

Working in close collaboration with NCWC, we will design programs to strengthen women leadership and actively encourage women's vibrant civic leadership as board members in various NGOs and agencies.

8. We will institute mother and baby friendly services in all our hospitals.

Recognising the collective responsibility of bringing up a healthy child, we will institute nutrition program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and provide education and incentives for supplements to low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk.

9. We will commit to enabling our women entrepreneurs to own and operate businesses.

In collaboration with government agencies and CSOs, we will provide

targeted programs for women to enhance their entrepreneurial skills and provide mortgage free loans and targeted financial literacy programs for our women entrepreneurs.

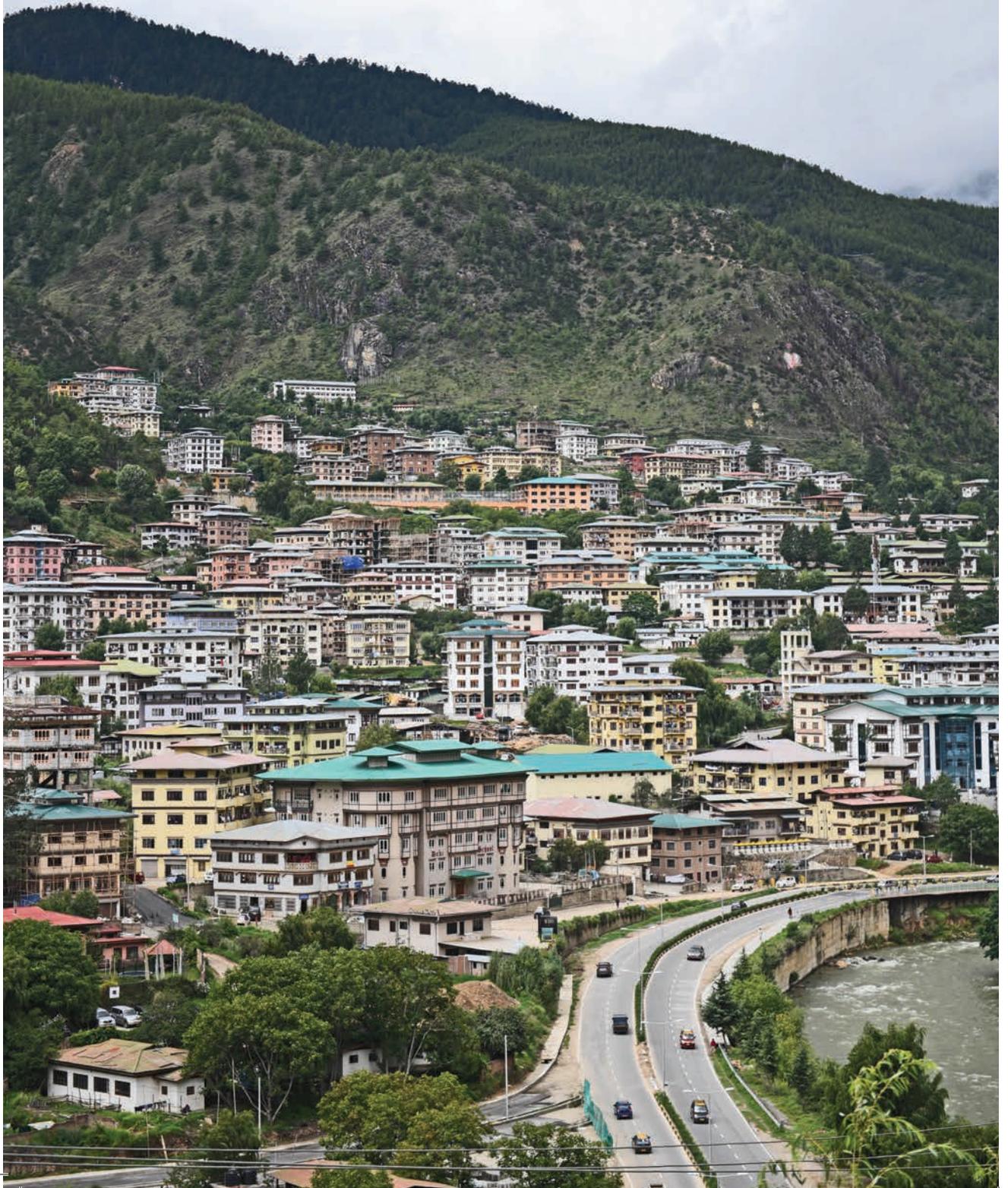
10. Build competency of the ECCDs teachers to provide quality, child-friendly services.

Recognising the important role of ECCD centres, we will invest in establishing child friendly ECCDs in collaboration with the community and continuously build the competency and skills of the ECCD teachers and provide necessary equipment as per the international guidelines.

11. We will provide free sanitary pads to all our school going girls.

Menstruation is NOT a "choice" and realising the current challenges of availability and affordability of sanitary pads, we will make available free sanitary pads in all girls' washrooms in schools so they maintain hygiene and change pads at their convenience.

For middle and low income groups, 2,500 homes will be built under home-ownership scheme





AFFORDABLE HOUSING

...for middle and low income groups nationwide

OUR COMMITMENT

Housing is important for all, and in urban areas, not only to have affordable homes to live but to have the opportunity of owning a home. Towards that we will:

- ✓ Build 2,500 flats for home ownership
- ✓ Initiate subsidised interest loan schemes for low income groups
- ✓ Lift existing rule limiting houses beyond two-storey in dzongkhags

Today only a small group of Bhutanese civil servants benefit from the government housing built by National Housing Development Corporation Limited (NHDCL). Likewise, the National Pension and Provident Fund provides housing loans only to its members and armed forces, again benefitting only a small segment of the population.

The housing need survey conducted by NHDCL in 2014 reported that 9,500 Bhutanese were residing in Jaigaon paying monthly rents ranging from Nu 5000 to Nu 10,000. They were all identified as low and middle income families. They could not afford rental houses in Phuentsholing and despite risks to life, have had to live across the border.

Our people have lived in insecurity and faced cases of robbery, even rape

in recent times. We cannot allow this to continue and we will take full responsibility of building adequate homes for all residents so they can live in peace and security.

Although there has been rapid growth in construction of commercial buildings in Thimphu, a majority are for higher income groups with houses rents soaring beyond affordability range of lower income groups. It is crucial to have more homes like the Changjiji complex in Thimphu that target middle and low income groups.

We are aware that residents in other dzongkhags, such as Trashigang, Samdrupjongkhar and Dagana, of many, also have housing problems. A majority of the urban residents have to spend more than half their income on house rents. Therefore, we know there is a need to, not only build homes for everyone but to make it



NARROWING THE GAP

affordable.

Home ownership is beyond the reach of low and middle income groups, particularly in urban towns of Bhutan. This inability to purchase one's own home means heavy dependence on rental housing, which in turn limits abilities of urban families to save to build a home of their own. In keeping with our vision of narrowing the gap, we must accord the highest importance to enable home ownership, especially for the low and middle income groups.

Some factors that have caused housing challenges are:

- Lack of national land and housing policy to provide framework for urban development and housing.
- Rapid population growth, urbanisation and rural-urban migration.
- Housing loans are difficult to access and the interest rates on housing loans are steep, when compared with many other countries. In Bhutan, the interest rate ranges from 8.6 percent to 14 percent. In most instances, housing loan repayment through installments to financial institutions is not met from rentals, forcing house owners to look for additional money from other sources. According to ADB Report, 2017, about 25 percent of the total loan disbursed by banks is on housing, made mostly to

developers to build multi-storied buildings and apartments rented out to tenants. The report also states that only 17 percent of households in urban areas own homes.

- Concentration of government offices and establishments in few Thromdes and districts, instead of adopting balanced growth centers have also led to high land prices and its scarcity for house constructions in urban areas.

OUR PLAN OF ACTION

1. We will develop a comprehensive plan to provide adequate housing in urban areas.

Solving the housing crisis in Phuentsholing and other urban areas will be the first priority of the government.

A high-level committee will be established within six months of the government's formation to submit a detailed report and plan to provide 100 percent solution to the housing crisis in Phuentsholing.

It will be one of the most significant pledges concerning security issues resulting from housing crisis in the border town. We will build at least one Changjiji-like housing complex in Phuentsholing.

We will then identify all major urban areas, including Thimphu and invest and work closely with NHDCL to



“...we will consult and work closely with Royal Monetary Authority in lowering interest rates for home loans for lower income groups”

ensure adequate housing within the first three years of our government.

2. We will identify adequate space and areas for low and middle income housing.

Suitable residential areas will be identified and local area plans developed along the border towns and cities facing housing crisis for the construction of buildings for residential purposes.

Resources required for such local area plan developments, such as roads, electricity, water and other facilities will be allocated on a priority basis. Construction works will be expedited for completion within first three years of the government. The government will co-ordinate with agencies like Thromdes, NHDCL, NLC and financial institutions.

Priority will be in building housing complexes that are liveable, affordable and within close proximity to public services such as schools and hospitals. Middle and low income groups and families working in corporate and private sectors will be given priority.

Mechanisms will be put in place to

ensure this. It is in keeping with our vision of narrowing the gap.

3. We will subsidise home interest rates for low income groups for a specified period.

To expedite the development and completion of housing construction works in Phuentsholing and other urban centers, we will consult and work closely with Royal Monetary Authority in lowering interest rates for home loans for lower income groups.

Low interest rates will be given to individuals and families from low income groups, as well as, builders of low income residential housing. We will also improve mortgage terms to improve access to housing loans, particularly for low and middle income groups. A mechanism to screen all such proposals and a vigilant monitoring system will be instituted.

We will also consider identifying and categorising Dzongkhags as per housing needs and put in place - incentives such as low interest rates, reduced prices for timber, sand and stone to encourage building houses in those places.

4. We will introduce home ownership schemes for government and private sector employees.

It is the aspiration of every family to own a home and to live their lives without having to worry about



“Build at least 2,500 flats/homes around the country for home ownership.”

moving and not being able to pay rent, especially after retirement. We will strengthen NHDCL to plan and develop public housing projects that provide every Bhutanese with opportunity to own quality homes and healthy living environments at a cost they can afford. Towards this we will consider implementing the following:

- ❖ Build at least 2,500 flats/homes around the country for home ownership.
- ❖ Introduce a home ownership scheme that provides financial support and gives priority to first time house owners and for those from lower and middle income groups. We will work with RMA and NPPF to enable Bhutanese to use their pension and provident fund for down payment of their homes and pay monthly mortgage loan installments.
- ❖ Introduce grants for low and middle income groups, whereby the public houses/flats will be sold at a discounted cost.
- ❖ We will strengthen NHDCL to carry out this project and provide financial resources to successfully implement the housing project.

5. We will initiate green buildings and homestay in villages for tourists.

The MoWHS and Thromdes will be tasked to institute policies and regulations to incorporate green building concepts.

Various incentives will be put in place for builders that use sustainable (e.g., reused, recycled, or made from renewable resources) and in-country available materials in their construction.

The concept of “green buildings” with traditional architectural designs will be promoted in villages to serve as homestay and attraction of eco-tourists and visitors.

We will ensure that all housing projects are provided with various commercial, recreational, and social amenities for the convenience of the residents.

6. We will lift the mandatory rule limiting houses to two-storey.

We will ensure that construction of every commercial building strictly adheres to traditional architecture and technical specifications. However, due to limited suitable areas for construction in towns and cities, the mandatory rule imposed in most Dzongkhags limiting houses to two-storey will be lifted.





STRENGTHENING CSOs

Build partnership through various initiatives

CSOs have been contributing to our nations' development by complimenting government efforts, drawing attention to new development challenges and launching initiatives that pilot new effective approaches. They are also supplementing government programs through greater outreach, especially in situations where private associations can mobilise and sensitise communities more effectively.

Among others, they have promoted greater accountability. The increasing number of CSOs in diverse fields indicate the need to address issues beyond what government covers.

Despite enormous achievements made by our CSOs, we know they are confronted with financial constraints and that sustaining their programs and organisation itself are a problem. There is limited capacity and opportunity for fund raising and resource mobilisation. Many of our CSOs remain unrecognised, are perceived to be contradicting government programs and their concerns remain unheard. Acknowledging them as partners, DNT will:

OUR COMMITMENT

- ✓ Establish revolving fund for CSOs to avail when in need
- ✓ Outsource development programs and activities in the 12th Plan to CSOs
- ✓ Invest in capacity building of CSOs to enable fund mobilisation

OUR PLAN OF ACTION

1. We will establish a revolving fund that CSOs can access.

To encourage and assist our CSOs, we will establish a revolving fund that will allow them to access funds conveniently and reliably. We will make funding flexible to allow greater share in sustaining and for administrative costs.

2. We will invest in capacity building of CSOs to mobilise funds.

Being aware of the limited capacity and the inability of many small CSOs to access funds and meet donor requirements, we will support capacity-building of CSOs specifically in resource mobilisation. We will strengthen CSOs to carry out these functions and enable the Authority to provide technical support to CSOs.



NARROWING THE GAP

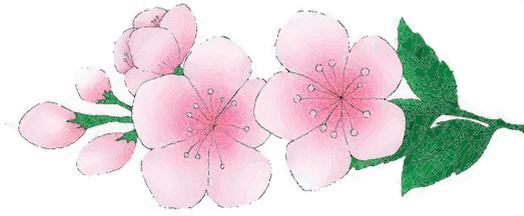
3. We will outsource programs and activities to CSOs for effective implementation.

We will outsource development programs and activities in the 12th Plan to CSOs, who can more effectively carry them out. We will avoid duplication and, wherever

possible, give opportunity to CSOs to engage in development work as a priority. Monitoring and reporting mechanisms will be strengthened and the role of CSOs, vis-a-vis, the government will be further strengthened.

25 PLEDGES IN 120 DAYS

1. Establish a high level committee to draft the country's new long-term vision, *Bhutan: Vision 2045* to carry our nation forward.
2. Establish a dedicated water agency with a plan of action to ensure water - DRINKING and IRRIGATION - for all by 2021.
3. Convert Samrang project into vegetable farming project. PROMOTE vegetarian meals during official functions
4. Develop "Suung Joen" app to enable Bhutanese to communicate freely without the need to recharge voucher. Remove five percent voucher tax.
5. Implement free nutritious lunch program in all schools.
6. Initiate and implement discontinuing examinations until Class VI, and removing Class X cut-off point.
7. Free access, 24/7, to all online data within the country – BBS, online shopping, websites browsing and document downloading – by installing intranet technology.
8. Institute the fourth pay commission to revise civil service salaries and allowances.
9. Begin projects to address stray dogs problem, manage wastes more efficiently and develop a blue print for building adequate residential complexes.
10. Set up insurance schemes for farmers to protect their crops.
11. Develop professional service standards and minimal turn-around times for all public services.
12. Institute mechanisms for delivery of all public services in gewogs and thromdes through one-stop shops.
13. Contributing to decentralisation process, support tshogpas by opening offices for them at chiwogs.
14. Establish a tourism development board and initiate implementation of *Bhutan Tourism Review, 2016* recommendations.
15. Finalise a framework, in consultation with teachers



- nationwide, to reduce teacher workload. Provide administrative/HR support for extra/co-curricular activities.
16. Review the national youth policy and implement a national youth action plan to address the needs of our youth.
 17. Identify and list the country's skills needs and design a program to train youth for employment. Complete review of employment policies to strengthen it and draw up strategies to achieve jobs and livelihood opportunities for all.
 18. Enumerate and provide budget to all community lhakhangs to support them to conduct annual rituals and festivals.
 19. Cabinet ministers will use electric/hybrid cars for local travels.
 20. Meet taxi tshogpa, thromde representatives and other agencies to address issues facing taxi drivers over parking space, professional driving licence and ownership, age of vehicles and age of drivers.
 21. Review the 12th Plan to include revolving fund for CSOs and funds for film and documentary promotion.
 22. Review and revise working conditions and salaries of RBP personal to ease long duty hours and appropriate compensation for additional duties.
 23. Initiate *Sonam Gongphel* project, where the government will buy farmers' produces. Review and revise the function of farm shops to buy from farmers at floor price without impeding small businesses in the gewogs.
 24. Establish a private sector development committee led by the Finance Minister in partnership with BCCI. Together implement *Private Sector Development – The Way Forward, 2016* recommendations.
 25. Initiate recruitment of domestic workers by reviewing and amending immigration rules and regulation. Institute stringent monitoring standards and guidelines for that.