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LHOMON SOCIETY



**SAMDRUPJONGKHAR INITIATIVE**  
*A GNH Laboratory*

## ANNUAL REPORT 2017

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## INTRODUCTION

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Bhutan is a small country sandwiched between two most populous countries. Pristine environment, strong traditional wisdom and values, cultural and spiritual richness, rich agro and bio-diversity, communal harmony and stable governance are proud legacy of our selfless monarchs and visionary forefathers. However, with the rising and aggressive onslaught of consumerism and materialism in the world, Bhutan is undergoing rapid change in aspects of socio-economic, culture and tradition, for both good or bad. As a small nation with less than a million population, impact can be enormous, whether positive or negative, and the speed of impact will be felt faster and sooner than later. Like anywhere in the world, poorer section of the society will be the first to bear the brunt of any impact be it drought, natural calamities, food scarcity, epidemics, water shortage, political instability, etc.

There is visible tension between hard core economic development and ecological wellbeing, modernization and tradition, younger and older generation, rich and poor, etc. Lifestyle is changing fast, junk food and cheap imports are steadily replacing home grown and homemade food and thus corresponding waste generation whose management is challenged with the inherent general lack of appreciation of its impact on the overall ecological health, resource depletion and growing lifestyle related deceases.

Therefore, the Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative (SJI) as a GNH inspired project under the Lhomon Society that manifests in its primary programs that are delivered consciously by a young passionate team has much to offer in its modest ways in such changing times. It has a national significance while maintaining local relevance. A brief overview on the Lhomon Society was covered by the national newspaper, Kuensel. Here is the article link <http://www.kuenselonline.com/making-a-gnh-country/>

SJI's overall program and activities during the reporting period is presented in the following pages of the report.

## ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

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Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative has raised farmers' awareness on the importance of household level food and nutrition sufficiency through sustainable agro-diversity vis-à-vis mono and commercial farming, revival of traditional crops for pest and climate resilience and seed self-reliance vis-à-vis high yielding crop variety and free distribution of hybrid seeds, protecting soil health and the environment through organic nutrient and pest management vis-à-vis use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides and not the least of all promoting agriculture as being economically viable.

Samdrup Jongkhar is now recognized as an organic farming district. Farmers are generally self-sufficient in vegetables. They acknowledge the advantages of organic farming and the value of organic farm produce. The collective effort in promoting local produce through awareness program, formation of vegetable groups, conducting stakeholders' meeting and the construction of market sheds has led to decrease in the import of vegetables from India by about 16%. The interventions in this program have benefitted over 22% of total households (including appropriate technology) with 30% higher yield (communities with SJI support). The success of System of Rice Intensification has encouraged farmers and SJI to upscale it and to make it one of the major thrust areas in future. Working in groups e.g. vegetable groups is a challenge with competing demand of work and varying priorities of the farmers. Tapping the common market collectively as individual farmers (producers) is an option that will be tried in consultation with the community. Groups may be continued for sharing of work force, seed banking and financial support (an informal banking system, which is effective in the region).

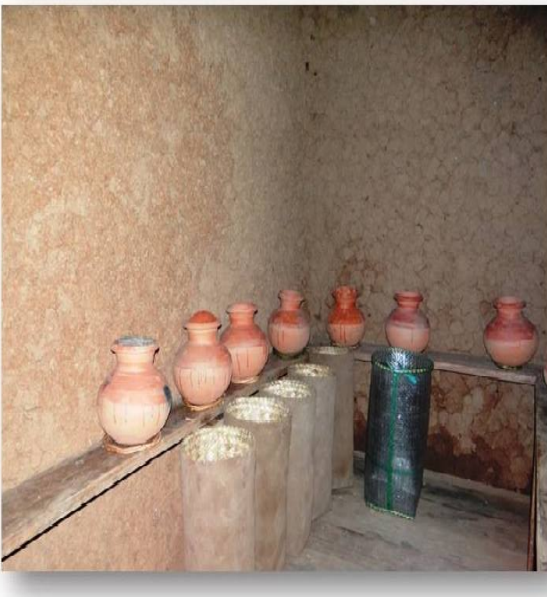
Greater and skillful effort also has to be made in bringing the producers, consumers and service providers such as SJI and the agriculture sector together to address the issue of diversity, quantity and pricing. The recent chili crisis due to the ban of import of chemical infested chili from India and abnormally low price of potatoes due to the demonetization of Indian rupee that hit the farmers the hardest accentuate on larger issues that need to be addressed in the agriculture sector.

Food imports may grow as agricultural farms are being converted into cash crop or fodder fields (for imported cows that gives higher volume of milk, hence higher income; these cows are gradually replacing the local breed) or fields remaining fallow due to growing rural-urban migration, aging rural population and not the least of all changing food habits. For example, Bhutan imported Nu.1.5 billion worth of rice from India in 2013 besides the fact that it contains heavy chemicals. Further, a recent survey revealed that

25% of traditional cereal crops have already been lost in Samdrup Jongkhar district, which is also the national figure. There may be a time where people may have higher disposable income but increasingly produce less and depend on imports.

Some of the activities carried out in 2017:

1. Opening of indigenous community seed bank for Dewathang and Orong gewogs to promote sustainable way of preserving traditional cropping and also promote more climate resilient indigenous seeds:









2. A Lead farmer shares his knowledge to farmer groups from neighbouring villages on organic agriculture practices and eco-friendly farming:





3. Thirty farmers from fifteen gewogs of Trashigang Dzongkhag along with two Agriculture Extension Officers visit SJI for exposure and study trip:





#### 4. Reviving paddy cultivation in Lauri Gewog through youth engagement:





5. Successful harvest after large-scale piloting of SRI method of rice cultivation in Rekhay village.



## ZERO WASTE MANAGEMENT

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A source confirms that there are 22 open waste dumpsites in Bhutan which have affected 20 water catchment areas. Daily generation of waste in Bhutan's capital city Thimphu is 45 tons, in Samdrup Jongkhar municipal area 3 tons (source: municipal authority) and Dewathang 1.5 tons (rough calculation). Correspondingly, per capita daily waste generated in Thimphu is 300 gm, Samdrup Jongkhar town is 280 gm and 110 gm in Dewathang (roughly). To dispose one kilogram of waste costs Nu. 30 in Thimphu and Nu. 100 in other districts. Waste generation is expected to increase by 60-70% (estimated) in the next 5 years. Waste is either burnt or dumped down the valleys or in pits in the rural areas and in urban areas, except for Thimphu which has started segregation, waste is collected and dumped at an open site that is shifted when filled. Trucks or tractors, dustbins, cleaners and occasional mass cleaning campaigns typically define the waste management infrastructure in Bhutan.

Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative addresses waste as a causal effect of development and the multiple and easy choices that it continually showers upon people with persuasive advertisements, prompting addictive consumerism, among others. What, where and when one eats, wears and uses at home, workplace, etc. is changing faster than one realizes. Most often tax policies also promote consumerism and thus import of goods and services, which perhaps are not essential. Development certainly heralds great opportunities too. Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative's zero waste management program goes beyond littering, picking up litters, mass cleaning campaigns and dustbins. SJI practices what it preaches. It integrates awareness on the cause, education on the effect, behavioural change, adding economic value to waste as an incidental benefit and thus saving it from going to the landfill/dumpsite and integrates it into mainstream development and the governance structure at the community and local government levels. In Bhutan, this is the only wholesome program and hence a flagship program. It is now slowly being replicated in parts by other actors in the country.

Some of the activities carried out in 2017:

1. A ten-day training program on diversification of plastic wrapper (infusion of plastic made thread and yarn) products. The training was attended by Dewathang zero waste craft group members and zero waste trainers from the communities - Reshore & Orong and institution - Samten Choling nunnery in Wamrong.





2. Pemathang Gewog is the first gewog in Samdrup Jongkhar to go beyond the concept of cleaning campaign and distribution of waste bins by focusing on lifestyle, nutrition, zero waste craft, segregation at household level and building Material Recovery Facility (MRF) which is now run by women's zero waste craft group.

Recently, Gewog has also procured a machine to manufacture degradable plates and cups from the areca nut bark which are readily available in the Gewog. This project will be implemented in a month from now and expected to put an end on the usage of plastic plates and cups in the District and beyond.

Journey towards zero waste management requires constant effort; we have to be authentic and passionate. Then, journey itself becomes our accomplishment. On 1st July, 2017, 250 community members of Pemathang Gewog was again educated on the importance of zero waste management system including highlights from “Waste Prevention and Management Regulation 2012”.and “National Integrated Solid Waste Management Strategy 2014”





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## Pemathang Gewog produces areca sheath plates and mugs

[Tinley Wangchuk, Samdrup Jongkhar](#)  
Dec 18, 2017



Pemathang Gewog in Samdrup Jongkhar is leading a new initiative aimed at reducing use of plastics. The gewog is producing plates and mugs made with the sheaths of areca nut trees

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3. SJI has conducted 'Training of Trainers' for six zero waste trainers from Wamrong, Jomotsangkha and Samdrupcholing satellite towns:





4. Responsible and Sustainable Waste Management Program at Jomotsangkha  
Dungkhag under Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag.



## EDUCATION AND YOUTH

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Education and youth program aims at developing contented, responsible, creative and caring human beings with analytical thinking and a strong sense of justice and understanding of collective wellbeing a departure from the (mis)perception of education as a means to pass examination and to get a job. Quality of this program underpins the sustainability of other programs in the long run. Nearly one fourth of Bhutan's population is in schools and colleges. This is one of the biggest attributes to rural-urban migration, which is aggravated by many factors including parents' and children's perception of rural life farming as drudgery.

The Lhomon Education (LME), a separate project under the same parent organization namely Lhomon Society was merged with SJI in September 2015, coinciding with the undersigned assuming office. The new curriculum that seeks to integrate ecological, social, and economic objectives of Gross National Happiness is well underway with the development and testing of 5 curricular units and the establishment of an 18-member advisory committee consisting of Bhutanese and international educators who will review, advice, and give input on the units.

The expert curriculum developer is currently in Bhutan for 4 months. Together with the LME team, the expert curriculum developer will further consolidate the 5 units, work on the 8 remaining units and professional development of teachers, engage local schools and deepen relations, continue work on assessment measures and develop curriculum for the puppy group. The team will also network with institutions, within Bhutan and beyond with alternate education models. With the recent recruitment, the team has grown from 2 to 5 teachers, of whom one has rich teaching experience with PhD in contemplative education. SJI will also work on lending greater clarity and deeper understanding of its long-term educational program (beyond 3 years).

Over 51% of Bhutan's youth is below 25 years of age. Passing examination, getting a certificate that the job market demands and getting any job in the city are the aspirations of the youth in general and their parents, too. Otherwise, one is deemed to have failed in life. Such narrow outlook to life manifests in serious social disorders. While SJI youth programme seeks to create opportunities for rural youth that help build a vibrant rural economy and society and thereby reduce the rapid rate of rural-urban migration, not much has really happened besides the engagement of youth of model GNH village, regular internship, which certainly has mutual benefits and some adhoc programs to foster creativity and artistic expression, job skill development workshops, volunteerism, and training in vocational skills.



A new thrust has to be given to this program in pursuance of its important goal or the goal itself has to be reviewed.

Some of the activities carried out in 2017:

1. SJI hosted faculty members and 27 final year students from the College of Natural Resources and 59 final year students from Sherubtse College as part of learning holistic approach to development in SJI.





2. SJI conducts mindfulness camp at the Chokyi Gyatso Institute, Dewathang to a group of educators, teachers, parents, youths and civil servants from Samdrup Jongkhar, Dewathang and other parts of Bhutan:



3. SJI carries out Karma Yoga sessions – the mindful action and the contemplative nature walk sessions were conducted during the mindfulness camp and the outdoor session with LME students.





4. The more we know each other in our communities and the more connected we are to each other, the more likely we are to come together to solve our common issues rather than waiting for Govt. to come and do. It is all about sharing responsibilities.

As part of the initiative, four youth groups have conducted the community mapping.





## THE MODEL VILLAGE - MENCHARI

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This is one of SJI's highly successful programs with both qualitative and quantitative results. It has been a year of awakening for the people of Menchari village, with high self-esteem, greater communal feeling and a deep sense of achievement. The community's health has improved with improved sanitation (100% proper toilet), nutritious food (almost every household has a nutrition kitchen garden) and reduced consumption of alcohol (from 86% to 50-60%). Incidence of sickness and death has reduced. Governance has improved with heightened awareness of their rights and responsibilities. Women and men, young and old are equally involved in the affairs of the community. They have higher disposal income now (21 active bank accounts). Farming is totally organic; they are self-sufficient in livestock products and vegetables. They can also be self-sufficient in cereals because they grow maize twice a year and have abundant land to grow other cereals including rice. Waste generation is minimal. They now have a temple and a road (nearing completion). The community is already working on reviving traditional cereal crops.

SJI is mindful of the fact that building a model village calls for inner transformation which will take time. Hence, it is gradually involving the community and in particular its youth in mindfulness camps and universal human values workshop.

The model village approach is comprehensive lending to greater focus and greater appreciation for meaningful integration of economic, social and political development, eases implementation and monitoring, enhances ownership of the program by the community, builds greater personal relations without compromising professional standards, lends greater visibility of value addition of development, produces better and quicker results hence greater outcome, ensures greater sustainability and offers persuasive argument for GNH-based development that is development with values.

Some of the activities carried out in 2017:

1. Completed the construction of farm road to Menchari: The construction of Menchari farm road (3.9 km) which was began last year (17/11/2016) with a machinery support from MoAF, labour contribution from the community, administration support from Orong Gewog, technical support from the Department of Road and financial assistance from Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC) and TomKat Foundation was inaugurated on 4th March, 2017, by honorable Minister for Agriculture and Forests (MoAF). It is an exemplary collaboration between people, government and civil society organization, bear equal responsibility to meet the shared goal of development

with values. The farm road is fundamentally expected to improve the lives of the farmers. Most importantly farmers expressed that they can have immediate access of their produce in the markets.



2. A seven-day land management training conducted in Menchari village.





3. Carried out consultation with the local people to plan for a large grant proposal for sustainable and green development of Menchari.



4. Lead farmer, Tshering, from Dewathang trains farmers from Menchari on organic agriculture practices. Unlike before, all 23 households have their own nutritional garden where they grow all sorts of vegetables. They also actively participate in vegetable group activities. Dzongkhag agriculture sector also have started supporting the community by providing them various support.



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## REACHING BEYOND SAMDRUP JONGKHAR

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1. Waste is ours! Hence, it is our responsibility to manage it - reduce, reuse and recycle it. Interventions have to be made at all levels with citizens assuming a greater role in reducing waste instead of expecting the Government to do everything. There is so much that every individual can do, fundamentally starting with making the right choices to live healthily and sustainably.

As part of SJI's zero waste programs, Wamrong satellite town was identified as new and first ever pilot area on zero waste beyond Samdrup Jongkhar. Some of the best practices on zero waste management system from our seven years of experience was shared and institutionalized.





2. Mr. Darwan Singh Negi, an expert on Organic Farming from Navdanya (our partner organization since from 2010) in India on a seven-day visit to SJI. He trained the farmers on bio-pest management, on integrated seed selection and storage, land management, nutrient management and seed banking.



3. Programme Directors from CARLEP Programme Management Office and ARDC - Wengkhhar along with 2 officials from CARLEP-IFAD.





4. Mr. Werner Kuelling (Former Secretary General of HELVETAS) and Mr. Mario Fehr (Member of Swiss Parliament), visited Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative on 21/7/2017 to learn about SJI.



5. Farmers lead by a SJI staff visited the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in Nepal to learn some of their best practices from 3rd - 8th October, 2017. The team also met with the experts, members from CSO, women and seed grower groups, and the community seed bank farmers.





6. SJI took a mixed group of 26 people (SRI farmers from Rekhay, Agriculture officials, representatives from Gewog administration and SJI staff) to Guwahati, Assam on 24 - 25/6/2017. Apart from SRI, they also visited vermin-compost production centre of Lauhitya Livelihood private Ltd. and Organic Majuli's outlet in organic bazaar. Thank you Manash Chaliha for organizing and hosting us.



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## OPERATION AND MANAGEMENT

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### MONITORING AND EVALUATION

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Monitoring and evaluation of programs and follow-up action on field visits is SJI's Achilles heels. Firstly, it is overstretched with multiplicity of activities, secondly it is burdened with the higher responsibilities of proposal writing and fund raising and thirdly it generally fails to plan effectively, which essentially arises from lack of capacity, a plan which has to be enriched with clear knowledge of the project site, its beneficiaries, research and baseline studies or analysis of available data.

Therefore, program activities will be consolidated and consciously aligned to the larger SJI goal, the strengthened board in year 2017 has assumed higher responsibilities, monitor and give strategic guidance to the field team as roles were divided amongst the field team as follows:

#### Education and Youth:

1. Dasho Pema Thinley
2. Dr. Sonam Chuki
3. Mr. Sonam Jamtsho
4. Mrs. Pasang Lham Dorjee

#### Financial strategy:

1. Dasho Ugen Chewang
2. Mr. Kencho Namgyel
3. Mrs. Kinley Om

#### Donor networking and proposal editing:

1. Dasho Kinley Dorji
2. Ms. Kunzang Wangmo
3. Mr. Tashi Tshering Dukpa

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### STAFF CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

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- a. Apart from a formal training program (attending conference, workshops and meetings), every Saturday is dedicated for in-house capacity building of SJI staff through various activities like dialogue, watching documentaries, sharing experiences and development committee meetings.



- b. Mr. Cheku Dorji (Program Director) attended international workshop on “Unpacking participatory democracy: From practice to theory and from theory to practice” along with Executive Director in Kerala from 30th January to 1st February 2017. In continuation (2nd – 4th February, 2017), Program Director also visited SJI’s zero waste partner called Thanal, a non-profit organization in Kerala, thus broadening his knowledge on zero waste management system.
- c. Executive Director and Program Director also participated in Civil Society Organization’s (CSO’s) “Retreat” organized by Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD) funded by Helvetas from 9th – 11th February, 2017 in Phuentsholing.
- d. The SJI team: Dr. Yang Gyeltshen, Mr. Dawa, and Mr. Cheku Dorji participated a two-day international workshop on the ‘Role of University in Promoting GNH through Practice and Rural Development’ from 10th - 11th March, 2017, organized by Sherubtse College, Royal University of Bhutan and Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, Japan. SJI shared its experience from GNH in practice through our program areas: Zero Waste, Organic Agriculture, Youth Engagement & Lho Mon Education and Menchari GNH Model Village.
- e. Mr. Cheku Dorji (Project Director) attended Sun & Earth Festival in Ladakh from 20th - 31st August 2017, organized by Himalayan Institute of Alternatives of Ladakh (HIAL) and Student’s Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL) in Ladakh. The main objective for the visit was to explore ideas, concepts and building networks from the festival to develop a plan for SJI village and to study the SECMOL education system, some aspects of it, if feasible, could be adopted in our education program. It provided as well some skills through hands on workshops on earth building techniques.
- f. Mr. Dawa, LME teacher and Sonam Tshering, Program Officer attended the ‘Training of Trainers’ on community mapping in Paro organized by Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy in summer 2017.
- g. LME teachers participated in summer vacation 2017 Professional Development Workshop on English for Effective Communication held at Garpawoong Middle Secondary School organized by the Ministry of Education.

- h. Professional development, especially on teaching methodologies, is an ongoing process. For example, having provided with a folder containing learning materials for 52 weeks after the summer workshop on English for Effective Communication, one of 52 activities is carried out every week

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## LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY

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While SJI's existence is temporary, its sustainability while it exists is of paramount importance. In pursuance of its goal of self-reliance, SJI is gradually working towards mobilizing internal resources and ultimately towards a self-sustaining funding source. Therefore, this year it launched its membership drive with the concept of people governing SJI by virtue of being its member through the payment of a monthly minimum fee of Nu.100, which can also be paid bi-annually, annually or a lump sum amount. Our target is 10000 members to secure adequate endowment to meet both operational and program implementation costs. As of now, only 618 members with an amount of Nu. 12,59,458.00 have been secured (list attached as Annexure 1). More aggressive effort has to be made to fulfil the target by the end of 2018 and make the fund operational. Alternate sources are being explored to meet the core cost during the interim period.

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## ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

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Organizational culture has been visibly strengthened with greater team work and a sense of shared responsibility and community service ethos instilled, though much remains to be desired. There is greater openness and sharing of programs for effective networking and partnership building within and with external entities.

Further, to ensure efficiency, continuity and stability, the organization development committee formed in early 2016, has been further strengthened with the inclusion of a Lead Teacher and creation of a post of "Program Director". A Program Director has been appointed for effective administration of the office and overall coordination of the program activities. With the voluntary resignation of the Executive Director in 2017, the Program Director leads the project at this point of application and the Board does not wish to seek replacement for the Executive Director any time soon. The appropriate technology program is now be integrated with the programs for meaningful application and effective results. After the new year's collective reflection and redirection, SJI will take stock of its work and critically determine its focus areas through formulation of a strategic document.



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## STRENGTHENING OF BOARD

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The present board was constituted in 2017 with the following Board of Directors:

Board of Directors:

1. Dasho Ugen Chewang (Vice Chairperson)  
Thimphu
2. Dasho Pema Thinley  
Thimphu
3. Dasho Kinley Dorji  
Thimphu
4. Sonam Chuki  
Paro
5. Sonam Jamtsho  
Thimphu
6. Kunzang Wangmo  
Thimphu
7. Pasang Lham Dorjee  
Paro
8. Kinley Om  
Paro
9. Kencho Namgyel (Treasurer)  
Thimphu
10. Tashi Tshering Dukpa (Secretary)  
Thimphu