



THE SAMDRUP JONGKHAR INITIATIVE

SJI/18/02

January 01, 2017

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Sub: Building SJI's sustainability through people's ownership

Dear,

My colleagues and I take this opportunity to share with you and solicit your support towards our effort in achieving self reliance through ownership and building an effective system of governance. We are pleased to share with you the detailed rationale of our important pursuit, which you may wish to communicate to those within your circle of influence.

In fulfilling the long-term aspiration of a harmonious, self reliant and an ever secure and sovereign nation, Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Norbu who is the chairman of Lhomon Society (LMS) launched the Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative (SJI) in 2010 at the Chokyi Gyatso Institute. SJI is a GNH inspired project under the auspices of LMS, a registered civil society organization. Aligned with the national goals, it endeavours to work towards (i) raising living standards of communities in harmony with nature, (ii) establishing food and nutrition security and self-sufficiency, (iii) protecting the natural environment, (iv) strengthening communities and encouraging local participation in decision-making, (v) fostering a cooperative, productive, entrepreneurial, and self-reliant spirit (vi) stemming rural-urban migration tide by providing opportunities for youth and (vii) promoting culture and traditional knowledge. Its ultimate goal is not to exist when communities begin to manifest SJI spirit, in body, speech and mind. It is also SJI's conscious endeavour to add value, ensure meaningful integration and lend deeper GNH consciousness to the design and delivery of its programs. In essence, it is a GNH laboratory, with the aspiration to replicate it in other dzongkhags, if it succeeds.

Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative has four major program areas, viz. (i) GNH inspired education program & youth engagement, (ii) organic farming, (iii) zero waste management and (iv) appropriate technology. In gist, the education program called Lhomon Education (LME) that started in 2012 is core to all the programs and offers an alternate education model that re-imagines teacher, classroom and rethinks knowledge. Passing examination, competition and subject classification, among others is of least

importance. It takes themes such as water, earth, culture, etc. to teach/learn about their importance, origin, harmony, responsibilities, history, science, arithmetic, language, nutrition, traditional wisdom, respect, culture, reflect on realities, etc. It makes learning-teaching joyful, exciting and relevant for students, gradually nurturing them to be emotionally, socially, politically and professionally intelligent with deep human values. Its drive towards organic farming has made Samdrup Jongkhar dzongkhag generally chemical and pesticide free (some still being smuggled) and people have become more conscious about the value of organically grown vegetables. The zero waste management program is a flagship program that has taken waste management beyond mass cleaning campaigns and picking litters. A comprehensive program of 3Rs (reduce, reuse and recycle) with the underpinning goal of behavioural change and community taking ownership of their own waste management may be the first of its kind in the country. Waste is directly linked with lifestyle, socio-economic dynamics and national policies.

In nearly six years of its active existence, it may not be wrong to surmise that SJI has added value to rethinking development though in limited ways. This has been possible because of the wise guidance from its Board, diligence and perseverance of the SJI's young team and not the least of all the generous support of International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Canada, Maitri Trust, Bhutan Trust Fund for Environment Conservation, UNDP, Austrian Coordination Office, Sustainable Development Secretariat of GNHC, Alerce Trust and many other development partners including local corporate entities and few individuals. Domestic funding constitutes 3% of the total support received by SJI.

Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative believes that continued dependence on external development partners undermines the spirit of self reliance. It is paradoxical to advocate self reliance to communities while one remains dependent on others. Therefore, the LMS Board and SJI have decided to take articulation of self reliance to the next level of implementation and that is Bhutanese people owning, supporting and governing SJI. Why should Bhutanese support SJI? Bhutanese should support SJI because (i) it endeavours to showcase GNH (Bhutan's development philosophy)-in-action with the long-term plan to go beyond Samdrup Jongkhar dzongkhag, (ii) hence, it has to be sustained to succeed, (iii) it lends greater meaning to democracy through citizens taking charge for their own well being and self help is core to self reliance –why should others support us when we are not ready to support ourselves? (iv) expected contribution from each prospective SJI member is very small (Nu.100 per member) and affordable and (v) SJI will remain small and temporary, which can also serve as an institutional model to others. In 2014, LMS Chair Dzongsar Jamyang Khyentse Norbu exhorted the youth of Samdrup Jongkhar not to forget their roots and take responsibility in developing their own communities (letter at www.sji.bt).

As you will acknowledge, Bhutanese can easily own, govern and sustain SJI without much burden at all. Except for its GNH based educational program and the dream projects of building GNH model villages, other SJI programs are not capital intensive and can be managed by a small group of selfless and intelligent professionals committed to the noble cause, who are supported by a continuous stream of interns and volunteers. Besides, SJI will cease to exist once its spirit is understood and articulated by the

communities in how they think, how they live, how they govern, what they grow, what they eat and drink, etc. Until then, it has to be actively supported by the communities.

Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative currently has 285 members, *far from meeting the target of 10,000 members by December 31, 2016*. The total amount accumulated thus far is only Nu. 217305/-. We request you to help us mobilize more members from within your organization and your circle of influence. *Membership fee, which is a minimum of Nu.100/- may be directly deposited on a monthly/half yearly/annually basis directly from the bank on authorization from the concerned individual member. Some members also offer lump sum amount. SJI has bank accounts in both BOBL (200185095) and BNBL (5100043705001). The membership form and bank authorization letter are on our website (ww.sji.bt). All contribution to Lhomon Society, SJI's parent organization, is tax deductible. Therefore, SJI shall issue tax exempt letter to all the members prior to the annual filing of tax. All contribution to Lhomon Society, SJI's parent organization, is tax deductible. Therefore, SJI shall issue tax exempt letter to all the members prior to the annual filing of tax. However, as a matter of principle, entities with conflicting policies with that SJI cannot be its members.*

The details of members and their contribution are posted every month on SJI's website and facebook page (www.sji.bt & Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative FB). Once the fund becomes operational, which SJI hopes will be sooner than later with everyone's support, its plans and programs and budget-expenditure status will be posted on the website for the members' perusal, guidance and verification.

The SJI team, in its modest efforts towards achieving its chairperson's vision of building a self reliant community by helping itself, acknowledges your genuine goodwill and impending generous support. SJI's information leaflet can be downloaded from its website/facebook page. Please, contact me at neten@sji.bt or my colleague Karma Choki at 17983530 or karmac@sji.bt for any further communication.

Thanking you in anticipation of your unrelenting support towards fulfilling our goal of self reliance and good governance.

Yours sincerely,

Neten Zangmo
(Executive Director)