ANNUAL REPORT 2021



Annual Report 2021

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Lhomon Society

The Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative

The Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative (SJI) is a community-based organisation that operates under the auspices of the Lhomon Society; a registered Civil Society Organisation (CSO) in Bhutan. The SJI promotes the principles of Gross National Happiness (GNH) in harmony with Government goals at grassroots level. SJI upholds trust and confidence, valuing and enhancing local potential through partnership with local government and government institutions.

Our Team



Karma Choki Administration & Accounts Officer



Ugyen Tshomo Zero Waste Craft Trainer



Karma Dema Sr. Program Officer



Ugyen Zangmo Sales & Marketing Supervisor



Cheku Dorji Program Director



Karma Losel Yangnyen Program Officer



Yeshey Tenzin Program Officer



Tandin Phub Driver/Office Assistant



Passang Tamang Program Officer

VISION

Foster genuine Gross National Happiness-based development and the knowledge, principles, values, and practices required to achieve it in Samdrup Jongkhar, as a model.

MISSION

To build prosperous, resilient, ecologically sensitive and self-reliant communities that have the courage, initiative, and wisdom to take their future in their own hands; to achieve food self-sufficiency; to enhance opportunities for local youth, and to create a genuine GNH-based educational system locally.

Stepping up in difficult time

The SJI, during the second nationwide lockdown in collaboration with Lead Farmers, Youth Groups, Organic Vegetable Groups, went all out to contribute in our small ways to help Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag (District Administration), front liners, monastic institutes and communities.

As a gesture of goodwill, appreciation and solidarity in these challenging times, the SJI with farmers offered dairy products and food items, including fruits, pulses, rice, and ground maize, to the Dzongkhag COVID-19 Control Room, front liners, Dratshang (Monastic Body) and the Chokyi Gyatso Institute at Dewathang. In total, we have contributed 4 Metric Tons of food items worth Nu 153,250, including cereals, vegetables and fruits.

When the shortage of chilli in the country sent its prices through the roof, hitting whopping Nu 1,000 per kilogram, our youth-led organic farm in Dewathang provided a respite to the communities in Samdrup Jongkhar. Our youth groups provided chilli - the most essential - part of the Bhutanese diet for much lesser price than the people in other parts of the country were paying.

The youths sold chilli for Nu 300 a kilogram to the communities in Samdrup Jongkhar.

Besides supplying food items, the SJI also further promoted vegetable cultivation in Samdrup Jongkhar *Thromde* (Municipality) to counter



vegetable shortages in the region. Hence, we helped local farmers sell 6 Metric Tons Farm Yard Manure and 1,000 Liters of cow urine in Dewathang and Samdrup Jongkhar towns to urban farmers.

Our initiative -- such as this -- not only helped farmers find a market for their compost but went a long way in boosting the morale of urban farmers to continue with their gardening quest.

For this success we sincerely acknowledge the support rendered by ARDC Wengkhar, Mongar Dzongkhag (District) and Dzongkhag Agriculture Sector in Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag to help us contribute to the nation during such difficult times.

With more people forced to spend time online, we held a Digital Citizenship Education to educate and caution youths about the dangers of the internet, social media, misinformation, and disinformation and learn to tackle such maligning information.

80 MT FYM Marketed

1,000

Lt of Cow Urine Marketed

Nu 153,250

Worth Food Supplied

2MT

Veggies Supplied



Dr Andreas Schild Memorial Mountain Prize 2021

Congratulations to these organizations, who received an honourable mention for their exceptional efforts towards building the resilience of the HKH communities during the COVID-19 pandemic!

Honourable mentions

The SJI is honoured to receive an Honourable Mention at the Dr Andreas Schild Memorial Mountain Prize 2021 for the promotion of Urban Farming in Samdrup Jongkhar.



Gurunjor Welfare Organization

for their exceptional work on sustainable mountain development in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative

for their exceptional work promoting urban farming in Samdrup Jongkhar, Bhutan during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Program Areas

Organic Agriculture
 Menchari Pilot Village
 Youth Engagement
 Zero Waste

Organic Agriculture

Prepping Up Lead Farmer's to New Normal

In an attempt to introduce farmers to the ways of the new normal, the SJI held a virtual meeting with the 14 Lead Farmers of Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag (District). Following the meeting, we once again reassured the Lead Farmers that the SJI would do everything within our capacity to help the rural communities build resilience to overcome the ongoing human-wildlife conflict, pests, diseases and labour shortage.

The Lead Farmers raised these as some of the major challenges blighting the farming communities today.

For SJI, Lead Farmer plays a critical role in imparting organic agriculture practice back in the communities. The Lead Farmers also act as the communication channel by which we understand the challenges farmers face in the ground reality. Thus, a day-long virtual meeting was held with the 14 Lead Farmers. In the meeting, ways to enhance their roles and responsibilities; improve technical capacities to help communities overcome challenges were discussed.

392 Farmers Trained

100 Farmers Received Inputs

13.42 MT Veggies Produced

Nu 955,967 Generated

Organic Farm

SJI's Model Farm has been functioning as an experiential farm where the staffs engage in farm activities to learn and understand the issues faced by farmers while farming organically.

Besides that, it has also been serving as a venue for farmers' training and a platform for youth engagement.

The Model Farm has also presented an opportunity for the local women to earn. While carrying out these farm activities, we hired local women for more than 33 days on paid labour. The SJI's aspiration for a farm is to model a farm where the local community can draw inspiration and learn about new agricultural ideas, knowledge and technology.

Some of the major farm activities carried out in the Model Farms over the past three months include sowing and transplantation of vegetable seeds and seedlings, weeding, harvesting and thrashing mustard and vegetable seeds.

The farm has also served as the chief avenue for various farmer training, including the lead farmers'.



Making FYM viable

Organic farming and Farm Yard Manure (FYM) go handin-hand -- one is incomplete without the other.

While this might sound a little proverbial, FYM, indeed, has become a lucrative source of income for the farmers of Dewathang areas.

That's because our FYM project -- not only -- taught the farmers how to produce FYM, but we helped them market it by providing transportation linking to urban areas where there is demand for FYM.

Our initiative, such as this, not only helped farmers market their FYM and earn, it also equally helped the urban farmers to improve their backyard garden productivity.

Moreover, the improved packaging and labelling of FYM further improved it as a product and its marketability.

To further promote liquid manure and bio-pesticide through diversification of organic inputs to support natural farming systems, we also trained farmers on preparing Jeevamrut (Liquid Manure) and Jholmol-3 (Biopesticide).

Liquid manure is known to be resourceful to growers without any source of manure. Jeevamrut is prepared with minimal ingredients, which could be increased in quantity by diluting it. Since Jeevamrut has an enormous potential to diversify income for farmers, the SJI has already started facilitating its sale through its outlet, Kantali Hut using proper labels and packaging.



Returning Mustard to our Fields

Our initiative to revive mustard cultivation in Dewathang under Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag (District) last year is paying off.

This year far more farmers have joined the fray.

Today, the mustard cultivation in Dewathang is estimated to span over 30 acres of land from almost nothing before.

The heightened interest in cultivation is due to the installation of the first ever operational mustard oil press machine in the community with support from the Bhutan Foundation.

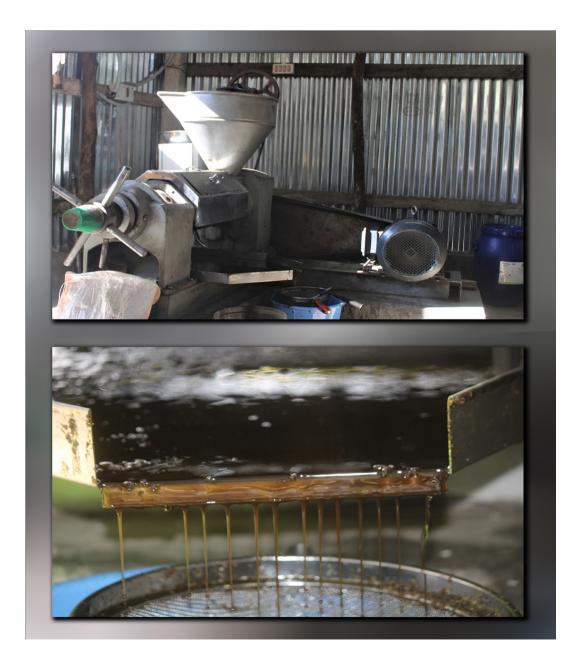


200kgs Seeds distributed Last year, the SJI started supporting and encouraging mustard cultivation in Dewathang areas with farmers and youth groups to improve food security and promote sustainability.

But within one year, farmers have taken to mustard cultivation in hordes with great interest. Following a dramatic increase in demand for mustard seeds, the SJI funded 200 kilograms of local mustard seed with funding from ARDC-CARLEP.

Meantime, the SJI has reached out to Dzongkhag Agriculture Office, urging to provide its guidanc.

"Before, I used to expel my mustard seeds at the Indian border town of Kumarikata. But after the border was closed, I had to depend on imported edible oil as well as its residual or mustard oil cake, which is a critical ingredient for my cattle feed. Finally, after a long wait, the problem is solved, "said Sherab, a farmer from Dewathang Gewog."







Phueluma in Orong Gewog, Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag receives its first rice mill after we supported rice cultivation a few years ago.



More and more communities across Samdrup Jongkhar and Zhemgang Dzongkhags are taking up SRI paddy cultivation because of high yield and other benefits.



The use of biopesticide has become an increasingly integral practice for farming communities in Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag.



We are promoting farm mechanisation to help communities overcome the labour shortage in the villages.

Organic Farming in Urban Areas

The SJI trained urban farmers on Basic Organic Agriculture Practices with the help of Lead Farmers to impart organic farming knowledge, skills and techniques.

While around 97 per cent of the participants have been growing vegetables, more than 80 per cent of the farmers lacked proper knowledge and skills on Organic Agriculture practices, making our training timely and resourceful to the farmers honing their green hands.

Besides the training in Organic Agriculture Practices, the urban farmers also received training on fruit trees and seed management.

But for farming to be successful, training farmers in growing alone does not lead to a good harvest. Climate change and its allied dangers like pests and diseases pose a great difficulty and threat to any farming.



Taking a holistic approach to organic farming, the SJI also places great importance on the development and application of bio-pesticide. And take great interest in sharing and passing down this knowledge and skills to the farmers and communities.

So that the urban farmers reap most of their production, the SJI trained urban farmers from Samdrup Jongkhar and Dewathang on Biopesticide Preparation and Application.

The training enabled and empowered the farmers on concocting biopesticide using locally available plants and leaves. To further extend the benefits of biopesticide, residents from the Royal Bhutan Police colony and National Housing Development Corporation Limited provided training to 15 more community members.



With these tricks up their sleeve, the urban farmers today remain well equipped with the basic knowledge on soil, nutrient and pest management.

Furthermore, with support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the auspice of the Bhutan Foundation, the SJI also supported 30 urban farmers with seeds, land preparation, water supply and farmland fencing. Besides the urban farmers, we are also working on the development of commercial farms with lead farmers to boost vegetable production in the region.



Helping farmers with marketing

Lack of market has always been one of the key challenges for our farmers during the production season.

In order to bridge the gap, the SJI supported the construction of a makeshift shop for an urban farmer at Jigtu, Samdrup Gatshel to sell his surplus vegetables. But interestingly enough, this market shed has also helped 6 households to sell their surplus farm produce.

Furthermore, the SJI linked up the youth-led groups, vegetable and commercial farming groups struggling to sell their vegetables like cabbage, tomato, broccoli and cauliflower with the buyers.

With the support from SJI, Youth-Led Group, Vegetable Groups and Commercial Groups were able to produce early chilli in the market. But they still encountered challenges in marketing other products such as tomato, cabbages, broccoli and cauliflower.

The problem of marketing, however, is likely to reappear in the future. Thus, the SJI will be working towards bridging this gap in collaboration with different stakeholders to link up the farmers with suppliers and vendors.



Model Farm Development

As we gradually shift our focus to areas beyond Samdrup Jongkhar and Dewathang, our Model Farms are taking shape in Phuntshothang Gewog, located around 64 kilometres further east.

Our project to support farming communities with a 1,000 Litre water tank and HDPE pipe is already making a positive impact. This is what one of the beneficiaries of our support in Phuntshothang, Radhika Pokhrel, had to say about the project. "Usually, my garden used to be empty at this point of time in winter after the harvest. But this year people are still buying veggies from my garden," she said, adding many vegetables could also be grown in summer.

With its fertile plains and moderate weather conditions, Phuntshothang offers everything farmland needs to thrive. Yet, as everywhere, challenges remain abound for farming communities.

Therefore, the SJI has supported five Lead Farmers owning more than an acre of farmland with portable water tanks and HDPE pipe to improve irrigation in winters. And Pokhrel is one of the five beneficiaries of this project.

Meantime, the Phuntshothang community is also made a noticeable impact in composting, training other community members in compost making. Composting was picked up in Phuntshothang after ARDC Wengkhar in Mongar Dzongkhag constructed a compost shed.

Boosting Vegetable Production

For the first time -- the vegetable is looking up both in production and varieties in Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag (District).

Thanks to our mass distribution of vegetable seeds worth Nu 10,770 to the urban, lead and commercial farmers.

Meantime, farmers and urbanites also bought seeds worth more than Nu 15,000 from the Kantali Hut after securing a Seed Distribution License from the Ministry of Agriculture to meet the seed requirement in the long run.

Kantali Hut is the SJI's Products Outlet based in Samdrup Jongkhar *Thromde* (Municipality).

In the past, the unavailability of seeds has been one of the deterrents for vegetable growers.

As a result, Samdrup Jongkhar faced an enormous shortage of vegetables every summer. But with many urbanites, lead, and commercial farmers growing vegetables, we're hoping to consign this story to the past. Last year, the vegetable production in Samdrup Jongkhar grew by leaps and bounds with the help of our urban farming initiative. The vegetable production project began as an initiative to counter vegetable shortages caused by the closure of the border with our immediate neighbour, India following the spread of coronavirus.

But in the last two years, under our guidance and stewardship, with an increasing number of farmers and urban dwellers growing vegetables, we are hoping to reduce our reliance on imports, at least in Samdrup Jongkhar.

With a reliable seed distribution from the Kantali Hut and a bigger number of urbanites and farmers into production, the SJI looks forward to gradually replacing imported veggies with healthier, fresh & crunchy homegrown vegetables.

Menchari Pilot Village

3 MT Paddy Harvested

Acres Cultivated

2

Households Engaged

Mechari Keeps Making History

After many years of support and handholding, things are beginning to look up for Mechari village in Orong Gewog under Samdrup Jongkhar Dzongkhag (District).

Menchari has come a long way since we modelled it as the GNH Village a few years ago. From youth empowerment to community-building initiatives to vegetable cultivation, the newest page in the community's history is the opening of its first-ever Grocery Store.

Yes, Menchari once, a left out, the unreached community now has its Grocery Store in the village.

Thanks to its youth Lungten Dema for stepping up, the villagers now no longer have to travel 20 kilometres, all the way to Dewathang town for trivial reasons such as to buy salt and sugar. And the idea has been a welcome move for the villagers, who were increasingly feeling the need for a Grocery Store in their village, given the movements from one place to another are frequently controlled amidst the pandemic.

But that's not all about how Menchari is doing as a GNH Village. Over the years, our intervention not only opened up the community's gateway to the outside world but has made remarkable progress in helping the youth population see their future in returning to farmlands, a losing battle at a national level.

Today, from farm road maintenance to the Chorten (Stupa) renovation to building a home for the underprivileged, the Menchari Youth Group has been a big influence in their community. Over the years, with their impact, the youth has not only gotten themselves on with their lives but taken up projects that helped improve the livelihood of their community members.

One such project is the revival of paddy cultivation in the village in 2019, a practice they stopped decades ago. The youths however despite using water-efficient and high-yield techniques, SRI, faced another hurdle on their way to expand the cultivation in the village. Despite making a progress in revival, the lack of irrigation still limited their scope to expand the cultivation.

Thus, with support from the Bhutan Foundation, the group built an irrigation reserve tank near the source, which enabled the community to increase the cultivation by an acre.

Now with irrigation in place, all of us, including the youth, community and the SJI hopes to report a bountiful rice harvest come next year.



Skilling for gainful employment

The SJI, in partnership with the Jigme Namgyel Engineering College's (JNEC) Entrepreneurship Development Cell, provided a weeklong shoe-repairing course for five local youths.

Following the closure of borders amidst the pandemic, there has been a dire need for shoe-repairing services in Samdrup Jongkhar thromde (Municipality). Before the closure of the border gates, most of the residents walked across the border to mend their footwear.

But since the closure of border gates for public health safety reasons, shoe repair services have been in great demand. Hence, the SJI partnered with JNEC in training five youths in shoe repair for a week.

Following the training, a youth from Menchari village in Orong Gewog, Lungten Gyeltshen, who made pocket money by mending shoes of his schoolmates from his school days, rose to the occasion and opened a shoe repair shop to cater the services.

The week-long training not only helped Lungten Gyeltshen sharpen his skills but boosted his morale and confidence about getting his hand on entrepreneurship. "Now I am well trained and equipped with tools so I can do better. Now I have a good opportunity to make an income from this business," said Lungten Gyeltshen.

Meanwhile, another young participant, Tshering Lhendup is also planning to start a similar venture in Samdrup Chholing. Even at Tshering Lhendup's place, there is no shoe repair shop.

But he wants to take a slightly different approach to maximise coverage with his services. "I am planning to invite some of our training mates to take up a mass shoe repair campaign," said Tshering Lhendup.

Meantime, Dewathang Town residents are already benefiting from the support that we rendered to another youth, Kelzang Jigme who has gone on to open a shoe repair shop, the first one ever run by a Bhutanese.



Winter Youth Engagement Program

Introductory Pottery Class

Pottery was once a popular art in eastern Bhutan. The art was passed down like a familial inheritance from the older to the younger generation, keeping the tradition intact for hundreds of years. But the onset of modernisation in the 1960s has taken a great toll on both art and culture.

Today, the art of pottery has been reduced to only a handful of artisans in the community with no future. And the younger generation thronging to urban areas for better opportunities has neither helped in transferring the skills and knowledge to the next generation nor in preserving the art and the culture.

That said, there is still a glimmer of hope since 2019 when we first started training young people in pottery. Today, it has become customary for SJI to train young school-going and out-of-school youths in the art.

In 2021, 10 youths from Menchari were trained in pottery to promote the art among the community members. In winter, 22 school-going girls, aged 13 - 17, from three schools in Dewathang, including Dewathang Primary School were also trained for a week in basics of pottery during their winter vacation.

During the training, children learned various nuances of pottery, from preparing mud to moulding to giving the final touches. While in training, youths learned to make cups, mugs, and bowls.



BURBERRY





"I joined a pottery class to keep myself engaged during my vacation. Being idle at home is a waste of time. But coming here, I learned to turn mud into beautiful products. It was difficult at first, but with the trainer's help, it was fun and enjoyable," said Jigme Zangmo from Garpawoong Middle Secondary School.

Jigme Zangmo added that the skills she acquired during the training could also open up opportunities for her in the future.

On-the-Job Training Program

In our pursuit to empower youth, the SJI continued engaging local youth in various programs like an internship, college-to-farm, on-jobtraining and vocational skills to nurture and help them see their future beyond the coveted government jobs.

Under our youth program, eight students from Jigme Namgyal Engineering College (JNEC) completed a monthlong on-the-job training program. During their OJTP, the students built a singleunit toilet, farm fencing and assisted the SJI with administrative, logistics and accounting works.

"During the execution of the assignments, this project helped me strengthen my field knowledge," said Ugyen Wangchuk, pursuing a Diploma in Civil Engineering at JNEC. "We all learnt so much, especially the field knowledge helped us connect with our theory learning," said another student, Tenzin Chophel, who is also taking a Diploma in Civil Engineering at JNEC.

Meanwhile, a youth group is also leading by example after their success with organic farming at Bangtsho in Dewathang Gewog.

After having successfully developed the farm with barbed wire fencing, terracing, greenhouse, water pump and installation of a 5,000-litres irrigation tank, the farm has become a model of some sort in the farming community. In just three months, the youths made off Nu 51, 330 from the sale of their farm produce.

And their success today has become a source of inspiration and learning platform for other farmers while also engaging youth. With their success with modern farming ideas, tools and technology, many farmers are now beginning to look up the youth group for new ideas and approaches.

The farm has also helped women in the neighbourhood to earn some cash income by taking up labour work on the farm. As a result of the farm's success, the landowner, Sherab, has further leased his land to the youths for eight more years under the same conditions.



When her school was closed for the winter vacation, Tshering Choki Yangzom heard that the SJI would be providing winter programs for youths, among which Zero Waste Craft was one. As soon as she heard the announcement, Tshering, with some of her friends, decided to join the program right away. By being in the program, Tshering knew, she would gain invaluable skills in turning recyclable wastes into sellable products.

Besides keeping her engaged in winter vacation, she felt that having such skills would even help her in the future.

Dechen Tshomo, another participant from Garpawoong Middle Secondary School also, wanted to join the training for the same reasons. "I came here to learn so that in the future if we are unable to find a job, we can make a living by recycling waste into crafts, " said Dechen Tshomo.

Rightly so, the SJI's Zero Waste Craft program is to engage youths in winter productively and help them learn new skills and knowledge. And create opportunities for students to learn skills that they don't usually learn in the classroom. Our aim is also to help students earn some cash income to buy stationaries for their next academic session.

But most important of all is to make students realise that waste can also be an income-generating resource and that it can also support livelihood.

Accordingly, our Zero Waste Craft engaged 12 students from Samdrup Jongkhar Middle Secondary & Garpawoong Middle Secondary Schools for a week-long training. The training took students through the complete waste recycling process, including cleaning, shredding and weaving.

By the end of the training, every student was able to weave a basket and a pencil case each.

Women trained on zero waste craft

30

Women trained on food

waste compost making

28

People sensitized on zero waste practices



Her Success Story

52

When Dechen Dema was attending the SJI's waste craft training in April last year, she never imagined the kind of impact it would have in her life with the turn of events.

Several months since, Dechen Dema, today, is a single mother. And her two children are living with her.

"I never imagined when I went to the training last April that it would become my only source of income until I became a single mother. Now I solely rely on the income from waste craft to run the house," she said.

Since becoming a single mother, paraphernalia of zero waste products, like basket has helped Dechen Dema with her monthly income fetching up to Nu 5,000.

But Dechen's is not only the success story of waste craft. Since the kickstart of our zero waste craft, families continue to benefit monetarily from the sale of waste craft products.

Because of the remarkable changes that waste craft has had in waste management, skilling, and income for communities, we continued providing training to more than 15 women, local leaders, civil servants and social workers in Samdrup Jongkhar with support from the Dzongkhag (District Administration).

We also trained six young women in Tsangchuthama in the waste craft for a week to address waste issues and empower women with income-generating skilling.

These women, in turn, will be training more community members from other communities. The SJI has also facilitated opening a marketing outlet for their waste craft products. To further augment waste advocacy, the SJI also held an awareness program on responsible and sustainable waste management for more than 50 shopkeepers of Tsangchuthama.

Turning food waste into income

Food waste in Dewathang Town and Samdrup Jongkhar towns is likely going to decrease by 450 kilograms per month after urban farmers start their composting.

Following our success with food waste composting with the Royal Bhutan Army earlier, we trained 30 more people from Dewathang and Samdrup Jongkhar *thromde* (Municipality).

We also provided the participants with materials, such as buckets, barrels, compost trays to encourage composting and liquid manure.

Once the composting takes off, food waste is also bound to become an economically viable business, with an increasing number of town residents owning backyard gardens. The availability of its compost and liquid manure within the respective areas is also going to reduce urban backyard gardeners' dependence on external farmyard manure.

Thanks to 30 urban farmers who stepped up to take up the food waste composting.



Lhomon Society Receipt and Payment Statement Period 01/01/2021 to 31/12/2021

Receipt	Amount (Nu.)	Payment	Amount (Nu.)
Opening Balance		Expenditure	
Cash-in- Hand	0	Administrative Expenses	2,199,850.50
Cash at Bank	18,679,739.08	Programme Expenses	15,960,931.47
Total Fund Received		Purchase of Assets	2,800.00
Program Funds	3,806,786.32		
Other Source	1,084,146.83		
Interest from Bank	3,76,762.01	Opening Balance	
		Cash-in- Hand	1,261.00
		Cash at Bank	5,782,591.27
	23,947,434.24	1	23,947,434.24

Program Director Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative (SJI) Dewathang : Samdrup Jongkhar LHO MON SOCIETY Ir

Accounts & Adm. Officer LHO MON SOCIETY Dewalhang : Samdrup Jong's

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SJI Members









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Partners



The SJI also would like to thank and acknowledge the support of all our donors, partners, members and volunteers whose contributions go a long way in supporting our communities. We look forward to your continued support.



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