

Title of Project: Lungtenphu Community Center: Advancing the lives of youth in a Military Camp

Country of project implementation: Bhutan

Sponsoring College: Wheaton College

Designated Project Leader: Chogyal Norbu

Home Country: Bhutan

UWC School Attended: UWCSEA East, Singapore

Personal Perspective and Current Situation: Most of the time when I meet foreigners and tell them that I am from Bhutan, their reaction is that my country is full of happiness. Bhutan might be known as a happy country but if we dig deeper into the social lives of many poor families, one will find complexities created by a high level of inequality and low-literacy rate. Without excelling in education, opportunities to improve one's life are limited. I grew up in a military camp called Lungtenphu. My dad used to be an alcoholic which resulted in domestic violence from a young age. The day my dad gave up alcohol was the day I found peace in my life. Many young children face similar problems at home and it affects their academics and social lives. With one of the highest numbers of uneducated parents and low outside support in Bhutan, the percentage of children who either don't do well in their academics or who indulge in negative activities is increasing every year in Lungtenphu. I believe that if we provide these young children with meaningful education and helpful resources to stay away from negative behaviors, we would be able to bring peace to the lives of children in Lungtenphu.

Project Summary: The Community Center at Lungtenphu Military Camp will offer comprehensive knowledge and skills in various activities to help the students take a positive path. My network of Bhutanese college students and experts from YDF (Youth Development Fund) and BNCA (Bhutan Narcotics Control Authority) are willing to build the needed resources and programming in the Community Center. The project will last a month, offering different learning activities weekly. I want to focus on improving students' English proficiency because the majority of public school classes are conducted in English. The expected goal will be the students' ability to express themselves more coherently and fluently. They will also receive awareness programs on the effects of drugs and alcohol, violence, mental health, and other prevailing issues. I believe when young people get such opportunities to learn and express themselves, it gives peace a chance in the community.

Feasibility: This past summer, I went to the Lungtenphu school and interacted with the vice-principal, teachers, and about 400 students regarding what would improve students' lives - the answer was a community center. The teachers were willing to make it happen by converting the school library into a community center that will operate even after school hours and on weekends. I received a prestigious scholarship to study at the UWCSEA, Singapore, and then another wonderful opportunity to study at Wheaton College, MA. I have been serving as a youth representative of Young Volunteers in Action (Y-VIA) for 4 plus years and participated in youth events such as Golden Youth Award, Resilience and Leadership Training, and Social Awareness campaigns. I served in the Initiative For Peace (IFP) during high school where I learned about promoting and practicing peace. As a second year Wheaton Residential Advisor (RA), I have developed programming skills and supported students on different issues. With these experiences and immense support from teachers and friends, I am very confident that this project will come to reality if given the opportunity to kick start.

Project Timeline: **Week one** will be dedicated to buying equipment for the community center and some classrooms. We will also start participant registration. The **second week** will focus on training the college student-facilitators who live in the community. The 10 facilitators have good language and programming skills. With the help of our teachers and experts, we will create a comprehensive program to educate the students. We will open the community center by the **third week** and the program officially begins with an emphasis on how to improve reading and listening skills. Many schools in Bhutan do not use modern technology such as PowerPoint projectors or computers in classrooms. We will use projectors, speakers, computers, and online materials, much different from traditional methods, to engage the students. Students will also be given various reading materials and books to read during the program where they need to discuss and share their opinions. This will help the students in improving their critical learning skills. The **4th and 5th** weeks will teach how to improve writing and speaking skills with helpful materials. We will give students the opportunity to write and speak on important topics of their interests or from the books that they have read. With the help of some experts, they will also get helpful awareness classes on prevalent issues of the community such as the effect of drugs and alcohol, violence, teenage pregnancy, social media, and mental health. The **last week** of the project is an opportunity for them to express their learnings and ideas through various methods such as in the form of art, drama, poetry, and so on which will display their skills and boost their confidence.

Expected Outcomes: The community center will become a hotspot for many young people who are seeking knowledge and skills beyond their classrooms. It will improve their language skills and further help them in their academic performances which may open more opportunities for them. This project will also reduce the crime rate among young people who are under the influence of drugs, alcohol and violence. And most importantly, I believe that this project will serve as an inspiration to many people in my community to take their own initiatives and give wings to their ideas and dreams.

Sustainability and future direction: I, along with the college facilitators, will coordinate plans for a consistent volunteer application process to keep the center running. I will partner with Y-VIA (7000 members), who look for opportunities to help the students. Many of the facilitators are college students so, we will do zoom sessions and ensure that things are going smoothly on a weekly basis. I have planned to send proposals and request the Army Headquarter, Ministry of Education, Digital Kidu, and some NGOs like the Youth Development Fund and Loden Foundation to provide us with financial support or life skill training. With all this support, we can ensure that the community center will stay active and further expand by giving more resources such as free tuition for tutoring to excel in the board exams which often determines their future of further education. I believe that we can bring immense change in the lives of those young children in the long run.

Personnel Drive: The military camp and its children are often viewed as a sore spot to the eyes of those living outside the camp and despite knowing their challenges, those children hardly get any help. I am one of the few people in my community who got these prestigious and unique opportunities to explore the world and pursue my dreams. I believe that it is my responsibility to bring some positive change in the lives of those students and let them know that no matter who we are or where we are from, we can always have big dreams and chase them. When I see the young children of my community, I see myself in them, a young dreamer who was full of passions and ambitions. If we don't work on it sooner, I am afraid that things are never going to improve in my camp.

Budget Details:

Direct Equipment and Supplies	Number (price)
Computer	3 computers with an Internet connection (\$2500)
Powerpoint projector	5 projectors (\$700)
Furniture	Desks and chairs (\$1000)
Microphone and speakers	2 microphones and speakers (\$500)
Stationeries for students	Will include notebooks, pens, pencils, chart papers, and other useful items they will need during our programs. (\$2500)
Staffing Costs	Will be paying the ten facilitators by dividing \$1000 among them.

