

IYV Going Strong in Bhutan

"We have created an exciting slate of activities that will reach all Bhutanese and further instigate the spirit of volunteerism in Bhutan," stated Ms. Janette Moritz, the UNV Programme Officer in Bhutan. Surely, this is the case. Many activities have paved the way for the further promotion of volunteerism in Bhutan. Planning began on 27 July with a Task Force that was set up in order to create a calendar of national activities for the facilitation, promotion, recognition and networking in Bhutan.

Since the Task Force meeting, many of the activities for the year have included a volunteer-themed essay contest; an annual awards ceremony for exceptional volunteers and a Bhutan IYV commemorative stamp. Other planned activities include a Bhutan-wide clean-up campaign, a documentation of volunteer activities, an IYV Bhutanese web site and youth development in volunteering. The UNDP Resident Coordinator and National Steering Committee Chairperson, Mr. Shun-ichi Murata stated, "we should look into how to make use of youth as volunteers. It has great potential to help them overcome some element of their struggles."

National Steering Committee (NSC) and Task Force

Also sitting on the National Steering Committee (NSC), are Mr. Namgay Om, the Director of the Royal Institute of Management, and Dasho Meghraj Gurung, the Managing Director of Bhutan Post. Both were elected as vice-chairpersons. The NSC mandate is to strengthen the policy and institutional frameworks in support of the voluntary sector.

The National Steering Committee and Task Force are composed of representatives from local and international volunteer organizations, the private sector, government agencies and the UN. Representatives from the monastic body and the media have also joined the membership.

There are two main objectives for the year in Bhutan: to enhance civil society through coordination and communication between volunteer organizations and to create awareness about the contribution volunteerism makes to civil society in Bhutan and regionally.

5 December Launch

Approximately 200 guests participated at the launch ceremony. Guests included the Head of Government, as Chief Guest, the Minister of Health and Education, other ministries, non-government representatives, donor representatives, volunteers and concerned citizens. Highlights included the address by the Head of Government, who made a commitment statement in support of the volunteer sector. Prominent individuals who have contributed to volunteerism in Bhutan made two presentations and shared their views and experiences. Prizes were distributed to winners of nation wide essay and stamp design competitions on the theme of volunteerism. A publication produced by the IYV Bhutan Task Force was also officially launched during

the ceremony. The Launch received wide media coverage in Bhutan through the national TV and newspaper. For example, an article on IYV was published in "KUENSEL" of the 2-8 December issue.

"Volunteerism in Bhutan" Publication

Launched on 5 December, this document is a 31-page booklet to commemorate the International Year of Volunteers 2001 in Bhutan. It is the first document to highlight volunteerism in Bhutan and stimulate further promotion and facilitation. Six of the articles were entries chosen from a nation-wide essay contest where over 200 youth and civil society submitted their views on volunteerism.

IYV Bhutan Commemorative Stamp

With the cooperation of Bhutan Post, four commemorative stamps are in process of being produced. The stamp designs will depict visions of volunteerism through the drawings made by primary and secondary level school children that participated in a nation wide contest. The four best entries have been selected for production into stamps. A commemorative launching ceremony will be held for the stamps in March 2001.

Bhutan successes in IYV

Bhutan has been one of the most active countries for the International Year of Volunteers and has been continuing its efforts, with great success, for further promotion, facilitation, recognition and networking of volunteerism regionally, nationally and globally.

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