



FROM POVERTY TO SUSTAINABILITY: People at the Centre of Inclusive Development

Message from the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-Moon

For decades the United Nations has worked to free people from poverty.

We have made great progress — but today those gains are in doubt.

Too many people are living in fear:

Fear of losing their jobs;
Fear of not being able to feed their families;
Fear of being trapped forever in poverty, deprived of the human right to live with health and dignity and hope for the future.

We can meet the challenges we face — the economic crisis, climate change, rising costs of food and energy, the effects of natural disasters.

We can overcome them by putting people at the centre of our work.

Too often in the debates that will shape our future, I see three groups missing. The poor ... the young ... and the planet.

As we work to avoid a global financial meltdown, we must also work to avoid a global development meltdown.

In the name of fiscal austerity, we cannot cut back on common-sense investments in people.

Malaria can be stopped.

AIDS can be reversed.

Millions of mothers can be saved from dying in child birth. Green investments can generate jobs and growth.

This is not theory. It is happening.

Now is not the time to slide backwards.

Now is the time to push harder to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

Now is the time to prepare to make the most of next year's crucial Rio + 20 conference on sustainable development.

Together, let us listen to people – and stand up for their hopes and aspirations.

That is how we will build a world free of poverty.



Addressing Poverty in Bhutan



POVERTY can be measured in different ways. The income poverty line in Bhutan has been established at Nu. 1,097 per month. However as the income poverty cannot reflect various kinds of human deprivations adequately, a multi-dimensional way of measuring poverty has been constructed with several indicators around three core domains: living standard, education and health. It thus gives a more holistic picture of the poverty level in Bhutan.

By using the multi-dimensional approach to poverty a person who earns more than 1,097 Nu. per month but lacks access to clean water, proper housing or nutritious food can still be considered poor.

Bhutan has along with other UN member states signed the UN Millennium Declaration in 2000 that responds to critical development challenges facing humanity through the instrument of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The MDGs are in close compatibility with Gross National Happiness (GNH), the Bhutan's development paradigm. As the GNH philosophy is ultimately about the well being of the people, fighting poverty is critical for building sustainable livelihoods for all.

The Royal Government is strongly committed to reducing poverty incidence below 15% by the end of 2013 and the UN has been supporting the government and various NGOs in achieving this goal.

However, no changes can be brought about or be sustainable without the active participation of the poor people themselves.

The farmers in Lamgang under Wangdue Dzongkhag and youth like Ms. Palzang Lhamo, provide inspiring examples. They have worked hard to create their own livelihoods and raise income. Such a sense of ownership and initiative are critical in the efforts for reducing poverty successfully.

Winning the battle against hunger is yet another key pillar to achieving the MDGs. Not having enough food can deprive the opportunities for education. In Bhutan, school meals are provided to some 36,000 children in 225 primary and lower secondary schools that are located in remote and off-road areas, contributing to increased enrolment, regular class attendance, reduced drop-out, and encourage more girls to come to the school.

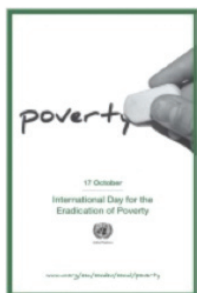


INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR ERADICATION OF POVERTY

Every year on October 17th the International Day for Eradication of Poverty is commemorated all over the world. The observance of the day can be traced back to 17th October 1987.

On that day, more than one hundred thousand people gathered in Paris, where the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was signed in 1948, to honour the victims of extreme poverty, violence and hunger. They proclaimed that poverty is a violation of human rights and affirmed the need to come together to ensure that these rights are respected.

Since that day, people of all backgrounds, beliefs



and social origins have gathered every year on October 17th to renew their commitment and show their solidarity with the poor. Bhutan has been joining the international community in the observance of the day.

October 17th is an opportunity to acknowledge the effort and struggle of people living in poverty. It is chance for them to make their concerns heard, and a moment to recognize that poor people are the first ones to fight against poverty.

So join in the observance by reflecting a bit on the how we can eradicate poverty here in Bhutan. What can you do? The theme for this year's observance is "From Poverty to Sustainability: People at the Centre of Inclusive Development".

From Poverty to Sustainability: People at the Centre of Inclusive Development

Poor people are at the forefront of the fight against poverty and are critical partners for achieving sustainable development.

Poverty is not just about the lack of basic necessities and material needs but is a debilitating condition that deeply affects the non-material well being of people. It denies people the rightful opportunity to lead decent and happy lives, robs them of their dignity, confidence and self-esteem, aspects of deprivation that can be extremely dehumanizing.

People living in extreme poverty face greater exposure to difficult and dangerous environments yet have less means to cope with the consequences. They often live in polluted areas or areas prone to natural disasters and the effects of climate change, be it floods or landslides. They cannot claim their rights, such as healthcare, education, decent work, clean water and sanitation.

Sustainable development is not only about a clean



environment. It also means ensuring that nobody is left behind. Only in this way can development be truly sustainable. The path to sustainable development must ensure that people living in poverty are included in decision-making processes, and building their resilience and ability of pull themselves out of poverty with concrete action taken to respond to their needs and demands.

From unemployed to empowered

PELZANG LHAMO, aged 25, from Mongar, a grade X pass out, has undergone basic tailoring in the past. She was eager to start a small business but the lack of capital and collateral for accessing mainstream credit facilities prevented her from doing business.

Fortunately, she was able to join entrepreneurship programme in how to set up a small scale business.

The Income Generation Support Programme was an initiative established under the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources to address the unemployment problem. It is aimed at school dropouts and unemployed youth to start small businesses. It is designed to assist those who have the necessary skills and motivation but are without the required capital or collateral to access mainstream credit facilities to start small income generating enterprises.

Armed with her tailoring skills and entrepreneurship course, Pelzang has successfully managed to sustain a small business. Her main challenge she says

was finding an affordable space to showcase her work.

Today, she has applied for and been accepted by the Ministry of Economic Affairs to operate one of the many stalls at the newly established Craft Bazaar in the capital. The Craft Bazaar is being initiated by the Royal Government to promote traditional Bhutanese arts and crafts.

Pelzang is ecstatic about this opportunity and is grateful for the training programme that catapulted her accomplishments.

“The training was not only beneficial in developing my skills, but also my confidence and creativeness as a person. I hope that I will be able to open my souvenir shop and employ girls from my village. I want them to know it is possible to start a small business and live their dreams.”

- Pelzang Lhamo, Beneficiary of the IGSP

However, had it not been for her

own efforts, hard work and will to determinations, she would not have reached where she is today – running a small stall, sustaining herself by selling her own souvenir products.

Meanwhile, her aspiration remains: that little souvenir shop of her own employing girls from her community to encourage them to start their own businesses and live their dreams.



Villagers building a Better Future

“I used to look at a house that had been built in Rukha and pray every day that the same benefit comes to our village. Now this has become a reality.”

- Bakhu, resident of Lamgang, Wangdue

A PROJECT to provide better housing and proper sanitation for 40 families in remote villages in Wangdue was implemented by the Tarayana Foundation. The project was to a large extent carried out by the local villagers themselves.

In this way they were important in bringing about change in their own lives. When the benefits of the project became clear to the villagers, they volunteered to participate in groups to make the project successful.

They were enthusiastic in learning new construction skills as the benefit from that was not only building their own house but they could also later use the skills to earn their living during off cultivation seasons. Over 50 farmers are now trained in basic carpentry, masonry, construction and livestock related skills.

As such, 12 village committees/self-help groups have been formed and the members are responsible for the execution of the activities in which they have been trained. Now these villagers are able to contribute to the socio-economic development of their community.



“Poverty often deprives a man of all spirit and virtue; it is hard for an empty bag to stand upright”

~Benjamin Franklin~

Facts about Poverty

- About 925 million people do not have enough to eat- more than the populations of USA, Canada and the European Union combined.
- 8 million people die from lack of food and nutrition every year - about 24,000 deaths each day.
- 50 percent of hungry people are farming families.
- 60 percent of the world's hungry are women.
- Every five seconds, a child dies from hunger-related diseases.

The UN agencies over the next five years (2008 – 2012) will assist the Government in its effort to:

- To halve poverty by 2015;
- To improve accessibility, quality and sustainability of health care delivery system;
- To improve quality, relevance and coverage of education;
- To foster good governance as a core value for development; and
- To enhance environmental sustainability and disaster risk management

(Source: UN in Bhutan – Delivering as One)