

# Valley of Happiness

News Letter

GNH Community Engagement Centre - Sherubtse College

JICA Partnership Program  
Human Resource Development toward Community Building  
by University-Community Engagement in  
Trashigang, Bhutan

July Issue

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## Valley Of Happiness

July 2022/ Vol: 01/ Issue: 01



**Bartsham**



# CENTRE PROFILE



## GNH – Community Engagement Centre

### Our Vision

- Create an outstanding climate of support for rural development to enhance the well-being and happiness of the people.

### Our Mission

- Establish institutional and community linkages.
- Practically implement GNH values at the grass root level.
- Conduct social and historical research on agriculture, happiness and rural development.
- Preserve National and cultural identity and establish its link in promoting happiness.
- Provide support services for the betterment of the rural community.
- Strengthening the bottom-up planning approach.



# Message from the College President

Kuzuzangpo la!

I am happy and grateful that the team is coming out with the first issue of the newsletter on “Human Resource Development toward Community Building by University - Community Engagement in Trashigang, Bhutan under the JICA Partnership Program.” This social partnership program is an important milestone for “Sherubtse GNH Community Engagement Centre”, the first of its kind and scope, since its inception.

Community engagement activities are an important component for our college and the Royal University of Bhutan. We plan and organize several activities every semester as part of our communal responsibility.

The three and half years program, to be carried out in collaboration with Professors from the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University, Japan, JICA experts and the local Happy Farmers’ Group, is a good opportunity for our students and faculties to work with the community to share and disseminate knowledge and resources, enrich scholarship (to foster innovative pedagogy and teaching and learning practice), and the opportunity to conduct social and historical research on agriculture, happiness and rural development.

By encouraging our students to apply their classroom knowledge in issues and problems at the community level, we hope to help the students gain a more adaptable skill set in project management, team work and communication preparing them for life after college. The students and faculties will get opportunity to work alongside some of the experienced and strong community leaders like the Gup, Tsokpa and the Happy Farmers Group. This connection will not only help to expand their professional networks but we hope to encourage them to come back to villages and explore these as potential career paths. One of the main objectives of the program is to help the community gain a wide range of benefits from the interactions with students, faculties, experts Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University, Japan, and JICA Officials. Apart from the knowledge transfer and exchange, the community will be benefitted with enhanced human and social capital development needed to achieve community goals, and increase public awareness of key issues. We will also be working very closely with the dzongkhag and gewog service providers and hope to help build improved professional and intellectual infrastructure in the communities. The collaboration will also help enhance community – college – university relations. We are positive that the project will educate and create a mechanism for the college and university to support rural development to improve the well-being and happiness of the people.

We are grateful to our partner, the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University, Japan, for the administrative and technical support, our local partner – the Happy Farmers’ Group for the collaboration and JICA for financial assistance.

Tshering Wangdi  
(President)  
Sherubtse College



Mr. Tshering Wangdi  
(College President ; Project Advisor)



# Message from Project Manager

First of all, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to Yoshiro Akamatsu-san, Chandra-san, Sonam Choden Tshering-san, Pema Choden-san, Tadahiro Ikoma-san and Yoshiki Ishiuchi-san who are working on site, and to people of Sherubtse College and Bartsham Gewog. The JICA partnership program for human resource development toward community building by university-community engagement in Trashigang, Bhutan has started on March 1, 2022.



**Dr. Ryota Sakamoto**  
**(Project Manager)**

The goals of the collaborative activities are threefold

- (i) Improvement of the livelihood of farmers and local residents
- (ii) Improvement of the local healthcare system
- (iii) Preservation and utilization of local resources (culture and nature)

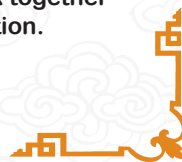
At the current situation, regarding (i), we plan to provide mainly technical support for organic farming; regarding (ii), mainly educational support related to checking vital signs and conducting health checkups; and regarding (iii), mainly the development of a folk museum and support for recording local cultures, in the cooperation with villagers, gewog offices, NGOs, schools, hospitals, dzongkhag offices, ministries, and so on. These issues are based on the voices we have heard directly from the field, including those of Bhutanese people who have observed and expressed interest in organic farming in Japan, those of Bhutanese health staff we have worked in communities of Bhutan, and those of university faculty who have visited in rural towns of Japan. From the perspective of promoting vegetable & fruit intake, which is often in short supply, (i) and (ii) are strongly interrelated, and the planned reminiscence therapy for the elderly may contribute to both (ii) and (iii), and we are considering linking (iii) and (i) from the perspective of preserving farm tools and farming techniques. Thus, the three goals of the collaborative activities are interrelated.

The project aims to organize regular collaborative meetings among key actors from the university and the local communities as members and create a trial curriculum for social collaboration between university and communities. Although the project's planned implementation period is limited to three and a half years, we hope that this project will contribute to the revitalization of community-based research and education activities in Bhutan using objectives and methods tailored to the time and place.

Looking back, when Kazuo Ando-san first visited Sherubtse College, Royal University of Bhutan, on November 17, 2010, I was present at the meeting with the Sherubtse College because I was working as a medical doctor at Khaling Basic Health Unit, which is located in a neighboring gewog in the same Trashigang Dzongkhag. What was impressive for me was that rather than describing his own activities in Bhutan, he first clearly expressed his desire to become friends with members of the college. Subsequently, the project has resulted from the continuous implementation of two-way exchanges, from Japan to Bhutan and from Bhutan to Japan.

In this project, we would like to emphasize the importance of two-way, collaborative, and mutual respect with the local people. We would like the members who will stay in the area to take good care of their own health. Please treat the villagers with mutual respect, work together and make good charo (friends) with them. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Respectfully your friend,  
Ryota Sakamoto



# Overview of the Project

## JICA Partnership Program

“Human Resource Development toward Community Building  
by University-Community Engagement in Trashigang, Bhutan”

Assignor: JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency)

Assignee & Implement: Kyoto University and Sherubtse College

Period: 1st March 2022 – 29th August 2025 (Three and a half years)

## OBJECTIVES

- The project aims to support the activities of GNH Community Engagement Centre (GNH-CEC), Sherubtse College, Royal University of Bhutan.
- To promote human resource development at the GNH-CEC to work on rural development issues through the implementation of the Social Partnership Program (research and practical activities in collaboration with local communities and relevant institutions) in the field.
- Institutionalization of Community engagement system of Sherubtse College (e.g., curriculum, module) through GNH-CEC.
- Strengthen the partnership between GNH-CEC (Sherubtse College) and the local community.

## SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (SPP)

### Objectives:

- Strengthen the partnership relationship (win-win based relationship) between GNH-CEC (Sherubtse College) and local communities [1]
- Promote field/community/problem-based education (students) [2]
- Promote academic research and its feedback to the society/community (faculty) [3]
- Contribute rural development/Solve community problems by practical activities [4]
- Capacity building of GNH-CEC and local stakeholders for further cooperation and implementation of various activities [5]



**Target area:**

- **Bartsham Gewog, Trashigang (esp. Agriculture, Cultural fields)**
- **Trashigang Dzongkhag (esp. Healthcare field)**

**Target group/person:**

- **Faculty and Student (GNH-CEC/Sherubtse College)**
- **Local stakeholders**
- **Farmers & Happy Farmers Group (in Bartsham)**
- **BHU & Village Health Workers (in Trashigang Dzongkhag)**
- **Local administrates (Gup Office in Bartsham)**
- **Central School, etc**

**Contents of the program:**

- **Preparation (planning) and implementation of the Social Partnership Program by GNH-CEC/project members with the support of Sherubtse College and Kyoto University**
  - **Field/community/problem-based education program (obj. [2])**
  - **Research activities (obj. [3])**
  - **Practical activities (obj. [4])**
- **Practical activities for agricultural issues (taken by Mr. Ando and Mr. Thinley)**
- **Practical activities for community healthcare issues (taken by Mr. Sakamoto and Mr. Tashi)**
- **Practical activities for conservation and utilization of local resources for community development (taken by Mr. Akamatsu and Mr. Sonam)**

**Establishment of a Coordinating Committee (CC) and organizing regular meeting to discuss and implement the Social Partnership Program (obj. [1][5])**

- **CC member: Gup - chairman**
- **Project officer (Bhutanese) - secretary**
- **Other project members and Asst. PO**
- **Member of Happy Farmers Group**
- **The officers of the RNR extension office**
- **Teacher (Principal) of Bartsham Central School**
- **The staff of JICA Bhutan office**
- **Any local stakeholders**



Implementation of Exchange Program between Bhutan and Japan for mutual learning and to strengthen international relations (obj. [1]-[5])

- Sherubtse College (Project members /lecturer/student)
- MoH/BHU
- Locals (local government/farmers/any stakeholders)
- Locals (local practitioners)

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## SPP – PRACTICAL PROGRAM

Practical activities for agricultural issues:

*Keywords: abandoned farmland, organic farming, variety of products, marketing, nutrition.*

Activities:

- Conduct a periodic vegetable market survey
- Establish a model farm with model farmer to examine vegetable cultivation and its sales.
- Support model farmer to implement extension program of vegetable cultivation.

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Practical activities for community healthcare issues:

*Keywords: elderly healthcare, VHWs, basic-human needs.*

Activities:

- Distribute basic medical equipment (thermometer, blood pressure meter and pulse oximeter) to BHUs and ORCs under Trashigang Dzongkhag.
- Provide a training program with BHU staff and Village Health Workers
- Implement community healthcare program to improve community healthcare system and social welfare.

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Practical activities for conservation and utilization of local resources for community development:

*Keywords: local culture and history, evaluation and utilization, education, tourism.*

Activities:

- Implement conservation and development program of local community resources (establishment of Community Museum, maintenance of ancient paths (trade/pilgrim road) as a walking trail).
- Implement utilization program of local community resources (experimental community-based tourism program, community education program in collaboration with central school).



## OTHER PROGRAM/ACTIVITY

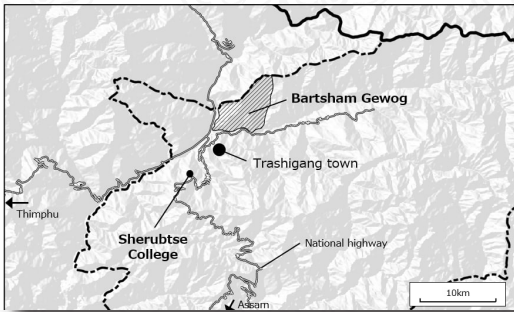
- **Baseline Survey (1st year):** Collect information on the current status of Sherubtse College/Students and community (esp. agriculture, healthcare, and community resources (local culture) to set indicators for the project by the project.
- **Endline Survey (3rd year):** Collect information to check how the indicators changed at the beginning and the end of the project.
- **Kick-off Meeting.**
- **Midterm Workshop (Oct/Nov, 2023).**
- **Final Workshop (May/Jun, 2025).**
- **Paper Publication:** Himalayan study monographs (peer-reviewed journals).
- **Book Publication (Aug, 2025):** One project member writes at least one section.
- **Final report (Aug, 2025):** submit to JICA.







# Why Eastern Bhutan?



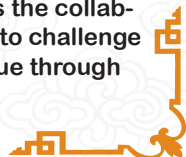
*Figure. 1 Project Site*



*Figure. 2 Nagtshang, Bartsham*

Kyoto University and Sherubtse College, Royal University of Bhutan have conducted joint research since 2011 based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Eastern Bhutan, where Sherubtse College is located, is one of the attractive fields, especially for foreign researchers. Majority of the dwellers in eastern Bhutan is called “Sharchok-pa” or “Tshangla” and they are considered one of the oldest dwellers groups in Bhutan. Although their language, culture and characteristic of the society is well distinguished among Bhutan society, their origin, history, culture and society has not been well studied. Additionally, eastern Bhutan is also one of the regions facing serious out-migration. According to Population & Housing Census of Bhutan 2017, out-migrants from the Eastern region (6 districts consists of S/Jongkhar, Mongar, Trashigang, T/Yangtse, P/Gatshel and Lhuntse) to other regions reached 85,849 (in-migrants to the Eastern region was 16,211). Due to massive out-migration, especially youth, the aging rate of Eastern Dzongkhags, except S/Jongkhar, is above 7.0 besides the country’s aging rate is 5.9 (PHCB 2017). During the field survey, we researchers and students encountered a lot of vacant houses and abandon farmlands in many villages of Trashigang Dzongkhag.

The situation of rural areas in Japan and Bhutan is quite similar in terms of depopulation, abandoning farming and aging, even though there are some differences in the factors. Along with joint research on rural development issues, Kyoto University and Sherubtse College have conducted exchange programs and international workshops in Bhutan, Japan, Myanmar and other countries to strengthen mutual learning and prepare for practice. In 2019, we conducted a study tour program in Japan involving local people from Bartsham Gewog those who had a link by fate through a study tour program in Bhutan in 2018 and 2019. Bartsham Gewog is only away from 25 km from Trashigang town but is one of the hardest hit Gewogs by out-migration in Trashigang Dzongkhag. The project focus on agricultural, community healthcare and local resource utilization issues in Bartsham Gewog and supports the collaborative activities by GNH Community Engagement Center and local stakeholders to challenge these issues, as well as develop human resources work on rural development issue through these practices.



# Project Members Profile

## Sherubtse Members



**Mr. Tshering Wangdi**  
Collge President  
(Project Advisor)



**Mr. Dendup Tshering**  
Dean of Research and Industrial  
Linkages  
(Project Supervisor)



**Mr. Karma Yezer**  
Lecturer  
(Centre coodinator for Population  
and developenet studies)



**Mr. Tashi Dorji**  
Lecturer  
(Focal Person for  
Health project)



**Mr. Sonam Wangdi**  
Lecturer  
(Focal Person For  
Cultural Project)



**Mr. Thinley Namgyel**  
Lecturer,  
(Focal Person for  
Agricultural Project)



**Mr. Abi Chandra Acharya**  
(Asst. Project Officer)



**Ms. Sonam C. Tshering**  
(Asst. Project Officer)



**Ms. Pema Choden**  
(Asst. Project Officer)



## Japanese Members



**Dr. Ryota Sakamoto**  
(Project Manager)



**Prof. Kazuo Ando**  
(Sub. Project Manager)



**Asst Prof. Yoshio Akamatsu**  
(Project Coordinator)



**Mr. Tadahiro Ikoma**  
(Research officer)



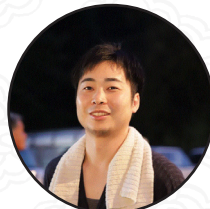
**Mr. Yoshiki Ishiuchi**  
(Research officer)



**Mr. Shota Kikugawa**  
(Jr. Researcher)



**Mr. Ryutaro Ueda**  
(Jr. Researcher)



**Mr. Kiichi Hirayama**  
(Jr. Researcher)



**Dr. Hiromi Segawa-Kohori**  
(Sr. Research Officer)



**Ms. Rio Yasui**  
(Jr. Researcher)



**Dr. Haruo Uchida**  
(Asst. Project Officer)



**Ms. Yukiko Kita**  
(Accountant)