



**ANNUAL REPORT  
2023**



## ■ TABLE OF CONTENT

Message from our Honorable President HRH Kesang Chodren Wangchuck	1
Harvesting Happiness: The GNH Farmer’s Project Journey	3
Journeys of Transformation and Collaboration:	5
1. The Impact Safari	5
Legacy of Compassionate Governance	7
2. The Right Livelihood	8
Promoting the GNH Dialogue	10
A Quest for Happiness: Singapore and Thailand	13
GNH in Action: Taking it beyond Bhutan	14
Annual commemoration of 11 November: Celebrating the Father of Gross National Happiness	15



## MESSAGE FROM OUR HONORABLE PRESIDENT HRH KESANG CHODREN WANGCHUCK

Throughout 2023, the GNH Centre Bhutan navigated pandemic challenges while actively pursuing opportunities in the dynamic realms of well-being and happiness.

I take immense pride in sharing that our Centre has maintained unwavering dedication to propagating the GNH philosophy within Bhutan and to our global stakeholders, partners, employees, and the communities we serve. Despite the economic upheavals and disruptions caused by the pandemic, our Centre displayed remarkable resilience and adaptability, successfully executing two international programs, generating revenue, and solidifying our standing as a competent non-profit organization in Bhutan.

Moreover, our strategic initiatives and judicious financial management have positioned us for sustained growth in the years ahead. I trust you will find the report a testament to the accomplishments of the past year.

Looking to the horizon, we are energized by the promising ventures that lie ahead. Bhutan is embarking on ambitious endeavors, and the GNH Centre stands ready to complement the nation's pursuit of happiness envisioned by His Majesty the King and the government. As we embark on these ventures, we reaffirm our steadfast commitment to delivering excellence and attaining enduring, sustainable success.

The Centre remains dedicated to the pursuit of wellbeing and our enduring contribution towards a happier, safer world.





## ■ HARVESTING HAPPINESS: THE GNH FARMER'S PROJECT JOURNEY

The GNH Farmer's Project embarked on a journey to bring "GNH in Action" through agricultural activities. This innovative project combined GNH learning sessions with mindfulness practices, actively involving youth in the process. The initiative aimed to empower young minds to develop their micro-business ideas, promoting entrepreneurship alongside education and fostering community cohesion and resilience.

At the College of Language and Cultural Studies (CLCS) in Trongsa, the GNH Club members celebrated a humble but significant milestone—their first harvest of mushrooms. Last October, a group of enthusiastic club members prepared 30 bales of oyster mushrooms, nurturing them with care and dedication. By April 2023, their efforts bore fruit, and the students were thrilled to harvest their first batch of mushrooms.

Among them was Dorji Gyeltshen, a first-year student who was pleasantly surprised by the ease of oyster mushroom cultivation. Inspired by this success, he eagerly planned to introduce mushroom farming to his village during the college vacation. His enthusiasm was contagious, and he shared the mushroom cultivation process on Dangsang College's weekly radio broadcast. The initiative received widespread appreciation, highlighting the students' hard work and dedication.

Meanwhile, Yoezer Phuntsho, another dedicated member of the GNH Club, reflected on the rewarding yet challenging experience of cultivating mushrooms in the autumn. Despite the initial hurdles, the club learned valuable lessons and prepared to initiate a second batch of mushrooms in the coming month. Armed with experience and newfound knowledge, they were determined to achieve a better yield.

Wesel Dema, a former Programme Officer at the GNH Centre Bhutan, expressed heartfelt pride in the students' achievements. "It is heartening to learn that the students are applying their knowledge from the training. We hope more college clubs will embrace farming activities," she said.

The GNH Farmer's Project not only cultivated mushrooms but also nurtured a sense of community, resilience, and entrepreneurial spirit among the youth. As they looked forward to the future, the young farmers of CLCS continued their journey, embodying the true essence of Gross National Happiness in their actions.





# JOURNEYS OF TRANSFORMATION AND COLLABORATION

## 1. The Impact Safari

A unique collaboration was born between the GNH Centre Bhutan (GNHCB) and the Small Giants Academy in Australia. Their combined efforts led to the creation of transformative learning journeys for international participants, fostering empathy, purpose, and holistic well-being inspired by Bhutan's Gross National Happiness philosophy.

The Impact Safari first began in 2018, rooted in the shared vision of GNHCB and Small Giants Academy to bring together individuals from around the world for immersive learning experiences. Since its inception, the program has grown in scope and impact, continually adapting to meet the evolving needs of its participants. Each has built upon the last, creating a legacy of meaningful connections and profound personal growth.

In May 2023, this joint initiative launched its first international post-pandemic Impact Safari. Participants from diverse corners of the world embarked on this ten-day journey. They had the opportunity to interact with Bhutanese Parliamentarians, community leaders, entrepreneurs, and representatives from civil society organizations.

Throughout the program, the focus was on inspiring and preparing individuals to lead a new economy characterized by high-growth industries at the forefront of technology. The participants delved into the essence of Gross National Happiness, exploring how inner transformation could lead to systemic shifts and positive change. They learned about the importance of collective responsibility, blending personal growth with the broader goal of societal well-being.

As the Impact Safari concluded, the participants carried with them not just memories, but a profound understanding of how empathy and purpose can drive a new era of leadership and economic development. This unique experience continues to bridge cultures and foster holistic well-being, inspired by the timeless wisdom of Bhutan, its inspirational leadership and vision of Gross National Happiness.

The Impact Safari will continue in the years to come, building on its past successes and expanding its reach, ensuring that the transformative journey touches more lives and creates ripples of positive change worldwide.



## ■ LEGACY OF COMPASSIONATE GOVERNANCE

In its ongoing efforts to promote Gross National Happiness (GNH) in action, the GNH Centre Bhutan, took 24 international participants for a visit to the National Parliament. This visit aimed to provide participants with a first-hand understanding of the GNH pillar of Good Governance.

Bhutan's traditional system of governance continues to inspire visitors due to its deep commitment to the people's well-being. His Majesty the Third King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck established Bhutan's first National Assembly in 1953, based on a document called "Bangzhung lhami sidey chigdril gi chimi tshogtam," which translates to 'Manifesto of the people's government consisting of representatives of humans and gods.' This commitment was furthered by the Fourth King's vision of Gross National Happiness, who in 2008 introduced democracy in Bhutan. This demonstration of values and compassionate leadership has become a source of inspiration worldwide.

The Honorable Speaker welcomed the delegation from Australia, highlighting the strong and friendly relations shared by the two countries. In his address, he emphasized how Bhutanese politicians, despite having different manifestos, resolve their differences amicably, stating, "Bhutanese politicians try to follow a middle path as the overall responsibility is to maintain our security and sovereignty as a small nation." He also noted, "As GNH is a national goal, all political parties include GNH in their campaign manifesto." The Speaker touched on key topics such as renewable hydro energy, the environment, the tourism sector, and Bhutan's graduation to a middle-income country.

This unique approach to leadership and governance continues to resonate with participants, encouraging a global shift towards more holistic and compassionate leadership.

## 2.The Right Livelihood

The Right Livelihood Program in October 2023, facilitated deeper exploration of GNH principles among 22 international participants. Through experiential learning individuals embraced themselves into mindfulness, compassion and deep listening which cultivated personal and happiness skills. Case clinics provided peer-to-peer support for addressing challenges, guiding participants in developing their own Right Livelihood plans inspired by GNH principles.

Some participants shared their profound experiences like Le Tieu from Canada who stated “the valuable lessons and experiences are beyond any expectations I had imagined”. Similarly, Tania from Australia, described the workshop as a “life changing event”. Side events including visits to educational institutions, traditional medical institutions, community village and some important landmarks of the country, provided insights into Bhutanese approaches to balancing traditional and modernization. Nature walk and self-assessment exercises deepened participants’ connections to Bhutanese culture and heritage.

Led by the GNH Centre Bhutan and supported by local expertise, these initiatives illustrate the global resonance of GNH, offering international participants a unique opportunity to explore and spiritualize transformative potentials on personal and societal well-being. This program originally served as a catalyst and nurturing holistic well-being in a rapidly changing world.





## PROMOTING THE GNH DIALOGUE

During our international workshop, the Centre collaborates with local experts to share their wisdom. These distinguished individuals, each renowned in their respective fields, shared wisdom and insights on Bhutan, the changes taking place, thematic topics and emerging trends. These sessions are aimed to unite participants from diverse backgrounds, all eagerly seeking to explore the vision, values, and potential applications of Gross National Happiness, working together with our local experts not only add values to our workshops but also enriches the experiences for the participants. The GNHCB remains grateful to our local experts for their time and collaboration.



Aum Siok Sian Pek Dorj founder of the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD), shared her experience on “Bhutan in Transition”. During her presentation, she provided an in-depth analysis of the ongoing changes and developments occurring within Bhutan, exploring various aspects such as political, social, economic, and cultural transitions. She also discussed the challenges and opportunities arising from these changes, as well as the country’s efforts to navigate them while upholding its unique values and principles under the concept of Gross National Happiness.



Mr. Karma Wangdi, Chief Research Officer from the Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH Studies (CBS), delivered a technical presentation on “Insight on the GNH Survey.” He provided a comprehensive overview of the methodologies, data collection techniques, and analytical frameworks utilized in the GNH survey conducted by CBS. Additionally, he discussed key findings, trends, and implications derived from the GNH survey, offering valuable insights for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders interested in understanding and promoting the principles of GNH.



Dr. Tshering Tempa, lecturer from SFS, shared the importance of “Environmental and Tiger Conservation”. During his talk, he emphasized the importance of preserving natural habitats, particularly those essential for the survival of tiger populations. He discussed the various challenges facing tiger conservation efforts, including habitat loss, human-wildlife conflict and climate change. Furthermore, he highlighted the unique role that Bhutan plays in tiger conservation, but also the government’s commitment to environmental protection.



Ms. Lhazin Y. Nedup, from UNDP, was invited to talk on “A Sustainable Future of Bhutan.” She explored the multifaceted aspects of sustainability in the context of Bhutan, encompassing environmental, social, and economic dimensions. Moreover, she addressed social sustainability, emphasizing the importance of inclusive development, equitable access to education and healthcare, and the empowerment of marginalized communities. In terms of economic sustainability, she discussed the importance of sustainable tourism, responsible resource management, and the promotion of green industries.





## ■ A QUEST FOR HAPPINESS: SINGAPORE AND THAILAND

There is an increasingly recognized need for prioritizing happiness and well-being within the education system all over the world. There is a growing realization that academic achievements alone do not guarantee holistic success or fulfillment in life. With rising awareness of mental health challenges among students and the environment of competitive schooling, there is a pressing need to redefine success beyond grades and academic accolades.

The GNH Centre Bhutan was invited to Thailand and Singapore to speak to schools and students about the GNH Philosophy to learn how Bhutan has been integrating happiness and well-being into school curricula towards nurturing resilient, balanced individuals equipped to navigate the complexities of the modern world.

The GNH Centre visited the XCL World Academy in Singapore, the American School of Bangkok, and the DPREP International School in Bangkok. The students and faculty were keen to learn and understand how to apply GNH and the 9 domains in their projects and schools. XCL World Academy is a family-oriented international school in Singapore for students aged 2 to 18.

By fostering positive school cultures, providing mental health support services, and incorporating social-emotional learning into education, irrespective of where a school is, they can empower students to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. Embracing happiness as an essential component of education not only enhances student well-being but also cultivates a happier, healthier society for future generations.

Side event: The organizers also held side events on GNH Dialogue at the 1880 Club and Money GM Radio.



## GNH IN ACTION: TAKING IT BEYOND BHUTAN

Sangay Dorji, a final-year student at Taktse College and Coordinator of the GNH Club, embarked on a remarkable journey to integrate Gross National Happiness (GNH) principles into everyday life at his college. Through his dedication and leadership, Sangay demonstrated the transformative power of GNH in fostering a sense of community, environmental leadership, and well-being among students.

### Sharing GNH Values Internationally

Sangay's commitment to GNH extends beyond Bhutan. He shared his experiences and insights with schools in Singapore and Thailand, inspiring students and educators to embrace GNH principles in their own contexts. His stories of volunteerism, sustainable farming, and community engagement have resonated deeply, encouraging others to adopt these values in their classes, schools, and communities.

## **Fostering GNH Principles through Club Activities**

The Taktse GNH-Club, established to promote volunteerism, awareness, and compassion, has been a vibrant club for various activities that embody the essence of GNH. Under Sangay's leadership, the club actively participated in initiatives that enhanced the quality of life for both the college and the surrounding community.

One of the significant milestones in Sangay's journey was his participation in the GNH Farmer's training program in 2022. The training equipped him with valuable knowledge on sustainable farming practices, which he diligently shared with his peers. This initiative not only improved the nutritional quality of meals at the college but also instilled a sense of responsibility towards sustainable living among the students.

## **Community Engagement and Environmental Conservation**

Beyond the campus, the GNH Club has made substantial contributions to the local community. The club members volunteer their time and effort to restore the community Lhakhang (temple), assist needy families during the agricultural seasons, and promote environmental conservation through tree-planting efforts. These activities not only strengthen community bonds but also cultivate a deep respect for Bhutan's cultural heritage and natural environment.

To support their extensive range of activities, the club engages in fundraising initiatives. These funds are directed towards various volunteer projects aimed at enhancing community vitality and well-being. Additionally, the club organizes GNH dialogues, literary activities, and conferences, providing platforms for students to explore and advocate for GNH values.

## **Inspiring Change through Leadership**

At Taktse College, Sangay's leadership in the GNH Club has been instrumental in promoting the domain of community vitality. Through various volunteer activities, farming projects, tree plantations, and advocacy efforts, he has demonstrated that GNH is not just a theoretical concept but a practical approach to enhancing quality of life. His journey exemplifies how students can be powerful agents of change, fostering happiness and well-being in their communities and beyond.

In conclusion, the GNH Club at Taktse College is a shining example of how GNH can be put into action. Their initiatives have not only enriched the lives of students and community members but have also contributed to the broader goal of creating a happier, more sustainable world.

## ANNUAL COMMEMORATION OF 11 NOVEMBER: CELEBRATING THE FATHER OF GROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS

The GNH Centre Bhutan marked the 68th Birth Anniversary of Drukgyal Zhipa Jigme Singye Wangchuck by conducting a heartfelt ceremony at the Memorial Chhorten, Thimphu. The event included offerings of butter lamps, ss Zhabten and prayers for His Majesty's health and long life, showcasing deep respect for his noble vision of happiness.

As part of the commemoration, traditional breakfast was served to the public who were circumambulating the Memorial Chhorten.

Since 2016, the GNH Centre Bhutan has adopted 11 November, as the National GNH Day, reinforcing the commitment to honoring the enduring impact of Drukgyal Zhipa's legacy in the country.

