



CSO REGISTRATION NUMBER: CSOA/PBO-30

## OgyenCholing Foundation

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# Mid-year Report 2019

(January to June)

Losar, the beginning of the Earth Female Pig Year, was celebrated in Ogyen Choling on the 5<sup>th</sup> of February with the usual enthusiasm and renewed hopes for a blessed and happy year. As usual, members of the village came together to participate in the invocations and celebration starting with the time honoured tradition of *shudrel phuensum tshogpa* in the Dolma Lhakhang (Tara Temple)..

### Prayers and Rituals

The year began with some religious fervour as demonstrated by the performance of the reading of the Bum (Prajnaparamita) , which was conducted in February. A few days later a household from the village and the Foundation jointly hosted the ritual of *chöd* in the Dolma Lhakhang The annual *Gonpoi dudchod* was performed in June. A group of households in the village hosted another ritual of *chöd*, performed by 10 lay people, disciples of Dungsey Garab Rinpoche in the Dolma Lhakhang towards end of June. The group comprised of men and women. It was new experience for many, to see women practitioners who had tend to their babies and small children during the ritual! It is hoped that this religious fervour will continue into the year.



The chöd ritual performed by a group of men and women

## Museum

The work of installing window frames continued over the period covered by this report. This work should be completed within the next six months. Two rooms on the ground floor of the *utse* have been emptied and are being readied for the new exhibits.

The museum had visitors nearly every day. We noted a significant increase in the number of Bhutanese visitors to the museum and the temples.

## Guest House

The guest house operators were happy to be awarded the 3 star rating for the guest house by the Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB). The approval for the award came after a second visit by an assessment team. The occupancy rate of the guest house is picking up and, we continued to receive a few guests right into June, which is usually considered the lean months for tourism in Bumthang. Besides the regular guests we were happy to host some special groups namely;

- Frequent visitor and friend of Ogyen Choling, Wendy Erd, writer and film maker from Alaska and Hanoi, came with a writers' group and stayed with us for three nights in April. Some teachers from Tang Central School Misethang, were invited to join the writers for a fun interactive creative writing workshop. The writing was based on the artefacts in the museum.



Dr. Suchart making a portrait



Visitors enjoy momo making lessons

- Samten, a travel agent from the village brought an international group of Tibetan medicine practitioners, led by Dr. Nida Chenatsang the Co-founder of Sorig International. Over the three days Dr. Nida guided the group in practice and meditation in the temple.
- In June we had the pleasure of hosting Asha Karma, the founder of the Voluntary Artists Studio Thimphu. (VAST). He was accompanied by the renowned Thai artist Dr. Suchart and his wife.



Four of the kitchen staff of the Heritage House have received their food handlers' licence from BAFRA (Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority).



Through the Swiss Bhutan Friendship Association, we were fortunate to be introduced to Ms. Annagret Schlumpf, a Swiss consultant in gastronomy and housekeeping. Ms. Schlumpf stayed here for over 3 weeks in March, giving the staff of the Heritage House hands-on training in cooking and housekeeping. On her recommendation and with the help of her friends and contacts in Switzerland, Ms. Pema Yangdon, who leads the team in the Heritage House, was able to go to Switzerland for a two months internship. Pema Yangdon will be based in Centro Magliaso but will have the opportunity to look at different hotels in Switzerland.

Heritage House staff received certificates of participation in hospitality training

### Construction of the boundary wall

The boundary wall was completed in March. Within the well protected area, around the mani



walls the villagers have planted decorative plants and trees. It was decided to plant mostly local perennial species. The initiative was in response to Bumthang Dzongkhag's declaration of beautifying Bumthang under the slogan of *Beautiful Bumthang*. Many of the trees and plants have survived under the collaborative care of the villagers. We are still looking at building a small playground for the children from the village. We have acquired the timber and have looked at samples of locally made play structures.

Working on the last few meters of wall

## Installation of the CCTV



The installation of CCTV as a security system guarantees a sense of security but it also reminds us that the possibility of a breach of trust is a constant reality. A local entrepreneur, Tsewang Dorji, assisted by the staff spent over one week, installing the CCTV with 14 cameras located in areas in and around the museum, temple and the Heritage House.

Installing CCTV system

## Audit

Once again, we are grateful to the Royal Audit Authority for authorizing the Regional Audit Office in Bumthang to audit the Foundation for the calendar years 2017 and 2018 in February.

Coincidentally the Foundation was honoured by a visit by the Auditor General and a team from the Royal Audit Authority almost at the same time as the audit was conducted.



The Auditor General and his team



## Education and Scholarship



Prizes for academic excellence for students of the Tang Central School provided by the Foundation were awarded during the celebration of His Majesty's Birthday.

A friend and well-wisher of Ogyen Choling, Dr. Joerg Nagel of Switzerland has successfully mobilised substantial donations for Ogyen Choling Foundation. There is an understandable preference to give donations towards education. As the ECCD in the village is rather small and already quite well provided for, we felt that its only right to reach out to the other ECCDs in the valley. With the approval of the Board, we have already visited the other ECCDs and distributed some toys and stationery materials. We are also open to offering some resources for minor infrastructural developments such as toilets.

Executive Trustee awarding prizes



Students of Misethang ECCD



Toys for Bebzur ECCD

### **Volunteers for Fire mitigation**

Kelzang Namgyel, the Development Officer of the Foundation, conducted a briefing and training for the staff and some volunteers from the village on how to use the fog pumps.



Kesang Lhamo, Heritage House staff, using the water hose during the fire mitigation exercise

The first half of the year 2019 was satisfying and we look forward to an equally successful and fulfilling remainder of the year.

Once again we gratefully acknowledge all the good wishes and the support we have received. Be assured that we are trying our best to live up to your expectations and your faith in us.

**TASHI DELEK** from Ogyen Choling

*Kunzang Choden and the Team of the Ogyen Choling Foundation*