

A woman in a pink jacket and blue boots stands in a field of tall green plants, with a mountainous landscape in the background. The scene is set in a rural, mountainous area with terraced fields and a small house visible in the distance. The sky is overcast with heavy clouds.

**BHUTAN ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN
ENTREPRENEURS (BAOWE)**

ANNUAL REPORT 2019



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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT BAOWE

BAOWE is a Civil Society Organization (CSO) established on 15 April 2010 and registered under the CSO Act of 2007. The aim of the organization is to reach out and empower women and girls (single mothers, unemployed youth, and women working in the informal sector) through entrepreneurship programs.

BAOWE has over 4000 members spread across 12 Dzongkhags in the form of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Cooperatives registered with the Department of Agriculture and Marketing Cooperatives (DAMC) under the Ministry of Agriculture. The member of the groups are engaged in plethora of agriculture activities ranging from rice, cardamom, turmeric, vegetables, mustard and aromatic plant plantation to production of mustard oil, dairy products, and dairy cum poultry feed.

BAOWE is also engaged in operation of a non-deposit Microfinance Institution as its ancillary activity to support its members through provision of affordable finances and saving accounts complementing government's initiative of financial inclusion. One of the activities under this program is training of its members in financial literacy.

Besides the above programs, BAOWE is engaged in branding, packaging, labeling and marketing of local produces belonging to its members; and building international and regional market networks.

VISION

Economic Empowerment of Women and Girls working both in the formal and informal sector through Entrepreneurship Programs and Affordable Microfinance Services

MISSION

- Identification of economic opportunities both in rural and urban places;
- Formation of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Cooperatives;
- Facilitate related trainings and technical backstopping;
- Facilitate affordable finances through its Microfinance windows;
- Create supply chain networks;
- Develop marketing networks both within and outside;

MESSAGE FROM THE FOUNDER/CEO

BAOWE is pleased to highlight some of its achievements made over the last one year.



The project "Advancing Economic Opportunities for Women and Girls," funded by the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction 9155 and executed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Bhutan, ended towards the first quarter of 2019. Under the project, BAOWE set up a livestock feed production unit for its cooperative group in Trashigang, promoted aromatic and medicinal plant plantations for its Self-Help Group in Trongsa, and set up a dairy product processing unit including plantations of rice, ginger, cardamom, and vegetables for its Self-Help Groups in Zhemgang.

The project directly or indirectly benefited more than 1100 families within these three Dzongkhags in terms of enhancing their personal income and migrating from their existing state of living. The TA 9016 BHU 2016–2018 component of the project helped our members avail training in basic accounting and financial literacy, essential oil extraction, organic farming, mustard oil extraction, pasture development and dairy shed management, livestock feed production, cardamom plantations, including grading, harvesting, and weeding, and food and beverages (F&B), including hygiene and sanitation.

The construction of the Food and Snack Processing Unit in collaboration with Samdrupjongkhar Thromde near the RSTA Bus Terminal at Samdrupjongkhar, funded by EU-Helvetas Bhutan, is another milestone achieved by BAOWE in 2019. The project is in progress, and upon completion in the first quarter of 2021, it is expected to benefit at least 15 households, comprising single mothers, vulnerable women, and girls currently residing under the Thromde. The aim of the project is to source local ingredients from

various parts of the country and manufacture healthy snacks and cookies (Khabzey) for personal consumption as well as religious offerings during auspicious days. A lucid supply chain will be created whereby the finished products will be sold through big markets located in urban centers. The income earned in the process will be distributed among the women and girls engaged in production at the unit in Samdrupjongkhar.

Similarly, BAOWE is also in the process of constructing a market shed for 15 street vendors under Gelephu Thromde with funding from the Bhutan National Bank (BNB) through its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) window. While all the preliminary work pertaining to the project is complete, actual construction is expected to commence in collaboration with Gelephu Thromde only from the first quarter of 2021, owing to the current lockdown situation at Gelephu.

I would like to commend the hard work and efforts put in by the small BAOWE team in securing the projects, implementing the same with dedication and commitment, bringing in commendable changes in the lives of our poor members, and putting on record all the sequence of events. In continuation, I would like to thank all our development partners and related government agencies listed at the end of this report, including well wishers and supporters, without which our mission would not have been possible.

Tashi Delek!

BAOWE TEAM



Ms. Damchae Dem - Founder/CEO



Ms. Namgay Wangmo – Finance Officer



Ms. Tshering Pelden - Project Coordinator



Ms. Yangchen Lhamo – Microfinance Officer



Ms. Tashi Lhamo - Legal Officer



Mr. Lhap Tshering – Project Manager

DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN OWNED OPEN MARKET (WOOM) – TO ADDRESS URBAN POVERTY

One of the many manifestations of urban poverty is the increasing number of "footpath vendors." In its quest to address urban poverty by empowering women economically, BAOWE, in collaboration with Thimphu and Phuentsholing Thromde, introduced a pilot vendor's outlet for women in the urban nerve centers of Thimphu and Phuentsholing. The beneficiaries of this project are mostly illiterate and semi literate single mothers, women, and girls. It is envisioned that through this initiative, they will become empowered, independent, and live a dignified life as contributing members of society. Basically, BAOWE facilitates and provides a secure and conducive environment for erstwhile street hawkers to sell their produce, such as homegrown vegetables, fruits, and home cooked food/ snacks, hygienically under the supervision of BAFRA.



Sales outlet Hejo, Thimphu



Sales outlet at RSTA Bus Terminal, Thimphu



Sales outlet at the entrance of JDWNRH



Sales Outlet & Yogurt Unit near RSTA Bus Terminal, Phuntsholing

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

1. Decentralized Coordination and Partnerships for Gender Equality Results

This project is funded by the Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction (JFPR), Asian Development Bank (ADB), executed through READ Bhutan and implemented by BAOWE.

The key objectives of this project are to enhance access to economic livelihood options and employment opportunities through a process of facilitating the identification and diversification of viable livelihood options and building the capacity of women and girls to enable them to benefit optimally, thereby addressing gender inequities that exist in the economy.

The Self Help Groups (SHGs) and Cooperatives have been formed so far, with 4000 plus members engaged in income-generating activities such as feed production, dairy farming, plantations of medicinal plants, food processing, vegetable production, cardamom production, turmeric production, and different cash crops. The SHGs and Cooperatives are formed to encourage teamwork and cohesiveness among the community members for common income generation.

Through the technical assistance window of the project, the following activities were carried out in 2018 at the respective project sites:

i. Stakeholder meeting with Nubi Cooperatives, Trongsa

BAOWE) organized a one day stakeholder meeting involving Dzongkhag, DAMC, DoTMS, DoA, BAOWE and the Nubi Community to resolve issues regarding the CFC at Nubi geog, explore the ways to direct this TABHU9016 for improvement in the field of value addition to the existing activity of Nubi Menjong Nyamley Tshogdey (MAP cooperative).



Members of Nubi, Trongsa

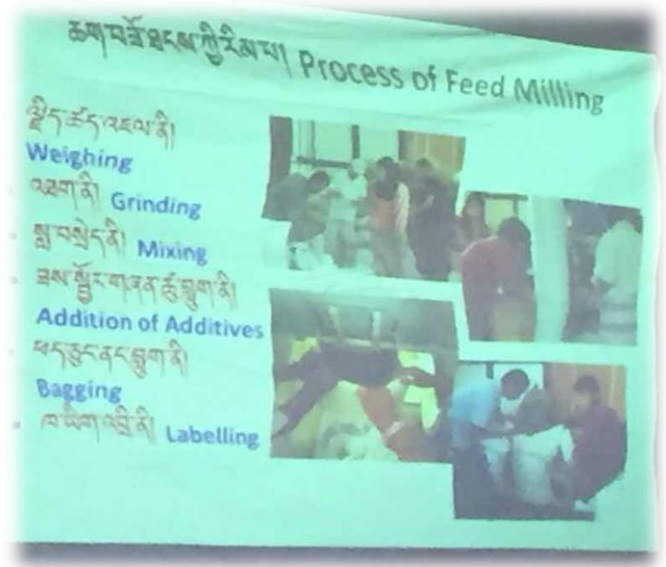
ii. Awareness Programme on Wild MAPs/Cultivable MAPs /Value chain analysis

BAOWE in collaboration with the Horticulture Division under the Department of Agriculture, implemented the project "*Medicinal Plants and Herbs: Developing Sustainable Supply Chain and Enhancing Rural Livelihoods*" in 2011 at Nubi Geog Trongsa with the aim to conserve natural resources, reduce poverty, and improve the livelihoods of mountain communities through the sustainable development and utilization of high-value, low-volume medicinal and aromatic plants and products. While certain basic trainings on plantation and accounting were imparted through the project, the group members were not oriented with the detailed costing of the products and bookkeeping. Therefore, to make the group independent in calculating costs and fixing their own prices, trainings on cost-benefit analysis (CBA) were imparted to at least the office bearers.



iii. Training on the Production of 3 types feed and maintenance and operation of Feed machine

While the feed production unit and plant have already been established with ADB's funding, the unit management team faced lots of problems due to technical glitches and the need for critical components. The members turned to BAOWE for technical backstopping all the time, and BAOWE had to coordinate with the National Center for Animal Nutrition in Bumthang and the Agriculture Machinery Center in Paro for the training on the production of three types of feed and the maintenance and operation of feed machines and component suppliers from within the country. It was therefore, felt necessary to identify a few operators from among the group members and train them for all times to come in managing the operation.



Members of Lumang Feed Cooperative, Trashigang

iv. Stakeholder meeting with Gup and people of Lumang for supply of locally available raw materials to the feed cooperative

The purpose of the gathering is to encourage the local people to assist the feed production unit by providing raw materials that may be available, such as corn, to ensure that the unit does not have a raw material shortage.

During the stakeholder meeting, the people were informed of the importance of the feed processing plant to enhance the income of the local people and how it was equally important for the locals to increase the volume of their corn production by utilizing their fallow lands and supply any volume of the corn to the manufacturing plant.



v. Practical training on cardamom harvest and post harvest for the cardamom groups of Soobdrang, Tali and Tama, Zhemgang

The training was provided by Trong Agriculture Extension officers and two specialists from Zhemgang Dzongkhag. Through the training, farmers were made aware of the suitability of the climate and soil for cardamom plantations and the sources from which the seeds could be collected. The Self-Help Groups of Sobdrang, Tali, and Tama Group identified cardamom plantations, which eventually raised interests among their neighboring villages.



vii. Training on Dairy Product Diversification and Pasture Development to the Dairy Group of Tshagljong, Zhemgang

Earlier, due to the limited market for milk, farmers were not inclined to upscale their production of milk. In order to address this issue and encourage farmers to take up dairy farming, a dairy group was formed and trained in the processing of yogurt, butter, paneer, and cottage cheese with technical experts from the National Dairy Research Center at Yusipang, Thimphu. They were also informed on the importance of maintaining the hygiene and cleanliness of the processing unit, its equipment, and its production personnel.

In addition, the group was provided with fodder seedlings and training on pasture development and the balancing of feed and nutrition for their animals.





Members of Dairy Group of Tshanglajong, Zhemgang- Pasture Development

viii. Training on how to use oil expeller and oil processing from mustard seeds & making chips from Potato for the Vegetable Groups of Zhurphel and Gongphu.

The training was imparted to encourage the people of Zhurphel and Gomphu to engage in mustard production and meet the required volume for commercial purposes, at least in their localities. The training was also aimed at building the farmer's capacity in oil extraction.



Learning how to process oil from Mustard Seeds

ix. Training on Value Chain Development for Group Members from Trongsa, Trashigang and Zhemgang

In order to make our group members familiar with market dynamics, training on value chain development has been given to the Self-Help Groups of Trongsa, Trashigang, and Zhemgang Dzongkhag at Phuntsholing. The training was also aimed at informing the group members about market channels and segmentation, deriving market prices, preparing marketing plans, and developing strategic market linkages.



Self-Help Groups of Trongsa, Trashigang, and Zhemgang Dzongkhag

x. Exposure and Field visit

During the exposure tours to the Southern Dzongkhags, especially Samtse, farmers from diverse regions had the opportunity to interact and exchange knowledge with one another. As a result, they had the ability to observe firsthand instances of how sustainable practices had been effectively adopted into the agriculture, dairy, livestock, and other sectors in communities just like their own.



Visit to Dairy Group of Pasakha, Phuentsholing



Visit to STCBL Phuntsholing to explore range of agricultural tools and equipments



Visit to Organic Agriculture Farm at Samtse Chengmari



Visit to National Breeding Centre, MoAF at Samtse

CAPACITY BUILDING TRAINING

The project funded by the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) through Department of Trade (DoT) under Ministry of Economic Affairs (MoEA) focuses on empowering women and girls in rural communities with sustainable income generating activities through capacity building and economic opportunities to become a Self Employed Entrepreneurs. The training was aimed at adding value to their product to increase shelf life and marketability.

- a) *Pasture Development & Dairy Shed Management for Dairy Group at*
- Build farmer's capacity in sustainable dairy farming and dairy shed management
 - Promote clean milk production
 - Understand dairy nutrition and forage husbandry in dairy enterprise
 - Understand role of post production and marketing in dairy industry.
 - Hand on training for developing improved pasture and fodder plantation



Dairy Group – P/ling



Dairy Group - Haa

b) *Training on Food Processing - Pickling, Dehydration of Vegetables- 2 SHGs*

- To build farmer's capacity in value addition and operation of the food processing equipment.
- To value add on the existing activity to increase their income source and to have alternative livelihood source.



Self Help Groups of Pantang, Tashibi and Panibi

DONORS and PROGRAMME PARTNERS

Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs would like to thank our development partners for their continued support in our quest to better the lives of underserved women and girls.

1. Pelden Group of Companies
2. Asian Development Bank
3. ICIMOD
4. EIF (Enhanced Integrated Framework), MoEA
5. Department of Renewable Energy, MoEA
6. Norwegian Government for FK Exchange Program
7. Thimphu Thromdey
8. Samdrup Jongkhar Thromdey
9. Gelephu Thromdey
10. National Commission for Women and Children
11. Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC)
12. Ministry of Health
13. Ministry of Agriculture and Forests
14. Department of Agriculture Marketing and Cooperatives
15. National Feed and Fodder Development Program
16. Horticulture Division
17. National Post Harvest Centre
18. National Organic Program
19. National Mushroom Center
20. College of Natural Resources, Lobesa
21. READ BHUTAN



BAOWE as an informal platform addressing the economic and social needs of its member is being stretched beyond capacity. The need for a formal platform addressing these issues within BAOWE is an urgent impetus that can no longer be ignored. We need financial and technical support in building this platform and invite interested individuals and institutions to help us in this meaningful endeavor.

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