



Report Bhutan Film Trust, 2014

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THE BHUTAN FILM TRUST

Project Outline

Although Bhutan has a vibrant film industry with over 200 filmmakers, actors and technicians, with more than 100 productions over the past 5 years, the films in general reach only 20% of the population and are hardly watched across the borders. The earnings on the film productions are that low that investments in qualitative films is risky, thus films are made on low budgets (20 - 30.000 euros) and screened in the few urban cinemas of Bhutan or in tents during annual festivals (tshechu's) equipped with out-dated techniques and comfort.

The Bhutan Film Trust, instigated by bhutan+partners the Netherlands, aims at supporting young and talented Bhutanese film-makers to bring their productions to an internationally recognised level with increased production budgets, international exposure and to venture in international co-productions.

Objectives

1. Quality improvement of the film productions in Bhutan (feature, art films and documentaries) through financial support, technical assistance and training
2. Increased international exposure of Bhutan productions at international film festivals
3. Enhanced interest for Bhutan and its artists through creative, entertaining and informative film productions

Goals

- 1) Financial support and investment for talented upcoming professionals to develop new scripts/films and for films to reach the technical and artistic standards for international festivals and markets.
- 2) Training in all aspects of filmmaking for selected talented youth
- 3) Master classes and festivals – Master classes and production of short films and documentaries for a festival and film award competition
- 4) Exposure of *made in Bhutan* films at major international film festivals (categories: feature, short/long, documentaries, animation) and among European filmmakers and film markets.

Activities

1. Annual competition for Bhutan script writers and film directors
2. Support to the editing and re-editing of Bhutan film productions for the international market.
3. Promotion of selected Bhutan films and documentaries at international film festivals and to international film networks, including distribution channels
4. Support to the Annual Bhutan Film Festivals in Europe

ACTIVITIES OCTOBER 2013 – DECEMBER 2014

Institutional progress

1. *Start up issues:* Setting up The Bhutan Film Trust took more time than expected. Main causes were complicated formalities to register a Netherlands NGO with foreign board members. This urged us to re-do the articles of registration, the by-laws and to design a new institutional set up. Another factor is the distance between Bhutan and the Netherlands and the absence of international experience and ambition with Bhutanese filmmakers. Finally setting up activities required presence and explanation on the spot in Bhutan for which only a few weeks in 2013 and recently in June / November 2014 were available. This explains why contracting with Netherlands staff only started in June 2014. Equipment and staffing of the Bhutan office started in September 2014.
2. *Groundwork* for the Bhutan Film Trust has almost finished:
 - Bhutanese artist, Pema Tshering (TinTin) in collaboration with bhutan+partners designer, Harmine Louwe, designed the logo. Business cards and letterhead paper were designed and printed.
 - The website - www.bhutanfilmtrust.org, developed by Sonam Chopel, is operational since November 2014. The Bhutan Film Trust weblog was replaced by the face book page <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Bhutanfilmtrust/815652338476004?ref=hl> in September 2014.
 - The acting board approved articles of registration and the by-laws, made and translated at DAAN solicitors.
 - The board will consist of three Dutch senior media professionals. Lem van Eupen - faculty director/dean HU University of Applied Sciences, and Mr Peter Schrurs - member of the media and film committee of the National Council of Culture and course coordinator international broadcast management RNTC, former Managing director at VPRO - public broadcaster, and member of the advice committee of the Dutch television and film academy, have accepted posts. The third member is about to be identified.
 - Three Bhutanese form the strategic advisory committee: Dorji Wangchuk – senior lecturer department of Communications and Media at Sherubtshe college, Lopen Lungtaen Gyatso – director Institute of Language and Cultural Studies, Royal University of Bhutan, and Françoise Pommaret – CNRS (France) and Institute of Language and Cultural Studies, Royal University of Bhutan. The technical advisory committee is composed of two Bhutanese, Mr Dorjee Tshering - former director culture, and Ms Namgay Zam – free lance journalist and film critic, and one European film specialist to be identified. The structure is operational since December 2014
 - Staffing: Dutch office: Erica Sluyters, Coordinator and office manager, seconded by Patricia Becks, festivals, Henk de Jong, Bhutan network and communications and Tineke Alons, finance and accountancy. Bhutan office: Karma Luday, office manager, seconded by local experts
 - Bhutan office was equipped with computer.
 - Cards were printed to promote the Bhutan Film Trust at film festivals and other relevant occasions.
3. *Travels and networking:*
 - The visits of Henk de Jong to Bhutan in October 2013, June and November 2014 were used to familiarise the Bhutan film industry and authorities with the Bhutan Film Trust, meetings were held with the Bhutan Film Association, local film makers and presentations were made at the Journalist Association of Bhutan (JAB) and the Beskop Tschachu organisers (also see the October – November 2013 report). A number of films in progress were discussed and viewed, mostly during private screenings.
 - Erica Sluyters and Henk de Jong visited the first Bhutan Film Festival in Copenhagen, March 2014 to watch the latest Bhutan film productions, to discuss with Bhutanese filmmakers and to investigate opportunities for collaboration with the Danish film industry. We concluded that the *modus operandi* of the Bhutan Film Trust is focussed on commercial development of the Bhutan film industry rather than seeking support from other NGO's and government institutions, as per the working procedures of our Danish counterparts.
 - Logistical support has been given to Film festivals in Freiburg, Curaçao, Copenhagen and Vienna.
 - Erica Sluyters presented the Bhutan Film Trust at the bi-annual meeting of the European Friends of Bhutan Association, October 3, 2014

Project support 2014

- *The Red Door* - short art movie by Tashi Gyeltshen; *The Red Door* was supported with post production in Thailand (sound and colour correction), Tashi Gyeltshen was invited to attend the world premiere at the International Film Festival Rotterdam and was hosted by the Bhutan Film Trust. Tashi met with various filmmakers and film distributors, viewed many films and visited various museums during his ten days' stay in The Netherlands. *The Red Door* was screened at international film festivals in Curaçao, Freiburg, Hong Kong and Vienna besides the IFFR. Subscription to 13 film festivals worldwide resulted in international screenings at an additional 4 festivals in 2015: DMFF, Washington environmental film festival, Helsinki and Mumbai.
- *Nazhoen Chharo* the 2008 feature film by Dorji Wangchuk to be re-edited in 2015
- *Thank you Sir*, feature film by Tshering Gyeltshen is being re-edited and shortened and will be ready for international exposure in 2015.
- *Sherubtse Film festival/competition* in East Bhutan was awarded a donation of 500 euros to train young film students and to make them compete in the Sherubtse film award competition.
- *Opera Bhutan*. The first opera ever in Bhutan, October 2014, was documented by TGMI (Bhutan) and bhutan+partners (producer). The technical crew (cameras, sound, rough editing, logistics) was a mix of seasoned and junior technicians from Bhutan of whom only a few worked in an international production before. The opera documentary will be finished by the end of April 2015, and is expected to have international exposure at film festivals. This will enhance promotion of local film technicians and encourage opportunities of international co-productions.
- Karma Deki - feature film *Kushuthara*, was supported with juridical advice on international distribution and rights regulations.
- Purchased rights *Girl with the Red Sky* for post production and distribution
- *Cine-maal (film dinner)* The Cine-maal project, created to promote Bhutan films over a lovely vegetarian dinner was held three times in the Netherlands.
- *IMdB*, bhutan+partners/Bhutan Film Trust, registered a number of Bhutanese film productions at the IMDB film database (<http://www.imdb.com>) to promote Bhutan art films and to introduce Bhutanese filmmakers to the international arena.

Activities 2015

- Completing boards and committees with adequate professionals (April 2015)
- Formal registration of the Bhutan Film Trust in the Netherlands (early May 2015)
- Three application rounds with deadlines on 31 January, 31 May and 30 September
- *Girl with the Red Sky*, post production (April / May 2015)
- Support *Ap Bokto* animation with Post production, subtitles (spring 2015)
- Support the feature film of Dechen Roder (Spring 2015)
- Support Beskop Tshechu, bi-annual short film festival Bhutan
- Promotion of Bhutan films International Film Festivals
- Organise Cine-maal as a means to contribution to the Bhutan Film Trust network
- Prepare Launch Bhutan Film Trust, early May 2015
- Prepare auditing, closure of books (January 2015)
- Draft annual report, financial statements, annual plan 2015, including budgets (February 2015)
- Draft and discuss fundraising strategy 2015 - 2016 (April / May 2015)

Project support 2015

- Support *Tashi Gyeltshen's Trilogy* consisting of *The Red Door* (2013), *The Girl with the Red Sky* (2009) and *The Red Phallus* (2015). The Bhutan Film Trust aims to issue a film box with the three films and a book by the end of 2015, early 2016. *The Red Door* rights have been accessed through 2014 support, the rights of *The Girl with the Red Sky* were obtained from the rights holder: Bhutan Youth Development Fund. This film is to be re-edited and requires sound and colour corrections. The production of *The Red Phallus*, Tashi's first feature length film, is yet to start. The director is currently looking for budgets (estimated to 100.000 euros). It is expected that a comprehensive presentation of the trilogy will help Tashi to further develop himself and to contribute to the promotion of the Bhutan Art Films.
- Dechen Roder attended the premiere of her third short *Lo Sum Choe Sum* at the Berlinale with support from the Trust. We will assist her in finding funds for her first feature film: *the honey giver among dogs*. Dechen gave a presentation at the Hong Kong Festival and is now under negotiation with a film distributor.
- *Ap Bokto* is Bhutan's first animation made for cinema viewing. The character of Ap Bokto telling old Bhutanese stories through images has become very popular over the past few months. Ap Bokto will also appear in drama, as toys and on TV as short 6 minutes stories. The inventor of Ap Bokto, Karma Dhendup, applies for support to assess the international market with his animations. View: <https://www.facebook.com/apbokto>
- *Lugar theatre*: One of the oldest buildings in Thimphu town and the first cinema in Bhutan, the Lugar, has been closed since 2011 due to weak construction and constant lack of investment and maintenance of the structure and equipment. Investors from the Netherlands and Belgium aim to device and renovate the theatre in the "diamond" year of Bhutan's fourth King. After renovation the Lugar will screen foreign films in a luxury accommodation, equipped with the latest technology. Bhutan+partners has been requested to facilitate negotiations and procedures for the renovation. Part of the negotiations will include donation of a percentage of Lugar revenues to the Bhutan Film Trust.

The Netherlands, March 19, 2015