



volunteer bhutan

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INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY, DEC 4 & 5, DAMPHU, TSIRANG

THE BEST WAY TO FIND YOURSELF, IS TO LOSE YOURSELF IN THE SERVICE OF OTHERS

~MAHATMA GANDHI

FACTS ON INTERNATIONAL VOLUNTEER DAY

- International Volunteer Day (IVD) is an international observance designated by the United Nations since 1985
- The aim of this event is to thank the volunteers for their efforts and increase public awareness on their contribution to society
- The theme for the event was "Volunteering for Our Planet" focusing on climate change, waste management and recycling
- United Nations Volunteers, Tsirang Dzongkha Administration and Volunteers in Bhutan organized the event
- The keynote speaker at the event was Tinley Palden Dorji, Vice President of the Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The chief guests were Dasho Paljor Dorji and the UN Resident Coordinator, Claire Van der Vaeren
- Representatives from 14 volunteer organizations in Bhutan, individual volunteers as well as international volunteers were present at this event

FACTS ABOUT UN VOLUNTEERS

- The United Nations Volunteers Program is the UN organization that promotes volunteerism to support peace and development worldwide
- Currently, there are 25 Bhutanese UN Volunteers serving abroad, most of them in conflict or post-conflict areas
- International volunteerism started in Bhutan in the early 1980s, when a mechanic and an English teacher came to Bhutan to work as the first UN Volunteers
- Today there are 63 international volunteers serving in Bhutan

volunteer spirits

Rebecca Shirin Jafari



The UN Resident Coordinator Claire Van der Vaeren (in black jacket) with the UN Volunteers during the 'Clean Tsirang' activity

They came from different parts of the world, and from different nooks of Bhutan. Their age, cultural background and academic qualifications were varied. But they all had one thing in common: the spirit of volunteerism.

On December 4 and 5, over two hundred international and local volunteers gathered at the Damphu public ground in Tsirang to celebrate the International Volunteers Day 2009. This year's theme was *Volunteering for Our Planet*. Through skits, dances, workshops and exhibit programs on waste management and climate change, the event reminded everyone of the realities of global warming and the need to act

now.

"There is nothing more useful than volunteering for our planet and environment. This event inspires people to act now. After this, I want to go back to my college and encourage more students to become volunteers," said Tenzin Dorji, 20, a member of Volunteers in Bhutan and a Samtse College of Education student. The Damphu ground, packed with people, saw different volunteer organizations with stalls where they provided information about volunteer work and they fundraised and arranged workshops on waste management.

Saturday morning, volunteers

collected garbage and participated in the "Clean Tsirang" activity. The UN Resident Coordinator, Claire Van der Vaeren and Tsirang Dzongkha Pemba Wangchuk also took part in this activity.

"I am impressed by the spirit of the volunteers," Ms. Van der Haeren said after the event. In her speech on the opening ceremony she said that the UN would continue to support volunteerism as a force for sustainable development. The chief guest Dasho Paljor J. Dorji paid tribute to the volunteers and said they are tomorrow's leaders. "You are the new generation and you can always lead."

But what does it actually mean to be

a volunteer? And what are the volunteers getting in return for the time they spend doing something for others? Tshelthrim Dorjee has been a volunteer for many years, and is a member of *Volunteers in Bhutan*. He stressed the point that volunteerism must come from within and that the feeling of making a difference makes it all worth it.

This was the first time the International Volunteers Day was arranged outside Thimphu. Next year the volunteer spirit will meet in Eastern Bhutan. Meanwhile, the volunteers will continue to make a difference – in Bhutan as well as around the world.

VOICES



Dorji Yuden: *Volunteer with Tsirang Women's Association*

"At least, I feel I am doing something that makes a difference in the society. We collect money to help vulnerable women and children in Bhutan. The people we help say it is a blessing for them. It's a great joy to see a smile on a person's face, it is a gift and it makes me very happy."

Ugyen Phuntsok: *Volunteering for 'Young Volunteers in Action'*

"Being a volunteer I learn a lot about myself. Especially when we are interacting with rural youths, I feel I get a lot of useful knowledge back. As a volunteer you also get lots of opportunities as for example participating in this event."



Ambikam Neopaney: *Core volunteer at RENEW, Sar pang*

"My best experience, as a volunteer was when one husband who had beaten his wife participated in the training and realized he had done something very wrong. He called me and asked me to help him bring his wife back from the shelter home. This man did a lot to prove he had changed."

Sangay Letho: *Forest fire volunteer*

"As a Bhutanese, the nature is an important part of our identity and religion. It is important to take care of it, that's why I am a fire forest volunteer. Being a volunteer is also very social. I meet a lot of different people from different backgrounds, and we have a lot of fun together."



Asami Suzuki: *International Volunteer from Japan, JICA*

"I'm here to teach Bhutanese guides Japanese language. My students tell me they are very happy to learn Japanese because there is a lack of Japanese speaking guides here. I can see that they enjoy the classes and that what I give them is useful. That's all I can ask for as a volunteer, and I'm happy I came."

