

## Loden Entrepreneurship Training Programme 12-13 April, 2008

### Report

Loden Zhitshog, the Bhutan chapter of Loden Foundation has successfully organized a two day training programme on entrepreneurship for the young Bhutanese men and women. The programme aimed to train and support young Bhutanese in entrepreneurial business venture with focus on conceiving business ideas and drafting business proposals. It was held in the lecture hall of Ministry of Information and Communications, located in the centre of Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan during the weekend of 12 and 13 April. Both the centrality of the training venue and its facilities and the timing of the training programme contributed significantly to its success.



It was attended by forty five participants from various departments, corporations, private agencies, entrepreneurs and other interested individuals between the age of twenty five and forty who have genuine interest to set up small business enterprises. Out of the fifty candidates who had initially applied for the training programme, forty five had attended the training. When asked to introduce themselves and give a reason to their participation, almost everyone who attended stated that they wanted to gain more knowledge about entrepreneurship and hoped to start a new business or improve interesting ones. There were eleven female and thirty four male participants and they come from a wide range of background. A quarter of the participants were employed in various departments and private agencies but others were unemployed and looking for a job. Almost all of them have quite a considerable academic background and some even have completed their first degree and are enthusiastically planning to establish their own businesses.



The instruction at the programme was given by the combination of one international and five local experts. Although Gerard Tardy, the main inspiration behind the LEP could not make it for the



training, we were very fortunate to have Hans Keller, an eminent Swiss entrepreneurial expert based in Bhutan, to instruct during the opening session. His humorous and lively presentation with a wide knowledge of international business and intimate understanding of Bhutan's situation was very inspirational. Karma Lodoe, a business lecturer, Pema Wangdhee, a lecturer from the Royal Institute of Management specializing in operations, Norbu Wangchuk, an independent consultant and Karma Tobgay a lecturer in Finances at the Royal Institute of Management and Dorji Wangchuk, a media specialist and successful entrepreneur in Thimphu were the Bhutanese resource persons. They covered between them

various business topics including introduction to entrepreneurial thinking, cultivation of entrepreneurial ethics and skills, conception of business ideas, understanding of business structures, financial analysis, operations and management, marketing techniques, drafting of business plans and proposals, importance of customer relations and other entrepreneurial issues. Some of them gave a more academic presentation of general theories, nonetheless applying them to familiar Bhutanese examples. Others such as Dorji Wangchuk told a personal story of his background, education and work and business to inspire and encourage the participants. Besides giving their time and knowledge for free, the instructors conducted the training with much zest and humour sharing their knowledge and experience selflessly. Both Karma Phuntsho and Ashe Kunzang Choden, the directors of Loden Zhitshog, also participated in the programme sharing their knowledge on issues relevant to entrepreneurial ventures.



We distributed a feedback form after the training asking the participants to rate the programme in the range of fair, poor, good, very good and excellent in course content, quality of instructors, productivity and management. 60% of the participants said the course content as excellent, 30% very good and 10% good. Similarly 15% said the instructors were excellent, 75% very good and 10% good. 70% rated the management of the programme by Loden staff as excellent, 20% rated very good and 10% good. All the candidates claim their time at the training to have been highly productive. There was no negative comment although there were a few suggestions for improvements. A number of the participants proposed for a longer course while some suggested group and sub-group works to help everyone participate actively. The training programme seems to have left very positive impact on the young Bhutanese participants as none of them rated the programme as fair and poor.

We feel the training programme has succeeded beyond our expectations in arousing a fervent spirit of social entrepreneurship among the participants, instilling a sense of leadership, informing them of the business world and its complexities, and above all of the various challenges and prospects they face as a potential entrepreneur. It has also helped us build a pool of professionals and a link between the various people interested or engaged in the entrepreneurial ventures.



At the end of the training programme, we also announced Loden's plans to announce a competition for a number of capital funds, which are to be made available in order to support entrepreneurial projects. Following the initial response and feedback we received after the training programme, we are confident that there will be a significant number of proposals for the capital funds, which we hope to award starting in October 2008.

The only sad part of the LEP was the absence at the training programme of Gerard and Anne Tardy, whose generosity and inspiration are main driving forces behind the LEP. Despite our plans, they could not come for the training programme due to unforeseen circumstances. However, Gerard and Anne joined Karma Phuntsho and Dorjee Trashi two weeks later to go on an exquisite Loden trek for three days through forests of blooming rhododendrons in central Bhutan. In the midst of singing birds, under rhododendron shades, along temple corridors and around camp fires, we discussed the general affairs of Loden and the prospects and plans of LEP in particular. All four of us agreed that the LEP plans are on track and time, just as we were, and that LEP is bound to bloom as much as the forest of flowers in which we deliberated about it.



A full report of the Loden Entrepreneurship Training Programme will appear in our next newsletter.