



# The Loden Report

Loden's Official Newsletter

Dedicated to promoting education and learning in the Himalayas and to raising awareness of the region's culture, religion and environment.

Winter 2008

## Loden Zhitshog Bhutan

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Ashe Kunzang Choden  
Trustee/Director

Karma Phuntsho  
Trustee/Director

Dechen Chime  
Trustee

Dorjee Trashi  
Co-ordinator

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## Kuzu Zangpo La!

Greetings from the Loden family in Bhutan and the UK. We are pleased to bring you this report and update you about Loden's activities this year. The year 2008 has been an eventful one for both Bhutan and Loden. First, Bhutan was gripped with a mixture of anxiety and excitement as democracy was ushered in to replace the monarchical system, and then it was exuberant with an unprecedented festive spirit for the coronation of the fifth King and the celebration of a hundred years of monarchy.

In spite of, or rather in addition to, this flurry of events, Loden has thrived and managed to launch several of its initiatives in Bhutan. On April 22, Loden opened its first early learning centre in Ura amid much applause from the local villagers. Over forty children aged 4 to 6 with their parents flocked to the new centre on the first day while

monks chanted prayers to consecrate the place as a site of learning.

In the same month, the Loden Entrepreneurship Programme was launched with a two day intensive training on entrepreneurship for fifty young persons. The training was followed by the competition for funding to start entrepreneurial ventures, for which we received an alarming 59 business proposals for the 6 soft loans we projected this year. After an intensive assessment and interviews, 6 soft loans and one grant were awarded to a diverse range of projects in October.

Loden has so far been run through voluntary service without any overhead or personnel costs. However, as we expanded, it became difficult to run our programmes without staff. In January, Loden appointed Dorjee Trashi as the full time co-ordinator. With

training in Bhutanese language and culture studies and experience in media, Dorjee has quickly adjusted to his new role and responsibilities.

On December 1, Loden also moved into a new office in the heart of Thimphu. It is our plan now to provide in the new office a walk-in Knowledge Base, which will provide information both in print and online on higher education and entrepreneurship. We believe this will be of immense benefit to the population of educated youth churned out of schools each year.

Without your support, none of these programmes can be achieved. Your generosity and continued support makes a lot of difference to many young lives.

*Namey samey kadrinche! (Thank you beyond heaven and earth!)*

*With season's greetings,*

*Karma, Cambridge*

## Loden's New Office in Thimphu: A Knowledge Base

On 1 Dec, 2008, Loden started operating from a new office in the centre of Thimphu. Until then, Loden was hosted free of cost in Karma's house in Thimphu. However, with the expansion of its activities and increased interaction with the public, it became necessary for Loden to find an independent and convenient office.

It is our plan to accommodate in the office space also a Knowledge Base, which will provide access to information concerning higher education

and entrepreneurship. The Knowledge Base will include a small library of books relevant to higher education and entrepreneurship and a few computers with internet connections. We have started building this with a small collection of books including a few university prospectuses and copies of IELTS textbook and CDs for those preparing English language exams.

Each year, an increasing number of students graduate from schools but there are not

enough places for higher education within Bhutan and information on higher education elsewhere and scholarships are hard to find. There is also much need for support and guidance for those who want to start private businesses. It is our plan to give these young people free access to information.

We welcome contributions of funds, books, CDs and computers toward the Loden Knowledge Base.

**Loden Zhitshog, P.O. Box No. 131, Thimphu, Bhutan**  
The Loden Foundation, Flat No. 9, Pied Bull Court, Galen Place,  
London WC1A 2JR (Registered Charity No. 1114763)  
www.loden.org

## Loden Entrepreneurship Programme

*"The Loden Entrepreneurship Training Programme was very helpful. I hope Loden will conduct more such courses in the future."*

*Sonam*

*"I want to go to school but the teachers would not let me in that school. So, I am happy here."*

*Rinchen Chogyal, 4.*

The Loden Entrepreneurship Programme (LEP), an entrepreneurial education project conceived and financially supported by Anne and Gerard Tardy, two of Loden's longest standing benefactors, has successfully started this year. The programme aims to help young people realise their dreams by providing them with business training, moral and technical support, and initial funds to begin new business enterprises. By helping them cultivate entrepreneurial skills, the programme hopes to alleviate the rising unemployment problem in Bhutan.

With these objectives, the LEP was launched in April with two days of intensive training on the conception of business ideas and structure, market and financial analysis, operations and management, drafting business plans and entrepreneurial ethics and skills. Following the training, Loden announced the competition for capital funds and by September received an overwhelming number of 59 business proposals. 19 projects were short-listed and interviewed by the LEP Jury, which was composed of international and local Bhutanese experts who gave voluntarily donated their services to LEP.



Subsequently, six soft loans and one grant were awarded to the successful candidates. Among the recipients are four women and three men with a wide variety of projects:

Bimla Rai	Financial services
Deki Wangmo	Tyre Resoling
Namgay	Paint House
Pem	Agricultural Store
Tandin Dorji	Music Industry
Yenten Jamtsho	E-Tendering
Sonam Jamtsho	Incense Factory

These ventures have now started and an international and a local mentor have each been appointed to monitor and guide the entrepreneurs as their businesses develop. Most will generate returns in six months and start paying back the loan so that we can use the funds for new projects in the future.

The LEP has so far progressed smoothly and received a wonderful response. Following the success of the first year, it is our plan to hold a couple more training sessions and make available even more funds in the New Year. Much of this depends on finding additional funding to what the Tardys have already pledged. If you are interested in supporting LEP either financially or as a mentor, please contact us and find updates on LEP at

[www.loden.org](http://www.loden.org).

## A Bustling Year at Loden Early Learning Centre - Karma

The hall was buzzing with activity when I arrived. Monks sat wrapped in maroon robes saying prayers to bless the venue as a centre of learning. Children ran around with toys while their parents served the tea, alcohol and all kinds of food they brought for the inauguration.

Almost the entire village had come to open the new Loden early learning centre in Ura on 22 April. "With this centre, our children will get an early start in education and their future will be even brighter," the village head told the gathering. "Ura is fortunate to get free early training for its children," added the principal of the secondary school whose idea it was to start the centre.

The first day some forty children aged 3 to 6 turned up for registration but the number fell to 32 regular attendees after a few weeks when the very young ones found it difficult to do the half hour toddling to the centre. However, ever since the opening the Loden centre has been bustling



with childish commotion supervised by Tshoki, Sonam and Pema, our three teacher/carers. "The children enjoy coming to the 'school' and learning games, letters, numbers and nursery rhymes," they claim. The parents of the children also expressed much happiness in having the centre.

Later in November just before they closed for winter break, I visited the centre again with a group of Australian tourists. "They come from the bottom of the world where

they have a lot of sheep", I told the children. "We know the sheep song," they replied and burst into an incongruous chorus of 'bah bah black sheep'.

At a cost of only approximately £200 a month, the first centre, I am confident to claim, has proved a huge success giving rural children the opportunity for an early start in education. It is our plan now to start a second one in Samtse within a year and our hope to expand the programme across Bhutan.



## Notes From Afar...

Dear Friends of Loden,

Winter is finally here in Bhutan. The typical winter days in Thimphu are sunny with blue skies and the nights are cold and frosty. We are grateful that the usual weather patterns continue despite all kinds of changes that have taken place in our country and our lives. We are especially happy because some Bhutanese believe that all the flu related health problems that have plagued many of us recently will only be swept away by the cold and frosty wintry conditions.

Over the recent months Bhutan received considerable international media attention. But what friends of Loden might like to hear about is that Loden was well represented during one of the highlights of the coronation; the famous walk of the newly crowned king as he entered the capital city, meeting and talking with the well wishers who lined the road to offer him felicitations. The Bhutan Loden members together with the long standing and enthusiastic Loden benefactors, Anne and Gerard Tardy and their friend Jacques Gaillard, were among the people to welcome the king. Coincidentally Loden had just concluded the interviews of the LEP candidates on that day!

As Bhutan celebrates such historical and political changes we hope that the benefits of social changes generated by the will of the people will be shared by all Bhutanese. Through those whose lives are touched by Loden's intervention, Loden's contribution to Bhutanese society will continue to be significant and meaningful. So we must endeavor to keep up the momentum that Loden's initiatives and activities have gathered in Bhutan.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and a New Year filled with peace, good health, happiness and compassion.

Kunzang Choden  
Thimphu, 17 December, 2008



## Child Sponsorship Opportunities

Loden was one of the first organizations to support children at school in Bhutan by providing costs for uniforms, stationeries, sports gear, etc. Although school education in Bhutan is state financed, such extra costs can be often too heavy a burden for rural families whose livelihoods are based on subsistence farming. Since Loden's initiative in 2000, many other organizations including Save the Children, Tarayana Foundation and the King's office have

actively started child sponsorship programmes. Thus, Loden is now only helping find a sponsor or a child and channel funds when people approach us.

Our work in this regard is two-fold — first is to find either a sponsor or a child as requested and secondly to channel and administer the funds efficiently. Given differing levels of need amongst students, we have, under the advice of school masters, set the amount of annual support at Nu.6000 for primary students and Nu.8000 for

secondary school students.

Loden offers some sponsorship from our general funds but most of our students are funded by individual sponsors. We encourage the sponsors and children to build a personal bond, under our supervision, and to write to each other to understand the direct impact of the support.

*Please let us know if you would like to sponsor a child in the Himalayas!*

## Some of the Students Supported by Loden...



**Tsering Dorji**  
**Jaibab Community School**

Tsering's father is 72 and has been ill for years. Neither he, nor his siblings, who are 11 and 8 years old, have been able to go to school until a community school was opened in their village. Loden supports Tsering's education today and he is in Class I.



**Sonam Choden**  
**Mongar LS School**

Sonam (9 yrs) is the eldest of the three children of an illiterate single mother. She lives with her mother, two siblings and grandma in a hut. She studies in Class II and Loden supports her education.



**Thinley Wangdi**  
**Ura MS School**

Thinley is the son of a single mother who originally came from southern Bhutan. His mother settled in Ura and today works as a cleaner to support her family. Thinley studies in Ura Middle Secondary School through support from Loden.



**Tsering Lhadon**  
**Chumey MS School**

Tsering is the only daughter in her family and thus under constant pressure to leave school to help her illiterate mother on the farm. Colin and Charlotte Franklin helped her financially to continue school education. She will soon finish school.

## In Need of Support...



### Pema Deki Mongar

7 years old Pema is the only daughter of an alcoholic single mother. Her parents separated when she was barely one. She and her mother today are supported by her 60 year old aunt who is a nun. We are looking for someone who will support Pema's education by providing funds to buy uniforms, stationeries, bedding, etc. The total cost for Pema in a year is approximately £100.

## Meet New Faces



Hans and Dorjee

### Dorjee Trashi Loden Coordinator Bhutan

Dorjee Trashi is from the village of Shingnyer, Bumthang. Born in 1982, he attended school in Bumthang before joining the Institute of Language and Culture Studies in Thimphu. After receiving a Bachelor's degree from there, Dorjee worked in Department of Information Technology and Bhutan Broadcasting Service. Dorjee joined Loden at the beginning of 2008 and is currently the full time coordinator.

### Hans J Keller LEP Board Member

Hans is a retired Swiss hotelier living in Bhutan. With a great wealth of experience in business, he runs the Hotel Middle Management Programme and volunteers for LEP.

## Join Loden's Fundraising Drive!

Wouldn't you fancy having your name blessed? Donate £10 or \$20 and we will have your name written on a prayer flag on a holy mountain in Bhutan or Tibet. You will gain merit, happiness and prosperity in this life, a good rebirth next life and ultimately enlightenment. Is a prayer flag a little transient? Would you prefer something more tangible and everlasting? Donate £50 and have your name carved in stone alongside prayers on a stupa or mani wall. *(More details at [www.loden.org](http://www.loden.org))*

### LODEN'S GENERAL SCHEME

**Children in the Himalayas face difficulties in obtaining education in the three phases of pre-school, school and post-school periods.**

**At the pre-school stage, some children even as old as 7 years do not go to school because there are not enough places in the local school or schools are too far away.**

**After entering school, a lot of children drop out because their families cannot pay the**

**small fees or buy uniforms and stationeries.**

**When they finish school, thousands of children are left with no prospect of higher education or worthwhile employment.**

**Loden aims to support the education of children in these three phases through its three main programmes:**

- **Early learning centres for pre-school stage. We give rural children free access to early education.**

- **The sponsorship scheme for the school period. We help poor students continue their studies by providing support to ease financial burdens.**

- **The Loden Entrepreneurship Programme, vocational training programmes and Loden Knowledge Base for post-school period. These help educated youth to pursue further studies or find a suitable career.**

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### Sonam Wangdi: A Success Story

Two years ago, Sonam was half way through his college education when his father's potato harvest failed badly and he was faced with discontinuing his education. Loden intervened and Sonam successfully completed his Bachelor's degree in Visual Communication. Today, Sonam is employed as a graphic designer and volunteers for Loden.

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## Donation Form

I would like to contribute toward:

- Child Sponsorship
- Loden Entrepreneurship Programme
- Vocational training programmes
- Loden Early Learning Centres
- Any Loden project

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Method of Payment

- Check
- Bill Me
- Cash

Total: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature



**Please make a special gift this holiday season.**

**Every size of gift helps.**

**Loden Zhitshog, P.O. Box No. 131, Thimphu, Bhutan**  
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