

A woman in a blue jacket is hugging a Buddhist monk in a red robe. The monk has a shaved head and is smiling. In the background, other people are visible, including a woman taking a photo with a camera. The scene is set against a yellow and green backdrop.

Opening
your heart to
Bhutan 

Strategic Plan 2016-2021

Summary



Opening your heart to Bhutan (OYHTB) is a UK-based charity that is dedicated to helping Bhutanese children and young people, particularly those living in rural areas with disabilities and special needs, to achieve their full potential and enjoy a meaningful life.

Bhutan is a mountainous landlocked country in South Asia with topological extremes and a small, isolated and dispersed population. Communities living in rural locations find it extremely challenging to traverse locally and regionally, let alone nationally. These communities therefore experience many disadvantages due to the isolation that the country's topology imposes upon them.

Our began work as a volunteer initiative in February 2015. Through becoming more and more aware of the challenges facing children with disabilities in rural Bhutan, we decided in February 2016 to become a fully registered UK charity in order to secure funding for materials, equipment, vehicles and facilities that will improve the health, welfare and future prospects of this disadvantaged group.

We currently deliver our services in partnership with the Bhutanese charity, Drak-tsho. Drak-tsho provides formal and informal education in life skills, social skills and vocational training to children with various disabilities and special needs with a view to their eventual integration into the mainstream population. It delivers this social service from two dedicated schools – a mixed boarding school in the east of the country, in Kanglung, for students aged 13 – 30 with disabilities and moderate learning difficulties and a mixed day school in the country's capital, Thimpu in the west where disadvantaged pupils engage in the traditional eastern curriculum subjects of weaving, tailoring, painting and life skills.

Our objectives over the next 5 years are to secure funding to undertake structural work desperately needed at Kanglung including the building of a hostel for the boarding girls and to provide new vehicles for both schools in order that staff can collect and drop off the day students from their rural homes. We want to enable those in need of medical assistance to access it without undue delay and we also want to improve teaching and study facilities so that the students receive appropriate and high quality education.

On 14th April 2016 we were honoured to meet Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge when they spoke to students from Drak-tsho's school in Thimpu. This meeting buoyed our determination to improve circumstances, and the future prospects, of disadvantaged CYP in Bhutan and we are

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Full information on our charity, past projects and future goals including video clips can be found on our website www.openingyourhearttobhutan.com. I hope this strategy document raises greater awareness of the needs of CYP in rural areas living with disabilities and special needs, and that you too can 'open your heart to Bhutan'



Peter Williams, Chairman

Right:

HRH The Duke of Cambridge visiting children at Drat-sko



Opening Your Heart to Bhutan aims to transform the lives of Bhutan's children and young people (aged 13 to 30) with disabilities or special needs living in isolated rural areas.



Our Vision

The Need

In a developing country such as Bhutan much remains to be done to improve the quality of lives for children from rural areas and particularly for those with a physical or mental challenge or disability.

UNICEF has documented the prevalence of disability in Bhutan, demonstrating high levels among this sector of society in rural areas, amongst children of mothers with lower education and amongst the younger and poorer children. Poor infrastructure coupled with the country's difficult terrain has meant limited access to medical and educational facilities, creating real hardship in many cases. Bhutan's rural children trying to cope with disabilities live isolated lives behind closed doors and have little or no purpose or joy.

UNICEF has therefore identified the main challenges in Bhutan as:

- Lack of early detection/identification
- Lack of an established referral and follow-up mechanism after identification
- Lack of co-ordination amongst critical sectors (health, education and economic affairs)
- Low level of knowledge and awareness among parents regarding disabilities
- Inappropriate social 'norms' regarding disabilities (past karma) and
- Lack of recognition of those children with disabilities (i.e. children with disabilities are not productive and therefore not worthy of equal treatment in the family)

In addition, research undertaken by UNICEF in 2012 indicated the following perceptions towards disability in Bhutan:

Charity Model

People with disabilities are helpless and need to be cared for. It is easy for people to feel pity or look at disabilities from a charitable angle instead of an empowerment approach. People with disabilities enjoy the same rights as all other people.

Medical Model

Disability is seen as a medical problem that needs to be solved or an illness that needs to be 'cured'. This model implies that a person with disabilities is broken or sick and that they need to be fixed or healed.

Social Model

This model focuses on eliminating barriers created by society or the physical environment that limit a person from enjoying their human rights. This model encourages human rights based approach to disability and promotes empowerment.

OYHTB and Drak-tsho both strongly believe that everybody has the right to be independent and equal, the right to choose and the right to live their lives to fullest potential. Although attitudes towards people with disabilities within Bhutanese society are improving slowly there remains an immense lack of understanding about disability in all its forms.

In its Bhutan Two-Stage Disability Study 2012 UNICEF also identified the following statistics regarding children with disabilities in Bhutan:

- Overall Prevalence: 21% (significantly higher among poor children at 26% for the lowest wealth quintile compared to 14% for the highest quintile)
- Mild disability – 19%; Moderate – 2%; Severe – 0.7%
- Single impairment – 14%;
- Multiple – 8% disability is the most common – 15%(associated with mild impairment)
- Prevalence among younger children: 27% among 2 to 5 years; and 16% among 5 to 9 years
- No significant gender difference
- The data available is limited to children between 2 to 9 years old only
- No exact data on out-of-school children due to disabilities

Training in Drak-tsho's schools takes the form of life skills, social skills and vocational tasks (such as artistic carving, tailoring and embroidery) in order to help students secure employment in the future and enable their eventual integration into the mainstream population. The teachings also aim to build students' self-esteem and self-reliance, thereby making them more independent and confident.

The services provided at the two special schools are becoming increasingly popular in Bhutan and resources are therefore stretched to the limit. The current pupil population at Drak-tsho's two schools totals 135 but it has been stressed to us that there are many more children and young people throughout Bhutan in need of our assistance.

OYHTB has seen for itself the great need that exists to help such children, particularly after its village project in the rural community of Meretsemo, which was our main focus in 2015/16. It was through this work that we came to know children with disabilities, primarily those with hearing issues and cerebral palsy, and to see the difficulties they had in attending school and gaining medical assistance.

Right:

One of the students at Drat-sko's vocational training centre in Thimpu



Respectful and responsive

We respect cultural differences, listen to local communities and strive to meet their needs

Effective and meaningful

We aim to maximise the value of income generated for our target beneficiaries

Quality and excellence

We strive for excellence through continuous improvement in order to deliver a quality service

Open and honest

We operate transparently and with open communication in order to engender support and respect

Our Activities

OYHTB currently provides equipment, materials and makes capital improvements at two school sites owned and managed by our partner organisation Drak-tsho and at other rural and isolated community locations across Bhutan. Our current priorities include the provision of:

- Teaching aids
- Study equipment and materials
- Specialised equipment and resources
- School uniforms and sports kits
- Bedding for boarding students
- School transportation
- Sports equipment and facilities
- Cooking and eating facilities
- Access and security improvements to the educational facilities
- Construction of boarding facilities

Priorities are identified in the following way:



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The Global Partnership for Education states that

‘Education is one of the most effective ways to break the cycle of discrimination and poverty often suffered by children with disabilities and their families. According to the World Report on Disability approximately one billion people in the world are living with a disability, with at least 1 in 10 being children and 80% living in developing countries. Children with disabilities are one of the most marginalised and excluded groups of children and remain invisible to the mainstream population and many education officials.

It is essential that societies adapt their structures to ensure that all children, irrespective of age, gender and disability, can enjoy their basic human rights without discrimination of any kind. This applies to education systems, which need changes and new, innovative approaches to fit the specific needs of children with disabilities.’

Bhutan is making headway in the crucial role of education in breaking the cycle of poverty but it is clear that, particularly for children in harder to access rural areas and those with special needs, serious obstacles remain. Drak-tsho has been ground breaking in the help it has provided in Bhutan and is working hard to fulfil the vision expressed in the Global Partnership for Education.

Partnership working

There is both Bhutanese charitable activity and some international charitable activity in Bhutan; the latter is largely the work of UNICEF and UNICEF has, and continues to, donate to the daily running of the Drak-tsho schools.

The largest Bhutanese charity working providing similar activities is the Tarayana Foundation www.tarayanafoundation.org which works to support a range of vulnerable individuals in a range of areas; often through extensive programmes of financial support and establishment of new enterprises to increase economic opportunities open to them. In contrast the work of OYHTB is more focused around achievable projects in specific locations and sections of society. Where areas of interest overlap however we aim to work in partnership with this Tarayana.

The Bhutanese government provides education to children with visual impairments, mild learning disabilities and hearing impairments through special institutions and inclusive education projects in some schools. However, many children with disabilities, especially those with moderate and profound intellectual impairments are unable to access these services.

We aim to remain aware of the work of these government and NGO providers as part of our process of fully researching any potential project and ensuring we abide by any necessary guidelines whether it be in relation to education or building rules. Our partnership with Drak-tsho clearly demonstrates our progress in this regard.

Our project objectives will be continuously developed as a result of our knowledge of, and information gained from, these organisations but we will remain bespoke in our project delivery; seeking achievable, finite achievements of fixed assets that will support CYP in greatest need

Key achievements

OYHTB has successfully completed the following projects

- 3-day educational trip to the capital city by 50 primary school children who took part in a national literary event. Total cost £650
- Provision of a grass cutter for use in the grounds of Meretsemo primary school). Total cost £270
- Provision of uniforms, clothing and medical support for 30 children in need located in the village of Meretsemo, Southern Bhutan. Total cost £350
- Provision of a fully equipped playground, two toilets, septic tank, water tank and an outdoor wash facility in village of Meretsemo to serve both the school and the village. Total cost £5,500
- Renovated two roofs in community buildings in the village of Meretsemo, Southern Bhutan. Total cost £800
- Provided 80 mattresses, sheets, pillowcases to the Drak-tsho East boarding school. Total cost £1,750.
- Provided school uniforms and tracksuits to students of Drak-tsho East boarding school. Total cost £180,

These projects were successfully completed as a result of £17,000 having been raised by OYHTB including £3,000 from the Openwork Foundation and a donation of £700 from the Bhutan Society of the UK.

We have also employed a full-time Bhutanese Project Co-ordinator, Ugyen Tshering, to support our projects in-country.

2016/2017 Priorities

During the coming year we wish to develop meaningful and lasting partnership with UNICEF. We will do this by:

- Meeting with them at their Thimpu offices in August 2016
- Discussing key areas of synergy and difference
- Discussing possibilities of working together to assist Drak-tsho further

We will also be working to:

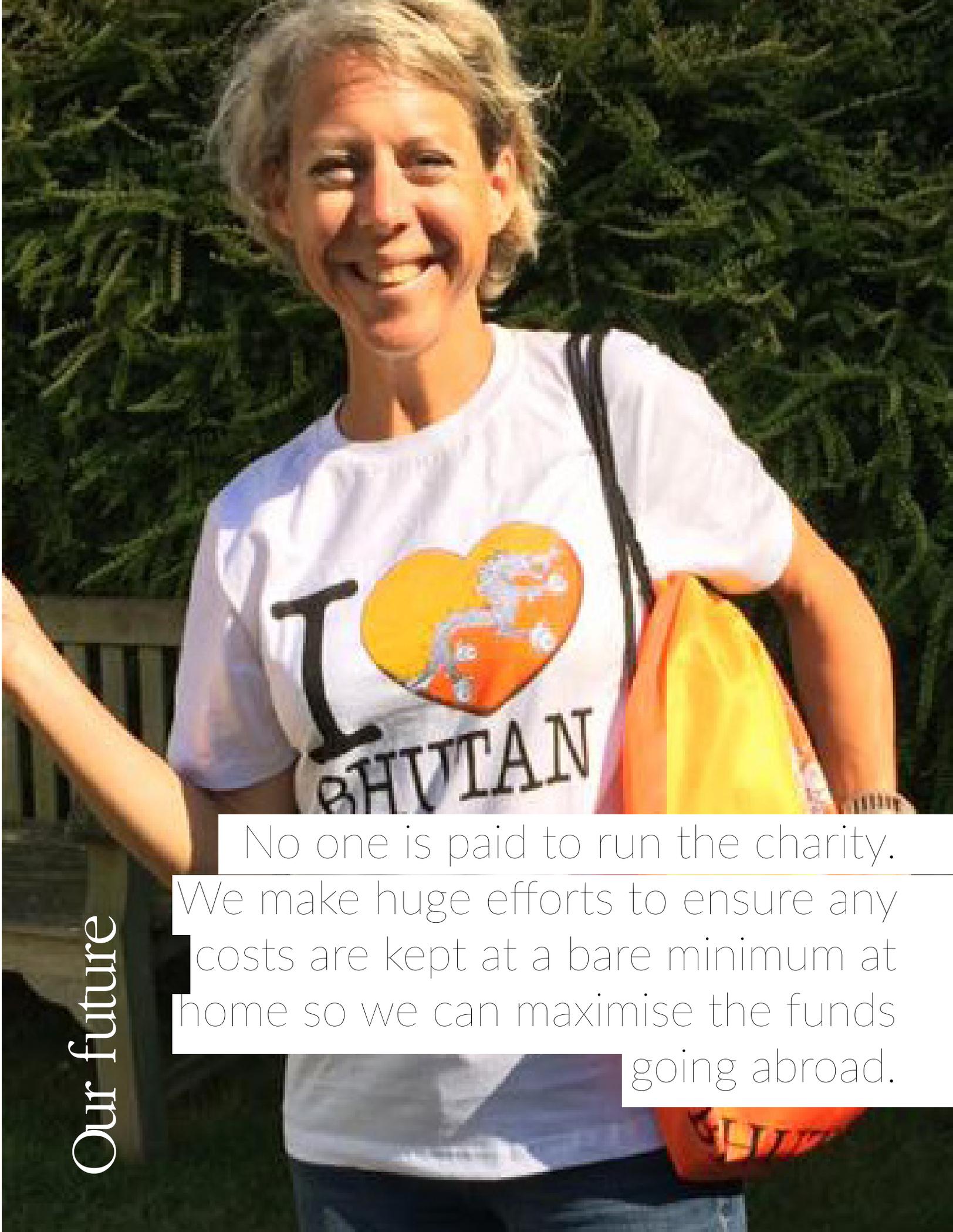
- Build a single gender boarding hostel at Drak-tsho's school in east Bhutan
- Purchase pupil transportation for Drak-tsho's schools in east and west Bhutan
- Purchase learning materials and equipment for both schools
- Increase our volunteers in the UK
- Raise our profile in the media, particularly through a publicity campaign in Spring 2017 to publicise the book Emma Slade has written to provide further charity funds
- Consider increasing the number of trustees with specific skills

Priorities over next five years

In partnership with Drak-Tsho, OYHTB has identified key priorities that will make a vital and significant difference to the lives of CYP with disabilities.

- **Drak-tsho East provides its services to children from a wide rural area.** Parents are unable to transport their children back and forth to school on a daily basis due to lack of transport, lack of roads and the distances involved. Currently the one hostel building the school has is housing both the girls and the boys, which means conditions are cramped and it is clearly not appropriate to have mixed gender dwellings, particularly as the age of 'young people' in Bhutan with special needs includes all those under 30 years. Our first priority is to build a single gender hostel for females in order to allow the remaining hostel to be occupied by only males.
- **An all-terrain vehicle is vital for Drak-tsho East.** Currently the school has no vehicle, which creates significant practical difficulties in terms of the running and gathering of daily supplies for the smooth working of the school and to meet the needs of its pupils. In particular, it limits the pupils access to medical help either in emergencies or for pre-planned appointments. Four pupils have significant cerebral palsy needs and are required to attend weekly physiotherapy appointments at Trashigang hospital, which is twenty minutes away by vehicle. Once the vehicle is in place the health of the students will improve and the risk of the school not being able to quickly or adequately respond to a sudden medical emergency will be overcome.
- **A new mini bus for Drak-tsho West in Thimpu is also needed because their current vehicle is old and in ill repair.** As this is the day school a larger mini-bus is required as it is necessary to do daily pick-ups and drop offs for all of the children attending. It remains rare in Bhutan for a family to have a car and short journey bus rides are difficult to come by or not possible for these children given their disabilities. All 65 children will use this mini-bus for their daily access to the school and all it offers. In addition, the vehicle will be used to take pupils back and forth to Thimpu hospital and to collect supplies for the smooth running of the school and all its pupils.
- **Equipment and materials are needed at both schools** to ensure all children have consistent and high quality access to all they need in gaining the vocational skills offered by the school and to support its day to day running requirements.
- **The schools and other community buildings that provide services for CYP with disabilities and special needs require upgrading** in order to meet this community's needs. Wheelchair access, appropriate internal facilities, security measures, drainage and protection from the weather are all issues that require addressing. OYHTB intends to contribute towards improvements where need is greatest.

Longer-term goals include the construction of a refectory, improved access and suitable sports facilities at the Drak-tsho East boarding school



Our future

No one is paid to run the charity. We make huge efforts to ensure any costs are kept at a bare minimum at home so we can maximise the funds going abroad.

Fundraising

Our fundraising strategy for the next 5 years is to:

- encourage individual giving using appropriate social media/websites
- fundraise by organising public events
- secure sponsorship from the private sector in accordance with their corporate social responsibility policies
- secure grants from appropriate funding bodies such as trust and foundations
- work towards securing legacies and donations from individuals

As OYHTB works towards meeting its funding targets we will constantly monitor our progress in order to measure success, and to amend planning where necessary.

Performance Management

Our primary performance indicator will be the amount of money we raise for capital equipment, materials and to deliver capital improvement schemes that will benefit our target beneficiaries.

In addition to monitoring our income, and ensuring the majority of funds secured directly benefit disadvantaged CYP in Bhutan, we will also monitor the following key performance indicators:

- Inputs: trustee, staff and volunteer time invested in OYHTB's aim and objectives
- Outputs: numbers of establishments, teachers, CYP and their families whose circumstances and prospects are improved as a result of OYHTB's contribution
- Outcomes: feedback received from teachers, children and their families about the CYPs feelings and attitude towards their futures
- Impact: successful partnerships with other charitable organisations working in Bhutan and the influence OYHTB's work contributes towards projects delivered by other organisations.

We will use specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound targets to monitor and evaluate our indicators: Statistics and information will be collated on a monthly basis and will be reviewed quarterly. At the end of each project an internal evaluation and de-brief will take place in order to identify what worked and where there is room for improvement.

A traffic light system will be used to monitor success: green – on target, amber – close monitoring required and red – urgent action required.

OYHTB will operate in accordance with the Charities Commission's regulations and guidelines regarding appropriate policies and procedures. We will work towards best practice and will regularly review our policies and procedures to ensure they are appropriate for the work we undertake as we develop over time. For participatory activities that will be of interest to the public we will distribute media releases to local and regional outlets and will maximise all opportunities to advertise at little or no cost to OYHTB.

Our People



Peter Williams, Chairman / Trustee

Peter started his own business, Clean Air Technologies Ltd, in 1998 to Design, Build, Maintain and Test highly controlled manufacturing and research environments within the Pharmaceutical, Micro-electronic and virus research industries. The business now also has an office in southern France and a total workforce in excess of 50 strong. Whilst his core skills and training have been in Engineering, the development of the business has proven Peter to have a strategic and pragmatic approach to development, risk management, team building and quality delivery. Engaging at all levels of client and supplier organisations, Peter has been able to generate support throughout the supply chain, project management, setting clear objectives and milestones, and helped develop personnel to achieve the common purpose.



Adrienne Shaw, Treasurer / Trustee

Adrienne has accumulated a varied and extensive amount of experience and skills throughout her life. She started her career with 6 years in the catering trade working in Hong Kong, France and England.

Once the unsociable hours of being a London restaurant manager took their toll, she turned her hand to TV commercial production, where she spent a further 9 years as a commercials producer, working on many high end & award winning TV commercials with budgets up to £1m.

As children, long hours and international travel don't mix well, especially with a husband in the business too, after becoming a mother Adrienne left the world of film production and is currently a company secretary, property manager and domestic goddess, who is in the process of setting up a stock photography website & turns her hand to occasional event organising. All of this combined with her passions for life, travel, yoga, photography and painting means she leads a fulfilling and busy life, complimented by her dedication to Opening Your Heart To Bhutan.



Sue Hills, Secretary / Trustee

In her capacity as Company Secretary in a limited company, Sue held, and continues to hold responsibility for all the official company returns. This has included Inland Revenue returns on VAT, Income Tax and National Insurance for their staff, and provides all the necessary accounts information for their Accountant. She implemented and executed the entire accounts administrative system unassisted, which covered financial liaison with customers, suppliers and staff. She initiated the use of the software 'Quickbooks' and trained other members of staff in its use. She provided regular management accounts to the Board.

Sue has extensive experience of making sales calls to companies without prior introduction and is experienced in raising sponsorship for charity events from known and previously unknown contacts.

As an adult graduate, she is capable of bringing together diverse ideas in order to compile a comprehensive text. She speaks fluent French.

She has created job descriptions, advertised vacancies and carried out selection interviews for both staff and management. She implemented the official training policy in a rapidly-growing retailer to award level.

Sue runs a modest annual fundraising campaign for Cancer Research, raising over £40k since 2005. She makes appeals, manages donations, liaises with donors and shows immense and genuine gratitude.



Emma Slade / Pema Deki, Chief Executive

Since leaving the City, Emma has continued to pursue her personal goal of becoming a well-rounded human being by teaching yoga and meditation for a number of years and running a successful teaching business. Her interests in Buddhism eventually led her to Bhutan where she was ordained as a Buddhist nun.

Given her academic and business background and her in-depth knowledge of Bhutan she is the ideal Chief Executive for OYHTB. As an individual she remains highly focused and energetic and provides strong and effective leadership in both the UK and Bhutan.

Her total commitment to help Bhutanese children means that she is undertaking the role of Chief Executive on a voluntary basis and is closely monitored and evaluated by our chairman, Peter Williams.



Ugyen Tshering, Project Co-ordinator

Ugyen has joined OYHTB because he believes the charity offers him a unique chance to do help disadvantaged individuals within his country. His local knowledge and experience are crucial in ensuring the successful delivery of our projects on the ground. He also undertakes day-to-day project management, assessments and evaluations. He is fluent in Dzongka, Nepali and English.

Ugyen Tshering is a full-time salaried employee and is also paid expenses for travel and translation services as and when required.

Occasionally other individuals are employed on a freelance basis to assist with organisational issues such as grant applications or legal requirements.

More information about the charity and its work is available online at www.openingyourhearttobhutan.com. Alternatively email the charity at beingkindinbhutan@gmail.com