

BHUTAN MEDIA FOUNDATION



2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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Chairperson's Message



I am pleased to present the Bhutan Media Foundation (BMF) Annual Report for 2024. Over the past year, the Foundation continued to strengthen Bhutan's media landscape by promoting professionalism, responsible reporting, social media literacy, and meaningful dialogue.

In 2024, we focused on capacity building through specialized training across key sectors such as climate change, agriculture, sanitation, civil society, and child rights, equipping media professionals to report more accurately and insightfully on issues shaping Bhutan's future. To further encourage impactful journalism, we awarded reporting grants and celebrated excellence through the 8th Annual Journalism Awards, honouring 14 outstanding reporters.

BMF further strengthened the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Bhutan's governance and development by supporting training and workshops for both civil society officials and media professionals. These efforts fostered closer collaboration between the media and civil society, while building CSOs' capacity to engage effectively with the media and

deepening journalists' understanding of civil society work.

Recognizing the influence of digital platforms, we expanded our social media literacy programmes to include teachers, students, monks, and nuns, empowering them to engage meaningfully and responsibly online. Despite operational challenges, the Thimphu Press Club, a social enterprise of BMF, remained a hub for dialogue and knowledge-sharing among media professionals, diplomats, and civil society representatives.

We extend our sincere gratitude to our valued partners—government agencies, international organizations, CSOs, and media organizations—whose support has been integral to these achievements. Together, we remain committed to nurturing a strong and responsible media that sustains and enriches our democracy.

Tashi Delek!

Gelay Jamtsho
Chairperson
Bhutan Media Foundation

Board Directors



Gelay Jamtsho (Chairperson)
Director, Royal Office for Media



Ugyen Penjor (Board Director)
CEO, Kuensel



Tenzing Lamsang (Board Director)
Editor-In-Chief, The Bhutanese



Binod Pardhan (Board Director)
Chief, DoMCIIP, MoICE



Needrup Zangpo (Member Secretary)
Executive Director, BMF

Staff Secretariat



Needrup Zangpo
Executive Director



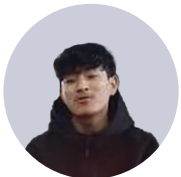
Dawa Tshering
Finance Officer



Bansika Rai
Programme & Communications Officer



Sonam Wangmo
Programme Officer (Admin)



Kinley Tshering
Thimphu Press Club



Kelzang Dawa
Thimphu Press Club



Tashi Deki
Thimphu Press Club



Phuntsho Choden
Thimphu Press Club



About Bhutan Media Foundation

Bhutan Media Foundation (BMF) was established through a Royal Charter issued by His Majesty the King on 21 February 2010 to foster the growth of a strong, responsible media capable of playing an important role in the social, economic and political growth of the nation. It is a public-benefit organization registered with the CSO Authority of Bhutan and is mandated to strengthen the media so that they may carry out their duties, without fear and favour, in the interest of democracy. BMF works to enhance professionalism, support policy advocacy, and promote media development through training, scholarships, media and information literacy, dialogues, and policy initiatives. It also supports the sustainability and growth of newspapers, broadcast stations, journalists' associations, and the press club.

Vision

Take effective action targeted at an informed society by fostering the growth of free, independent, responsive and credible media that play a constructive role in the social, economic, and political life of the nation, thereby leading to a vibrant democracy.

Mission

Sustain democracy by developing the Bhutanese media through transformational initiatives that promote quality journalism, advance media innovation, engage communities and foster freedom of expression, information, and press.



TASHICHHO DZONG
THIMPHU, BHUTAN

The rights to freedom of information, expression and of the media enshrined in the Constitution are fundamental to democracy. In our small nation, media can be even more effective in encouraging debate and participation, vital to building a vibrant democracy.

However, today, our media agencies are young and their exemplary commitment and desire to perform their duties are not matched by adequate resources. As it is my sacred duty to ensure the success of our young democracy, I have decided, through the exercise of my Royal Prerogative of Kidu, to strengthen media agencies so that they may carry out their duties, without fear or favour, in the interest of democracy.

It is my hope that the Bhutan Media Foundation established under this Charter, shall serve to foster the growth of a strong responsible media capable of playing an important role in the social, economic and political growth of the nation.

Granted on the 21st day of February, 2010 at Tashichho Dzong.

His Majesty The Druk Gyalpo



2024 Highlights



01

SPECIALISED REPORTING TRAINING

In 2024, BMF rolled out a series of specialised reporting training aimed at strengthening ethical journalism, amplifying marginalized voices, and supporting media development as a catalyst for social change and democratic resilience. Through focused training, reporting grants, and strategic collaborations, BMF equipped journalists to engage with critical issues such as climate change, food and agriculture, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), child rights, and HIV and key populations.

This section highlights BMF's key initiatives, demonstrating how capacity building, inclusive storytelling, and policy advocacy are shaping a more informed, engaged, and resilient media landscape in Bhutan.

1.1 Climate Change Reporting

BMF initiated a project titled 'Building the Capacity of the Media for Climate Change Reporting', supported by UNDP's GEF Small Grants Programme and implemented in partnership with the Royal Government of Bhutan. As part of this project, two activities were carried out: (1) Training on Climate Change Reporting; and (2) Climate Change Reporting Grants.

1.1.1 Training on Climate Change Reporting

A Training on Climate Change Reporting was organised from February 26 - 27, 2024 in Paro. 25 editors and reporters (11 male, 14 female) from seven media houses and freelance journalists attended the training, which was facilitated by two lecturers from the College of Natural Resources and a local news editor.

Its main objective was to build the capacity of media professionals to understand and report effectively on climate change, its impact on livelihoods, and its implications for sustainable development. The training led to Climate Change Reporting Grants.



1.1.2 Climate Change Reporting Grants

Following an enriching Climate Change Reporting Training, 6 media professionals received grants from the project, and the details are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Details of Climate Change Reporting Grantees

S/N	Name of the recipient	Media House	Topic
1	Upasana Dahal	Freelancer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Water Crises in Thimphu Dzongkhag
2	Nidup Lhamo	Business Bhutan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bumthang’s Battle: A tale of resilience against rice blastEmpowering farmers against adversity: the struggle for sustainable paddy cultivation in Bumthang
3	Sangay Rabten	Business Bhutan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Meat Consumption and Climate Change, the link DissectedEchoes of Change: Bhutan’s Culinary Landscape Amidst Climate Change
4	Ugyen Dorji	Kuensel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Finding niche in local watermelon yieldWhat Agri-business are sustainable in Bhutan
5	Yangyel Lhaden	Kuensel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Dilemma facing potato farmersCan Bhutan eradicate chemical fertilisers completely
6	Dechen Dolkar	Kuensel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Apple orchards in Haa: A harvesting conundrumFrom mandarin monoculture to crop diversification

1.2 Food and Agriculture Reporting

In partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, BMF implemented a Food and Agriculture Reporting Programme aimed at enhancing journalistic capacity to cover issues related to Bhutan's agricultural systems. It comprised a two-day training and follow-up reporting grants.

1.2.1 Training on Food and Agriculture Reporting

On March 25–26, 2024, a two-day training on Food and Agriculture Reporting was conducted, bringing together 20 journalists (10 male, 10 female) from six media houses. The training aimed to deepen participants' understanding of Bhutan's agricultural systems while enhancing their human-interest storytelling skills.

Key technical sessions of the training were led by:

- Mr. Ken Shimizu, FAO Representative for Bhutan and Nepal, who engaged with the media on the importance of agricultural journalism.
- Mr. Ngawang, Senior Agriculture Officer, who discussed major crops, livestock production, food security, and government initiatives supporting nutrition.
- Dr. Sangay Rinchen, Department of Livestock, who highlighted livestock challenges, zoonotic disease reporting, and the role of media in improving food and nutrition security
- Mr. Needrup Zangpo, Executive Director of BMF, trained participants on structuring and pitching human-interest stories.



1.2.2 Food and Agriculture Reporting Grants

Six journalists have been awarded grants based on their story pitches to cover in-depth reports on food and agriculture, following the training on food and agriculture reporting.

Table 2: Details of Food and Agriculture Reporting Grant Recipients

S/N	Name of the recipient	Media House	Topic
1	Yam Kumar Poudel	Kuensel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hope in sight for dwindling WOW farm• Potato farmers see declining production
2	Tshering Dema	The Bhutanese	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mongar sees drop in maize production• Maize: Lack of highbred seedlings and wildlife conflict hinders main source of livelihood in Mongar
3	Sumitra Pradhan	Bhutan Times	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Human-wildlife conflict threatens livelihoods in Yoesltse Gewog• Where are the hands to till the land
4	Rinzin Norbu	Bhutan Today	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Salamjee Harvest: Cultivation on the edge on peril at Dagana Dzongkhag
5	Monica Rai	The Bhutanese	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Farmers in Pemaling Gewog, Samtse struggle against persistent fruit drop• Addressing Citrus fruit drop issues in Pemaling Gewog: Solutions and plans
6	Chabilal Gurung	The Journalist	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Battling the Birds: A farmer’s Daily Struggle in Trashigang, Dagana• Guarding Fields Against Wild Sparrows: Seeking Sustainable Solutions



1.3 Reporting for Better Sanitation

To strengthen impactful journalism on water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) in Bhutan, BMF, in collaboration with the Bhutan Toilet Organization (BTO) and with financial support from FANSA Bhutan, initiated the WASH Reporting programme. This effort included a two-day training, followed by story grants.

1.3.1 Training on WASH Reporting

A WASH Reporting Training was conducted from March 29–30, 2024, bringing together 20 journalists, editors, and freelancers (10 male, 10 female). The training aimed to enhance participants’ technical understanding of WASH while equipping them with storytelling skills to produce engaging and impactful journalism on sanitation and hygiene.

Key sessions of the WASH reporting training included:

- Mr. Passang Tshering and Mr. Tshedrup Dorji from BTO presented the current state of sanitation and hygiene in Bhutan.
- Mr. Depinder Kapur, Director of Water Program at the Centre for Science and Environment, highlighted the media's role in awareness and policy influence.
- Mr. Narayan Bhat, an independent expert, spoke on CWIS implementation and the media's role in governance reform.
- Mr. Needrup Zangpo, BMF, conducted a session on human-interest storytelling and the WASH Reporting Grant.

1.3.2 WASH Reporting Grants

Five journalists have received grants to cover WASH stories following the training on WASH Reporting. Subsequently, a ‘WASH Story of the Year’ has been instituted during the upcoming Annual Journalism Awards.

Table 3: Details of WASH Reporting Recipients

S/N	Name of the recipient	Media House	Topic
1	Rinzin Wangchuk	Kuensel	• Battlefield of filth: WASH challenges at gatherings
2	Dorji Choden	The Bhutanese	• Nuns manage sanitation and ‘that time of the month’ in the face of water and paid shortages and yet uphold the Dharma
3	Tashi Phuntsho	Kuensel	• Public Toilet Challenges and way forward
4	Thinley Namgay	Kuensel	• Is Johkasou tank the future of sewage treatment
5	Sherab Lhamo	Kuensel	• Thromde’s Sewage workers expose city resident’s habit

1.4 Enhancing Media’s Reporting on Children

In partnership with Save the Children Bhutan and funded by the Canadian Fund for Local Initiative (CFLI), BMF has initiated the Enhancing Media’s Reporting on Children project to strengthen child-sensitive reporting in Bhutan. The initiative comprises three key components: (1) Workshop on Child-Sensitive Reporting, (2) Publication Fee Awards, and (3) Redefining the Narrative Workshop.



1.4.1 Workshop on Child-Sensitive Reporting

A Workshop on Child-Sensitive Reporting was held in Paro on September 3, 2024, bringing together 25 media professionals (14 male, 11 female). The workshop covered key topics including child participation, child protection services, the Prescription to Play programme, and long-term considerations in reporting on children.

It was facilitated by officials from Save the Children, The PEMA Secretariat, and representatives from media houses. Following the workshop, seven participants received support to produce in-depth stories focusing on children and related issues.



1.4.2 Training on Children Reporting

The training on children reporting was conducted in Paro on September 4, 2024 for Bhutanese journalists, including reporters, editors, and producers. The training covered critical areas such as safeguarding children in media coverage, the use of child-friendly language and tone, ethical considerations, and the application of long-form narrative journalism in reporting on children’s issues.

The session was attended by 25 media professionals (14 male and 11 female) and was facilitated by officials from the Women and Children Division, MoESD, along with senior media professionals.

1.4.3 Children Reporting Publication Fees

On September 30, 2024, the Children Reporting Publication Fees were awarded to the recipients. The recipients had a consultation session with media experts to guide them along their story pitches who would cover stories related to children in Bhutan.

Table 4: Details of Publication Fee Recipients

S/N	Name of the recipient	Media House	Topic
1	Yangyel Lhaden	Kuensel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bridging the gap in child welfare and protection
2	Rinzin Norbu	Bhutan Today	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Quest for Learning
3	Nidup Lhamo	Business Bhutan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Unclear Regulations on Expunging Criminal Records of CICL
4	Rinchen Dorji	Freelance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Rain Rain Go Away
5	Dema Yeshe	Freelance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">High Cyberbullying incidence among studentsSchools in Punakha see a decline in malnutrition
6	Lhakpa Duba	Kuensel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Early marriage and teenage pregnancies: Harsh reality for rural girls
7	Nedup Dorji	Bhutan Today	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lighting the way how the Save the Children is creating pathways at risk youth in Zhemgang CS



1.4.4 Redefining the Narrative: A Children Reporting Workshop

A follow-up workshop titled Redefining the Narrative: A Children Reporting Workshop was conducted on December 9, 2024 in Paro. Building on the initial Children Reporting Workshop, this session brought together recipients of BMF's Children Reporting publication fee and experts in child rights and media.

To ensure these narratives have a deeper impact, the workshop focused on refining and reimagining the storytelling process. The workshop provided a platform for the journalists to present their stories, reflect on challenges, share best practices, and receive expert feedback from MoESD, The PEMA Secretariat, and RENEW. By bridging journalistic practice with expert insight, the aim is to ensure that the voices and experiences of Bhutanese children are more meaningfully represented in the media.

1.5 Media Sensitisation Workshop on HIV and Key Populations

On November 18, 2024, BMF collaborated with Lhak-Sam and Save the Children to organize a media sensitization workshop on HIV and key populations. The workshop focused on enhancing media capacity to report sensitively and accurately on HIV and key population issues.

This workshop brought together journalists from across Bhutan to discuss critical issues like SOGIESC, challenges faced by Key Populations, advancements in HIV prevention, and findings from Optima Modeling for HIV services. It underscored the importance of empowering the media to create inclusive narratives, challenge stigmas, and foster positive change in society.



02

CSOS: GOVERNANCE & DEVELOPMENT

A Cooperation Contract was signed between HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation Bhutan Country Office and BMF to jointly implement the project “CSOs as Actors in Governance and Development” (CSOsAct4Dev), funded by the European Union. Running from January 1, 2024 to June 30, 2026, the project aims to strengthen the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Bhutan’s governance and development by supporting training programmes and workshops for both media professionals and CSOs. It also includes publication support fees for media professionals to produce stories highlighting the contributions of CSOs and CBOs in Bhutan.

2.1 Media Engagement Training for CSOs and CBOs

From March 22–23, 2024, a Media Engagement Training was held in Paro for CSOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) in Paro. The training brought together 26 passionate participants (13 male, 13 female) from across Bhutan. The programme aimed to strengthen the relationship between civil society and the media by enhancing participants’ understanding of media dynamics. It fostered insightful discussions, meaningful connections, and a shared commitment to positive social change.





2.2 Sensitization Workshop on CSOs and CBOs for the Media

A Sensitization Workshop on CSOs and CBOs for reporters and editors was held on June 17–18, 2024, with the primary objective of bridging the gap between media and civil society. 25 journalists (13 male, 12 female) from both print and broadcast media participated in the work-shop, which aimed to deepen their understanding of CSOs and CBOs.

The workshop encouraged stronger collaboration between the media and civil society. A key session was led by the CSO Authority, providing an overview of the institutional and legal framework governing CSOs in Bhutan.

2.2.1 CSOs and CBOs Story Publication Support Grants

Following the sensitization workshop on CSOs and CBOs, four jour-nalists received grants and publication support to produce stories on the contributions of CSOs and CBOs in Bhutan. It aimed to encourage sustained reporting and raise public awareness of their vital role in governance and development.

Table 5: Details of CSOs and CBOs Story Publication Grantees

S/N	Name of the recipient	Media House	Topic
1	Rinzin Wangchuk	Freelance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changing role of CSOs and how far CSOs have come since 2010 as the ‘third space’
2	Nidup Lhamo	Business Bhutan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women Waste Recyclers of Bhutan, a CBO in Bumthang
3	Damchoe Pem	Freelance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significance of the endowment fund and its impact on CSOs across the country
4	Sangay Rabten	Business Bhutan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenge of access to credit faced by CBOs



03 8TH ANNUAL JOURNALISM AWARDS

BMF, in partnership with UN Bhutan, hosted the 8th Annual Journalism Awards on May 3, 2024, in Thimphu, celebrating the outstanding contributions of journalists from across the country. The event was graced by Hon'ble Prime Minister Dasho Tshering Tobgay and attended by media professionals, government officials, international partners, and representatives from civil society organizations.

Held annually, the awards recognize the dedication and impact of Bhutanese journalists in fostering informed public discourse. This year's ceremony honored excellence in 14 categories, underscoring the essential role of quality journalism in Bhutanese society. The event reflects BMF and UN Bhutan's shared commitment to strengthening the media landscape and promoting journalistic excellence through recognition and encouragement.

During the event, the 'Include Ability' initiative was also launched. It aims to promote greater inclusivity by amplifying the voices of people with disabilities through media storytelling and advocacy.





Table 6: Details of 8th Annual Journalism Awardees

S/N	Category of Awards	Name of the Winner	Firm
1	The Radio Story of the Year	Thinley Penjor	Radio Valley
2	The Radio Podcast of the Year (scripted series)	Kesang Wangmo	BBS
3	The TV Feature of the Year	Kinley Wangchuk	BBS
4	The TV News Story of the Year	Karma Wangdi	BBS
5	The Current Affairs Programme of the Year	Phuntsho Namgyal	BBS
6	The Business Story of the Year	Tenzing Lamsang	The Bhutanese
7	The Political Story of the Year	Rinzin Wangchuk	Kuensel
8	The Sports Story of the Year	Ugyen Tenzin	Business Bhutan
9	The Climate Change Story of the Year	Ugyen Dorji	Kuensel
10	The Investigative Story of the Year	Tenzin Lamsang	The Bhutanese
11	The Feature of the Year	Tashi Phuntsho	Kuensel
12	Most Promising Young Journalist of the Year	Tshering Dema	The Bhutanese
13	The Female Journalist of the Year	Chencho Dema	Kuensel
14	The Food and Agriculture Story of the Year	Sangay Rabten	Business Bhutan

04 MEDIA DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP



BMF has partnered with the Department of Media, Creative Industry & Intellectual Property (DoMCIIP) under the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Employment (MoICE) through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on August 23, 2024. This collaboration aims to actively contribute to the growth and development of the media landscape in Bhutan.

This initiative was a part of BMF’s broader commitment to capacity building for Bhutanese media personnel. Under the Media Development Partnership, initiatives included training programmes ranging from basic to advanced levels, including newsroom management, and other specialised areas and support for Thimphu Press Club.

4.1 Intermediate Journalism Training

Under the Media Development Partnership, an Intermediate Journalism Training was conducted on December 2 and 3, 2024, targeting mid-career journalists to strengthen journalistic standards. 21 journalists (8 male, 13 female) from both print and broadcast media, and freelancers attended the two-day training facilitated by OxMedia.

This training focused on enhancing the skills of mid-career journalists through sessions on narrative journalism, data journalism, media ethics, and interviewing techniques, complemented by practical exercises. Officials from DoMCIIP also attended the training, contributing valuable insights to the discussions.



05 SOCIAL MEDIA LITERACY

In collaboration with Friedrich Naumann Foundation, BMF conducted Social Media Literacy Training at three levels: 1) Basic for illiterate and semi-literate people in rural communities; 2) Intermediate for high school and college students, and 3) Advanced for working professionals. It aimed to enhance digital literacy, promote responsible online engagement, and equip participants with essential skills to navigate social media effectively. In 2024, the initiative reached 130 students, 43 teachers, 123 nuns, and 87 monks.

5.1 Intermediate Social Media Literacy Training at Tangmachu Central School

On May 18, 2024, an Intermediate Social Media Literacy Training was organized at Tangmachu Central School in Lhuentse. The session aimed to equip students and teachers with critical media literacy skills to navigate and engage responsibly with social media platforms.

130 students and 43 teachers participated in the training, which was delivered by the Executive Director of BMF. The training covered the size, reach, and power of social media, ethical use of social media, and the Social Media Policy for the Royal Government of Bhutan.



5.2 Basic Social Media Literacy Training for Nuns at Druptob Thangtong Dewachen Nunnery

A Basic Social Media Literacy Training was conducted at Druptob Thangtong Dewachen Nunnery in Zilukha, Thimphu on September 27, 2024. The training aimed to foster ethical media engagement and build the capacity of nuns as advocates of responsible media use. A total of 45 nuns participated in the session, which was delivered by Mr. Dorji Wangdi, a BMF's certified trainer on basic social media literacy.

5.3 Social Media Literacy Training for Monks and Nuns in Wangdue and Thimphu

A Basic Social Media Literacy Training was conducted at Kathok Yoesel Samtenling Monastery in Baylangdra, Wangdue, and Shechen Ogyen Chodzhong Ngagyur Nyingma Buddhist Nunnery in Wangsisina, Thimphu on December 16, 2024. The sessions were held separately for monks and nuns, with a focus on responsible use of social media, reinforcing media ethics, and strengthening digital engagement skills. Over 100 monks and nuns attended the training.



06 MEDIA DIALOGUES AND CONFERENCES

In 2024, BMF hosted a series of high-level dialogues, panel discussions, and regional conferences to explore emerging challenges and opportunities in the media landscape. These platforms brought together journalists, policymakers, international experts, and civil society representatives to discuss critical issues shaping Bhutan's media ecosystem and fostering a more informed, engaged, and resilient society.

6.1 Panel Discussion on Gender Balance in Newsroom

In collaboration with the High Commission of Canada in India, BMF hosted a thought-provoking panel discussion on improving gender balance in newsrooms. Held on March 15, 2024, the event brought together senior journalists and media professionals from Bhutan, India, and representatives from the Canadian Embassy, who shared their experiences, insights, and strategies to foster gender equity in the media sector.

The discussion highlighted the importance of inclusive newsroom cultures, equitable leadership opportunities, and gender-sensitive reporting. Panelists emphasized the need for structural changes, mentoring opportunities for women journalists, and policy interventions to support gender diversity.



6.2 Open Dialogue on Tourism in Bhutan

On June 5, 2024, with the support of Kuensel, an open dialogue on tourism with renowned blogger and tourism expert Mr. Yeshey Dorji was held at Thimphu Press Club. In an engaging and thought-provoking session, Mr. Yeshey Dorji unpacked the current dynamics of Bhutan's tourism sector, offering valuable insights into its complexities and future prospects.

The event fostered an open and inclusive environment, with journalists from various media houses actively participating and contributing their perspectives. The dialogue served as a platform for meaningful exchange and reflection on the evolving landscape of tourism in the country.

6.3 Dialogue with the Canadian Ambassador to Bhutan

BMF hosted an interactive dialogue with H.E. Cameron MacKay, Ambassador of Canada to Bhutan on June 25, 2024, highlighting the strong and evolving Bhutan-Canada relationship. Journalists from different media houses actively participated in discussions on shared democratic values, international cooperation, and the vital role of media in promoting cross-cultural understanding.



6.4 Conference on Emerging Trends in Media in South Asia and Europe

BMF, in collaboration with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF) and the Deutsche Bhutan Himalaya Gesellschaft e.V., hosted a South Asia Regional Conference on Emerging Trends in Media at the Thimphu Press Club on 17 September 2024. The programme was graced by Hon'ble Lyonpo Namgyal Dorji, Minister of Industry, Commerce, and Employment (MoICE), and attended by foreign delegates and members of the Thimphu Press Club. The conference featured two panel discussions led by distinguished panelists from South Asia and Europe, exploring critical issues shaping the media landscape today.



6.4.1 Panel Discussion on Navigating Freedom of Speech: Perspectives from South Asia and Europe

The first panel discussion delved into the complexities of freedom of speech—a cornerstone of democracy, particularly in new democracies like Bhutan. It fostered a deeper understanding of how different countries navigate the intricate landscape of free speech and its implications for society.

The discussion was moderated by Ms. Amrita Cheema, a seasoned media consultant with a distinguished career at Deutsche Welle (DW), Germany's international broadcaster. The panel featured the following distinguished speakers:

- Mr. Sujeet Kumar, Member of Parliament, India, a lawyer and trained arbitrator
- Dr. Ranga Kalansooriya, a renowned media and political analyst from Sri Lanka
- Mr. Kinley Tshering, Managing Editor of Kuensel, Bhutan

6.4.2 Panel Discussion on Artificial Intelligence and its Impact on Elections in South Asia

This panel discussion brought together speakers from South Asia and Europe, and it delved into the opportunities, challenges, and ethical implications of AI in the democratic process. It was moderated by Mr. Needrup Zangpo, Executive Director of BMF. The speakers were:

- Dr. Anna Sawerthal, an expert in foreign policy and editor at the Austrian daily newspaper Der Standard
- D. Dhanuraj, Founder-Chairman of the Centre for Public Policy Research
- Waqar Rizvi, a journalist and strategic policy consultant



6.5 Webinar on Citizen Participation and Engagement in Bhutan

In partnership with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation and the Deutsche Bhutan Himalaya Gesellschaft e.V., BMF organized a WebTalk on 'Strengthening Citizen Participation in Bhutan's Democracy' on November 13, 2024. The session focused on how Bhutan is nurturing active citizenship, reinforcing democratic values, and empowering communities to contribute to a vibrant and participatory democracy. This timely dialogue brought together diverse perspectives and emphasized the importance of continued civic engagement, transparency, and collaboration in strengthening Bhutan's democratic institutions.

Featured Speakers:

- Hon'ble Tshering Tshomo, Member of Parliament, National Council of Bhutan
- Kinley Tshering, Managing Editor, Kuensel
- Dr. Chenchho Lhamu, Dean of Development and External Relations, Royal Thimphu College
- Karma Dupchen, Environmental, Social, and Governance Specialist, Germany

The session was moderated by Mr. Sangay Khandu, former Member of Parliament.



07 OTHER IMPORTANT ENGAGEMENTS



7.1 Engagement with Hon'ble Prime Minister on Media Sector Development

On July 26, 2024, BMF participated in a high-level consultative meeting convened by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan to deliberate on the challenges and opportunities within Bhutan's evolving media landscape. The meeting brought together key stakeholders, including BMF, JAB, media houses, DoMCIIP and BICMA.

The Hon'ble Prime Minister underscored the critical need for capacity building within the media sector and proposed the strategic use of Economic Stimulus Programme (ESP) funds to revitalize the economy. As a way forward, he encouraged media houses to collaborate and submit joint proposals under the ESP framework.



7.2 Consultation on the State of Media Report in Bhutan

Bhutan Media Foundation participated in the first public consultation meeting on the State of Media Report organized by the Social and Cultural Affairs Committee (SCAC) of the National Council on October 7, 2024. During the session, the Foundation made a comprehensive presentation on the state of the media in Bhutan, highlighting current challenges, emerging opportunities, and future directions. The consultation also included the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy as a key stakeholder.

During the 11th Sitting of the National Council, SCAC presented its review report, initiated in light of His Majesty The King's Royal Kasho to BMF in 2010, which underscores the media's role in a vibrant democracy. The report reviewed media legislation, assessed government interventions, and proposed strategies to strengthen independent journalism.

08 THIMPHU PRESS CLUB

Launched on October 3, 2023, Thimphu Press Club (TPC), a social enterprise of BMF, has become a vibrant hub for dialogue and knowledge-sharing among journalists, civil servants, educators, diplomats, and civil society members. Established with support from the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, TPC promotes open discourse, learning, and the exchange of ideas through a variety of events and gatherings. The facility includes a canteen, café, lounge, and a fully equipped conference hall with modern sound systems, interactive smart screens, and Wi-Fi connectivity.

In 2024, TPC hosted a range of notable events, including:

- February 14, 2024: International Book Giving Day and Launch of TPC Library
- March 15, 2024: Panel Discussion on Gender in Newsrooms
- May 22, 2024: Meeting for Selection of 10 CSOsAct4Dev Grantees organized by Helvetas Bhutan
- June 5, 2024: Tourism Dialogue with Blogger Yeshey Dorji
- June 25, 2024: Interactive Dialogue with H.E. Cameron MacKay, Ambassador of Canada to Bhutan
- September 17, 2024: South Asia Regional Conference on Emerging Media Trends

As of December 2024, the TPC has 110 registered members from different professional backgrounds.



Our Interns

In 2024, BMF provided internship opportunities to eight undergraduate students from two colleges in Bhutan as part of their academic learning experience. During their internship, students gained hands-on experience supporting BMF’s daily operations, including administrative tasks, programme coordination, and event management.

Table 7: Undergraduate Student Interns at BMF

Sl No	Name of the intern	College	Duration
1	Ugyen Tashi	Norbuling Rigter College	December 2023 to 11 February 2024
2	Ugyen Phuntsho		
3	Kinga Thinley		
4	Kinga Rabsel Wangchuk		
5	Pema Yangki	Sherubtse College	December 2024 to January 2025
6	Choney Zangmo		
7	Yeshe Zangmo		
8	Kunzang Wangmo		

Financial Report 2024

Money In (Nu.)

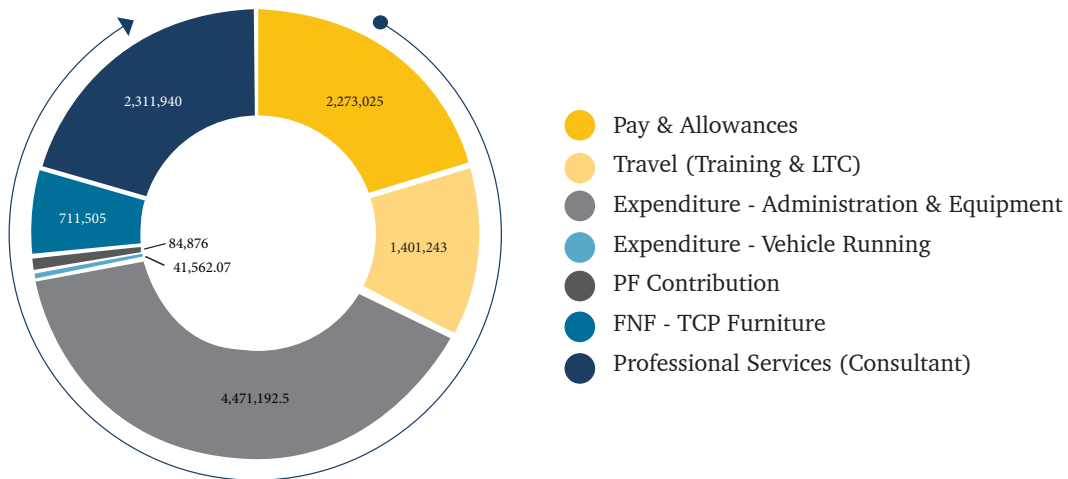
Interest Income (2024)	741,347
Seed Fund	8,720,000
Grant	11,382,700

Money Out (Nu.)

Pay & Allowances	2,273,025
Travel (Training & LTC)	1,401,243
Expenditure - Administration & Equipment	4,471,193
Expenditure - Vehicle Running	41,562
PF Contribution	84,876
FNF - TCP Furniture	711,505
Professional Services (Consultant)	2,311,940
Total Expenses	11,295,344

Balance as of December 2024

Income Minus Expenses	Nu. 9,548,703
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Our Partners



Media Stakeholders



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Stay in Touch

