

**ROYAL RESEARCH & ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**Langjugphakha**

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**Thimphu: Bhutan**

Keynote Address: *Roles of RUB and CSOs for a better Democratic  
Bhutan*

by

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**Seminar**

**on**

**The Royal University of Bhutan and the CSO in Bhutan**

**Royal University of Bhutan**

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**Hon'ble Vice Chancellor Dasho Nidup,  
Seminar Coordinator  
Officers of RUB,  
Distinguished Participants representing different CSOs, Foundations and  
INGOs,  
Distinguished Guests, and  
Ladies and Gentlemen.**

1. I feel honoured for being invited to talk at the opening ceremony of the Seminar on the Royal University of Bhutan and the CSOs in Bhutan.
2. I would like to thank Director of The Institute for Gross National Happiness Studies (iGNHaS), Royal University of Bhutan for convening this workshop recognizing the importance of partnership for achieving the objectives of the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plans.
3. I am happy that you will be able to reflect on your own objectives and be able to appreciate those of others.
4. The idea of pairing of CSOs with research entities of RUB to form a network for a meaningful participation is noteworthy.
5. As I belong to certain registered and non-registered non-governmental bodies, I am grateful for this initiative of encouraging dialogue amongst the researchers of RUB, executives of CSOs and representatives of other like-minded agencies.
6. In a fast changing dynamic world where the involvement of the government gets enlarged but spreads thinner, it is crucial that CSOs rise up to the occasion to fill up, supplement or complement where necessary, in order that justice and common wellbeing are better ensured.

7. Bhutan has a rich culture and tradition of voluntarism and community services. The Buddhist values such as love, generosity, compassion etc. have helped sustain such support and service in the community and nation.
8. Now, with modernization of governance, need have emerged for these informal practices to assume formal shape through legislation and institutionalization. This fact is evident from the registration of more than 51 registered CSOs (both PBOs and MBOs). This does not include the mushrooming of religious organisations and institutions and the informal Associations and Tshogpas. In fact, the contribution that are being made by CSOs, I strongly feel they ought to be rather given the status of the fourth state of good governance – in place of the media.
9. I am impressed of the themes chosen for group discussions. And I shall look forward to reading the reports of the deliberations.
10. Under our laws, we as CSOs, unlike in other countries, are classified as apolitical, while being able to be very purposeful and useful in enhancing good governance, promoting inclusiveness and contributing to common wellbeing, in the democratic culture and environment, with the roles to motivate, and where crucial to prod the governance and competent authorities to be more accountable, responsive, effective and legitimate.
11. According to Shri P.K. Doraiswamy, a retired IAS Officer, there is gap between the not-so-efficient state and the profit-alone-matters private sector. A third sector is essential to serve as the bridge in between. In this he suggests six different roles for CSOs. As:
  - 1) **Watchdog** — Those who are with mandate to combat against violation of human rights and governing deficiencies. Keeping watch on how state officials use their powers. Raising public concern about any abuse of power;
  - 2) **Advocate** — Those who are interested in raising awareness and represent and communicate the interest of weaker sections;

- 3) **Agitator** — Those who are interested to fight or Expose the corruption and abuse by public officials on behalf of aggrieved citizens;
- 4) **Educator** — committed to enlighten the citizens of their rights, entitlements and responsibilities and inform the government about the pulse of the people;
- 5) **Service provider** — dedicated to provide or serve as conduit of social and welfare services to people in areas not easily reachable or no covered by official efforts; and
- 6) **Mobiliser** — Willing to organise public opinion for or against a programme or policy and empowering people to express their views through establishing dialogue, lobby, and articulate or testify before parliamentary committees.

12. I think it is so here in Bhutan too, with each CSO, playing the single or combination these different roles.

13. From the management perspective, CSOs are synonymous with professionalism and commitment. A CSO organisation is expected to be one that is imbued with efficiency and effectiveness with highest sense of integrity. A CSO is considered to be less bureaucratic but People Centric. For its employees, serving others with compassion, selfless service that upholds the humanitarian values, culture and traditions of our nation. In fact they succeed where government fall short.

14. Thus, all CSOs are grateful and stand motivated with recognition of our services, when His Majesty The King was pleased to award the National Order of Merit to CSOs and Academics during the National Day 2016.

15. The **Royal University of Bhutan** and its constituent colleges and institutes, as citadels of learning and human development, has the lead role to engage and enlighten the society on the right path. Seminars such as this will definitely help equip CSOs with tools to manage challenges effectively, while

your research and studies will gain relevance and usefulness, directly addressing social issues that challenges the Nation.

16. It is thus incumbent on all of us to come out, as per Vision of His Majesty The King, with “... *policies and strategies... aimed at empowering our people to become strong, capable and responsible citizens.*”
17. I have every hope that the network being built and work you initiate today from this premises, would go a long way in helping both the university and the CSOs to play a valuable role in the next plan and beyond.
18. Lastly, as Democracy in Bhutan is homegrown and being nurtured beginning fifties, some aspect of it may be found peculiar to outsiders. As we are on the eve of the next Parliamentary elections, as non-partisan entities, when you carry out your educational, advocacy and awareness roles, be mindful not to tread the partisan path.
19. So, as CSOs one may be receiving financial support from individuals and bodies outside Bhutan, whose objectives may not always be agreeable with ours. My parting advice is not to get enmeshed. You shall not be tolerated to function as representatives or mouthpiece of such donors and sponsors during our elections.
20. After all as Bhutanese, we love our country and we will need to defend its interest over and above everything else.
21. I wish the seminar very fruitful deliberations.

Thank you

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