

**Draktsho Vocational Training Centre for Special Children and Youth,
Thimphu, Bhutan**



**Submitted by
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Founder/Director**

Introduction

As with all cultures around the world, the ways and means of managing people and their disabilities has a varied and colourful history. In Bhutan, the provision of services specific to people who have a disability has been dependent upon the caring of members of the family, and extended family, based on a belief in Karma, which enables family members and the community to look at people with disability with compassion and concern. The support provided by families has been of immense benefit to people who have a disability, notwithstanding the sometimes use of ineffective support activities, such as the use of traditional medicines and ‘lay doctors’ prescribing cures.

The supportive Buddhist culture has also allowed for the maintenance of people with a disability within their culture and community. In many countries, with the growth of large urban populations, it has been necessary to provide services specifically for people with a disability as families became less able to provide the care themselves. The industrialization of communities has often forced parents to seek paid employment, to leave the family home, thus creating situations where caring for people with a disability became a ‘burden’. In the hustle and bustle of urban life more and more people with a disability became segregated and in many western countries the people with disabilities who needed most care were placed in large institutions [institutionalized] and effectively excluded from their families and society in general. This ‘westernization’ history has not established itself fully in the Bhutanese way of life and so the provision of services for people who have a disability has only recently become a ‘national’ issue for deliberation and planning at a governmental level.

Within Bhutan there is lack of clear data regarding incidence of disability and a clarity about the definition. The general opinion is that the persons with disability are the responsibility of the society and their needs should be taken care of by the society.

The Royal Government of Bhutan provides health, prevention, medical rehabilitation and social services free of cost to all the citizens. Childhood care practices have always existed in the cultural context and institutionalisation of care is a new concept in Bhutan. The needs of education of children with disabilities have been met through institutional care in two residential National Institutions for the hearing and visually impaired, but the current focus of the government is to provide inclusive education and promote the learning of all children together in ordinary schools.

Non-formal education policy provides all Bhutanese citizens with community-based opportunities to become literate but these are being used by the disabled children and adults in almost an ad-hoc manner. There is a lack of strong advocacy for education of children with disabilities, particularly when physical and geographical barriers affect accessibility and services available for the education of children with disabilities are an unmet need.

DRAKTSHO

In 2000 the project proposal drafted by Jigme Wangmo caught the attention of Her Majesty the Queen Ashi Tshering Pem Wangchuck, [the President of the Youth Development Fund], Her Majesty's compassion for the destitute was so amazing that without any doubt the YDF was asked to support this new project. With the blessing of Her Majesty, the Draktsho Vocational Training Centre for Special Children and Youth was inaugurated on the 2nd October 2001.

Draktsho was established as a non-profit-making service-oriented organization. The bulk of its funding for staff and resources has been provided by the YDF till 2009, but as with many fledgling organizations Draktsho has sought additional funding as it expanded in terms of activities and number of students. Much of the additional funding has been from donations and the proceeds from the sales of the many products generated by the trainees. The staffing for the agency has also been somewhat dependent upon the use of volunteers and over the ten years since it began there has been some significant support from people external to the agency in Bhutan and from overseas.

1. History:

Draktsho previously known as Drak-Tsho Vocational Training Centre for the Disabled(DVTCD) is now known as Draktsho Vocational Training Centre for Special Children and Youth or simply Draktsho. Draktsho is a combination of two Dzongkha words "Drak" and "Tsho" meaning "Cliff or high mountain" and "sea or ocean" respectively. Put together, Draktsho is supposed to describe the height and the depth of its goals and aspirations. Draktsho is suppose to signify its aspiration as high as the mountain and its commitment as deep as the ocean in the service of children and youth with disabilities. Draktsho strongly believes that everybody has the right to be independent and equal, has the power to choose, and to live their lives to the fullest potential. Disability is prevalent and affects all age groups. Although attitudes towards people with disabilities and other minority groups within our society are changing and becoming more positive, there still seems to be an immense lack of understanding about disability as "disadvantaged individuals" whose disabilities cause "suffering." It is the environment that imposes constraints preventing people with disability from running their lives in a way equal to able people.

2. What Draktsho aspires to do? After 10 years of operation, Draktsho was finally registered as a CSO on 26th November 2010. Draktsho is the first of its kind in the country; it's a service- oriented and Public Benefit Organization under the Civil Society Organization Act of Bhutan which aspires to enhance the living standard of children and youth with various types of disabilities through empowerment by training, education and eventual integration with the mainstream population. Although Draktsho provides various personal development skills, its main focus is to equip the students with vocational skills to enhance their opportunities for gainful employment. It also aims to build their self-esteem and self-reliance, thereby making them more independent, confident and

contributing members of the society. Draktsho encompasses opportunities that allow them to grow in their aptitude, determination, goals and dreams. One of the greatest challenges for the Draktsho is to erase the deeply embedded stigma that people with disabilities are incapable of independence.

The Government is providing education to children with visual, mild learning disabilities and hearing impairment, 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 avail these. The work undertaken by Draktsho in vocational training and employment of persons with disability helps supplement the Government initiatives in a significant manner.

3. Vision

“Persons with Disabilities in Bhutan will actively and equitably participate in socio-economic development of the country and live a fulfilling life”

4. Mission

“To ensure young Persons with Disabilities in Bhutan have quality opportunities for developing skills for life and vocation, and for becoming self-reliant, make a living and lead a contended life overcoming barriers created by gender or other differences”

5. Goals

1. Draktsho will be a centre of excellence in Bhutan providing state of the art training and supportive services for vocational training, employment and quality living for persons with disabilities.
2. Draktsho will work with all different kinds of special needs children and youth, with special focus on children/ youth with intellectual impairments.
3. Draktsho will work with children/youth and adults with disabilities and their families.
4. Draktsho will be proactive in promoting equal work opportunities for persons with disabilities keeping in view the employment scenario for youth in Bhutan.
5. Draktsho will be a model activity based program, generating concepts and methods for promoting employment for persons with disabilities that can be adopted by similar services in urban and rural areas of Bhutan.
6. Draktsho will adopt approaches and methods that foster and reflect inclusion.
7. Draktsho will develop as a facilitator and a technical resource base for promoting employment of persons with disabilities.

6. Objectives

1. To provide training in life skills including basic literacy and numeracy to children and youth with various types of disabilities for enabling them to cope with their daily life needs in present and future.
2. To equip students with disabilities with vocational and work skills as preparation for sheltered, open or self-employment.
3. To facilitate the students with disabilities secure work with dignity.
4. To initiate dialogue, build collaborations and networks with different stakeholders (government, industry, institutions etc) for actively promoting equal opportunities for people with special needs.
5. To organize parent support and community outreach program for raising awareness and generating support for inclusion of persons with special needs.
6. To conduct training, research and documentation for building human resources, supporting innovative actions and generating resource material and data for supporting quality services and advocacy.

7. Approach

Draktsho will aim to adopt approaches that foster inclusion of persons with disabilities and encourage their participation in family and community. The aim will be to identify ways that will provide persons with disabilities and, persons without, to interact. In this way skills will get built and attitudes and perceptions influenced positively thus creating a better environment of acceptance for persons with disabilities in daily living and work spaces.

Draktsho will also aim at proactively establishing strong long-term linkages with the government programmes to gather requisite support and generate resources for activities like training for staff, trainees & families etc. Draktsho will continue to work as a non-profit making organization and an organization that is responsive to changes in the development sector.

Draktsho's long long term objective is to scale up Draktsho activities through replication in other parts of the Kingdom, (Following our long term objectives we have established our first branch in Kanglung at Tashigang Dzongkhag known as "Draktsho East" with 70 students with boarding facilities.)

8. Beneficiaries:

Children and youth with various types of disabilities are the direct beneficiaries of the services offered by Draktsho. Draktsho also supports the parents' support group by conducting training and counseling for them. Parents with economic background are also encouraged to make production and sell them to Draktsho's souvenir shop. The society at large is the indirect beneficiaries.

8.1 Students Enrollment:

The number of students at Thimphu has been increasing each year. It rose from 8 students to 57 students by 2013. As few students graduated or left the centre for other favorable options like joining jobs, special schools in India and abroad or managing family businesses, new enrollments filled the vacant seats. The number of students at Draktsho East has risen from 40 to 70 as of 2013. The total number of students benefiting from the services offered by Draktsho is 127 in 2013.

8.2 Programme

Vocational and Co-curricular programs:

The Vocational training and other co-curricular activities given below are some of the training programs offered at the centre. The vocational training is traditional based and it suits the capacities of the students. New skills depending on the requirement of the students would be introduced in the future.

Main Vocational Courses offered:

- i. Tailoring,
- ii. Traditional art and painting
- iii. Embroidery
- iv. Weaving
- v. Basket weaving(cane and plastic)
- vi. Souvenir carpentry (wood carving)
- vii. Souvenir making(cards ,bookmarks and dolls)
- viii. T-Shirt and Mug Printing
- ix. Envelope Making

Life skills offered:

- i. Personal management skills
- ii. Sign language(communication skills)
- iii. Social Behaviour, domestic behaviour
- iv. Work related or Functional Academic
- v. Safety skills
- vi. Occupational skill

Co-curricular Activities:

- i. Social skills (dancing, singing, acting and cultural disciplinary programs)

- ii. Physical fitness programs: special Olympic, Deaflympic and Paralympics are being promoted by Draktsho, the organization is often used as the base for promoting sports for athletes with disabilities as Draktsho has maximum number of children and youth with various types of disabilities. Draktsho's athletes two boys and two girls have won a gold medal in mix relay race in the Special Olympic, World Summer Games, held in Athens, Greece 2011.
- iii. Apart from the vocational training, educational and life skill program, the students are also given opportunities to development individually through counseling, personal coaching and guidance.

9. Number of staff and students:

There are 18 permanent staff, six graduates of Draktsho as temporary staff and 1011 students in total (inclusive of staff and students of Draktsho East) Draktsho relies on volunteers to reinforce the staff capacity, foreigners and nationals, mostly students volunteer to teach as support staff to our regular teachers. A letter of appreciation is awarded to the student volunteer at the end of their contribution.

10. Board of Directors:

Draktsho has a Board of Directors who are responsible in guiding Draktsho towards the achievement of its objectives and goals in a sustainable manner. In particular Board guides Draktsho to grow into a self sustaining organization. Key decisions for Draktsho are made by the Board.

The management of Draktsho's activities and staff are guided by the recommendations recorded in the 2007 'Master Plan'

Board of Directors:

Royal Patron: Ashi Tshering Pem Wangchuck

1. President: Ashi Sonam Choden
2. Director: Nado Dukpa (Helvetas)
3. Director: Am Dechen Jamyang (Zimdra automobiles)
4. Director: Am Tshering Lham (Dept. Special education)
5. Director: Am Pem Lhanden(parents' support group)
6. Director: Mr. Chencho Tshering (Kuensel)
7. Director: Mr. Karma Phuntsho (Mins. Health)
8. Director: Ms. Jigme Wangmo (Founder/Director, Draktsho)

11. Financial support

Financial support for Draktsho is partly provided by Elysium Foundation based in Switzerland, and Omega Foundation in Finland, and this has been supplemented by donations from local and overseas organizations and individual donors. The items produced by the trainees have also been made available for sale to the general public.

The major expense is made on maintenance and operational cost. Unlike other CSOs, Draktsho implements its own programs and the running capital is an urgent need. The annual expenditures come to US\$ 95000.00 roughly.

11.1. Draktsho Shop

There is a souvenir shop at Draktsho and an outlet at Paro airport at the departure lounge. Products made by the youth while training are displayed for sale. Well made handicraft products made by the graduates are also being sold at the outlets. One can see the finest of items made by these youth; orders for souvenir or present items can be placed with Draktsho. The proceeds from the sales are used for procuring raw materials, paying salaries and remuneration for the students.

12. Issues:

Financial support will perhaps be a constant source of stress for the management of the Centre. The provision of resources is dependent upon funding, as is also the ability of the Centre to support staff to access continuing professional education. As Draktsho is an implementing organization, financial status needs to be 99% secured.

Drak-Tsho is still facing acute problem due to lack of its own building facilities. It has been constantly bothered with having to find and move to new rented facilities. This problem will persist till Draktsho builds its own infrastructures.

Advocacy for the rights of people who have a disability to engage in formal education and participate in paid employment is relatively recent in Bhutan. This has become a role for Drak-Tsho and with increasing numbers of students who have an intellectual impairment this role becomes more urgent.

13. Current and Future Plans/ Targets

- Draktsho is currently seeking financial support to build its infrastructures and its trust fund.
- It plans to avail employment opportunities to those trainees who have leadership qualities, and also support small scale projects to those individuals who wish to establish their businesses.
- Draktsh also plans to build linkages with sheltered workshops and relevant organizations to avail employment opportunities to the intellectually challenged people.
- One of Draktsho's long term plans is to replicate its activities in different needy districts of the country.

Areas of Support:

Possible areas for support from your Organization

Draktsho have identified the following areas for possible support from your esteem Foundation/ Organization. The areas are sequenced in order of priority.

Support to Draktsho's Trust Fund

Draktsho has evolved into a Civil Society Organization (CSO) in 2010. While doing so, the achievement of financial self-reliance is a key pre-requisite. In this regard, we are planning to build up a trust fund to ensure sustainable funding. Therefore, we like to propose you to be one of our funding patrons. We would appreciate for your kind and generous support in this regard. Your contribution will go a long way in building a Trust Fund.

Supporting building construction and rental charges:

Currently, the center is housed in a rented private property, paying high rental charges due to housing shortages. Besides inadequate facilities, the building is also not suitable for children/youth with disabilities. The tenants are always at the mercy of the house owners who go on increasing the rent. Draktsho is seeking financial support to build infrastructures for Thimphu.

Supporting the production unit:

Draktsho has a production unit to generate fund to sustain its activities. Ten graduates of Draktsho now work as paid staff in the production unit. As Draktsho is low on financial resources, we are looking for financial support to sustain the new unit. This unit will ensure a steady and sustainable source of funding for future sustainability. Each student is paid Nu. 8,000.00 = USD 134.00 per month and Nu.96, 000.00 = USD 1,600.00 per year.

Supporting the maintenance or running cost of the centre: Nu. 61,17,179.00 = USD 1,01,953.00 annual expenditure, any amount would be appreciate.

Submitted by:

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