

## Role of the Media in Achieving a Sustainable Society

Tim Bodt\*

### Abstract

*This paper explores the role that the media can play in contributing to a sustainable society. First the terms sustainable development and its ultimate aim, a sustainable society, are defined in particular in the context of Bhutan's pursuit of Gross National Happiness. Despite the Royal Government's future vision for Bhutan and the resulting deliberate and well-planned policies, a growing population will inevitably mean an increased pressure on the environment, culture, and society. Therefore, it is argued that if Bhutan is serious in pursuing a path of sustainable development, the Bhutanese population needs a change in behaviour away from current or possible future unsustainable behaviour towards sustainable actions. These should contribute to sustainable development and thus to Gross National Happiness. This change in behaviour will not be achieved by itself but needs conscious efforts on the part of the government and society as a whole. It is suggested that Education for Sustainable Development of all sections of society can contribute to this behavioural change. Considering that a considerable part of the Bhutanese population is not enrolled in the formal education system, the case is made for an increased role of the media in disseminating Education for Sustainable Development. Various recommendations are then made as to how the current developments in the information, communication, and media sector, as well as the increased democratisation and decentralisation of the Bhutanese system of governance, can be utilised to make continued progress towards a sustainable Bhutanese society.*

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\* Lecturer, Department of Environmental Studies, Sherubtse College, Royal University of Bhutan, Kanglung.

## **Introduction**

### *Poverty, Economic Development and Environment*

The raise in living standards of the mass of the population occurred in developed countries in the past 100 years. This has been happening in most developing countries in the last half century, or, in the context of Bhutan, mainly in the past three decades. This raise in living standards has many positive effects, such as: better access to health care resulting in increase in life expectancy and reduction in child and infant mortality; better access to educational facilities rising literacy and improving economic opportunities; improved infrastructure; increased availability of consumer goods; and increased access to modern media. As expressed in Bhutan's Vision 2020 (Planning Commission Secretariat 1999: 11-17):

30 Years ago Bhutan had little of the infrastructure associated with a modern nation state and the life for the vast majority of the people was both harsh and short. In the past three decades Bhutan has undergone a major transformation (and seen) progress unmatched by other developing countries. More social and economic development has happened in the past 30 years than compared to the previous 300 years.

But, at the same time, increased development, rising living standards, and increased consumption and production result in increased pressure on the environment, threatening the long-term sustainability of the earth's life-support systems. Vision 2020 phrases it as follows (Planning Commission Secretariat 1999: 36): "Although the natural heritage is still largely intact, we cannot take it for granted (as) it is subject to increasing pressures. Ecological systems are particularly vulnerable, and pressures will certainly mount in the years ahead." In the presentation on the State of Bhutan's Environment by the Deputy Minister of the National Environment Commission to the National Assembly in 2005, it was stated that although Bhutan's natural environment is still largely intact, growing population and development activities, especially in urban areas, reduce the air quality in

urban areas and lead to localised water pollution and land pollution in the form of deforestation and waste (N.n. 2005).

So despite recognition of the problem and a well-planned vision for the year 2020, including government policies directed at environmental preservation besides economic and social development, there is a danger that when the behaviour of people does not change towards a more sustainable way of living, Bhutan might face future environmental problems not much different from those faced by other (developing) countries.

Thus, even in Bhutan, there are obvious links between poverty, environmental degradation, and economic development. The precursor for all later developments was the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE, United Nations 1972) in Stockholm in 1972, where the then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi already said that “the environment cannot be improved in conditions of poverty”. It is often thought that economic development alone will alleviate poverty through increasing income levels of the population. This unfortunately passes by the fact that the resulting environmental degradation can also lead to increased poverty. For example, large-scale commercial harvest of valuable tree species will contribute to the economy and can thus contribute to poverty alleviation. If not properly managed however the resulting deforestation can lead to soil erosion, nutrient loss, loss of biodiversity, and loss of ecological services such as maintenance of the water balance. This in return will affect rural populations depending on the forests directly through decreased availability of forest products—but also indirectly, for example through decreased agricultural production as a result of decreased soil fertility.

*Achieving a Sustainable Society through the process of Sustainable Development*

It was this realisation of the links between environment, economic development, and poverty which resulted in the coining of the term ‘sustainable development’ by the United Nation’s Brundtland Commission in 1987. It is generally

defined as development “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland 1987), with as basic pillars economic development, social development, and environmental protection at the local, national, regional, and global levels (United Nations 2002). In other words, sustainable development strives to achieve economic development that can be maintained well into the future and for all human beings. The Brundtland Report describes the common challenges facing the earth, namely: growing populations; securing food security; threats to and conservation of species and ecosystems; energy use and depletion of energy sources; industrial development; increasing urbanization; and the relationship between poverty and environmental degradation and inequality between the developed and developing world.

The goal of sustainable development has been generally described as to achieve a sustainable society. This means a society in which economy and population size are managed in such a way that they do not do irreparable harm to the environment by overloading the planet’s ability to absorb waste and pollution, replenish its resources, and sustain human and other forms of life over a specified period of time. In a sustainable society the needs of people are satisfied without depleting natural resources and thereby reducing the prospects of current and future generations of humans and other species. The objectives of sustainable development often are mentioned as: reviving growth; changing the quality of growth; meeting essential needs for jobs, food, energy, water, and sanitation; ensuring a sustainable level of population; conserving and enhancing the resource base; reorienting technology and managing risk; and merging environment and economics in decision-making.

Since 1987, the term has seen a mass distribution and popularisation to the extent that now practically every nation has adopted sustainable development as one of the official policy objectives. In 1992, the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil resulted in the adoption or signing by more

than 178 nations of Agenda 21 (a 300-page plan for achieving sustainable development in the 21st century) and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (UNCED 1992). Principle 8 and 10 of this declaration state that “to achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies” (Principle 8); and there has to be “participation of all concerned citizens...each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment...and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available...” (Principle 10).

As will be shown later, these two principles are important since they provide a direct link between sustainable development, media, and democracy.

In 2002 the Rio Conference was followed up by the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, where states recommitted themselves to the Rio Declaration Principles; more concrete measures and targets for better implementation of the Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Goals were discussed (United Nations 2002). Article 11 of the Report states: “We recognise that poverty eradication, changing consumption and production patterns and protecting and managing the natural resource base for economic and social development are overarching objectives of and essential requirements for sustainable development.” Thus from economic development alone as the solution to problems of poverty and environmental degradation, we have now reached a general consensus that arriving at a sustainable society includes achieving both economical, social, as well as environmental sustainability.

#### *Sustainable Development and Gross National Happiness*

As mentioned, Bhutan is currently undergoing a fast transformation from one of the least developed countries in

the world to a country where many of the usual features of a developing country belong to the past. In this development process, with its ultimate goal to maintain Bhutan's independence, sovereignty, and security, Bhutan is guided by six main principles, namely: identity; unity and harmony; stability; self-reliance; sustainability; and flexibility (Planning Commission Secretariat 1999). However these six main principles are not sufficient and a single unifying concept of development has been chosen to complement these principles and identify future directions that are preferred above all others. This concept has been propounded in the 1980s by His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck. It is the uniquely Bhutanese concept of 'Gross National Happiness.'

Although the concept has been made popular by His Majesty, many of the underlying ideas and principles have guided Bhutan's development for a much longer time. The starting point for the concept is that happiness is the ultimate desire of all human beings and that all else is a means for achieving happiness. The traditional development concept of Gross National Product, stressing a maximisation of economic growth, does not take this happiness into account. Neither does it take environmental degradation nor increase in social problems into account, which might be the results of a narrow striving for economic growth and prosperity (Planning Commission Secretariat 1992). In that way, the concept of GNH is directly linked to pursuing sustainable development, in which economic, social, and environmental sustainability are equal components of development. GNH places the individual at the centre of all development efforts and recognises that an individual, besides material needs, also has spiritual and emotional needs. Finding a careful balance between material and non-material components of development is the main aim of GNH as a development concept.

The concept of GNH has been translated into more easily quantifiable objectives for the long-term development of Bhutan. The five most important priorities, or pillars, of GNH have been selected as: human development; culture and heritage; balanced and equitable development; governance;

and environmental conservation (Planning Commission Secretariat 1999). These five pillars not only serve as objectives to be achieved when GNH is to be maximised, but they also are of decisive importance to maintain Bhutan's future sovereignty, independence, and security. The global significance of Bhutan's environment warrants a development process that conserves this rich environment for all times to come, whilst at the same time using this environment in a sustainable way to maximise GNH. This means a careful balance has to be found between use and conservation of environmental resources, and between economic growth and social stability. Thus, if GNH is taken as the ultimate policy objective, sustainable development is required.

This is reiterated in the Draft Constitution of Bhutan (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2005), in which Article 5(1) defines the role of every Bhutanese towards the environment: "every Bhutanese is a trustee of the Kingdom's natural resources and environment for the benefit of the present and future generations...through the adoption of environmentally friendly practices and ethos." The role of the government is defined in Article 5(2): "The Royal Government shall secure ecologically balanced sustainable development while promoting justifiable economic and social development." Regarding the roles of the State, Article 9(20) furthermore states that the State shall "strive to create conditions that will enable the true and sustainable development of a good and compassionate society rooted in Buddhist ethos and universal human values".

Thus, the entire Bhutanese development policy has been, is, and will be directly based upon the concept of sustainable development. But how sustainable development can be achieved in practice is a more difficult question to answer. Government policies alone will not be sufficient to achieve a sustainable society. It is the people who matter and make the change.

*Sustainable Development requires Behavioural Change*

According to Agenda 21, achieving sustainable development

requires “recognition of the challenge, collective responsibility and constructive partnership, acting with determination and indivisibility of human dignity” (UNCED 1992). However, trying to achieve GNH and a sustainable society implicitly implies a change of behaviour and action from environmentally, socially, and culturally unsustainable to sustainable behaviour.

Although some research is available on behavioural change for sustainable development, this research is mainly on the theoretical and academic level (social and psychological theories on human behaviour) and there are very few practical examples (Warburton 2005). There are several theories explaining how behavioural change in humans takes place. Examples are *learning theories* that emphasize that learning a new, complex pattern of behaviour, like changing from unsustainable to sustainable behaviour, normally requires modifying many of the small behaviours that compose an overall complex behaviour. The *theory of reasoned action* states that individual performance of a given behaviour is primarily determined by a person's intention to perform that behaviour. The *social learning theory*, later renamed *social cognitive theory*, proposes that behaviour change is affected by environmental influences, personal factors, and attributes of the behaviour itself. Examples on behavioural change towards conservation are more widely available, such as the Conservation, Education and Communication Programme of WWF-Nepal, where positive changes in attitude and behaviour in support of sustainable development have been observed (Shrestha 2005).

One model which seems very applicable to the behavioural changes necessary to move from unsustainable to sustainable behaviour is the *Trans-theoretical Model*, or *Stages of Change* (Prochaska et al. 1997). This model, which is widely applied in health education and promotion, is based on several key insights that radically shifted the way that psychologists and others understand and support the process of behavioural change. Although the model in essence focuses on individual behavioural changes, it is all these behavioural changes together that finally contribute to societal change,



and as will be discussed, individual change cannot occur seen separate from the wider societal developments.

The main insight of the model is that behaviour change is a process rather than an event. Before the advent of *Stages of Change*, it was common to assume that a certain period of education and support might lead someone to change an entrenched behaviour. This older approach has several implications. One is the assumption that every person will react similarly to new information and guidance. It was assumed that once people realise there is a problem, they will change their ways, and if they don't then it's because of a lack of motivation and willpower. Warburton (2005) however also indicated that the assumption that people don't change because they have a lack of information is not sufficient, because: people don't always trust the message (scientific data) or the messenger (government institutions); there is a value/action gap (people know there is a problem and they have to do something about it, but they don't); people don't have sufficient time and resources; and because people don't think that what they'll do will make a difference.

The *Trans-theoretical Model*, however, is based on the insight that the behaviour change process unfolds over months and years and is characterized by six distinct stages of change. Each change corresponds to an individual's readiness to change, which will vary over time. By matching an intervention to the appropriate stage (or readiness) the chances of success increase. Success, moreover, is defined not just by changing the behaviour but by any movement toward change, such as a shift from one stage of readiness to another. Barrow and Condon (2002) also recognised that change from an economically driven to a sustainability driven society will be made in small steps. Another important and innovative contribution of *Stages of Change* is its emphasis on *maintaining* change. The model recognizes that relapse is common. But instead of viewing relapse as a failure (i.e., the behaviour change didn't last), the Stages of Change model sees relapse as an opportunity to learn how to sustain change more effectively in the future.

The six stages in the *Trans-theoretical Model* are pre-

contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance, and termination (adapted from Prochaska et al., 1997).

In the pre-contemplation stage, people have not yet thought about changing their behaviour. Some may be truly unaware of the consequences of their behaviour (e.g. "Plastics are not bad for the environment so throwing them away is no problem"). Others may be aware of the consequences but don't see any relevance to themselves personally (e.g. "I know waste is polluting our environment, but as a single person I don't produce much waste anyway"). A shorter term for this situation is 'denial'.

In the contemplation stage, the first steps are taken towards behavioural change. There is a greater and more accurate understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of changing the behaviour but since the advantages are still considered to outweigh the disadvantages, there is no readiness to change yet (e.g. "I know I should reduce my waste, but I wouldn't know how").

In the preparation stage, a person gets ready to take action relatively soon (e.g. "I have learnt a bit about composting, recycling and waste management so I know what I should do").

Now the advantages of changing behaviour are outweighing the disadvantages, and the next stage implies taking actual action to change the behaviour (e.g. "I have dug a waste pit and a compost pit and contacted a recycling agent").

The following stage, the maintenance stage, might last forever and is related to possible relapses into the old behaviour. In this stage the behaviour should be more firmly and thoroughly adopted (e.g. "I used the waste and compost pits but it is difficult and time-consuming to separate the waste").

In the last stage, the termination stage, there is complete confidence that the behavioural change can be maintained forever in any situation (e.g. "I always separate and recycle all the waste I produce"). Sometimes, this phase is never achieved and the maintenance stage might last forever.

So in this model, any person changing his or her behaviour from unsustainable to sustainable has to move through at least five different stages in order to achieve a behavioural pattern which is compatible to the behavioural pattern required in a sustainable society. The moving from one stage of the model to the next is being encouraged by several processes (adapted from (Prochaska et al, 1997) :

Consciousness-raising—finding and learning new facts and suggestions supporting the change (e.g. through education, by accessing different kinds of media, or communication with other people). This process is most effective in the pre-contemplation stage, when awareness has to be created regarding the lack of sustainability in current behaviour. After initial awareness and consciousness is raised, as Warburton (2005) mentions, further awareness raising and telling people what to do becomes less effective and can better be replaced by other processes such as the following processes.

Environmental re-evaluation—assessing how one's problem affects the environment (e.g. realizing that producing and indiscriminately dumping waste is harmful to the environment as well as human health). This process also applies mostly to the pre-contemplation stage, as it raises consciousness of the effects of behaviour.

Self re-evaluation—realizing that the behavioural change is part of one's identity (e.g. seeing oneself as an environmentally and socially conscious person). This process is most effective in urging the move from the pre-contemplation to the contemplation stage as it projects a more positive image of oneself as the goal of the change process.

Self liberation—choosing and committing to act on the belief that change is possible (e.g. making a New Year's resolution). This is most efficient in the preparation stage as it makes a person mentally ready for taking actual action

Counter-conditioning—substituting more sustainable alternatives for unsustainable behaviours (e.g. recycling instead of dumping of tin cans). This process is most effective

in the step from maintenance to termination behaviour. It makes relapse into more unsustainable behaviour less attractive and less possible and is closely related to implementing more sustainable actions.

Stimulus control—avoiding triggers and cues (e.g. buying less single packed chewing gum and other sweets which are easily thrown into the environment). This process also works best in the step from maintenance to termination.

Contingency management—increasing the rewards of positive behavioural change and decreasing the rewards of the unsustainable behaviour (e.g. providing a deposit for returning bottles and cans to the producer for recycling or a tax on each kilo of waste produced). This process also works best in the step from maintenance to termination as it reinforces the positive behaviour thus preventing relapse into unsustainable behaviour.

Social liberation—this is receiving societal support for more sustainable behaviours (e.g. discussions about waste management, community action in constructing compost pits). This process is applicable throughout all stages of the model. It can assist in raising awareness and consciousness, but also in making the taking of decisions and of actions easier. According to Warburton (2005), this focus on practical support for sustainable behaviour, and linking this up with wider societal changes and building up a critical mass to make changes mainstream, are most important since individual behaviour is based on individual values and attitudes shaped by collective and social norms, expectations habits, and situations. One of the most important factors is a democratic and decentralised society with freedom of expression.

As the model shows, for people to make the change from unsustainable to sustainable behaviour it is first of all necessary to have sufficient and well-balanced information regarding current issues and policies. They should also have the capacity to evaluate this information within their personal context in order to make the right decisions, especially since many of these issues involve their every day life as well as the lives of future generations. Later on in the model, societal

support and a conducive social environment become more and more important. One of the important implications of this model is that a society moving towards sustainability should have a sufficient level of participation of people in decision-making, as well as sufficient access to information.

*Behavioural Change, Democratisation, and the Media in Bhutan*

This becomes quintessential when, like in the case of Bhutan, a society moves towards more advanced forms of democracy. When people are given more choice; decision-making power; and chance to participate in formulation, adoption and execution of plans and policies, they require sufficient background for delivering inputs and making decisions. As said, this is also mentioned in the Rio Declaration, Article 8 and 10.

This need for access to information is also stressed in the Policy and Institutional Plan (Department of Information and Media 2005), The Draft Constitution (Article 7(5), Royal Government of Bhutan 2005), and the Application Guidelines for the Introduction of Private Newspapers in Bhutan (Ministry of Information and Communications 2005a). In all of these, a growth towards an information or knowledge-based society is envisaged in which there is ready access to information, and freedom of speech, opinion, and expression (Draft Constitution, Article 7(2)), as well as freedom of press, radio, television, and other forms of electronic dissemination of information (Draft Constitution, Article 7(4)), leading to sustainable and equitable opportunities for growth and progress. The media in an information society has the dual role of informing the general public of policies, developments, and current affairs especially those affecting them directly. It also has to give the public the ability to make their voice heard. The media is seen as a vital two-way tool, providing information from the top to the masses at the grass-roots and allowing their views, ideas, and opinions to filter back up to the policy makers. As it is said, "Whoever controls the media controls the mind" (N.n. 2006b).

Thus in order to achieve a sustainable society,

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behavioural change is necessary, and for this change in behaviour the public should have sufficient access to information, as well as an opportunity to freely express views and opinions. Increased democratisation and decentralisation are supportive factors which enable people to effectuate behavioural change through provision of information needed for consciousness-raising and awareness-raising and through better communication with (and choice of) policy-makers and decision-makers at all levels of government.

### *Education as a Vehicle for Behavioural Change*

But how this change of behaviour can be achieved in practice is a big challenge. Chapter 36 of Agenda 21 advocates the promotion of education, public awareness, and training in order to come to a behavioural change leading to a more sustainable society. The decade 2005-2014 has been selected as the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. The aim is “to promote education as basis for a more sustainable human society and integrate sustainable development into education systems at all levels”. Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), sometimes called Education for Sustainable Living (ESL) or Education for Sustainability (EfS), evolved partially out of Environmental Education (EE) and is one of the ways in which information on how to achieve a more sustainable way of living has been disseminated among wide portions of society in many countries.

Environmental education was first propounded in the Belgrade Chapter (UNESCO-UNEP 1976) with the goal of “a world population aware and concerned about the environment and associated problems and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations, and commitment to work individually and collectively toward solutions for current problems and prevention of new ones”. The Tbilisi Declaration that followed in 1978 (UNESCO 1978) continued by stating that environmental education should:

- Foster clear awareness and concern about

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- economic, social, political and ecological interdependences in urban and rural areas;
- Provide every person with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes, commitment and skills needed to protect and improve the environment; and
  - Create new patterns of behaviour of individuals, groups and society towards the environment.

According to the Tbilisi Declaration, environmental education should focus on five criteria, namely:

- Awareness: to help social groups and individuals acquire an awareness and sensitivity to the total environment and its allied problems;
- Knowledge: to help social groups and individuals gain a variety of experience in, and acquire a basic understanding of, the environment and its associated problems;
- Attitude: to help social groups and individuals acquire a set of values and feelings of concern for the environment, and the motivation for actively participating in environmental improvement and protection;
- Skills: to help social groups and individuals acquire the skills for identifying and solving environmental problems;
- Participation: to provide social groups and individuals with an opportunity to be actively involved at all levels in working towards resolution of environmental problems.

Thus, the Tbilisi Declaration clearly doesn't just focus on awareness creation, but also on the change of behaviour necessary for improvement necessary for improvement of the environment.

In 1998, the International Conference on Environment and Society (ICES) in Thessaloniki, Greece, in its proceedings,

moved away from 'environmental education' focusing primarily on education for understanding and conservation of our environment to a more all-inclusive education focusing on all issues of sustainable development, including economic, environmental, social, and cultural aspects (UNESCO 1998).

This ESD is "a dynamic concept using all aspects of public awareness, education and training to create or enhance an understanding of linkages among issues of sustainable development, thus balancing human and economic well-being with cultural traditions and respect for the earth's natural resources" (UNESCO 1998; Centre for Environmental Education 2005). Like environmental education, ESD involves a multidisciplinary process that focuses on critical analysis of environmental issues by gathering information, organizing information, and interpreting information to draw conclusions and make inferences. It has to foster respect for human needs compatible with sustainable use of resources and the needs of the planet combined with a sense of global solidarity (Centre for Environmental Education, 2005). The general population needs to understand that any policy decisions, especially decisions on environment related issues, have profound influence on their lives and the lives of future generations.

ESD has a number of characteristics shared with EE, whereas others are more unique to ESD alone. The main characteristics are (North American Association for Environmental Education 1996; Centre for Environmental Education 2005; UNESCO 1998):

A learner-centred approach: ESD has a focus on learning rather than teaching, and learning of institutions and societies rather than individuals. Learners, through active involvement and participation, will learn much more effectively that way than by being simply taught and told what to know and what to do. Moreover, it is considered that although the first step always starts with behavioural change of individuals, it is ultimately the society that has to change.

Life-long and continuous learning rather than confined to



a specific period, which coincides with the *Stages of Change* model. It is recognised that behavioural change is a process therefore taking an entire lifetime, with most people remaining in the maintenance stage wherein sustainable behaviour has to be continuously reinforced.

Formation of an active learning community through action-oriented education, including examining one's own lifestyle, exhibiting a willingness to change it, envisioning the necessary changes, and implementing these changes. It also needs to promote civic responsibility and encourage learners to use knowledge, skills, and assessments of issues related to sustainable development as the basis for problem-solving and action. This relates to the process of societal liberation which will enforce each and every step towards change and ultimately result in behavioural patterns that are more sustainable.

Equip societies with the kinds of expertise, skills, knowledge, and technologies to make these changes. If these supporting factors are absent, the implementation of actions that lead to change often turns out impossible and a relapse into unsustainable behaviour occurs.

Be multi-sourced and accessed rather than top-down, controlled, and orchestrated, empowering rather than indoctrinating. Instead of relying on a limited number of teachers, information should be accessible from various sources including the media, that way providing different views, ideas, and opinions from which the individual or community can select the one that is most applicable to their own situation. It also refers to an increased degree of participation and democracy in which people have more access to information as well as a better forum for making their voices heard. This is why democracy, decentralisation, and freedom of media and speech are necessary preconditions for ESD and sustainable development.

Sensitive to gender, poverty, diversity, etc. ESD should include all factors of sustainable development including environment, economy, and society, but explicit attention should be given to those groups in society that are marginalised or otherwise disadvantaged, such as the poor,

women, children, indigenous people, and the handicapped. ESD should also focus on creating awareness of the wide variety of views, opinions, feelings, attitudes, values, and perceptions surrounding issues of sustainable development, often depending on the position in society.

Foster awareness of the natural and built environment, and an understanding of environmental as well as social and economic concepts, conditions, and issues. Without this initial awareness the step from pre-contemplation to contemplation will not be made since there is no understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of certain behaviours.

Fairness and accuracy in describing sustainability problems, issues, and conditions, reflecting the diversity of perspectives on them. It is important to offer different perspectives and, depending on the audience, present a necessary level of facts and data underpinning the information provided.

Real-world contexts and issues, global yet locale specific. People are often encouraged to change when they are presented with examples from reality and from examples to which they can relate and which they know do really exist. Issues of sustainable development have local, national, regional, as well as global implications. Although change, first and foremost, takes place in the local environment of the individual, it is important to recognise the ways that it affects, as well as is affected by, global issues.

A multidisciplinary approach: This flows from the understanding that sustainable development has elements of social, economic, as well as environmental nature. Thus, input, knowledge, and ideas from all the sciences is required, and issues of sustainable development cannot be understood and solved by simply focusing on a particular science.

Not only focusing on formal education, since empowerment of all people is needed. Especially in developing countries with relatively low enrolment in the formal education system, a considerable proportion of the society will not be reached. Therefore, specific attention and focus have to be placed on non-formal education, as well as on

people who are illiterate. As will be discussed later on, this leads to an important role for the mass media.

Strive towards the development and building up of the critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. Issues of sustainable development cannot be solved by simply understanding them, and instead ESD requires people to think critically about the information they are provided with, filter out the information important to them, and apply problem-solving skills to deal with issues that are most critical to their own lives, as well as those of future generations.

#### *Education for Sustainable Living in Bhutan*

Education for sustainable development has until now not been consciously implemented in Bhutan. Instead, the focus has been on merely education to raise awareness about the environment and environmental problems. Moreover, environmental education in Bhutan has been rather limited to environmental studies (EVS), taught in Dzongkha in schools, NFE centres, training institutes, and in Sherubtse College. Furthermore, there have been one-time or regular periodical awareness campaigns such as the Land Management Campaign (focusing on land degradation), the Walk for Life (focusing on human health), water preservation campaigns, STD and HIV/AIDS campaigns, and the yearly celebration of Social Forestry Day (focusing on reforestation).

The Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (RSPN) is one of the main supporters of environmental education in the country. The goal of the RSPN's environmental education program is "to impart environmental education and raise awareness among citizens for promoting positive attitudes and self sustaining citizens' action to conserve Bhutan rich environmental heritage". As such, the RSPN has established environmental education programs at 78 schools and four training institutions, providing them with financial and technical support and distribution of resources; a model self-sustaining citizen involvement program for urban solid waste management; an environment education program with

scouts, National Parks, and the Integrated Conservation and Development Project in Phobjikha; an action and research component in the Wang Watershed Management Project; and an Environment Education program with the Education Department, mainly focused on developing teaching materials for the formal and non-formal education sectors (Royal Society for the Protection of Nature 2005). The RSPN has recently initiated another programme, 'Environment and Religion', focused on disseminating environmental education among the religious institutions and the general populace based on religious texts and precepts.

Although environmental and value education within the formal and non-formal education system, and occasional public awareness campaigns, reach a considerable part of the society, in predominantly agricultural societies such as the Bhutanese, a significant part of the population is not, or only marginally, reached. Moreover, the limited focus on environmental issues neglects other important elements of sustainable development. It is particularly in such situations that the media play a major role in spreading information, providing a medium for discussion, and as a vehicle for change that would lead to a more sustainable society.

### **The Media as vehicle of Education for Sustainable Development**

#### *The Role of the Media in Education for Sustainable Development and Behavioural Change*

The media plays a crucial role in educating and making individuals, communities, and society conscious about sustainable development, the need for more sustainable patterns of production and consumption, and encouraging them to take action directed towards change and a more sustainable future. It is generally acknowledged that not scientists nor politicians, but rather the common man is the most effective agent of change. Once the civil society is familiar with the complex environment and development related issues, it will gain the confidence to act appropriately, leading towards sustainability. A major point for

understanding the role of the media in achieving a sustainable society is that ESD does not only target those in the regular educational system (i.e. school going children and adults attending non-formal education), but the majority of the public. These people can most efficiently be reached through all available mass media including newspapers and other printed media, radio, television, and the internet.

This is reaffirmed in the Programme for Further Implementation of Agenda 21, Article 137, which states that "...education for all needs to be assured as another crucial factor associated with policy development. The concerns of sustainable development, global interdependence and peace must be fully integrated in formal and non-formal education as well as in public awareness-raising" (Commission on Sustainable Development, 1997). The International Council for Science (2002:9) also states that "encouragement should be given to the publication of popular books and magazines, as well as theatrical presentations, radio and television programmes and other forms of mass communication, intended to help the public become sufficiently informed about the nature and impact of key scientific and technical developments to participate effectively in debates about them."

The mass media, especially the radio, are seen as the most cost-effective way of providing information and a voice to all members of society including the marginalised sections (Department of Information and Media 2005). According to the findings of the International Conference on Education for a Sustainable Future (Centre for Environmental Education 2005), the media has an important role in fostering debate, influencing public opinion, and encouraging people to make behaviour changes towards sustainability. Thus even in Bhutan the mass media are widely seen to play a pivotal role in educating and shaping public opinion as well as influencing policy decisions.

#### *History of the Media in Bhutan*

The Bhutanese society mainly depended on oral transmission

of information until the recent past. In absence of newspapers, radio and TV, and telecommunication facilities, word travelled mainly through word of mouth. *Kuensel*, the government gazette, was published from 1965 onwards with as main purpose to inform civil servants on government policies. The majority of the population, being illiterate, was not reached through this medium. In 1973 the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS) started short-wave radio broadcasts, increasing the number of people reached. But still the programmes mainly consisted of limited news bulletins and information on government policies, achievements, and decisions.

The main developments started in the mid-1980s when *Kuensel* became the weekly published national newspaper and the Bhutan Broadcasting Service got the mandate for daily radio broadcasts. In 1989, under pressure from conservative sections of the society, the government ordered all television antennas and satellite receiving dishes to be dismantled. In 1992 the government-run *Kuensel* and BBS were made into independent corporations. In 1999, coinciding with the 25 year reign of His Majesty the King, this was followed by a remarkable liberalisation of the media. Television broadcasting was legalised, allowing around 25 foreign channels as well as the BBS TV to broadcast programmes. A digital telephone network was also installed, internet was introduced through the ISP provider DrukNet, and the Division of Information Technology was established. In 2000, FM instead of SW radio broadcasts of the BBS reached all parts of the Kingdom, greatly improving reception. Between 1997 and 2000, the number of radio sets in the country increased from an estimated 37,000 to 250,000, and in 2000 the number of television sets was estimated at 35,000 or reaching 4 percent of the population, with 0.73 percent of the population having access to the internet and a *Kuensel* circulation of 20,000 (Pek, 2003). Finally, in 2004, public television and internet cafes sprang up in various parts of the country and the first steps were made towards an Information and Communication Technology Act and Media Law (Penjore, 2003).

*Recent Developments in the Media in Bhutan*

The International Press Institute (2006) has reported positive developments in democracy as well as the media taking place in Bhutan. According to Pek (2003) it has been conscious government policy to first establish and privatise the media in order to develop the infrastructure and train the professionals, followed by securing sustainability of the independent organisations, and finally come up with the necessary legislation. The developments in the media in Bhutan are, however, accelerating. BBS can now be received on FM band all over the country and even in the most remote parts of the Kingdom a transistor radio can be found in practically each and every home. The BBS radio broadcasts are estimated to be listened to by around 400,000 people or over 63 percent of the population (Pek, 2003). BBS radio broadcasts in Dzongkha (six hours per day), Tshangla (two hours per day), English (three hours per day), and Lhotshamkha (two hours per day).

From 2005 onwards, the broadcast of BBS TV was nationalised with two hours of programming each in Dzongkha and English. With the increased coverage of BBS television through satellite broadcast since February 20, 2006, antenna and cable are rapidly being introduced in every place that has electricity bringing the news and entertainment right from Thimphu into the rural household and acting as a bridge connecting people with the government and people among themselves (Rai 2006; Acharya 2006). With increased literacy in Dzongkha and English, the number of people that have access to the news through *Kuensel*, now published twice weekly, has also increased, and with the new *Kuensel* office in Kanglung since December 2005 news reaches every major town in the country within a day.

The latest developments include the introduction of two private newspapers, the *Bhutan Times* (first issue appeared on April 30th 2006) and the *Bhutan Observer* (planned for May 2006: Penjore 2006). These newspapers are expected to play an important role in the new political environment but need strong support from society to act as a watchdog for the

## *Media and Public Culture*

democratic system in informing and educating the whole society (N.n. 2006a). In the near future, The National Assembly will discuss the approval of the Bhutan Information, Communications and Media Act 2005 (Ministry of Information and Communications 2005b). This Act, in its Preamble, states that the government will strive to “promote universal service to all Bhutanese especially in the remote and rural areas of the country”. This developing media environment poses both possibilities as well as challenges. According to Pek (2003), the growth of the media has to be directed towards professional growth and development but at the same time be sensitive to Bhutan’s unique goals, hence the need for clear media policies and regulations and for a constitutional assurance of freedom of speech and the media.

All these developments in the media, including increased coverage and access and increased programme time, in combination with a constitutionally secured freedom of press and expression of opinions and a legal framework, mean that there is a huge scope for stepping up ESD in order to reach a larger proportion of the population.

### *Current role of the Media in disseminating education for Sustainable Development in Bhutan*

Just like ESD is currently not yet well-entrenched in the Bhutanese formal and non-formal education system, at the same time the role of the media in disseminating ESD is rather limited. *Kuensel* regularly publishes news articles regarding issues and problems of sustainable development, for example on waste management, the situation of forests in Bhutan, industrial and chemical waste, and road and hydropower construction. These articles, however, merely present the news as it is without going very much in-depth and are not based upon additional research. Moreover, and more importantly, by merely presenting the news they don’t actually encourage action, although these articles have led to improved conditions and action, mostly on the part of the government. Government agencies, such as the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agriculture, regularly publish



health and environment related messages that explain existing or new rules and regulations and encourage or discourage certain behaviours. The first issue of the *Bhutan Times* issued on April 30<sup>th</sup> 2006, had a similar message on forest protection and forest fire prevention.

Regarding BBS radio broadcasting, the following are the programmes which bring information and create awareness to the public regarding issues related to sustainable development:

- Dzongkha service: 25 minutes per week on current affairs, education, and regional issues; 50 minutes per week on women's affairs, health, culture, youth, and social affairs; 75 minutes per week on agriculture, politics, and good governance;
- Tshangla service: 40 minutes per week on culture; 10 minutes per week on education, politics and good governance, and women's affairs; and 30 minutes per week each on health, social affairs, youth, and agriculture;
- Lhotshamkha service: 90 minutes per week on health and agriculture; 40 minutes per week on environment; and 30 minutes per week on current affairs;
- English service: 30 minutes per week on women's affairs; 15 minutes per week on cultural affairs; 60 minutes per week on youth; and 30 minutes per week UN radio.

These programmes are still rather limited in number and, moreover, in many cases, they present current news issues and latest government news; encourage certain agricultural practices (mostly focused on increased income generation and marketing and not necessarily on encouraging sustainable practices; application of chemical fertilisers and pesticides is for example encouraged whereas focus on biological pest control is absent); and often stop at creating awareness, without providing incentives for people and communities to

actually take action. A major advantage of these programmes is that in many cases they take a distinctly rural outlook.

As for BBS TV, right now BBS TV broadcasts from 6 p.m. to 11 p.m. with a repetition the next morning. The programmes are in English and Dzongkha. Per week, 80 minutes of the Dzongkha programme are devoted to regional news from Phuentsholing, Jakar, Samdrup Jongkhar and Gelephu, and Kanglung; 20 minutes to youth, social issues, agriculture and environment, education and health, and current affairs; and 40 minutes to good governance. Of the English programme, 20 minutes per week each are dedicated to youth, good governance, ICT, education and health, current affairs, agriculture and environment, and women. Compared to the BBS radio service, the number of programmes on sustainability issues is much more limited and often the programmes take a more urban view on the issues. Considering the increased broadcasts, and therefore public of BBS TV, this should ideally change.

The audiovisual entertainment industry in Bhutan is still in its infancy although a lot of progress has been made in the recent past. As several audio cassettes produced by the former Ministry of Health and Education as well as the success of the recent street theatre tour have shown, these alternative media have a very high potential in spreading messages of sustainability. However, the right support should be given to them in order to increase efficiency.

The electronic media, mainly the internet, in Bhutan is still in the infant stage when considering access, coverage, infrastructure, and usage. With a large proportion of the population not having access to the electronic media, their development should be a gradual process.

*Increasing the Role of the Media in Disseminating Education for Sustainable Development in Bhutan*

The media are usually divided in printed media (such as books, magazines, and newspapers), the audiovisual media (including TV and radio, and the entertainment media including cinema, drama, and audiocassettes and CDs) and

the electronic media (first and foremost the internet). Here, the recommendations on how the role of the media in disseminating ESD can be improved will be divided in general recommendations (mostly on how to bring a message across and inspire people to take action); recommendations regarding (BBS) radio; recommendations regarding (BBS) TV; recommendations regarding *Kuensel* and the private print media; recommendations regarding entertainment forms of audiovisual media; and recommendations regarding electronic media.

### **General Recommendations**

Although there are several programmes broadcast and published in the media that bring messages of sustainability to the general population, the design of these programmes could be improved to make an impact on a larger proportion of the population. Among the recommendations made are:

Since mainstream media, i.e. those channels broadcasted from India, focuses heavily on news and entertainment programmes popular with the audience (such as serials, fashion, urban concerns and issues), it is the role of the national media to focus on issues of sustainable development (Centre for Environmental Education, 2005). This was also expressed at a meeting of journalists in 2006 where it was argued that the media could help to achieve the eight Millennium Development Goals (Wangchuk 2006).

Knowing the target: It is very important to define and understand the audience and to come up with appropriate strategies to reach the targets. Each and every audience has a different set of values, biases, and conceptions as well as hopes and aspirations for the future and as such, the products should be aligned with those in order to fulfil the desired goals and objectives.

With a largely rural population, the media should pay more attention to rural problems, views and challenges and increase access to the media for rural leaders and populations, for example through the establishment of small

cinemas or professional screening centres in rural areas (Pek 2003). These outreach activities were also advocated during the International Conference on Education for a Sustainable Future (Centre for Environmental Education 2005). This is of special importance in view of the continued decentralisation policies and increased participation of people in decision-making.

Building and supporting a community (Patten 2005) as seen in the Trans-theoretical Model, social liberation is an important process influencing individuals and communities in their transition from one stage of the model to the next. Especially the step from preparation to actual action is heavily influenced by social pressures. Therefore, working within a supportive community will result in more effective and lasting change. The internet is a very effective means for realising this, as the example of the *Kuensel* online forum shows.

Currently, Bhutan has no specialised environmental reporters and the current reporters often lack background to effectively investigate and convey messages on sustainability issues. More professionalism is therefore required. In order to achieve this, environmental reporters, journalists, and programme makers should receive training. Possible assistance to this end could be provided by the Society of Environmental Journalists (Society of Environmental Journalists 2006) whose goal it is to advance public understanding of environmental issues by improving the quality, accuracy, and visibility of environmental reporting.

Alternative sources of funding have to be sought. Procuring as well as producing programs for broadcasting which encourage people towards more sustainable behaviour costs money. Since due to the small population and limited government budget, neither advertisement nor government subsidies will be sufficient for this, funds could be secured for procuring and dubbing these products from the international community and environmental organisations abroad.

Producing programmes designed and directed by local people (either individuals or communities), and publishing articles written by local authors (Pek 2003). Local people have

a much better idea of the issues pertaining to sustainable development that directly affect them and that are of importance to them. Therefore, programmes and articles by local people with a more specific Bhutanese content will generate more interest, hold the attention, encourage people to take action, and will be expressed in an understandable language.

Focusing on good practices and examples from both within and outside Bhutan (Centre for Environmental Education 2005; Patten 2005; Wildlife Film Festival 2005). Individuals and communities will be encouraged to take action when they are confronted with successful and positive changes made by other people, as long as they feel that those changes can be effectuated by themselves as well. It is important to note here that although positive/successful examples will encourage positive behaviour, it is also important to show unsuccessful examples (including relapse into old behaviour) in order to show what could possibly go wrong, as long as it is also shown how this could be prevented or solved.

Making products which inspire people to take actual individual or community action on an issue. As indicated before, ESD does not stop with providing information and raising awareness, but should lead to actions that represent a change from unsustainable to more sustainable behaviour. If an article or a radio or TV programme hits the right snare with the audience, it can be a very efficient trigger for actual action and behaviour change.

Coming to a synergy between audio-visual, audio, and written media (Centre for Environmental Education 2005). Too often these three forms of media are treated in isolation whereas they can actually complement each other and strengthen each other. Messages conveyed in one form of media can be repeated in other forms, thus reaffirming, reinforcing and strengthening the effect of the message among the audience.

Providing accurate and up-to-date information that can be verified (International Council for Science 2002; Patten 2005). As seen in the *Trans-theoretical Model*, consciousness-

raising is especially important when an individual or community is moving from the pre-contemplation to the contemplation stage. It is the accuracy of the information which will often decide the balance between advantages and disadvantages of changing certain behaviour. On the other hand, the accuracy of information provided also influences whether a person might relapse into old behaviour or not. For example, if information becomes available stating that recycling glass bottles uses a lot of water and energy for transportation and cleaning and is therefore not as environmentally friendly as previously thought, this might lead people to give up on bottle recycling. Moreover, current issues in sustainable development are constantly changing and developing and with a lot of research being done, new information is becoming available every moment. And with increased access to electronic media such as the internet, and thus opportunities people have to cross-check information provided, it is important to present information that is accurate and recent. This will avoid people losing trust and confidence in the media when they are confronted with obviously incorrect information. One source of information could be the Environmental News Network (Environmental News Network 2006), the largest and most recognised environmental news source providing daily news updates on environmental and sustainability issues accessed for information by many journalists and other people across the world.

Using simple terminology that can be understood by the audience. It has to be realised that for most people scientific jargon is incomprehensible. Therefore, this jargon has to be translated into simple language that can be understood easily. This is especially important for languages such as Dzongkha, in which most of the scientific terms are not yet or only recently translated and thus unknown to the public. Instead, terms have to be explained and elaborated upon to make them known.

Making products short and to the point, thus holding the attention of the audience and generating interest within the audience (International Council for Science 2002; Centre for

Environmental Education 2005). People have only a limited concentration span especially when more serious issues and concerns are raised. Therefore, it is important to make articles and programmes which convey the message in a compact but efficient way. Other useful tips on how to create a message that grabs the attention of the audience are: using word pictures describing a situation with measures that are familiar and easily visualised (such as for example the number of football fields of tropical rainforest cut down every year instead of the number of hectares); emphasizing additional features, effects, benefits or advantages; working at the appropriate (local, national, regional, global) scale; stressing the human angle by presenting humans as the culprits, victims, as well as solvers of environmental problems; relying on outside expertise if needed, admit what you are not doing; and being persistent (Global Development Research Centre 2006).

Making more products in the local languages (also stressed as outcome during the International Conference on Education for Sustainable Living, Centre for Environmental Education 2005). In a country such as Bhutan with a diversity of around 20 languages, there will always be people who do not understand the national language or the language spoken by other majority groups. These people are in some cases disadvantaged in other ways as well, such as women, the aged, and the poor. In order to reach these groups, products on sustainability issues should be made in local languages.

Evaluate the product and see whether it has reached the goals of education and awareness and participation and behaviour change (Patten 2005). Each product, being a newspaper article, radio broadcast or TV telecast, is made with certain goals in mind. Evaluation of the product will result in valuable lessons as to how the product could be improved in the future to achieve a better result.

### **Recommendations regarding (BBS) Radio Broadcasts**

It is widely accepted that in developing countries with a

considerable illiterate population, as well as scattered and remote settlements and a difficult terrain making communications difficult, radio broadcasts are the most cost-effective means of communication for sustainable development (International Council for Science 2002). According to Pek (2003), despite the increased access to media there is an increasing gap between the haves and the have-nots, to which the BBS radio broadcasts can provide a solution. Although there is an estimated rural population of 70 percent, the importance of the radio has recently become rather neglected.

Radio is considered the main media for mass communication but despite that, the excitement over the introduction of TV has led to the neglect of the radio. Since the Bhutan Information, Communications and Media Act 2005 (Ministry of Information and Communications, 2005), in its Preamble, states that the government will strive to “promote universal service to all Bhutanese especially in the remote and rural areas of the country”, there should be an increasing role for the radio. Shrestha (2005) also mentions that in the case of Nepal, radio programmes are the most effective medium of communication due to the wide coverage, affordability, and the fact that it reaches illiterate people as well.

Making more programmes in the local languages (Pek 2003). Currently, BBS radio broadcasts in Dzongkha, English, Tshangla and Lhotshamkha. English service only reaches those who have sufficient educational background, in particular civil servants and students. Dzongkha medium reaches the majority of the population of western Bhutan as well as those educated in Dzongkha and those whose language is closely related to Dzongkha (i.e. Kurtoepkha/Kurmekha). Tshangla medium reaches a major part of the population of eastern Bhutan who speak or at least understand Tshangla. Lhotshamkha service is mainly directed towards the people of Nepali origin. Thus, the radio services cover a considerable part of the population; however, disadvantaged (uneducated, poor and remote communities) are not reached. This mainly refers to the population of



central Bhutan (i.e. speakers of Khengkha, Bumthangkha and Dungkar Kurtoepkha) and far eastern Bhutan (i.e. Dzalakha and Dakpake, to a large extent also understood by speakers of Brokpake and the Monpa of Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh). If BBS radio could include for example weekly or twice weekly one to two-hour services in Khengkha and Dakpake, this would reach another major part of society. The content should not be limited to news and information but also programmes specifically focusing on local sustainability issues.

Increasing the number and quality of programmes related to sustainability. At the moment BBS radio broadcasts programmes from 7 a.m. till 12 p.m. As mentioned before, during this broadcasting time, there are only limited programmes which bring information and create awareness to the public regarding issues related to sustainable development. Except for the Lhotshamkha service, the other language services do not have programmes specifically about the environment. However, environmental topics are usually presented in other programmes. It can be noticed that health and agriculture are relatively well represented, that the programmes are adapted to the audience (for example the English service has no programmes on agriculture since few farmers will know English), and that regional programmes are underrepresented. Moreover, since most programmes lack in promotion of taking action and actually changing behaviour, they are not very effective in fostering change for sustainable development. The ways in which programme quality can be improved have already been mentioned in the general recommendations section.

Introducing competing FM radio broadcasting stations which could focus on local languages and more local and regional issues, giving BBS the national mandate. With the small population, competing radio broadcasters, even though sanctioned under the Bhutan Information, Communications and Media Act 2005, would rely on government support and subsidies since proceeds from advertisements would be minimal. Moreover, for the moment it might be too expensive to produce quality content. Therefore, it is considered that

BBS radio will remain the main radio broadcaster for the near future.

**Recommendations regarding (BBS) TV telecasts**

Broadcasting time and quality of content should improve: The current broadcast time as well as the number of programmes on sustainability issues is rather limited. Broadcasts should ideally be increased to day-long original programmes. However, as said before, an increase in the BBS TV broadcasts should not be at the cost or neglect of the BBS radio service. Recommendations on how to improve the programme content can be found under the general recommendations.

Regional media houses could be contacted to co-produce programmes to reduce production cost, for example within context of the SAARC. The production costs of programmes solely for the limited Bhutanese market would in many cases be too high. But programmes on sustainability issues produced in Bhutan might find a ready market in other South Asian countries as well as beyond, and programmes produced abroad could be broadcasted in Bhutan. Thus, cooperation between BBS TV and other media companies and media houses could increase the number of programmes that become available.

Regionally and internationally produced programmes could be dubbed in Dzongkha and broadcasted on TV. In contrast to the German and Japanese programmes currently aired on BBS TV, which are purely entertaining, there are unlimited choices in media and educational products available supporting and promoting the transition to sustainability. One example is EcoIQ (EcoIQ 2006), which offers spoken and written products, video and still images, and online resources regarding the environment. Another example is the Environmental Media Corporation (Environmental Media Corporation 2006), designing, producing, and distributing curriculum-based media to support science and environmental education and conservation for classrooms and communities and having a

collection of 450 programs and series for public television broadcast and public use. Alternative funding for the procurement of these programmes should be sought, for example, from international donors, organisations, and agencies supporting sustainable development.

**Recommendations regarding Kuensel and the other printed media**

The increased competition after introduction of the two private newspapers should be a stimulus for more competitive, truthful, accurate, and challenging reporting which makes articles more appealing to the audience. Recommendations on how to improve the content have been mentioned under the general recommendations.

More printed media space could be used for conveying messages and spreading awareness on sustainability issues by showing examples of successful actions and behaviour changes rather than just focusing on news, advertisement, and entertainment.

Frequency of newspapers could increase if more attention would be paid to the above mentioned rather than just relying on news.

**Recommendations regarding entertainment forms of audiovisual media**

The entertainment forms of the audiovisual media include for example audio cassettes and CDs, drama, theatre, street-theatre, and movies. It is recommended that:

The government and other organisations subsidise the production of audio cassettes and CDs with songs containing messages of sustainability that not only raise awareness but also promote action and behaviour change.

The government and other organisations stimulate the development of (street) theatre plays which focus on sustainability issues, for example by sending interested people for training, providing a place for practice, and providing financial support.

Movie-makers are encouraged to insert issues of sustainability into their movies since these movies reach a larger audience and the combination with entertainment might create a synergy promoting change.

Media outreach posts should be set up in every Dzongkhag and major human settlement for the benefit of people (filmmakers, theatre groups) to show their product to the rural population.

The cost of audiovisual entertainment media should be reduced. Right now the price, for example, of audio cassettes not produced or subsidised by the government as well as for example screening of movies is too high for rural populations to access. By reducing cost, the rural coverage will increase.

### **Recommendations regarding the electronic media**

Until the time that internet coverage in Bhutan is increased to include rural areas as well, the roles of the electronic media in achieving more sustainable behaviour will remain limited to:

Being a source of information for journalists and producers of programmes. Those who write and produce the media could use the internet as a readily accessible and inexhaustible source of information on sustainable development. However, caution has to be made that the internet is not an unbiased and objective source of information. In fact, anyone and everyone can publish and present information on the internet and this means that many websites present individual, organisational, or governmental opinions and ideas. These websites should always be used with great care and can never replace first-hand information obtained from, for example, research and scientific journals, which are peer-reviewed and therefore much more likely to present an approximation of the truth. As was mentioned before, there are some websites which try to present more or less objective information on sustainable development.

Being a source of information and inspiration for people on the policy-making and policy-implementing levels. The

internet publishes a staggering amount of messages on sustainability issues accessible to the majority of policy-making and implementing public officials. These messages do not only provide information and create awareness, but can also sensitise policy makers and implementers. They could also encourage them to take action and come up with new policies or increase the sustainability of current ones.

Providing a forum for discussions among the scientific community, policy-makers and implementers, and the general public regarding issues of sustainable development. The internet is a powerful tool for people to express their ideas, opinions, and views mainly because it guarantees anonymity to a large extent. With increasing freedom of press and speech guaranteed in the Draft Constitution people will make increased use of this option, as the Kuenselonline Forum has already shown.

The main recommendation would be that the coverage of and access to internet facilities should be increased to all parts of the Kingdom, especially towards the rural areas. For example, in each Dzongkhag and geog, government-initiated and sponsored internet facilities could be set up. This would encourage literate people to use the internet and provide an additional source of information. At the same time, the cost should be reduced and, with high set-up and maintenance costs, the government should consider subsidising it.

### **Conclusion**

Bhutan, in its Draft Constitution as well as in its *Vision for 2020*, has made a conscious choice that for achieving Gross National Happiness, a path of sustainable development is necessary. This path of sustainable development would lead to a sustainable society, thus maximising economic and social development while at the same time conserving the environment. To move from unsustainable to sustainable practices, a change in behaviour of individuals, communities, and the society as a whole is necessary. This change in behaviour can be supported and influenced through Education for Sustainable Development as well as increased

democratisation, decentralisation, and participation. Although Education for Sustainable Development has not been implemented as such in Bhutan, it is argued that the recent developments in the media as well as the new political dimensions of Bhutan offer an increased scope for effective behavioural change through awareness-raising, education, and encouragement to action-taking. The media is a very effective means of reaching those people not within the regular educational system, often also otherwise marginalised or disadvantaged groups. However to fully exploit this, a number of recommendations is made. These include:

- Focus on issues of sustainable development for the national media;
- Know the audience and the goals and objectives to be achieved; including to pay more attention to rural populations and their issues of sustainable development;
- Build and support a learning community;
- Training of reporters, journalists and programme makers;
- Look for alternative sources of funding, for example through co-production of TV programmes;
- Produce products written, designed and directed by local people;
- Focus on good practices and examples;
- Programmes and articles should inspire to taking individual or community action;
- There should be more synergy between audio-visual, audio and written material;
- Media should provide accurate, recent and verifiable information;
- There should be more programmes in local languages especially in the radio broadcasting;
- The language used should be simple and understandable to all;
- Programmes and articles should remain short and to the point;

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- The role of the radio should increase and not suffer from increased attention to the TV;
- Competing FM radio stations could be introduced;
- Number and quality of radio, TV and newspaper editions as well as the time and space used for sustainability issues should increase;
- Internationally and regionally produced TV programmes could be dubbed;
- The entertainment forms of audiovisual media should be subsidised and cost reduced if they include issues of sustainability and awareness-generating messages;
- The coverage of and access to entertainment forms of audiovisual media should increase especially in rural areas, for example through media outreach posts;
- The cost of the electronic media mainly the Internet should decrease and the access should increase especially in rural areas.

It is hoped that with the implementation of at least some of these recommendations the media in Bhutan will be able to provide the much needed vehicle for Education for Sustainable Development and thus to future achievement of the noble goal of Gross National Happiness in a sustainable society.

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