Foreword

By Ernst Reinhardt, former Chairman

The Society Switzerland - Bhutan was founded in 2000 by some 60 friends who have either been early sponsors or have worked in Bhutan for some time. We had a vision right from the beginning: believing in partnership, we wanted to build two platforms, one in Bhutan and one in Switzerland, onto which to place initiatives contributing to the upcoming civil society in a people to people approach. In 2001, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding with our sister organization which still serves as a guideline. Among other activities we have invited Bhutanese farmers to work with Swiss farmers. We supported the feasibility study and business plan of Bio Bhutan. We were helping out Bhutanese students. And we have conducted a concert tour of BigSenn, a Swiss group, throughout Bhutan in October - November 2008. And last but not least, the Society - with strong contributions of Bhutanese - has published the book "Far apart and close together. Switzerland and Bhutan - Development Partners since 1950". It is thought to be a case reference book about a successful foreign assisted development. This is not to praise Switzerland or Helvetas or SDC, we simply happened to be the oldest western partner. Yet, the book stands to proof that our people and the Bhutanese have done a good job, possibly as good as can be under real-world conditions. That is why we gave it to all Members of the Parliament in Bhutan.

Globalization and Democracy will most likely change Bhutan rapidly. I believe that the Bhutanese (governmental) system and the society are now strong enough to contribute more and more meaningfully to development. Likewise, we should strive for an even more meaningful discourse with our partners. Not the quantity of donations, but the quality of exchanges must be the leading principle.

As the founder president, I was on the helm for eight years until end of 2008. Many words of thanks to all the friends who were helping me.

Outline for 2009

By Patrick Vogel, Chairman

In the past nine years we have initiated and implemented quite a number of projects and activities. The last two projects, the book and the culture tour were by far the largest. Large because of the amount of money used, the number of people involved and the reputation that was at stake. The book is published, and the culture tour took place in October / November 2008. A film about this project will be broadcasted on Swiss television and ARTE in summer 2009.

This shows that our society is capable of delivering results. But it is now time to change from our previous approach of event-driven projects to a more sustainable “development program”.

Just to be very clear about this point: We are not going to be another donor agency. But since the transition from monarchy to parliamentary democracy in Bhutan is in full swing and changes at the various institutional levels and within the society will and are taking place, it is important for our society to find a place in this dynamic environment.

The board initiated a strategy and program discussion last November to develop a clearer framework for our future activities. Results of this “work in progress” are shown in the following chapter.

The following criteria shall be an integral part of our strategy:

• Focus on a region (less developed than other parts of Bhutan)
• Focus on capable, enterprising, innovative people who are willing to be / to become local leaders and multiplicators
• Support based on performance
• Transfer of know-how and expertise through tutors within a broad network

In addition we have to expand and broaden our member base, reinforce marketing and sales efforts for our book and support the sister society in Bhutan with its newly elected president Lyonpo Dr. Pema Gyamtsho. This is the necessary groundwork we have to do.

Unfortunately, I have to announce my resignation from the chair of the society only six months after the election. Due to the economic
crisis I am confronted with a sudden unpre-
dicted increase of work load in my company «reflecta». This situation needs full manage-
ment attention from my side as our business
has to react quickly to accommodate short
term demands from our customers. A solution
for my succession will be presented at the next
meeting.

Strategy and Programme outline

Main aim of the Strategy

Developing / strengthening enterprising people
as the main driver of socio-economic welfare
and stability with potential leverage e.g. in
Kheng / Shemgang, one of the poorest regions
of Bhutan.

Framework conditions

• The Bylaws shall apply
• The Memo of Understanding signed on
  2001 by the two sister organizations Soci-
ety Switzerland – Bhutan (SSB) and Bhu-
tan – Switzerland Friendship Association
  shall apply
• Official development policy taken as
  granted
• Co-operation, non-duplication of other
  agencies policy and activities
• Synergies with Helvetas / SDC Activities

Focus

• Regional: proposal Board (upper) Kheng
• Social: existing or potential multiplicators
  providing leverage; supporting projects to
develop civil society institutions (cooper-
tation; mutual support)
• Thematic: Rural producers (priority farmers
  or affiliated industries), Workshops
• Participation / Capacity Building: Through
  supporting the development of the sister
  organization in Bhutan

Report on Culture Tour 2008

By Patrick Vogel

It was Sunday, the 26th October 2008, when a
group of seven musicians, three film crew-
members and eleven supporters including
Ernst and Annegret Reinhardt embarked on
Swiss flight LX183 to Mumbai. After an adven-
turous and tiring journey, including a last mi-
ute change of our travel
itinerary, carrying 700kg
of baggage and equip-
ment through Mumbai
airport (which was under
construction) – not to
mention the formalities
of importing and re-
exporting musical
equipment that customs
officials have never seen
before - and an over-night stop in Kathmandu
due to bad weather in Bhutan, we finally
reached Paro on Tuesday, 28th October 2008,
in the brightest of sunlight. Tired, but very re-
lied that none of our equipment had suffered
any damage. What came next was an inten-
sive and emotionally very challenging cultural
experience in every sense of the word.

The concert tour started in Paro where a huge
crowd of locals gathered to enjoy the cultural
program of Bhutanese and Swiss traditional
and modern music. In retro-
spect this was a
key success factor in our shows: to fusion with
Bhutanese culture. For instance we played
three popular Bhutanese folk songs together
with local singers. We also learned quickly
that the Swiss yodeling was going to be the big hit
in our performances.

The tour took us further
to Thimphu, where we
played in front of an
official gathering, cele-
brating the centennial of
the Wangchuck dynasty.
This concert unfort-
nately did not go well.
Various circumstances
including unauthorized
fiddling with our sound
system contributed to
this dreadful experience
- in the words of a musician. We continued to
Gelephu and performed with Bhutanese and
Indian groups in the football ground, perfectly set-up for this event. Again a huge crowd of locals watched the dancing and listened to the music. The following days took us to Zhemgang where we played on the sports ground, further on to Bumthang where the show was performed in the hall of Jakar Junior High School. In Mongar we played in the hall of Mongar High School, the chief guest was a high Lama who visibly enjoyed the music. We then went further east to Trashigang and performed at Sherubtse College. It was a rousing gig thanks to the young and enthusiastic Bhutanese students. Some of them played and some listened. And then came our last show in Samdrup Jhongkar. The setting was beyond our imagination. A grand stage in the middle of the sports ground and a cultural show that lasted for more than four hours followed by a Bhutanese buffet for the whole crowd. Again hundreds of people joined in. For us it was indeed a “grande finale”.

We left Bhutan on the 10th November 2008. A short stay in Guwahati / Assam and Delhi and then we quickly returned to the daily challenges of our real world.

The concert tour was a successful adventure. Every show was completely different and unique. Thanks to the support of the local authorities and people who put so much effort in organizing their event.

We therefore would like to thank all the people involved. Foremost Dasho Pema Wangchuck, who accompanied the group during the first days in Bhutan, made sure we had a good start. A special thanks goes to Dasho Tshering Wangda and Sangay Tshering who made the tour possible through their personal efforts.

Financial report

By Patrick Vogel and Ernst Reinhardt

To cover the issue and meet the demands of financial information the board decided to hold an extraordinary general assembly on May 9, 2009.

Please help us to make the sales of books a story of success and order additional books as gifts for friends (see enclosed flyer). If each SSB member orders two books: ≈ 250 books à CHF 69 = CHF 17’250

Board Members

Patrick VOGEL
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Managing director / partner of reflecta ag (management consulting and law firm in Bern and Zurich)
SSB Board: Chairman. Board member since 2002.
Motivation: To participate / engage myself in active people to people exchange between Switzerland and Bhutan.

Dieter BRATSCHI
Riedweg
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Forest Engineer M.Sc. ETHZ
SSB Board: Accounting & Finance
Motivation: To support the Society in their tasks to provide valuable assistance to the Bhutanese.

Marianne FREI
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Lecturer, Counsellor, Zürich University of Teacher Education
SSB Board: Communication
Motivation: Continuing 15 years of experience as a consultant in education and organisational development in Bhutan in the interest of the Society.

Dominique GUENAT
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PhD in agricultural sciences, professor for agricultural economics at the Swiss College of Agriculture, Zollikofen
SSB Board: Special projects, mainly in the field of agriculture
Motivation: Maintaining contacts between people in Switzerland and in Bhutan through a platform that should exist beyond the end of formal Swiss-Bhutan development cooperation.

Erwin KOENIG
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653 Grande Route,
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Agronomist
SSB Board: Programme management
Motivation: Keep ties with Bhutan. Avail some of my time and experience to the Society.

Julia MENK
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MSc in Geography / Scientific Officer - Federal Office for the Environment
SSB Board: Member administration / Network Switzerland-Bhutan
Motivation: Introduce and establish the Network Switzerland – Bhutan.

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Forestengineer M.Sc. / Urban- and Regionalplanner ETH / M.B.A
SSB Board: Special tasks
Motivation: Networking.

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