

Retreat and Bonding
A self-care program
August 4th, 2019

Druk-Youth Initiative of Sexual Advocacy
Asia Safe Abortion Partnership



Coincidentally, August 4th was an auspicious day for the entire country and we had already decided to block the date for a hike where we could give ourselves some time to know each other better. It was a retreat and an opportunity to understand self-care, a topic we never discussed before. The hike was about 5 hours and we spent about 3 hours at our destination, talking to each other about our lives and discussed self-care at length besides slightly touching upon on the subjects of feminism and safe abortion. We started our journey at 8 am in the morning and returned by 5 pm in the evening. This time, out of 13 of us, only two were young men.

The following were the members who went on hiking and bonding:

Sl.no	Name	Mobile number
1	Sonam Choden	77619207
2	Chonei Zangmo	17600640
3	Karma Pelden	17674540

4	Sonam Zangmo	17504772
5	Sonam Zangmo	17946947
6	Sonam Choden	16911387
7	Ashok Gurung	77756864
8	Dorji Wangmo	77446411
9	Karma Choden	17958004
10	Tabita Gurung	77635200
11	Rinchen Dawa	17893591
12	Ugyen Dema	17737488
13	Wangchuk Dema	17613386

It was a good getaway from the meetings and programs we normally conduct as we walked and trekked through the forest, it was a beautiful occasion of connecting with the nature. We brought lunch and many snacks to munch along the way as we sat down a couple of times to rest. The young members had a good time with all the songs they sang while hiking.



When we finally reached the destination, which by the way was a Buddhist temple called Talakha Goenpa. There were many other visitors as it was an auspicious day of Buddha's first sermon. All of us gathered beside the temple and rested a bit before we went inside the temple to pay our respects.



Then, we went to the other side of the temple and sat there to have our refreshments, we had cakes and tea and more. We did a round of introduction as some of us were not very familiar with each other; we told our names and the village that we come from.



We all know taking care of ourselves is important but we usually think of it than actually do it. When these young people were asked if they take care of themselves, the answer was a definite yes but added that it may not always be the most helpful or useful of care. Also, the coordinator

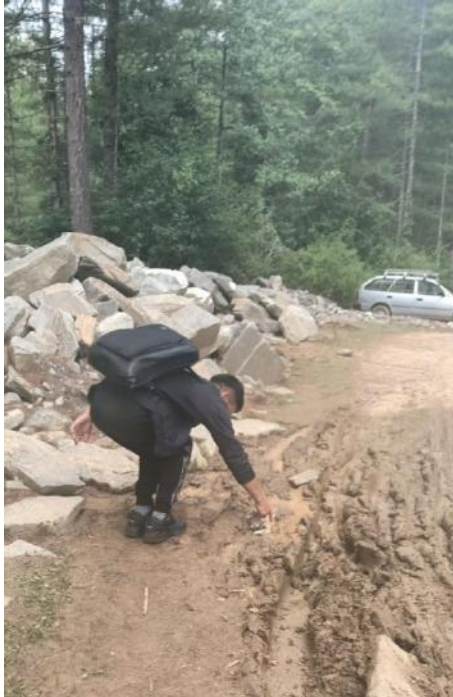
Wangchuk Dema threw a follow up question that made them realize an important lesson; how would they feel after doing nothing of importance like binge watching a series or nothing at all on a weekend especially after a week of putting a lot of efforts in studies and advocacy or being part of advocacy? Each one of them had something negative to say such as ‘it was a waste’, ‘feeling guilty’, ‘should have done something productive instead’ and similar views.



Then they were told that all of us have felt that way and many people still feel that way and it is okay to feel that way. However, what is more critical to reflect is that those feelings and thoughts are secondary and should in no way affect our relationship with oneself in terms of self-esteem and trust for oneself. Wangchuk Dema declared that if a person has been working themselves to the point of exhaustion, they certainly deserve a break – and that is self-care.



She then shared her personal story of how failing to maintain a healthy relationship with herself got her sick. When she was in second year in college, she was super active in the advocacy of SRHR and gender equality. At one point, she used to return as late as 10 pm to her room when she for the first time in the history of college organized a pageant for college girls with the theme 'beauty with brain', and she went to sleep without dinner and got up in the middle of the night to grab a packet of Maggie. After few months, she was diagnosed with Tuberculosis. She now has fully recovered and perfectly learnt a good lesson of giving oneself the self-care and self-love.



Working hard is important, be it for studies, or one's job or hobby or advocacy or activism and sometimes without knowing we burn out. And more importantly, understanding when to stop and take a break is essential in the recovery of one's energy and passion.

We then briefly talked about feminism and safe abortion especially to sensitize our three members who had joined us for the first time. None of them have heard about feminism before and after our discussion, they shared that they have never had the opportunity to learn about these issues.



They now know that feminism is about equality for all and that abortion in Bhutan is in fact conditionally legal

Lastly, on our way back, we collected garbage to remind ourselves that we can make small difference in our own little ways. Overall, it was a tiring yet refreshing at the same time and we look forward to building the movement based on closeness and trust amongst all the young members as this retreat has provided the assurance that we can have fun while advocating.

