

**The International Conference on Disaster
Management and Cultural Heritage
“Living in Harmony with the Four Elements”
7th - 9th September 2010**

by
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Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs,
Royal Government of Bhutan.**

SUMMARY of PROJECT

Conference Title	:	International Conference on Disaster Management and Cultural Heritage “Living in Harmony with the Four Elements”
Dates	:	7 th , 8 th and 9 th Sept 2010
Location	:	Thimphu, Bhutan.
Implementing agency	:	Department of Disaster Management, Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, Bhutan
Partner Agencies	:	The World Bank, and the UN

Background

Even though cultural values and traditions lie at the heart of the social fabric of local communities who are the main victims of disasters, these values are often overlooked or marginalised during disaster management initiatives. Many local communities have employed and adapted indigenous knowledge and traditions for many centuries and these have often proven to be exceedingly successful in disaster prevention and recovery. Therefore, for the holistic recovery and positive growth of communities after a disaster, it is essential to integrate local cultural traditions and heritage into the overall framework of disaster management initiatives.

With globalization, many cultural traditions are slowly fading, are often marginalized in economic development efforts and during disasters, they are particularly vulnerable to being lost forever. This International Conference on Disaster Management and Cultural Heritage will help fill in a crucial gap in the international initiatives on disaster management and offers a valuable opportunity for the world to highlight and address these concerns, share knowledge and experiences and increase the profile of cultural heritage and indigenous traditions for disaster risk management.

Theme: “Living in Harmony with the Four Elements”

The four elements: **earth, water, fire and wind** are the four key elements that the universe is composed from. Negotiation and innovation to live with the four elements in various forms has always been an integral part of the history of human beings. These four elements of nature are at the core of the causes of natural disasters such as floods, wind storms, landslides, forest fires, and earthquakes. The key to mitigate the impact of disasters lies in living in harmony with these four elements since they are also the source of nourishment for man. Local communities have adapted cultural and traditional practices to live in harmony with the four elements over many centuries and these are invaluable sources of values, knowledge and

technology. The International Conference on Disaster Management and Cultural Heritage therefore, has adopted the theme “Living in Harmony with the Four Elements”.

Participants:

- Organisations at all levels (Governments, NGO's, private sector) involved in disaster management
- Organisations at all levels (Governments, NGO's, private sector) involved in cultural heritage.
- International experts and academicians in the area of culture and disaster management.
- Community leaders- both formal and informal leaders
- Local traditional practitioners- master carpenters, masons, etc.
- Local community stakeholders and victims of disasters.

The tentative target is 50 international participants and 50 local participants.

Objectives of the conference:

1. To foster and strengthen international and regional partnerships to leverage national policies, programs and systems in disaster management and cultural heritage conservation.
2. To share knowledge of tangible and intangible aspects of culture, local traditions and technology for integration of these values and assets within the framework of disaster management.
3. To examine local traditional knowledge systems and practices and develop new ideas, enhance practical tools and approaches to incorporate these practices for disaster management
4. To create frameworks to include local communities and their values and traditions in the preparation and implementation of risk management plans, and all stages of disaster
5. To provide an opportunity to connect key players and organizations to create new networks and strengthen existing networks on cultural heritage risk management and link these to the larger networks for disaster management.

Conference Format:

The conference will be arranged around the 4 key different stages of disaster management.

Within each key stage of disaster management, **the integration of cultural assets and the inclusion of local communities and their traditional practices** and values will be presented and discussed.

1. Disaster Risk Reduction and Mitigation.
2. Response during a disaster.
3. Post disaster recovery.
4. Rehabilitation and steps forward to the future.

There will be an international open call for submission of papers. The submissions will be reviewed by a panel made up of local and international experts. The presenters for the conference will then be selected by the panel.

Sessions for the conference will be consequently put together based on the main issues discussed in the papers submitted and international presenters selected by the panel.

Pre Conference Program

To give participants of the Conference an opportunity to visit cultural heritage sites and meet local communities in Bhutan, a pre-conference program has been suggested. The tentative program is as follows:

Day	Program	
	Arrival in Paro of participants	
4 th Sept	Night halt in Paro	
Day 1 (5 th Sept)	Option A	Option B
	National Museum, Drukgyel Dzong and Kyichu Lhakhang	Trek to Taktshang Monastery
	Night halt in Paro	Night halt in Paro
Day 2 (6 th Sept)	Travel to Punakha, visit the Punakha Dzong and travel back to Thimphu	
	Night halt in Thimphu	
Day 3 (7 th Sept)	Option A	Option B
	Folk Heritage Museum, Institute of traditional Arts and Crafts, the Textile Museum, Semtokha Dzong	Morning - Trek to Tango Monastery
		Afternoon - Folk Heritage Museum
	Evening - OPENING CEREMONY	