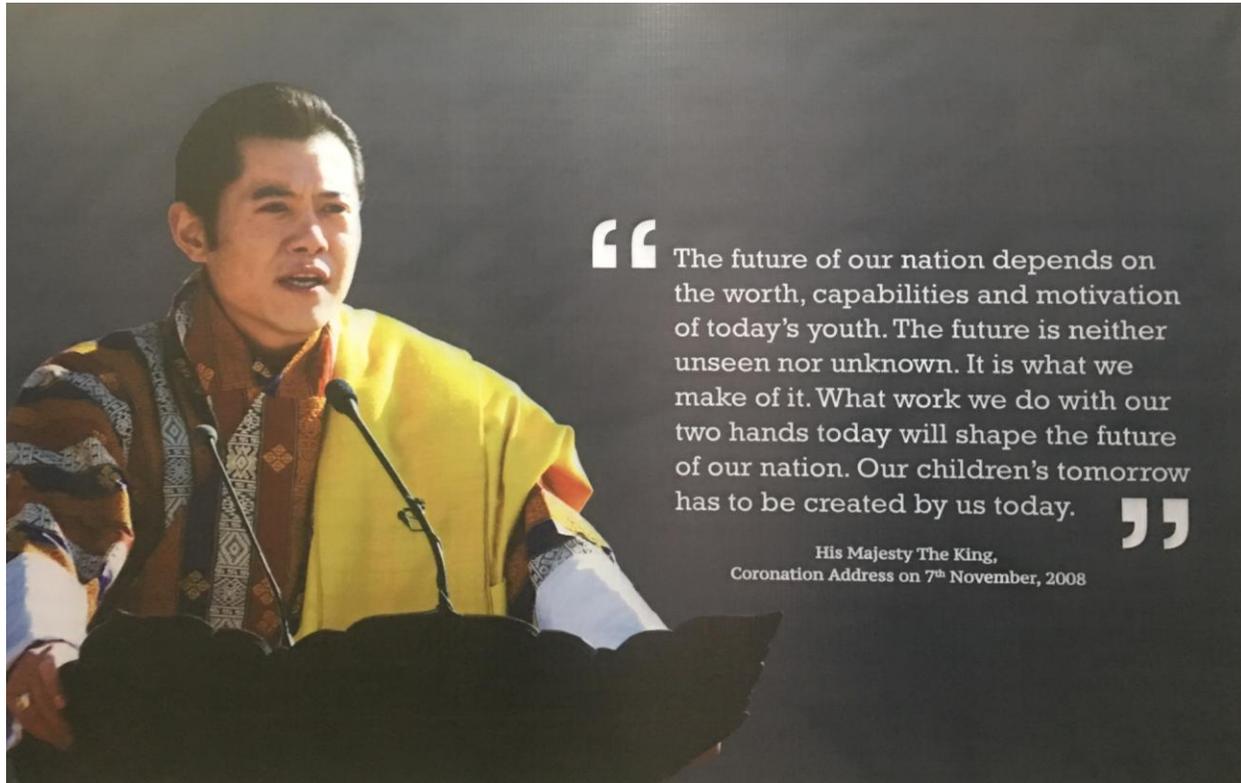


REVIEW OF BUSINESS INCUBATION UNITS



TTI CHUMEY & KHURUTHANG January 2018

Submitted to HELVETAS, Swiss Intercooperation, Country Office, Bhutan.
By ENNOVENT Bhutan



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1. Abbreviations:

APA – Annual Performance Agreement
BIU – Business Incubation Unit
NC – National Certificate
CAB – Construction Association of Bhutan
CDB – Construction Development Board
CNR – College of Natural Resources
CTC – Construction Training Centre
DTE - Department of Technical Education
FYP – Five-Year Plan
IZC – Institute of Zorig Chusum
MoLHR – Ministry of Labour and Human Resources
NC – National Certificate
NPPF – National Pension and Provident Fund
OJT – On the Job Training
RCSC – Royal Civil Service Commission
TTI – Technical Training Institute
TTP – Thimphu Tech Park
KRA – Key Result Area

2. Introduction:

A review of Helvetas's support to the Business Incubation Units (BIU) established in the TTIs at Chumey, Bumthang and Khuruthang, Punakha took place from January 1 to 15, 2018. The review's overall objective and the scope as defined by the Helvetas were:

- To critically assess and analyze the current status of two BIUs under the MoLHR.
- To draw clear lessons and practical recommendations as a basis for the second phase of the skills development project.
- To conduct a desk review of 1-2 incubation models targeting youths in the region/internationally for comparison and lessons.
- To present the findings including lessons and best practices from elsewhere and recommendations to the MoLHR Task Force (recently formed to take forward private sector engagement) and HELVETAS.

The findings in this report are all based on consultations and interviews carried out with the relevant people at the TTIs at Chumey and Khuruthang including trainees and with relevant people from the MoLHR. A comparative analysis was made with best practices as documented in the region and internationally.



TTI Chumey

The idea of instituting these BIUs was conceived during the 11th FYP by the MoLHR as an extension and replacement of the Construction Training Centre (CTC) that was closed in 2008. Initially it was instituted as 'Business Units' and not as BIUs. Business units functioned exactly like the CTC focusing more on real construction work wherein 80% of the trainings were availed at the job sites and 20% at the institutes. However it was eventually transformed into BIUs, as the TTIs are Government institutes and are not allowed to carry out commercial activities. The primary objective of the BIUs was to promote work experience and enhance the standard of skills of the TTI graduates and provide employment opportunities especially after completion of the training programs from the institutes.

Business Incubators in general seek to provide basic facilities like workspace, mentors, equipment, and Internet connection. In addition, it provides various forms of business planning, managerial advice, office facilities, and education in finance and accounting, access to business networks and legal services etc.



TTI Punakha

However, the BIUs at the TTIs are still at the initial stages and these fundamental attributes are not in place as of now other than a room at the institute(s) used by the in-charge as his/her office. The interaction with the trainers and trainees also indicated that they have not understood the concept or fundamentals of a business 'incubator' in its true sense. This can be mainly due to lack of adequate facilities or education provided at the time of establishing the BIUs.

2.1 Impact:

Notwithstanding the fact that the BIUs do not have enough facilities in terms of manpower or infrastructure and also that the BIUs are only as old as 2 years and only about 6 months in case of Khuruthang and the IZC, the achievements are commendable particularly in the areas of the skills demonstrated by the trainees.

- BIUs were expected to incubate the trainees and make them more employable by providing hands on job experience. This is something that the TTIs are carrying out successfully in addition to the maintenance work carried out during the on the job training (OJT). Earlier when the BIUs were not established, the trainees were sent on OJTs only while they were still undergoing training and the duration is also only about two to three months depending on the kind of job they secure for the OJT. As such their experiences are limited to carrying out only maintenance jobs as opposed to full construction packages like now. Now with the full packages availed through the BIUs, it has provided the trainees a platform to showcase or demonstrate their skills; as such

this has been a visible value addition according to the staff and trainees. TTI Chumey received a lot of appreciation as feedback from the construction work carried out by their trainees at various locations. They also bagged the 1st prize during the 14th National Skills Competition.

- The TTIs were also provided with certain incentives from the Government that allows them to get works/contracts for the students directly without having to bid. An example of this is the government order that states that all maintenance work in the Bumthang Dzongkhag Sector Offices must be awarded to the TTI at Chumey. Having a BIU enables the institute to take up these works, providing their graduates with experience as well as filling the labour gap, without having to affect their regular courses by sending trainees on OJT.
- According to the TTI Chumey Principal, due to the attractiveness of the training programs especially after having upgraded them to National Certificate (NC) level, and other facilities like the BIU, even students who qualified for higher education after completing 12th standard are now coming to join the vocational institutes.



Toilet at the Gup's Office at Tang and Horse Farm Office at Bumthang constructed by TTI students, Chumey

However, while the BIU activities have been able to attract students towards skills development over the years, adopting the BIU or the skills acquired as a career option have not been happening as expected. They also have not been able to progress in the areas like bringing together potential business partners, developing business plans or form 'self organized groups' to promote self-employment. The trainees themselves outside of the BIU initiated some group formation after graduation and did work in the local areas but since they were informal groups, they were unable to create adequate visibility or sustain their business. This in turn made it difficult for them to sustain and continue their self employment.

3. Issues – Management:

As of now the management of the BIU is directly under the Institutes and managed by a regular staff/trainer at the institute nominated as 'in-charge of the BIU'. There is no separate space or infrastructure other than a normal room designated as the BIU office.

- The management could not recruit a separate manager for taking care of the BIU on a contract or regular basis as agreed at the time when Helvetas decided to help set up the BIUs in Chumey and Khuruthang.
- The TTI trainees who are involved in construction contracts availed through the BIU are not directly involved in how the BIU functions other than executing the construction at the site. As such they have no idea how the negotiations are carried out.
- The BIUs lack the basic minimum facilities a normal BIU should have. For instance, a small facility like having an Internet connection connected to a few desktops would go a long way in terms of getting virtual exposure by the students. This could have helped the students getting information regarding skills requirement and the latest technology that is prevailing in the market.
- Other than the BIU in-charge, there are no mentors at the BIU to guide the students as such. In fact, the existing staff members are used for monitoring the students at the work site and also mentoring. This often hampers (according to the staffs) the completion of their training curriculum on time at the institutes. Therefore, due to shortage of manpower, all other functions of the BIUs as agreed could not be carried out.
- From the management side, it apparently drains out the institute's limited budget in the form of daily subsistence allowance (DSA) paid to the trainers who are constantly on the move to monitor the trainees at the work site.
- Other resources like rations, tools, equipment of the institute also fall short because of these trainees at the site. For instance at Chumey, trainees said they have to take rations from the institute's mess when they go to the work site but they often run short and when the work site is far away from the institute they do not get enough to eat till they get additional ration.
- Other than construction of one duplex and bungalow for NPPF executed by the trainees of TTI Chumey at Debsi in Thimphu, most of the other OJT works are around the locality. As such there is a lack of visibility in recognizing the skills of the TTI trainees.



Consultation with NC II and III students of TTI Chumey

3.1 Recommendation:

If the BIUs are to be kept under the institutes, certain short-term measures have to be taken in order to achieve the objectives:

- Immediate recruitment of a separate manager and skilled mentors for the BIU, both for technical fields as well as for financial and business management.
- Capacity building should be focused on training the mentors and on functions of the BIUs. A basic operating level training skills in using computers and internet for both trainers and trainees would be very useful as well. A full training needs assessment should be carried out to ensure that the training programs include relevant modules.
- Day to day functions should be carried out independently from that of the institute regardless of where the BIU is located. Activities such as mentoring, management of projects and day-to-day administration and financial management of the BIU should be segregated from that of the institute.
- The BIU manager must on a regular basis promote the BIU to trainees and other relevant skilled workers highlighting the benefits and purposes of the BIU. Advocacy programs should also be introduced to create awareness in the market and create necessary linkages with the relevant stakeholder like the Construction Association Board (CAB), Construction Development Board (CDB) etc.

- The BIU should be equipped with at least a few desktop computers connected to Internet. Depending on availability of funds, a separate BIU should be constructed or leased outside the main administrative building of the institute for easy accessibility by the trainees.
- The functions and guidelines for the BIUs should be revised and more focus should be placed on creating linkages, mapping the skills requirement in the market and providing information to the TTIs, negotiation of contracts on a continued basis, development of criteria for the trainees to join the BIU after graduation, resource mobilization for the BIU to improve the facilities and working conditions. Appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) should be developed for the BIU to measure the growth and success of the BIU.

4. De-Linking the BIU from the TTIs – WHY?

Owing to the various issues faced by the TTIs, and through interaction with the staff of the institute and even the Ministry officials who deal with the TTIs on a daily basis including the Helvetas project Manager; the consensus from stakeholders is that they prefer de-linking the BIU altogether from the institutes. If the BIUs are de-linked from the TTIs;

- TTIs can focus on the training programs as per the APA and outsource the OJT to the BIU. An agreement could be developed between the TTIs and the BIUs in terms of sharing resources, use of tools and equipment till the BIUs become sustainable.
- The BIU would be a separate entity registered separately on its own and eventually it would gain recognition and visibility in the construction industry. The graduates opting to join the BIUs should remain for at least 3 to 5 years before they can go and work in a company or start one on their own.
- The Ministry will have to support the BIUs initially in the form of seed fund, infrastructure and some equipment till the BIUs are fully functional and sustainable.
- One of the requirements for this review was to look at some best practices outside that can be applicable in our context here. In most other countries, BIUs are redundant in that the construction companies take on the role of mentoring and skills up gradation as a part of their corporate HR strategy. A case in point closer to home are companies such as L&T that have taken on some of the construction of hydropower projects in Bhutan. L&T has its own training institutes in about seven states in India, which train workers based on work demand/ changing technology to ensure that all workers have the skills set necessary to complete the work on hand. There is continuous assessment of the skills of the construction workers and training is planned accordingly. The Bhutanese construction companies are not in a position to develop something as comprehensive as L&T because of the limitations and uncertainty of market in Bhutan as opposed to the investment needed. As such, it makes sense in Bhutan's context to have a separate entity managing this crucial step between training in the TTIs and the construction industry.
- Furthermore, having the BIU under institute or the Government causes inefficiencies. As the BIU is expected to sustain itself over time, profit generation is necessary which requires more efficient use of resources and management strategies, which the

Government or in this case the TTIs are not being able to provide. The addition of the BIU creates an additional burden on institute management and instructors and takes away attention from their core function. As such, the objectives and goals of the BIU are being sacrificed at the moment in the interest of the institute's other interests based on which their performances are being evaluated.

- Finally, the institute has the capacity for construction skills training but lack in providing the necessary guidance in entrepreneurial skills, business management, negotiation and other soft skills that are one of the main mandates of the BIU. This is understandable as the institute and the instructors are not actively a part of the job market or the construction industry. But a private BIU should provide these soft skills to the trainees without excuses.
- If the BIU's were under the institutes, due to constant movement of people from one department to the other, Ministry-to-Ministry, the efficient management and growth of the BIU would be hampered. Further since the income generated through the BIU cannot be shared with the people managing the BIUs at the institutes, their commitment towards making the BIU function successfully is questionable. On the other hand, a private BIU would be fully committed to make the BIU function successfully as they have equal stake together with the trainees in the income generated.

4.1 Recommendation:

The following recommendations are not necessarily specific to 'If the BIUs are de linked from the TTIs' but more like continuation to the recommendations on page 3.

- Doing any business including construction depends highly on three fundamental requirements: skills, information and finance. So while the trainees would have acquired the skill part, the BIU should work towards generating income to make it financially sustainable in the long run through contract jobs and also provide all the required information to the trainees by constantly scanning the rapidly changing environment and equip employees at all times with the required knowledge and information.
- Further a culture of continuous learning and development should be in place through structured core developmental programs, conducted by relevant institutions/construction companies for employees to develop superior skills and capabilities. This would require the BIU to constantly be in touch with the construction contractors and relevant agencies like CDB. This has not been happening at the BIUs at the time of the assessment. While talking to a few large construction companies, they indicated that they do not have the knowledge from where to get TTI graduates so they just advertise on social media on a need basis. Further it is apparently difficult for the construction companies to get the required numbers of TTI graduates for a project at any given time. As such they prefer getting the laborers from outside since they not only can get the required numbers but also at a cheaper cost.
- BIUs should maintain a '*labour bank*' and recruit as many trainees as possible and keep increasing the numbers in the subsequent years. If the numbers as per demand could be

met, the cost factor could be resolved through quality of work demonstrated at site and with Government intervention.

- In order to maintain the numbers required at the BIU to meet the market demand, a bond should be signed with the trainees who opt to join the BIU like the Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC) does with the civil servants at the time of recruitment.
- BIUs should develop the capacity or collaborate with other relevant institutes (government or private) in the country to enable the TTI graduates to meet the challenges and demand for construction skills in terms of safety, quality of workmanship and time as per the prevailing standards in the market.
- A career enhancement program within the BIU would highly encourage the trainees to join the BIU after graduation.
- If the Ministry is not ready to de link the BIUs from the TTIs immediately; a pilot could be carried out by choosing an institute and bringing in a private entrepreneur who would be interested to form a BIU and provide hand holding services to the trainees after their graduation. If the pilot works, the lessons learned could be used to scale the BIUs including all TTIs. This would provide the necessary information to validate the recommendations made in this report, but also allow for a more gradual change in the perceptions of the implementers in better understanding the needs and requirements for a successful BIU. The pilot outsourced BIU would also get the private sector more fully engaged in the process of skilling and maintaining a skilled labour force, adding value to Government efforts.

5. Conclusion:

The TTIs and the BIU should focus on the long term objective of channelizing the potential and strength of Bhutanese youth, for producing a trained construction workforce capable of delivering and substituting the labour force that is currently being imported from the neighboring countries. The BIU experience has the potential, if managed correctly, to provide adequate skills, experience and knowledge and enable them to become entrepreneurs. This can be seen from the work they have carried out until now (listed in annex 2). Further the BIUs can be the bridge that can reduce the gap between the skills demand and supply in the country and also would play a huge role in building the eco system in the construction industry. At the moment the eco system is very much fragmented and various players within the construction industry, government or private, seem to operate independently.

A labour bank under the BIU consisting of the TTI trainees would go a long way in building this gap between the stakeholders, understanding the need for skill set, mechanizing the construction industry. There is without any doubt, abundance of skilled workers but being able to use their skill sets productively, someone if not the Government should handhold and take them to the right place where they can be gainfully employed since they lack the required knowledge to do it themselves.

6. Annex 1.

6.1 List of People Interviewed or interacted with during the Review:

- Mr. Pema Tshering, Principal TTI Chumey
- Mr. Sangay Dorji, Vice Principal TTI Chumey
- Mr Samten Dorji, BIU incharge of BIU, TTI Chumey
- Mr Jurmi Dorji, NC II graduate (on OJT at Tang)
- Mr Tshering Namgay NC II graduate (on OJT at Tang)
- Mr, Yonten Pelzang, Principal, TTI Khuruthang
- Ms Wangchukmo, BIU member TTI Khuruthang.
- Mr Karma Dorji, Project Manager, MoLHR
- Mr. Kesang, DCPO, DHR, MoLHR
- Mr. Jigme Wangchuk, PO, DHR, MoLHR
- 40+ NC II and NC III graduates of Chumey TTI at the Campus Assembly Hall
- Druk Chabchab Construction and Lhojong construction Company Ltd.

7. Annex 2:

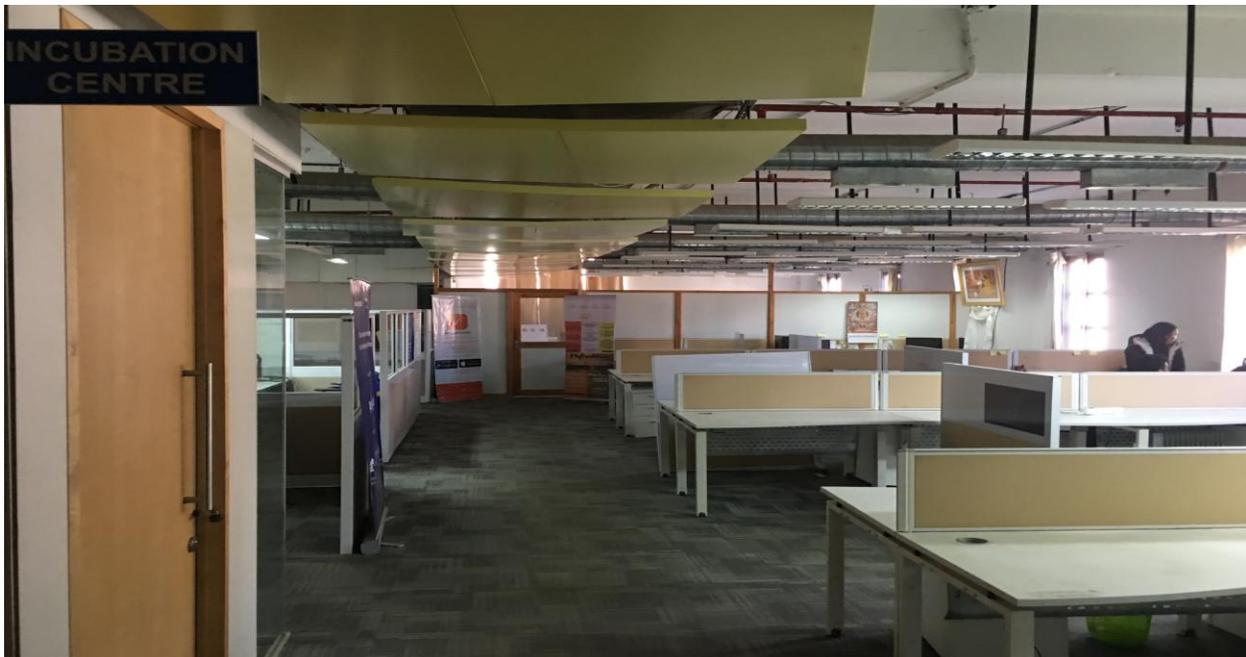
7.1 Work done by the TTI trainees through the BIUs:

1. NPPF a duplex and a bungalow at Debsi, Thimphu TTI Chumey Trainees
2. Maintenance of horse farm in Bumthang, TTI Chumey
3. Construction of office building at the Horse Farm at Bumthang, TTI Chumey
4. Construction of toilet and maintenance of Gup Office at Tang, Bumthang (ongoing), TTI Chumey
5. Pipe fitting at the Thinleygang Higher Secondary School, TTI Khuruthang
6. Construction of shed and installing benches at the football ground, CNR Lobesa TTI Khuruthang

8. De-briefing at MoLHR:

Based on the findings of the review, a de-briefing presentation was subsequently made on the **22nd of January 2018** to the officials of the MoLHR task force chaired by the Hon'ble Secretary. The Hon'ble Secretary expressed that the timing of the review could not be more appropriate as the ministry is in the process of formulating the programs for the 12th FYP and also appreciated the quality of review by the consultant. He thanked the consultant (Ennovent Country Director) and HELVETAS for the very comprehensive review and putting forward useful and thought provoking findings for discussion that could help the Ministry formulate relevant programs for the 12th FYP.

The discussions were focused around the issues and how they can be dealt with going forward. As indicated above in the report, the issues were mainly around the 'modus operandi' since the BIUs are within the TTIs, both the management as well as the infrastructure. The participants agreed with the issues that were pointed out and Honble Secretary highlighted that the BIUs as it is not acceptable since the TTIs have not been able to make the BIUs function like it should and also since most of the objectives outlined while establishing the BIUs have not been achieved. The BIUs should be focusing more on providing the softer skills that they would not have acquired during their training period at the TTIs. These soft skills combined with the construction skills they have would enable them to become more employable or become entrepreneurs eventually. The trainees should be encouraged to form self help groups and the Ministry in return could provide certain incentives to these groups for availing construction packages without having to compete or bid for works. The Secretary pointed out that the impact created thus far could have been achieved without the BIUs at the TTIs through on the job training.



TTP

It was pointed out during the presentation that the overall objective of promoting the skilled workers is to cater to the skills demand in the market and eventually substitute the workers that are being imported from the neighboring countries as of now. These workers treat the

construction jobs here as a training ground for them to gain experience and moreover, a minimum of 25 to 30million Bhutanese ngultrum (approximately USD 45'000) is being drained out of the country annually. As Bhutan is a developing country, more than 50% of the Five Year Plan budget or annual budget is allocated for construction and that does not include the private construction.

Another important issue pointed out through the presentation was the comparison of how similar BIUs functions outside in other countries. It was highlighted that the major difference is such BIUs in most other countries are established and managed by the private sector, particularly by the construction companies within their campus but conversely, the BIUs here are established by the Government with the help of development partners like Helvetas and run by the TTIs. This can be attributed to the fact that our construction industry is still at a nascent stage and the construction companies do not have the capacity to establish such units within the company and also because there is no guarantee that they will get construction jobs on a continuous basis.

However, best practices show that, to be able to achieve the objectives of the BIUs, private sector or more specifically the construction industry involvement is key as they can provide employment opportunities and experience for the trainees who can make use of their skills before being able to take on any construction works or become an entrepreneur by starting businesses related to the skills achieved.

Further it was unanimously agreed that a BIU should be equipped with the fundamental requirements at least like mentors, computers with Internet connection and an infrastructure that is accessible to the trainees. While it was discussed that the government could run BIUs by providing support like infrastructure, tools and mentoring until the incubatees become independent and are able set up his/her own business, the views of the Hon'ble Secretary also were skewed more towards de linking the BIUs from the TTIs.

Agreeing to the review recommendations, Dasho Secretary also questioned if Chumey, Bumthang is indeed an "ideal location" for a BIU. Considering the transportation cost, volume/economy of scale and that all large construction companies are located in Thimphu, Chumey might not be the best location. To this effect, Mr. Karma Dorji, the project manager, of Helvetas skills development was instructed to discuss the same with the task force considering the credible reasons for the relocation and propose the same to the Government as an activity for the 12th FYP.

It was recommended that if the de linking cannot be done immediately due to all the investment that were pumped in by Helvetas and the Government, a pilot could be carried out by a private entrepreneur while maintaining close linkages with the TTIs and the existing BIUs. This essentially means that a private company could form an independent BIU and retain the TTI graduates and cater to the skills demand in the market. The BIU could carry out contract negotiation on a continuous basis, create linkages and visibility, map skill requirement in the market and in turn provide feedback to the TTIs to introduce new curricula by removing skills training that are redundant. The Secretary articulated that the project should focus on a few priorities (of the government) rather than spread the resources thinly to achieve tangible impacts by the end of the project period and also liked the idea of piloting after identifying an ideal location to fulfill the priority of strengthening the BIUs in the next phase.

The Secretary requested the consultant (Ennovent Bhutan) to come back for a more detailed discussion on this after the Director of the Department of Technical Education who was on leave at the time joins office.

8.1 De-briefing PowerPoint presentation:



What is a BIU..



A business incubator Unit is where a program offered with the sole purpose of supporting the establishment and growth of small businesses by offering support services to entrepreneurs. Support services offered can include fully equipped working space, technical assistance, advice, coaching and mentorship.

-Durban University of Technology

These services are developed or orchestrated by **incubator management** offered both in the business incubator and through its **network of contacts**.

It provides **information, education, advocacy and networking resources**.

IMPACT



Chumey BIUs is only as old as 2 years but the achievements are highly commendable in terms of the skills demonstrated by the trainees. HELNETAS supported TTI Chumey BIU with Nu. 1.2 M (establishment, computers etc)

- NPPF a duplex and a bungalow at Debsi, Thimphu
- Maintenance of sheep farm in Bumthang
- Construction of office building at the Horse Farm at Bumthang
- Construction of Toilet and maintenance of Gup Office at Tang, Bumthang (ongoing)

Chumey TTI also bagged the 1st Prize during the '**14th National Skills Competition**' held from 7 to 9th November 2017



Impact...



BIU at TTI Khuruthang is only about 6 months old yet:

- They installed the drinking water pipes at Thinleygang Higher Secondary School
- Constructed shed and benches at the football ground of CNR, Lobesa
- All in all, both TTIs and the trainees expressed satisfaction in getting hands on experience from the BIU initiated contracts



Issues



Management:

- BIUs are managed by the TTIs - Shortage of fund and facilities
- Cannot make profits
- No Takers of BIU services
- Shortage of trainers
- No Private sector involvement
- Lack of career enhancement plan
- NO visibility – BIU & Non-formal groups
- Don't have the numbers (supply) and also cost are high - contractors

De-Linking BIUs - WHY



De-linking of the BIUs from the TTIs is something virtually all people consulted during the review seem to prefer based on the following reasons:

- TTIs being able focus on providing the training only
- There are no or very few takers of the BIU facilities after graduation.
- BIUs as Government entity not allowed to engage into commercial activities.
- Can focus on fulfilling the the other objectives and upgrade it gradually.
- The BIU negotiate contracts continuously to provide employment

Best Practices outside...



Best practices outside that can be catalyzed (not comparable)

- BIUs are redundant in that the pvt. construction companies have their own BIUs
- Take on the role of mentoring and skills up gradation as a part of their corporate HR strategy.
- A case in point closer to home are companies such as L&T that have taken on some of the construction of hydropower projects in Bhutan.
- L&T has its own training institutes in more than 6 states in India

LT – a case in point



Induction Programme at LT

- On-boarding process, all fresh entrants go through an Induction Programme, to give them an overview of the breadth of work and get them acclimatized to the work ethos.
- The trainees work on technical projects, individual assignments, product simulations, and undergo various technical as well non-technical exercises.
- The programme is a good mix of **technical & behavioral** programmes

Recommendations...



- Highly Skilled trainees (demonstrated) should be recognized, perhaps through a accreditation system within the BIU
- The BIU should be the bridge between the skilled workers and the construction center.
- Should form a 'labour bank' to meet the demand eventually (numbers). Self help groups should be initiated and keep under the BIU supervision
- Separate theory classes on BIU functions and importance should be taken by BIU staffs
- Separate adequate budget for BIUs
- Self sustainable eventually
- Create adequate visibility



Recommendation - Way Forward...



Why Helvetas wanted this review done?

- Intend to continue supporting the TTI/BIUs in the 12th Plan – ‘2nd Phase’.
- Use the findings to plan and articulate their support meaningfully:

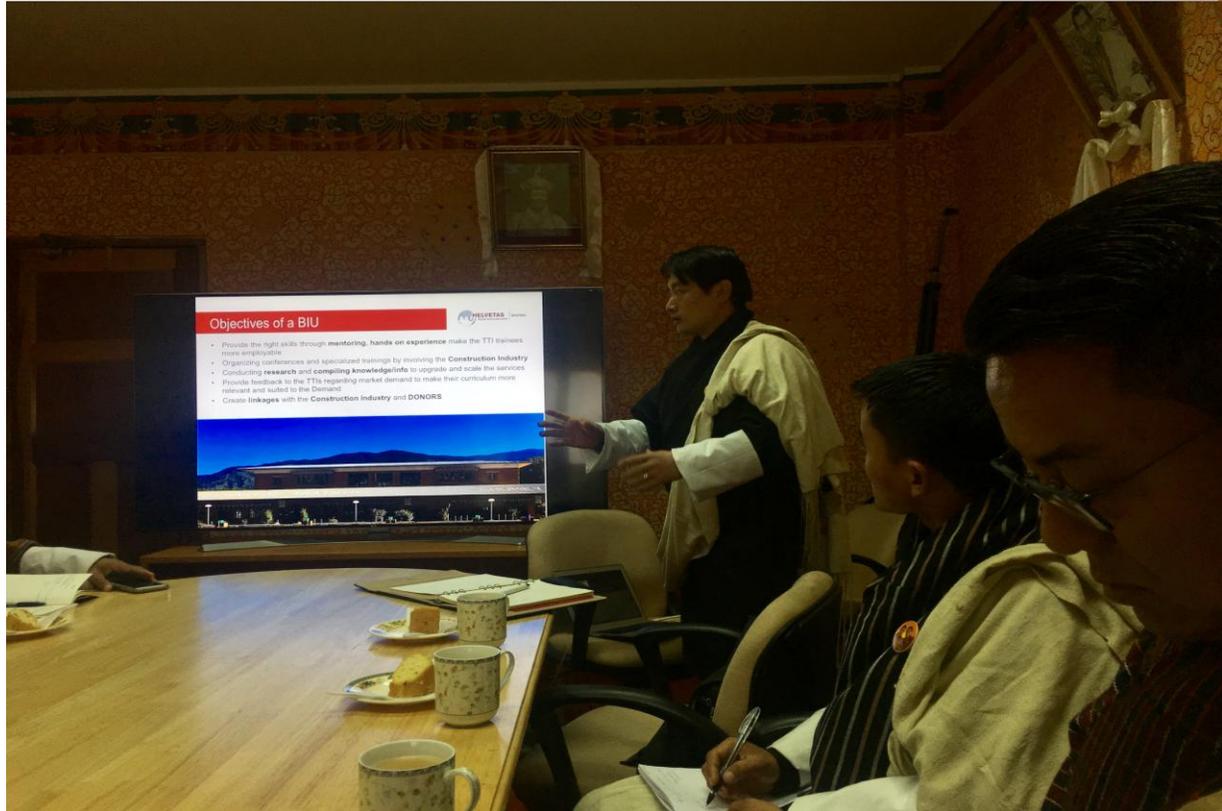
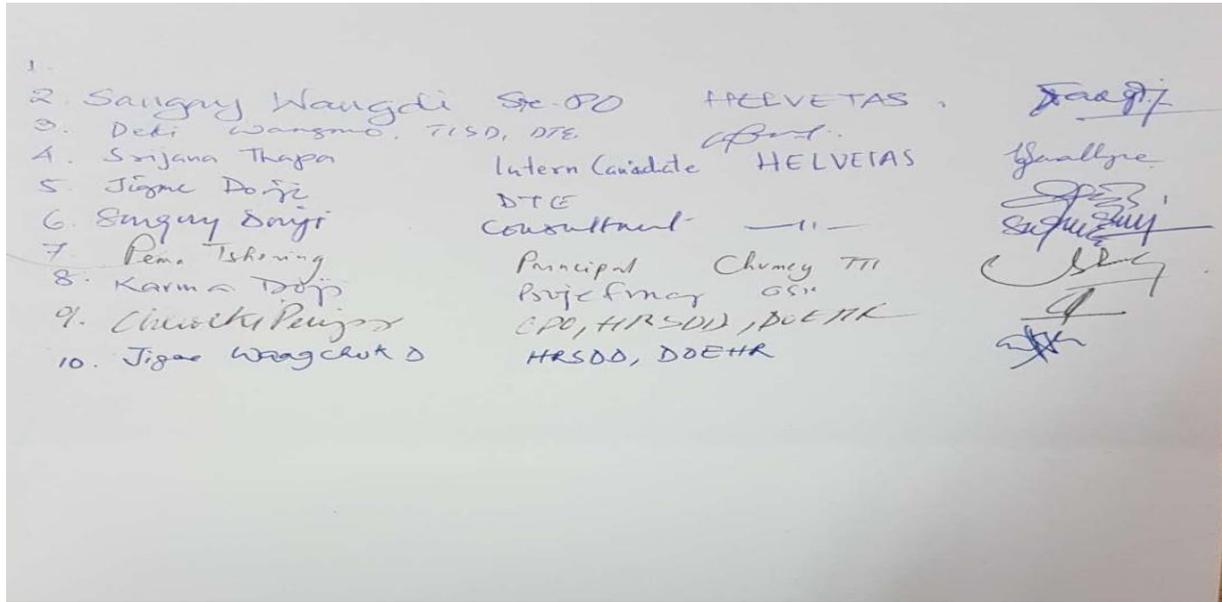
So as a joint effort in the 12th Plan:

- The MoLHR should help identify the right option, plan and support the intervention. eg – outsourcing the management of BIU
- New and innovative intervention should be identified instead of reinventing the wheel
- Annual Performance Agreement (APA) Targets for the TTIs and BIUs should be kept broad
- Should consolidate the efforts, resources and similar other activities by other Development Partners and private sector players



8.2 List of Participants during the De-briefing at MoLHR:

The Hon'ble Secretary of the MoLHR chaired the de-briefing session at the Ministry. The other participants consisted of the task force members from the ministry and officials from Helvetas.



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