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## **BARC for animal welfare**

Focused on animal happiness and welfare, Bhutan Animal Rescue and Care (BARC), a civil society organisation (CSO) works for a happy co-existence of animals and humans in the country.

Although BARC was officially registered as a CSO in 2013, the idea had come up as early as 20 years ago from Marianne Guillet and Hendrik Visser. Marianne Guillet also known as Rochi Ama (mother of dogs) is a French architect and geographer turned veterinarian, while Hendrik Visser is a Dutch civil engineer and sociologist.

Today, BARC shelters 320 dogs, 12 cats and 27 macaque monkeys at its rescue centre in Yusipang.

One of the founding member of BARC, Hendrik Visser, said that the centre provides 24 hours rescue service, pick-up animals in need and organise transport through supporters. “We strive to reintegrate or relocate recovered animals but those who are handicapped, those who suffer from chronic diseases and those who are old always find a warm permanent welcome at our shelters and sanctuary.”



Similarly, the rescue centre in Paro shelters numerous dogs, cows, cats, goats, mules and pigs.

Services such as medical treatment for wounds, infectious diseases, cancer/tumours, gastroenteritis, skin infections, orthopedic surgery, prosthetics and cesareans are provided.

Hendrik Visser said that for a compassionate and happy animal society, BARC conducts advocacy, awareness and education programmes to promote the importance of practicing kindness, animal welfare and compassion-in-action towards all animals.

He added that to reach more animals in need and to easily identify and monitor sick and injured animals, BARC aims to involve communities and networks of volunteers in future. “This would also allow us to know where dog sterilisation campaigns are needed and with help from volunteers, we hope that it will be easier to catch dogs as they are friends.”

Apart from helping animals in Thimphu and Paro, the organisation also takes in animals from across the country. BARC is challenged with limited space and lack of private veterinarians in Bhutan.

Hendrik Visser shared the need for a national policy to allow provision of small animal veterinary services by CSOs. “We cannot recruit doctors and nurses for the animals today. Many animals do not get the care they actually need,” Hendrik Visser said.

Currently, BARC functions with most of the animal care cost covered by personal donations. The need and hope to develop a good fund raising strategy to make it more sustainable was also shared.

BARC plans to establish a ‘Centre for Animal Happiness (C4AH)’ in the future.

He added that if private veterinary is allowed by CSOs, BARC could establish small animal care centres. “Tourists now often complain about the suffering dogs they see on their trip and they call us for help. In such cases, we can really make a difference.”

BARC believes that happiness can be attained by creating happiness for all others around us, including animals. “Animals are sentient beings with feelings, consciousness and integrity and deserve to be treated with respect, kindness and compassion.”

## **Vision**

To stimulate the progression of Bhutan's society towards Gross National Happiness (GNH), where animals are treated and cared for with respect, kindness and compassion, and where a healthy and happy co-existence of animals and humans is the norm.

**Mission**

The Bhutan Animal Rescue and Care (BARC) aims to achieve its vision through:

The establishment of 'Bhutan Animal Rescue and Care Centers' and a 'Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation Center', with high standard animal rescue, shelter and medical treatment services;

Advocacy, awareness and education programmes to promote the importance of animal welfare and practicing kindness and compassion in action towards animals.

**Phurpa Lhamo**