



TV

# UNITED NATIONS NATIONS UNIES

U.N. IN ACTION

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Week of 29 March 2004

Programme No. 898

Duration: 5'06"

**A NEW ROLE FOR BHUTANESE MONKS**  
**PROMOTING GOOD HEALTH PRACTICES IN COMMUNITIES**

**VIDEO**

**AUDIO**

LANDSCAPE (5.5")

**NARRATION**

Bhutan, a Buddhist kingdom between India and China.

PELDEN WELCOMING MONKS  
(6.5")

Pelden is a typical farmer. Her family of fourteen subsists on four acres of land.

(11")

Like most villagers, she believes that spirits are the causes of all misfortunes, including sickness, and invites monks to perform pujas.

PELDEN PROSTRATING IN  
FRONT OF ALTAR/MONKS IN  
PRAYERS (7.5")

Puja is a religious ceremony to cast away evils, and to pay respect to the deities that are guarding the houses.

(11.5")

When someone gets sick, rather than going to the hospital, many turn to the monks for pujas, believing that the cure lies in appeasing their guardian spirits.

**PENJOR:**

UGYEN PENJOR ON CAMERA  
(5")

"Community people trust monks more than the other officials and health workers."

INTRO (6")

NARRATION

Ugyen Penjor works with the United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF, to promote better health.

UGYEN PENJOR ON CAMERA  
(15")

PENJOR:

"Whenever they get sick, they just don't go the hospital. And by the time they get help from the monks, take pujas and keep the patient at home, and by this time, it's too late to refer the patient to the hospital."

LANDSCAPE OF  
COUNTRYSIDE (6.5")

NARRATION

Isolated in the Himalayas, Bhutan started development only in the 1960s.

(12")

Many rural communities have no access to roads, no radios or televisions. The closest health clinics are often kilometres away.

MONKS IN WORKSHOP (21.5")

A project was launched a decade ago to assist Bhutan in reaching the goal of universal access to safe water and sanitation by 2007. Known as the Religion and Health Programme, it promotes scientific approaches to health care and trains monks to give out modern health information. Anoja Wijeyesekera is the Representative in Bhutan.

OVER HER

ANOJA:

ANOJA WIJEYESEKERA ON

"In Bhutan, mass media is a very recent

CAMERA (28")

phenomenon and even today outreach to television is very limited. So to communicate with remote communities in far-flung places, such as mountaintops, the most effective medium of communication is through the monks because every single family has consultations with the monks."

PAN ROAD TO MOUNTAIN

#### NARRATION

MONKS WALKING DOWN  
STEPS (12.5")

Founded in 1754, the Nolanda Buddhist Institute houses 35 novice monks. They are part of the country's monastic order of 5,000 lamas.

MONKS RINGING GONG/INTO  
PRAYER ROOM (6.5")

For centuries, monks have devoted themselves to religious studies and the pursuit of enlightenment.

(9.5")

Held in high regard by people, particularly in remote areas, they are often the only link between communities and the outside world.

WORKSHOP WITH PENJOR  
(16")

Ugyen Penjor travels to monasteries to give teachings on basic hygiene. He tells the monks to take frequent baths, wash their hands more often and keep their finger nails clean all the time. The lamas, in turn, will pass on this knowledge to villagers.

POSTERS (15")

Bad habits, lack of sanitation facilities, and contaminated water sources make diarrhoea and worm infestations common in rural Bhutan.

In view of this, elementary hygiene is the basis of the monks' training programme.

MONKS WASHING  
HANDS/CLEANING LATRINES  
ETC. (22")

And the monks are putting theory into practice. They take pride in keeping their environment clean. The project has helped over 50 monasteries across the country to install and upgrade water supply systems, sanitary latrines and bathhouses. Over 3,000 religious practitioners have been trained.

PELDEN PREPARING TEA (17")

They make use of the social time after pujas to give advice. A recent survey indicates that the scheme is working. Farmers increasingly are seeking medical help in hospitals, even for minor injuries. Villagers, including Pelden, are listening to the monks.

UGYEN PELDEN ON CAMERA  
(11")

PELDEN: (dialect)

"The monks tell us to keep clean, which we have always been. They say we must remember to keep drinking water clean. Being clean will prevent us from getting sick."

MONKS WITH PELDEN (15")

NARRATION

Pelden says the monks also tell her to go to the hospital when someone in the house gets sick. She says she will, but she'll also invite the monks to perform pujas just in case the illness is caused by evil spirits.

LOGO (12")

This report was prepared by Patricia Chan for the United Nations.