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Good Practice Cases of Community Engagement Platforms (Case Studies from Gozhi, Nubee and Toewang) March 2026

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List of Acronyms

- CEP – Community Engagement Platform
- CFs – Community Facilitators
- CZ – Chiwog Zomdu
- CZ–GT – Linkage between Chiwog Zomdu and Gewog Tshogde
- DLGDM – Department of Local Governance and Disaster Management
- EU – European Union
- GAO – Gewog Administrative Officer
- GT – Gewog Tshogde
- Gup – Elected Head of Gewog
- Mangmi – Elected Deputy Head of Gewog
- MTs – Master Trainers
- RCC – Reinforced Cement Concrete (bridge type)
- Tshogpa – Elected Chiwog representative

1.0 Objective and Methodology

This study aims to establish a benchmark for an ideal Community Engagement Platform (CEP) through an assessment of several good practice cases. The focus is not merely on tangible outcomes, such as the construction of a road or a bridge, but on the replicable processes that enabled these successes. By examining the dynamics of leadership, collaboration, and problem-solving at the grassroots level, this analysis seeks to inspire and inform key stakeholders—including Master Trainers (Mts), Community Facilitators (CFs), and decision-makers within the Department of Local Governance and Disaster Management (DLGDM)—on how to foster similar achievements.

The methodology employed involves presenting a series of narrative case studies, each illustrating a unique community-led initiative. These narratives are then analyzed against a predefined set of thematic models and analytical criteria, including participatory engagement, institutional linkages, and consensus-building.

The following cases from Dagana (Gozhi Gewog), Trongsa (Nubi Gewog), and Punakha (Toewang Gewog) provide a rich evidence base for understanding these success factors in practice, demonstrating how empowered communities can translate their needs into tangible, sustainable development.

2.0 Thematic Analysis of CEP Good Practice Cases

This section delves into the specific narratives of five distinct community initiatives, exploring the context, challenges, and triumphs of each. Every case is first presented as a story to provide a rich, human-centered context for the subsequent analysis. Following each narrative, a thematic breakdown examines the events through the lens of relevant models, such as participatory engagement, institutional linkages, and consensus-building, to distill the core principles at play.

2.1 Case Study: The Rise of Female Leadership in Dagana (Januka Poudel)

For years, the seven households in Januka Poudel's Chiwog operated under a familiar pattern. Male coordinators were appointed—educated men who could "talk and move around," as the women would say. It seemed natural, even inevitable. The women had internalized a simple belief: coordination required education, mobility, and a voice that would be heard. These were things they thought only men possessed.

But the reality on the ground told a different story. The male coordinators were often connected to big contractors and didn't stay in the Gewog. When decisions were made about resource distribution, the concerns of women went unheard. When meetings were called, information rarely flowed back to the households. Resources were distributed unfairly.

For women like Januka, community meetings—the zomdus—were sources of anxiety "We used to be scared and cried, worried what it was, why people were gathering," she recalls. There was an unspoken but pervasive stereotype: women's talk was of no importance. In a system where their voices didn't matter, why would they speak at all?

Slowly, the women began to discuss among themselves: the male coordinators didn't stay, didn't understand their needs, didn't show up to meetings or relay information.

Januka Poudel, a single mother who had been quietly observing these patterns since becoming involved with CEP in 2019, came to a realization that would change everything: "I realized that I can do better."

Taking that realization and transforming it into action required more than just confidence. It required allies.

Januka approached the Mangmi, who was then serving as the Tshogpa. "I went and complained to her," a simple act of frustration and hope. Mangmi gave Januka her moral support and encouraged her to take on the role of CEP coordinator herself.

Januka also found encouragement from her father, who had years of experience as a Tshogpa. He had seen the dysfunction of the current system and recognized his daughter's capability. With his blessing and Mangmi's backing, Januka gathered the courage to propose something radical to her group: that she, a woman, should become their CEP coordinator.

The seven households deliberated. There were no speeches, no promises—just a simple question hanging in the air: could a woman do what the men had failed to do?

They all agreed.

The change was immediate and profound. Mangmi, reflecting on Januka's tenure as coordinator, put it simply: "After she came on board as the CEP Coordinator, there were no complaints, no need to announce for cooperation. She coordinates and gets things done!"

What had shifted? Where male coordinators had been absent and disconnected, Januka was present and embedded in the community. She understood the daily rhythms of the seven households—what priorities truly mattered. Information began to flow smoothly. Cooperation emerged organically rather than through top-down mandates.

But Januka's impact extended far beyond her own chiwog. During the COVID-19 lockdown, when the community members needed support most desperately, she became a lifeline. She distributed rations to community members, personally delivered medicine to people with disabilities, and assisted households with navigating community orange taxes, house insurance, and land tax—bureaucratic processes that, without her help, would have been overwhelming for many.

She led beautification projects and coordinated the construction of a canopy for community gatherings. Each action built trust, demonstrated competence, and quietly dismantled the old stereotype that had kept women silent for so long.

For Januka personally, the transformation was even more profound. "Instead of staying home in an idle situation—now as CEP coordinator I have talked to Dashos, which would have never happened if I didn't take up this role," she reflects. The young girls in her community began to look up to her. Elders gave her their blessings. The community's respect, once withheld from women in leadership, now came freely. "I want to motivate young girls," Januka says.

Perhaps most importantly, she found her voice. "I am able to speak up in the Chiwog Zomdu and ask about the budget to the Tshogpa," she explains—a simple statement that represents a revolutionary shift in her own sense of agency and in her community's willingness to listen.

The true test of Januka's leadership came when her community identified a critical need: maintenance of 1.5km road that connected their households to their drinking water source.

The need was first voiced in the Nangzom. She brought the discussion to the Chiwog Zomdu, where nine CEP coordinators (five male and four female) gathered to deliberate on resource allocation. Januka presented the case: the road was not just important but essential, particularly for water access. She made the argument clearly and persistently. The coordinators agreed that from the 1.2 million budget, 0.7 million would be allocated to road maintenance in Januka's Chiwog.

This decision was validated through community scanning conducted by the Tshogpa, which confirmed that Januka's Chiwog road was indeed a priority for the broader area.

The agenda from the Chiwog Zomdu was then taken to the Gewog Tshogde, where it was approved for implementation in 2019-2020 budget. What had begun as concerns whispered among women in a Nangzom had travelled through every level of local governance and secured substantial funding because a woman coordinator had the trust, the skill, and the platform to carry it forward.

Reflecting on what made this success possible, Januka is clear: "It is important that the Gewog officials understand about CEP. We need the support. For me, the main support came from Mangmi and my father."

Success did not come without resistance and loneliness. Bringing cooperation among community members was harder than Januka expected. Some questioned her authority directly: "Are you Tshogpa?" they would ask dismissively, as if her role as coordinator carried no weight without a formal title.

There were days when she went to work sites alone, searching for people to help, her calls going unanswered. When building the canopy, the group started together but gradually drifted away, leaving Januka to finish the project by herself. But slowly, persistently, people began to see her effort. Actions spoke louder than titles. The completed canopy stood as evidence. The smooth distribution of rations during COVID, the advocacy that secured road funding, the consistent presence at every meeting—these things accumulated into a reputation that could not be dismissed.

"But slowly they started to see my effort," Januka says.

Today, Januka Poudel speaks with a clarity born of experience and struggle. "There's no point in staying or accepting inequality. I want to speak up and serve as a representative,"



The picture shows active participation of community people in beautification, including the construction of a community canopy, under Januka's leadership.

Thematic Analysis

- **Participatory engagement – Nangzom:** Januka's leadership fundamentally transformed the nature of community participation. She replaced an environment of absenteeism and unfair resource distribution under previous coordinators - where women were "scared and cried"—with one where needs were voiced, starting in the informal Nangzom. By being a consistent and trusted presence, she ensured that discussions were inclusive and that the concerns of all seven households were genuinely heard and translated into collective action, dismantling the stereotype that "women's talk was of no importance."
- **Establishing linkage of CEP–CZ–GT:** Januka's success in securing road maintenance funding is a textbook example of an effective linkage between grassroots needs and local government. The process demonstrates a functional pathway: the need was identified in the Nangzom, formally proposed and defended by Januka at the Chiwog Zomdu, and finally approved and funded at the Gewog Tshogde. This journey illustrates how a competent coordinator can secure the necessary moral, technical, and financial support from the local government to turn a community priority into a reality.

2.2 Case Study: Youth Leadership and Collective Action in Dagana (Pem Chuki)

Pem Chuki still remembers the journey along that rough path through Nangzom in 2018, the year everything began to shift. Before the CEP arrived in her village, development seemed like something that happened elsewhere, to other people. The neighbors who lived just houses apart rarely agreed on anything of substance. They had their zomdus, their community meetings, but these gatherings felt hollow—full of noise and confusion, with people wandering in and out, no proper attendance taken, no real decisions made. Many didn't even understand why they were there, sitting through the Chiwog Zomdu with blank faces and restless hands.

Then Pem Chuki became the CEP coordinator for her group of eight households. She was only twenty-two years old, young enough that the responsibility felt enormous, but the Mangmi had seen something in her and encouraged her to take the role. She became the first coordinator in her area, stepping into territory that felt unfamiliar.

When her Nangzom group sat together and conducted their community scanning, really looking at what surrounded them with fresh eyes, they began to see clearly what needed to change, what could be improved. They started with things they could do themselves, using what they had. The cow sheds came first—the Gewog provided some resources, and they moved from household to household, assessing what each family needed. Some required just one or two items to improve their sheds, others needed nothing at all – just manpower, and a few families didn't even keep cows. But they worked through it together, household by household.

They improved the footpath so the elderly could walk more safely. They installed dustbins around the area and established regular community cleaning routines. But the biggest need, the one that emerged most clearly from their nangzom discussions, was the farm road. Pem Chuki carried this need to the Chiwog Zomdu and presented the problem: their community had no access road. She met resistance. Other CEP coordinators from neighboring Chiwogs were reluctant, skeptical. However, Pem Chuki had to prove it—she had to make them understand that they had no passable road at all.

With her persistence, something shifted. Neighbors who had barely spoken to each other began to work together. They started to see that these efforts weren't for individual gain but for everyone. Now they have seven and a half kilometers of farm road winding through their community.

In the beginning, getting people to cooperate felt nearly impossible. Meetings would be announced and people simply wouldn't come. However, after they began to understand, they started showing up, offering support. What changed their minds was witnessing the transformation in other households. When people saw neighbors coming together and making real changes, the logic became clear: if one person alone requested resources for a cow shed, it wasn't fair to others and made it difficult to secure anything from gewog office. But as a group, they had power. They could see that collective action brought results. The Gewog would provide what it could, they would discuss among themselves, divide the resources, and make do.

Before, only the loudest voices were heard in meetings. Now women speak up with confidence, contributing ideas that are genuinely good, ideas that get implemented. Pem Chuki herself feels the change within. She used to defer every decision, saying she would ask her father first. Now she listens carefully, analyzes the situation, and makes decisions herself. She calls it leadership, though it took years to claim that word. The support from the gup and tshogpa made it possible, giving her the backing she needed to step fully into the role.

She understands things now that once seemed mysterious—the rules and procedures that govern development work. They used to follow old traditional methods simply because that was what had always been done. But now they are the ones with information, the ones who understand the community's real situation. They used to wait endlessly for government support. Now Pem Chuki tells her CEP members something different: we can do this ourselves.

Her members have grown so accustomed to her leadership that they insist she continue as coordinator. They remind her that she was there from the very beginning, that she knows the journey they've all traveled together. And so, she stays, leading the group through Nangzom, along roads that now connect them in ways both literal and profound.

Thematic Analysis

- **Participatory engagement – Nangzom:** Pem Chuki transformed the zomdus from confusing, ineffective gatherings into productive sessions for collective action. By following structured processes like community scanning, she enabled the group to identify shared priorities. This "snowball" approach of securing small, tangible wins—like improving cow sheds—was essential for building the community's trust and collective efficacy. This became a necessary precondition for tackling the larger, more critical farm road project and created an environment where women felt empowered to contribute ideas, confident that their voices would be heard.
- **Establishing linkage of CEP–CZ–GT:** The successful farm road project demonstrates a strong linkage between community needs and government support. Pem Chuki served as the crucial advocate, carrying the proposal from the Nangzom to the Chiwog Zomdu. Her persistence in convincing skeptical coordinators and her ability to secure the backing of the Gup and Tshogpa were essential. This case highlights how a dedicated coordinator can navigate local governance structures to translate a community's "felt need" into a formally supported, large-scale project.

2.3 Case Study: Repurposing Assets for Economic Development in Dagana (Chunku)

In Chunku's Nangzom, someone pointed out what everyone already knew but had stopped talking about: the old primary school in Dogak had been closed since 2016. The building sat empty, its purpose abandoned. Members raised concerns during their discussions—they had to do something with that space, put it to use somehow. They started with simple ideas, planting radish and carrot, but nothing grew well. The soil resisted their efforts, or perhaps they hadn't yet found what would thrive there.

Then Mangmi proposed something different: growing Aloe vera. She brought the idea to the Nangzom, and from that initial proposal, something larger began to take shape.

Now they have plans for integrated farming, with funding secured through Department of Local Governance and Disaster Management and the European Union. They will grow soybeans, cardamom, and aloe vera—crops that might succeed where the radishes and carrots had failed. The proposal went through the Local Area Potential Based Economic Development (LAPBED) program, submitted in 2023 by the Gewog Administrative Officer (GAO).

Mangmi had shared that their proposal was finally approved in August, 2025. The Dzongkhag had to create a separate budget head for this project, a bureaucratic necessity that took time. The funds would have been released in 2024, but without that budget head in place, everything stalled. Their Gup's health wasn't well either, adding another layer of difficulty to moving things forward.

They intend to start planting in June or July 2026. For now, the groundwork continues: a water survey is underway, the five acres of land near the old school are being prepared for the women's group, and the procurement of machines is in process. The group itself has changed—what began as fifteen members has condensed to seven, the ones who stayed committed through the waiting. They have a name now, something official that gives their effort shape and recognition: the Dogak Community Integrated Farming Group.



The above pictures show the old Dogak primary school closed since 2016, the Aloe vera plant proposed for cultivation, and the Dogak Community Integrated Farming Group, which began with fifteen members.

Thematic Analysis

- **Establishing linkage of CEP–CZ–GT:** This case illustrates the formal pathway for securing significant financial and institutional support for a community-led economic initiative. The group successfully navigated the process of submitting a formal proposal and securing external funding via the Dzongkhag. However, it also highlights a critical challenge: the linkage can be stalled by bureaucratic hurdles. This case serves as a critical reminder that even with secured funding, administrative bottlenecks within local government, such as the creation of a budget head, can become an obstacle to community-led development.
- **Management of local common assets:** The initiative is a prime example of proactive community management of a local asset. The women's group identified an abandoned public building and its surrounding land not as an abandoned space but as an economic opportunity. Their plan to repurpose it for an integrated farming project demonstrates a strategic effort to create value for the community from a disused common resource, turning a symbol of decline into a potential source of livelihood.

2.4 Case Study: The Power of Public-Help in Nubi Gewog, Trongsa

For the 49 households of Sinphoog Chiwog, life was defined by the river that divided their homes from their paddy fields. Historically, they used an old suspension bridge, and later, a simple wooden bridge was constructed that served them for two years. But after heavy rainfall washed that bridge away, the community was left disconnected.

The loss transformed every aspect of daily life. Farmers returning from harvest had to balance heavy loads of rice stalks on their backs as they navigated the narrow, swaying suspension bridge—a journey that turned a simple commute into an exhausting one. During the monsoon, when the river swelled, elderly residents and children couldn't cross safely at all. What had once been a ten-minute walk to the fields became an hour-long detour, and transporting a sick family member to the road for medical care required multiple people and considerable risk. The bridge wasn't just an infrastructure; it was the thread that held their community's livelihood together.

Recognizing the urgency of their situation, the community members took the first formal step toward a solution. They convened a Zomdu where they decided to seek support from the Gewog.

The Gewog's response revealed the costs of a permanent solution. A bailey bridge was priced at 13 million, while an engineer estimated that an RCC bridge would cost 10 million—a figure that overshadowed the 4.5 million they initially thought might be sufficient. The Gup had to refuse the request, explaining that allocating such a large sum to just one of the Gewog's five Chiwogs would be unfair.

The Gup proposed a strategic compromise that perfectly embodies the "Public Help" model. Having been trained in CEP principles within Bhutan and given the opportunity to observe the practice in Japan, the Gup of Nubi Gewog made it her practice to share these learnings with all the Tshogpas in her Gewog. At that time, CEP had not yet been formally introduced to the people; only the Gup had briefed the Tshogpas of the chiwogs on what she had learned. Because of this knowledge transfer, the Sinphoog Tshogpa (Chiwog leader) was already well-informed when the Gup made her suggestion: if the community would volunteer their labor, the Gewog would pay 2 lakhs to hire a heavy excavator for five days from a nearby project. This excavator would accomplish the most capital-intensive task—clearing stones to construct a strong foundation, which their previous bridge lacked.

The Tshogpa returned to the community with this proposal. Another Zomdu was convened. The discussions were heated and pragmatic. Some households worried about the physical demands—how many days would it take, and could everyone contribute equally? Others questioned the fairness: why should they volunteer labor when the government had construction budgets? Daily wage earners raised the most pressing concern—days spent building the bridge meant days without income, a real hardship for families living month to month. The debate stretched across an entire afternoon.

From these difficult deliberations emerged a counterproposal: they would build the bridge themselves, but required the Gewog to pay them a daily wage and provide resources like fuel for their chainsaws. It felt like a reasonable middle ground—they would do the work, but not at personal financial cost. They presented this to the Gewog with cautious optimism.

The Gup refused again. She explained patiently that paying for both labor and materials was financially equivalent to the government building the bridge itself, leaving them at the same dead end. The community's need was clear and urgent, but the path to a solution seemed completely blocked.

The Tshogpa convened yet another Zomdu. The households deliberated late into the evening with the realization that waiting for full government funding could take years, perhaps a decade. How many more monsoons would wash out temporary fixes? How many more back-breaking trips across the suspension bridge? How many emergencies would be complicated by the river crossing?

Then, a consensus began to emerge, tentative at first, then gathering strength. This bridge was of high importance for all the people—if someone fell sick, they needed this bridge to reach medical care, for daily activities, for their children's schooling. They would build the bridge themselves, contributing their labor freely, but with support from the Gewog office in hiring the excavator for the foundation work. After this decision, a new challenge arose. Highland Thingyel Chiwog did not agree to participate, arguing that they could contribute only one day of labor and could not match the commitment shown by the other chiwogs. They explained that their chiwog was located the farthest from the site and felt that the new bridge would not be as useful to them as it would be for the others. Their reluctance risked slowing the entire plan, even though the road and the bridge were essential for all connected households.

The Gewog Gup stepped in once again. She visited Highland Thingyel, met with the residents, and patiently explained that the bridge would benefit all chiwogs, not just one or two. With persistent dialogue and reassurance that the workload would be shared fairly, the community eventually agreed to join the initiative, allowing the project to move forward in unity.

With a shared vision in place, the community and its partners mobilized with remarkable speed and efficiency. The collaborative effort was a clear demonstration of shared responsibility, with each party contributing its unique strengths.

The Gewog Administration provided the critical, high-cost capital asset—the excavator—to build a strong foundation that would withstand future floods.

The Community members contributed the entire labor force, demonstrating immense collective will. They also brought their own personal tools, including chainsaws, and provided the necessary petrol and nails.

The spirit of collaboration extended beyond the immediate stakeholders. On the first day, the people of Sinphoog brought lunch to the work site. The second day, residents from the nearby Goenpa village arrived with food. A contractor working on a nearby project, whose project will also benefit from the bridge, sponsored the third day's lunch with a 0.01 million contribution. The final day was marked by a celebratory potluck organized by the entire village.

As a result of this powerful synergy, the bridge was successfully completed in just four days. The new, sturdy structure was a significant upgrade, capable of supporting the weight of the community's power tillers and boleros.

After the bridge was completed, the then Agriculture Lyonpo visited the site. Impressed by the workmanship and the collaborative spirit behind the people and the Gewog Office, the Lyonpo observed that the community had demonstrated that steel was not always necessary—a well-constructed wooden bridge could also be strong, reliable, and cost-effective.

The Lyonpo praised both the Chiwog and the Gewog Administration for working together so effectively to achieve a shared goal.

To ensure the bridge remains functional, the Chiwogs have established a Bridge

Maintenance Roster managed by the Road User Groups. Each household participates in scheduled inspections and minor repairs, reinforcing the shared ownership model that made the construction possible.

Today, the bridge has stood strong for two years, enduring monsoon seasons without damage.



These images show the washed-away bridge, the community's collective effort urging reconstruction, and the final completed bridge, which is strong enough to carry the weight of a Bolero.

Thematic Analysis

- **Consensus decision-making processes:** This case illustrates a complex and successful consensus-building process. The community navigated significant internal conflict, weighing the urgent need for the bridge against the real financial hardship of volunteering labor. The Tshogpa's role in convening multiple Zomdus was critical, allowing for open debate where initial resistance and counter-proposals were aired. Ultimately, a shared understanding of their collective vulnerability and the impracticality of waiting for full government funding drove them to a difficult but unified decision.
- **Establishing linkage of CEP–CZ–GT:** The "Public Help" model represents an exemplary synergy between a community and its local government. The linkage was not a simple top-down grant but a smart economic partnership. The Gup's proposal was a strategic of a high-cost capital asset (the excavator) that unlocked the community's vast labor potential, making the project financially viable. This provision of targeted moral, technical, and financial support resulted in a rapid, cost-effective, and locally owned solution. The Gup's direct intervention to mediate with the reluctant chiwog further demonstrates how proactive leadership from the Gewog can facilitate crucial cooperation.

2.5 Case Study: Self-Help and Resourcefulness in Toewang Gewog, Punakha

In Toewang Gewog, Punakha, the old irrigation field washed away in June 2025. The water that had fed their crops for years was now carried off by flood. Within the same week, the people found another source. They turned to a spring that had once served as drinking water, but this year's heavy rainfall had swollen it enough that they could draw from it for irrigation without depleting what they needed to drink. They understood that any delay would invite rats to damage their paddy field.

The discussion happened through the Nangzom. One household sent one member, eighteen people in total. They agreed quickly—there was no point waiting for the government, not when they all understood the long bureaucratic process and their immediate need. Because of CEP, they understood they wouldn't need to wait for government support. People responded well, positively, ready to act.

They gathered—fifteen men and three women—with their own tools and whatever resources they could find among the members. They completed the work in three days. They cut through forest, removed trees and stones, piled the stones for stability, and retrieved the old pipes from the washed-away irrigation canal. These pipes had cracks, so they heated the damaged sections until the plastic became pliable enough to seal. Then they held the pipes together with wood for support, some sections bound with chains. The resources came from what was lying around their households: sheets of metal, drums, lengths of pipe—things that had seemed like junk until they became essential.

These pipes came from the site where the old irrigation field had washed away. They had been cemented in place as part of the original system, and the community members had to break that cement to retrieve them. This worries them now. When the Gewog eventually builds another permanent irrigation canal, they fear they might be charged for breaking the cement, for salvaging what had been fixed infrastructure. The community members have already agreed among themselves: if the gewog asks for the pipes back, if there's a cost to pay, they will contribute later, whatever is needed. But for now, water flows again to their fields, and the rats have nothing to feast on.



The pictures show the community members gathered for the work, the old pipes being retrieved and connected, and the restored irrigation water flowing back to their fields.

Thematic Analysis

- **Consensus decision-making processes:** The community achieved a rapid and unanimous consensus driven by urgency and their prior knowledge of bureaucratic delays. The Nangzom served as a platform for immediate decision-making, allowing them to agree on a course of self-help to avert an agricultural crisis.
- **Management of local common assets:** This case demonstrates exceptional resourcefulness in managing assets. The community members did not see the broken pipes from the washed-away government infrastructure as waste but as a salvageable resource. They ingeniously repaired and repurposed these materials to create a functional temporary irrigation system. Their forward-thinking agreement to collectively cover any future costs to the Gewog shows a sense of shared ownership and responsibility for their actions.

3.0 Key Learnings and Implications for Stakeholders

This final section shares the most critical lessons from the case studies, strategic insights for stakeholders aiming to foster and institutionalize exemplary Community Engagement Platforms in their own jurisdictions. The cases reveal clear, replicable patterns that define a successful empowerment process.

1. **The Transformative Impact of Inclusive Leadership** The emergence of female and youth leaders like Januka and Pem Chuki fundamentally changed community dynamics. They replaced an ineffective status quo of absent male coordinators with a model of present, empathetic, and highly effective leadership. Their success improved communication, built trust, and led to more equitable outcomes, particularly by ensuring women's voices were heard. This demonstrates that actively identifying, encouraging, and supporting non-traditional leaders is a critical strategy for unlocking a community's full potential and overcoming ingrained patterns of exclusion.
2. **The "Public-Help" Model as a Catalyst for Action:** Nubi Gewog bridge project serves as a powerful testament to the value of synergistic partnerships between communities and local government. The "Public-Help" model is highly effective because it leverages the unique strengths of each partner. When the government provides targeted, high-value support that communities cannot source themselves—such as heavy excavators, technical guidance, or seed funding—it unlocks immense potential for community-led labor and co-investment. This collaborative approach achieves results faster and more cost-effectively than traditional top-down development, while simultaneously building deep local ownership.

3. **The Power of Proactive, Self-Reliant Problem-Solving** The rapid irrigation repair in Toewang Gewog highlights the importance of fostering a community mindset that shifts from dependency to agency. A key indicator of a mature CEP is the community's ability to perform "triage"—correctly identifying which problems require navigating formal governance channels (like Januka's road maintenance) and which urgent issues are best solved through immediate self-reliance. This capacity for proactive, situational problem-solving is a symbol of true empowerment, building resilience and ensuring that communities can respond effectively to challenges without being paralyzed by bureaucratic delays.

These cases collectively demonstrate that an ideal CEP is not a rigid model but an adaptable process built on a foundation of trust, inclusive participation, and a flexible partnership between empowered citizens and responsive local government.

Annex 1: A Comparative Assessment: Case Study and Model Type

Themes / Model Areas	Case 1 – Janutka (Dagana)	Case 2 – Pem Chuki (Dagana)	Case 3 – Chunku (Dagana)	Case 4 – Nubi Bridge Reconstruction (Trompsa)	Case 5 – Toewang Gewog (Punakha)
Case study theme	<i>The Rise of Female Leadership</i>	<i>Youth Leadership and Collective Action</i>	<i>Repurposing Assets for Economic Development (Dogak women's integrated farming)</i>	<i>The Power of Public-Help</i>	<i>Self-Help and Resourcefulness</i>
How long did it take?	Road maintenance – 3-4 months	To build the road – 1 year	Integrated farming – 1.5 years	From the initial discussions to the completion – 3-4 months	Within 1 week
a. Participatory engagement – Nangzom	<p>Key Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replaced absentee male coordinators Restored fairness in resource-sharing Ensured inclusive discussion (women + men) <p>Actions taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carried needs from Nangzom → Zomdu Advocated consistently for the 1.5 km road 	<p>Key Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enabled group to identify shared priorities through scanning Women gained confidence to speak <p>Actions taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implemented small wins (cow sheds, dustbins, footpath) 	—	—	<p>Good practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nangzom enabled rapid agreement to self-implement irrigation repair Immediate decision-making helped avoid crop loss
b. Establishing linkage Nangzom–CZ–GT	<p>Good practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective linkage: Nangzom → CZ → GT Successfully secured 7 lakhs for road maintenance 	<p>Good practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acted as advocate carrying proposal to CZ Secured support from gup & Tshogpa 	<p>Good practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submitted LAPBED proposal <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bureaucratic delays (budget head) 	<p>Good practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gup created "public-help" framework combining community labor + govt excavator 	<p>Good practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forward-thinking agreement to cover future costs to gewog Self-help based on CEP experience
c. Spiral Development Mindset	—	—	—	<p>Good practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tshogpa convened multiple Zomdus enabling rounds of negotiation 	<p>Good practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Iterative problem-solving with salvaged materials, testing solutions quickly
d. Consensus decision-making processes	—	—	—	<p>Good practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple Zomdus enabled negotiation Community weighed trade-offs (free labor vs paid labor) Achieved consensus across 5 Chiwogs 	<p>Good practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Immediate consensus due to urgency and shared risk
e. Management of local common assets	—	—	<p>Good practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified abandoned school as economic asset 	—	<p>Good practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repaired and repurposed washed-away pipes

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repurposed space for integrated farming 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used local materials (wood, chains, metal sheets)
f. Other thematic model areas							
g. Key challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overcoming stereotypes about women's leadership. • Initial lack of community cooperation and challenges to her authority ("Are you Tshogpa?"). • Loneliness and having to complete some tasks alone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting absenteeism • Resistance from other coordinators regarding the farm road proposal • Community apathy at the beginning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial agricultural efforts (radish, carrot) failed. • Significant bureaucratic delays in releasing approved funds due to the need for a new budget head. • Gup's poor health added to delays. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The high cost of a government-built bridge was prohibited. • Overcoming internal community disagreement about contributing free labor vs. receiving a daily wage. • Gaining the cooperation of a reluctant chiwog (Highland Thingyal). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waiting for the formal government process would be too slow and result in crop loss. 		
h. Enabling factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good Leadership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Januka's persistence and competence. • Good Support: Critical moral support from Mangmi (a female leader) and her father (a former Tshogpa). <p>Enabling Environment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growing dissatisfaction with the previous coordinators created an opening for change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good Facilitation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouragement from the Mangmi to take the role. • Good Support: Backing from the Gup and Tshogpa provided legitimacy. <p>Enabling Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Witnessing tangible results in other households motivated wider cooperation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good Facilitation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mangmi proposed the idea of growing aloe vera. • Good Support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal was approved and secured EU funding, with support from the GAO. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good Leadership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gup's strategic proposal and her direct intervention to resolve inter-chiwog conflict. • Enabling Past Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Gup was trained in CEP principles, enabling to propose a collaborative solution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling Past Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community understanding CEP principles and knew they could act themselves without waiting for the government. • Enabling Environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The urgency of the situation created a strong, shared motivation for immediate collective action. 		
i. Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realization that existing male coordinators were ineffective. • Personal drive: "I realized that I can do better." • Desire for women's needs to be heard and addressed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desire to move beyond hollow, unproductive zomdus. • Need to address visible community problems identified through scanning (poor roads, lack of sanitation). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to put an abandoned common asset (the old school) to productive use for the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The urgent and shared need to replace a washed-away bridge, which was critical for livelihoods, safety, and access to medical care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate threat to crops from lack of water and pests after an irrigation canal washed away. 		
j. Coordination Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular communication and presence within the community. • Organized advocacy to secure road funding through the formal Zomdu process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized community scanning to identify and prioritize needs. • Implemented projects household by household (cow sheds) to build momentum. • Persistently presented the case for the farm road at the Chiwog Zomdus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formed an official group: Dogak Community Integrated Farming Group. • Submitted a formal proposal through the Local Area Potential Based Economic Development program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Held multiple Zomdus to debate options and build consensus. • The "Public Help" model: Community provides labor, Gup provides high-cost excavator. • Organized shared lunches to foster community spirit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organized a self-help group of 18 people through the Mangzom. • Pooled personal tools and salvaged materials from the old site. • Completed the work in three days without outside support. 		