

A stylized illustration of a woman's profile in a three-quarter view, facing right. She has long, dark, wavy hair. The background is a mix of dark blue, gold, and light beige. There are various geometric shapes: a crescent moon in the upper right, a large gold circle behind her face, and a stylized wave at the bottom. In the top left corner, there is a small grid of six squares. The overall style is modern and artistic.

# SheLeads

## Fall 2025 Highlights and Her Stories

From Vision to Impact: The journey of SheLeads and the Stories of Women Who Inspire Us

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# About SheLeads

*Empowering Young Women to Lead, Innovate, and Grow*

## The beginning of SheLeads

SheLeads, the Royal Thimphu College (RTC) Women Entrepreneurs' Circle was founded in 2025 by Ms. Tshering Lhamo Dukpa, a faculty member in the Development Economics program at Royal Thimphu College, after her academic visit to VIVES University of Applied Sciences, Belgium. During her discussion with Dr. Martine Standaert from VIVES, Ms. Tshering discussed about the challenges many female graduates face from financial constraints to cultural expectations and risk aversion. Inspired by these insights, she envisioned a platform that would nurture confidence, independence, and leadership among RTC's female students.

Upon her return, and with the support of RTC Registrar Ms. Dechen Dolkar and other stakeholders, the concept was brought to life. After months of planning, SheLeads officially launched on August 13, 2025, marking a new chapter for women's entrepreneurship at RTC.

## Guiding Principles of SheLeads

**Vision:** To empower female students through entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and leadership development, building a culture of self-sustainability, accountability, and innovation.

**Mission:** To create an inclusive and action-driven platform where young women can explore business ideas, gain real-world experience, and grow into confident, capable leaders.

## Leadership and Collaboration

The club is led by a dedicated team of students who are the advisory committee members of the club. The committee members from fall 2025, laid the foundation for the club's sustainability and growth. SheLeads promotes teamwork, accountability, and creative leadership.

SheLeads also maintains a strong international collaboration with VIVES University of Applied Sciences (Belgium) and aims to work closely with local Bhutanese women entrepreneurs. These partnerships enable continuous learning, mentorship, and global collaboration, helping young women turn their ambitions into action.

## The Bigger Picture

Aligned with Royal Thimphu College's vision of experiential learning and leadership development, SheLeads embodies the spirit of initiative, innovation, and empowerment. We aim to represent a growing movement of women ready to lead change in college, in business, and beyond.



*Ms. Tshering L Dukpa  
Founder of SheLeads*

### Description of SheLeads Logo

*Designed by Sherab Lodrel (Media and Design Lead)*



The SheLeads logo is a carefully designed visual mark. Its main feature is a stylized letter "S" that cleverly includes a flowing, feminine shape. This "S" represents the spirit of womanhood, ongoing growth, and the strong potential of women who want to start businesses, showing their journey. The curves and open spaces within the "S" also stand for new paths and chances that the club offers.

The words, "SHE LEADS," are written in a modern, simple font. This choice makes them clear and easy to read, giving a professional yet friendly feel. This ensures the main symbol remains the focus while still clearly stating the brand name. For colors, the logo uses white shapes on a teal background. Teal was chosen because it suggests sophistication, trustworthiness, and clear thinking, which are important for leaders and entrepreneurs. It also balances traditional colors, showing inclusivity. The white color stands for purity, new ideas, and fresh starts, reflecting the high standards and forward-looking spirit of the women involved.

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS



*Front row(right to left): Tandin Zam, Sonam Eden, Bhawan Pradhan, Sherab Lodrel, Jitsen Chimi Dolkar, and Kinley Pem.*

*Back row( left to right): Rinchen Wangmo, Preya Sharma, Sonam Choki, Chimi Lhamo, and Kinzang Choden Tshering*

# Faces of SheLeads

**SHERABA LODRELE**  
 Design & Media Lead  
 BA IN DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS, 2022 COHORT  
 Why Sheleads?  
 "Develop skills of interest in digital designs and information"  
 gaming and production of digital assets

**SONAM CHOKKI**  
 PRESIDENT  
 BA IN DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS, COHORT 2022  
 Why Sheleads?  
 "To create space where young women can lead with creativity and confidence"  
 Exploring horoscopes, star gazing, and late-night series marathon

**SONAM EEDEN**  
 Vice President  
 BA IN DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS, 2023 COHORT  
 Why Sheleads?  
 "To uplift women entrepreneurs, support small businesses, and inspire independence through courage and vision"  
 playing badminton, singing, watching TV dramas, and helping women build their own businesses.

**PREYA SHARMA**  
 Secretary  
 BA IN DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS, 2022 COHORT  
 Why Sheleads?  
 "As a vibrant sisterhood that empowers young women to rise, lead with purpose, and leave a trail of impact wherever they go"  
 Listening to music

**KINZANG CHODEN TSHERING**  
 Marketing & Communication Head  
 BA IN DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS, COHORT 2022  
 Why Sheleads?  
 "SheLeads offers a valuable opportunity to gain real-world entrepreneurial experience and acquire important skills"  
 Dancing, social work, travelling.

**CHIMI LHAMO**  
 Membership Coordinator  
 BA IN DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS, 2022 COHORT  
 Why Sheleads?  
 "To build a space where every woman feels seen, supported, and inspired to grow"  
 Exploring, hiking, camping, visiting Khaling

**IRINCHENE WANGMO**  
 Whatsapp Coordinator  
 BA IN DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS, COHORT 2022  
 Why Sheleads?  
 "To build confidence, leadership, and communication skills while empowering young women to grow together"  
 Interacting with new people and learning from different perspectives

**BHAWAN PRADHAN**  
 Social Media Focal Person  
 BA IN DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS, COHORT 2023  
 Why Sheleads?  
 "As a movement to turn ideas into action and women into leaders"  
 Hiking, Video games, and sports

**TANDINI ZAMM**  
 Treasurer  
 BA IN DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS, COHORT 2023  
 Why Sheleads?  
 "Since her voice matters, her vision inspires, and her courage paves the way"  
 Exploring, hiking, camping, visiting Khaling

**KINLEY PPEMM**  
 Assistant Treasurer  
 BA IN DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS, COHORT 2024  
 Why Sheleads?  
 "She Leads because she can make a difference"  
 Meeting with people, journaling and painting

**JITSEN CHIMI DOLKAR**  
 Event Coordinator  
 BA IN DEVELOPMENT ECONOMICS, 2022 COHORT  
 Why Sheleads?  
 "to empower and inspire women to raise their voices"  
 hyper-reading on reading, hiking & mediocre writing

# Her Path, Her Story

*Women Entrepreneurs Who Inspire*



# Bhutanese Boulangerie

In Thimphu, Yeshey Pelzom has become a familiar name in Bhutan's culinary scene. As the founder of Bhutanese Boulangerie in Olakha, Le Petit Cafe in town, and two takeaway outlets in Hongtsho and Khariphu, she has built more than just a cafe, she has built experiences that blend European elegance with Bhutanese warmth.

Yeshey's love for baking began in childhood, inspired by her mother's cooking and her own curiosity as a foodie. That early passion eventually took her abroad, first to La Roche University in Switzerland for a degree in hospitality and management, and later to Paris, where she studied French boulangerie. "Living in Europe opened my eyes," she recalls. "I fell in love with breads, croissants, and pastries, and when I came back to Bhutan, I missed them so much. That's when the idea struck, why not bring that taste here?"

The timing, though, wasn't ideal. The pandemic hit soon after her studies, confining her to her home kitchen. But in those quiet lockdown months, she found purpose, experimenting with recipes and baking small batches that laid the foundation for Bhutanese Boulangerie. With encouragement and investment from her parents, especially her father, whom she calls her "biggest backbone, her dream slowly grew from a single café to four outlets.



The journey wasn't without challenges. As a young woman entrepreneur, Yeshey often faced doubt and gender bias. "Sometimes when I went to apply for licenses, people assumed I was just a staff member and that the real owner must be a man," she says. "When I told them it was me, they were surprised. It wasn't easy, but I learned to handle it calmly."

## Yeshey Pelzom Founder of Bhutanese Boulangerie



Her calm strength, positivity, and the unwavering support of her family and partner helped her stay grounded. "Being positive and looking to the good side is what keeps me going," she says.

Today, Bhutanese Boulangerie and Le Petit Café are cherished by locals, expats, and tourists alike. From crisp baguettes and buttery croissants to delicate macarons adored by children, her bakeries bring a slice of Paris to Bhutan. For Yeshey, success means consistency and quality. "If my customers are happy with what I make, then I feel I've achieved my goal."

Beyond her own success, Yeshey is also passionate about empowering others. She employs women in her shops, giving them opportunities to learn and grow. "Entrepreneurship isn't just about building a business, it's about building people and communities," she says.

Reflecting on her journey, Yeshey describes entrepreneurship as both demanding and fulfilling.

"It's stressful, but it teaches you so much. At the end of the day, if you love what you do, it's fun. That's the lesson I've learned, enjoy your work, or else success won't come easily."

Looking ahead, she plans to expand to Paro and Phuentsholing, bringing her European-inspired creations to more communities. Her message to young women is clear and heartfelt: "Do your research, take advice, never lose hope, and just start. Balance your work and life, because enjoying what you do is most important."

Yeshey Pelzom's story reminds us that entrepreneurship doesn't always begin with a grand business plan. Sometimes, it starts with a craving, a bit of courage, and the belief that joy and work can be one and the same.



Story by Tandin Zam  
Cohort 2023

# Brewing Dreams with Bubble Tea in Bhutan

From a simple craving to a thriving brand, Tshering Zangmo Topgay’s journey with Bobalicious Bhutan shows what passion and persistence can create. An alumna of the Royal Thimphu College (RTC), Tshering has turned her love for bubble tea into a fast-growing café brand that now operates across three Dzongkhags.



## Overcoming Challenges

Running a growing business while helping manage her family’s construction and interior design company demanded long hours and emotional stamina. Yet Tshering found strength in balance, learning to delegate, set boundaries and take breaks when needed. While being a woman entrepreneur brought unique responsibilities, she never saw it as a disadvantage. “Bhutan’s society gives women equal space to grow,” she shares. The real challenges came from elsewhere, importing ingredients, managing costs and dealing with shipment delays. But instead of compromising on quality, Tshering adapted. She built reliable supplier networks and maintained buffer stock to ensure consistent quality.



## A Dream Born from a Craving

For Tshering, bubble tea was more than a drink, it was a memory. Her childhood trip to Thailand came with a cup of her favorite beverage, a small joy that stayed with her long after returning to Bhutan. Each time she wished for that same experience at home, the idea took root a little deeper.



**Tshering Zangmo Tobgay**  
Founder of Bobalicious

With encouragement and financial backing from her parents, and support from her siblings and husband, Tshering turned that wish into a business. In 2022, Bobalicious Bhutan opened its doors, transforming a personal love into a community experience.

## Design, Heart and Hard Work

Though she had no formal training in business or hospitality, Tshering’s creativity and curiosity guided her through. Her passion for interior design shaped every corner of her cafés, making them warm, inviting and full of personality.

Her attention to detail extended to customer experience, from the flavors on the menu to the smiles that greet every visitor. Over time, Bobalicious has become more than a café; it has become a space where connections brew as naturally as the tea itself.

**“My motivation comes from the smiles of happy customers - they remind me why I started.”**

What began as an online store in January 2022 has grown into a thriving multi-branch business. Each café carries her signature blend of aesthetics and authenticity, and each new flavor reflects her continuous innovation. Beyond business success, Tshering’s greatest reward has been the community she’s built - of loyal customers, friends, and fellow dreamers. To aspiring entrepreneurs in Bhutan, Tshering’s words are simple but powerful: Start , even if you’re afraid. Believe in your idea, work hard, and surround yourself with good people. What you gain; confidence, freedom, and purpose is worth every sacrifice.”



**Story by Sonam Eden**  
Cohort 2023

## Bouquet Studio

Sitting in a corner of her home, wires, ribbons and scissors scattered around her, Nima peacefully twirls every petal by hand with precision and attention. Her journey of handmade bouquets began on July 14, 2023 as she engaged herself in a five-day experiment with ribbons and wrappings. Little did she know that the experiment would turn into a dainty dream of commitment and passion. However, it wasn't until July 24th, after days of hesitation, that she finally posted a picture of her first bouquet on Instagram and asked her friends and family to follow and share her page. Within a short span of time, she had gained 100 followers!

Nima, who graduated from Royal Thimphu College in 2024 is the creative mind behind one of Bhutan's first bouquet studios offering specialised ribbon roses. What made Nima's idea stand out from existing flower shops in Thimphu was her 'everlasting' flowers that are beautifully hand made using ribbons and packaged with love and care. Her inspiration to specialise in ribbon flowers came from an unexpected place- a guy friend who gifted her a bouquet of flowers made from ribbons. Nima recalls, 'It was so beautiful, I kept thinking about how something so simple could be so meaningful.' Her love for flowers complemented her passion for crafting and learning new skills. "Bouquets make people feel special. I wanted to make ones that last forever," she says. The fact that it was also trending among youth added momentum to her idea.



Balancing college and entrepreneurship were not easy. "It was really difficult at first," Nima admits. "But since my studio was home-based and I worked on pre-orders only, I used weekends and free time to create the bouquets."



*Nima Dema*  
*Founder of Bouquet Studio*

What distinguishes Nima's bouquets is not just their durability, but also how much effort she puts into the details. "People say my wrapping style is a bit extra," she laughs, "but that's the point! Since our flowers are eternal, the wrapping becomes part of the bouquet's identity." Customers often mention how realistic and elegant her flowers look even from a distance.

However, the path hasn't been entirely rosy. One of her biggest challenges was sourcing materials. "It's really hard to get raw materials in Bhutan, and when they are available, they're expensive. That makes the overall bouquet pricey, which turns away some customers." To overcome this, Nima began sourcing materials from India and ordering through platforms like Medhey. She also offers a 10% discount to student buyers to keep her business affordable. Another hurdle? Deliveries. "At first, we didn't offer delivery at all. It was too hard without a van, and taxis either refused or charged too much," she explains. But with time, she partnered with One Click Logistics, solving the delivery dilemma and supporting another local business in the process.

Support from her family, friends, and college community has been vital. "My parents helped with the finances. My friends promoted my page, brought in customers, and even bought from me. Without them, this wouldn't have been possible."

For Nima, flowers now represent more than simply aesthetics. "I used to love receiving flowers. But now, I love making them even more. It's the satisfaction of crafting something special, knowing someone out there is going to smile because of it." Her advice to other young women looking to start a business is simple but bold: Just start. "Don't wait. Even if it's risky, take that risk. Always consider things from the perspective of the client. Consider whether I would be pleased with this, if I were the one receiving it. And if you are not, then improve it and make it better."

Nima Dema has made more than flowers that last. Her creativity, tenacity and resilience in the might of commercial markets and rapid consumption continues to inspire young and emerging entrepreneurs to strive on, perhaps one flower at a time!



**Story by Sonam Choki**  
**Cohort 2022**

## ZICHO ~Bhutan 3D

From a mechanical engineering graduate to one of Bhutan's most promising tech entrepreneurs, Zina Choden Yoenten, founder of ZICHO also known as Bhutan 3D, is redefining what innovation looks like in the country's creative manufacturing landscape.

At just 30, Zina's journey to entrepreneurship was far from planned. After earning a full scholarship to study in the United States and gaining three years of professional experience there, she returned to Bhutan in search of stability, not entrepreneurship. "I was never business-minded," she says honestly. "I just wanted a steady job. But deep down, I always had this urge to do something meaningful."



That sense of purpose found direction in 2019 during her internship at FabLab Bhutan, where she first encountered 3D printing and digital fabrication machines. While most saw idle equipment, Zina saw opportunity. "I realized no one was using them to their full potential, and there was a real market gap for personalized, high-quality design work."

From that realization, Bhutan 3D, a business specializing in custom-made products ranging from corporate gifts and event souvenirs to signage and decor was born. What began as a modest side project in her apartment, armed with a single 3D printer, has since grown into a fully equipped workshop boasting multiple 3D printers, laser cutters, vinyl cutters, and a color printer.

"I started with my own savings," Zina recalls. "My first machine cost Nu. 30,000, and I earned it back within three months. Every bit of profit went straight back into the business." Today, her client list includes names like YDF, local offices, hotels, and even tourists seeking unique Bhutanese-themed pieces.



**Zina Choden**  
Founder of ZICHO

But her journey was far from smooth. "As a woman, I faced skepticism. Some customers were dismissive," she shares. "Then there were technical issues such as shipping delays, sourcing parts, machine errors. I had to teach myself everything from scratch."

Her early days were filled with long hours and trial and error. "Sometimes prints failed halfway, or designs didn't align right. It was exhausting, but I learned to see mistakes as part of the process."

Zina's resilience has been anchored by her strong support from her parents, fiancé, and grandmother. "My father always believed in my potential," she says warmly. "My fiancé, Tenzin, helped me navigate the business side taxes, licensing, all the complicated parts. And my grandmother, though skeptical at first, became one of my biggest supporters once she saw how serious I was."

Today, Zicho stands as more than just a business. It represents a new wave of creative technology in Bhutan. "People are now beginning to see what digital fabrication can do," Zina says with pride. "I feel like I've helped spark something larger than myself."

Her vision is clear: to reduce Bhutan's dependence on imported customized goods and to foster a thriving local creative-tech industry. She hopes to expand Bhutan 3D to new locations, invest in more advanced machines, and create job opportunities, especially for women interested in technology and design.

Her advice to aspiring women entrepreneurs is as bold as her work: "Just start. Don't wait for the perfect time, it doesn't exist. You'll make mistakes, but that's how you grow."

In transforming her vision into reality, Zina Choden Yoenten is not just building a business but she's also shaping Bhutan's creative future. Through her innovation, persistence, and quiet leadership, she's proving that real success isn't just about profit, but about pioneering change and inspiring others to dream beyond limits.



**Story by Tandin Zam**  
Cohort 2023

# Happy Pizza

Women entrepreneurs across Bhutan have been reshaping the country's economic and social landscape. Their growing participation in business reflects not only a pursuit of financial independence but also a collective redefinition of success one grounded in resilience, creativity, and community impact. From overcoming limited access to finance to breaking cultural barriers, Bhutanese women are making spaces where innovation thrives and where each venture strengthens the fabric of local communities.

Among these inspiring women is Pelden Dema, a 35-year-old entrepreneur from Bumthang whose love for hospitality and people led her to create Cafe Happy Pizza. At the age of 31, Pelden, alongside her husband, turned her vision of a warm, welcoming cafe into reality, a place where food, culture, and connection come together.



With her years of experience in the hospitality industry both within and outside Bhutan, Pelden recognized a gap in her local market. Together with her husband, she studied the community's needs and designed a cafe that could fill that space, offering not just good food, but an environment that brings people together.



Like many start-up stories, her journey began with obstacles. Funding and designing the right concept were among the toughest challenges. But Pelden had international exposure and years of savings and these served as a foundation for her cafe. "Those experiences gave me the courage to take the leap," she says. Her husband's unwavering support was just as crucial as he played an active role in developing the cafe's menu and layout, making her dream a reality.



For Pelden, customer satisfaction is the heart of it all. "Seeing my customers happy makes me happiest," she says with a smile. Her approach to business is rooted in passion and optimism, and through the ups and downs, she has learned the importance of resilience, adapting to challenges, handling rejection with grace, and building lasting relationships along the way. "The personal growth I've experienced has been far beyond what I imagined," she reflects.

Today, Pelden stands as a role model for aspiring women entrepreneurs in rural Bhutan. Her leadership could inspire many, and prove that success is developed through patience, hard work, and belief in one's ideas. Her advice to women dreaming of starting their own ventures is simple but powerful: "Never underestimate your ideas. Start small, stay committed, and allow yourself to grow with the journey."

In the serene valley of Bumthang, Cafe Happy Pizza is more than a business, it's a story of courage, community, and the spirit of a woman who turned her passion into purpose.



Story by  
Kinang Choden Tshering  
Cohort 2022

# The Pillar Of Our Home



**Sonam Paeday**

**Pioneering Team of UMA, COMO Hotel & Resorts**

In our family, my mother, Sonam Paeday, stands as the pillar of everything we are. Her life is a story of quiet strength, resilience, and unwavering love, a reminder that true leadership often begins at home. Growing up as the second youngest of six siblings, my mother faced immense hardship early on. When her father passed away at just six years old, she learned quickly what it meant to be strong. Her mother and older siblings became her guiding lights, instilling in her the values of compassion, perseverance, and self-belief that she carries to this day.

From a young age, she dreamed of teaching and did her Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) from Samtse College of Education, preparing to build a career in the classroom. But life, as it often does, opened another path. She discovered a growing fascination with hospitality and soon applied to COMO Hotels and Resorts, one of the world's leading names in the industry. Out of thousands of applicants, she was selected.



Her time at COMO became transformative, both professionally and personally. It was there that she met my father, and together they began building a life filled with shared dreams and purpose. Her work took her across Asia, from the Hard Rock Hotel in Bangkok to positions in Malaysia and Singapore, each experience expanding her perspective and deepening her love for hospitality. Yet, no matter how far she traveled, her heart always yearned for home.

Returning to Bhutan, she became part of something remarkable, helping establish UMA, one of the country's first five-star resorts, now a symbol of Bhutanese luxury and service excellence. She worked tirelessly, even while she was pregnant. But when she finally embraced motherhood, she realized no title could ever outshine her role as a mother. With grace, she traded in high heels for baby bottles and bedtime stories, channeling her drive into nurturing her family.



Still, her entrepreneurial spark never dimmed. Once I was old enough, she took another leap of faith, founding two businesses, a travel agency and an education consultancy, alongside my father's support. Through every challenge, she managed to balance work, family, and personal growth with remarkable ease. Even now, she somehow finds time to run her businesses and pack my lunch every morning because, as I like to joke, being a superwoman seems to be just part of her routine.

My mother's story is more than an inspiration, it's a lesson. It shows that success has no single path, that you can be a leader, a professional, and a loving mother all at once. She reminds me daily that a woman who is the heart of a home can also be the engine of ambition and that strength, when rooted in love, knows no limits.



**Story by Jhomo Lhazin**  
**Cohort 2024**

# Z's Tarot: Turning Intuition into Inspiration

*"A young entrepreneur journey of turning intuition into empowerment through tarot"*



Meet Z's Tarot, founded by a young woman who wishes to remain anonymous. She runs an online psychic tarot reading service on TikTok and Instagram (@z.s\_tarot), where her intuitive readings bring comfort and clarity to many.

What began as simple readings for family and friends quickly grew into something greater. Encouraged by positive feedback, Miss Z decided to share her gift with a wider audience and took a bold step forward creating Z's Tarot, a space built on honesty, intuition, and connection.

Entrepreneurship, she says, started as a passing thought a personal goal for growth and independence. In a world where many stick to familiar paths, Miss Z wanted to create her own. Her vision was to offer authentic, affordable, and accessible spiritual guidance for those navigating confusion or change something she felt was missing in the market.

Seeing a gap in accessibility for spiritual wellness, she seized the opportunity. As tarot and astrology continue to rise in popularity among young adults, Miss Z offers thoughtful readings to help others find peace and direction in uncertain times.

## Hardships and Growth

Like many entrepreneurs, Miss Z faced her share of challenges. With no blueprint or business background, she learned through trial and error from setting prices to managing social media. Each hurdle became a lesson in resilience and self-belief.

She met skepticism with integrity and overcame self-doubt with determination. One of her first major steps was building an online presence. By creating content that was intuitive and relatable, she built a genuine community. Social media soon became the heart of her business, connecting her to clients around the world.

Through her journey, Miss Z discovered more than business skills she found confidence, balance, and joy in helping others. She learned to set boundaries, stay consistent, and draw motivation from the positive impact her readings bring.



Miss Z believes not every reading must perfectly align or unfold as expected. The true value lies in the experience itself if someone finds comfort or clarity, that's what truly matters.

Her advice to young women aspiring to start their own ventures is simple "Don't fear judgment or failure just go for it." Mistakes are part of the process, and every challenge teaches something valuable.

If she could go back, she says she would have started sooner, but every step shaped her path. Today, Z's Tarot stands as a testament to courage, faith, and the power of following your intuition.



Story by  
Jitsen Chimi Dolkar  
Cohort 2024

# GUMAR



In the quiet but determined halls of the Start-up Centre in Changzamtog, Thimphu, stands GU-MAR, a homegrown brand redefining eco-friendly packaging in Bhutan. Behind this inspiring venture is Geeta Rai, founder of Ratna Samphel Fabric & Paper Unit, whose journey into entrepreneurship began not with a plan, but with a nudge from someone who believed in her before she believed in herself.

A 2014 graduate, Geeta spent two years working in restaurants, never imagining that business ownership would be part of her story. “He saw something in me I didn’t see in myself,” she says of her husband, who first encouraged her to take the leap into entrepreneurship at a time when women business owners were still rare in Bhutan.

In 2018, she took over an idle manufacturing unit once managed by her husband’s friend, a space filled with unused machinery and unrealized potential. With courage and conviction, Geeta rebranded the enterprise as GU-MAR and set out to produce durable, reusable and eco-friendly bags to replace single-use plastics. But her promising start was soon derailed. In 2019, the National Environment Commission (NEC) raised concerns over the microfiber content in the non-woven fabric used in her products, forcing an abrupt shutdown. What began with enthusiasm and a Nu. 10 million loan came to a painful halt. The factory doors remained closed for nearly five years.

“It was an emotionally exhausting period,” Geeta recalls. “We had invested not only money, but heart and hope. For years, there was nothing to show for it.” The weight of uncertainty tested her resilience, yet she refused to let go of her vision. Supported by her husband and the Start-up Centre management, Geeta held on to the dream of restarting, stronger and wiser. Her perseverance paid off. On February 20, 2025, GU-MAR officially reopened its doors. This time, Geeta returned with renewed clarity, better understanding of regulatory standards, refined production strategies, and a deeper commitment to sustainability.

The revived unit began operations with three staff members, including two supported under the Youth Engagement and Livelihood Programme (YELP).

GU-MAR now crafts customized, eco-conscious bags made from jute, cotton and Bhutanese Desho paper. While some raw materials are imported, Geeta and her husband are exploring local fibre alternatives to create products that are truly “Made in Bhutan.” Today, GU-MAR serves clients across Thimphu, Phuentsholing, Mongar, Dagana, and Wangduephodrang, offering a range of biodegradable, customizable packaging options for shops, restaurants, and local businesses.



Beyond creating products, Geeta’s vision for GU-MAR is to inspire a cultural shift, making eco-friendly packaging not just an alternative but a norm. “We want to create solutions that are both beautiful and responsible,” she says. “Something people are proud to carry.”



Her story is one of perseverance, partnership and purpose, a proof to how belief, both in oneself and from others, can transform setbacks into new beginnings. “We’re hoping for continued government support,” Geeta adds. “Our dream is to create jobs, reduce waste, and revive Bhutan’s traditional eco-materials for modern use.”



Story by  
**Preya Sharma**  
Cohort 2022

# Stitching Dreams and Strength in Thimphu

In the lively neighborhood of Changzamtog, Thimphu, Devi Maya Subba's is a story of courage, resilience, and renewal, one stitch at a time. At just 28, she runs her own tailoring shop, a small but meaningful enterprise born from hardship, determination and an unwavering desire to support her family.

Originally from Dagana, Devi's life has been marked by extraordinary challenges. She attended school only up to Class 2 before a devastating illness left her paralyzed in 2004. For a decade, she fought to regain her strength and mobility, enduring years of uncertainty. When she finally recovered in 2014, Devi emerged not defeated, but stronger and ready to rebuild her life on her own terms.

Her journey into tailoring began soon after. She started under experienced tailors, she spent six months learning the basics before working another six years in a tailoring business. The experience gave her confidence and skill, but the income was never enough to meet her goals or her family's needs. With a sense of responsibility, and her wish to help repay her father's bank loan, Devi took a leap of faith in August 2024, opening her very own tailoring shop.

Launching a business with limited resources was daunting, but Devi was never alone. Her brother and younger sister stood beside her, helping her set up the shop and manage the early challenges. Today, her tailoring unit employs two workers and has become a steady source of income and pride for the family.

What keeps her going through the struggles? For Devi, it comes down to gratitude and love. "Sometimes when business is slow, I feel like giving up," she admits softly. "But then I remember my family and how they stood by me when I couldn't even walk. I owe it to them to keep moving forward."

Her shop is more than just a workspace; it's a symbol of healing and purpose. Despite occasional health setbacks, Devi finds joy in her quiet corner of Changzamtog. "I prefer silence over noise," she says with a calm smile. "This place feels just right for me."

From overcoming paralysis to becoming a provider, Devi Maya Subba's journey is an inspiring example of how strength can rise from struggle. Her story is not simply about sewing clothes, it's about weaving hope, gratitude and resilience into every thread. Through her work, she reminds us all that no matter how heavy life's fabric may seem, it can always be stitched into something beautiful.



**Story by Amandika Thapa  
Cohort 2022**

# Our Semester in Focus

## SheLeads Scoop

Financial Bootcamp

Entrepreneur  
Talk!

Club  
Orientation

Business  
Pitch and  
Launch  
Competition



# Club Orientation

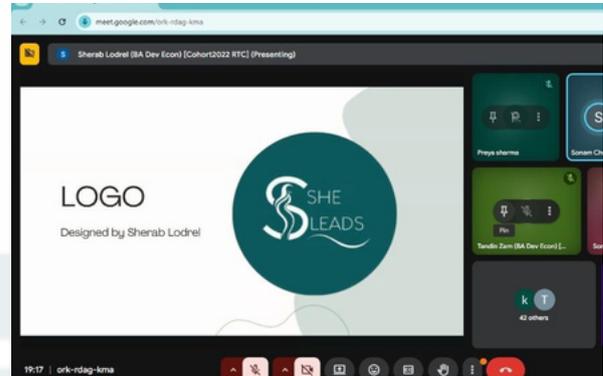
**Date: 19th August 2025**

**Time: 7:00 PM – 8:00 PM**

**Platform: Zoom**

## Event details

The program began with a welcome speech followed by the introduction of the eleven core members. After the introductions, the club coordinator, Sonam Choki, shared an overview of the club and spoke about the history of SheLeads, highlighting how, when, and why the club came into existence.



This was followed by a presentation from Kinzang Choden Tshering, the Marketing and Communication Head, who explained the mission, vision, and objectives of the club. She also introduced the social media platforms where SheLeads is active and encouraged members to follow the pages for updates and engagement.

The Event Coordinator, Jitsen Chimi Dolkar, then highlighted events organized by the club so far and explained the opportunities that members can gain through these events. After this, the Treasurer, Tandin Zam, presented the financial structure of SheLeads. She emphasized that the club operates independently without relying on funds from the SSD or the college, and she explained the fundraising activities undertaken to support the club's operations.



To add further context, the Club Faculty Advisor, Miss Tshering Lhamo Dukpa, shared her insights on why SheLeads was formed and the vision behind its establishment. She stressed on the importance of making the club both effective and efficient in achieving its goals.

## Achievements

- Successfully introduced the SheLeads Club to new members.
- Strengthened members' understanding of the club's vision, mission, and structure.
- Fostered active commitment from over 80% of participants.
- Encouraged new ideas for future growth and fundraising.
- Inspired members to grow with SheLeads

# Financial Bootcamp

**Date: 3rd and 4th September 2025**

**Time: 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM**

## Event Details

The SheLeads club successfully organized a two-day Financial Bootcamp on the 3rd and 4th of September, aimed at enhancing students' understanding of financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and leadership development. The boot camp was conducted by Ms. Namrata Pradhan, Senior Lecturer in Business Studies, Faculty in the Business Program at Royal Thimphu College.



## Theme for the Financial Bootcamp

Empowering young individuals with essential financial skills, fostering entrepreneurial thinking, and nurturing leadership qualities. Financial literacy was emphasized as a foundation for making informed money-related decisions, while entrepreneurship was highlighted as a pathway to innovation, self-employment, and economic growth. Leadership development, on the other hand, focused on equipping students with confidence, decision-making skills, and the ability to guide teams toward success.

## Day One: 3rd September 2025

The first session of the boot camp was held from 5:00 PM to 6:00 PM in room A01 at RTC. The session was hosted by Tandin Zam, a 3rd-year BA Development Economics student. The program began with a welcome speech by Sonam Eden, also a 3rd-year BA Development Economics student, followed by an interactive game.

In this game, students were divided into three groups, and each group was allocated an initial investment of Nu. 235. The facilitator also offered the option of taking a loan, simulating real-world financial decision-making. Students were then presented with different business scenarios, where they had to decide how much to invest and assess potential profits or losses.

To make the session more engaging, the facilitator incorporated a dart game, linking the outcomes to real-life entrepreneurial risks and rewards. This activity allowed participants to not only learn the theoretical aspects of finance but also experience decision-making in practice.

The key takeaway from the first day was that taking calculated risks is essential to thrive in business. The session concluded with refreshments, and participants dispersed at 6:00 PM.



### Day Two: 4th September 2025

The second session took place in the room B28 at RTC, from 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM. The session was hosted by Jitsen Chimi Dolkar, a 2nd-year BA Development Economics student.

The training began with an insightful presentation on systematic thinking by Miss Namrata Pradhan. She introduced the concept of the decision-making tree, explaining how each branch and root symbolized different choices, consequences, and underlying factors in the decision making process. This visual framework helped students understand that successful entrepreneurship is not about a single decision but about navigating a series of interconnected factors.



After the presentation, students were divided into groups of five and provided with chart papers and markers. Each group was tasked with applying the decision-making tree to a case study presented by the facilitator. The groups worked collaboratively for 20 minutes, identifying possible causes of the problem and proposing logical solutions using the systematic thinking approach. When groups presented their findings, it became clear that different teams approached the same problem from varied perspectives. This highlighted the idea that in entrepreneurship, there is rarely a single cause or a single solution rather, multiple small factors combine to shape business challenges and opportunities.



The key learning outcome from day 2 was that systematic thinking is an essential skill for entrepreneurs, helping them break down complex problems into manageable causes and solutions. The session concluded with a vote of thanks by Bhumika Adhikari, a 3rd-year BA Development Economics student.

She expressed gratitude to the facilitator and organizers for providing such a valuable platform for learning. A certificate of appreciation and a small token of gratitude were presented to the facilitator, followed by a group photo session and refreshments to celebrate the successful conclusion of the boot camp.

### Conclusion

The two-days Financial Bootcamp proved to be an enriching and highly interactive learning experience. Unlike conventional classroom lectures, the program blended theoretical knowledge with engaging activities such as simulations, games, and group exercises, ensuring that students could apply their learning in practical contexts. Participants not only gained insights into financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and leadership development but also learned the importance of taking calculated risks and adopting systematic thinking when faced with challenges

### Achievements:

- Successfully conducted a two-day interactive bootcamp with full student participation.
- Strengthened financial literacy and entrepreneurial knowledge.
- Introduced systematic thinking as a problem-solving approach.
- Boosted student confidence in financial decision-making.
- Fostered teamwork and leadership skills among participants.

# Entrepreneur Talk

**Date: 16th September 2025**

**Time: 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM**

**Venue: Executive Centre, Royal Thimphu College**

## Event Details

The SheLeads Club hosted an Entrepreneurial Talk on the journey of an entrepreneur at the Executive Centre, the session began with a welcome speech delivered by Sherab Lodrel, a fourth-year Development Economics student, who warmly introduced the guest speaker and set the tone for the evening. The speaker for the talk was Ms. Sonam Choden, Founder of Bhutan Lhayi Zeydhen Tour & Travel.



In her talk, Ms. Sonam Choden shared her inspiring entrepreneurial journey. She explained that her passion for business began at a very young age. Even during her college days, she was engaged in side hustles such as selling oriflame products, which built her confidence and interest in entrepreneurship. After graduating, with the strong support of her family and sister, she started her own travel agency at just 21 years old. Today, her company is nearing its 10th anniversary, marking nearly a decade of growth and success.

Ms. Sonam Choden emphasized the importance of patience, dedication, and persistence in pursuing one's goals. She highlighted that the way individuals present themselves and interact with others plays a key role in receiving support and building trust. She also expressed pride in being a woman business owner, noting that her agency not only sustains her livelihood but also contributes significantly to society by creating job opportunities for women and supporting different sectors connected to tourism, including hotels and other small third-party businesses.

She further shared that sustaining in the market after graduation is not easy. Many people have dreams and connections, but it is important to know where one is headed and to remain focused on a chosen path. According to her, once you begin a journey, you should not abandon it midway but rather stay committed and strive to give it a meaningful direction. This philosophy guided her throughout her entrepreneurial journey and helped her establish a strong footing in the business world.

The program concluded with an engaging question-and-answer session. A vote of thanks was then delivered by Bhawan Pardhan, a third-year Development Economics student. Before closing, the club presented a certificate and a token of appreciation to Ms. Sonam Choden in recognition of her valuable time and for sharing her entrepreneurial story. The evening ended with refreshments and a group photo session with the guest speaker, leaving participants inspired and motivated.



## Achievements:

- Successfully hosted an inspiring entrepreneurial talk with strong student participation.
- Motivated students with real-life stories of business challenges and success.
- Promoted women's empowerment in entrepreneurship.
- Provided a practical learning platform beyond classroom theory.

# Business Pitch and Launch

**Date: October 21, 2025**

**Time: 4:00PM-6:00PM**

**Venue: A01**

## Event Details

The Business Pitch and Launch event served as an exciting platform for students to present their entrepreneurial ideas and innovative solutions before a distinguished panel of judges from both RTC and VIVES University of Applied Sciences, Belgium.

A total of five registrations were received, one solo pitch and four group pitches. The program began with a welcome address by Ms. Jitsen Chimi Dolker, a second-year BA in Development Economics student, who officially inaugurated the event and welcomed the esteemed judges.

The judging panel included internal judges Dr. Stephen Victor (Business Faculty) and Dr. Tshering Dolkar (Social Science Faculty) from RTC, alongside international judges Dr. Martine Standaert, Ms. Ilse Wyffels, and Ms. Lies Verstraete from VIVES University of Applied Sciences, Belgium

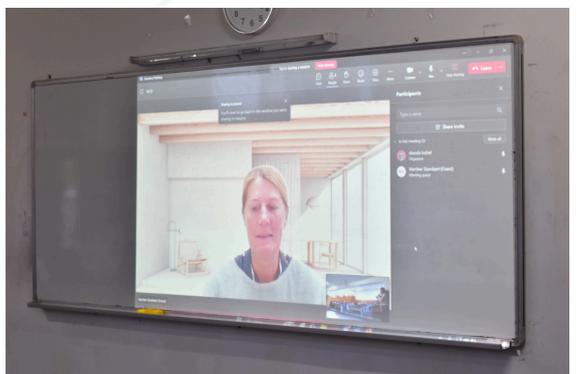
The pitching session featured five presentations:

- Team S.L presented an innovative idea on using augmented reality in tourism, enhancing visitor experiences through digital interactivity.
- Team Thunderbolt pitched the idea of reusing college course packs to promote sustainability on campus.
- Green Innovation proposed producing bamboo-based charcoal as an eco-friendly substitute for conventional charcoal.
- Mr. Leki Tshewang, a solo participant, presented a proposal to establish a new internet service provider aimed at improving connectivity and service quality.
- Team Room Pilot introduced a concept for a hostel grievance website, enabling students to file complaints and receive timely resolutions online.

After each presentation, Dr. Stephen Victor and Dr. Tshering Dolkar asked evaluative questions, while Dr. Martine provided detailed feedback. The other two international judges attended as observers.

Upon completion of all presentations, results were announced on the spot. Team S.L secured first place, followed by Team Thunderbolt in second place. Tokens of appreciation were presented to the internal judges, while e-certificates were awarded to international judges and participants in recognition of their involvement and support.

The event concluded with refreshments and a group photo session, marking the end of an inspiring and successful evening that fostered creativity, entrepreneurship, and collaborative learning. Although attendance was optional for non-participants, a small audience joined and offered support and encouragement to the participants.



# Gallery Walk

**Date: 19th November 2025**

**Time: 10:00 PM – 4:00 PM**

**Venue: Open space in front of library**

## Event Details

The SheLeads Club successfully organized its first Gallery Walk on 19th November, creating an engaging and interactive platform to highlight Bhutanese women's entrepreneurial journeys, and the collective efforts of students (SheLeads members) to advocate for change. The event was strategically held in front of the college library, transforming the space into a vibrant, educational, and visually captivating zone of learning and inspiration. A total of seven thematic corners were curated, each overseen by dedicated student representatives who designed their sections with creativity, research, and purpose.

### 1. Introduction of SheLeads and the events from fall 2025

Represented by: Kristi Phuyel, Third-year BA in Development Economics (Volunteer)

The Gallery Walk began with the Event Corner, which served as a gateway to the SheLeads history and milestones. Kristi presented a timeline of major events conducted by SheLeads since its establishment. The corner featured visually appealing posters, event photos, and brief descriptions of activities such as:

- Club Orientation Program
- Financial Bootcamp
- Entrepreneur Talk
- Business Pitch and Launch Competition



This section allowed visitors to understand how SheLeads has consistently provided platforms for capacity-building, financial literacy, and entrepreneurial learning for young women. It also highlighted how each event contributed to shaping the club's mission of building confident, independent, and skilled women leaders.

### 2. Breaking the Barriers Corner – Challenges Faced by Women Entrepreneurs

Represented by: Sonam Choki, Fourth-year BA in Development Economics, SheLeads Club Coordinator

The second corner focused on the theme "Breaking the Barriers", shedding light on the multifaceted challenges faced by women entrepreneurs in Bhutan. Sonam Choki created an informative and reflective space that depicted social, financial, cultural, and structural barriers such as:

- Lack of financial support
- Limited access to markets
- Gender stereotypes and societal expectations
- Balancing business with household responsibilities
- Inadequate mentorship and exposure

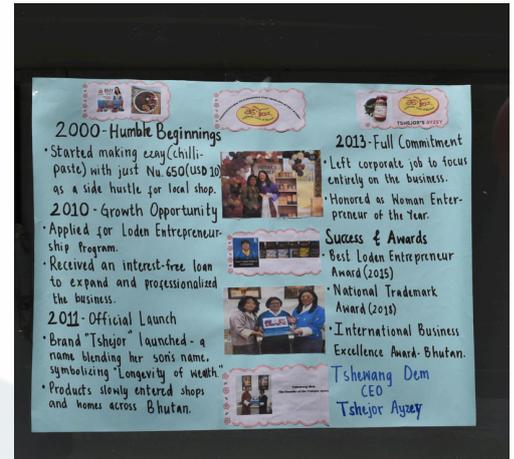


What made this corner especially engaging was its interactive component. A designated board invited visitors to write down solutions, insights, or messages on how these barriers could be dismantled. Students and faculty offered thoughtful suggestions, turning the corner into a collaborative space for dialogue and problem-solving.

### 3. First Female Entrepreneurs Corner

Represented by: Rinchen Wangmo, Fourth-year BA in Development Economics, SheLeads Whatsapp coordinator.

The third corner honored Bhutan's first generation of female entrepreneurs, focusing on their courage, resilience, and unwavering determination to build businesses during times when women's participation in entrepreneurship was extremely limited. Rinchen curated biographies, photographs, and key achievements of these pioneering women. This theme highlighted their struggles ranging from financial constraints to societal discouragement and celebrated their ground breaking contributions that opened doors for today's young entrepreneurs. This corner was deeply appreciated for bringing forward stories that are often overlooked in mainstream discussions.



### 4. Her Journey Corner

Represented by: Sonam Eden, Third-year BA in Development Economics, SheLeads Vice coordinator.

The fourth corner, titled "Her Journey," was a spotlight for a young and contemporary woman entrepreneur who founded Bobalicious Café, a popular brand now operating multiple outlets across Bhutan. Sonam Eden narrated the entrepreneur's journey from a simple idea to a thriving business, focusing on:

- The early challenges of building a brand
- Managing finances and expansion
- Overcoming public criticism and competition
- Establishing a youth-friendly café culture in Bhutan

This corner brought modern entrepreneurship closer to the audience and inspired many students by showing how determination and creativity can turn a simple business idea into a success story.



### 5. Voices of Change Corner – Art, Expression & Social Reflection

Represented by: Sherab Lodrel & Preya Sharma, Fourth-year BA in Development Economics.

The Voices of Change corner was one of the most artistic and reflective sections of the Gallery Walk. This area featured a large portrait-style outline of a woman, symbolizing the blank canvas on which society projects identities, roles, and expectations.

Visitors were invited to fill the silhouette with words, colors, drawings, and messages that represented:

- How they perceive women in society
- What changes they want to see
- Qualities they admire in women
- Aspirations for future generations



By the end of the event, the outline was filled with vibrant thoughts and designs, collectively building a powerful symbolic portrait of women through the eyes of the community. This corner not only encouraged creativity but also brought forward diverse perspectives on women's roles and empowerment.

## 6. Mini Mart Booth – Showcasing SheLeads as a Self-Sustaining Club

Represented by: Tandin Zam & Kinley Pem, Third and Second-year BA in Development Economics

The Mini Mart Booth highlighted SheLeads' commitment to being a self-sustaining club. This corner showcased the various fundraising activities that have enabled the club to support both its internal initiatives and external women entrepreneurs.

The items displayed included:

- Crispy potatoes, one of the first fundraising products
- Boba drinks from Bobalicious
- Other small saleable goods that contributed to the club's savings



This corner demonstrated how student-led fundraising can contribute to empowering women-owned businesses outside the college, emphasizing SheLeads' values of collaboration, support, and community upliftment.

## 7. Photo Booth Corner – Capturing Moments & Memories



Represented by: Kinzang Choden, Fourth-year BA in Development Economics, Marketing Head of SheLeads

The Photo Booth added a fun and interactive element to the event. Decorated with creative photo booth and props, the corner allowed visitors to capture memories. This not only made the event memorable but also helped build a sense of community and engagement among participants.

## Token Collection & Appreciation Gifts

To encourage full participation, the Gallery Walk included a token collection activity. Each corner distributed uniquely designed tokens. Visitors who successfully collected all seven tokens submitted them at a designated counter and received:

- SheLeads bookmark
- A chocolate

This gesture served as a symbol of appreciation and helped motivate visitors to explore every corner of the Gallery Walk.



## Conclusion

The SheLeads Gallery Walk was a vibrant, educational, and inspiring event that combined creativity, research, and storytelling to celebrate women's empowerment. Each corner highlighted a different dimension of women's journeys from the first entrepreneurs to modern café owners, from societal barriers to artistic expressions of change. The Gallery Walk not only showcased the achievements of women in Bhutan but also reminded the audience of the importance of continuous dialogue, support, and leadership in empowering future generations of women.

# SheLeads Fundraising Activities

To support the vision of empowering young girls and creating opportunities for leadership, SheLeads organized a series of fundraising initiatives driven entirely by teamwork and creativity. These activities not only raised funds but also inspired confidence, entrepreneurship, and social responsibility among members.

## Lottery Ticket Selling

The lottery ticket initiative became one of the most exciting highlights of the semester. Members enthusiastically approached students, teachers, and local supporters to participate and contribute. The activity strengthened communication skills, built confidence, and attracted wide participation due to the excitement of lucky draws and meaningful prizes.



## Business Fest Stall

One of the most exciting fundraising took place during the Business Fest, where SheLeads set up its own food stall. This real life business experience taught budgeting, pricing, customer service, and teamwork. The stall attracted many students and visitors, helping raise a significant amount for the club's activities.

# Acknowledgement

We sincerely thank everyone who has supported the SheLeads Club and been part of its journey of learning and growth. We are grateful to Student Service Department (SSD) for endorsing our club events and supporting our fundraising initiatives, and to Academic Affairs Department (AAD) for their invaluable assistance with venues and logistics.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to our external partners, Dr. Martine Standaert, Lies Verstraete, and Ilse Wyffels from VIVES University of Applied Sciences, Belgium. We would also like to acknowledge our distinguished speakers, facilitators, and judges including Miss Namrata Pradhan (Business Faculty), Miss Sonam Choden (Founder of Bhutan Lhayi Zeydhan), Dr. Tshering Dolkar (Social Sciences Faculty), and Dr. Stephen Victor (Business Faculty), whose expertise and engagement significantly enriched our events and learning experiences.

We express our special gratitude to ma'am Registrar Dechen Dolkar, whose inspiring idea to develop a magazine for the SheLeads Club laid the very foundation for this publication. Her encouragement and vision motivated us to give shape to this meaningful initiative.

The successful creation of this magazine would not have been possible without Dr. Supongbenla Longkumar (Social Sciences Faculty), whose careful editing and guidance brought clarity and coherence to every featured narrative. We are also grateful to the dedicated members who helped gather and document stories, bringing the experiences, insights and perspectives of young women entrepreneurs to life on these pages. Special recognition goes to the Advisory Committee Members of SheLeads for their careful compilation of stories and reports, as well as their sincere efforts in layout, design and overall coordination that made this publication possible.

Additionally, we also extend our heartfelt thanks to all the members of the SheLeads Club and every participant who took part in our initiatives in any capacity, as organizers, volunteers, contributors, learners, and supporters. Your time, energy, creativity, and commitment have been the true driving force behind the success of our events and this publication.

Finally, our deepest gratitude goes to Miss Tshering Lhamo Dukpa, our esteemed club advisor, for her unwavering supervision and support from guiding the club's events to overseeing every stage of this magazine's development. Her vision, mentorship, and dedication have been instrumental in shaping SheLeads Club and making this publication a reality.

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**She Leads, She Builds, She Inspires**

