

Ura Temple Gallery

a multi-purpose community space and cultural centre

An initiative of Lopen Karma Phuntsho and

Ura Solidarity Association

to sustain the precious communal cultures of Ura



འདིན་ལུགས་བཟང་སློ་བུར་ལྷགས་ལ་བྱམས། །གང་དུ་འགྲོ་ཡང་ལམ་རྒྱགས་མི་དགོས་ལ། །
ཉེདུའི་བྱིམ་ལས་ལྷག་པའི་སྒྲ་ལེན་དང་། །བྱ་བ་ཆེ་བས་བསྐྱལ་པ་བཟང་པོ་བཞིན། །

Here thrives a noble culture, kindness greets all guests.

No need for journey's burden where one may go.

They embrace all more than a kin would do.

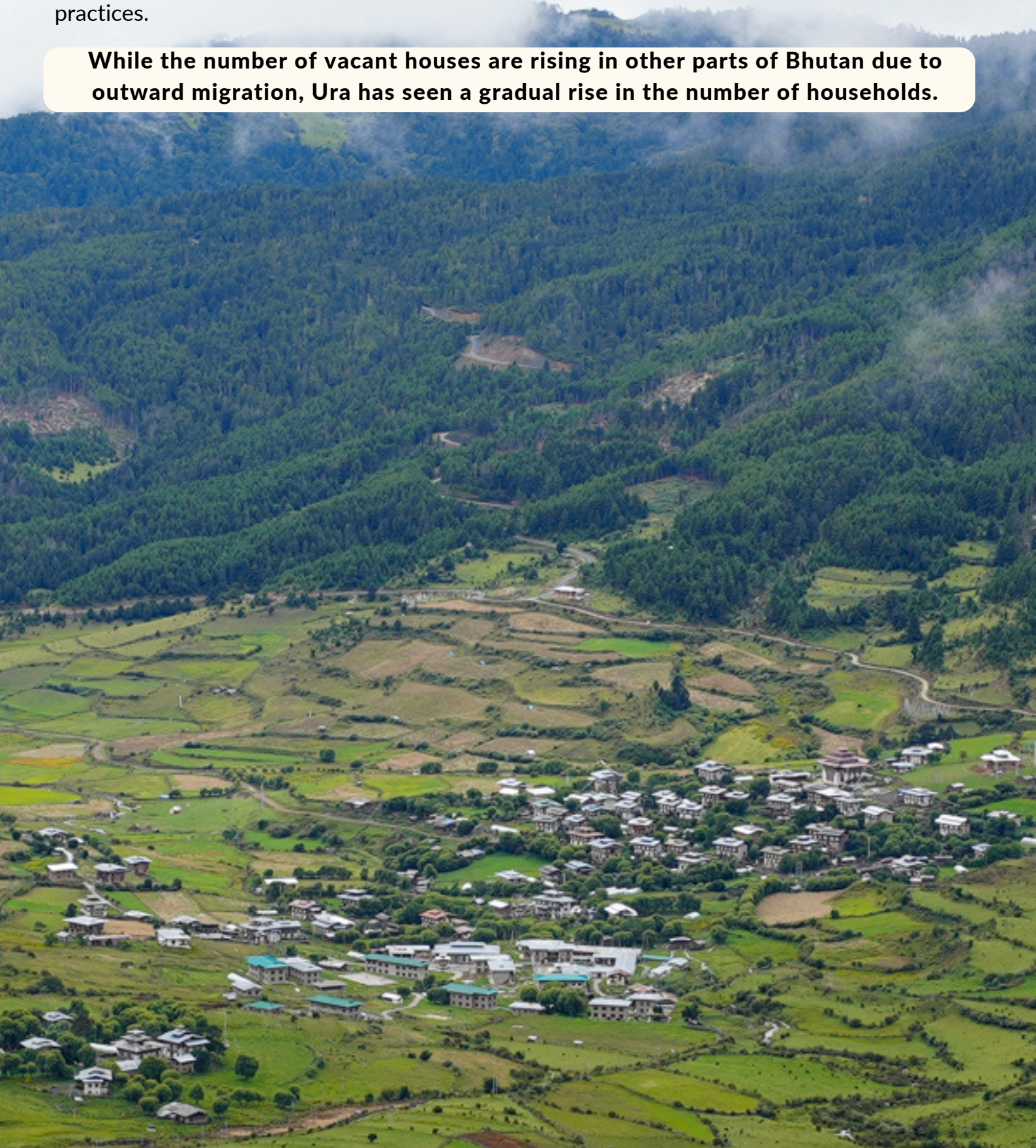
With great deed, they dwell as if in a golden age.

*Longchenpa, a Tibetan saint visitor describing Ura's hospitality
in 1355 in his Praise of Bumthang*



Ura, named after Bhutan's patron saint Ugyen Guru Rinpoche, is nestled in a valley at roughly 3200m altitude, surrounded by forests of spruce, pine, larch, fir, juniper, bamboo and rhododendrons where wildlife such as tigers, leopards, bears, boars and red pandas roam. Its beautiful landscape, bestrewn with the farmhouses, watermills, temples, stupas and prayer flags, provides a wonderful balance between pristine nature and thriving traditional life. It is one of the largest clustered villages in Bhutan consisting of some seventy-five households and about four hundred residents. The village prides in a strong sense of community solidarity expressed through over a dozen annual festivals and ancient management and organizational practices.

While the number of vacant houses are rising in other parts of Bhutan due to outward migration, Ura has seen a gradual rise in the number of households.





The Village

The Lhakhang Temple

The Ura temple, known as Guru Lhakhang, stands tall overlooking the village. Built by the villagers in 1980s in the place of an earlier one, it contains one of the holiest statues of Guru Rinpoche in Bhutan and another one which is one of the largest. Beside being a shrine of holy relics and venue for numerous spiritual and religious practices, the temple is also the centre of cultural activity and community gatherings. It is the venue of some two dozen religious and festive celebrations including Ura Yakcho, the grand annual festival of Ura and Saang, a festival of women.

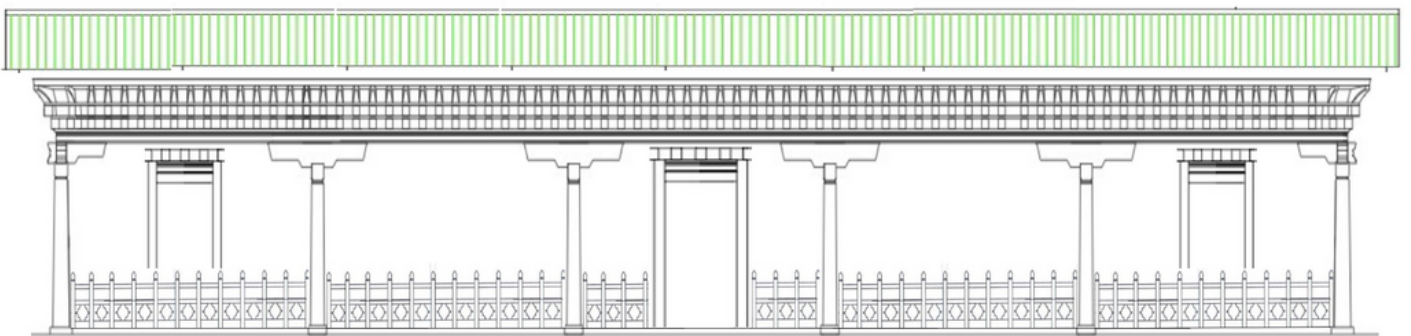
Young monks live and study in the premises of the temple while elderly villagers spend their days circumambulating it and turning the prayer wheels around the temple. The temple is also where funerals, rituals for village wellbeing, and other community gatherings take place on a regular basis.

THE GALLERY



The temple has a gallery which serves as a residence and classroom for young priests and also houses on the ground floor the community kitchen and brewery for ladies to brew the festival drink. However, the stone walls and timber frames of the building have become unstable and risky for continued use. Moreover, the space has become too small for the increasing crowd during the festivals. To address this issue, the village has acquired the adjacent land to expand the gallery.

THIS PROJECT plans to build a new larger structure and have the gallery ready by **April 2026** on time for the next festival. The Ura Yakcho festival today is ranked as the fifth most popular festival among tourists. It attracts some 400-500 tourists from nearly 50 countries. The new structure shall have a spectator's **GALLERY** facing the temple from where locals and visitors can enjoy the festival with a roof over their head. At other times, the gallery will serve as **RESTING PLACE** for the elderly who circumambulate the temple everyday.



Spectator's gallery facing courtyard and temple



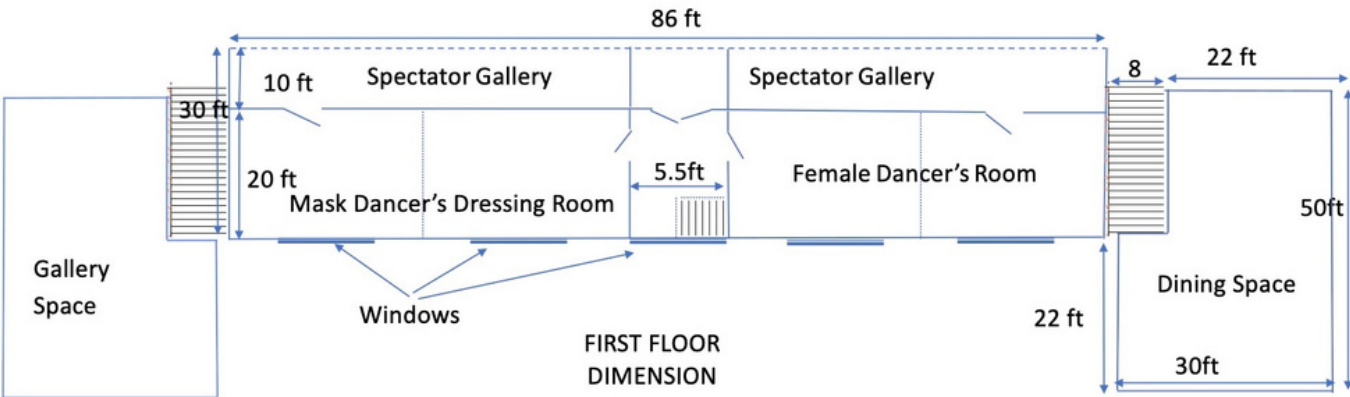
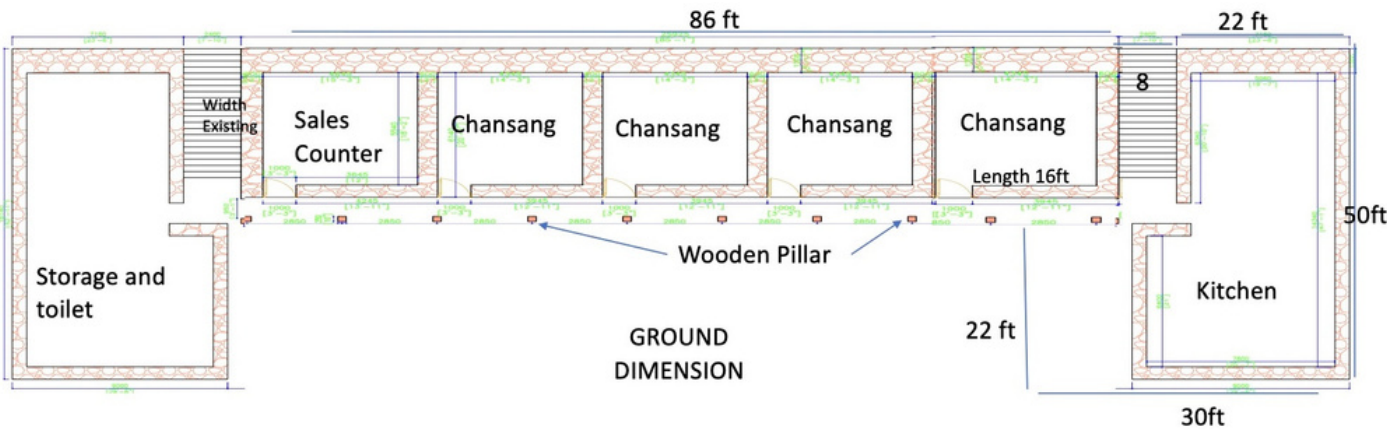
Behind the gallery will be **ROOMS** which will be used by young priests as their residence and classrooms, and as dressing rooms for the male and female dancers during the festivals. The ground floor of the part will be **CHANGSANG BREWERY** space for the women of the village to brew the festival drink and entertain guests, and a **SALES COUNTER** for local products.

The structure on the northside will be restored to house the common **KITCHEN** on the ground floor and **DINING** space on top floor. Similarly, the structure on the southside will join the current southern gallery as extended **GALLERY** space and have a **STORE** and **TOILET** for priests and dancers on the ground floor. The space may be also used to house families who need temporary shelter when building their house.



SOUTHSIDE

NORTHSIDE



RESOURCES

The villagers will help with labour in collecting stone and timber for the construction. However, they cannot provide free labour for the entire construction, and many materials including electrical and plumbing items will have to be procured from outside.

Lopen Dr. Karma Phuntsho, who has been active in preserving and promoting the festival for over twenty-five years, has contributed the initial fund of Nu.1,410,000 (US\$16,600) with a strong belief that the space and the festivals function are fundamental for community vitality and social harmony in the village.

Timber permit and collection including transportation	Nu.1,000,000 US\$ 11,765
Stone collection, transportation and masonry	Nu.500,000 US\$5882
Roof, gutter, electricals, plumbing, nails, paints, etc.	Nu.2,000,000 US\$23,529
Labour costs including masonry, carpentry, electrification, plumbing, painting, etc.	Nu.3,500.000 US\$41,176
TOTAL	Nu.7,000,000 US\$82,353
Raised	Nu.1,410,000 US\$16,588
BALANCE NEEDED	Nu.55,90,000 US\$65,765

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Visit Ura.

**Join us for Yakcho,
the grand annual festival.
28 April - 2 May 2026**