

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

Progress Report



Ura Village, named after Bhutan's patron saint Ugyen Guru Rinpoche and nestled in a valley at roughly 3200m altitude, is 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 and it prides in its strong sense of community solidarity expressed through over a dozen annual festivals and ancient management and organizational practices.



Priests saying prayers at the Ura Yakcho festival before the large applique hanging.

The Ura Guru Lhakhang, built by the villagers in 1980s, is the venue for numerous spiritual and religious practices in village including festivals such as Ura Yakcho, the grand annual festival of Ura, and Saang, a festival of women. Housing many holy relics, the temple is also a pilgrimage site and a tourist attraction. Young priests live and study on the premises of the temple while elderly villagers spend their days circumambulating the temple. The temple complex is also where funerals, rituals for village wellbeing, and other community meetings take place on a regular basis.





Old gallery which was small and decrepit

The temple 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, was unstable and risky for continued use. Moreover, the space has become too small for the increasing crowd of locals and international visitors during the festivals. To address this issue, the village has acquired the adjacent land to expand the gallery and build new community facilities.

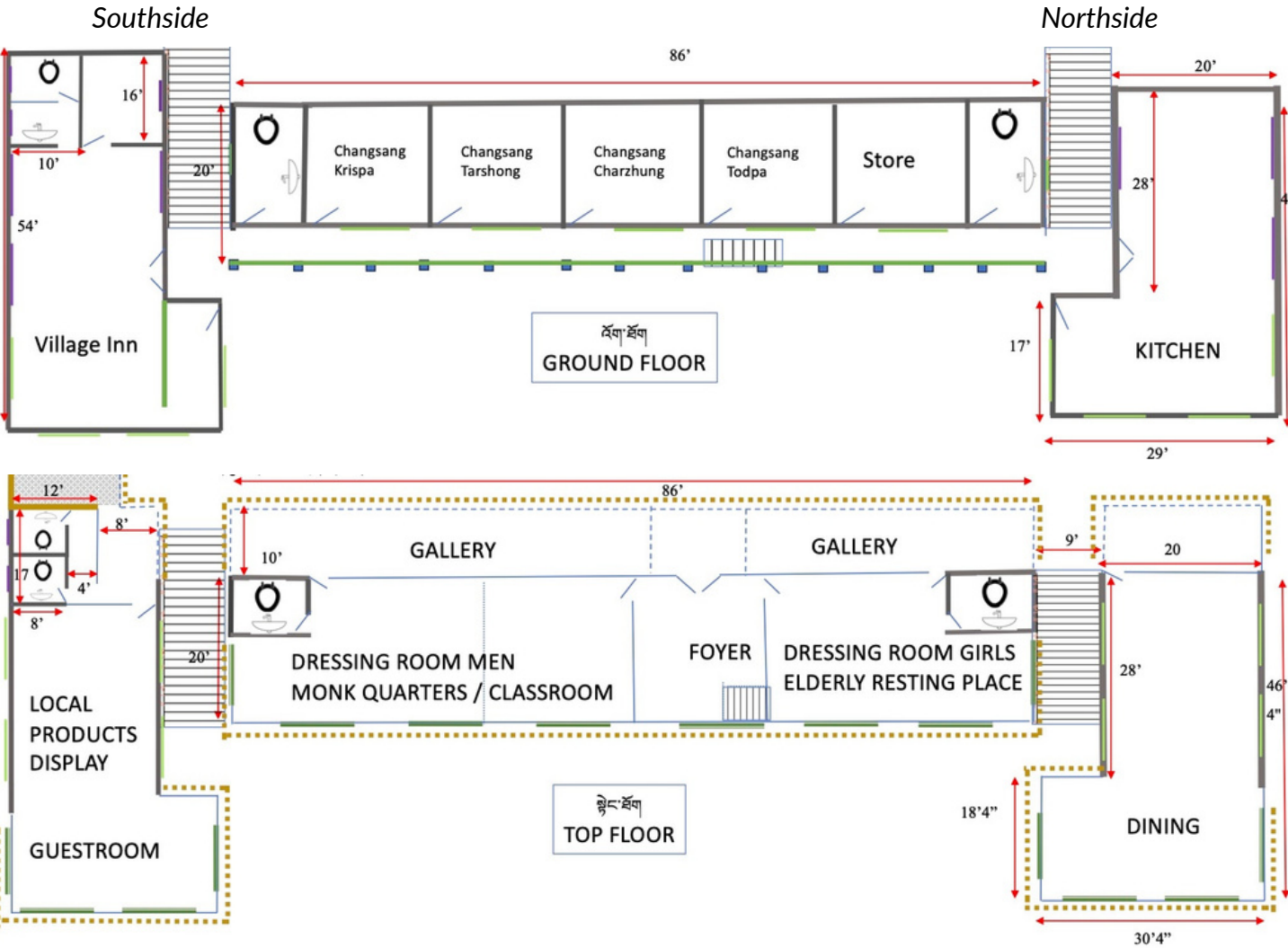
The **PROJECT** started with the aim to build a new gallery and adjacent structures. As the Ura Yakcho festival today is ranked as the fifth most popular festival among visitors and attracts some 400-500 tourists from nearly 50 countries, the plan was to have larger spectator's **GALLERY** ready by **April 2026** for the locals and visitors to enjoy the festival with a roof over their head. Behind the gallery will be **DRESSING ROOMS** for dancers during festivals and these rooms, at other times, will serve as **RESIDENCE** and **CLASSROOMS** for young priests and as a **RESTING PLACE** for the elderly.



Spectator's gallery facing courtyard and temple



The ground floor of the gallery will house **CHANGSANG BREWERY** for the women to brew the festival drink and entertain guests, and a **STORE** which will serve the common kitchen. The structure to the northside will be the **KITCHEN** on the ground floor and **DINING** on the floor above while the space in the structure to the south will be let out as **VILLAGE INN** and space for production, display, and sale of local **ARTS and CRAFTS**.

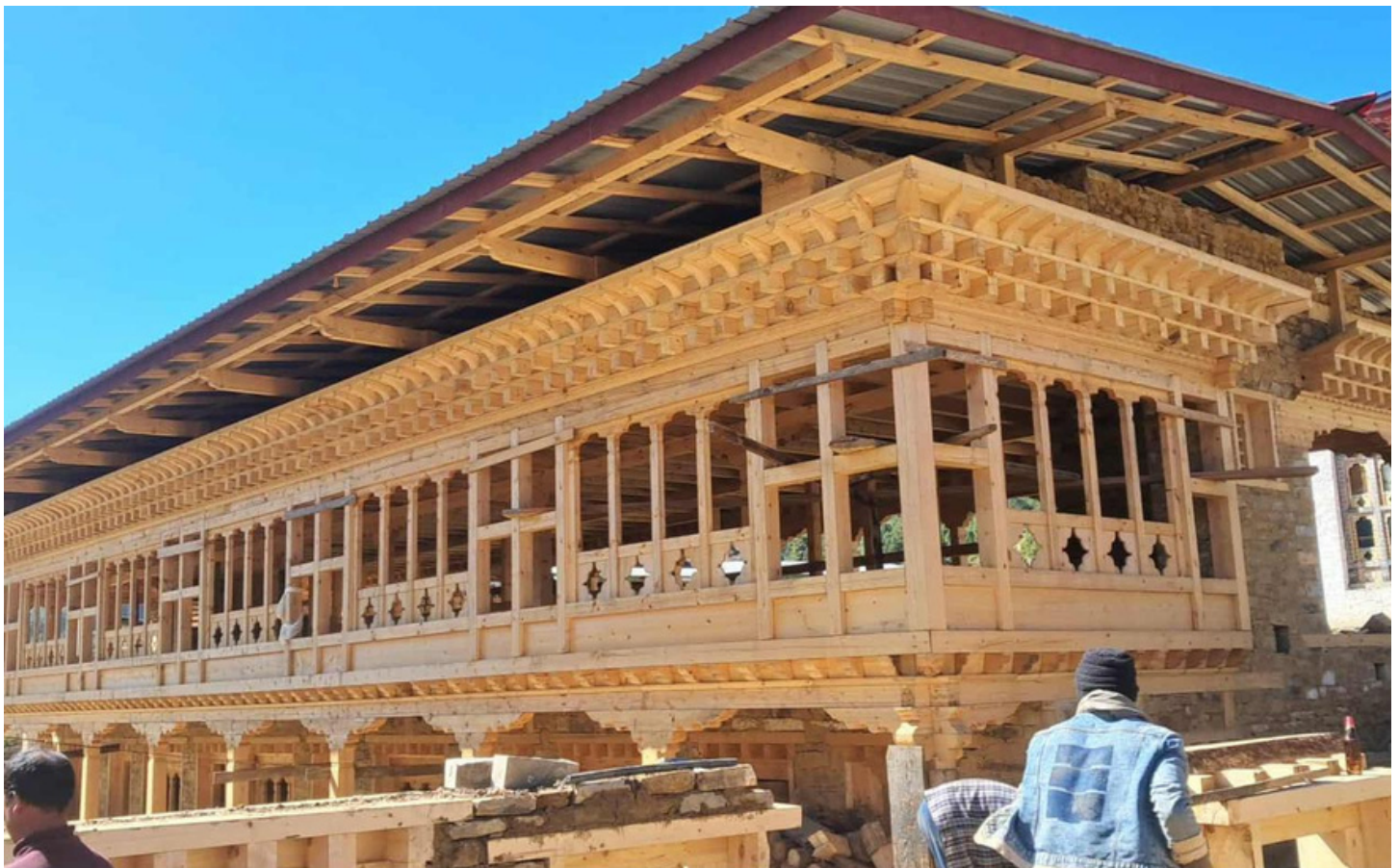


WORK PROGRESS

The **first meeting** for the construction took place in **mid-May 2025** upon the conclusion of the Yakcho festival. The villagers led by the elected head, Khandu Wangchuk, were assigned the task to initiate and supervise work on the ground while Lopen Karma Phuntsho and team in Thimphu began to mobilise funds and procure materials. Using the drawings Lopen Karma Phuntsho prepared, the village head applied for building permit. Tragically, the village head, Khandu Wangchuk, suddenly passed away in June and the work had to be postponed until the funeral was over. With no leader on the site, Lopen Karma Phuntsho travelled to Ura and convened a meeting to appoint village members as focal persons for different aspects of the work. The actual work started on **22 July 2025** after a delay of two months.

His Holiness Drigung Chetsang Rinpoche consecrated the foundation. The carpentry and masonry were contracted out to Rinchen Dorji and his team while the villagers collected timber and stones. The **outer structure** of the **central gallery** was finished by the end of **September 2025**, and the team started to work on structures on the north and south sides. Although the work was repeatedly hindered due to the shortage of timber, **all three building structures** were completed by **the end of 2025**. The carpenters also prepared the planks for flooring and partitions to be dried during peak winter when they suspended the work due to severe cold in Ura.

Interior work shall resume by **1 March 2026** with the plan to complete all works by **mid-April 2026** on time for the festival at the end of April. While the carpenters finish the partition, flooring, and steps, the villagers will clean the surroundings and build the border walls, and professional electricians, plumbers, and painters will carry out electrification, sanitary work, kitchen fittings, and painting.



RESOURCES

The local [National Park office](#) granted timber permits and the [villagers](#), as and when possible, contributed [free labour](#) and [donations in kind](#). The following donors made generous financial donations and we are immensely grateful to them. The difference in the income and expense were so far covered by the modest funds available in the Ura Yakchoe festival account.

Donations

<i>Donor (as of 31 Janaury 2026)</i>	<i>Original currency</i>	<i>In BTN</i>
Karma Phuntsho	BTN	2,410,390
Mayumi Kido via Wakita	USD500	42,400
Sheryl Loke	GBP888	103,372
Yakze Trulku and disciples	USD1175	104,050
Noriko and Tadashi	YEN50000	30,000
Riam Sarah Knapp	GBP1000	116,410
Ura Girls Association	BTN	100,000
Ura Village Contribution	BTN	131,000
Alison Tay	BTN	30,000
Achi Tsepal	USD300	26,700
Bruce Huett	GBP5000	582,050
Anne & Gerard Tardy	GBP4068	492,716
Chen Liangyu	BTN	25,000
Total		4,194,088

Current Accounts

<i>Expenses</i>	<i>Spent</i>	<i>Still Required</i>	<i>Total</i>
Carpentry and masonry	2,828,608	2,300,000	5,128,608
Timber and stone supply	1,078,753	100,000	1,178,753
Roof, nails, transport, etc.	569,689	50,000	619,689
Electrification	0	400,000	400,000
Sanitation, Kitchen, Plumbing	0	500,000	500,000
Painting	0	250,000	250,000
Border Wall	0	50,000	50,000
Other items	175	10,000	10,175
Total	4,477,225	3,660,000	8,137,225



APPEAL

Although the external structure is now complete, the completion of the internal partition, floor, electrification, plumbing, painting, etc. on time for the festival in late April depends on availability of further funding. In addition, the cost is also likely to go up by Nu. 1.13 m from Nu. 7m projected last year. Thus, once again we turn to generous donors and are deeply grateful to you for your support. We also wish to welcome you to Ura Yakchoe festival from 28 April - 2 May 2026 or to any other cultural events held by the Ura community.

Donate through

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MORE PICTURES







