

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa

Introduction

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT) was founded in 2007 and is one of the two oldest political parties in the country. DPT is dedicated to realising the vision of our Kings. It is committed to the creation of a unique democratic culture, the fabric of which is woven from the threads of our spiritual, cultural, and historical wealth. The party is inspired by the highest standards of ethics and principles. DPT believes that the pursuit of good democracy begins with the electoral process itself since the values and means by which a party comes to power will shape the way in which it will govern. Likewise, the voters too have the shared responsibility of participating in the electoral process.

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa is unique in that it is not founded by its 'leaders' but by the people themselves. The so called leaders in the party are recruits called upon by the people to serve the nation. Those who have heeded the call include former ministers and an impressive array of senior government officials and professionals from all walks of life including the private sector. The youth and women are well represented to complement the wisdom and experience of the elders with dynamism. Our collective leadership capacity is noteworthy.

Party's Vision and Mission

Druk Phuensum Tshogpa's vision is to contribute towards a vibrant democracy, where every Bhutanese would pursue happiness in an environment of peace, prosperity, equity, and justice. It hopes to achieve this vision by pursuing the following mission goals:

1. To achieve economic self-reliance by the year 2020.
2. To eradicate poverty, raise the standard of living and enable pursuit of happiness through regionally balanced development.
3. To strengthen the legal, institutional, and administrative foundations of democracy.
4. To ensure prevalence of the Rule of Law.
5. To promote harmony, peace, and security within Bhutan and the world.
6. To ennoble politics and politicians so that they are worthy of public trust.
7. To serve with humility and devotion.

DPT is dedicated and committed to serving the *Tsa-wa-Sum*; His Majesty The King, Country and People, the state of the core of our being and the three elements of our nationhood. It is of the firm belief that the *Tsa-wa-Sum* must forever form the essence of our dreams and must always flourish.

In pursuing the noble vision of our Kings, our party has adopted “growth with Equity and Justice” as the core value that will guide the party in its endeavours. We see these as the noble means to the noblest end. Justice is the fundamental condition for continued peace, progress, and stability of nations just as equity is the means to harmony and sustainable prosperity.

Why Druk Phuensum Tshogpa?

DPT is the only party that has experience both as a government and opposition with significant number of members. Among them are highly qualified professionals from various backgrounds and fields of expertise, experienced bureaucrats who have served in leadership positions for decades, and committed youth who do not see their choice of politics as an option but a cause to serve the *Tsa-wa-Sum*.

DPT as the Government (2008-2013)

DPT was the first democratically elected government that came to power with a landslide majority in 2008 winning 45 of the total 47 seats. Since it was an unchartered territory, DPT faced numerous daunting challenges during the formative days. The glare of our expectant public and that of the international community were upon us and every move we made was scrutinised, analysed, and judged by the public and the media. Our actions were often put through the highest standards of moral compass and performance barometers. Despite those seemingly insurmountable challenges, we have reasons to believe that we did well for the following reasons:

- 1) In any democratic system, the transition is rife with controversies and teething problems. However, DPT was able to see through the transition without any major problems.
- 2) The success and failure of a democratic government is judged by the fulfillment or non-fulfilment of its campaign pledges. For the period 2008 – 2013, DPT prepared a broad range of 153 pledges encompassing almost all sectors of our country’s socio-economic domain.

Despite numerous formidable challenges, at the end of our term in 2013, we were able to fulfill 151 pledges (98 percent) and only 2 pledges remained unfulfilled (2 percent). To justify our claim of achieving 98 percent of our pledges, the following are some of our major achievements that impacted the lives of every single Bhutanese:

- i) Started 5 hydropower projects – Dagachu, Punatsangchu I & II, Mangdechu, and Nikachu.
- ii) Expanded our road networks by 5,980 kilometers (3,400 km of farm road) easing the drudgery of having to walk long distances and opening up markets to farm produces.
- iii) Provided electricity to some 40,000 households, illuminating people’s lives and enhancing economic opportunities.
- iv) Enabled mobile phone connectivity to all 20 dzongkhags, 205 gewogs and almost all villages, facilitating the ease of communication and bridging the gap of geographical distance.
- v) Took education to the doorstep by opening up Extended Class Rooms (ECR) all over the country, eventually achieving 100 percent Universal Primary Enrolment.
- vi) Likewise, the health sector received one of the highest priorities and annual budget allocated to the sector was consistently one of the highest. The system of ‘mobile ambulance’ was initiated for the first time to save precious lives and ease the burden of scarce transportation facility in rural areas. We fulfilled our pledge of providing 2 doctors and 2 ambulances to every dzongkhag hospital.
- vii) While our campaign pledge was to bring down the unemployment rate to 2.5 percent (full employment as per ILO’s definition), through concerted efforts of planning, programming, and implementation of effective employment policies, we were able to bring down the rate of unemployment from 4.1 percent (2008) to 2.1 percent (2013) exceeding our target and expectations.
- viii) Finally, the cumulative impact of all the aforementioned achievements were manifested in the reduction of poverty from 26.7 percent to a mere 12 percent at the end of our term.

The foregoing are not an exhaustive list of our achievements but just some of our major accomplishments quoted to lend credence to our claim that we are a party with a proven track record in terms of leadership and performance.

DPT as the Opposition (2013-2018)

As the Opposition Party in the Parliament, we have been guided by the vision of our Monarchs and the provisions of our sacred Constitution. We have served as an exemplary opposition party and have allowed the government of the day to function without undue disruption. We have been steadfast in our commitment to be a responsible and constructive opposition.

To this end, we have been supportive of all government actions and policies that carried the scope and prospect to bring larger benefits to our country and the people. We have provided our support in passing the annual budgets and other legislative instruments introduced in the National Assembly. However, where we felt that the government was introducing policies and programmes that do not benefit our people, we have expressed our concerns and views on them. Some of our noteworthy opposition were on the following issues:

- i. **Corporatisation of Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital:** We opposed the government's plan to corporatise our country's biggest and busiest hospital. Our action has ensured that health services for our people remains free at all times as enshrined in the Constitution.
- ii. **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal Motor Vehicle Agreement:** We expressed deep concern on the ratification of this Agreement in the best interest of our people and nation.
- iii. **Establishment of Rural Enterprise Development Corporation Limited (erstwhile Business Opportunity and Information Centre):** We repeatedly expressed concern and opposed the establishment of these institutions and recommended that the responsibility be entrusted to existing financial institutions.
- iv. **Central Schools:** While we supported the concept of establishing Central Schools, we had made a number of recommendations to improve their functioning and sustainability.

In addition to the above, we have also raised serious concerns on the government's populist measures like the purchase of helicopters, supply of power tillers, Boleros, reduction and exemption of taxes and fees, farms shops, and many others, that promotes peoples' dependency on the government which in turn increases our country's dependence on external aid. These populist measures of the government will pose serious challenges and difficulties in achieving our country's cherished goals of self-reliance and strengthening of national sovereignty and security.

In gist, our performance track record of having achieved 98 percent of our campaign pledges as the country's first democratically elected government is unparalleled and has set a high benchmark for all political parties. As the Opposition Party, we have been exemplary in our performance. We have shouldered the responsibility with full dedication and loyalty and have set good precedence for future opposition parties.

Therefore, if given the mandate to govern the country again, we solemnly pledge to establish a government that is caring and responsive while subjecting ourselves to transparency, accountability, and public scrutiny. To this end, we will always keep an ear for even the loneliest and feeblest cry for help. We will articulate through policies, the shared hopes and aspirations of the people and devise means for their realisation, keeping both the short-term needs and long-term interests of the nation and the people.

In view of the aforementioned vision, performance and commitment to serve the *Tsa-wa-Sum* with unwavering loyalty and *tha damtsi*, it is our humble hope and prayer that the people of Bhutan will find reasons for placing your trust in Druk Phuensum Tshogpa.