

4. Bhutan's Report

Chimi Wangmo

Bhutanese dietitians perceive the Asian Young Dietitian Network (AYDN) as a networking platform tailored for young dietitians, offering crucial support, providing resources, and presenting opportunities - all geared towards fostering professional development for dietitians from various countries. AYDN is exclusively designed for young professionals in the field. Networks of this nature play a vital role in delivering essential support, resources, and networking opportunities to facilitate professional growth. The benefits associated with such networks are diverse, encompassing information sharing, career guidance, improved job opportunities, and the overall enhancement of professional skills.

We think AYDN can play a crucial role in shaping the future of nutrition in several ways:

1. **Innovation and Adaptation:** AYDN members bring fresh ideas, innovation, new perspectives, and a willingness to adapt to emerging trends in nutrition. These networks serve as platforms for discussing and implementing new ideas.
2. **Collaboration and Networking:** Networking within AYDN can lead to partnerships, joint projects, and the sharing of diverse experiences and insights.
3. **Professional Development:** AYDN is instrumental in supporting ongoing professional development, ensuring that young dietitians stay informed and updated about the latest research. This contributes to the continuous improvement of nutritional practices.
4. **Mentorship Programs:** Establishing mentorship programs within these networks can help bridge the gap between experienced professionals and those starting their careers. This fosters knowledge transfers and skill development.
5. **Global Collaboration:** AYDN can facilitate global exchanges of knowledge, best practices, and cultural perspectives on nutrition.

Therefore, we think that our country should join this network. It will facilitate the exchange of invaluable knowledge and expertise among emerging dietitians. Through participation, our country can gain access to a diverse pool of professionals who can share insights, best practices, and innovative approaches to nutrition and dietary challenges. Secondly, it opens collaborative opportunities on both national and international levels. Moreover, the network serves as a platform for continuous professional development. We can benefit from workshops, conferences, and training programs tailored to the latest advancements in the

field. This not only enhances the skills of individual dietitians but also contributes to the overall improvement of nutritional practices within the country.

Kick-off meeting of AYDN

Unfortunately, this time kick-off meeting program, none of the Bhutanese members were able to attend physically, however, while participating virtually in the meeting, we gained valuable insights by attentively listening to our fellows' presentations. The shared information was impressive, especially the discussion on the diverse food cultures they possess—highlighting a stark contrast to our main challenge of limited food diversification. Furthermore, these countries exhibit well-updated data on nutritional issues, demonstrating a more advanced understanding of nutrition and research, even in the face of larger challenges and issues.

We also had the opportunity to share our country's presentation online. In the initial segment, we provided an overview of Bhutan—a landlocked country nestled in the Eastern Himalayas, recognized for its distinctive development and governance approach. With a population surpassing 700,000, Bhutan boasts an estimated life expectancy of around 72 years, with Buddhism being the predominant religion.

Moving beyond the overview, the presentation delved into Bhutanese food culture—a unique cuisine shaped by geography, climate, and Buddhist traditions. Characterized by simplicity, reliance on local ingredients, and distinct regional flavors, the cultural significance of food is evident in shared and celebrated meals, reflecting Bhutan's rich heritage.

Bhutanese cuisine highlights staples like red rice and buckwheat, particularly common in the central and eastern regions. The national dish, Ema Datshi, is a spicy chili and cheese delight. The culinary landscape further includes dairy products, momos (dumplings), and traditional beverages like Suja (butter tea). Additionally, fermented foods such as sikam, ezay, and pickles enjoy popularity.

While Bhutan has made strides in healthcare and nutrition, it grapples with ongoing nutritional challenges. Issues include iron deficiency anemia, micronutrient deficiencies, and undernutrition in the population. The double and triple burden of malnutrition remains a concern, alongside challenges related to limited dietary diversity, changing dietary patterns, rural-urban disparities, and food security in vulnerable communities.

*To whom correspondence should be addressed:
cwangmo@mrrh.gov.bt



Fig 1. Bhutan's food culture

In conclusion, we outlined the steps and requisites for individuals aspiring to become Dietitians in Bhutan. This involves obtaining a relevant educational background, gaining practical experience through training and internships, and registering for preliminary and main examinations. Successful candidates can pursue roles in hospitals, ministries, and other sectors. The presentation also touched upon continuing education and licensing or accreditation

opportunities.

Expectations from the network may vary, but we believe this network will significantly contribute to professional development. It will offer opportunities for professional growth, skill enhancement, and access to the latest advancements in the field of nutrition. Additionally, there will be valuable networking opportunities where members can build a strong professional network, connect with experienced professionals, and engage with colleagues from different countries. There is an expectation for mentorship programs to guide and support young dietitians in their career paths. Members can anticipate access to educational materials, workshops, and seminars to stay updated on nutritional trends, research, and best practices. The network is expected to provide various career opportunities, foster collaboration and teamwork, and advocate for representation within the profession. Furthermore, attending events and conferences organized by the network will be a valuable aspect of membership. Overall, being with AYDN, learning new insights and ideas regarding the knowledge and understanding of nutrition and dietetics, we will collaborate on all the positive activities and adopt them if feasible for our country's future endeavors.