

Ura Temple Gallery: a multi-purpose community space and cultural centre.



Photo: Ura Solidarity Association

འདི་ན་ལྷགས་བཟང་གློ་བུར་ལྷགས་ལ་བྱམས། །གང་དུ་འགྲོ་ཡང་ལམ་རྒྱགས་མི་དགོས་ལ། །
ཉེ་དུ་འཁྱེམ་ལས་ལྷག་པའི་སྣ་ལེན་དང་། །བྱ་བ་ཆེ་བས་བསྐྱལ་པ་བཟང་པོ་བཞིན། །

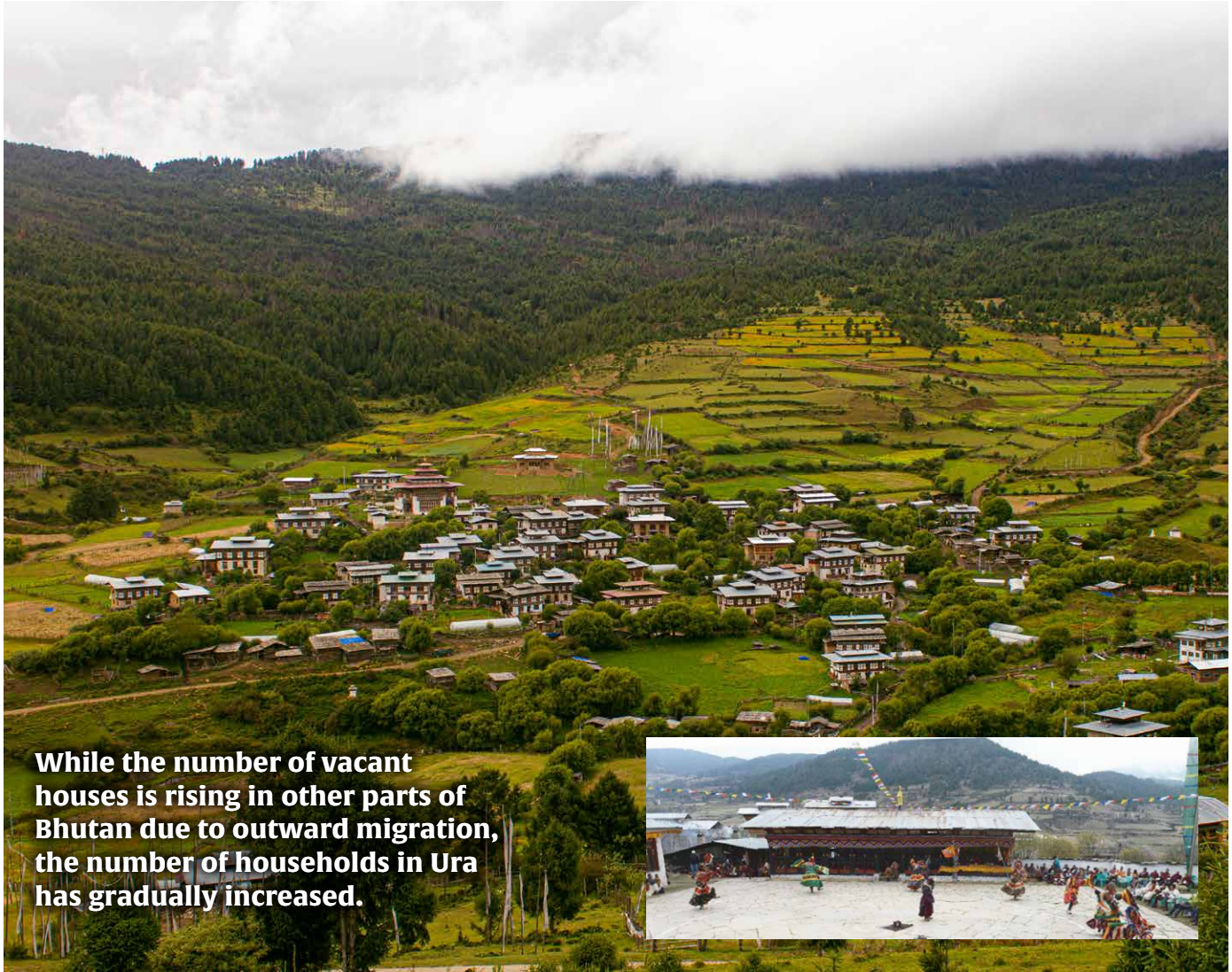
*“A noble culture thrives here, where kindness greets all guests.
There is no need to bear the burden of a journey.
They embrace all as if they were family.
They dwell as if in a golden age, with great deeds.”*

In his Praise of Bumthang, Longchenpa, a Tibetan saint, describes the hospitality of Ura in 1355.

This is an initiative of the Ura Solidarity Association, aiming to sustain the precious communal cultures of Ura.

Named after Bhutan’s patron saint, Ugyen Guru Rinpoche, Ura is nestled in a valley at an altitude of around 3,200 metres. It is surrounded by forests of

spruce, pine, larch, fir, juniper, bamboo and rhododendrons. Wildlife such as tigers, leopards, bears, wild boars and red pandas roam. The beautiful landscape, scattered with farmhouses, watermills, temples, stupas and prayer flags, strikes a wonderful balance between pristine nature and thriving traditional life.



While the number of vacant houses is rising in other parts of Bhutan due to outward migration, the number of households in Ura has gradually increased.

Photos: Ura Solidarity Association

It is one of the largest clustered villages in Bhutan, consisting of around seventy-five households and approximately four hundred residents. The village takes pride in its strong sense of community solidarity, expressed through around a dozen annual festivals and ancient management and organisational practices.

The Lhakhang Temple

The Ura Temple, also known as the Guru Lhakhang, stands tall overlooking the village. Built by the villagers in the 1980s to replace an earlier, smaller structure, it contains one of the holiest and largest statues of Guru Rinpoche in Bhutan. As well as being a shrine for holy relics and a venue for numerous spiritual and religious practices, the temple is also the centre of cultural activity and community gatherings. Some two dozen religious and festive celebrations are held here, including the grand annual Ura Yakcho festival.



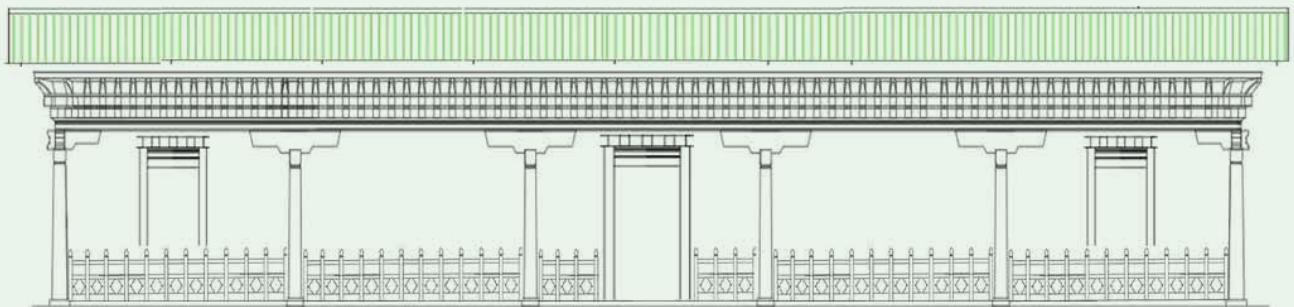
Young monks live and study in the temple, while elderly villagers spend their days circumambulating it and turning the prayer wheels. Funerals, rituals for the wellbeing of the village, and other community gatherings also take place here on a regular basis.



The (old) Gallery

The temple has a gallery which serves as a residence and classroom for young priests. The ground floor contains a community kitchen and a brewery, where women brew the festival drink. However, the building's stone walls and timber frames have become unstable

and pose a risk if continued use. Furthermore, the space has become too small to accommodate the increasing number of visitors during festivals. To address these issues, the village has acquired adjacent land on which to expand the gallery.



The spectator's gallery faces the courtyard and the temple.

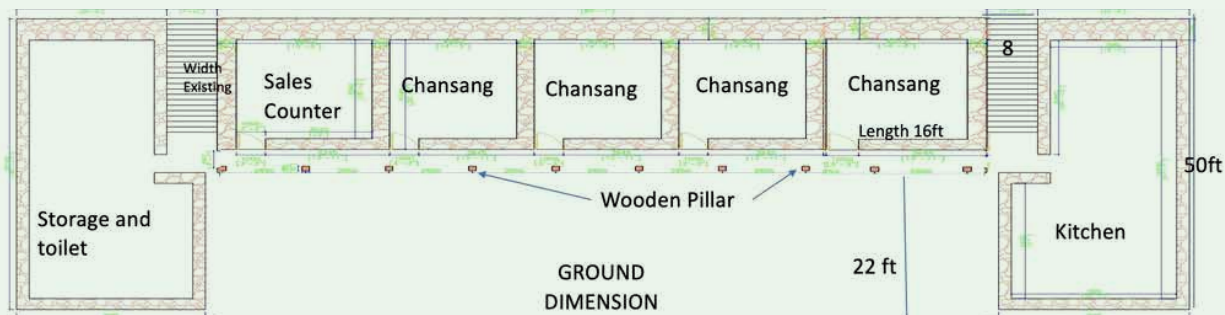
This project plans to build a new larger structure. The Ura Yakcho festival today is ranked as the fifth most popular festival among tourists. It attracts some 400-500 tourists from nearly 50 countries. The new structure shall have a spectator's gallery facing the temple from where locals and visitors can enjoy the festival with roof over their heads. The gallery will normally serve as **resting place** for the elderly who circumam-

bulate the temple everyday. 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.



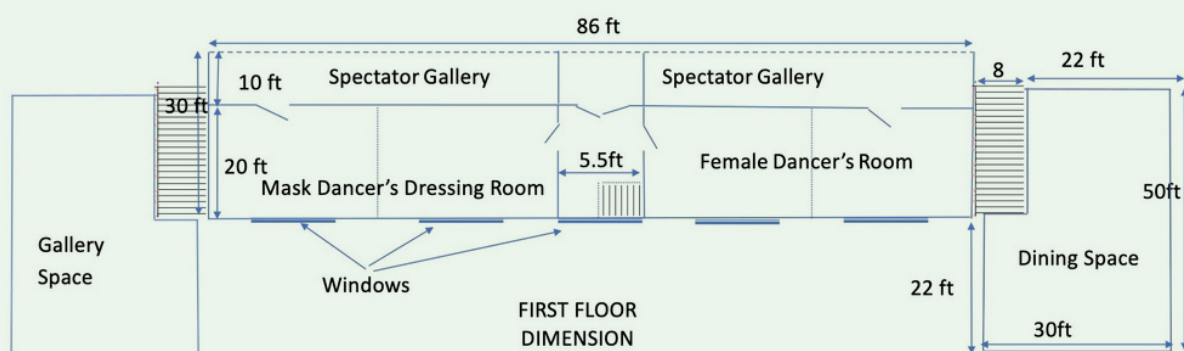
Southside

Northside



The northside structure will be restored to house a communal **kitchen** on the ground floor and a **dining** area on the top floor. Similarly, the southside structure will be joined to the current southern gallery to provide

additional **gallery** space, with a **toilet** for priests and dancers on the ground floor. This space may also be used to provide temporary shelter for families while they build their houses.



Resources: The villagers will help with some of the labour, such as collecting stones for the ground floor walls and timber. 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 an initial fund of Nu. 1,410,000 (US\$16,600), believing strongly that the space and the festival's function are core to community vitality and social harmony. ■

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 incl. 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

Would you like to support the construction of the new gallery and community rooms at Ura Temple and the work of the German Bhutan Himalaya Society??

Then you can easily make a donation via PayPal using the QR code below or by bank transfer: Sparkasse KölnBonn (IBAN: DE89 3705 0198 0016 4122 80, BIC: COLSDE33XXX).

Upon request, you will receive a donation receipt.



Deutsche
Bhutan Himalaya
Gesellschaft e. V.

ཇིང་ལྷན་ འབྲུག་གི་ཚོགས་པ།

