

Paro Forum
Water Management and Climate Change: Bridging Knowledge to Action
JSW Law Climate Change & Environmental Law Centre
February 22-24, 2025
JSW Law Paro Campus, Pangbisa, Bhutan and Virtual

FORUM SCHEDULE

22 February 2025	
9:00 am	Registration
9:30 am	Welcome and Opening
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Arrival of the Honorable President, Her Royal Highness Ashi Sonam Dechan Wangchuck ● Lighting of butter lamp ● Marchang and Opening prayer ● Welcome, Dean Sangay Dorjee ● Keynote, Lyonchen Tshering Tobgay, Prime Minister of Bhutan ● The Announcement of the Justice Sector ● Vote of Thanks, Helen Lansdowne
10:30 am	High Tea
11:15 am	Session 1: Hydrology and Glacier panel
	<p>This panel will focus on the state of the cryosphere globally and in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region, examining its contribution to river systems, the risks posed by climate change, and potential mitigation strategies. It will also highlight research from the Polar Arctic, discussing data collection techniques and the challenges faced in understanding glacial and hydrological dynamics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Moderator - Pam Pearson, Founder and Director, International Cryosphere Climate Initiative ● John Pomeroy, Dept. of Geography & Planning, University of Saskatchewan ● Miriam Jackson, Glaciologist, ICIMOD, IPCC Lead Author, and formerly of the Norwegian Water Authority

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Karma Tshering, Former Director of the National Centre for Hydrology and Meteorology
1:00 pm	Lunch Break
2:00 pm	Session 2: Protecting Rivers
	<p>Hydropower, the main source of energy in Bhutan, is considered a green renewable energy source. However, according to the WWF, the use of dams or weirs on rivers needed to operate hydropower plants has devastating consequences for rivers and biodiversity. While Europe is seeing an expansion of river damming, in North America there is an attempt to start dismantling dams, particularly large, older dams that are recognized as contributors to the destruction of river ecosystems. This panel will examine how best to protect rivers within the context of hydropower and its impact on water systems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderator - Victor V. Ramraj, University of Victoria • Deborah Curran, University of Victoria • Paljor Jigme Dorji, Founding President of Bhutan Ecological Society • Dorji Pavo Phuntshok, Chief Executive Officer, Exalt Druk Enviroklens Limited • John Dore, DFAT, Lead Specialist – Climate Resilience & Water Security
3:30 pm	Tea Break
4:00 pm	Session 3: Documentary Screening and Discussion: “Glacial Perspectives: Exploring the Frozen Frontiers
	<p>Join us for an insightful documentary screening and discussion focusing on the changing landscapes of the world’s glaciers. “Bhutan Mountain Man: video diaries from a lone glaciologist” delves into the dramatic impacts of climate change on glacial environments, exploring the science, stories, and stakes involved. This session will offer a unique blend of visual storytelling and expert dialogue, providing a platform to discuss the challenges and opportunities for glacier conservation and sustainable water management.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening of “Bhutan Mountain Man: video diaries from a lone glaciologist.” • Moderator - Dema Lham, JSW School of Law • Arun Bhattacharai, Independent Filmmaker.

6:00 pm	Opening Dinner
23 February 2025	
9:00 am	Registration
9:30 am	Session 4: Groundwater Use
	<p>Historically, groundwater has not been a water source for Bhutanese society, however, with climate change and water use pressures there is a rethinking and groundwater use has become part of the discussions in Bhutan regarding water management. This panel brings together experts both within and beyond Bhutan to discuss the complexities of groundwater use in the Himalayas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Moderator - Saroj Rai, College of Science & Technology ● Karma Chhoiphygel Nyedrup, Environmental Specialist, Department of Environment and Climate Change ● Gayatri Naik, National Law School of India University ● Tom Gleeson, University of Victoria ● Abjijit Mukherjee, Indian Institute of Technology
11:00 am	Tea Break
11:30 am	Session 5: Funders Panel “Investing in Water: Exploring Opportunities for Climate Adaptation”
	<p>Funding is crucial for climate adaptation and water management. This panel will feature local and multinational funders discussing strategies, opportunities, and challenges in financing sustainable water projects. Panelists will share insights on funding models, priorities, and pathways for communities and organizations to access support, aiming to foster collaboration for impactful climate adaptation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Moderator -William W. Burke-White, University of Pennsylvania ● Sonam Yangdon Rabgay, Program Analyst, UNDP ● Sonam Dagay, Program Specialist, WWF-Bhutan ● Tsheten Dorji, Chief of Sustainable Development, Royal Society For Protection of Nature, ● Shokhimardon Musaev, Country Operations Head, ADB - Bhutan
1:00 pm	Lunch Break

2:00 pm	Session 6: Student Showcase: “Innovation in Action: Commercializing Water in Bhutan”
	<p>The Climate Change and Environmental Law Clinic, Human Dignity Clinic, and Entrepreneurism Clinic from JSW Law will present their research and findings on innovative approaches to commercializing water in Bhutan. This session highlights student-led initiatives aimed at addressing water challenges through sustainable and entrepreneurial solutions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change and Environmental Law Clinic • Human Dignity Clinic • Entrepreneurism Clinic
3:30 pm	Tea Break
4:00 pm	Session 7: Water Sources
	<p>Climate variation as well population increase, changes in lifestyles, and economic advancement has brought about new demands for water in Bhutan. Water management has become a priority for the country, particularly in addressing the competing needs for water by hydropower projects, irrigation and industry. This panel will address the changing pressures on Bhutan’s water sources and the need for their constant Protection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderator - Sonam Jamtsho, Consultant, Water Supply and Sanitation Design, Gyelsung Infra • Sonam Choden, Lead Research Coordinator, ReBuilt Bhutan • Lam Dorji, Managing Director, Centre for Environment and Development • Karma Drupchu, Director, National Centre for Hydrology and Meteorology • Tenzin Drugyel, Deputy Chief Agriculture Officer, Ministry of Agriculture
6:00 pm	Dinner
24 February 2025	
9:00 am	Registration
9:30 am	Session 8 : Water User Groups

	<p>Community activism is vital to meeting Bhutan’s water needs. This panel features representatives from water-focused CSOs working directly with local communities, highlighting grassroots efforts in sustainable water management. Panelists will share insights on empowering communities, innovative practices, and the role of local solutions in climate adaptation, aiming to inspire collaboration and showcase strategies for water resilience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderator - Tshering Dolkar, Jigme Singye Wangchuck School of Law • Kencho Wangdi, WASH Sector Leader, SNV - Bhutan • Sonam Pem, Executive Director, Tarayana Foundation • Chukey Wangchuk, Country Coordinator, Bhutan Water Partnership • Shar Jamil, Member of the Board of Directors, Waterkeeper Alliance • Sagar Prasai, Former Country Representative, India, The Asia Foundation
10:30 am	Tea Break
11:00 am	Session 9: Urban Water Management Practices
	<p>This panel will bring together key stakeholders in urban water management, including representatives from the Department of Water, the city municipality, and engineering experts. Participants will discuss best practices, innovative solutions, and collaborative strategies for effective urban water design and management, addressing the challenges faced by cities in ensuring sustainable water resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderator: Chencho Norbu, Technical Advisor, Climate Change and Environmental Law Centre, Jigme Singye Wangchuck School of Law • Tenzin Khorlo, Chief Environment Officer, Department of Water, Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources • Yeshey Wangdi, Chief, Thimphu Thromde • Chhimi Dorji, Lead Consultant and Founder, Water Resources, Renewable Energy, Hydro-Meteorology and Environment
1:00 pm	Lunch Break
2:00 pm	Session 10: Stakeholders Meeting: “Charting the Course: Collaborative Strategies for Water Conservation and Climate Resilience - creating a roadmap”

	<p>After three days of knowledge sharing, discussions and debates, the final step in the Paro Forum program is to bring presenters and participants together to contribute to the creation of a roadmap that will identify the immediate challenges concerning climate change and water management and outline strategies that could be considered moving forward. The outcome of the roadmap is a white paper that will be presented to the Government of Bhutan as an advisory document.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapporteur: Eric Lemelson, Founder and President, Karuna Foundation • Moderator: Donna Greschner, Former Dean of Law, University of Victoria • Conclusion of key insights and strategies.
5:00 pm	Closing & Prayer
6:00 pm	Post-Forum Reception