

# Compassion in Action Jangsa Animal Saving Trust



The morning air in Serbithang carries the familiar rhythm of devotion — a blend of barks, soft hoofbeats, and the careful footsteps of caretakers beginning their day. Mist lifts slowly from the surrounding hills as the first rays of sunlight touch the shelter’s corrugated roofs. Here, adjacent to the Royal Thimphu College, stands a place that breathes compassion: Jangsa Animal Saving Trust.

This is not just an animal shelter. It is a refuge, a field hospital, a classroom, and a quiet spiritual reminder of what it means to care for life in all its forms.

## MY COMPASS FOR COMPASSION

My journey with Jangsa began long before I ever set foot in its Thimphu shelter. It started in my childhood, when my father — a Dzongkha teacher and one of

the kindest people I know — would stop to feed hungry dogs on our evening walks. “Every being deserves kindness,” he would say. “Even if they can’t thank you for it.”

Those words became a compass for my life. I’ve been taking care of sick, injured, and hungry animals for as long as I can remember. When I first volunteered at Jangsa as a college student many years ago, I immediately felt at home. Every visit since has strengthened my connection with the animals I meet — each encounter teaching me something about patience, trust, and care.

Some of those encounters have stayed with me more closely, especially the animals I took home so I could help them heal more fully. My own dog, Courage, for example, was rescued from the streets of

Paro and has been with me for almost eight years now. And just recently, another little soul, Zamine — which means “girl” in *tshangla* language — came into my life. She was brought to the Thimphu shelter all the way from Gelephu, unable to walk, her hind legs completely paralyzed. With daily massages, gentle exercises, and the support of a makeshift carrier cloth, she is now slowly regaining her strength and her ability to walk. When I’m away, my mother looks after her, and together we celebrate every small sign of progress.

Zamine’s resilience is my daily reminder that compassion is not about perfection; it’s about persistence.

## THE HEART OF JANGSA

Jangsa Animal Saving Trust was founded in 2000 by Lama Kunzang Dorjee Rinpoche, under the guiding principle Saving Lives, Living Compassion. What began as a small group performing Tsethar — the Buddhist practice of liberating animals from slaughter — has since grown into one of Bhutan’s most respected civil society organizations, recognized with the National Order of Merit (Gold) from His Majesty The King.

Today, Jangsa operates across eleven Dzongkhags in Bhutan and in Kalimpong, India. Its shelters range from the rescue and treatment center in Thim-

phu to sanctuaries in Lhuntse, Trashigang, Tsirang, Bumthang, and beyond. Some animals are victims of road accidents or abandoned pets; others were rescued from slaughterhouses across the border. Jangsa now cares for over 3,000 animals — dogs, bulls, pigs, goats, yaks, horses, and fish.

Yet behind every number is a heartbeat — and a story.

## STORIES OF RESCUE AND RESILIENCE

What stays constant at Jangsa is the quiet, steady work of caring for animals in need — each day bringing its own moments of challenge and hope.

There was the young bull rescued from a truck bound for slaughter in Assam. When he arrived at the Tsirang sanctuary, his legs trembled from exhaustion, his eyes dull with fear. Today, he grazes freely in a green pasture with others like him, each of them bearing a bright red thread around their necks — a symbol of their release, their Tsethar.

Then the dog that was found by the roadside near Babesa, her back broken after being struck by a car. For weeks she lay motionless, tended by Jangsa’s clinic team, until she began to move her head, then her front paws. Now she wobbles around the Serbithang compound, tail wagging as if reminding everyone that life’s smallest victories matter most.

These are just two of countless stories of compassion in action.

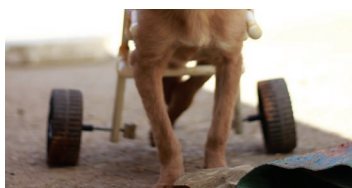
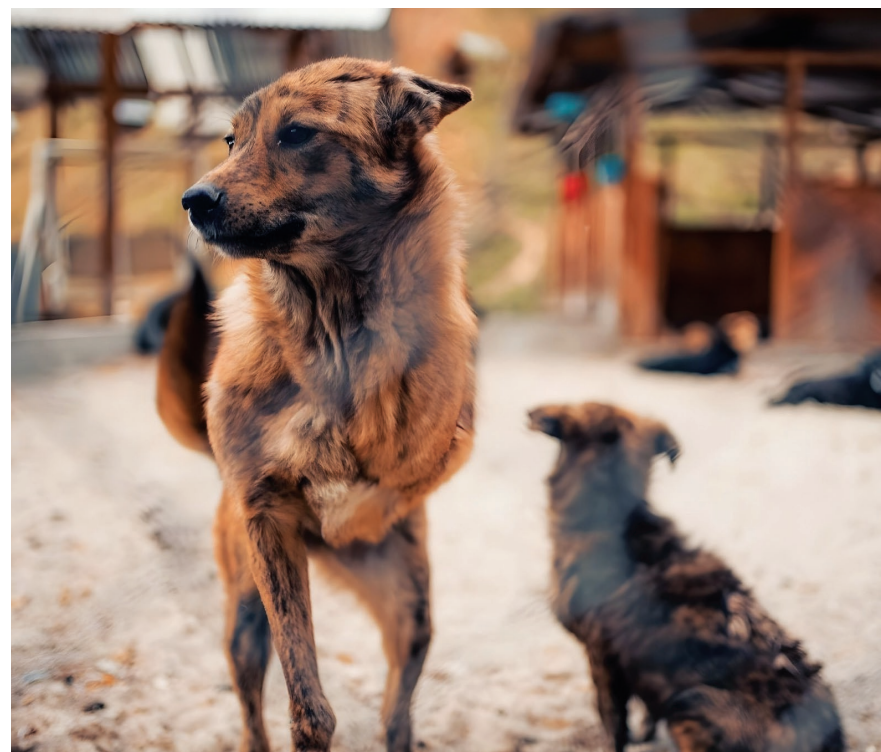
## UNSUNG HEROES OF COMPASSION

Behind these stories of rescues and recoveries are quiet heroes — the volunteers and caretakers who show up every single day. Tshering Dorji, one of Jangsa’s longest-serving staff members, often says, “We may not have much, but the animals don’t care about what you wear or how much you earn. They care about whether you show up.”

There are about twenty salaried caretakers across Jangsa’s shelters and hundreds of volunteers nationwide. Many are young Bhutanese — students, nurses, monks — who dedicate weekends to cleaning, feeding, or simply sitting beside an injured animal that needs comfort. Local biker clubs also show up regularly with food supplies and lend a helping hand with some of the heavier tasks that need to be done.

The shelter in Serbithang alone receives more than 1,000 rescue calls each year. Some days are heartbreaking: car accidents, abandoned pets, or a sudden influx of sick animals during outbreaks of contagious diseases like distemper. Other days are pure joy — an adoption, a recovery, a wagging tail after months of stillness.

It’s not grand gestures that sustain Jangsa, but



thousands of small acts of care: a bowl of food, a gentle touch, a moment of patience. Together, they form a quiet movement of compassion — one that transforms not only the lives of animals, but also those who choose to care for them.

### COMPASSION WITHOUT ILLUSION: BHUTAN'S PARADOX OF PROGRESS

Bhutan is often described as the “Last Shangri-La”, a nation guided by Gross National Happiness. It's true that our policies place wellbeing above wealth, and our spiritual roots run deep. But like anywhere in the modern world, we face tensions between tradition and change.

Many Bhutanese still eat meat, even though almost all of it is imported. And today, the country is debating whether to establish slaughterhouses within our borders — a proposal that has stirred both practical and moral reflection. As Lama Kunzang often reminds us, when killing becomes easier, feeling compassion becomes harder. He believes that such measures would erode the compassionate essence that defines Bhutan as a Dharma Kingdom.

Yet compassion in Bhutan has never been an abstraction. It lives in small, daily acts — villagers feeding stray dogs after prayers, monks rescuing insects from butter lamps, families releasing fish during festivals. But modernization has also brought contradictions: imported meat in every market, stray animals multiplying as towns expand, and a generation influenced by lifestyles where compassion is often symbolic rather than lived.

That is why organizations like Jangsa matter so deeply. They remind us that compassion is not something we inherit automatically from our culture — it is something we must practice, renew, and protect. In Lama Kunzang Dorjee Rinpoche's words, “The greatest refuge is compassion. Saving animals is not only saving them — it is saving ourselves from indifference.”

### COMPASSION THROUGH POSSIBILITY

As Jangsa continues its rescue work, another dimension of compassion is taking shape — one that begins earlier, by preventing suffering rather than responding to it. At the Pema Yoedling Monastery in Gelephu, under Lama Kunzang's leadership, monks have adopted a fully vegan kitchen, the first of its kind in Bhutan. The monastery now produces tofu and tempeh, also offering these plant-based alternatives to the local community.

This initiative is about more than food. It reflects a growing awareness that compassion can guide not only how we care for animals, but also the choices we make each day. By making plant-based options accessible and inviting, the program encourages people to join this shift in a gentle, practical way — proving that meaningful change rarely requires pressure, only possibility.

### A CALL FOR MINDFUL PROGRESS

As Bhutan moves forward with modernization, we face the same question every generation must ask: What kind of progress do we want? If our success

comes at the cost of our compassion, then it is not true progress.

Lama Kunzang has often shared that Bhutan can show the world that development and compassion can grow together. It's not about pretending that everyone must be vegetarian overnight, or that compassion belongs only to monasteries and NGOs. It's about recognizing that every policy, every plate of food, every act of kindness — large or small — shapes the moral landscape of our nation.

For Lama Kunzang and the Jangsa family, every act of rescue and every life spared is part of a larger vision — to help Bhutan remain a true Dharma Nation. A land where compassion is not only a belief but a living practice, woven into our daily choices and national policies alike.

Projects like the Gelephu Mindfulness City offer a profound opportunity. Imagine a modern Bhutan that leads not only in happiness but in compassion-driven innovation — where plant-based industries thrive, where humane education is part of school curricula, and where every community has space for both people and animals to coexist peacefully.

### IN THE END

When I return home after volunteering, Zamine is always waiting — her tail twitching, eyes bright with expectation. Some days she can almost stand without support and walk a bit on her own. On others, I still carry her in the sling to let her feel the ground beneath her paws. Her life may be limited by her legs, but not by her spirit. She reminds me, daily, that com-

passion is a muscle — it grows with use.

And perhaps that is the ultimate teaching of Jangsa: that saving animals is not charity, but continuity — the continuation of our humanity, our culture, and our collective wish for happiness that includes all beings.

As my father told me long ago, “Every act of kindness lights a path, even if we never see where it leads.”

At Jangsa, I see that light moving from one being to another — in healed animals, in dedicated hands, and in choices made with compassion.

Together, these small lights illuminate something that deepens Bhutan's vision of well-being — a compassion that extends beyond people to every being who shares our world. A natural companion to Gross National Happiness: Gross Animal Happiness.

### CARRY COMPASSION HOME — BECOME A DONOR

Every act of kindness helps keep Bhutan's spirit of compassion alive.

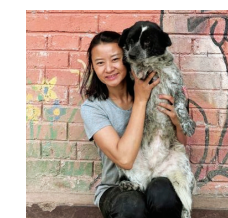
At Jangsa Animal Saving Trust, kindness takes form in rescue, healing, and the hope of a new beginning.

If your journey through Bhutan has touched your heart, you can help carry this forward — by supporting Jangsa's mission of compassion in action.

### Call/WhatsApp

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**Connect with Jangsa:**  jangsaanimalsavingtrust  jangsaanimalsavingtrust  jangsaanimalsaving.org



### YOGA YANGCHEN

She is a yoga and meditation teacher, yoga therapist in training, sound healer, animal rights advocate, and content creator. Her passion in life is improving the well-being of all sentient beings, people and animals alike. Based in Thimphu, she works on changing mindsets through her well-being practice.

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