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## Aalto University's Studio Sajo Joins Forces With Jigme Namgyel Engineering College for Student-Driven Project Tackling Waste Management Issues in Bhutan

Student teams at **Aalto University** and **Royal University of Bhutan** worked together through the spring of 2020 to understand and **address solid waste problems in Samdrup Jongkhar, Bhutan**. The main objective of the student project — under the name of **Studio SaJo** — was to **raise awareness** and **offer working solutions** for the local community on alternative waste management practices.

The collaboration came about under the guidance and funding of Aalto University's **Problem-Based Learning South Asia** initiative, and the **Sustainable Global Technologies (SGT) Studio course**.

In March, Aalto University's multidisciplinary student team was able to travel to Bhutan, where they joined forces with Jigme Namgyel Engineering College's (JNEC) student team from the civil engineering department. Together over the course of two weeks the student team conducted **interviews, workshops and field visits** to better understand local stakeholders and jointly ideate solutions.

The main goal of the project was to find ways for **reducing environmental pollution caused by mismanaged solid waste** in the area. This objective was realized through Studio Sajo's collaboratively designed **educational game** for local middle and primary schools, plus **compost** for the local college campus.

At the end of the field trip, a final exhibition was organised at JNEC, where local faculty, students and collaborators were able to pitch in and learn more about the PBL approach and the team's final deliverables.

Currently, due to **unforeseen circumstances posed by the COVID-19 pandemic**, the collaboration is facing sudden challenges, though continuing onward.

The educational game, for example, has been tested with Bhutanese children and iterated through **continued online collaboration** with school teachers in Samdrup Jongkhar. Once college students return to campus at JNEC, the jointly designed compost will hopefully find form — thanks to a driven student body and **proactive, hands-on approach to learning**.

The project has sparked an interest towards environmental issues, waste management and new ways of collaborating in both Finland and Bhutan. Both parties have expressed their interest in **continuing collaboration beyond Studio Sajo's venture**, and we are excited to see what might blossom in the future.

“This trip, fueled by great encounters, was an incredible experience in which I learned much more than I could have imagined.”

- **Gaspard Del Marmol**  
Design Student at Aalto University and  
Member of Studio Sajo



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