



Mende Thuji Yangden is from Bhutan, a tiny country situated on the foothills of the Himalayas, usually recognized for adopting the holistic development philosophy known as Gross National Happiness (GNH).

She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Affairs and Economics from Skidmore College, NY, USA, in 2016. Her International Affairs thesis titled *Dethorning Prince Charming: Problematizing Human Rights in the World's Last Shangri-la* analyzed the controversial 1990s ethnic friction between the Lhotshampas and the Drukpas, in Bhutan. Her Economic thesis, evaluated the growth of the hydropower sector in Bhutan (the largest income contributor to Bhutan) using the Gross National Happiness pillars as lens. During her time at Skidmore College she worked as a Research Assistant for the Political Science department where she primarily analyzed terrorist welfare activities and political economy issues in South Asia. The analytical skills that she has been able to cultivate from this experience has been vital to understanding diplomatic relations among the South Asian nations.

Mende's academic interest focuses on sustainable development, inter regional trade and social justice issues in South Asia. Her academic pursuits and work experience has given her insight on the multidimensionality and trans boundary nature of several underlying political, economic, social, environmental issues. Thus, these combined experiences have intrigued and influenced her aspirations to learn more about international relations.

Aside from her academic interest she also served as the president of the international student union (ISU) and treasurer of the Spanish club at Skidmore College. She was also a peer tutor for both economics and international affairs which has further solidified her understanding of international relations and economics.

After completion of her undergraduate studies she worked for the Rotary Club of Thimphu as a communications officer. She was primarily responsible for organizing the first international district conference held by Rotary Club Thimphu, and also played an instrumental role in reviewing project proposal focused on agriculture, health and food security. She took on these roles with great optimism, diligence and commitment, traits that are a prominent part of her personality.

At SAIS, she would like to concentrate in Strategic Studies focused on South Asia. Her future plans include either working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bhutan, as a diplomat or for a nonprofit research institutes that promotes grassroots solutions.

Mende is fluent in Dzongkha and English with conversational ability in Spanish. She is also able to communicate in Nepali, Hindi, Urdu, and Sharshopa (Bhutanese dialect).