

UN Bhutan COVID-19 Sit-rep # 1 (19 May 2020)

1. Generic Situation

The Government of Bhutan is closely monitoring the coronavirus pandemic and while 21 cases have been confirmed in Bhutan, all were imported. Nevertheless, Bhutan is at high risk considering the high number of reported cases in the region and in countries where Bhutan's airlines operate, and the increasing number of cases in India which shares a porous border with Bhutan. Current global trends indicate that the situation may worsen over the next six months and Bhutan will not be an exception. The pandemic has deep socio-economic impacts in Bhutan threatening the livelihoods of its people.

COVID-19 in Bhutan		Outbreak & Surveillance(new in last 24 hrs)	
Total confirmed cases	21	Rapid tests	10,799 (201)
Total recovered cases	5	RT-PCR tests	3,424 (60)
Death	0	Total Samples tested	14,223 (261)
Total testing sites	54	Ground screened	2,436,597 (424)
Screening at 54 Flu Clinics(new in 24 hrs)	39,969 (253)	Airport screened	14,602 (0)
Suspected sample	178 (3)	UPDATE: 1. The plans are being worked out to arrange five flights to bring Bhutanese home between 24th May and 1st June. Five repatriation flights- three to Kuwait, one to Dubai and one to Kuwait-Bahrain will be evacuating 398 Bhutanese from Kuwait, 131 from Dubai and 110 from Kuwait and Bahrain.	
Quarantined(new in last 24 hrs)			
Facility	838 (1)		
Facility Discharged	5598 (173)		
No. of facilities	44 (1)		





2. Socio-economic impacts and Government's response

- **The Royal Relief fund (Kidu)** has granted Nu. 150 million (2 million USD) as the first disbursement of the Relief Kidu to 13,006 people. The Kidu will be provided for three months – April, May and June 2020. This Relief fund was commanded by His Majesty The King for people directly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. A committee, headed by the Prime Minister, was established to oversee the implementation process. As the Relief Kidu is granted to an individual for a period of three months, it will be critical for the recipient to actively seek employment opportunities. To this end, the government, in partnership with the private sector, will also facilitate the creation of employment opportunities for affected people by expediting and accelerating the implementation of the reprioritized activities of the 12th plan through frontloading of budgetary outlays. The government will actively match the individuals with job openings. This will allow affected individuals to find employment, thereby enabling them to transition out of the Kidu.
- **CSO Engagement:** Prime Minister met with representatives of the relevant Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and HOPE - Covid19 Bhutan, a volunteer group, to work on securing the groups that are more vulnerable to coronavirus. This is also a part of His Majesty's Kidu package that seeks the involvement of the CSOs to protect the vulnerable sections of the society. With some of the CSOs dealing directly with rural communities, the disabled and people with medical conditions, Prime Minister asked the representatives to formulate action plans that will minimize risks should there be a community outbreak.
- **The Central Bank, (Royal Monetary Authority)** to ensure financial sector remains stable and resilient, introduced the deferment of loan repayment for a period of three months (April to June 2020) to performing as well as non-performing.
- As part of its immediate response plan the government prioritized the development of **a tourism stimulus package** to be implemented by the Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB) and launched **an Agriculture Stimulus Plan titled: Going Beyond COVID 19 - for Food & Nutrition Security**
- The Ministry of Education has developed **Education In Emergency** - Curriculum Implementation Guidelines and is preparing its own COVID-19 Response Plan with technical support from UNICEF and Save the Children. From the end of March 2020, e-learning lessons have started on national television and continuous learning plans are being discussed within the Ministry of Education. Vulnerable groups, including children with disabilities, were kept very much at the centre of the Government's preparedness and response planning to COVID-19. Mapping of people with disabilities was done by Ministry of Health with a view to provide focused support in terms of medical needs, education, and livelihood.





- In order to mount effective and efficient response to COVID-19 in the country, the **National Preparedness and Response Plan (NPRP) for COVID-19 is prepared with the objective to enhance the health sector’s** capacity in surveillance, early detection, control and prevention, response, and recovery from COVID-19 outbreak in the country. The plan shall be reviewed and updated as and when required by the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) for COVID-19, Ministry of Health. MOH is also taken stock of Returning Bhutanese people, Persons with disabilities and vulnerable population in the country.
- National Commission for Women and Children has recently developed the **Child Protection and GBV contingency plan** with the support of UNICEF and UNDP.
- **Druk Trace** is a contact tracing mobile application, which will maintain a log of visitors at workplaces or public centers. The data and information will register with Ministry of Health real time. This will enable easy contact tracing in case of an coronavirus outbreak in the localities.
- As per the Command of His Majesty The King, the **De-suung Integrated Training Programme** is instituted to be a value-based personal development program with the main objective to encourage all citizens to be active in the greater role of nation building and to ensure government guidelines around covid 19 are adhered to by all members of society. The underlying premise of the training programme is built upon the spirit of “volunteerism” and the positive influence of ethics and values of community service, integrity and civic responsibility. It is also expected that any citizen who has undergone this training programme will actively volunteer during disaster operations, participate in charitable activities and be of service to others throughout their lives.

3. UN Bhutan COVID-19 response

1) A UN framework for the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19.

- Rearrange the action of the UN technical assistance package against COVID-19 to fit into the UN Socio-Economic response to COVID-19 Pillars.

A UN framework fo the immediate socio-economic response to COVID-19	Co-lead	Activities	Cross-cutting Areas
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Pillar 1. Health First: Protecting Health Service and Systems during the Crisis	UNICEF/WHO	Health system strengthening – telemedicine, MCH, cold-chain development for essential supplies.	A) Communication (Gender, Nutrition, We Care, We Share) B) Data, M&E, learning 4 COVID
Pillar 2. Protecting People: Social Protection and Basic Services	UNICEF	Strengthening of social protection systems (new norms), capacity development of local government, social registry, etc.	
Pillar 3. Economic Response and Recovery: Protecting Jobs, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise, and informal sector workers	WFP/UNDP	labor-market demand forecasting, skills/Human Capital development aligned with the future demand, policy directives to accompany short-term interventions for sustainability to protect competitiveness of skills and local production, Invest in green economy and jobs to promote green growth, climate resilient agricultural production	
Pillar 4. Macro-Economic response and multilateral collaboration	UNDP/RCO-IFI's (WB)	Modeling for sustainable exit strategy. Value-chain analysis for sustainable consumption and production, assessments on SME, linked with the 21 st century roadmap. Impact assessments	
Pillar 5. Social Cohesion and Community Resilience	UNFPA/UNODC	Dialogue between decision-makers and communities (youths, children, women, business groups), social accountability and contract. Community resilience (disaster reduction to avoid double punch). Local governance.	

- **Highlights - UN Socio-economic response activities up to date.**
- Support Contingency plans with different scenarios developed with Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Forest, Education, Information and Communication, and National Commission for Women and Children.





- Support the health ministry on the response and preparedness.
- Support PMO’s national task force on the economic stimulus package, PPE procurement assistance, design of digital Realtime data APPs for managing flu clinics, and quarantine centers.
- Communication and advocacy support targeting vulnerable groups, including making sign language interpreters available for daily press conferences.
- Conduct a rapid SEIA in tourism and affiliated sectors.
- Support to entrepreneurs with COVID-19 response businesses.
- Support economic recovery packages in the agriculture sector.
- Reskilling and upskilling for those affected by COVID019 in the construction and tourism sector.
- Food production increase support in the agriculture sector.
- Nutrition/food support to vulnerable children.
- Rapid immunization assessment and vaccine procurement.
- Support ECCD and distance education modality with alternative learning solutions together with nutritious food intervention.
- Improving WASH and hygiene facilities in schools and public places.
- Data system strengthening for food production and distribution.

2) Re-programming of UN Annual Work Plan(AWP)

UN AWP 2020	Outcome Groups	Budget 2020 (USD)	Reprogrammed (USD)
Outcome 1	Data and Policy	367,750	45,000
Outcome 2	Essential Social Services	4,750,707	378,067
Outcome 3	Governance	1,916,875	212,497





Outcome 4	Climate Change and disaster risk management	11,620,917	1,805,378
		18,656,249	2,440,942

- As of 19 May 2020, UN Bhutan reprogrammed **2,440,942 USD** into COVID-19 response from its Annual Work Plan(AWP). Note that other AWP activities not identified for reprogramming are still relevant for COVID-19 response as they are supporting continuation/strengthening of essential health, nutrition, WASH, education, and protection systems. In that sense, “un-reprogrammed” UN funds in the AWP are still pertinent to immediate COVID-19 response and subsequent responses to address COVID-19’s socio-economic impacts on people.

3) Additional funds

- As of 19 May 2020, UN Bhutan mobilized **3,538,216 USD** additional funds apart from its AWP to COVID-19 response.

UNDP	340,000
UNICEF	1,049,716
WFP	75,000
WHO	1,009,500
FAO	764,000
Secretary-General’s fund for COVID-19 response – will be implemented by UNICEF, WFP, and UNDP	300,000
Total	3,538,216

