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2020 AND BEYOND



COVID-19
RESPONSE



BRIEF

UNITED NATIONS BHUTAN

COVID-19 SITREP #3

UPDATE 30 July 2020

Highlight of Key UN Achievements and Advocacy Messages

“ Given the scale of this global COVID challenge, our world may need to go beyond simple categories of either optimism or pessimism. UN Bhutan is responding to the immediate needs of the people; the needs of the most vulnerable while strengthening economic resilience and building longer-term human capital in a comprehensive way so that we find new ways to ‘Build Back Better’.

- Gerald Daly, UN Resident Coordinator, Bhutan

One UN

- The Government of Bhutan is closely monitoring the coronavirus pandemic and while 101 cases have been confirmed in Bhutan, all were imported, and no deaths have been reported. While the health impact has so far been limited as compared to many other countries, the economic and social effects are significant. The health sector would be challenged to cope with a major outbreak and a possible stock out of essential health commodities such as drugs, reagents and consumables. An extended period of limited movement of people, goods, and finances will have important consequences for the economy, especially the tourism sector and related service industries. Bhutan is also likely to be negatively affected by any extended economic downturn in its neighbors (especially India).
- The UN in Bhutan (FAO, IFAD, ITC, UNDP, UNESCAP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNODC, WFP, and WHO) moved quickly and pro-actively to respond to COVID-19. In particular, UN agencies developed a joint response framework aligned with “UN Framework for the Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19” includes both short-term measures to mitigate negative social and economic consequences along with medium- to long-term investments to strengthen the re-build and resilience to future crises.
- The UN in Bhutan received USD 300,000 from the UN Secretary-General’s COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund to support the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) in mitigating negative social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, the UN in Bhutan recently received USD 872,000 from the Joint SDG Fund for SDG implementation and financing COVID-19 recovery.



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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Highlight of Key UN Achievements and Advocacy Messages

FAO

- Highlighting the importance of local production in terms of food safety, freshness, organic products, varieties, etc, necessary for a balanced nutrition during the COVID-19 pandemic, FAO developed and screened a 7-minute video on “We Are What We Eat”, where the Prime Minister, and the Ministers for Agriculture and Health shared messages.

UNDP

- UNDP supported the RGoB to conduct a Rapid Socio-economic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 on Bhutan's Tourism Sector to understand how the COVID-19 crisis is affecting individuals, households, and businesses engaged in Bhutan's tourism sector for timely and targeted interventions. The study revealed deep, widespread and crosscutting impact on the lives of people working in the sector.

UNFPA

- UNFPA's Goodwill Ambassador, Her Majesty Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck, addressed gender-based violence prevention and sexual and reproductive health rights of women and girls on two National TV channels and the national newspaper, Kuensel.

UNICEF

- UNICEF handed over two Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) machines with 4,800 rapid test kits, 35,952 items of personal protective equipment (PPE), 100 handheld thermometers and 3,652 water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) supplies to the Ministry of Health (MoH).
- In collaboration with the Ministry of Education, UNICEF trained 700 youth volunteers including Youth Service Center Managers, Scout leaders, and Community Based Support Service volunteers on COVID-19 prevention advisories, interpersonal communication skills, use of social media, mental health, GBV, domestic violence and child protection issues and advisories.

UNODC

- Recognising the increasing vulnerabilities caused by the COVID-19 situation for the unemployed youth, women and economically affected families, UNODC observed July as Trafficking in Persons (TIP) awareness month and used the social media platforms to promote the Blue Heart Campaign. UNODC partnered with Druk Super Star (DSS) Season 9 (a very popular Dancing Talent Hunt show for the youth) and the Royal Academy of Performing Arts to create awareness on TIP on its live shows.

WFP

- WFP released USD 150,000 to the RGoB and the Agriculture Stimulus Plan as part of support to the Government's Economic Contingency Plan. Funds will be directed to increase productivity through provision of high quality and required variety of seeds, farming tools and improved farm practices for cultivation of nutritious cereals, fruits, vegetables and high value commodities as per local agro-climates. Water efficiency will also be enhanced through provision of efficient systems such as sprinklers, drips etc.
- WFP is supporting the National guidance, strengthening capacity and advocating on food safety and quality for RGoB partners and private traders/retailers through equipment and proper food handling – food safety guidance documents, training, inventory management, SoPs and pamphlets were developed and distributed to various government and private partners.

WHO

- WHO shipped in the first batch of testing reagents (1,000 reactions) to enhance diagnostic services followed by another shipment of 2,500 reactions. WHO also shipped in 440 protective goggles, 1,920 N95 masks, 25,000 surgical gloves, 3,750 surgical gowns and 1625 surgical gowns to supplement the limited number of PPEs that the RGoB had in stock to protect frontline health workers.

UNICEF/ WFP

- In partnership with UNICEF, WFP is assisting the RGoB in ensuring safe re-opening of schools and provision for nutrition/health information and nutritious take-home rations to the most vulnerable children in the country.





Brief Summary of National Approach/Response to date

- The Royal Government of Bhutan's actions in steering the response to COVID-19 is highly commendable under the inspiring leadership of His Majesty the King. The Prime Minister's Office, along with the Ministries, agencies and the local governments along with the support from private sector and CSO's are engaged in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and to build back better.
- In order to mount effective and efficient response to COVID-19, the RGoB prepared the National Preparedness and Response Plan (NPRP) 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, MoH. The MoH is also taking stock of Bhutanese returning from abroad, Persons Living with Disabilities and vulnerable people.
- The RGoB developed an Economic Contingency Plan, detailing both immediate and longer-term response actions to support economy recovery in key sectors: construction (through the Build Bhutan Project), tourism, and agriculture (especially food self-sufficiency and nutrition). The Ministry of Education developed Education In Emergency - Curriculum Implementation Guidelines and is preparing its own COVID-19 Response Plan. The National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) has developed the Child Protection and GBV contingency plan.
- The RGoB announced a Comprehensive National Response to the Challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic Phase II on 26th June 2020:
 - o *Druk Gyalpo's Relief Kidu – Income support to affected individuals:* The Druk Gyalpo's Relief Kidu for affected individuals will continue from July until September 2020. The Relief Kidu has granted about Nu 700 million to over 23,000 affected people between April and June 2020, providing critical livelihood support and assurances of hope amid current hardships.
 - o *Druk Gyalpo's Relief Kidu – Support for interest payment:* In order to alleviate the mounting worries of the people about loan repayments, the Prime Minister announced the Royal Command to further extend interest waiver for another nine months for loans availed as of April 10, 2020. Full interest waiver shall be granted for another three months from July to September 2020. This will be followed by partial interest waiver (50%) for six additional months from October 2020 to March 2021. The Royal Kidu on interest waiver is expected to benefit 112,024 individuals (with 139,261 loan accounts) across 20 Dzongkhags with personal and business loan accounts including those accounts listed as Non Performing Loan.
 - o *Monetary Measures: Phase II monetary interventions –* Bridging loans for business continuity (soft short-term loans) to corporate and business entities at a concessional interest rate of 5%, Soft Short-Term Micro Loans and Soft Loans to CSIs, Deferment of Loan Repayment, etc - are aimed to help the economy gain some degree of resilience and adapt to the changing circumstances.



Photo: UNICEF Bhutan



Key areas of Socio-economic Response

The UN Resident Coordinator is leading the overall UN response to COVID-19 in Bhutan based on five key pillars, and is supported by the technical guidance of UNDP.

1. Health First: Protecting health services and systems during the crisis

UNDP

- UNDP supported the MoH in developing and rolling out emergency IT solutions - the Gate Management System, the Quarantine App and the GIS Dashboard - deployed at border gates, to obtain realtime data to effectively monitor and rapidly respond to COVID-19, and provided 18 computers, six video conferencing equipment, six wi-fi routers and a printer to help run these systems.
- UNDP is supporting the procurement of 100,000 units of IIR Masks for frontline health workers through its Global Procurement Support.

UNICEF

- Procurement plan for ADB new grant USD 1,019,047.62 (programmable amount) has been jointly developed by MoH and UNICEF. Based on the catalogues of the supply items (cold rooms, refrigerated mobile van, vehicles) and new developments, the procurement plan has been revised.
- Personal protective equipment (20,000 coveralls, 8,700 face shields and 105,000 surgical masks) was received by MoH on 7 June. Physical verification is ongoing and a distribution plan is expected to be ready by mid-June 2020.
- UNICEF, WHO and SNV are partnering to provide both technical and financial assistance to strengthen WASH facilities through MoH. UNICEF will support installation of wash facilities in 45 healthcare centers and remaining public places in 14 districts. 17 new public handwashing stations are operational (seven in Thimphu, two each in Paro, Phuentsholing, Gelephu, Samdrup Jongkhar and Mongar). Construction of 28 new handwashing stations in 14 other districts has commenced.
- 40,000 soap bars have been distributed to approximately 188 schools (64 central schools, 52 higher secondary schools and 71 middle secondary schools) which re-opened recently reaching approximately 26,185 children.
- To continue essential health and nutrition services, briefing on the SOP for continuity of MCH services during COVID-19 pandemic situation is ongoing. The MoH has conducted several online and face-to-face trainings on Maternal, Newborn and Child Health. So far, 550 participants (doctors, nurses and health workers) have been trained on the use of the MCH handbook and the Bhutan Child Development Screening Tool (BCDST) through Zoom.
- Based on a field visit to assess the continuity of nutrition services during COVID-19 situation, an assessment of the recently conducted online trainings is being done with technical support from UNICEF.

WFP

- WFP is working with the Department of Disaster Management (DDM) to strengthen data preparedness, by setting-up and assisting the implementation of the “72 Hours Rapid Assessment Approach” in DDM. WFP proposes that the 72-hours assessment approach be used for targeted assistance during the COVID-19 pandemic. DDM and WFP can also leverage the 72-hours assessment datasets and maps to support the RGoB in targeting food or other interventions at the Chiwog, Gewog, or Dzongkhag level.

WHO

- WHO continues to support MoH through technical and financial support. WHO also supported the sensitization of Dessugs (Volunteers) on COVID-19. Further, WHO supported the tabletop simulation exercise at border crossing (Phuntsholing) to test preparedness and response from 9-12 May. WHO technical officers provide support in developing contingency plans, high risk community assessments, review of SOPs and facilitation to attend different virtual learning classes regarding COVID-19.
- The National COVID-19 media team comprising officials from MoH and WHO are the central coordinating body for all media related materials and to validate all information related to COVID-19 at the national level to fight myths and misinformation.
- WHO handed over two sets of NCD Kit to MoH to support in providing essential health services.
- WHO provided technical expertise to draft Risk Communication Plan. WHO assisted in developing frequently asked questions and answers to meet the growing demand of information and to clear confusion regarding COVID-19 among the general population. WHO published the Q&A in the national newspaper – Kuensel.
- WHO supplied MCK tents are utilized for setting up temporary flu clinics across the country.
- To create awareness on preventive measures, WHO assisted the MoH in developing posters in two languages and these were disseminated on election notice board in all districts.

UNFPA/ UNICEF

- Together with UNFPA, UNICEF supported the MoH in providing 240 sets of dignity kits (face mask, T-shirt, umbrella, sanitary pads, soap and hand sanitizers) to youth, CBSS, Scouts and private sector volunteers in Phuntsholing, to support their community engagement initiatives on COVID-19, Dengue, GBV and domestic violence messages.

2. Protecting people: Social protection and basic services

UNDP

- Through the Loden-UNDP COVID-19 Response Fund, UNDP supported ten young entrepreneurs execute green business ideas to help their communities navigate the COVID-19, directly creating employment opportunities for 57 individuals (21 Female and 36 Male) comprising of single mothers, youth and those whose jobs were impacted by COVID-19 and overall contributing to Bhutan's initiative towards building back better, including climate action.

UNESCAP

- UNESCAP organized a high-level policy dialogue on COVID-19 and South Asia with planning/economic ministers of all South Asian countries including the Minister of Economic Affairs of RGoB and the heads of SAARC and BIMSTEC Secretariats to share experiences and lessons in mitigating the pandemic in the subregion and discuss regional cooperation.

UNFPA

- UNFPA trained 323 health workers comprising of medical/health officers, nurse midwives and programmes-in-charge on the interim operational guidelines on Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (RMNCH) regarding COVID-19.
- UNFPA trained 30 tourist guides and 34 community volunteers comprising of local leaders, advocates, teachers, shelter home counselors, home makers, mental health counselors on GBV prevention and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights issues.





- A GBV prevention package developed by UNFPA was integrated into the accelerated DeSuung (Guardian of Peace - National Volunteer) training programme. The 39th batch with 2,950 trainees (2,350 male and 600 female) was the first batch of DeSuung to receive and complete this training on 23 May. This GBV prevention module will now be a part of the national DeSuung training programme.

UNICEF

- To ensure continuity of national nutritional services, 60 health workers (30 male and 33 female) have been trained on micronutrient powder supplementation with Infant and young child feeding (IYCF) counselling using Zoom. Meanwhile, advocacy and promotion of IYCF including messages around breastfeeding practices are being done through social and broadcast media.
- Following an analysis of the distribution of Self-Instruction Materials (SIM) to 17,000 children identified as being unable to access any form of online or broadcast media, the Ministry of Education identified an additional 15,135 children without access to online learning. UNICEF will continue supporting the distribution of SIM to the additional children bringing the total number supported with SIM to 32,135.
- In terms of access to service, 386 children (215 girls) and 197 (110 female) adults have been referred to counsellors in their respective districts and provided with counselling services through the Sherig Counselling online platform set up to provide counselling and psychosocial support in response to COVID-19.
- Technical support was provided to NCWC in developing posters addressing prevention and response to gender-based violence. These posters will be displayed at hospitals, flu clinics and election display boards in all districts. 5,000 pamphlets for frontline workers and non-specialized service providers on responding to GBV has also been developed and disseminated to about 2,900 Desuups who are currently undergoing training. Prevention and response to GBV have been incorporated in their training manual.
- As a result of orientation workshop to 87 scout leaders (30 female) in three districts in June, the scout leaders are engaged in organizing online advocacy campaign on safe handwashing, designing communication materials, to support 30 marginalized children (16 female) who are in grade three to seven with e-learning in one district. Additionally, the ten best scout leaders from three districts have been engaged to develop social messages in July and design campaigns for the 2nd wave of COVID-19 RCCE.
- To support home-based learning and promote COVID prevention practices, an ECCD parenting booklet and handwashing soaps were distributed to 9,188 ECCD children (4,602 girls) across all districts.
- In partnership with UNICEF Regional Office and the International Policy Centre for Policy growth-IIPCI a Policy Brief on 'Child-sensitive cash transfers in Bhutan' has been developed using the National Statistics Bureau data. The brief examines the macro-economic impacts, focusing on COVID-19 related issues, such as informal workers and how social protection (SP) measures to informal workers are part of the COVID-19 responses, or how SP responses could be beneficial to these groups. Subsequently a guideline on best practices for deploying social protection policies to mitigate the socioeconomic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemics is planned.





WFP

- WFP has implemented with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MOAF) in instituting a proper inventory management system that can be adopted by traders and dealers. WFP with the Confederation of Indian Industry's Food & Agriculture Centre of Excellence, and companies such as Cargill, Big Bazaar, Spencer's, developed customized online module on industry best practices on food safety and quality management during warehousing, transportation, distribution and retail as well as the science behind safe storage of food commodities, storage structures and the basics of inventory management.
- WFP supported the development of safe reopening protocols and checklists with the Ministry of Education in partnership with UNICEF and other development partners. The document aims to guide and support teachers and students to stay healthy and safe while following health, safety and psychosocial protocol for COVID-19 prevention and control measures. Schools across the country reopened for students of grades 10 and 12 on 1 July.

UNESCO, UNICEF, and WFP

- UNESCO participated in the Framework for reopening schools in Bhutan. The Framework, jointly developed by UNESCO, UNICEF, WFP and the World Bank provides guidance to help national and local authorities make their decisions on why, when and how to reopen learning establishments.

WFP and UNICEF

- As an immediate mitigation measure to COVID-19 related school closures in the country, WFP, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF, launched the school feeding take-home ration to help 10,000 vulnerable students in the country meet their daily dietary and nutritional requirements. The proposed food basket consists of rice and oil fortified with essential vitamins and minerals, chickpeas, and pulses. The Take Home Ration of School Feeding Programme distribution will reach about 10,000 needy children with 10,000 soaps, sanitary napkins and IEC materials (posters) containing steps of handwashing along with nutrition pamphlet.
- WFP, with UNICEF, is assisting the RGoB in safe re-opening of schools and is assisting the MoE in provision of nutrition/health information and nutritious take-home rations to the most vulnerable children in the country.
- WFP and UNICEF drafted a brochure with simple illustrations on food groups and advocacy to eat a variety of foods in each meal, as demonstrated by the ideal food plate and portions to eat as easily measured by hands. The document also includes encouragement to eat a "rainbow" of vegetables to make vegetable consumption attractive to children as well as handwashing steps.
- WFP and UNICEF are developing a survey on the impact of COVID-19 on the food security, household income and health of the most vulnerable households identified for take-home ration distributions by the Ministry of Education.



Photo: On 23 July, the UN Country Team visited the intensive vegetable production site under the Urban and Peri-urban Project organized by FAO Bhutan.

3. Economic recovery: Protecting jobs, small and medium-sized enterprises, and the most vulnerable productive actors

- FAO**
 - FAO received a request for intensive vegetable production in selected urban/peri-urban areas for employing displaced employees from the private sector and youth. The project focuses on technology-induced vegetable production. The support covers over 77 acres giving employment to over 300 laid-off employees. FAO in collaboration with the National Organic Program supports agricultural research centers, and districts concerned.
- ITC**
 - ITC (International Trade Centre) has assessed the impact of the COVID-19 on businesses with a focus on MSMEs (i) whether and through which channels businesses have been affected; (ii) how severe the impact is; (iii) which coping measures businesses have taken; (iv) which government support measures would be most useful; (v) whether information on government support is easily accessible to firms.
 - ITC is also providing capacity building opportunities to MSMEs through distance coaching and e-learning.
- UNDP**
 - Taking the lead from the recommendations provided by the Rapid Socio-economic Impact Assessment, and in line with the RGoB's Economic Contingency Plans, UNDP finalized support as part of programmes in Food self sufficiency and nutrition security and tourism resilience, geared towards generation of livelihood opportunities for people impacted by COVID-19 through cash for work (USD 58,000) and reskilling and upskilling opportunities (USD 153,178). To this effect, two separate Letters of Agreements have been signed to formalize the support and funds are being transferred.
- UNESCAP**
 - UNESCAP is providing capacity building support for the sustainable graduation of Bhutan from the LDC category, with a focus on (i) formulation and implementation of the roadmap for sustainable graduation, (ii) identification of possible pathways for meeting the SDG targets, and (iii) assessment of the COVID-19 impact on Bhutan's sustainable graduation path.

4. Macroeconomic response and multilateral collaboration

- UNDP**
 - Several initiatives for collaboration (eg. between ADB and UN) are currently under discussion and will be reported in the next sitrep.





5. Social cohesion and community resilience

UNDP

- UNDP supported NCWC to develop a COVID-19 Contingency Plan geared towards preventing domestic violence and strengthening care services for vulnerable women and girls.
- UNDP supported inclusive advocacy to ensure no one is left behind by making regular COVID-19 press briefs from MoH accessible to the deaf community. UNDP is also working with CSOs in the disability space on four COVID-19 advocacy videos, highlighting challenges faced by Persons Living with Disabilities (PWDs) during COVID-19.

UNICEF

- Approximately 388,000 people were reached with messages on COVID-19 prevention and containment and access to services through the engagement of 16,266 influential persons and volunteer groups including district health officials, school health coordinators, local leaders, Desuung volunteers, religious persons, youth volunteers and CSOs.

6. Communications and Data, M&E, Learning 4 COVID

One UN

- On 20 April, UN Bhutan launched its communications initiative We Care, We Share: Resilience tools for COVID-19. It aims to provide useful information on personal resilience, physical health, mental health, lifelong learning and student entertainment to the general public and UN Staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative has a dedicated page on the UNCT website, which serves as a one-stop-shop for COVID-19 resilience tools and information. Since UN Bhutan started its initiative, the number of visitors to the website has soared by approximately 500%.
- Bhutan Dialogues is a flagship programme in 'thought-leadership in development' where the UN partners with a leading Bhutanese NGO/CSO (Loden Foundation). Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, Bhutan Dialogues is now being hosted virtually. The virtual Bhutan Dialogues session started on 9 April and the topic discussed during the first virtual session was on Education and Enterprise in Bhutan in times of COVID-19 which had 7,100 views. It opened a space to discuss COVID-19 and its implications in the country, while also providing opportunities for "recovery better" and "transformative changes" discussions for the future. The video recording of previous sessions is available on the Bhutan Dialogues YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvhDKjxnIUk5xoR9sdZQKPw>) and on the UNCT website (<http://www.unct.org.bt/bhutan-dailogue/>).



UNDP

- Together with the MoH, UNDP produced an advocacy video to debunk misinformation about COVID-19. The video continues to be aired on national TV regularly. It was also shared on the social media channels of both UNDP and MoH. With 153,000 views, 44 comments and 3,500 likes on MoH Facebook page, it remains the most viewed COVID-19 advocacy video. This is impressive given it was an organic post. The video has also gone viral on WeChat, a social media channel that's popular among the elderly and rural population. In collaboration with the NCWC, UNDP is working on an advocacy video to highlight increased burden of unpaid care work on women by COVID 19 and advocate for gender equality.
- Together with NCWC, UNDP worked on an advocacy video and illustrations to raise awareness on the heightened risks for domestic violence during COVID 19 and call for action to prevent gender-based violence. The video was launched on the national TV. The illustrations has reached over 52,000 users on UNDP Facebook ad Twitter.
- In partnership with the Disabled Persons' Association of Bhutan and Ability Bhutan Society, UNDP are working on a series of advocacy videos highlighting the challenges facing persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the context of COVID-19. The goal is to raise awareness on the need to ensure inclusive response that takes into account the special needs and concerns of vulnerable populations like PWDs.

UNICEF

- The target for reaching people on COVID-19 through messaging on prevention and access to services has far exceeded through social media, with a cumulative reach of 17,141,212 and 32,177,457 impressions on twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Just within the period June 4-22, reach on social media has been 2,975,532 while the total impressions have been 3,610,812.
- Since the campaign #COVID19STORIES was launched on April 9, the CO has posted more than 225 stories from children as young as six years old, young people and adults. The campaign has received more than 350 stories and videos from young people from across the country and abroad out of which 165 stories were received from children (18 and below). The campaign provides an opportunity for children and young people to advocate for and share prevention messages on COVID-19.
- UNICEF continues with #EarlyLearningFromHome campaign where ECCD facilitators share their COVID-19 experience.
- UNICEF and the National Statistics Bureau are currently exploring the possibility of a microsimulation on the effects of COVID-19 on Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) for Bhutan in collaboration with OPHI (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative).

UNODC

- Approximately 3,092,064 people were reached with messages on Trafficking in Persons through the National TV, Bhutan Broadcasting Service. The messages include cyber security/online scams, sexual exploitation, labour exploitatoin and child exploitation, and access to service providers.





Photo: UNICEF Bhutan

Resource mobilization for COVID-19 Response and Recovery

Thus far, UN Bhutan mobilized **USD 9,014,141** to directly respond to the Royal Government of Bhutan's priorities under COVID-19 Response and Recovery.

Repurposing of 2020 Annual Work Plan (AWP)	
UN agencies in collaboration with the RGOB and the implementing partners carried out the first phase of repurposing exercise for the UN AWP.	
IFAD	USD 968,875
UNFPA	USD 122,000
UNDP	USD 233,400
UNICEF	USD 112,000
WFP	USD 330,000
Total	USD 1,766,275

Additional resources through additional resource mobilization	
One UN (The Secretary General's UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund ¹)	USD 300,000
FAO	USD 296,000
UNDP	USD 2,709,600
UNICEF	USD 2,704,266
UNODC	USD 11,000
WFP	USD 217,500
WHO	USD 1,009,500
Total	USD 7,247,866

1. The donor countries for the Secretary-General's COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund are the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Denmark, New Zealand, Iceland, and Slovakia.

[We Care, We Share] Inspiring story: Caring for the mental wellbeing of Bhutan

A familiar voice echoes from the speakers in the hall. Amidst seated women and men in orange, white, blue dresses, Dr Chencho Dorji is halfway through his presentation. This is one of the many trainings conducted by the National COVID-19 Mental Health and Psychosocial Response Team (MHPRT), which is led by Dr Chencho. More than 15,000 Bhutanese in different dzongkhags have been trained so far.

After having worked 30 plus years in the government health system, Dr Chencho was superannuated and started his retirement life last year. However since the start of 2020, with the concern and growing focus on mental health, he finds himself thoroughly re-engaged and committed in expanding his capacity as a psychiatrist in COVID-19 responses and public health areas.

Dr Chencho and his team have been providing Psychological First Aid (PFA) training to more than 15,000 health workers, De-Suungs, Security Personnel and other volunteers ever since the start of COVID-19. PFA is an essential tool for frontline workers in crisis situations, comprising of five key steps: Being prepared in advance with knowledge, understanding and experience; Looking and identifying people who need priority attention; Listening actively to understand the needs of the people; Linking people with support services, specialized care and teaching self-care.

“During this COVID-19 pandemic, frontline health workers, security personnel and volunteers face a double burden of having to work under stressful circumstances as well as face the risk of exposure to the coronavirus” said Dr. Chencho. “They have to learn to take care of their own physical and psychological needs so that they remain healthy and continue to provide effective services” he added.



In addition, the Mental Health and Psychosocial Response Team (MHPRT), has established five 24x7 telephone counselling helplines at the national level, twenty-eight other helplines in the districts and Thromdes. A unique system of multi-disciplinary approach on voluntary basis was also adopted, where people with counselling skills and experience were invited to volunteer and team up at their local levels and liaise with health workers and other treatment providers.

In a time of global crisis and uncertainty, adding to the fear of contracting the virus and new realities of working from home, lack of physical contact, online classes, curfews and unemployment, it is important to look after our mental wellbeing as much as our physical health.

“COVID-19 pandemic is causing so much fear, pain and suffering in the world. Bhutan has a small population and we must do everything to protect its people – physically, emotionally and mentally,” said Dr Chencho.

For more information on UN Bhutan's We Care, We Share initiative, please scan the QR code



Partners of the United Nations Bhutan

The Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Gross National Happiness Commission, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Information and Communications, Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, Ministry of Works and Human Settlement, Parliamentarians, Dratshang Lhentshog, Royal Civil Service Commission, National Commission for Women and Children, National Statistics Bureau, Anti-Corruption Commission, National Environment Commission, National Center for Hydrology and Meteorology, Dzongkhags, Royal University of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck School of Law, Nazhoen Lamtoen, Agency for Promotion of Indigenous Crafts (APIC), RENEW, Tarayana, Bhutan Foundation, Bhutan Youth Development Fund, Draktsho Vocational Training Centre for Special Children and Youth, Loden Foundation.

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