



# BRIEF

## UNITED NATIONS BHUTAN

### COVID-19 SITREP # 5

UPDATE 30 November 2020

## Highlight of Key UN Achievements and Advocacy Messages

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*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'.*

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- Gerald Daly, UN Resident Coordinator, Bhutan

### One UN

- The Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) is closely monitoring the coronavirus pandemic and while 396 cases have been confirmed no deaths have been reported as of 29 November 2020. While the health impact has so far been limited as compared to many other countries, the impact on the economy has been significant.
- 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 the “UN Framework for the Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19,” including 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 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 to help SDG implementation and financing COVID-19 recovery.

## FAO

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

## 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.
- UNDP – UNDP is supporting a study of the impact of COVID-19 on the manufacturing sector which will help identify short term measures to keep existing industries operational and explore longer-term reform measures to ensure that these industries thrive in a post COVID world.

## UNESCAP

- UNESCAP has been providing technical assistance to strengthen Bhutan’s capital markets since 2017. Following the overwhelming success of the first-ever sovereign bond of Bhutan issued in September 2020, ESCAP jointly organized a technical workshop on capital market development in Bhutan with the Ministry of Finance on 24 November 2020. The workshop aimed to strengthen Bhutan’s fiscal management in recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and diversify Bhutan’s financial sources further by leveraging private financing through green and sustainable bonds.

## UNFPA

- UNFPA’s Goodwill Ambassador, Her Majesty Gyalum Sangay Choden Wangchuck, addressed gender-based violence prevention and the sexual and reproductive health rights of women and girls on the National TV channel and the national newspaper, Kuensel.
- UNFPA disseminated messages weekly through the mediums of National TV, local channels and social media on preventing GBV and addressing SRHR issues, including the airing of a clip ‘Real Life Super Heroes,’ a dedication to frontline workers on World Humanitarian Day, through ‘Chik-Thuen’ - a programme dedicated to Bhutan’s COVID-19 response.

## 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.
- Towards strengthening of cold chain systems and introduction of new vaccines, UNICEF has supported the MoH in development of the roadmap for cold chain capacity assessment and installation of cold room. The actual implementation will be funded through the ADB grant. To ensure continuity of services, 35 children with disabilities (15 girls) were supported with individual intervention packages to be used by parents and caregivers with support from social workers.



### UNODC

- Recognizing the increasing vulnerabilities caused by the COVID-19 situation for the unemployed youth, women and economically affected families, UNODC conducted three trainings on SOP for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons in Bhutan for 78 participants (21 gups, 27 community volunteers, and 30 law enforcement officials) of Punakha, Wangdue, Trongsa and Thimphu Dzongkhags. A training package for judges in Bhutan has also been completed and training is being planned for December.

### WFP

- WFP has allocated USD 200,000 to the RGoB and the Agriculture Economic Stimulus Plan as part of support to the Government's Economic Contingency Plan. Funds will be directed to increase agricultural production through the provision of varied and high quality 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 the provision of efficient systems such as sprinklers, drips etc.
- WFP is assisting the RGoB in ensuring safe reopening of schools through the refurbishment of kitchen and stores and provision of infrastructures such as pallets, baskets, exhaust fans, etc. to improve food safety and quality management.
- In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, WFP, in collaboration with the Bhutan Agriculture and Food Regulatory Authority (BAFRA), is developing consumer-friendly communication materials to educate consumers about various aspects of food safety, hygiene & nutrition. This initiative aims to support the RGoB's efforts to realize the vision of a Healthy DrukYul.

### WHO

- WHO shipped in the first batch of testing reagents (1,000 reactions) to enhance diagnostic services followed by another shipment of 2,500 reaction. WHO also shipped in 440 protective goggles, 1920 N95 masks, 25,000 surgical gloves, 5,375 surgical to supplement the limited number of PPEs that the RGoB had in stock to protect frontline health workers.





## Brief Summary of National Approach/Response to date

- The response by RGoB 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 the private sector and CSO's are engaged in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and to build back better.
  - **Active Surveillance** – To date as of 29 November 2020, the RGoB has tested 201,511 people in both quarantine and in communities for COVID-19. A total of 77,437 were screened at flu clinics. Bhutan has one of the highest per capita testing rates globally. In order to prevent and contain the spread of COVID-19 and to minimize social and economic disruption, the RGoB implemented the Community Transmission Mitigation Strategy with focus on four key interventions, namely; testing, tracing, treating and behavioral change.
  - **Druk Gyalpo's Relief Kidu** – In Phase I, 74% of the applicants i.e. 25,126 received Kidu, of which 55% were male and 45% were female. The total number of 13,314 children were also covered under the Child Support Kidu of an additional Nu. 800 per child per month. This included a child support Kidu of Nu. 27 million, a total amount of Nu. 680 million was granted to 25,126 beneficiaries. In Phase II, over 27,000 applicants received Kidu, of which 53% were male and 47% were female. Over 6,000 children were also covered under the child support Kidu. Including child support Kidu of Nu.14 million, around Nu. 500 million was granted in Phase II. In total, Nu.1.2 billion was granted to over 33,000 beneficiaries and over 14,000 children between April to October (6 months).
  - **Build Bhutan Project** - To address unemployment, the Build Bhutan Project is being initiated and implemented by the RGoB to fill the gap in the construction sector. The project will engage around 7,000 individuals over a period of two years of which 2,000 will be provided with new skills and reskilling and upskilling opportunities in construction trades resulting in national certifications. The project is also intended to facilitate the formation of specialized groups in construction occupations and provide support such as tools and equipment, wage subsidies, outsourcing and the creation of an environment conducive to policy making.
  - **Reopening of schools** - After months of learning from home following the pandemic, the RGoB reopened schools for students of grades IX, X, XI and XII across the country. Despite the increasing number of COVID-19 positive cases, the RGoB decided to go ahead with the reopening of schools as it will significantly reduce damage to education, social development, and the physical and mental health of children and adolescents as a result of social isolation, reduced social support and increased exposure to domestic violence.
  - **Safety Protocols** - The RGoB is prepared to reopen schools in line with all health protocols. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, schools are set to reopen from February next year for pre-primary to class VIII and classes IX to XII would reopen from 1 April 2021. The number of handwashing tap-points in schools has increased by 77%, from 9,654 handwashing tap points before the onset of the pandemic in early 2020, to 17,071 tap points today including in toilets.



## 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 real-time data to effectively monitor and rapidly respond to COVID-19, and provided 18 computers, three video conferencing equipment, six wifi routers and a printer to help run these systems.
- UNDP procured and handed over 100,000 units of IIR Masks and 480 units of N95 masks for frontline health workers through its Global Procurement Support to the MoH.
- UNDP is supporting the MoH to provide enhanced access to healthcare through mobile cardiotocography (iCTGs) devices, which will provide fetal wellbeing services to 46 health centres in Bhutan. This initiative will provide quality obstetrics and gynecology services for 50 % of the total reported pregnancies in Bhutan each year, while reducing the need for travel and physical contact, thereby leading to enhanced access to health services, reduced costs, and improved safety. The iCTGs are set to arrive by the end of November 2020
- UNDP is supporting the procurement of ICT equipment to provide back-up for the Health Help Centre, an ICT-enabled health delivery system for emergency pre-hospital services, health advice and counseling. During COVID-19, the Health Help Center (HHC) established new hotline numbers for disseminating COVID-19 related information to the general public as well as addressing the health care needs and issues among the elderly.
- UNDP is enhancing the RGoB's capacity to safely and more effectively manage health wastes generated from COVID-19 healthcare, quarantine and isolation facilities by developing a health waste management system, which includes supporting the procurement of incinerators for three regional hospitals (which are due to arrive by December 2020), developing Standard Operating Procedures(SOP) and providing trainings for health professionals.

#### **UNFPA**

- UNFPA trained 323 health workers comprising of medical/health officers, nurse midwives and programmes-in-charge on the interim operational guidelines of Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (RMNCH) relating to COVID-19.
- UNFPA mobilized additional resources for 4,200 PPE and sanitizers to enhance protection of maternal and child health service providers in health centers and front-line workers in the community.
- UNFPA operationalized guideline on SRMNCH (the Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal and Child Health) service during COVID-19 lockdown.



## UNFPA

- UNFPA conducted training on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV), including sexual violence during the COVID-19 pandemic for 20 people from the LGBTQI community.
- UNFPA provided 1,000 PPE to Red Cross/Taxi Association members who serve as frontline responders during the COVID-19 lockdown. Hand sanitizers and PPEs worth USD 239,000 were also handed over to MoH.
- UNFPA sensitized 20 people from LGBTQI community, 60 community-based volunteers on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and Gender-based Violence (GBV), including sexual violence during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- UNFPA oriented 246 graduating students from Paro College of Education and 78 general nurse-midwife and health assistant graduates for GBV/SRH issues, including COVID-19 risk communication.
- UNFPA supported the active engagement of Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (EmONC) focal points from 20 health district facilities to use a gynecological social platform to seek advice and share experiences related to maternal health services during COVID-19.

## UNICEF

- A procurement plan for the new ADB grant of USD 1,019,047 (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 to facilitate reprogramming.
- 480 pedal operated waste bins colour-coded for different types of waste have been distributed to 22 hospitals benefiting about 3,400 outpatients/inpatients which is expected to help prevent and control infections within the healthcare settings.
- 400 pieces of fridge tags procured for supporting the COVID-19 pandemic response, and mainly to monitor the vaccination quality.
- On 7 August, UNICEF handed over 205 portable megaphones to MoH, to support public engagement on COVID-19 prevention and containment measures by frontline workers and community communicators. These megaphones have come in handy as an effective communication tool during the lockdown which happened almost immediately after the handover. The megaphones have been used for coordinating crowds and ensuring physical distancing during delivery of basic services such as shopping for food, waste disposal, etc.
- With support from ADB grant, 15,000 boxes of surgical masks were procured and handed over to MOH on 5 October 2020.
- UNICEF, WHO and SNV are partnering to provide both technical and financial assistance to strengthen WASH facilities through MoH. After lifting of the nationwide lockdown, fabrication works have been initiated for installation of handwashing stations in 14 districts and 47 primary healthcare centers.
- 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. In addition, 10,000 soap bars were distributed to 90 monastic institutions reaching 7,015 children (6,571 young monks and 444 young nuns).
- 5,285 health workers across the country received handwashing communication packages and 7,015 children (6,571 monks and 444 nuns) received soaps in 90 monastic institutions.
- The pre-positioned soaps in schools and hand hygiene posters have benefited additionally 25,167 students since the reopening for schools for classes IX to XI in September.
- 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.



## UNICEF

- Based on a field visit to assess the continuity of nutrition services during COVID-19 an assessment of the recently conducted online trainings is being done with technical support from UNICEF.
- 50,000 doses of Td vaccine were delivered to the MOH in October 2020. In addition, 50,000 doses of bivalent OPV were delivered in June 2020. Both funding and procurement for this vaccine was supported by UNICEF.
- 95,000 doses of Northern Hemisphere Influenza vaccine were delivered in September, 2020 for six high risk groups. 17,000 doses of DTP+HepB+Hib (pentavalent) vaccine were delivered in June 2020. The funding for this vaccine was supported by Bhutan Health Trust Fund and the procurement was supported by UNICEF.
- 10,080 doses of Inactivated polio vaccine (IPV) was delivered in August 2020. The funding for this vaccine was supported by Gavi and UNICEF supported procurement.
- 400 numbers of Fridge Tag (30 Day Temperature Recorder) for use in the vaccine stores to monitor temperature was delivered in September 2020.

## 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 crisis. 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.
- On behalf of the Ministry of Education(MoE), WFP is procuring 4,520 reusable face masks and 1,130 face shields to be distributed to all 113 schools that are currently functional under the National School Feeding and Nutrition Programme.

## WHO

- WHO continues to support the MoH through technical and financial assistance. WHO also supported the sensitization of Desuungs (Volunteers) on COVID-19. Further, WHO supported the tabletop simulation exercise at border crossing (Phuntsholing) to test preparedness and response. 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 the MoH and WHO are the central coordinating body for all media related materials and to validate all information related to COVID19 at the national level to fight myths and mis-information.
- WHO handed over two sets of NCD Kits to MoH to support the provision of essential health services.
- WHO supplied MCK tents that have been utilized for the establishment of temporary flu clinics across the country. In addition, WHO handed over 425,000 disposable medical masks and 8,000 KN 95 protective face masks worth Nu.11.19 million to MoH.
- To create awareness on preventive measures, WHO assisted 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 messaging.





## 2. Protecting people: Social protection and basic services

### UNFPA

- UNFPA supported the refurbishment of six emergency shelter homes during COVID-19 including standardization of procurement items, development of operational guides and training modules for shelter managers and volunteers.
- UNFPA supported with the referral system to support survivors of GBV to avail shelter, psychosocial and medical services during COVID-19 lockdown.
- UNFPA supported volunteers in several districts who helped over 60 cases of domestic violence with tele-counselling. Four women and three children were brought to an emergency shelter for protection during the lockdown.
- A GBV prevention package developed by UNFPA was integrated into the accelerated DeSuung 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, 63 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) cards to 17,000 children identified as being unable to access any form of online or broadcast media, the Ministry of Education identified 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 SIMs to 32,135.
- In terms of access to service, 1,270 children (555 girls) and 437 (176 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 pandemic. Additionally, since the reopening of schools for Class X and XII students from 1 July, and class IX and XI from 21 September 2020, 18,271 children (9,089 girls) have been reached through counselling classes.
- To ensure the availability of Psychosocial Support (PSS) services for children who are in schools, counsellors in 117 schools have started bi-monthly PSS sessions. The sessions are being conducted online and face-to-face (where allowed) and will run until end of December. Till date, it has reached 2465 children (1,399 girls).
- Technical support was provided to the 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 the frontline workers and non-specialized service providers responding to GBV have also been developed and disseminated to about 2,900 Desuups who are currently undergoing training. Prevention and response to GBV have been incorporated into their training manual.



## UNICEF

- Since May, around 500 trained scout leaders (290 female) have been trained and engaged in organizing online campaigns and educating the public in their respective districts on the importance of maintaining physical distance, wearing masks, and washing hands.
- To support home-based learning and promote COVID-19 prevention practices, an ECCD parenting booklet and handwashing soaps were distributed to 9,188 ECCD children (4,602 girls) across all districts. To ensure support for ECCD facilitators in the field during the pandemic, a webinar on 'Responding to ECCD children and their Needs— Children and Caregiver Support during COVID-19' was held on 30 September. The webinar was jointly hosted by UNICEF Bhutan and the MoE and focused on cross-sectoral collaboration between education and child protection. The webinar reached 218 participants, with 211 attending from the 20 districts of the country.
- 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 some COVID-19 related issues, such as informal workers and how social protection (SP) measures for 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.
- A report on the "Evaluation of Early Childhood Care and Development Programme in Bhutan" was launched on 10 October by MoE, Education Secretary, and UNICEF Bhutan Representative. Together with the launch of the ECCD Evaluation the social media campaign on "Life of an ECCD facilitator during COVID-19" booklet was launched which compiles 63 stories shared on social media from facilitators across all 20 districts.

## WFP

- 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 aimed to guide and support teachers and students to stay healthy and safe while following health, safety and psychosocial protocols for COVID-19 prevention and control measures.
- To address issues related to food safety and quality during COVID-19 and to ensure food imported in large quantities due to the pandemic situation are safely stored, WFP in collaboration with the Department of Trade, Ministry of Economic Affairs (MoEA), developed a customized training module on food safety and quality management during warehousing, transportation, distribution and retail. As a result, 43 private traders were trained. For this training, WFP also partnered with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Food and Agriculture Centre of Excellence (FACE) for an online session on industry best practices from large organized retailers in India.
- Against the backdrop of COVID-19 and the resulting import and storage of large quantities of food enough for the entire population for six months, WFP supported various RGoB partners on food safety and quality management aspects of food commodities procured under the National Food Security Reserve (NFSR). This included the development of national guidance for food safety and quality management at the warehouse level; publication and distribution of food safety brochures (transportation and retailers) and social media awareness campaign among others.

## Joint Activities

- 5,000 copies of the COVID-19 FAQ booklet and 600 copies of 'A Balanced Diet' brochures were disseminated to Scouts and other volunteers with support of UNFPA and WFP.
- UNESCO participated in the Framework for reopening schools in Bhutan. The Framework, jointly developed by UNESCO, UNICEF, the World Food Programme and the World Bank provides guidance to help national and local authorities make their decisions on why, when and how to reopen learning establishments.
- UNICEF and WFP drafted a brochure with simple illustrations on food groups and advocacy, explaining how to eat a variety of foods in each meal, as demonstrated by the ideal food plate. The document also includes encouragement to eat a "rainbow" of vegetables to make vegetable consumption attractive to children as well as handwashing steps.





### 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 other relevant districts.
- FAO is providing greenhouse facilities and capacity building to a monastic school in Yurung chiwog, to help them produce their own vegetables and food items (USD 10,000).

#### ITC

- ITC (International Trade Centre) is providing capacity building and market linkages opportunities to MSMEs through distance coaching, e-learning and online B2B in light of COVID-19.
- E-platforms, including the Bhutan Trade Information Portal and Agriculture Market Information System have been launched for Bhutanese businesses to remain up-to-date with the latest regulations and market access requirements. ITC has provided advisory support on trade policy, investment promotion and business advocacy, integrating critical aspects for business growth after COVID-19.

#### 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.
- UNDP is supporting energy diversification in support of enhanced energy security with the implementation of a pilot project to install 180 kW Solar Photovoltaic (PV) systems. The project will not only offset the fossil fuel-based energy imports from India during lean hydropower months in the winter but will demonstrate the potential of solar PV as the new source of energy and future areas of skilling, upskilling and employment opportunities under the 'new normal'.
- 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 is supporting programmes in food self-sufficiency, nutrition security and tourism resilience, geared towards generation of livelihood opportunities for people impacted by COVID-19 through cash for work and reskilling and upskilling opportunities.
- UNDP is supporting the RGoB to carry out a value chain analysis of three priority products (potato-processed products, cooking oil and noodles) in order to strengthen the Cottage and Small Industries sector and achieve economic diversification. The findings of the value chain analyses will feed into the proposed Business Development Support.
- UNDP is supporting the RGoB's Agriculture Contingency Plan in Paro Dzongkhag to enhance the overall food self-sufficiency and nutrition security while directly providing livelihood opportunities to the laid-off workforce. The proposal will specifically support 17 farmers groups and 18 groups of workers who were laid off, mainly by focusing on vegetable production from more than 3400 acres of land.



- In partnership with various divisions under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF), WFP is supporting the strengthening of agriculture statistical and M&E systems in the agriculture sector. This will help address the short term COVID-19 response and support the agriculture sector's long-term efforts for increased production, market linkages, income, and job creation in line with Bhutan's Economic Contingency Plan.
- WFP is providing assistance to the agriculture sector across demand, production, post-harvest management, marketing and knowledge management and cost efficiency as well as the promotion of local production. WFP is together with the MoE and MoH planning a national Social Behaviour Change Campaign (SBCC) to improve dietary and health habits for Bhutan's children. The campaign will support the implementation of the Prime Ministers plan for Healthy Drukyul, which aims to help Bhutanese inculcate the habit of healthy eating, and substitute food import with Bhutanese food during and beyond COVID-19. To take forward the advocacy activities, WFP is in the final process of engaging in a formal collaboration with CSO, The Tarayana Foundation.

## 4. Macroeconomic response and multilateral collaboration

- UNDP together with UNRCO-ADB is supporting the Ministry of Finance to strengthen macroeconomic forecasting and modeling that will enable the Government to:
  - Simulate the relationships and interactions between different sectors of the economy;
  - Estimate economy-wide impacts of shocks, including scenarios related to the impact of COVID-19;
  - Model the multi-dimensional effects of different policy actions; and
  - Adapt simulations to changes in assumptions and circumstances.

Work has started on mapping the necessary data and constructing the main dataset that will support the new approach. This exercise will also be used to help estimate the economy-wide impacts of shocks, including COVID-19.

- 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.

## 5. Social cohesion and community resilience

- UNDP together with local CSOs are empowering survivors of GBV and women working in the entertainment vocation, the LGBTQ community, youth with substance abuse disorders (including recovering), people living with HIV, youth with mental illnesses and other marginalized groups in the country through following skills development programmes:
  - o Vocational training: weaving, tailoring, food production, professional traditional and cultural performance etc.
  - o Essential rights and awareness building on Sexual Reproductive Health, Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Violence
  - o Cross-cutting skills development including leadership skills, basic financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills.
- Some of the participants of the programme have been chosen to submit business proposals to Loden Foundation, with whom UNDP has set up a fund to support innovative ideas that contribute to the economy and COVID recovery.





## 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.
- UNDP is supporting piloting of e-litigation in 10 courts to ensure continued access to justice services even during the COVID-19 pandemic including for vulnerable groups such as women and children. This will enhance the efficiency of justice services, as well as contribute to access to justice for rural populations. As of November 2020, the first batch of equipment has been handed over to the regional courts.
- UNDP is supporting development of a comprehensive Parliamentary functionality plan to ensure delivery of core governance functions in times of emergencies.

## UNICEF

- Approximately 488,000 people were reached with messages on COVID-19 prevention and containment and access to services through the engagement of 18,000 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

- In adapting to the new normal, UN Bhutan organized three virtual environmental roadshows titled 'Art for Change' with the theme 'The Future We Want' from August to October. The first of its kind to keep students currently out of school engaged during the COVID-19 pandemic, the event is an initiative under the 75th anniversary of the UN. The roadshow raised awareness on several environmental issues that affect us all, by engaging 60 students from all over the country, through art in different forms, such as theatre, painting, photography and writing while visualizing the future they want. The next inperson roadshow will take place from 3 to 6 December with 25 participants from the Wangsel Institute of the Deaf in Paro.
- 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%.

## One UN

- 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. 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. A special edition 'Youth Dialogues' was hosted in November to give a voice to the youth of Bhutan. The session was attended by over 300 students from the Royal Thimphu College and was also livestreamed to ensure people have access to the session, in line with COVID-19 protocols. The video recording of previous sessions is available on the Bhutan Dialogues YouTube channel and on the UNCT website.

## UNDP

- Together with NCWC, UNDP worked on an advocacy video and illustrations to raise awareness of the heightened risks of domestic violence during COVID 19 and a call to action to prevent gender-based violence. The video was launched on national TV. The illustrations have reached over 52,000 users on UNDP Facebook and Twitter.
- 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 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.
- UNDP, in collaboration with Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy, is organizing a Conversation Series titled "Reimagining Bhutan: Building Forward Better Beyond COVID" to generate ideas for "no-regret" recovery policies. The fourth in the series, on social protection, organized in partnership with UNICEF on 26 November 2020, invited speakers from the private sector as well as CSOs working with women and persons with disabilities.

## UNESCAP

- COVID-19 has highlighted the need for more timely and more granular data. ESCAP worked with NSB to enable cost-effective and COVID-19 resilient economic statistics production using administrative data. The collaboration modality is COVID-19 resistant with weekly virtual status meetings and regular stakeholder seminars with national experts participating physically and ESCAP experts on Teams.

## UNFPA

- 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.
- UNFPA developed and disseminated IEC materials (posters and animated films) to address GBV and SRHR issues during the COVID-19 lockdown through national television and social media platforms.

## UNICEF

- To date, over 700,000 people have been reached with lifesaving messages on COVID-19 prevention and access to services through digital media (268,970) such as Facebook and UNICEF website and through community engagement (488,000). About 18,200 influential persons and volunteers were mobilized for community engagement at various levels.
- Since the campaign #COVID19STORIES was launched on 9 April, the CO has posted more than 430 stories from children as young as six years old, young people and adults. The campaign has received more than 500 stories and videos from young people from across the country and abroad out of which about 230 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

- 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 15,460,320 people were reached with messages on Trafficking in Persons through the national TV. The messages include cybersecurity/online scams, sexual exploitation, labour exploitation and child exploitation, and access to service providers.

## WFP

- In partnership with various divisions under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF), WFP is supporting the strengthening of agriculture statistical and M&E systems in the agriculture sector. This will help address the short term COVID-19 response and support the agriculture sector's long-term efforts for increased production, market linkages, income, and job creation in line with Bhutan's Economic Contingency Plan.





## Resource mobilization for COVID-19 Response and Recovery

Thus far, UN Bhutan mobilized **USD 10,674,641** 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 repurposing exercise for the UN AWP.	
IFAD	USD 968,875
UNDP	USD 193,000
UNFPA	USD 122,000
UNICEF	USD 258,400
WFP	USD 334,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>USD -1,876,775</b>

Additional resources through additional resource mobilization	
One UN (The Secretary General's UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund <sup>1</sup> )	USD 300,000
FAO	USD 316,000
UNDP	USD 2,709,600
UNFPA	USD 330,000
UNICEF	USD 2,904,266
UNODC	USD 11,000
WFP	USD 217,500
WHO	USD 2,009,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>USD 8,797,866</b>

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: We can do it. We can build Bhutan!

You may be familiar with the famous World War II propaganda poster depicting "Rosie the Riveter." A woman dressed in blue overalls, with the slogan "We Can Do It." Once the war ended the urgent need for women to join the labourforce declined but the picture remained a powerful symbol for many women in the labour workforce for years to come.

19-year-old Kinley Peldon is from Paro. She completed her Class 12 exams last year and planned to study in India to pursue a degree in Economics. 2020, like any other year, seemed promising for many high-school graduates looking to take another step in their academic journey in pursuit of a bachelor's degree and ultimately a professional job. However by February and March, COVID-19 had taken over and cases were rapidly increasing across the world. For some students, the transition from school to college stretched from 6 months to an indefinite gap year. Kinley decided to defer her college plans, and the rest of the year looked uncertain and empty. It was then that Kinley heard about the Build Bhutan Project.

The Build Bhutan Project is an emergency intervention initiated and implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources to address the gaps created in the construction and the skilled workforce due to the pandemic. Kinley is undergoing a foundational plumbing course in Sarpang. It is one of the many training opportunities offered by the Build Bhutan Project,

The second round of the plumbing course started on the 27th of September. The course is a month and seven days long. Other courses like masonry, painting, and carpentry are also offered to interested Bhutanese across the country. The training is free and after the students complete their training, they are sent to agencies and companies as apprentices. Trainees can also choose to sit exams to acquire the National Certificate (NC) under the Bhutan Vocational Qualifications Framework (BVQF). The current plumbing course has 11 male and 10 female trainees.

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



Stereotyped gender roles and socio-cultural perceptions of women working in male-dominated professions often lead to bias. Most women face the added burden of not only working in "blue-collared" jobs but also gender discrimination in their workspace.

Traditionally, the importance of these jobs were overlooked and for most people, the dignity of labour was not valued. However the construction and vocational workforce have both experienced significant challenges over the past months. 2020 dramatically reduced the number of foreign human resources available and an apparent skills gap emerged in the Bhutanese labour market. Build Bhutan Project is aimed at addressing this gap and building the national capacity in vocational based areas,

"After joining the training, I realised that not all college graduates can get a desk job. There are only so many jobs and only so many desks," said Kinley. "This training has been an eye-opening experience, it is a powerful learning journey and I am very grateful to my country. I am now even considering doing the exams for certification," added Kinley.

In many ways, Rosie the Riveter is relevant not just to women but to us all. It is imperative for Bhutanese in general, to use our hands to build Bhutan and to realize that "We Can Do It."

## 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.

### If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to

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