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2020 AND BEYOND



COVID-19  
RESPONSE



# BRIEF

## UNITED NATIONS BHUTAN

### COVID-19 SITREP #4

UPDATE 29 September 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

- Bhutan went into a 21-day nationwide lockdown on August 11 after a woman in Gelephu tested positive for COVID-19 and two days later, 12 positive cases were reported from the mini-dry port in Phuentsholing. Over subsequent weeks the country experienced sporadic transmission but the spread was largely controlled through strict contact tracing, enhanced testing, and the public's adherence to lockdown guidelines. Beginning 1 September the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) started a phased approach to easing the lockdown. The RGoB is closely monitoring the coronavirus pandemic and while 281 cases have been confirmed no deaths have been reported. 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 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 to help SDG implementation and financing COVID-19 recovery.



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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, 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.

## UNFPA

- UNFPA’s Goodwill Ambassador, Her Majesty Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck, addressed gender-based violence prevention and the 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, Scouts 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 road map 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 trainings on SOP for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons in Bhutan for 11 Gups, and 10 Community Based Volunteers of Chukha Dzongkhag, and 3 Gups, 4 Mangmis, 1 GAO and 9 Community Based Volunteers of Bumthang Dzongkhags.

## 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.

## 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, 25000 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 private sector and CSO's are engaged in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and to build back better.

- **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. During the second phase of Druk Gyalpo's Relief Kidu, there were 22,955 Kidu beneficiaries amounting to Nu. 284 million. Among the beneficiaries, Relief Kidu was extended towards Child Support Kidu benefitting 9,532 children amounting to Nu 7.6 million.

- **Nationwide lockdown** – Following the announcement of the nationwide lockdown, the RGoB's task force developed a zoning system to address the issues during the lockdown, especially in the delivery of essential services. In two days, 31,000 cards were distributed to the people in Thimphu in 43 identified zones. To ensure people had access to essential health services during the lockdown, the RGoB approved a protocol for availing essential health services. A total of 112 new intercom services were installed to cater to any health emergencies. In order to meet people's needs during lockdown.

- **Active Surveillance** – To date, the RGoB has tested 135,960 people in both quarantine and in communities for COVID-19. A total of 60,619 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.

- **Phase-wise ease of lockdown** – The RGoB started the relaxation of the lockdown in three phases spreading over a total of ten days from 1 to 10 September. Phase One (1-3 September) allowed more relaxation of essential activities, opening of more designated shops and restaurants and allowing families to walk around in the locality. Phase Two (4-6 September) allowed movement of public transport within the dzongkhags and in the final phase (7-11 September) movement of vehicles beyond the district was allowed. The RGoB ensured that the easing of restrictions helped support the introduction of a new normal that is conducive for the continued operation of economic and livelihood activities while also ensuring safety of people's health.

# 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 to MoH 100,000 units of IIR Masks and 480 units of N95 masks for frontline health workers through its Global Procurement Support.
- UNDP is supporting MoH to provide enhanced access to healthcare through innovative e-health solutions, such as mobile cardiocography (iCTGs) systems, which will provide fetal wellbeing services to 46 remote health centres in Bhutan. These initiatives will provide quality obstetrics and gynecology services to 50 % of the total pregnant women in Bhutan, while reducing the need for physical contact, thereby leading to enhanced access to health services, reduced costs, and improved safety.
- UNDP is enhancing the Government'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 health waste management equipment, 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 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.

### 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 pcs of fridge tags procured for supporting the covid19 pandemic response, and mainly to monitor the vaccination quality.



## UNICEF

- On August 7, UNICEF handed over 205 portable megaphones to Ministry of Health, 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, 2500 additional boxes of surgical masks were procured (in addition to 15,000 procured in August). The total of 17,500 boxes of surgical masks are expected to be delivered by end September 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.
- 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 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 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.

## WHO

- WHO continues to support the MoH through technical and financial assistance. WHO also supported the sensitization of Dessungs (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 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

### UNDP

- UNDP together with local CSOs is empowering survivors of GBV and women working in the entertainment vocation, LGBTQ, Youth with Substance Abuse Disorders (including recovering), People Living with HIV and other marginalized groups in the country through the 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 incl. leadership skills, basic financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills.

### UNFPA

- 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, 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) cards 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 SIMs to 32,135.
- In terms of access to service, 758 children (294 girls) and 358 (133 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 July 1st, 5336 children (2578 girls) have been reached through counselling classes .
- 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

- As a result of an orientation workshop for 87 scout leaders (30 female) in three districts in June, the scout leaders are engaged in organizing online advocacy campaigns 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 in July to develop social messages and design campaigns for 2nd wave of COVID-19 RCCE.
- 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.
- 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.

## 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. The training also covered the science behind safe storage of food commodities, storage structures and the basics of inventory management. 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.

## UNESCO, UNICEF, 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.

## WFP and UNICEF

- 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.





*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 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) 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 been information on government support is easily accessible for firms.
- ITC is also providing capacity building opportunities to MSMEs through distance coaching and e-learning.

#### 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 (USD 58,000) and reskilling and upskilling opportunities (USD 153,178).

#### WFP

- 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 Drukylu, 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 and UNRCO

- UNDP together with UNRCO-ADB is supporting the Government develop a macroeconomic forecasting and modelling model 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.

### 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.
- 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

- 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.
- UNDP is supporting development of a comprehensive Parliamentary functionality plan to ensure delivery of core governance functions in times of emergencies.
- 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.

### 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.

### 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 a four-day virtual environmental roadshow titled 'Art for Change' with the theme 'The Future We Want' from 27 to 30 August. 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 20 students from all over the country to use art in different forms, such as theatre, painting, photography and writing to visualize the future they want. The next virtual roadshow will take place from 22 to 25 September with 20 other participants from The Royal Academy 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%.
- Bhutan Dialogues is a flagship programme focusing on 'thought-leadership in development' and hosted by UN Bhutan and a leading Bhutanese 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 discussing how Bhutan "recovers better" and conversations about "transformative changes" for Bhutan's future. 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 partnership with the Disabled Persons' Association of Bhutan and Ability Bhutan Society, UNDP is developing 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 special needs and concerns of vulnerable populations like PWDs.

## UNFPA

- 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 756,970 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 18,000 influential persons and volunteers were mobilized for community engagement at various levels.
- Since the campaign #COVID19STORIES was launched on April 9, the CO has posted more than 370 stories from children as young as six years old, young people and adults. The campaign has received more than 450 stories and videos from young people from across the country and abroad out of which about 220 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 15,460,320 people were reached with messages on Trafficking in Persons through the National TV Bhutan Broadcasting Service. 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 10,247,189** to directly respond to the Royal Government of Bhutan's priorities under COVID-19 Response and Recovery.

<b>Repurposing of 2020 Annual Work Plan (AWP)</b>	
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 233,400
UNFPA	USD 122,000
UNICEF	USD 258,400
WFP	USD 330,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>USD 1,912,675</b>

<b>Additional resources through additional resource mobilization</b>	
One UN (The Secretary General's UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund <sup>1</sup> )	USD 300,000
FAO	USD 306,000
UNDP	USD 2,709,600
UNFPA	USD 100,000
UNICEF	USD 2,680,914
UNODC	USD 11,000
WFP	USD 217,500
WHO	USD 2,009,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>USD 8,334,514</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.

## [UNICEF] Ensuring access to handwashing facilities for children



(Left) UNICEF Bhutan's WASH Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen explains the need to ensure the height of tap stands for children to access the handwashing facilities at Logodama Primary School.

(Right) Soaps and disinfectants are ready for use when the school reopens.

As part of its implementing COVID-19 safety measures, Punakha district's oldest school, Logodama Primary School has installed new handwashing stations that are easily accessible by five year-old children.

"The pre-primary students are five years old, so the handwashing stations have to be built to their height," said the school principal, Jambay Gyeltshen.

The principal says that he discussed with the district engineer to improvise the standard design of handwashing station schools across the country received from the headquarters to make it accessible to the height of the smallest children. UNICEF supports schools and monastic institutions to install handwashing stations that are inclusive and accessible by children of all heights.

The school is today constructing its sixth handwashing station, which when complete will take the total number of tap points to 32, benefitting 285 students. About 60 children are in pre-primary.

Eight years ago, the school did not have a single tap stand specifically for handwashing.

"The school partnered with the parents and built four tap stands," the principal said. "With the seed money of Nu 15,000 we received from UNICEF, we mobilized funds and built another tap stand in 2019."

Jambay Gyeltshen says, the school supplemented the fund with the money it earned through the sale of pet bottles and recyclable waste.

Located about three kilometers away from Punakha proper, the has 20 teachers and four support staff. All staff are today engaged in preparing the school for its reopening. About nine tippy taps are on standby in a classroom, ready to use whenever required. "Now I feel quite satisfied with the work that has been done in the school," he said.

Two handwashing points are also installed at the entrances as part of the response to COVID-19.

The school also has soaps and its pouches ready for use along with disinfectants bottled and labelled class wise. "COVID-19 gave us an opportunity to prepare our WASH facilities," he says. "We are ready to open the school anytime."

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