



IMPACT REPORT

2020 -2021

**WELLBEING AND HAPPINESS IN TIMES OF A
GLOBAL PANDEMIC**

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Her Royal Highness Gyalsem
Kesang Chodren Wangchuck, President

MESSAGE FROM THE HONORABLE PRESIDENT

In a world already challenged by rising economic inequities, and the negative impacts on the natural world in pursuit of GDP growth, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has further proven how vulnerable we are as a people.

The pandemic forced the global community to rethink fundamental questions about economic paradigms and their impact on resilience and wellbeing. The years 2020-2021 were challenging and they made citizens of the world acknowledge and accept that we are not invincible. Here too, in Bhutan, the pandemic helped us as a people come together profoundly. In times of crisis when resources were strained and capacity limited, it was overwhelming to witness our people, support one another, and find solutions for our collective well being.

Despite challenges and limitations, I am happy that the GNH Centre Bhutan was one of thirteen civil society organizations that partnered under Project Facemask to make and distribute masks to our frontliners. The COVID-19 pandemic also digitized our work and lives. We saw how offices and individuals quickly adapted with virtual tools and the Centre launched its first-ever online GNH course for our students to supplement online education.

The food sufficiency of the nation was further threatened during the pandemic and subsequent lock downs that took place. Bhutan felt the hardship of being dependent on imports for food items and despite the Royal Government's proactive approach to addressing the emergency, it was evident that food security is a priority area for Bhutan. To address this issue, the Centre initiated the GNH Farmers Project and we hope to spark youth interest in agriculture. The project combines ecological farming opportunities with a GNH leadership training for a new generation of "GNH Farmers" who can view such livelihoods as part of a desirable and sustainable future for themselves. Fortunately, to support this project and other mandates of the Centre, the MoU with the Sterling College, USA and The Rekhi Foundation of Happiness, USA was signed.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my deepest gratitude to His Majesty The Druk Gyalpo for selflessly leading the frontliners and guiding our people during these difficult times, the Central Monastic Body, the Royal Government of Bhutan, the Desuups, and all the volunteers in containing and combating the COVID-19 issues in Bhutan. The past two years have no doubt been a period of gratitude, cooperation and solidarity. I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude to the members of the Board, our international partners, and our staff for their most valuable contributions. It is through this joint effort and partnership that the Centre has been able to make progress against many challenges.



Tashi Delek

EMBRACING COLLABORATION DURING THE PANDEMIC



In March 2020, the GNHCB, as a part of a joint effort among civil society organizations in Bhutan, collaborated in the Face Mask Project for tailoring reusable face masks for our frontliners. The Centre contributed funds and volunteered in taking forward different activities from mask making to the advocacy documentary for BBS.

Over 150 women from impoverished backgrounds benefited from the Face Mask Project during the time of the COVID-19 which started a few weeks after the detection of the first COVID-19 case in Bhutan. A total of 13 CSOs including GNH Centre Bhutan came forward to take part in this partnership. The first masks were offered to His Majesty's Royal Kidu Office by the CSO Chairperson and members. Based on the success of the initiative, both the Ministry of Health and Helvetas funded the second phase of the project which continues to supply tailored masks.

TAKING GNH ONLINE

The Gross National Happiness Centre Bhutan (GNHCB) launched the first national online GNH course for Bhutanese youth to commemorate Drugyal Zhipa's 65th Birth Anniversary and the National Happiness Day. The event was graced by Her Royal Highness Gyalsem Kesang Chodren Wangchuck President of the Centre with other key guests.

In partnership with Rigpah, it is the first online course on GNH delivered in Bhutan as part of the Centre's mandate for all Bhutanese to understand this unique philosophy and how it guides nation building. With the current COVID -19 pandemic youth are the most impacted with their education at great risk.

According to the latest available data from UNESCO, 1.57 billion students have been affected by school closures in more than 190 countries worldwide.

At the launch event, Her Highness stressed the need for more creative learning avenues to keep Bhutanese youth positively occupied. The student learning course is offered free on Rigpah and will benefit all young Bhutanese. Despite the global challenges presented by COVID-19, the GNHCB continues its efforts taking GNH deeper in Bhutan and to the world. The GNH Online Learning will engage students and youths meaningfully, while gaining understanding of our age old values. This course is designed to offer a user-friendly and interactive session with the use of audio-visual graphics providing a new learning experience for students and youth.



PARTNERING WITH THE REKHI FOUNDATION FOR HAPPINESS, USA



The GNH Centre Bhutan, and The Rekhi Foundation for Happiness signed a Memorandum of Understanding to further the efforts on promoting GNH activities in Bhutan and internationally.

The main purpose of the MoU is to facilitate collaboration between the two organizations in areas of common interest aimed at human happiness and wellbeing of all life with a special focus on youth leadership and happiness during and post COVID-19 pandemic period. HRH Princess Kesang Chodren Wangchuck, President of the GNHCB who is committed to promoting the values of Gross National Happiness said,

“As the COVID-19 pandemic ravages all nations, economies and social systems, the will of human society to collaborate and strive together is being tested as never before. Human wellbeing and happiness, indeed survival, is at stake and it is the poor, aged and young who are the most vulnerable. Now more than ever the world needs to pool its political, economic, technological and social resources to resist and overcome the multidimensional devastations being caused by this invisible adversary. In this regard, I am heartened by the contributions of Dr. Satinder and Harpreet Rekhi to the research and promotion of human wellbeing. It is therefore, a matter of deep joy for me to welcome the establishment of partnership between the GNHCB and the Rekhi Foundation of Happiness to pursue our shared dream of furthering peace, wellbeing and happiness in our deeply troubled world.”

Dr. Satinder Singh Rekhi will also support the Centre as an International Advisor given his vast experience and wisdom by helping to develop an international vision for the Centre and advise opportunities for collaborations in line with the GNH philosophy of happiness and well-being for the greater good of humanity.



The Phase 1 of the partnership will focus on practical solutions to deal with the pandemics impacts on the state of food security, youth employment and mental health issues in Bhutan. Activities will include GNH advocacy, workshops on GNH Leadership, promoting agricultural efforts and keeping youth involved as responsible citizens.

ABOUT THE REKHI FOUNDATION FOR HAPPINESS



A Non-Profit Trust founded in the year 2016 in California, USA by Dr. Satinder Rekhi and Harpreet Rekhi. The vision of the Foundation is to work for the betterment of individuals, specifically women and young girls and help them pursue their dreams for their

happiness, well-being, holistic self-development, a meaningful and independent life. The Foundation pursues a mission of spreading Happiness. To that objective, they have initiated research and studies on the Science of Happiness at California State University, Sacramento, Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, and Amity University. Dr. Rekhi and his wife, Harpreet, believe that by promoting individual empowerment, they are contributing towards a happier, healthier, and harmonious World.

GNH FARMERS PROJECT



The first phase of the GNH Farmers Project started from 14th October- 30th November, 2021 at the GNH Centre Dewaling, Bumthang. The programme was designed for youths from various colleges and schools to have hands-on experience in oyster mushroom cultivation and various farming techniques. The opening day of the programme was graced by Her Royal Highness Ashi Kesang Chodren Wangchuck. Her Highness highlighted lessons from the pandemic and emphasized how important it is to be food sufficient and thus encouraged the youths to embrace this opportunity and shared how agriculture plays an important part in Bhutanese life and the vital role of young people in the sector.

The GNH Farmers Project is the first of its kind that introduces farming as one of the elements in bringing “GNH in Action”. The project aim to translate GNH values through farming activities. The first phase of the project welcomed 11 youths, 4 girls and 7 boys, from various dzongkhags and was hosted at the GNH Centre, Dewaling, Bumthang.



The project is being implemented in partnership with Sterling College, USA under the EcoGather Initiative. The partnership comes at an opportune time when Bhutan is promoting youth engagement in agricultural activities - as a viable business module for livelihood opportunities. The two-year partnership will focus on combining GNH leadership and ecological farming initiatives.

Under this EcoGather initiative, the centre started an oyster mushroom farm based in Bumthang. Under the oyster mushroom farm training, the young farmers received practical sessions that were led by National Mushroom Centre, MoAF on the process of oyster cultivation on straw media. They were familiarized with methods of soaking and draining of straw media, and then steaming it under hygienic treatment, followed by inoculation and packing.

The participants were introduced and explained the process of fruiting and harvest. The session also included information on various pests and disease issues in mushroom farming, and this prepared the participants for future unforeseen disease outbreaks. In addition to mushroom farming the youths were introduced with an overview of GNH and how to implement GNH in their daily lives.





Practical sessions on basic mindfulness, meditations and nature hikes were organized. With the theme of community based living, youths were divided into different groups for carrying out weekly chores of the Centre. The programme also included guest speakers from relevant organizations such as Wangchuck Centennial National Park (WCNP) and Department of Agriculture. These sessions revolved in areas of opportunities and challenges in agriculture, seed production, farm machinery and to familiarized with morden technology.

One of the highlights of the project was the site visit to the Agriculture Research and Development Centre (ARDC) Wengkhar, Mongar. The group spent 5 days learning about fruit production technology, protected citriculture, hydroponic and mushroom cultivation systems. They also learned about vermicompost, citriculture greenhouse, seed bank, solar dryer, and fruit germplasm block.



"We are happy to see GNHCB organizing such initiatives which encourages youths to take up farming and also learn values of GNH and its a good opportunity to collaborate for similar training in future."

Mr. Lhap Dorji, Programme Director (ARDC, Wengkhar)



After a month of cultivating Oyster mushroom, the youths witnessed their first mushroom fruiting- a moment to cherish for all involved in the project. One of the youths shares “It is so satisfying to see the mushroom fruit in front of our eyes and our hardwork has paid off”.

The young farmer group was honored to offer the first harvest of oyster mushrooms to Her Royal Highness Ashi Kesang Chodren Wangchuck, President of the GNHCB. With this mushroom farming initiative, the Centre’s aim to build young GNH leaders through farming activities, promote healthy bodies and minds, and to create, develop and nurture healthy relationships with the local communities were achieved.



The youths who completed their training were awarded certificates by Her Royal Highness Ashi Kesang Chodren Wangchuck. Through this project, all 11 youths will now go back to their respective communities and start oyster mushroom farming, orange orchard and other agricultural cultivation in their villages. The project also offered employment opportunities for one youth who was hired as onsite project staff to manage and monitor mushroom shed at Dewaling, Bumthang. The first phase of the GNH Farmers Project successfully closed for this year on 30th November, 2021.

The EcoGather initiative is a collaborative and transformative learning network dedicated to the vitality of ecosystems, communities, and economies. The GNHCB is one of the five partners under the EcoGather Initiative of Sterling College.

Experiences from our GNH Farmers:



“Cultivating mushrooms is like cultivating oneself as the important element required in every process of self-development is being mindful.

For instance, if we are not mindful during mushroom cultivation then contamination can affect the whole harvest.”

Sonam Gyeltshen



“I am confident that I can now start oyster mushroom cultivation. If I were to compare mushroom farming with other types of farming, I feel that mushroom farming is one of the best.

It does not require hard labor and grows throughout the year as long as the temperature is maintained. It is a nutritional food and does not require a large scale of land”.

Chenga Om



“The main learning for me from the GNH Farmers Project was on how to cultivate oyster mushrooms and also, the GNH learning sessions were helpful to develop skills to be smart and mindful farmers”.

Choki Dema

GNH YOUTH IN ACTION IMPACT

Youth led initiatives

Bhutan is a nation of young people, with more than half of the population below the age of 25 years. Like youth elsewhere, the young Bhutanese is also challenged by uncertainty, unemployment, rural urban migration, social issues like drug abuse, sexual activity, sexual orientation and more recently an alarming rate of suicide.

Added to this, the current COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated these problems for our young people. **As per the National Mental Health report 2019, cases of anxiety and depression among the young people and students were the common mental health issues that drastically increased after the first lockdown.** Therefore, there is a clear need for a better support system towards positive change by the youth for the youth.



To further support the government's effort in helping the young people, the GNH Centre Bhutan started the GNH Youth in Action Project, to provide a space of learning for these young citizens. This initiative would support Bhutanese youth towards positive transformation and commitment of building communities, projects and lifestyles guided by GNH principles.

It will also focus on facilitating, guiding and supporting youth to put their ideas into action empowering them to become leaders, entrepreneurs and equipping them with the necessary skills to become future leaders of Bhutan. These activities are all youth led and result of the Centre's training programmes.



IMPACT 1: GNH village - towards community volunteerism



As part of the GNH Youth in Action campaign, the “GNH Village ” was launched and a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Sherubtse GNH Youth Club, Kanglung Gewog and Rongthong Village. The project seeks to encourage volunteerism, care and create support groups among the youths.

IMPACT 2: Promoting well being through social media

During the COVID -19 pandemic and lock down in the country, the GNHCB initiated to engage our GNH youth members to take up journaling during the lockdown. Youth shared their personal experiences and to read their stories was inspiring. The GNHCB used social media platforms to inspire other youths across the country. This was to promote the sense of belonging and was therapeutic for the young people.

Mon Kumar Rai, GNH Club member, shared that he enjoyed the lockdown period as it gave him ample time to write business proposals which was what he always wanted to do and he also took out time to meditate.

Tashi Tobgyel said that he was disappointed for not being able to join Desuup programme to volunteer and serve the nation. However he felt that by respecting and following the protocols from Ministry Of Health was also his small contribution in serving the nation.

“I never experienced the slightest of fear under His Majesty’s compassion, care and inspiration. Although the COVID-19 could sometimes raise my concern. The perspective and energy radiated from HM has always geared my outlook on the pandemic”

Leki Dorji, GNH Coordinator, Sherubtse College

IMPACT 3: Promoting GNH research and knowledge sharing



Coinciding with the International Happiness Day (20th March), the GNH Club in Sherubtse College, Kanglung, conducted a one-day symposium on GNH. The event was graced by the college President, Mr. Tshering Wangdi and a total of 50 GNH Club members joined the event.

During the symposium, 12 articles on GNH related topics were presented by the members. Some of the topics included the GNH values through Community Engagement, GNH through Democratic Practices; A Qualitative Research, GNH leadership, and Promoting Education Discourse.

It is not only encouraging for the GNHCB to see students interested in conducting their own research activities, but it also demonstrates that we have been able to promote a sense of responsibility and better understanding of the concept of GNH with youth.



IMPACT 4: Students promoting community vitality



To fulfill the aims and objectives of the club, the GNH Club of College of Language and Culture Studies (CLCS), Taktse, Trongsa initiated a one-day community service effort at the Samdrupcholing monastery construction site in May, 2020.

20 club members participated at the construction site by carrying rocks, sand and providing free labor as the traditional practice of “zhapto”. It is an offering of free labor towards the construction of monastic institutions whereby one reaps better karmic action. It was an opportunity for the members to interact with monks to learn and understand their way of living which helped in building better relationships among them. The day ended with a traditional offering of butter lamps and prayers for all sentient beings.

The monks of the monastery were grateful for the “Zhapto” contribution as it helped in speeding the construction process.

CELEBRATING HAPPINESS

Over the years, the Centre has organized various themed events to celebrate the Birth Anniversary of His Majesty the Fourth King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck and the “National Happiness Day”.



The Sherubtse GNH Club offered butter lamps and prayers, followed by a talk on GNH and significance of the day by Mr. Tshering Wangdi, College President.

In Thimphu, the Centre led a prayer and butter lamp ceremony for Drugyal Zhipa’s health and long life in the heart of the capital at the Memorial Chorten.



The 11 young GNH farmers celebrated the day by offering butter lamps and prayers at Dewaling Bumthang

FINANCIAL REPORT

RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2020

Amounts in Ngultrum
(Nu.)

Particulars	Schedule	2020
<u>Opening Cash & Cash Equivalents</u>		
Current Account (Operation)		202,562.96
Foreign Curreny Account (Value in Ngultrum)		1,838,116.70
Current Account (Construction)		2,553,717.75
Cash In Hand		-
Total Cash & Cash Equivalents (A)		4,594,397.41
<u>Receipts</u>		
B Grimme Thailand		1,880,551.16
Income from GNH Persentation Fee		14,910.00
Total Receipts (B)		1,895,461.16
<u>Payments</u>		
Administrative and Operation Expenses		2,831,085.06
Programme Expenses		51,092.00
Total Payments (C)		2,882,177.06
Net Cash & Cash Equivalents (D = A +B - C)		3,607,681.51
<u>Closing Cash & Cash Equivalents</u>		
Current Account (Operation)		192,313.46
Foreign Curreny Account (Value in Ngultrum)		861,650.30
Current Account (Construction)		2,553,717.75
Cash In Hand		-
Total Cash & Cash Equivalents (E)		3,607,681.51



RECEIPTS & PAYMENTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

*Amounts in Ngultrum
(Nu.)*

Particulars	2021
<u>Opening Cash & Cash Equivalents</u>	
<i>Current Account (Operation)</i>	192,313.46
<i>Foreign Curreny Account (Value in Ngultrum)</i>	861,650.30
<i>Current Account (Construction)</i>	2,553,717.75
<i>Cash In Hand</i>	-
Total Cash & Cash Equivalents (A)	3,607,681.51
<u>Receipts</u>	
<i>B Grimme Thailand</i>	1,260,000.00
<i>Income from GNH Persentation Fee</i>	47,251.35
<i>Rekhi Foundation</i>	1,575,000.00
<i>Sterling College</i>	1,750,000.00
Total Receipts (B)	4,632,251.35
<u>Payments</u>	
<i>Administrative and Operation Expenses</i>	3,677,110.96
<i>Programme Expenses</i>	1,279,980.86
Total Payments (C)	4,957,091.82
Net Cash & Cash Equivalents (D = A +B - C)	3,282,841.04
<u>Closing Cash & Cash Equivalents</u>	
<i>Current Account (Operation)</i>	390,705.04
<i>Foreign Curreny Account (Value in Ngultrum)</i>	2,875,538.25
<i>Current Account (Construction)</i>	16,597.75
<i>Cash In Hand</i>	
Total Cash & Cash Equivalents (E)	3,282,841.04



Outreach Impact 2012 - 2019

Year		2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
International Programme in Bhutan	No. of Programme	0	4	3	4	3	6	5	0
	No. of International Participants	0	80	54	91	69	90	75	0
National Advocacy (Schools and leadership workshops)	No. of Programme	2	3	3	1	5	2	22	40
	No. of youth	460	90	1040	145	731	60	Over 9000 students	Over 1000 Students
Advocacy for tourists and official visitors	No. of Programme	2	1	2	4	1	1	1	2
	No. of Participants	63	25	60	108	15	23	10	86