





# **Government Happiness**

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widespread supply chain and demand disruptions many businesses face insolvency. This has been reinforced by layoffs across the board resulting in lower household incomes and livelihood disruption.

Nevertheless, the situation has also opened avenues to expedite certain priorities, harness synergy, re-orient our approaches such as trying out new business models, fix systems to build resilience and harnessing IT enabled services in every facet from education to retail business. Bhutan began a strict lockdown as an interim measure when it entered the Orange zone on 6 March 2020. Since then it has moved to EiE Phase II and is considering various options for re-opening of schools. To minimize the disruption to learning and teaching, the EIE phase prioritizes to make the education system more resilient and less vulnerable to such future ebbs and flows through means such as main-streaming e-learning, and allowing flexibility in the curriculum, pedagogy, delivery, assessment, etc.

On the employment and production front, we are restricted to domestic alternatives thereby providing a platform for building a national workforce and strengthening domestic manufacturing. It is critical that we consider this recess as an opportunity to pursue either a strengthening or strategic reorientation of important domains of our economy and society.

Even while prioritizing health and safety angles over purely economic activity, we must now also consider the importance of non-COVID-19 aspects of health and safety: neglect of other diseases, postponement of screening and preventative health check-ups and routine vaccinations, and future habituation to avoiding hospitals. There are also increased risks and additional burdens that women or girls and children face during the COVID-19 pandemic, including violence at home; these are exacerbated by lack of essential protective services and social networks during the restriction on routine activities. Economic stress and uncertainty have led to heightened tensions at home often leading to increased alcohol consumption. Evidence from helplines and media reports in Bhutan, just as around the world, show rise in violence against women and girls. The pandemic has unfortunately compounded already existing deep-rooted inequalities and harmful practices against women and girls, the effects of which will linger long after the pandemic is over.

***Q. What recovery plans have been designed? What are the inadequacies and constraints in achieving an inclusive, resilient and sustainable recovery?***

Some of the details of recovery plans are highlighted in the answers to the previous questions. In order to build resilience, confidence and security of our people and businesses, as we face unprecedented economic difficulties such as this pandemic, a National Resilience Fund of Nu 30 billion (which is about 16% of GDP) (Around USD 40 Million) was put in place to support the Comprehensive National Response to the Challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The support included the grant of the His Royal Highness the King's Royal Kidu for individuals directly affected by the pandemic and the grant of interest waivers. In addition, several fiscal and monetary measures as mentioned above, were launched to boost economic activities, sustain growth and employment, and support the impacted households and individuals. The immediate grant of the Royal Kidu for affected individuals, and interest waiver and other government interventions have alleviated the economic difficulties and uncertainties faced by the people and businesses.



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The Economic Contingency Plan (ECP) is giving focus to the affected sectors such as Agriculture, Tourism and Construction and subsequent ECP series will support additional sectors/areas such as manufacturing, entrepreneurship and start-ups. The fiscal and monetary measures under implementation will continue as per their objectives and targets. The government is also working towards meeting the labor demand during the pandemic as an opportunity for replacement with local labor by employing skilled and unskilled Bhutanese workers for the construction works.

On the economy as a whole, Bhutan is currently developing a 2