

14th Round Table Meeting
‘Enhancing Happiness and Sustainable Development through Partnerships’
12-14 March 2019

Panel Discussion: *Gross National Happiness – Reimagining Development for
Happiness and Wellbeing*

Date and time: Wednesday 13th March 2019 at 0940-1130 hrs

Background

Bhutan’s guiding development philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) advocates for a holistic, responsible and inclusive approach to sustainable development. His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, first gave expression to this term in the early 1970s to convey the idea that economic growth alone does not define progress, and that collective wellbeing and happiness is most important.

With GNH principles applied in Bhutan’s socioeconomic processes since the early decades of planned development, Bhutan has always placed environmental conservation at the centre of all its development policies. Investments have long been prioritised for the provision of social services and poverty alleviation, while seeking to ensure regional balance and equity in economic growth. Efforts to maintain the values, principles and practices of its dynamic culture and wisdom traditions continue with the evolving times. Governance systems and processes are being strengthened at national and local levels, and democracy continues to be deepened with Bhutan having completed ten years of democracy in 2018.

Today, GNH is enshrined in the Constitution of Bhutan, making it the collective responsibility of the state and polity to ensure that unbridled economic growth does not compromise the social, ecological and spiritual wellbeing of the country. Over the years, operational aspects of GNH have been strengthened with the introduction of the GNH Index¹ in 2008 and the GNH Policy Screening Tool in 2009. These are increasingly being utilised in the formulation and monitoring of Bhutan’s recent Five-Year Plans (FYP), policies and programmes.

In fact, Bhutan’s experience has also inspired policy makers and policy frameworks around the world, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 integrated and indivisible Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The global community’s acceptance of this broad and inclusive development agenda—which sets standards for society as a whole to aspire and adhere to—was a significant milestone for a nation that has long championed the need for a higher purpose for development, as expressed by its GNH vision.

¹ Based on biennial surveys, the GNH Index facilitates assessment of wellbeing conditions across the nine domains of health, education, living standards, ecological diversity and resilience, good governance, psychological wellbeing, time use, community vitality and cultural diversity and resilience.

Objective

This panel discussion will introduce Bhutan's GNH vision and discuss how its development processes and outcomes are shaped by it.

Key Questions

1. How is GNH applied in Bhutan's socioeconomic policies and activities?
2. What roles do the national and Local Governments, civil society, businesses, communities and individuals play in the practical implementation of GNH? What are the key issues and challenges in its operationalisation?
3. How has Bhutan's GNH experience inspired others around the world, and how are the global practices and SDGs in turn help actualise GNH locally? How to enhance partnerships towards implementation of SDGs?
4. What needs to be done by the government to deepen/further strengthen GNH implementation towards becoming a true GNH state? How to create a common narrative and understanding of GNH throughout Bhutanese society?
5. Metrics to measure inequality in a GNH based society.

Panellists

1. H.E. Mr. Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator
2. Aum Chime P. Wangdi, Secretary General, Tarayana Foundation
3. Dasho Karma Ura, President, Centre for Bhutan and GNH Studies
4. Dr. Sabina Alkire, Director, Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI)

Moderator: Dasho Karma Tshiteem, Chairperson, Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC)

- Moderator shall:
 - Make contact with their respective session co-chairs and agree on their respective roles in the session
 - Familiarize themselves with the presentation topic(s) before the session
 - Review the speaking notes beforehand, and prepare questions that will stimulate audience participation and interaction during the moderated discussion.
 - Briefly introduce the speaker immediately prior to his/her presentation
 - Open the session with a short overall view of the topic/ set the stage with a brief introduction on the topic.
 - After the presentation/discussion, shall open the session for discussion
 - Take questions from the audience and moderate the session
 - Ask targeted questions to panellists to stimulate the discussion
 - Conclude the session with a summary of the discussion.
 - Monitor and manage the timing during the session and make sure the session begins and ends on time.

Proposed programme and broad issues to be discussed by each panellist

Time	Activity	Speakers
0940 hrs	Setting the stage – introduction of the topic	Moderator: Dasho Karma Tshiteem
0950 hrs	Introduction of the speakers	Moderator
0950-0957 hrs	<p><i>'Rethinking Development: advancing GNH and SDGs'</i></p> <p>Discuss how Bhutan's GNH experience inspired others around the world, and how are the global practices and SDGs in turn help actualise GNH locally?</p> <p>How to enhance partnerships towards implementation of SDGs?</p> <p>Synergy between GNH and SDGs and possible partnership to take GNH to the next level</p>	Mr. Achim Steiner, UNDP Administrator and UN Under-Secretary General
1000-1007 hrs	<p>Discuss metrics to measure inequality in a GNH based society given your intimate knowledge of GNH Index and Bhutan's development agenda.</p> <p>Or Sabina's preference – discuss why measuring happiness and wellbeing is important? And how can we measure GNH?</p>	Dr. Sabina Alkire, Director, Oxford Poverty & Human Development Initiative (OPHI)
1010-1017 hrs	Discuss role of Local Governments, civil society, communities and individuals in the practical implementation of GNH. Key issues, challenges and opportunities in its operationalization.	Aum Chime P. Wangdi, Secretary General, Tarayana Foundation
1020-1027 hrs	<p>Discuss what needs to be done by the government to deepen/further strengthen GNH implementation towards becoming a true GNH state? How to create a common narrative and understanding of GNH throughout Bhutanese society?</p> <p>Or discuss the key findings of GNH Survey 2015 and application of GNH in business, challenges and way forward</p>	Dasho Karma Ura, president, CBS
1030-1120hrs	Interactive session – questions from audience	
1120-1130 hrs	Closing and summary of the discussion	Moderator