

Drukyul Ngytshuel



BHUTAN CANADA
FOUNDATION

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Photo credit: Jesse Montes, <http://jessemontes.com/>

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1. From the Field

As Bhutan emerges from a 21 day lockdown that began on August 11, the country has reason for cautious optimism. By early September all indications are that the lockdown has **stopped widespread community outbreak of COVID-19**. A three-phase re-opening process in most of the country will ease people into a more regular routine as the Royal Government continues to monitor the situation. Overall, Bhutan's response to the pandemic, including the nature of its lockdown once COVID-19 cases began to spike, illustrates how Gross National Happiness, the country's national development strategy, uniquely shapes and frames the country's emergency response. See the *GNH Corner* section of this newsletter for more insight into Bhutan's GNH response to the pandemic.

The Bhutan Canada Foundation maintains its support for the country as it emerges from the lockdown. We continue to provide online educational resources as schools remain closed. We are also currently designing an online workshop initiative to provide professional development to Bhutanese teachers who must now deliver curriculum in new ways as schools remain closed.

Now more than ever, teachers need new techniques and strategies to support the continuity of student learning. Help support the emerging needs of Bhutanese teachers during COVID-19 by making a donation to fund online workshops: <https://bhutancanada.org/donations/>

Easing of the lockdown will also allow us to re-engage with some initiatives around our Trans Bhutan Trail (TBT) project. Significant progress was made on the physical rejuvenation of the TBT prior to the lockdown. The TBT team worked alongside gups (village block leaders) in gewogs (village blocks) across the country to construct the trail. A conscious decision was made to distribute the work across the 28 gewogs along the trail in order to maximize opportunities for local people to benefit from trail development. This approach has helped local economies during these difficult times; over 550 people have been employed doing trail work. Gups expressed gratitude for this initiative, seeing the value of the historic preservation of this ancient trail. Learn more [here](#) about vision of several gups for the Trans Bhutan Trail and their communities.





2. COVID-19 resources

Education and professional development resources

The following provides links to select education and professional development resources as Bhutan continues to navigate school closures and the easing of the lockdown due to COVID-19.

- [#wellreadBhutan: 10 pages a day reading journey](#). Volunteer Teachers of Bhutan and Drukyul's Literature Festival.
- [Self-Instructional Materials, volume V](#). Ministry of Education.
- [Audiovisual Materials for learning and teaching Dzongkha](#). Royal Education Council.
- [Rigzhung E-Learning videos](#), Royal Education Council.
- [Teach Me, Teacher Podcast](#). Professional development for teachers during COVID-19

3. In the news

- 1. Easing the lockdown in three phases.
- 2. Ministry of Education proposes to re-open classes IX-XII when lockdown is lifted.
- 3. TVET graduates need a qualification pathway.
- 4. Bhutan improves on the new e-government development index.
- 5. School principals witness increasing dropout rate

4. From the BCF Blog

Staff Spotlight: Kezang Wangmo, Program Manager

Kezang Wangmo has worked at Bhutan Canada Foundation since May 2018. Based in Thimphu, Kezang’s work is instrumental to helping BCF’s programming and initiatives come to life.

Can you describe what you do at BCF?

As a Program Manager, I arrange the logistics so our programs can run smoothly. This involves a variety of activities including corresponding with the Ministry of Education on teacher selection and placements, arranging visas through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, working with Druk Air and Bhutan Airlines to book flight tickets, orienting new teachers...[\(continue reading\)](#)



4. From the BCF Blog (continued)

Bhutan's Education in Emergency

School closures due to COVID-19 brought unparalleled disruptions to the education sector. Globally over 1.5 billion youth could no longer physically go to school. As countries faced outbreaks, almost overnight classrooms closed to prevent rapid local transmissions amid concerns of close quarters, shared spaces, and in some cases inadequate WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) infrastructure. Staying home became the new normal, forcing students to turn to alternative sources to continue their education. Bhutan responded to COVID-19 through a whole of society and whole of government approach. The response plan focused on early detection...[\(continue reading\)](#)



5. GNH Corner

Gross National Happiness in Bhutan

Gross National Happiness and Buddhist values have structured Bhutan's response to COVID-19 according to Dasho Karma Ura, President of the Centre for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research. Read an interview with him [here](#)

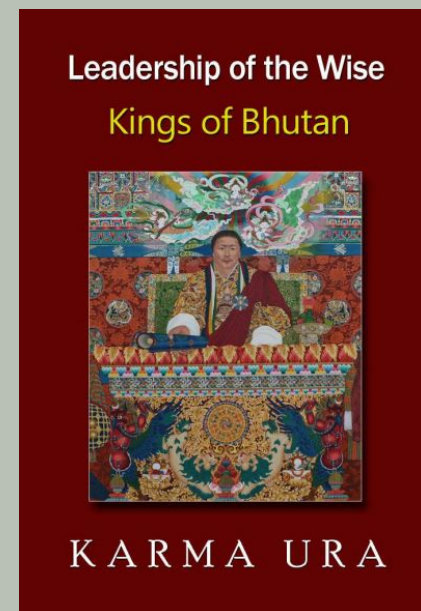
6. Recommended Viewing

Check out this *ABC News* special that explores the importance of Bhutan's rivers and the challenges they face due to climate change. [Watch video.](#)



7. Recommended Reading

The nature of the establishment of Bhutan's absolute monarchy in 1907 and its evolution into a constitutional monarchy by 2008 illustrates one of the more unique royal histories in the world. An in-depth look at each of Bhutan's Kings, entitled *Leadership of the Wise: Kings of Bhutan*, can be read [here](#).



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