

Imagine Change! NDP Forum
Secretariat for the New Development Paradigm
March 2014

Overview

Background: New Development Paradigm

Bhutan's New Development Paradigm (NDP) initiative is part of the worldwide effort to help define a new post-2015 global development agenda. After initiating the General Assembly Resolution 65/309 titled "*Happiness: Towards a holistic approach to development*", Bhutan hosted a High-Level Meeting on "*Wellbeing & Happiness: Towards a New Economic Paradigm*" at the United Nations Headquarters in New York in April, 2012. At this meeting, Bhutan was requested to convene an international expert working group to frame a new development paradigm based on human happiness and the wellbeing of all life forms as the ultimate goals for development. The report "*Happiness: Towards a New Development Paradigm*" was submitted to the UN in December 2013.

Imagine Change!

The role of the Secretariat for the New Development Paradigm (SNDP) is to coordinate all activities related to the NDP initiative, including the engagement of different sections of Bhutanese society towards deepening discourse on GNH in Bhutan. The aim of the *Imagine Change!* local forums is to share the main insights of the report "*Happiness: Towards a New Development Paradigm*" and to receive feedback as well as exchange ideas with a diverse group of participants. During the morning session, we will introduce the work of the SNDP, while the afternoon will focus on a specific theme with invited guest(s).

Who can participate?

We invite everyone to participate, including youth, government officials and representatives from civil society, media and academia.

Why should you participate?

Participants will engage in interactive discussions designed to stimulate a better understanding of what holistic development – or Gross National Happiness – means in practice and in their own work.

Objectives

- Explore the relevance of “new paradigm thinking” in Bhutan
- Encourage local people to think of solutions and “*wise decisions for a better future*” (His Majesty the King), through the lens of a new development paradigm

Desired Outcomes

- Elucidate our understanding of a holistic approach to development inspired by GNH
- Catalyse authentic dialogue between different sectors of Bhutanese society i.e. open interactive engagement on real issues affecting people
- Spark solutions & actions at all levels (individual, community, business, government) that lead to real change

Discussion Themes

- 14 March: Democracy and Active Citizenship
- 15 March: Culture and Globalization (for youth)
- 20 March: Sustainable Consumption
- 21 March: Economy

Tentative Programme

Morning session: GNH-inspired Development

9.00-9.30	Registration of participants
9.30-10.00	Welcome and introduction
10.00-10.45	About the New Development Paradigm initiative
10.45-11.00	<i>Tea break</i>
11.00-13.00	New paradigm vision, values and solutions Group activities and presentations
13.00-14.00	<i>Lunch</i>

Afternoon session: Thematic focus

14.00-16.30	Guest speakers / panel discussion Group activities <i>Tea break</i> Q & A
16.30-17.00	Wrap up and evaluation

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Imagine Change! NDP Forum

Theme: Democracy & Active Citizenship

Date: 14th March, 2014

Venue: Hotel Phuntsho Pelri, Thimphu

Synopsis

Good governance is one of the four pillars of GNH and is integral to the new development paradigm. It crosscuts all aspects of the new paradigm and is required at every stage of working towards such a holistic development agenda.

The need for dialogue, conversation and participation is called for throughout the NDP report, recognizing that at a global level, a crisis of governance underlies all other crises (economic, ecological, social, political).

Good governance includes (among other things) responsible, transparent and accountable government in the public interest as well as active, informed citizen participation. For this forum, we will look more closely at the role of democracy and active citizenship in Bhutan.

Why is active citizenship important? What does it mean to be engaged in a democratic process as an active citizen? What are the various roles and responsibilities? What are the challenges in this regard as a young democracy?

We will explore these and other discussion points in an interactive session with **Aum Siok Sian Pek-Dorji**, Executive Director of the Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD), **Mr Melam Zangpo** from the Department of Local Governance (MoHCA), and **Mr. T.B Rana** from Bhutan Youth Foundation.

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Imagine Change! NDP Forum

Theme: Culture & Globalisation

Date: 15th March, 2014

Venue: Hotel Phuntsho Pelri, Thimphu

Synopsis

Preservation and promotion of culture is one of the four pillars of GNH and is an essential aspect of a holistic development agenda. The new development paradigm asserts the right of culture as well as all life forms to survive and thrive, and recognises that their loss would impoverish humankind. However, “culture is not static but is also a dynamic concept constantly evolving and continuously challenged by external forces and by internal cultural and social change” (Karma Ura et al.)

In this forum, we will look at the importance of cultural resilience for GNH and the new paradigm. How does globalization affect local culture(s)? What does it mean to be a part of the world, but still preserve our own values and cultures? Is there a certain universal culture that is needed for NDP (core values such as justice, tolerance, etc.)?

Dr. Ritu Verma, member of the NDP International Expert Working Group and **Dr. Karma Phuntsho** will share their experiences and knowledge on this exciting exploration of culture and globalization. Participants will be encouraged to reflect on their own values and their place in a fast-changing Bhutanese society.

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Imagine Change! NDP Forum

Theme: Sustainable Consumption

Date: 20th March, 2014

Venue: Hotel Phuntsho Pelri, Thimphu

Synopsis

Sustainable and equitable development and environment conservation are two of the four pillars of GNH and important aspects of a holistic development agenda. The new development paradigm asserts that socio-economic development that depletes resources at the expense of other species and future generations is unsustainable. Similarly, inequitable development that benefits only a few and excludes the vast majority cannot bring societal happiness.

In this forum, we will introduce a theme that remains largely unexplored in Bhutan: sustainable consumption. With the rising income and living standards, the culture of consumption has sneaked into Bhutanese society. What is sustainable consumption and why is it important? What is its relevance in Bhutan? What can governments and companies do to encourage sustainable consumption? What are its challenges?

From a new development paradigm perspective, it is necessary both to treat the prevailing societal malaise - such as unsustainable consumption - while simultaneously creating the new order of society. In practical terms, this requires long-term as well as short-term goals. For example, while consuming in a more environmentally friendly manner is a step in the right direction, the longer-term goal must be to curb consumption habits to conform to planetary limits. This far-reaching shift must be led by those whose wealth and income are already substantial, so that those who are hungry or living in poverty may increase their consumption to sustainable levels.

Mr. Randall Krantz, Strategy Advisor at Druk Holding & Investments (DHI) and **Ms. Laura Turley**, Program Officer from the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) will share their thoughts on the topic. Participants will be encouraged to brainstorm necessary changes in our consumption behaviour and the related challenges in an evolving Bhutanese society.

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Imagine Change! NDP Forum

Theme: Economy

Date: 21st March, 2014

Venue: Hotel Phuntsho Pelri, Thimphu

Synopsis

Environmental conservation, sustainable and equitable development, preservation and promotion of culture and good governance are the four pillars of GNH - and a nation's economic activity is a driving force that impacts all the four pillars.

In the face of development and GDP-defined growth, what is the relevance of GNH philosophy and new paradigm for economy? Is GNH thinking applied in economic policies and activities in Bhutan? What would a “GNH Economy” look like? In Bhutan, is the economy serving its people? These are a few key questions that we will explore in this forum.

Conventional economic theory sees the human economy as a closed system in which firms produce and households consume. But the human economy is not a closed system. It serves broader societal goals, and exists as a sub-system within, and completely dependent upon the ecosystem that provides vital life-support services to the human economy. In the proposed new development paradigm, the economy is seen as a sub-system of the society whose broader wellbeing it must serve, while society is a sub-system of an encompassing ecosystem.

The forum will feature an interactive panel discussion with distinguished panelists, including **Dr. Sanjeev Mehta** (Royal Thimphu College), **Dasho Karma Ura** (President of the Centre for Bhutan Studies and GNH Research) and **Mr. Phub Tshering** (Secretary General of the Bhutan Chamber for Commerce and Industry) who will offer their views on the topic.

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