



Bhutan

Decision making for social and movement measures in the context of COVID-19

SNAPSHOT AS OF NOVEMBER 2020



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Ugyen Tshering is a Programme Officer for Emergency Preparedness & Response Programme under the Ministry of Health. He has a strong background in public health and health emergency management. He is responsible for planning, governance and overseeing the implementation of health emergency preparedness and response programmes/projects in the country.

Currently he serves as a member of Technical Advisory Group (TAG) for the COVID-19 management. In the TAG, he looks into the strategic contingency planning and processes besides his facilitator role in overall emergency management. In addition, he is also serving as one of the members of HEOC Secretariat.

1. Which social and/or movement measures against COVID-19 are currently in place in your country?

- ☒ Closures of schools
- ☐ Closures of offices, businesses, institutions and/or operations closures
- ☐ Restrictions on domestic movement (e.g. stay-at-home, stay within a city, etc.)
- ☒ Limitations to international travel
- ☒ Restriction on size of gatherings
- ☒ Other (please specify)
 - REQUIREMENT OF MANDATORY 7 DAYS QUARANTINE AND TESTING WHILE TRAVELLING FROM HIGH RISK TO LOW RISK AREA WITHIN THE COUNTRY.

2. Which information has been used to make these decisions in your country?

- Epidemiological situation
- Risk stratification of areas within the country
- Case projection through various modelling
- Health system capacity
- Economic and social vulnerability assessment

3. Please describe the process (formal or informal) through which information/data are discussed and decisions are made

At the national level, we have the National COVID-19 Task Force (NC19TF) chaired by His Excellency the Prime Minister. The NC19TF is the highest decision-making body in the country for decision making on all policy matters related to COVID-19 management. At the regional level, there are three multi-sectoral Regional COVID-19 Task Forces. Similarly, at district level, there are the district and sub-district COVID-19 Task Forces.

The pertinent information from the 3 Regional COVID-19 Task Forces, Health Emergency Management Committee (HEMC) and Districts COVID-19 Task Forces are submitted to NC19TF and accordingly the necessary decisions are made at the highest level.

At the health sector level, the HEMC makes the decision regarding the matters related to health emergency management including the surveillance, quarantine and testing based on the scientific evidence.

4. How are selected measures communicated/explained to stakeholders and/or the general public?

The Ministry of Health has established a Media and Risk Communication team at the onset of the pandemic. Any information on the health measures relevant to the COVID-19 are communicated to the general public and stakeholders through MoH's social media, various printed media, radio stations and the national television in forms of notifications, office orders, jingles, posters, flyers, infographics, video clips and others.

In addition, the MoH also conducts weekly press briefing on COVID-19.

5. What have been the key challenges and/or lessons learnt from your experience/ perspective?

Lessons learnt

- Lockdown – the new public health measure to contain the infectious disease, in addition to existing quarantine and isolation
- Preparedness activities especially the timely conduct of lockdown simulation exercises in high risk district and the capital benefitted during the real national lockdown
- SOPs and others plans developed for lockdown has to be disseminated to frontliners and public in advance as fast as possible
- Role of multisectoral approach including the volunteers is paramount
- To have a common and unified Incident Command Structure for public health emergency and disasters
- To develop the capacity of health professionals in epidemiology, modelling and advanced biostatistics.