

Since the corona virus was first reported in China it has gradually spread to the entire world affecting every sphere of life throughout the globe. It has disrupted the economic structure, political structure and social structure of every country across the world. As of 15th June the global Covid-19 cases reported in the WHO situation report 147 was 7823289 with 431541 deaths while Bhutan has reported 66 imported cases with zero death.

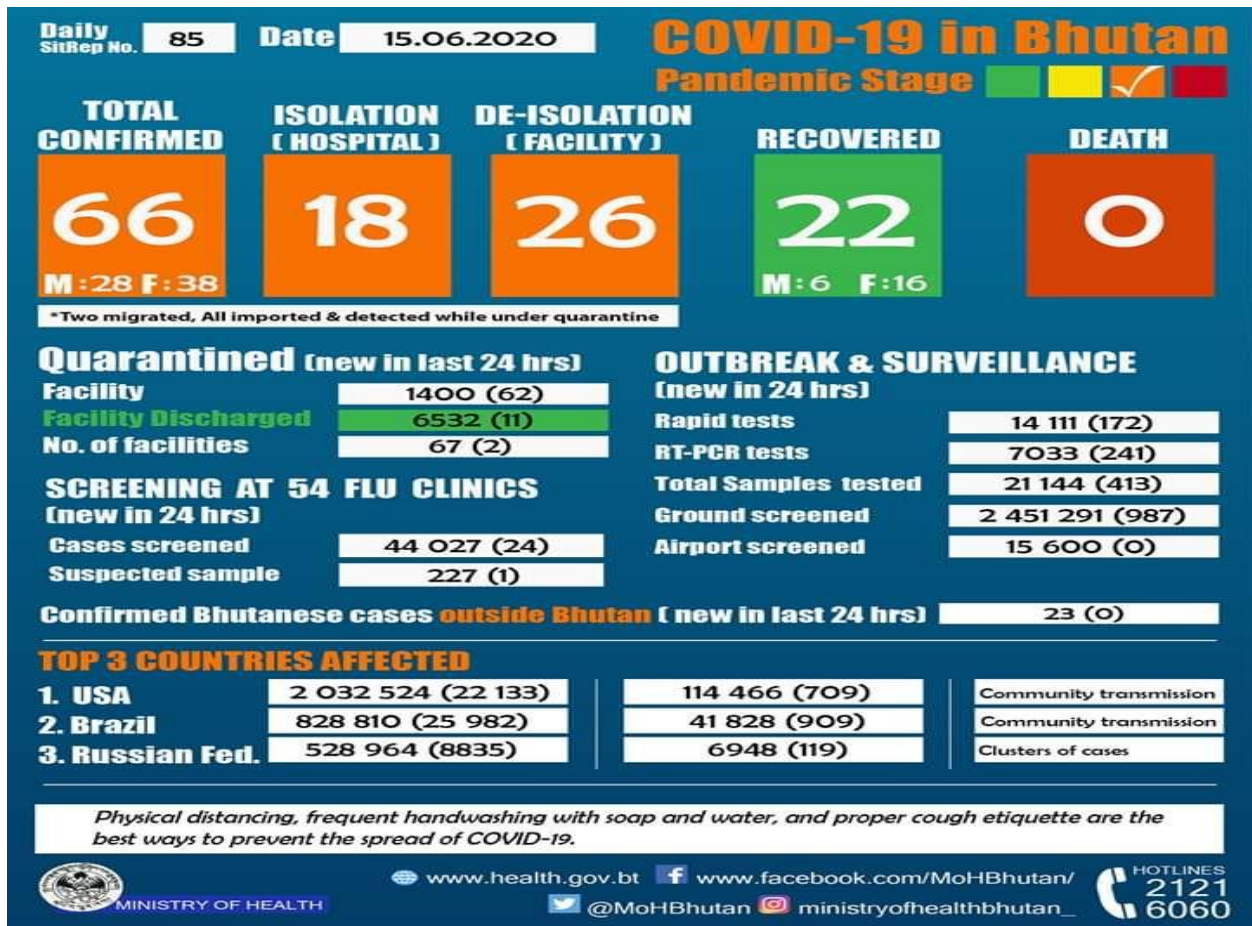


Figure 1 COVID-19 case in Bhutan

While many of the countries are struggling to curb the pandemic despite their capacity and resources, Bhutan stands as epitome to the outside world for her promptness and ability to prevent the disease from spreading in the communities in spite of limited resources and capacity. This has drawn the attention and admiration of leaders and people across the globe. Behind this success lies the unprecedented leadership of His Majesty the King and solidarity of the citizens during such turbulent

times. Religious bodies led by His Holiness the Je Khenpo have also played a significant role in keeping the disease at bay.



Figure 2: His Majesty on tour to southern dzongkhags

Photo Courtesy: His Majesty King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck: Facebook page



Figure 3 Monastic body presided by Je Khenpo

Photo Courtesy: His Holiness the 70th Je Khenpo: Facebook page

When the country first heard about the virus, it started preparing to tackle it swiftly. The Technical Advisory Group for Covid-19 was established at the national level whose prime role is to develop the

national guideline for covid-19 and to give policy directives to the government. Subsequently, every district was directed to develop its own district plan to confront the disease considering the worst case scenario.

The country had its first covid-19 case on 5th March, 2020 who was a 76 year old tourist. That further accelerated the country's preparation and response activities. The government has responded immediately announcing a two-week restriction for international tourists. However, the country could not be reopened for tourists due to the worsening situation worldwide. Since then the government started implementing various preventive measures like mass advocacy on Covid-19 through all available platforms, restricting crowd gathering, mandating hand washing facilities and hand sanitizers in the offices, public spaces, closing of shops at 7:00PM, social distancing, limiting the number of passengers in the public transports, closing the schools across the country etc.

Above all, introducing of quarantine facilities for those coming from outside and Flu Clinics for the local people, training of Desuups (Guardian of Peace) and deployment at the border areas and communities and sealing of border gates on 22nd March, have greatly benefited the country in preventing the local transmission of the disease. As of 15th June, the country has identified 67 quarantine facilities and 54 Flu Clinics across the country where 44027 people were screened at the Flu Clinics and 1400 are in the quarantine facilities. Unlike other countries, anyone entering the country from outside has to stay in quarantine for 21 days. Similarly, foreseeing the threat at the border areas and also to substantiate the limited health workers and armed forces, an Accelerated Desuung Integrated Training Program was initiated upon the royal command adding the total number of desuups in the country to more than nine thousand. Currently, they are serving along the borders and in the communities across the country ensuring both safety and compliance of the preventive and control measures at the local level.

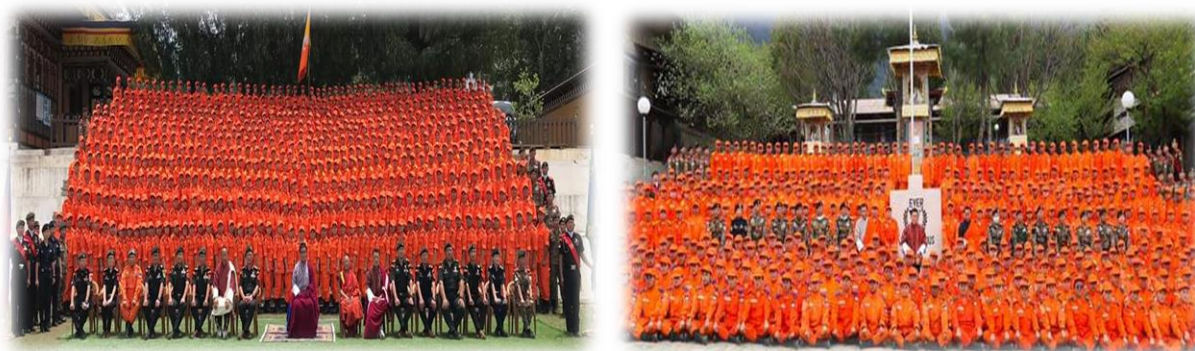


Figure 4 Desung (Guardian of Peace) Photo Courtesy: De-suung- Guardian of Peace

To those unfortunate citizens who have been greatly affected by the pandemic particularly working in the tourism sector and aviation, His Majesty has initiated the “Druk Gyalpo’s Relief Kidu” which has benefitted more than 22,000 citizens across the country.

KUENSEL
THAT THE PEOPLE SHALL BE INFORMED
SATURDAY
JUNE 13, 2020 • Nu 15
COVID-19: Bhutan: 62 | Global: 7,609,730 | Death: 424,084 | Recovered: 3,646,492 | US: 2,089,825
India: 2,97,535 | West Bengal: 9,768 | Assam: 3,319 | Arunachal Pradesh: 61 | Sikkim: 14

Druk Gyalpo's Relief Kidu benefits 22,963 people

MB Subba

The Druk Gyalpo's Relief Kidu has seen 32,088 applicants between April 14 and June 10, out of which 22,963 or 71.6 percent were found eligible for the relief kidu.

Most applied for the kidu in April where more than 21,080 applicants were received, while 10,385 applied in May and 623 in June.

With 11,045 recipients, those in the tourism sector benefited the most followed by those in the transport and communication sector with 4,705 recipients.

A total of 1,626 Bhutanese who returned from abroad also received the kidu including 796 unemployed and unpaid individuals. 17 individuals in the public and corporate and public sector also benefited from the kidu.

In terms of educational qualification, more than 24 percent of the recipients, 7,845, finished higher secondary school, 6,465 finished middle secondary school while 5,661 did not have any educational qualification.

There were 3,272 recipients who finished bachelor's degree and 113 recipients had master's degree or above qualification. 528 people with monastic education and 195 technical and vocational education and training (TVET) graduates also received the relief kidu.

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Deaf students cope up online education dema

Students want to go back to school

Focus Point

Figure 5 Druk Gyalpo's Relief Kidu benefits during Pandemic

His Majesty has also granted loan deferment for 3 months without interest for all the citizens irrespective of type of loans availed. For the Bhutanese citizens living inside the Indian border areas, temporary makeshifts of 1500 units were built in a month upon the command of His Majesty the King. Inspired by His Majesty's love and care toward his citizens, many people came forward donating both in cash and kind to the king and the government to help combating the disease. Likewise, agriculture sector has become a boon to not only villagers but also to those who lost their jobs in the urban areas. Youths have also picked up blue color jobs in the construction sites which have been one of the least preferred jobs for youths in Bhutan.

Yet against all odds, Bhutan has been able to maintain her status in controlling and preventing the disease from spreading in the communities. This is all because of His Majesty's dynamic leadership and guidance, dedicated health workers and solidarity of the citizens as a whole. His Majesty has been frequenting to the southern dzongkhags to assess the preparedness and situations along the borders to

ensure the safety of the people. His Majesty's selfless service, genuine affection and concern for his people has touched the hearts of many both inside and outside the country and motivated social workers, public servants and business people to even work harder for the benefit of the country during such crucial times.

As the entire world is still grappling with the Covid-19 pandemic, Bhutan shall stand undefeated under the noble leadership of His Majesty the King and having His Majesty at the forefront of nation's fight against the pandemic.