

FAQs ON GNH



GIROSS NATIONAL HAPPINESS

When was GNH Conceived?

Bhutan's journey with GNH began more than four decades ago, and initiatives to develop more elaborate and precise metrics to measure GNH has been underway only since 2008

The **4th Druk Gyalpo**, in 1972, declared that GNH rather than GNP should be the nation's principal yardstick for measuring progress. He believed that if at the end of the 5 year plan period, our people are not happier than they were before, our plans have failed.

What is GNH?

GNH is a “multi-dimensional development approach that seeks to achieve a *harmonious balance* between *material well-being* and the *spiritual, emotional and cultural* needs of our society.”

Founded on the belief that happiness can be achieved by balancing the needs of the body with those of the mind within a peaceful and secure environment, it requires that the *purpose of development must be to create enabling conditions* through public policy

GNH in Bhutan is distinct from the western literature on 'happiness' as our HPM put it:

"We have now clearly distinguished the 'happiness' ... in GNH from the fleeting, pleasurable 'feel good' moods so often associated with that term. We know that true abiding happiness cannot exist while others suffer, and comes only from serving others, living in harmony with nature, and realizing our innate wisdom and the true and brilliant nature of our own minds"

What is the Role of GNH Commission?

- ▶ GNHC is the Central Planning agency of the Government that identifies and recommends priorities, allocation of resources, setting of targets, and co-ordinates, monitors and evaluates policies and programs. The Commission is responsible for operationalizing GNH by mainstreaming its elements into our plans and programs. GNHC uses the GNH Index, its domains and indicators, and the survey results (published by CBS):
 - *To draw attention to areas that need to be addressed, and as basis for resource allocation.*
 - *As basis to formulate public policies, plans and programs by mainstreaming the GNH elements using the GNH Policy and Project Screening Tools (PPST).*

What are the 4 pillars and the 9 domains of GNH?

DOMAINS

Pillar 1

Sustainable and equitable
Socio Eco. Development

1. Living Standards
2. Education
3. Health

Pillar 2

Preservation and
promotion of Culture

4. Cultural Diversity &
Resilience
5. Community Vitality
6. Time use
7. Psychological Well-being

Pillar 3

Conservation of
Environment

8. Ecological Diversity

Pillar 4

Good Governance

9. Good Governance

Each Domain has 2 to 4 indicators under them totaling up to 33 and further these indicators have sub-indicators totaling up to 124 (GNH Survey, 2010)

How is GNH different from other development models?

Unlike the other development models, GNH is more comprehensive/holistic approach to development by having incorporated the innovative dimensions like *Psychological well-being*, *Community Vitality*, *Time Use* and *Cultural Diversity & Resilience* otherwise *undermined* in the other policy making frameworks. So this makes GNH a more realistic measure of progress which ensures a consistent alignment between what an individual aspires from development and what the Government does in the name of development.

- ▶ The GNH paradigm concludes that “*economic growth is not an end in itself but rather a means to achieve more important ends*”...happiness.

Can the **STABILITY** of GNH be guaranteed with changing Governments?

The Constitution provides the legal framework for a democratic political system:

- ▶ Article 9: *“The State shall strive to promote those conditions that will enable the pursuit of GNH.”*

and

- ▶ Article 11.2: *“The end result of all development activities should be the attainment of GNH”*

THEREFORE

Any new Government which comes to power would be guided by the constitution thus ensuring stability of our journey along the GNH path.

Can the GNH framework be applicable outside Bhutan?

- ▶ The RGoB identified the **nine domains** which forms the GNH framework, as the core elements that would ultimately determine the happiness of the Bhutanese people by creating enabling conditions around them (multidimensional approach). Likewise other countries could identify their own ‘domains’ and develop indicators for happiness accordingly based on their culture context, social fabric etc..., therefore the applicability of the GNH ‘**framework**’ in other countries appears plausible.
- ▶ For instance, Mexico has developed ***Genuine Progress Index (GPI)*** based on the same approach www.atlantic.org and other countries like the United Kingdom, France, Brazil, and Croatia have also carried out similar initiatives toward developing well-being index.

How happy are the Bhutanese according to the GNH Index (0.743)

Bhutan is not a country that has attained GNH. Like most developing nations, we are struggling with the challenge of fulfilling the basic needs of our people. What separates us, however, from most others is that we have made happiness, the most fundamental of human needs as the goal of societal change”... (HPM)

Category	% population	Sufficiency Group	Average Domain Sufficiency
Unhappy	10.4%	0 – 49%	44.7%
Narrowly happy	48.7%	50% - 65%	59.1%
Extensively Happy	32.6%	66% - 76%	70.7%
Deeply Happy	8.3%	77% - 100%	81.5%

Source: Short guide to GNH Index, CBS

What is GNH Policy & Project Screening Tool?

- ▶ It's a tool that enables planners to institutionalize a holistic approach to policy development by ensuring that all relevant dimensions of GNH are considered in a systematic way while assessing policies and projects. It has 22 GNH variables representing the 9 domains.
- ▶ The main objective of using the screening tools therefore, is to ensure that all the policies and projects are GNH enhancing or have minimal or no adverse affect on the GNH variables.

What happens if a policy doesn't “pass” the screening test?

- ▶ After compiling the results of the policy screening test, it is presented to the GNH Commission highlighting the variables on which the particular policy has scored low or high.
- ▶ If a policy doesn't achieve the required threshold during the screening exercise, the Commission sends back the policy with instructions to improve on the areas/variables with low scores along with recommendations
- ▶ The proponent agency improves the policy after incorporating the recommendations and resubmits it to the Commission.

Who carries out the Policy Screening test?

- ▶ The screening is carried out at the Proponent Agency & at the GNH Commission Secretariat.
- ▶ The number of people carrying out the screening exercise should not be less than 15 (fifteen)
- ▶ For details regarding the PPST please refer our website www.gnhc.gov.bt under the heading “Policies”

For additional information please refer/contact:

- ▶ Center for Bhutan Studies (CBS) for the method and technicalities involved in calculating the GNH index, indicators, weights assigned and the GNH survey details etc.. These details are also available in the book titled *“A Short Guide to Gross National Happiness Index”* published by CBS
- ▶ www.grossnationalhappiness.com - on domains and indicators etc..
- ▶ www.gnhc.gov.bt - details on GNH policy screen tool and
- ▶ PPD,GNH Commission for any other questions regarding operationalizing of GNH (sangaykidd@gnhc.gov.bt)



THANK YOU