

Gross National Happiness: Practice and Measurement

The Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Gross National
Happiness, 24-26 November 2008

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Gross National Happiness: Practice and Measurement

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Introduction

The Fourth International Conference on Gross National Happiness was held in Thimphu, Bhutan, from 24 to 26 November 2008, against the backdrop of the global financial crisis. The conference which attracted 90 participants from 25 countries and five continents was attended by an average of 300 participants and observers. With the theme 'Practice and Measurement', the conference could not be held at a better place and time than Bhutan, the birthplace of GNH, and a time when the world is questioning the conventional growth model and its measurement system. At the national level, three historic events converged in 2008 for all Bhutanese to remember: the centenary celebration of the Wangchuck dynasty, and the coronation of the Fifth Druk Gyalpo, and the introduction of the constitutional monarchy through parliamentary election.

The structure of the conference consisted of a plenary session followed by three parallel workshops. A total of 48 papers (14 papers in five plenary sessions and 34 papers in nine workshops) were presented. Almost all papers have been categorised to fit into one of the nine domains of Gross National Happiness: i. Psychological Wellbeing; ii. Time Use and Balance; iii. Cultural Diversity and Resilience; iv. Community Vitality; v. Ecological Diversity and Resilience; vi. Good Governance; vii. Health; viii. Education; and ix. Living Standard. Papers related to measuring progress and development of alternative measure of wellbeing (Measurement), and those related to carrying the GNH forward into global network and development of innovative ideas for implementing GNH (The Way Forward) constitute two separate parts.

Excellency Jigmi Y. Thinley, the first democratically elected Prime Minister of Bhutan, in his keynote address said that the conference was "a special celebration of the timeless gift of GNH by His Majesty the Fourth King not only to the Bhutanese people but to

human society in general. Gross National Happiness as the goal and purpose of development is the fruit of his wisdom born out of his dedication to understand, articulate and fulfil the innermost desire of his subjects. It served as the main motivator and basis of all his policies and actions during a glorious reign of 34 years." He said that his "government has begun our spirited journey of combining democracy and GNH" and "have pledged to consolidate and strengthen the conditions that will enable each citizen to find happiness." Since GNH must be first made measurable to make it practicable, promoting the 'Practice and Measurement' of GNH, he said, is the theme of the conference, and asked the conference to ponder over questions:

Is it enough for us to know how to measure happiness and to hope that this will influence policy-making? Is making GNH policies and programmes enough? What of political will and capacity given the fact that these, in a democracy, are responses conditioned by popular demands and aspirations? So, if people do not understand and favour GNH based policies, will politicians dare? And if they do, would they succeed? How do we begin? How do we internalize, beyond intellectual enquiry and statements, the values that we speak of? How do we as academics, thinkers, scientists, leaders and concerned citizens change our own way of life and behaviour?

Contemporary vocabulary and architecture of governance, he said, are not in perfect harmony with governance for GNH, and the traditional government structures, objectives and administrative norms have to be aligned with practices based on GNH measurements. Application of tools and criteria for selecting projects and programmes, and criteria for governing budget allocation would ensure that the common good (happiness) is the intended outcome of the government expenditure.

Prime Minister said that while he has been encouraged by practice and measuring aspects of GNH in many local communities around the world, the governments' recognition of true progress and its measurement would come only when citizens and organizations act in unison, spurred by a new consciousness,

stimulated by the collaboration of research institutions, and supported by enlightened people and leaders.

There is a big challenge of convincing people that happiness is a collective goal, not an individual pursuit, the maximization of happiness lay in rejecting consumerism, and limitless growth in finite world is impossible:

How does one create an enlightened society within which the citizenry knows that individual happiness is the fruit of collective action and happiness – that lasting happiness is conditioned by the happiness of surrounding individuals and that striving for others happiness is the most certain path to fulfilling experiences that bring true and lasting happiness? How does one go about persuading people to adopt a new ethical paradigm that rejects consumerism? How do we convince them that the dogma of limitless productivity and growth in a finite world is not only unsustainable and unfair to future generations but that it squeezes out social, cultural, spiritual and aesthetic pursuits?

Economic growth for poverty alleviation is unjustifiable without an equitable redistribution, and the present belief in making more money to fix environmental problems is like “killing the patient to cure the disease”. The address ended with a hope that if GNH is to become a new world order, it is today when the relevance and sustainability of the prevailing old order is being tested by multiple global crises.

Nicholas Rosellini, UN Resident Coordinator in Bhutan, in his statement to the conference explained that UNDP’s human development index (HDI) was developed to fulfil the need for an alternative yardstick for measuring human progress. He said that the conference should discuss and refine GNH as alternative approach from international perspective given the fact that none of the methods which attempted to move beyond purely materialistic interpretations of human progress have gained broad acceptance among the academics and development practitioners. The GNH philosophy, he said, has strong credibility to rekindle global concern for the common interest and the public good,

especially today when many countries face severe economic problems, “caused at least in part by our own excessive preoccupation with profit and consumption.” In the face of global financial, food and fuel crises, the old development paradigm must be re-assessed and an alternative one found, and in this, GNH continues to give a refreshing perspective to development. He mentioned that some of the indicators of GNH developed by the Centre for Bhutan Studies would be relevant to the UNDP-Oxford initiative in understanding the missing dimensions of poverty, and are being suggested for consideration as additional dimensions of poverty and development.

Measurement

In “Measuring Progress towards GNH: From GNH indicators to GNH national accounts”, Ron Colman, Founder and Executive Director of Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI, Atlantic) discusses the operationalization of GNH and measuring progress towards GNH. The first essential step, he writes, is the GNH indicators the Centre for Bhutan Studies has developed followed by development of a set of GNH National Accounts, because GDP is not an indicator, but an accounting system, and a new accounting system that reflects the constituents and components of GNH is needed to replace the GDP-based accounting system. Ron suggests that,

GNH approach and practice not only offer highly positive potential solutions to the current global economic crisis, but its most effective agents and standard bearers are likely to be the younger generation whose stake in a sane, secure, sustainable, and balanced world is probably the greatest of any demographic group.

Terue Ohashi, in “The Analysis of Results of Research into ‘the Ideal Society’ in Japan, Sweden and Bhutan -- Using the indicator of Human Satisfaction Measure (HSM)”, introduces Human Satisfaction Measures (HSM) she has developed to study the sustainability of the society through social indicator which includes the triple bottom line (society, environment and

economy), categorised as labour, health, education, gender, environment and income. With her HSM questionnaires administered to Japan, Sweden and Bhutan, her study provides suggestions for pursuing sustainability of the society.

In “The Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies: A global movement for a global challenge,” Jon Hall shares the origins, findings, and plans of the Global Project on Measuring the Progress of Societies. This global project, hosted by OECD in cooperation with number of international agencies, NGOs, national governments and others, promotes a deeper and broader assessment and understanding of progress in societies around the world, and provides a forum and a focal point for international effort for discussing and exchanging ideas and the development of best practice of measures of societal progress. The Centre for Bhutan Studies is one of many global correspondents of the project.

Founder and President of nef (the new economics foundation), Nic Marks in “Creating National Accounts of Well-Being: A parallel process to GNH” draws a parallel between the development of GNH Index and a GNH-based new accounting system process and **nef**’s attempts to create new accounts of Well-Being. Nic argues that as a direct consequence of different governments collecting and analysing economic data (and social and environmental to lesser extent), much is known about the material conditions of people’s lives, but not about their actual lived experience and their sense of personal and social well-being. It is to address this need and gap that nef has a programme for the government to collect data on a regular and on-going basis for developing a set of indicator for measuring the population wellbeing, and ultimately developing and promoting the concept of National Account of Wellbeing. The project’s ambition, Nic mentions, is to convert some of the successes of **nef**’s Happy Planet Index into a mainstream policy tool.

Psychological Wellbeing

George Burns, in introducing the term 'Gross Natural Happiness', establishes links between nature and human well-being, in that the nature's positive benefits extends to the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual realms. Through extensive review of the research across various disciplines as well his many years of practical experience of using nature in psychotherapy, he argues that personal and ecological well-being, despite appearing to conflict with each other and are influenced by factors such as religion and culture, compliment each other. Human contact with nature enhances happiness, which in turn enhances ecological responsibility.

Ragnhild Bang Nes's "The Nature-Nurture Debate: New evidence and good news", opens the old debate by reviewing the new evidence from behaviour genetic studies on happiness and well-being. She also reviews the benefits from greater use of genetically informative designs due to their potential for advancing our understanding of both genetic and environmental risk and protective mechanisms, which is necessary for making better, more fully informed policy decisions.

Time Use and Balance

Karma Galay's "Time Use and Happiness", the only paper on Time Use and Balance, is the analysis of the Time Use domain of the GNH survey. Time use study data disaggregated at the level of gender, age, area of residence, employment status, family structure, income group, against various activities of work and non-work categories, he explains, is very useful for understanding the overall social transformation or change, as well as for designing comprehensive and balanced economic and social policies which would directly enhance well-being of societies through informed policy formulation. One significant finding from GNH's perspective is the time allocated for activities

(volunteerism and other unpaid work) uncounted in GDP, which, however directly enhances the wellbeing.

Culture

Sharon Lowen, a renowned artist of Odissi classical Indian dance, explores the role of culturally specific performing arts in connecting to 'other' in her paper, "Internalizing the Other: A cross cultural understanding in arts and education". Expanding out from within one's cultural background to those less familiar ('other') is essential in creating a global community, and the entry into the cultural space 'other' dissolves fear of the 'other' and creates a sense of security and the happiness, as a direct result of connecting, understanding, celebrating, and sharing a larger human landscape.

In exploring the role of meditation in achieving happiness, Khenpo Phuntshok Tashi, Director of the National Museum of Bhutan, in "Role of meditation in achieving Gross National Happiness", prescribes meditation as the key to finding happiness and peace to mind to the extent of introducing basic meditation practice in schools, colleges, community temples, and farm houses. One important egalitarian aspect of meditation is its accessibility to everybody and its low or no price. His paper explains the usefulness of meditation in destroying three root causes of suffering (desire, anger and ignorance) and providing anti-dote to three root causes of suffering and pride, jealousy, and miserliness; and its role in bringing happiness at individual, national and global levels. While everybody needs to practice meditation, leaders, decision-makers, and businessmen, desperately need meditation because they deal with many people and problems and make many decisions.

Carl Polley ("The Semantic structure of Gross national Happiness: A View from conceptual metaphor theory") studies how conventionalized metaphors of public discourse regarding Gross National Happiness shapes the semantics of development in

Bhutan, and propose ways in which the field of cognitive linguistics might contribute to planning and education for Gross National Happiness. The paper, using Conceptual Metaphor Theory which analyzes the patterns of meaning reflected in idiomatic figurative language, predicts that these semantic patterns can influence patterns of non-linguistic conceptual structure, including patterns of moral reasoning.

Community Vitality

Dena Freeman in “Development and (Un)happiness” presents an ethnographic case study of the impact of development project in rural Ethiopia. The project doubtlessly increased income, but not happiness. It rather brought in social and cultural changes which in turn destroyed the traditional community to the extent that the customary conflict resolution system was ineffective in dealing with the new social reality. Such impacts of development are not measured or noticed by the conventional development indicators. She suggests that any holistic wellbeing indicators, such as GNH, should involve detailed ethnographic study for understanding the real impacts of development on people’s wellbeing.

Mohammed Kamruzzaman’s paper “Religious Institution-based Community-hood and Identity of a ‘Muslim Community’ in a ‘Remote’ Rural Village in Bangladesh” is about a religious institution (mosque) and its role in constructing the notion of community and community-hood through an ethnographic study of a ‘Muslim community’ in rural Bangladesh. Using the Resource Profiles Approach (RPA) and Subjective Well-Being (SWB) to understand the cultural constructions of community-hood in relation to the perceived religion, he argues that the notion of community and community-hood in the contexts of rural Bangladesh is multi-dimensional and culturally rooted.

Professor Juju Chin Shou Wang of National Tsing Hua University, Taiwan, develops an island-oriented GNH model of “think like an island” by focusing on natural, cultural and social capital, in his

paper “Think Like an Island: Three-Capital Model in Pursuing GNH in Taiwan”. The outstanding feature of GNH, he argues, is its focus on the Eastern world-view to deconstruct the long-standing practice of viewing the world largely through Western perspective and measuring the quality of life using Gross National Product (GNP). The market’s “invisible hands” has become an “invisible feet” that trample on society, producing the phenomenon of “affluent poverty” at the environmental and social costs. GNP-oriented development in Taiwan has brought about three GNPs: Gross National Pollution, Garbage, Noise and Pollution, $GNP = NG(\text{Guns}) + NP(\text{Pollution})$.

Ecological Diversity and Resilience

Ram Fishman, Columbia University, in his “The excessive influence of impatience in the collective management of a natural or environmental resource” discusses institutional challenges to the practice of far-sighted, “patient” policies, in order to avoid future damages, be they environmental or social. These challenges arise from the excessive influence of “impatient” parties in a participatory decision process. Collective action is necessary to manage open access and shared natural resource and without cooperation, stakeholders would tend to under-invest in the future of the resource (because the benefits of this investment will be shared by others while the cost borne by themselves only – “the tragedy of the commons”). Ram formulates his above arguments in a formal economic game-theoretic model and explains through a situation of a community seeking to manage a natural resource collectively to avoid the “tragedy of the commons” in which its members value the future differently, more impatient community members (through time discounting leading to excessive social “impatience”) would have an upper hand over the patient members since the former have less to lose from failing to reach an agreement (and resulting the tragedy of the commons), and they lose comparatively less than patient agent, because the fruits of cooperation lie in the future, not in the present, and hence more highly valued by patient agents. In such case, Ram suggests one

form of institutional schemes to remedy this situation by providing immediate compensation to impatient agent in place of reduced preservation of the resource.

In “Status Symbols, Ecosystems and Sustainability” Arthur Fishman, Professor of Economics at Bar Ilan University, Israel, explains why many of the consumption goods such as ivory which are much valued and loved are ecologically degrading and results in ecologically unsustainable production levels that lead to extinctions and depletion of these resources. Of many complex and manifold reasons, he points that these goods have assumed a status symbol for elites in traditional societies and cultures (“produced by traditional technologies that were dominated by natural conditions”) because of their ecologically low supply. Despite the availability and use of technologies for increasing the rates of production of these goods, a long-standing perception as a status symbol still remains engrained into cultural norms, and its direct consequence is the inability of the production to meet increasing demand (despite no intrinsically valuable functionality), which results in increased production through exploitative and unsustainable means, far exceeding natural rates, and at a cost to ecological stability and in an unsustainable manner. Targeted education policies to uproot the entrenched perception of some of these products as symbols of status, and their cultural perception has been suggested as the remedy to the situation.

Good Governance

In the first paper on good governance (“Good Organizational Practice and GNH: A Proposal for Organizational Performance Indicators”), Anne-Marie Schreven, an Honorary Counsel of the Netherlands in Thimphu, Bhutan, who is an expert on organizational development, proposes a development of performance indicators for Bhutanese organisations to measure their contribution to GNH. Her paper builds on the nation-wide organizational development exercise carried out in 2007 to

strengthen the bureaucracy and good governance. While good organizational development, practiced and applied widely, is most often driven by self interest of the organisation or leader to sell well, in Bhutan good organisational practice must go beyond the organisation's self interest towards achieving the national vision of GNH or the wellbeing of the people.

In "Between Earth and Sky: Formal Organizations as Instrument in Creating GNH" John Nirenberg argues that to realize GNH through the lived experience of people in formal organisations, a compatible organisational infrastructure is required, and that one's organisational experience is a source of happiness or suffering. He contends that the success of GNH index as measure of wellbeing would depend on re-evaluation of three causal variables: prevailing mental models determining the worldview and the role happiness play; individual capacity for, and expectation of, happiness as a by-product of working in organizations, and requisite organizational structures and processes that stimulate the creation of both happiness and profit as outputs. First two causal variables, he argues, may be amenable to the realization of the practical application of GNH, but the development of a compatible organizational infrastructure that enables and nurtures the realization of GNH through the lived experience of people in formal organizations would be a challenge for Bhutan.

The theme of the next paper by Mr. Kezang (IT Park Project, Bhutan) and Jason Whalley (Strathclyde Business School, UK), as can be inferred from the title "Do Information and Communication Technologies Further or Hinder Gross National Happiness?" deals with the relationship between ICT and Gross National Happiness, and their inherent tension. ICT has a significant role in promoting a sustainable and inclusive development, and creating a knowledge-based GNH society by empowering rural communities. But the increasing geographical coverage of ICT infrastructure and increasing array of products and services raise a number of issues: the widening digital divide

that is accompanied by ICT growth and diffusion; the paradox of the economics of ICT development which favours centralisation and high population densities while GNH favour a more even-handed development process; and the impact of increasing diffusion and use of ICT on Bhutanese culture. The paper focuses on making ICT technologies available and affordable to reduce the digital gap.

“ICT Key Role in the Economic Development of Haiti: Lessons from Pilot Projects in Rural Haiti and Associated Directions of Contribution to the GNH Index” by Professor Serge Miranda of University of Nice Sophia Antipolis, France (with Frantz Verella and Tahar Saiah) discusses the ICT paradigm shifts of the last five years, which has benefited the developing countries, followed by the overview of a bottom up ICT approach in rural areas of Haiti adopted for sustainable economy conducted within a long term-strategy leading to the crucial role of mobile-learning platforms. Serge then discusses the development of four key coefficients as joint multi-disciplinary research for enriching the GNH index and other European contributions like Paradiso project.

Health

Despite significant improvement in health care services in Bhutan in recent decades, there is an enormous challenge facing the Bhutanese health sector due to resource constraints and increasing lifestyle- and stress-related disorders. Dr. Chenko Dorji emphasises the role of the Buddhist mindfulness and meditation in mitigating the effects of modernization and material desires in “Bhutanese Health Care Reform: A Paradigm Shift in Health Care to Increase Gross National Happiness”. He also explains the major shift from the doctor-centered “medical model” of treatment to a holistic, patient-centered bio-psychosocial approach to health care management, in addition to participation of the private sector in health care delivery for sustaining quality health care service in the country.

Dave M. Augeri of Denver Zoological Foundation, US, calls for the recognition by all disciplines and professions the health benefits of Nature. In his paper “Nature-Deficit Disorder and the Spirit of Wilderness”, he explains the findings of research in health, medicine and psychology which support the hypothesis that Nature has some inherently positive effects on physical and psychological well-being. He supports his proposition that “Nature has positive effects on our physical and psychological well-being, changes our body chemistry and makes humans healthier and happier, but physical and psychological illnesses are increasing with loss of Nature” with scientific research evidence. He explains that as the humans destroy and disconnect themselves further from Nature, the incidents of physical and psychological illnesses are increasing, and the instinctive bond and deep affiliation humans have with Nature is not just aesthetics; it is rooted in our biology.

At 92, Ethel Lowen is the oldest participant at the conference, yet she writes (in her CV) that she is 92 years young. In her paper “Dynamic Ageing” she expands on a perspective that not only provides for personal happiness in senior years but expands circles of connections and friendships beyond retirement years, adding to the happiness of others. She explains that as we grow older we become more aware of the importance of being genuinely interested in the problems of our fellows.

Education

The first paper on education domain deals with every day dilemma every Bhutanese student also faces between value systems of the Bhutanese homes and the schools. “Western Education, Psychologized Individualism and Home/School Tensions: An American Example” by Professor Andrie Kusserow of St. Michael’s College, Vermont, US, discusses the tension faced by children of the poor American families between how they are socialized at home (‘hard individualism’) and how they are socialized in school (‘soft individualism’). The American

education preschool system emphasizes psychologised individualism and its values such as self expression, self-confidence, self-pride, uniqueness, independence, individuality. However, these values are not taught at homes. The author discusses the ways of harmonizing socializing psychologized individualism that reflect and promote Western cultural values and beliefs, and a home-based socialization of Buddhist values in Bhutanese schools.

Meena Srinivasan's paper, "Gross National Happiness in the Classroom - A Teacher's Thoughts" is couched on ever increasing complex global problems today and the role GNH values can play in promoting an ethical and ecological outlook that has the potential to make our world a better place for all peoples. She discusses her personal and classroom experience of teaching GNH in the American Embassy School in Delhi where she is a teacher. In her school students participate in 'Happiness Lab' and 'Project Happiness', meditate on compassion, understand dependant origination, and learn about deep ecology at an organic farm in India. She suggests teaching compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, harmony and social responsibility in schools.

In his paper "Conceptualising Education for Constitutional Monarchy System: Meiji Japan's View and Approach", Masanori Kakutani of Hiroshima International University, Japan, offers implication and suggestions for Bhutan as it introduces a constitutional monarchy. By examining the Meiji Japan (1868-1912), he explains the failures of the early national modernization, especially the borrowing of education ideas from the west. The failures, he contends, were due to pedagogical, financial and socio-political and cultural struggles. The Meiji introduced the constitutional monarchy to achieve national modernisation as well as to ease the political struggles among the three main forces: the Meiji government itself, traditional authority, and liberal forces. As a part of its education reform, a mission sent to Germany learned the significance of education to stabilise society. National

modernisation was possible after education was used as a basis for organising society by the Meiji Japan. The education reforms were made within the framework of establishing a constitutional monarchy system, not introducing West-inspired liberal ideas at the expense of traditional systems and values. He suggests Bhutan to consider Meiji Japan's case as a pilot example for using education reform.

Through case of two communities in Japan and Sweden Michiyo Kiwako Okuma-Nyström of Stockholm University ("Schools in Rural Areas and Gross National Happiness: Endogenous Actions of Small Communities in Japan and Sweden") discusses (within GNH framework) the community struggle for sustainability and wellbeing of the pupils, their parents, and the community itself, and thereby prevent the closure of schools. The intrusion of neo-liberalism and its associated market principles such as effectiveness, efficiency, and freedom of choice into the field of education has resulted in closure of schools due to the decreasing number of community members and students. The school closure results in loss of the community, the school itself and the centre of the community, which for a small community means the beginning of a long process towards the death of the community.

Living Standard

"Shift in the measures of Quality of life viz-a-viz Happiness - A study of Phongmey gewog and Trashigang town in Eastern Bhutan" by Vijay Kumar Shrotryia of North Eastern Hill University, India, presents quality of life study results of Phongmey gewog and Trahigang town. The measures of quality of life survey conducted in 2000-2001 and a follow-up survey in 2005-2006 compares the variations in opinions on the importance, and satisfaction of a wide range of quality of life variables. The findings reveal that the improvement in the variables is not leading to a corresponding increase in life satisfaction, thus pointing that the life quality or happiness is much more than mere physical development.

Junko Edahiro and Riichiro Oda in “Japan’s Paradigm Shift from Growth to Happiness: Slowing Down to Advance Wellbeing” discusses Japan’s mixed records of economic growth in enhancing people’s happiness while the price paid by society in forms of environmental and social costs is exacting. They emphasise the proper understanding of underlying structures and mental models, not merely events and patterns, and suggest a systemic view for understanding it. To shift focus from the problem of blind faith in infinite growth in a finite world towards pursuing and understanding what constitutes happiness, they present a new framework and a new set of indicators for a more holistic view of happiness, with cases from Japan, such as a company shifting its primary goal from sales growth to enhanced GCH (Gross Company Happiness) and the “Candle Night” movement co-initiated by one of the authors.

Akiko Ueda (“Food Security and Gross National Happiness”) looks at the concept of food security through Gross National Happiness prism, not the conventional understanding of food security. She explores various cases relating to people’s food security, including production, circulation and consumption, and examines factors which would affect GNH indicators. By comparing and contrasting the conventional concept of food security and GNH, she explains that the former focuses only on the question of ‘what’ and ‘how much’, that is what is produced, traded and consumed, but lacks a critical perspective on the question of ‘how’, that is how food is produced, traded, distributed, and consumed. She suggests that understanding and addressing these questions are important in considering sustainability of food security.

Prabhat Pankaj and Roma Mitra Debnath, who are both professors at ILM Graduate School of Management, Delhi, in “Optimal Condition of Happiness: Application of Taguchi Robust Parameter Design on Evidences from India” answers the pertinent question of which array of conditions make into an optimal condition for happiness by quantifying optimal condition of happiness,

measured in terms of subjective wellbeing (SWB), using Taguchi Robust Parameter Design. The optimization results suggest that among the domain facet, a marginal change in good family life and wellbeing, good inter-personal relationship, and good employment and job satisfaction would cause a large change in happiness. While for lifetime pursuit of happiness, most important sources are yoga and meditation, principles and responsibility, and cultural participation. Among the extra-domain sources pertaining to global experiences, factors such as responsible political leadership and low inflation have been found most important. The paper suggests that a prudent public policy could address these factors and also account for ways to improve them for achieving greater happiness for greater number of people.

GNH - The Way Forward

Relationship between Gross National Happiness, sustainability and international justice is the theme of Ross MacDonald's "The Future of Happiness as a National Pursuit". The heart of his analysis is the potential conflicts between the interests of the current national population on one hand and the needs of those who live beyond its borders, the future generations, and the other sentient beings on the other. He places GNH firmly in the context of a universalised ethical framework that would become increasingly necessary as we enter into a future of unprecedented inter-national, inter-generational and inter-species competition over collective resources and opportunities. Central to his argument is a claim that all understandings of national obligation would have to be radically expanded if harmony and happiness are to be genuinely secured.

In "Critical Holism: A New Development Paradigm Inspired by Gross National Happiness?" Hans van Willenswaard of Suan Nguen Mee Ma Corporation Limited discusses a new development paradigm inspired by Gross National Happiness. He provides a provisional sketch of an awareness-expanding process in Thailand through the series of conferences on GNH. Submitted

as a discussion paper at the start of the GNH Movement Project which resulted from the Third International Conference on GNH held in Nongkhai and Bangkok in 2007, the paper compares and synthesises Gross National Happiness and other resonating concepts like Sufficiency Economy in Thailand for developing a framework for multi-stakeholder action and research focusing on a range of common development goals in the coming decade. The ultimate result is a consensus on a 'new development paradigm'.

The last paper by Nille Van Hellemont, a historian and a graphic designer from Belgium proposes the development of a protocol for creating a GNH-label similar to the eco-label and criteria for well-being, in her paper "GNH: Changing Views, a Label for Quality Information". The GNH label, she explains, will guarantee quality information especially in advertisement and publicity sectors by balancing the holistic needs of the individual, society and the earth. The existing ethical codes such as those on human rights, international anti-racism, and anti-slavery etc. can be used to develop a set of criteria as defined and controlled by competent international, national, regional and local authorities. The application of GNH-label will guarantee the qualities of the promoted product as well as well as information before advertisement. The visibility of the GNH-label will inform the consumers on the undoubted quality of products and message.

We would like to apologise to those participants whose papers could not be accommodated in this publication for the lack of space. Except for "Time Use and Happiness" by Karma Galay, none of the papers written by researchers of the Centre for Bhutan Studies, has also been published in this proceedings; they will be published separately.

To conclude, the Centre for Bhutan Studies would like to thank all the participants for their participation and papers. A group of fresh college graduates, who truly embody one of the important indicators of community vitality, provided their voluntary service both before and after the conference in providing logistic service

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and looking after the participants. The Centre would like to thank all of them for their service.

Once again, United Nations Development Programme in Bhutan funded not only the first national GNH survey but also the organization of the conference itself. The Centre is ever grateful for this assistance.

Lastly, the Centre for Bhutan Studies would like to dedicate the conference, the publication and all the positive outcomes to His Majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the Author of Gross National Happiness, and to His Majesty the Fifth Druk Gyalpo Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck who personifies Gross National Happiness both in spirit and action.

Keynote Address by His Excellency Jigmi Y. Thinley, Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to be with you this morning at the opening of the Fourth International Conference on Gross National Happiness. From the philosophical domain of esoteric discourse on the purpose and meaning of life at the first conference, we have now come down to the world of reality where most things unquantifiable are not saleable or deemed to be worthy of pursuit.

Having fully convinced ourselves that in order to make GNH practicable, it must first become measurable, this conference I understand, will discuss how best to promote the 'Practice and Measurement' of GNH. (I am glad that we have long rejected the notion of measuring happiness through the breadth of smiles.) Likewise, the view that attempts to measure happiness will run the risk of promoting and pursuing only those elements that can be identified and measured has not found support.

It gives me and my colleagues in the government immense pleasure to note that so many distinguished persons from many countries have considered it worthwhile to attend the conference. 25 nationalities are represented here today. To receive fellow pilgrims in the quest for a better world through GNH at this time of the year is of special significance to us for three reasons.

First, this year is of extraordinary importance in the history of our country. Our country became the youngest parliamentary democracy in the world after 257 years of theocratic rule, albeit as a dual system, and 100 years of a golden era under monarchy. It was probably the most peaceful transition to democracy. What is unique about the transition is that it did not come through the will of the people but by the will of a King whose selfless love for and trust in the people led him to convince them that the destiny of the country must lie in the hands of the people themselves and not

depend on a single individual. Against strong resistance to change, the Bhutanese people finally accepted democracy not because of its inherent virtues but because they trusted their King.

A philosopher once said that trust is the basis of democracy and human rights rather than democracy and human rights being the basis of trust! I mention this point on trust as it is highly relevant to the vitality of institutions and communities, as well as to the way a democracy operates and affects our happiness. With such a sobering awareness, my government has begun our spirited journey of combining democracy and GNH. We have committed ourselves to ensuring that the trust of our Kings in the people and the people's trust in us, the elected, are not betrayed. We have pledged to consolidate and strengthen the conditions that will enable each citizen to find happiness. To this end, the most important goal of my government is to establish, in our society, a democratic culture of trust in the constitution and the capacity to inspire and hold its elected leaders responsible and accountable.

Second and most importantly, you have come here just after the Coronation of His Majesty King Jigme Khesar as the Fifth Druk Gyalpo. The Coronation of His Majesty is of special significance for GNH for His Majesty and his reign personify GNH. The King has emphasized promotion of GNH as His responsibility and priority as made clear in His Coronation Address, "... whatever goals we have - and no matter how these may change in this changing world - ultimately without peace, security and happiness we have nothing. That is the essence of the philosophy of Gross National Happiness... I shall give you everything and keep nothing; I shall live such a life as a good human being that you may find it worthy to serve as an example for your children; ...I also pray that while I am but King of a small Himalayan nation, I may in my time be able to do much to promote the greater wellbeing and happiness of all people in this world - of all sentient beings." Bhutan has, yet again, been blessed with a great King who is compassionate and wise. His commitment to GNH is based on a deep understanding of the philosophy and the

conviction that it is through this that his people can be best served. GNH could not find a greater advocate and patron and this conference could not have been better timed.

And third and lastly, you are here during the period of the celebrations for the centenary of our monarchy that will extend up to 17th December. This is the year when all Bhutanese are single minded in their reflections on the amazing journey of our beloved country under 100 years of monarchy. Each of our Kings served the nation under extraordinary circumstances and endowed the country with legacies that have made this kingdom what it is today. In this regard, I consider this conference to be a special celebration of the timeless gift of GNH by His Majesty the Fourth King not only to the Bhutanese people but to human society in general. Gross National Happiness as the goal and purpose of development is the fruit of his wisdom born out of his dedication to understand, articulate and fulfil the innermost desire of his subjects. It served as the main motivator and basis of all his policies and actions during a glorious reign of 34 years. As the reality of our unsustainable, unfulfilling way of life becomes ominously and indeed, devastatingly clear in our troubled world, I believe GNH, seen as an alternative development paradigm, has become ever more relevant.

These events and the mood that pervades throughout this Himalayan kingdom offer an exceptionally expectant setting for the GNH conference which has returned to Bhutan after two highly productive sessions abroad. As a participant in all three international conferences in the past, I feel specially privileged to be able to welcome it back to Bhutan. In fact, the royal government considers this conference as one of the most important and meaningful activities of the Centenary celebrations.

This occasion evokes a sense of continuity, renewal of solidarity among fellow GNH pilgrims and creation of fresh bonds of partnership toward a worthy cause. In particular, we are very happy to have here with us, Dr Ron Colman, Director of GPI Atlantic who was the chief organizer of the landmark 2nd GNH

conference in Halifax, Canada. That conference brought GNH to the broad-based attention of the people in North America. We are equally delighted to welcome Hans van Willenswaard and Hans Wallapa, the chief coordinators of the hugely successful 3rd International Conference in Nongkhai in Northern Thailand and in Bangkok. Through the Bangkok and Nongkhai conference, GNH was suffused, like the waters of Mother Mekong, through the Mekong Delta countries.

The breadth of participants in both these conferences were unprecedented, bringing in the Governor General of Canada, Prime Ministers of Thailand and Bhutan, politicians, corporate leaders, professionals, NGOs, youths, artistes, religious leaders and writers. The movement and practical actions the conferences generated are still rippling through places and societies in ways that have humbled us. You will be pleased, as I am, to be informed that the venue and hosts for our next conference has already been chosen. Please welcome Dr Susan Andrews, from Brazil, who will be instrumental in holding the 5th International conference on GNH in Brazil. My only request is that we now become more focused on translating the concepts of GNH into clear policies. For the organization of all the GNH conferences from the Bhutanese side, the UNDP has been exceptionally generous and a reliable partner. I would like to thank Nicholas Rossellini, UNDP Resident Representative, for his unwavering support.

Your participation in the past conferences has inspired, provoked and generated scientific inquiry and insights among ourselves and beyond. I have no doubt that the achievements of this conference will be no less. To you goes the credit for the widening interest in GNH and the growing conviction in the urgent need to search and find an alternative to our acquisitive, exploitative and insatiable way of life dictated by our faith in the infallibility of market forces which, in turn draw their power from the ambrosia of consumerism.

Over the years, due to the transmission of GNH by all of you, there have been attempts to practice and measure aspects of it in ways

that have and should always take into account local specificities and relevance. It is most encouraging to observe how aspects of GNH are being implemented in bottom-up, non-centralized ways, in many local communities around the world. Big shifts from governments towards what is recognition of true progress and how it should be measured may indeed only come when citizens and organizations, dispersed as they are, act in unison and convergence spurred by a new consciousness. Such actions are being stimulated by the collaborative activities of vanguard research institutions around the world that are supported by enlightened people and leaders.

Present here in this conference are key researchers from many leading edge research institutions. They include the statistical office of the OECD based in Paris, New Economic Foundation from London, and the International Cooperation Centre based in Osaka, Japan. The OECD, whose membership includes all industrialized and donor countries, is to be congratulated for having conducted a series of regional conferences covering all the continents on fostering and measuring true human progress. These culminated in the world summit in Istanbul, Turkey last year. I myself had the pleasure of being invited to participate in the Asian regional conference in Seoul and the global summit. These and such other activities demonstrate very clearly the growing concert to find a development model inspired by GNH.

Without being complacent, it would be most beneficial to intensify international collaboration on practices and measurements, while emphasizing the need to maintain focus on formulation of practical applications in terms of projects and programmes being rooted in the local where the real people are, and where genuine meaningful grassroots changes must take place. In this regard, it appears that developing measurements or indicators of progress for GNH may actually be easier than applying them to reshape public policy and action. The point of all attempts to measure holistic development is to persuade reconfiguration of public policies, restructuring or reorientation of institutions and

transformation of human behaviour. To this end, we may even have to be bold enough to suggest alternatives to competitive politics whereby common purposes and visions are often defeated by conventional divisions of left versus right, pro-market versus socialism, electoral calculations versus long term interests. While everyone acknowledges globalization and the reality of the global village, politics at all levels need to transcend parochial, national or regional perspectives to respond to and act on global problems such as the depletion of shared resources and erosion of ethical and moral consciousness. Even as we welcome democracies as part of the solution, we must be aware of what philosopher Onora O'Neill said: "Democracy can show us what is politically legitimate; it cannot show us what is ethically justified."

I dare say that contemporary vocabulary and architecture of governance are not in perfect harmony with governance for GNH. Practices based on GNH measurements will, I am certain, require changes in traditional government structures, objectives and administrative norms. To begin with, the tools and criteria for selecting projects and programmes need to be aligned with GNH. Then there are the criteria governing public budgetary allocation for realizing public goods. These are in need of revision just as the notion of what constitutes public good itself. For all I know, happiness, as a public good, does not feature as the intended outcome of most government expenditures. What will not change though is one challenge of public policy which is to enhance the well being of the individual without compromising the well being of the collective or vice versa. How does one achieve a judicious balance between the two? Is there a dichotomy?

As this august gathering discusses the subject of practice and measurement of GNH, I urge you to consider pondering the many questions that haunt me.

How does one create an enlightened society within which the citizenry knows that individual happiness is the fruit of collective action and happiness - that lasting happiness is conditioned by the happiness of surrounding individuals and that striving for others

happiness is the most certain path to fulfilling experiences that bring true and lasting happiness? How does one go about persuading people to adopt a new ethical paradigm that rejects consumerism? How do we convince them that the dogma of limitless productivity and growth in a finite world is not only unsustainable and unfair to future generations but that it squeezes out social, cultural, spiritual and aesthetic pursuits?

Even the justification for economic growth for poverty alleviation seems very shaky, unless we radically improve redistribution. Shamefully, little goes to poverty alleviation from the enormous wealth generated in the aggregate global economy. The same is applicable to the argument that we need to grow so that there will be money to fix environmental problems. To believe this is to believe in killing the patient to cure the disease. Evidence that we need to grow economically to be collectively happier is of course even scarcer among the rich countries. Well then, how does one advocate a new concept – definition – of productivity, wealth, prosperity and fulfillment that has little to do with material accessories and edging out the weak as compared to having more to do with social, psychological and emotional well being?

Is it enough for us to know how to measure happiness and to hope that this will influence policy-making? Is making GNH policies and programmes enough? What of political will and capacity given the fact that these, in a democracy, are responses conditioned by popular demands and aspirations? So, if people do not understand and favour GNH based policies, will politicians dare? And if they do, would they succeed? How do we begin? How do we internalize, beyond intellectual enquiry and statements, the values that we speak of? How do we as academics, thinkers, scientists, leaders and concerned citizens change our own way of life and behaviour?

I come now to the end of my humble address. Traditional wisdom tells us that new thoughts and ideas emerge from chaos and devastation. If GNH must be the new order, then the old certainly appears to be giving way as manifest in the multiple crises that are

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testing the relevance and sustainability of the prevailing order. The financial, energy, and food crises as well as the natural calamities of the magnitude and frequency never seen before are, I believe, alarm bells to warn us away from living the way we do.

Thank you for your patience.

Tashi Delek!

Remarks by Nicholas Rosellini, UN Resident Coordinator in Bhutan

At the outset, I would like to thank the Centre for Bhutan Studies for inviting me to the opening ceremony of the Fourth GNH Conference. I feel very privileged to address this distinguished gathering on a subject that has been personally both enriching and interesting to follow.

As you all know, since the 1980s, the world has felt the need for a development yardstick that not only measures economic progress through Gross National Product and per capita income but also captures other aspirations of a society. There was growing evidence that existing methodologies did not reflect the quality of life of the people and that the world was ready for an alternative measurement of human progress. This led to the development of the human development approach and the associated index which includes income, longevity and education.

On the other hand, little known to the rest of the world and much before this pluralist notion of development and human progress was to gain momentum, His Majesty the Fourth King of Bhutan stated that Bhutan's development should be guided by the philosophy of gross national happiness. I know most of you present here have followed and been part of the interactions in international conference settings or otherwise, on both the conceptual understanding and the complementarities of GNH with other development paradigms. While many methods have attempted to move beyond purely materialistic interpretations of human progress, none has yet gained broad-based acceptance among academics and development practitioners. Hence the importance of this conference where alternative approaches can be discussed and refined, benefiting from different international perspectives.

I strongly believe that in this globalised world, the GNH philosophy has strong credibility to rekindle global concern for the common interest and the public good. This is especially true in our turbulent times when many countries face severe economic problems, caused at least in part by our own excessive preoccupation with profit and consumption.

In the developing world especially, the livelihoods of millions of people are in jeopardy due to a crisis for which they had no responsibility. This situation could lead to major setbacks in reducing extreme poverty and, more broadly, in progress towards all MDGs.

We, at the United Nations System in Bhutan have been fortunate to partner with national agencies such as the Centre for Bhutan Studies and the Gross National Happiness Commission to assist in their elaboration of the messages of GNH and defining means to measure the country's progress and translating this vision into reality. We are privileged to have had the opportunity to join the discourse on GNH and be part of the various developments that have taken place since Bhutan's unique and inclusive development philosophy attracted attention internationally. We are confident that the work done here in Bhutan through conferences such as this will eventually influence the way we take forward development in many other countries.

While concepts such as human development with its HDI methodology continue to be relevant, we all know that the global environment has changed significantly since it was first introduced. The financial, food and fuel crises serve as very visible illustrations of this dynamic. It is in the spirit of recognizing this changing and varied nature of reality that we must continue to re-assess the relevance of development paradigms and search for alternatives. I feel that from this vantage point, GNH continues to give a refreshing perspective to development and it is encouraging to note that this conference will help Bhutan's endeavours in developing relevant indicators and indices to use GNH both as a

policy tool and as a measurement to assess the country's development progress.

It is also in this context of searching for alternatives, that I am happy to share that UNDP in association with Oxford University has recently initiated a study into understanding the missing dimensions of poverty. In this regard, Bhutan's on-going efforts to measure development through the GNH index, particularly those related to culture, psychological well-being, community vitality and other social safety nets (that I understand will be discussed at this conference) will be relevant dimensions that need to be addressed.

If this ongoing discussion on the HDI in different countries and with many contributors is any indication, then I think we are ready for a drastic change in the way we perceive poverty or human progress. Interesting dimensions similar to the ones related to the various domains and indicators developed for GNH such as the security, institutional or government performance, violence factor and community relations are being suggested for consideration as further dimensions of poverty and development.

In this context, I am reminded of the powerful message of His Excellency Prime Minister's statement at the 63rd UN General Assembly where he warned against the world's unsustainable and irrational way of life, whereby we are simply transferring our many debts to future generations who are not here to argue against it. From the UN perspective, new global solutions are needed that recognise the vulnerability of poor countries to the negative impact of interconnected crises – financial instability, climate change, volatile prices for food and energy, and unacceptable levels of hunger, poverty and inequality. We simply cannot address the challenges of the 21st century with the instruments of the 20th century.

May I conclude with this ardent hope that His Majesty the Fourth King's noble vision of Gross National Happiness be a gift of Bhutan to humanity, humanity deeply in need of it. I wish you all

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a productive conference and a happy stay in this beautiful country.