

*“Enhancing Mental Health, Counselling and Wellbeing support for University Students in Bhutan”.*



Royal University of Bhutan

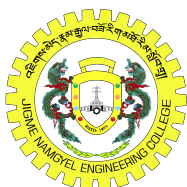
Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union



UNIVERSITY OF  
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## Introduction

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Welcome to the second project newsletter of the project, 'enhancing mental health, counselling, and wellbeing support for university students in Bhutan,' a project coordinated by Paro College of Education, Royal University of Bhutan in partnership with three Higher Education Institutes from the European Union. The project is co-funded by Erasmus Plus Programme and its planned for two years, starting 11/15/2018. Please, visit project webpage for more information, and opportunities. <http://www.rubstudentservice.com>

In this issue of the Newsletter, you can find a brief description of project objectives, project partnership, visual map of the centres, list of completed project events, highlight of the completed events, list of project stakeholders and upcoming project events.

## Objectives of the Project

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As a result of this project, a 'Happiness & Wellbeing Centre' is established at nine constituent colleges of RUB. The conceptual framework of the centres is generated through a hybrid model of contemporary theories, and practices in the field of counselling, guidance, and wellbeing integrated with the Bhutanese philosophy of Gross National Happiness. The project assisted individual colleges in capacity building through human resource training, and purchase of selected resources. Also, the project developed a digital platform (and an APP) dedicated for wellbeing and happiness centres, professionals working in the field of human service, students, young people, foreign linkages and regional linkages.

The specific objectives of the project are as follow:

- Establishing a Happiness and Wellbeing Centre at the participating colleges of RUB
- Establishing a lead Happiness and Wellbeing centre at Paro College of Education with an extension at Samtse College of Education.
- Training potential counselors and centre managers
- Developing a Digital Platform to support Mental Health, Wellbeing and Counseling services.
- Developing a training manual, working framework for the counseling centres and ethical code of conduct for counsellors working at the centres.
- Equipping the centres with essential resources to support the successful implementation of activities related to education, training and research.

## Project Partnership

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The Project is coordinated by Paro College of Education under Royal University of Bhutan in partnership with three Universities from Europe



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Each university holds significant role in the field of research, training manual development, digital platform & App, and training of counsellors. The the project partnership agreement was signed between Royal University of Bhutan and European Universities in May, 2019.

### Paro College of Education

Paro College of Education is one of the constituent colleges of the Royal University of Bhutan. It began as teacher training centre for preschool care, which was formally inaugurated on 4<sup>th</sup> November 1975 with 8 female trainees and a demonstration school at the Rinpung campus. The new teacher training g center academic campus at Nangkha was inaugurated by Her Majesty the Queen Ashi Dorji Wangmo Wangchuck on 18<sup>th</sup> November 1999. Paro College of Education will lead the project as coordinator. PCE take full responsibility to ensure that the project is implemented in accordance with the agreement. It represents and act on behalf of the project partners towards the European Commission, and bear the financial and legal responsibility for the proper operational. Administrative and financial implementation of the project, and coordination of the project in cooperation with project partners, is be looked after by PCE.

### University of Birmingham

The University of Birmingham (UoB) is a member of the prestigious Russell Group of universities in the United Kingdom, and ranks in the top 100 universities in the world according to QS World University Rankings and others. The UoB was chartered by Queen Victoria in 1900 and was the first civic 'red brick' university in the United Kingdom. In 2017, there were over 40,000 students studying at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, making the UoB one of the largest universities in the UK.

The School of Education, UoB, will be a host organisation for visiting Bhutanese project partners in July 2020. With expertise in educational psychology, mental health, and inclusion, the School of Education provides guidance and appraisal of current counselling, mental health, and

## **Project Partnership**

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inclusion services offered at UoB. Also, UoB is assisting RUB in development of counselling training package, and facilitation of the training of the counsellors in Bhutan. UoB will spearhead the evaluation, and assessment of project process, and outcome.

### **Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB)**

Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) founded in 1970, provides education for almost 15.000 students in 8 faculties, offering 27 Bachelor programs, 90 Master and Advanced Master programs, and over 35 PhD disciplines. It employs over 3000 staff at the university and 3,350 staff at the university hospital, UZ Brussel. Relevant with its unique location in the capital of Europe, it is part of VUB's mission to become an international university. Therefore, VUB also provides English programs for its nearly 21% foreign students.

The Bhutanese partner delegation was hosted by VUB in February, 2019. The visiting RUB team members were familiarized with the VUB's study guidance center. VUB is also partnering in training of the counsellors, and development of a counselling course-pack. The focus of manual development is on: study and examination skills, stress management, methods to enhance study success, communication skills, etc. Towards the later stage, VUB will also partner in the process of evaluating the project, and sustainability plan of the project results.

### **University Institute of Maia – ISMAI**

Maiêutica is the founding body of University Institute of Maia – ISMAI, and Polytechnic Institute of Maia - IPMaia, a private non-profit HEI located in Maia, near Porto. The university campus occupies an area of 70,000m<sup>2</sup> and provides students with excellent infrastructures and leading-edge technological equipment. ISMAI is the 2nd largest private HEI in Portugal. It has more than 250 academic staff members and 4,000 students, and offers a wide range of 1st, 2nd and 3rd cycle programmes in the fields of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Business Sciences, Physical Education and Sports Sciences, Communication Sciences and Information Technologies.

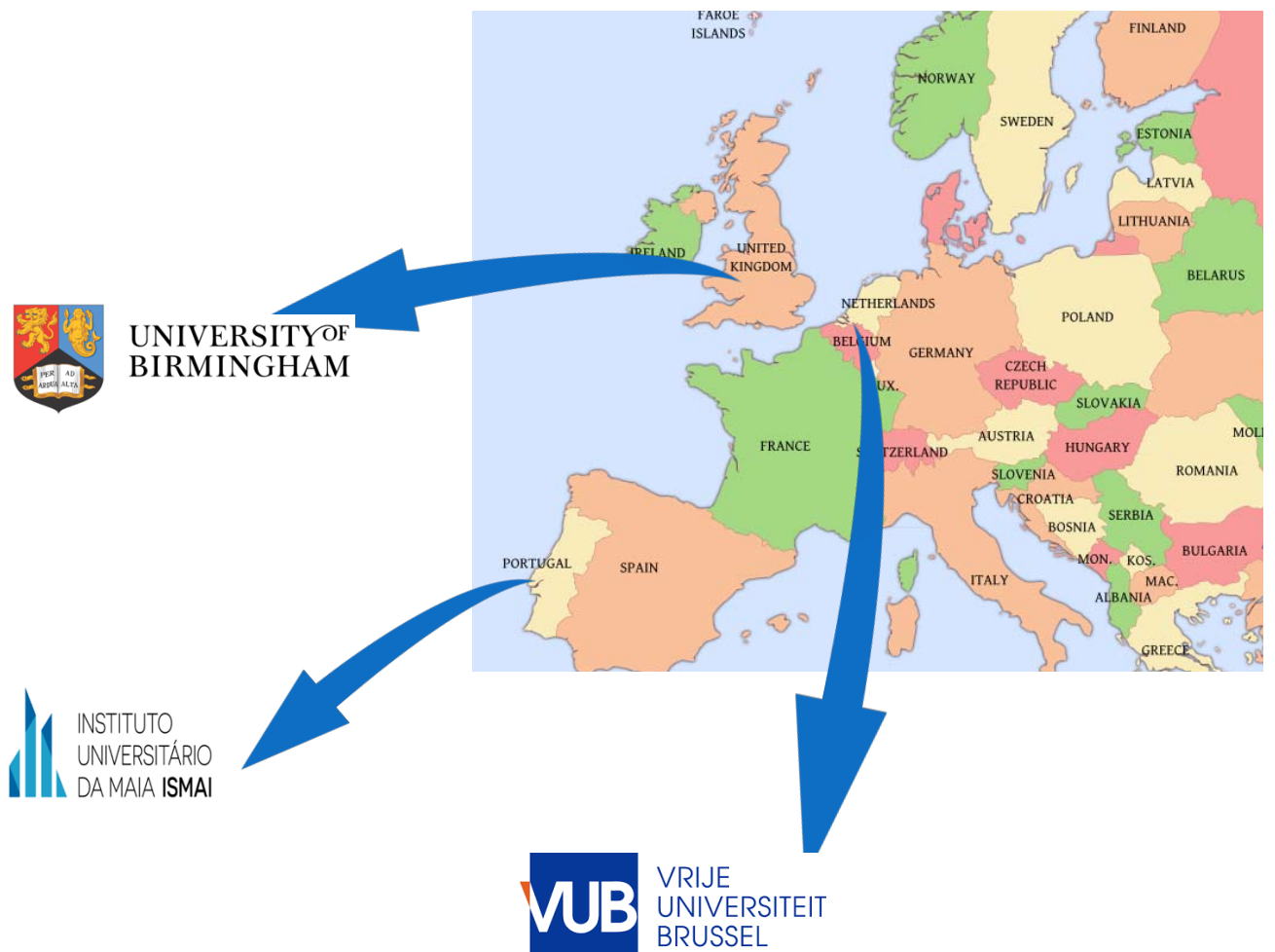
Jointly with the other EU university partners, ISMAI is supporting the establishment of a students' service centre at Royal University of Bhutan (project coordinator). More specifically, ISMAI's contribution is focused on developing a solid career guidance methodology. Additionally, ISMAI is developing, in accordance with the other partners, a digital platform to support all the information gathered for and generated by the project, and creating a dynamic and accessible network of contacts, linking all the counselling centres of the project. This platform fulfills a triple role: a) as a repository for all the methodological and technical information; b) as a way to facilitate the communication between counselling centres in colleges, university and counselors, thus improving their efficiency; and c) as a vehicle of external supervision (and update) of the outputs of the project, by facilitating the link with EU partners during the project and, more importantly, beyond the end of the present project. Towards the later stage, ISMAI will also partner in the process of evaluation of the project, and sustainability plan of the project results.



## Visual: Centres Across RUB and EU Partner Countries



## Partner Universities from Europe



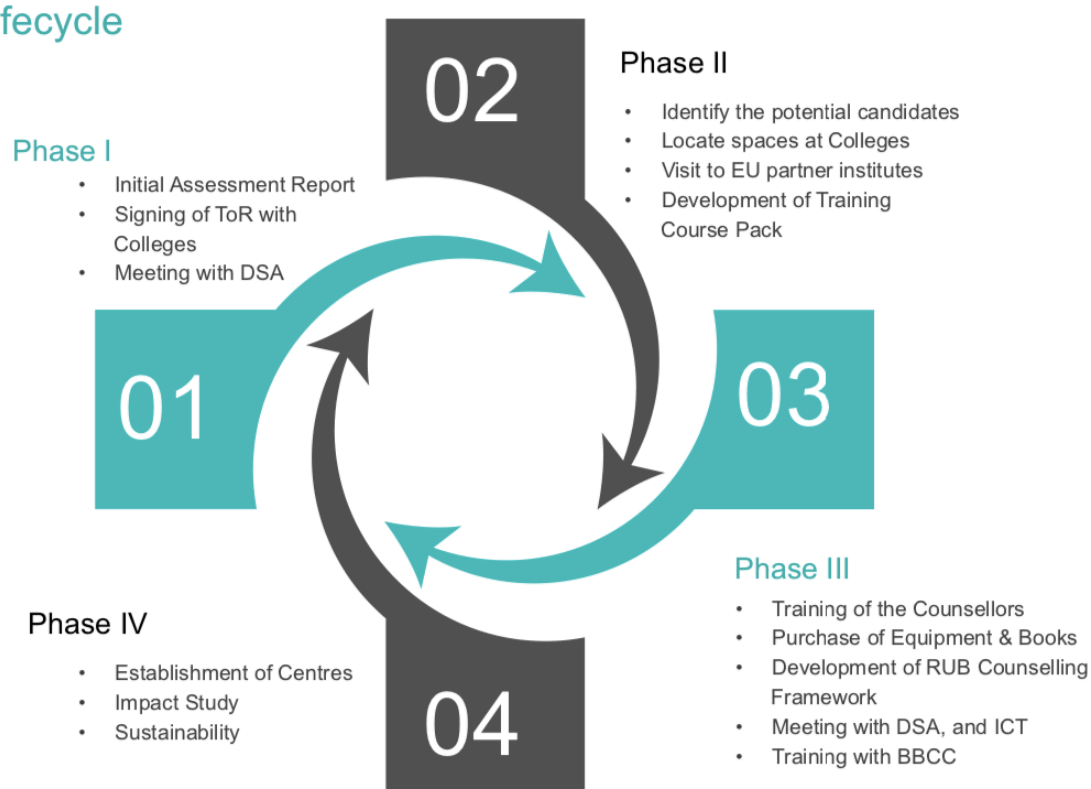
## Completed Project Events from November 2018 – September 2019

SL.NO	ACTIVITIES	DATES
1	1 <sup>st</sup> Project Workshop at Paro College of Education	15-16/11/2018
2	1 <sup>st</sup> DSA Meeting at Gedu College of Business Studies	18/12/2018
3	2 <sup>nd</sup> Project Progress Meeting at Samtse College of Education	4-5/1/2019
4	Project Kick-off Meeting in Brussels, Belgium	25-26/1/2019
5	Project Grant Holders Meeting Brussels, Belgium	28-29/1/2019
6	3 <sup>rd</sup> Project Progress Meeting at PCE	17/2/2019
7	Establishment of Project Office at PCE	01/03/2019
8	Project Initial Assessment in RUB Colleges	1-10/5/2019
9	Project Partnership Agreement Signed	10/05/2019
10	EU visit lot I Brussels, Belgium	25-29/3/2019
11	1 <sup>st</sup> Project Stakeholders Meeting at PCE	24/5/2019
12	2 <sup>nd</sup> DSA Meeting at Paro College of Education, Paro	29/5/2019
13	4 <sup>th</sup> Project Progress Meeting at OVC, Thimphu	22/6/2019
14	Project PD training for PCE Staff	1-2/7/2019
15	Project retreat at IMSL, Thimphu	30-6/7/2/2019
16	First Draft of Major Chapters of Training Manual	9/07/2019
16	EU Visit lot II to ISMAI, Porto Portugal	9-12/7/2019
17	Digital Platform Development Framework	12/07/2019
18	Identification of the centre counsellors and location of centres at RUB Project Training Level 0	15/07/2019
19	Workshop on Foundation of Leadership for Student Leaders of PCE.	13/09/2019 18 <sup>th</sup> & 25 <sup>th</sup> /09/2019

## Completed project activities from September 2019 – June 2020

<i>SL. No</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Dates</i>
3	Project Financial Statement by RUB	30/9/2019
4	Digital Platform First Trail by RUB team	30/9/2019
5	Project Stakeholders Meeting II	1/10/2019
6	Professional Development on Counseling	12/10/2019
7	Project Financial Statement for the Agency	15/10/2019
8	Initial Assessment Study, Measurement of indicators	15/10/2019
10	Training Level 0	13/09/2019
11	Inauguration of Project Training Manual by Prime Minister of Bhutan	4/11/2019
12	Training of counselors, Training level I & II at PCE	5-16/11/2019
13	ICT officers Digital Platform Workshop	23/11/2019
14	Training level III, Practicum	1/12/2019-30/1/2020
15	Consecration of Cultural Resources	26/03/2020
16	Happiness and Wellbeing Project in Pandemic	April onwards
17	Project Mid-report result and Project Extension	18-29/05/2020

## Project Lifecycle



## Project Stakeholders meeting II

The objectives of the 2<sup>nd</sup> project stakeholders meeting were to present the development framework of centres at RUB colleges, explore and strengthen the area of collaboration between stakeholders and Happiness and Wellbeing Centres. The meeting was chaired by Dasho Pema Thinley, former VC of RUB currently Advisor Specialist for Bhutan Institute of Wellbeing. The project was represented by Chair Dr. Dorji Thinley President PCE, Project Coordinator, and Project Officer. Dr. Chenchho Dorji, the first psychologist of Bhutan also attended the meeting and engaged to support the Happiness and Wellbeing Centre especially on mental health. The draft Memorandum of Agreement between Project and Stakeholders have also developed to progress the centres across RUB colleges. Final Memorandum of Agreement will be signed during the 3<sup>rd</sup> stakeholder meeting.



## Inauguration of Project Training Manual by Prime Minister of Bhutan.

The training manual was launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan during college 44<sup>th</sup> Foundation day. The training manual is developed by expertise from RUB, VUB, ISMAI & UoB as per the recommendations and guidelines of BBCC. Prime Minister shared the importance of Mental Health and Wellbeing at the university level and the consequence of mental health. One of the key components of the Project is, training of Centre Managers (Dean of Student Affairs & Student Service Officers), which are organized in training level 0, I & II, III, and Final Certification of centre managers by BBCC.





## Project Training Level I & II

The project training was planned at three levels. 0, I, II & III. In each level trainee counselors will gain insight, competency, and knowledge relating to counseling, wellbeing, mental health, and happiness.

In the training level, I & II covered important themes on Mindfulness and Awareness, Health and Wellbeing, Mental Health issues for Students, Academic & Career, Keeping a Balance in life- Time Management, Presentation Skills, Being Bhutanese, Leadership of Self, Spirituality and Counseling, Self-Care. The training is informed by a manual which is a hybrid of contemporary theories and principles in the field of counseling, psychology, and wellbeing infused with Bhutanese philosophy of GNH. The training was facilitated by five experts from the EU and seven experts from RUB, Bhutan.



## Digital Platform Focal Person Orientation Workshop

To integrate the digital platform with the Happiness and Wellbeing Centres of RUB, one-day workshop was conducted for ICT Officer at CST, Phuntsholing Chhukha. The main objectives of the workshop were the orientation of a digital platform for the ICT officers from a users' perspective. Resourcing a day's workshop for the centre managers/counselors/wellbeing coach as a follow up of the workshop and identification of the ICT officers as a focal person of the digital platform at their campus.

The ICT officers committed to doing their part in supporting the optimum utilization of the digital platform





## Training level III Bangkok, Thailand

During the training level III, trainees the Dean of Student Affairs and Student Service Officers of 9 RUB colleges were exposed to universities and schools in Thailand providing best Student Services. The exposure training level III gave hands on experience for the trainees. The training was led by the mentors and facilitators. The mentors facilitated daily pre-visit conference and post-visit conference. The trainees shared their reflection, learning and inquiries during the pre and post visit conferences. Every day the reflections were noted on the individual journal template developed by the mentors based on the overall objectives of the training component of the project. This training report developed based on the individual report submitted to the project office.

Universities in Thailand are reputed for advanced student service system across Asia not only based on academic literature but also through the experience of Bhutanese students studying there. As per the training plan the experiential training in Universities and schools in Thailand was implemented in two cohorts. The first cohort visited from 18th to 25th, 2019. The second cohort visited 19th to 25th Jan. During the five days experiential training, trainees visited Rangsit University, Thammasat University, Rajamanjala University, SIAM University, UNESCO Thailand, Dhammajarinnee Witthaya School and Phranakhon Rajabhat University.



Relaxation Room



Counseling and Mental Health assessment



Meditation and Therapy programs



UNESCO Projects

## Launching of Happiness and Wellbeing Centres across RUB colleges





## Happiness and Wellbeing Centre Brochure and Handouts

After the completion of training level III, the colleges launched their Happiness and Wellbeing Centres. The launch was associated with the programs like meditation, seminar, awareness on COVID-19, PD Programs.

The project officially recommended the centres to develop a centre brochure and handouts on time management and stress management. The handouts on time and stress were targeted for students and staff based on the current pandemic situation which resulted in the closure of colleges. The brochures and handouts were successfully launched and it was uploaded in college websites, students mail, VLE, Digital platform, Facebook pages, common group forum

**Organogram**  

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graph TD
    President --> Chair
    President --> Coordinator
    President --> Members
    Coordinator --> Dean_Student_Affairs[Dean, Student Affairs]
    Coordinator --> CM_WBC[Centre Manager & Wellbeing Coach]
    Members --> Faculty
    Members --> Student
    Members --> Stakeholders
    Chair --- CM_WBC
    Chair --- Faculty
    Chair --- Student
    Chair --- Stakeholders
    Dean_Student_Affairs --- Faculty
    Dean_Student_Affairs --- Student
    Dean_Student_Affairs --- Stakeholders
    CM_WBC --- Faculty
    CM_WBC --- Student
    CM_WBC --- Stakeholders
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**Digital Platform:**  
The center's digital platform is expected to help center connect better with the users. The digital platform also serves as a communication tool, resource bank, and information booth for students and staff of GCIT. To use digital platform, visit <https://gcit.edu.bt/web/guest>.  
To Login in:  
Username: your student ID or staff ID  
Password: your student ID or staff ID

**Contact Us**  
Centre Manager:  
Mr. Lhendup Dorji (Dean of Student Affairs)  
[lhendup.gcit@rub.edu.bt](mailto:lhendup.gcit@rub.edu.bt)  
Phone # 17643276  
Centre Coach:  
Mrs. Tshering Zangmo (Asst. Student Service Officer)  
[tsheringzangmo.gcit@rub.edu.bt](mailto:tsheringzangmo.gcit@rub.edu.bt)  
Phone # 17643277  
Counseling & Guidance:  
Mr. Kezang Namgyal (Asst. Student Service Officer)  
[kezangnamgyal.gcit@rub.edu.bt](mailto:kezangnamgyal.gcit@rub.edu.bt)  
Phone # 17736265

**HAPPINESS AND WELLBEING CENTER**  
Gyalpozhing College of Information Technology  
Royal University of Bhutan

### Background

"The CLCS Happiness and Wellbeing Centre will be a safe place for the students to seek refuge, provide opportunities to build skills, enhance insight, and grow resilience, which will all go a long way in preparing them for life. The centre serves as a hub of counseling & wellbeing education, training, and research programmes.

#### Objective

The main objectives of the centre to cater services related with happiness, wellbeing, and counselling to students, staff of CLCS, RUB staff, local community, government agencies, and Non Governmental Organizations. Some of the programmes are mindfulness, one-to-one counselling, group counselling, courses on insight, and skill enhancement.

The centre will also initiate tailor made group courses on need-based themes such as 'Being Bhutanese', 'Leadership of Self' & 'Working with life challenges' etc. The services under the Happiness and Wellbeing Centre are informed by five major themes related with empowerment of the self, and working with life challenges.

The five themes are:  
Leadership of Self, Working with Life Challenges (Counseling), Mindfulness and Awareness, Emotional and Social Intelligence, and Being Bhutanese



#### Centre Contact

Centre Head/Centre Manager:  
Mr. Sangay Phuntsho (Dean of Student Affairs)  
[Sangayphuntsho.clcs@rub.edu.bt](mailto:Sangayphuntsho.clcs@rub.edu.bt)  
Phone # 17891028

Centre Coach  
Mrs. Phub Dem (Asst. Student Service Officer)  
[Phubdem.clcs@rub.edu.bt](mailto:Phubdem.clcs@rub.edu.bt)  
Phone# 17598583

Counseling & Guidance  
Mr. Dorji Wangda (Asst. Student Service Officer)  
[Dorjiwangda.clcs@rub.edu.bt](mailto:Dorjiwangda.clcs@rub.edu.bt)  
Phone# 17869950/17336227

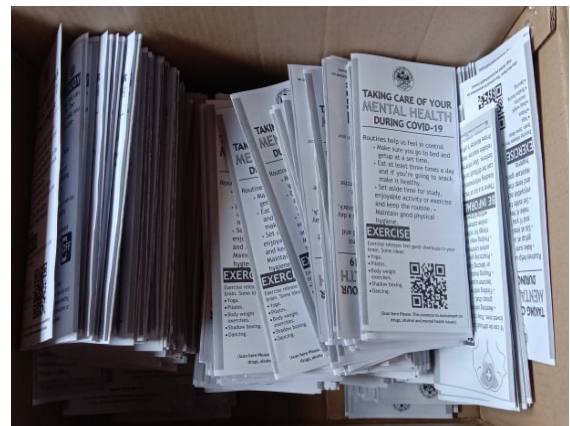


Happiness and Well Being Centre  
College of Language and Culture Studies



## Happiness and Wellbeing Project Role in Pandemic

Ever since the pandemic crisis doomed across the globe on the Health, Economy, Education, Tourism, and Agricultural sectors our country was well prepared to face the pandemic. The Happiness and Wellbeing Project have been working in collaboration with National Mental Health and Psychosocial Response Team to provide psychosocial support to those affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The project coordinator and NMHPRT were in the field supporting Bhutanese returning from abroad and those at quarantine facilities. The project printed thousand plus copies of COVID-19 response brochure and issued to frontline team Desuung. The brochure functions like a help desk for psychological wellbeing and personal health assessment through bar code. It was a great opportunity for the project to support during such pandemic at nations call.



Yoga session during Pandemic for Final Year students of PCE.



## **Project mid-report result and Project Extension**

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The project technical implementation report was submitted on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2019, as per the mandates of the EU scheme. We are really contented to share that, in accordance with the Grant Agreement project implementation has been qualified as “GOOD”, which shows the “project progresses in accordance with its original work programs and timetable but some improvements could be made”.

Due to the current pandemic (COVID-19), the project could not implement with important awaited tasks since March 2020. Consequently, we are granted an extension on the project completion by 12 months. In this regard, the completion of the project is extended to 14/11/2021. Currently, the project is working on the new activity outlines and work packages. One of the initiations of HWC across RUB was the development of Brochure and Handout on Centre, Stress, and Time Management. Such progress on time and stress management will have supportive strategies for University students during such situation as a result of the pandemic.

## **Benefits of the Project**

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### ***At Local Level***

- Enhancement of student support system of RUB students through a ‘Happiness and Wellbeing Centre’
- Capacity building of RUB staff members through training, workshops and seminar related with Mental Health, Counseling and Wellbeing.
- Capacity building of RUB colleges through purchase of selected equipment.

### ***At National Level***

- Integration amongst RUB colleges through ‘Happiness and Wellbeing Centre’.
- Capacity building of professionals working in the field of human series and young people in Bhutan.
- Development of Digital Platform/App which will serve as an integrated communication space for Bhutanese professionals working in the field of Mental Health, Counselling and Wellbeing.

### ***At International Level***

- Collaboration between Bhutan and the European Union through partnership in Tertiary Education
- Development of relationship and Exchange of good practice between RUB and Higher education institutes in European Union.
- Development of a unique model of student service centre: a centre which will embody the Bhutanese philosophy of Gross National Happiness infused with contemporary knowledge of Mental Health, Counselling and Wellbeing.