

**National Statement of Commitment to Transform Education
by the Royal Government of Bhutan
at the Transforming Education Summit 2022**

The massive disruptions in learning and education by COVID-19 pandemic has been unprecedented at the national, regional and global level. Besides affecting the learning in children, it also impacted their psychosocial health and wellbeing, loss of investment by parents in their children's education and growth, and to the nation socially and economically.

Post COVID-19, reverting back to a normalcy is not an option. Every stakeholder must put forward a collective action to ensure that all school-going aged children receive access to quality education, recover from the learning loss, and transform education for the 21st Century. In addition to addressing the current challenges, education must also strategically prepare for the short, medium, and long term. Today's young generation must learn to adapt and thrive with the changing lifestyles, fluid economies, digital revolutions, increasing societal demands, etc. for which the foundation for all these must be laid in education.

Today, around the world, education systems are linked with a number of societal issues such as disruptions in market systems, high unemployment rate, mismatch between jobs and skills, disparities, substance abuse, violence, health and lifestyle issues, migration, and digital divide. Education systems are pressured for solutions when many other stakeholders are equally responsible for working out sustainable solutions. The key stakeholders such as children, youth, adults, students, teachers, education leaders, lawmakers and enforcers, planners, CSOs, development partners, entrepreneurs, and private sectors should engage and come to a consensus to share the future aspirations for every child and build a roadmap for implementation. Such a strategic plan of action should consider equity, equality, inclusiveness, gender, disabilities, pathways considering the strength and competencies of each student.

For Bhutan, COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenge as well as an opportunity. The pre-existing challenges of expanding early education, inclusive education, digital learning, competency of teachers, infrastructure, and quality of education slowed the pace of earlier momentum if not rolling back the gains achieved.

However, the nation was granted 'The Royal Kasho' (Edict) on education reform by His Majesty on the National Day December 17, 2020. The Kasho highlights radical transformation of Bhutan's education system in terms of curriculum, pedagogy, teacher development, school infrastructure, and assessment practices to assess and upscale its standards and practices, in light of digital revolutions. Therefore, efforts must be made to address the challenges and secure the future of younger generations. It is a collective priority for Bhutan.

Towards this endeavour, guided by '*The Royal Kasho*' and in line with '*The Bangkok Statement 2022*', Bhutan commits to take forward the following:

1. Developing vibrant and safe schools as learning space for all children that considers equity, equality, disabilities and gender:

- . Strengthen policies and frameworks to support education for all students including children with disabilities, gender, and equity.
- a. Closely monitor SDG4 taking into account the prevalent gaps and challenges, and national priorities.
- b. Strategize focused interventions to develop schools to support the curricular, pedagogical, and transformational changes.
- c. Establish mechanisms to support students' health and wellbeing including nutrition intake, immunization and health check-up, water sanitation and hygiene practices, child0-safety, and psychosocial support.
- d. Strengthen system based disaggregated data generation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting for informed decision making.
- e. Collaborate, coordinate, and communicate on student safety and protection, their learning needs, while in school as well as out of school.
- f. Strengthen school leadership and accountability to devise interventions to fast track recovery from learning loss, and effectively embrace and implement the new educational transformation interventions.

2. Transforming education and education systems:

- . Focus on revamping the school curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment to meet the standards of 21st century skills requirements taking advantage of digital technologies.
- a. Strengthen digital curriculum, subject integration, and skills development in teachers and students.
- b. Promote and strengthen STEM subjects along with critical thinking and problem solving skills from early grades.
- c. Assess student, teacher and school performances including year-end curriculum assessment for appropriate interventions.
- d. Strengthen teacher competencies, school leadership, and other support mechanisms to strengthen transfer of knowledge and skills to students with special focus on primary as well as STEM education.
- e. Strengthen digital facilities, platforms, and applications to make quality teaching and learning accessible to all children, and make learning interactive, enriching, and explorative.
- f. Strengthen mechanisms to ensure school space, culture, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, and other learning support systems with focus on building competency and skills. It should also develop learners' personal, social and interpersonal skills, and moral reasoning to lead meaningful and sustainable lifestyles.
- g. Strengthen leadership skills in teachers, school leaders and other educators.
- h. Renew and strengthen key education stakeholder's collaboration, engagement, partnerships and support mechanisms.
- i. Develop innovative financing policies and mechanisms to support and sustain the education transformation towards highly accessible, equitable, and world class education facilities, learning materials and services.

Education is a public good, social investment and equalizer. A robust and visionary mechanism that countries around the world put together today without doubt, will lead to equitable and inclusive sustainable development for sustained harmony, peace and prosperity.

Therefore, the Royal Government of Bhutan commits to affirm that the five thematic actions initiated under the theme - United Nations *Transforming Education Summit* is a priority for the country to accelerate progress for the last mile, recover learning losses, and innovate to transform the education system to lead in the 21st century. The government also recognizes such collective actions at national, regional and global level will enable children, adolescents, youth and adults to live meaningful and constructive lives.