



Intellectual Capital for Communities  
In the Knowledge Economy

# BHUTAN

## Beyond GDP: Pioneering Efforts

Jean-Eric Aubert, May 2011



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# The Gross National Happiness Origins and Implementation

- The idea of happiness has been present since centuries in Bhutan's values
- The idea of GNH was launched by the King in 1974
- Since then, development does not mean only material progress but also emotional and spiritual well being.
- Measuring GNH in order to guide public policies and encourage the public at large to adopt appropriate attitudes.
- In 2006, the Center of Bhutan Studies has defined indicators - with the support of UNDP. Survey in 2007 of a sample of 950 people in 12 provinces.

# Indicators -- 9 themes

- *Psychological well-being*
- *Ecological diversity and resilience*
- *Health*
- *Education*
- *Cultural diversity and resilience*
- *Standard of living*
- *Time use*
- *Community vitality*
- *Good governance*

# Survey Results

- 68 per cent of (surveyed) Bhutanese say they are very happy
- Men more happy than women
- Educated people and students more happy than unemployed and farmers
- Inhabitants of rich provinces more happy than inhabitants of poor provinces

# Factors of Happiness

- Great progress in 20 years. But Bhutan is still an agrarian society. Relatively poor economically and with limited infrastructure. Therefore the following features are perceived as essential:
  - Financial security
  - Access to road
  - Education
  - Health
  - Family relations

# Wealth as Factor of Happiness?

- Wealth makes people happy but less and less as it grows (stress and saturation effects)
- Depends on the education levels (35 per cent of illiterate).
- In the agriculture sector wealth depends on the surface of field properties and livestock heads owned by people.

# Spirituality and moral values

- Spirituality and religious practice do not play a major role, even if they contribute to happiness
- On the opposite, values inherited from Buddhism, such as the absence of jealousy and envy, contribute to social harmony
- Corruption is on the rise (felt by half of the population)
- Government is perceived as efficient when dealing with education and health. But deprived of power when facing inequalities and corruption

# GNH is not yet firmly rooted in the population

- About half of Bhutanese do not know GNH, notably among the aged people
- For those who know it, most see it as a philosophy, but not as a survey effectively performed
- But all values that it carries are coherent with the population's views
- A new survey has been launched in 2011 and the GNH idea should gradually filter down in the population.
- Develop and refine GNH measurement (surveys)

# Coping with Societal Challenges (for GNH Credibility)

- Manage transition towards a more urbanized, less cohesive society.
- Create jobs and some material wealth
- Develop infrastructure (roads, internet)
- Fight corruption
- Renew values; reinvent spirituality.