

Technical Assistance in times of Covid: Challenges, Opportunities and Lessons Learned



**Kinley T Wangchuk,
Director General**

**Department of Intellectual Property, Ministry of Economic Affairs
04 November 2021**

Status of Covid-19 in Bhutan

Total case recorded	2,621
Active	8
Recovered	2,610
Death	3

As of Nov. 01, 2021

Safeguards against Covid-19

- Selfless leadership of His Majesty the King during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The King has spent almost 80 percent of his time outside the palace, mostly in the bordering areas in the south of the country.
- Providing unfailing physical and moral support for all the frontline workers along the borders.
- Follows all the protocols including the seven-day quarantine after each visit to the southern borders.
- Initiated Druk Gyalpo's Kidu Relief Fund - deferment of all loans payment, interest waive off and Nu.8000 to 12000 monthly salary to unemployed since April 2020 till June 2022.
- Bhutan vaccinated 90.2 % of the eligible population with second dose by July 2021.
- Most Children between 12 to 18 years are also fully vaccinated by September 2021



First Covid 19 positive case - March 06, 2020

- No Covid-19 positive case detected in the country until March 06, 2020.
- Same week, a three-day training of our Trademark Examiners was completed in Thimphu from 03-05 March 2020 by two officials from WIPO and Japan.
- They were the last two foreign IP experts invited by DoIP before our country closed international border in March 2020
- On March 06, 2019 a two-member WIPO mission had to return from Kathmandu.



Challenges

- To prevent any imminent local transmissions protocols such as Druk Trace, Hand Washing and Physical distancing introduced
- Official gathering and mass interactions avoided.
- New activities requiring in-country travel and public gatherings, such as IP awareness programs were postponed.
- Ex-country travel and training invitations were either regretted or adjusted to online sessions.
- Work from home schedule were introduced during the 1st lockdown in August 2020 and the same was followed during the 2nd lockdown in December 2020.
- Four IP officials (three males and one female) were assigned for voluntary service including for the southern border patrol.
- One officer is still on duty to His Majesty's Kidu Relief fund since mid-May 2020.

**PLEASE
WEAR A FACE
COVERING**



Challenges

- Ten IP Officers were assigned to assist Office of Consumer Protection for market surveillance, monitoring and advocacy against unethical business practices.
- Before the 2nd lockdown, DoIP was also assigned to assist a trade officials on the proper opening and closure of the business centers.



Opportunities

In view of the constraints imposed and travel restrictions we made maximum use of the Virtual Platform

The important engagements we had with WIPO are as follows:

1. Head of IP Office Conference 2020 - July 23, 2020

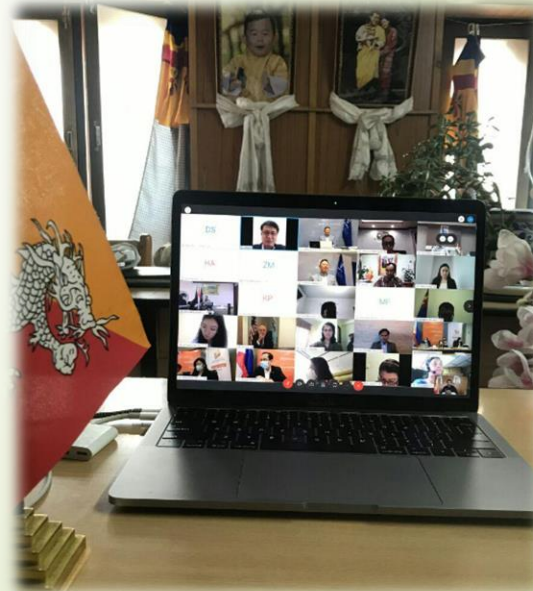
DoIP joined speakers and participants from ten other countries in the Virtual Meeting for the Heads of Intellectual Property Office Conference (HIPOC) for Countries in South Asia, Southeast Asia, Iran (Islamic Republic of) and Mongolia-Phase VIII.

The annual meeting brought together the Heads of the Intellectual Property Offices from the South and Southeast Asia with guest speakers spread across ten different time-zones around the world. The assigned theme was "At Home with Intellectual Property".

2. Third Virtual Meeting of the Heads of Intellectual Property Office(s) Conference (HIPOC) - Sept. 4, 2020

DoIP attended the conference with participants from IP offices and academic and research institutions from SAARC and ASEAN countries as well as Iran and Mongolia.

The meeting focused on the presentations and discussed the Global Innovation Index (GII) 2020, which was released by World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) on September 2, 2020. The theme for the GI 2020 was "Who will Finance Innovation?".



Opportunities



3. Strengthening the branding strategy of OGOP products - October 27, 2020

DoIP with ASPAC Division, WIPO organized a virtual training on strengthening the branding strategy of OGOP products/Queen's Project Office.

The training commenced from October 27 and concluded on December 17, 2020. It was an intensive training program encompassing both theoretical and practical sessions with special assignments and interactions. The training was conducted by international experts on Branding and Intellectual Property Rights.

4. Scaling Up Technology Deployment. - Nov. 10 & 12, 2020

DoIP attended this follow-up session to the Global Innovation Index (GII) discussion September 4, 2020. The ASPAC Division organized this virtual conference on the theme: Scaling Up Technology Deployment: Harnessing Technology in the Age of Covid and Beyond for the SDGs in Asia – a two 90-minute panel discussions – one on technology scouting on Tuesday, November 10 and one on technology deployment on Thursday, November 12. One of the national stakeholders, College of Science and Technology found these sessions very useful and relevant.

Opportunities

5. Fortieth Session of the Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights - Nov. 16-20, 2020

DoIP attended the Fortieth Session of Standing Committee on the Copyright and Related Rights (SCCR) organized by the WIPO from November 16 to 20, 2020 through a hybrid platform. The session was opened by the newly elected Director General of WIPO, H.E Mr. Daren Tang.



6. DoIP held Virtual Meeting with Asia and the Pacific Division, WIPO - Jan. 13, 2021

DoIP and ASPAC Division held a virtual meeting on January 13, 2021 to discuss and provide feedback on prior and ongoing projects activities. Through such meetings, ASPAC Bureau gathers feedback on several major projects that they have worked on with partner countries. Mr. Mathias Mulumba has been hired as a consultant to ASPAC to conduct these consultations over a short period of time between December, 2020 and January, 2021, through a series of virtual interviews, group discussions and a survey.



Opportunities

7. High-level Virtual Meeting on Copyright as a Key Player for Promoting Creativity and Creative Economy for Policy Makers of Least-developed Countries in the Asian and Pacific Region - April 22, 2021

High officials and copyright creators from Afghanistan, Bangladeshi, Cambodia, Kiribati, Lao PDR, Nepal, Timor Leste, Vanuatu and WIPO and speakers from Bhutan, New Zealand, South Korea. DoIP presented on the Promoting and Protecting National Creativity for Sustainable Development Opportunities of the Creative Economy for LDCs. We also shared the findings of the study by WIPO on the creative sector in Bhutan.

8. Twenty Sixth Session of the Committee for Development and Intellectual Property - July 26-30, 2021

Bhutan communicated its full support for the project proposal submitted by El Salvador on “Systematization of Statistical Data and the Design and Implementation of a Methodology for Developing Impact Assessments on the Use of the Intellectual Property System”, and, furthermore, conveyed our interest to participate as a pilot country as provided in the project document no. CDIP/26/4. However, this is subject to the proposal being approved by the committee and upon fulfillment of the selection criteria considered for choosing beneficiary countries by the CDIP Secretariat.



WIPO
HOME MEETINGS COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (CDIP/26) DAY 2

COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY (CDIP/26) DAY 2
27/07/2021 12:05:25 (GMT +02:00)

TIMELINE autoscroll - off

- 00:00:13 CHAIR
- 00:00:54 4. Monitor, assess, discuss and report on the implementation of all Development Agenda Recommendations
- 00:02:54 4.b) Report on WIPO's Contribution to the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and its Associated Targets
- 00:20:02 4.(f) WIPO Technical Assistance in the Area of Cooperation for Development
- 00:41:41 5. Consideration of work program for implementation of adopted recommendations
- 00:42:19 5.(c) Revised Project Proposal by Indonesia and the United Arab Emirates on Promoting the Use of Intellectual Property in Developing Countries in Creative Industries in the Digital Era
- 01:16:44 5.(b) Revised Project Proposal Submitted by El Salvador on the Systematization of Statistical Data and the Design and

Hide timeline Hide Info Share Download Meta/Audio language

Privacy policy Click here for more information. X

Opportunities

9. Finalization of IP Resource and Management Diagnostic Report - August 30, 2021

The diagnostic report was developed by the World Intellectual Property Organization in collaboration with the Department to identify gaps and recommend areas for improvement to make use of the IP protection system as a stimulus for the social, cultural, technological and economic growth. As a part of the diagnostic report a desk research, virtual meetings, and discussions were held with a range of stakeholders in 2020.

The report seeks to provide guidance on the assessed framework such as IP System stewardship, IP legislative and policy framework, role clarity, institutional arrangement, financial arrangements and fee structures, public outreach and awareness, operational excellence. It also identifies better regulatory practice and related gaps and weakness in current practices with a set of recommendations to address in the following four key areas:

1. Managing the change;
2. Demonstrating value of IP;
3. Strengthening IP foundations; and
4. Underpinnings for operational autonomy.

DoIP launched the Intellectual Property Resource and Management Diagnostic Report 2021 on August 30, 2021, where His Excellency the Minister of Economic Affairs graced the ceremony as the Chief Guest.



Opportunities

10. Hybrid Workshop on Branding for the Mineral Water Industry

- 5 October, 2021

Recently, DoIP participated in the workshop with 25 participants including 12 from the water industry. Presentations were on *introduction to Branding: What, Why and how, best practices on use of branding tools*. This was organised as part of the ongoing activities under the EIE-BD project on the MoU signed with WIPO in 2019.

11. Virtual meeting on Enhancing Infrastructural and Sustainable Support Frameworks and Mechanisms for Creative Communities and Enterprises - 12 October, 2021

The meeting was held with the support and cooperation with the Copyright Development Division, WIPO. Participants comprised of representatives from the creative sector and officials from the Policy and Planning Division of the Ministry and the DoIP.

12. TISCs and other Projects.

The other notable project during the pandemic were **TISCs** and the **IP Sharing Project 2020** with KIPA-KIPO.

The three national TISCs attended most of the virtual training hosted by TISC Div. WIPO.

The IP Sharing Project implementation with KIPA-KIPO started in May 2020 and concluded in Dec. 2020 with development of herb dryer technology and branding of products for the local beneficiary partner Menjong Sorig Pharmaceutical Corporation Ltd.



Lessons learned



- a) DoIP needs to enhance its existing IT infrastructure and urgently explore and expedite the development of e-filing and e-payment.**

The current application reception system including fees collection are exclusively designed for manual filings, owing to the technical nature of IP applications.

- b) Electronic equipment and reliable internet connections are important for virtual meeting, discussion and training, be at home or in the office.**

Most external discussions and meetings during the ongoing pandemic are conducted through online platforms.

- c) Officers need to be mindful to carry any portable IT equipment (laptop and accessories and the hard drive) and important office works along with them to and from office to home till the pandemic situation normalizes.**

There have been cases where laptops and other equipment have been left behind in the office as during the normal situation. This has led to some staff having to seek permit to visit the office to get them in the midst of lockdown period. Till the pandemic is overall officials need to be encouraged to take full IT working sets to home on daily basis.

- d) Work from home is not practical for some officials and not effective for some given their TOR aligned towards physical works.**

For instance, work at home for the DoIP have been mainly suited for the officers with good internet connectivity and those who are proactive in absence of physical supervision.

Lessons learned

e) **Virtual meetings are relatively easier and faster to set but implementations of the decisions require some forms of physical interactions.**

f) **Assign officials for multi-tasking for any call on duty during national emergencies.**

g) **Keep back-up officials to continue with the office's plans and programs on behalf of those who are on external assignments**

Since DoIP also strives hard and tries as much as possible to minimize the impact of the pandemic on most of our plans and programs, while officers are deployed on external emergency duties such as for long term voluntary duties.





Thank you

www.ipbhutan.gov.bt