

Bhutan Gender Country Profile 2021

EU Delegation to India and Bhutan

Executive Summary

The Kingdom of Bhutan is a small landlocked country located in the ecologically fragile Himalayan ranges with a population of approximately 780,000¹ (2021 estimates - 47% women and 53% men).

As per the Constitution, women enjoy full equality and are protected from any form of discrimination. The Constitution guarantees equal rights and opportunities to both women and men. The early unconditional ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 1981 (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990 (CRC) reflects the political and legal commitment to gender equality in the country. The Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) has enacted a number of policy and legislative measures, most significant of which include The Labour and Employment Act, 2007, The Penal Code (Amendment) of Bhutan, 2021, Domestic Violence Prevention Act, 2013, The Land Act of Bhutan 2007, The Local Government Act (Amendment), 2014, all of which promote gender equality. The government's Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC) has played an important role in stimulating and coordinating action by sector ministries in support of gender equality.

In the recent years, the government has reaffirmed its commitment to gender equality. In connection with SDG 5, the Women, Children and Youth Committee of the National Assembly presented at the January 2020 session eight recommendations: (i) establish effective legal and policy frameworks, (ii) promote multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms, (iii) carry out more awareness and sensitization in programmes, capacity building initiatives and mainstreaming gender and child issues in legislation, policies, plans and programmes (iv) strengthen gender and child friendly wellbeing, (v) promote job opportunities to reduce female unemployment, (vi) prioritize resources for gender equality and child protection and wellbeing, (vii) need to study the situation of women in detention centres and (viii) the safety of women working late.

Importantly in 2020, the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) adopted the National Gender Equality Policy (NGEP), which provides an overall policy direction for the country's gender equality. The purpose of the NGEP is “to provide an effective framework within which legislations, policies, programmes and practices ensure equal rights, opportunities and benefits for women and men in the family, community, workplace and in society at large”². Subsequently, the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) formulated the National Plan of Action on Gender Equality (NPAGE) to support the implementation of the policy. The plan covers the period 2019 – 2023 and “presents a holistic approach to achieving gender equality by addressing gaps and challenges” in the political and public, social, economic domains. The government's continued commitment and effort to promote gender equality and women's empowerment is also demonstrated in the 12th Five Year Plan (FYP), with the inclusion of a separate National Key Results Area for “Gender Equality” with three specific Key Performance Indicators.

¹ <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/bhutan-population/>

² Bhutan National Gender Equality Policy 2020

Despite a favourable institutional and legislative framework, the gender equality status of Bhutan shows a mixed picture. Bhutan ranks 130 out of 156 in the Global Gender Gap Report 2021, which uses indicators of political empowerment, health and survival, educational attainment and economic participation and opportunity to assess the extent of gender parity³.

While good progress has been made for women and girls over the years, with gender parity in education (up till the secondary level), decrease in maternal mortality, and increase in women's participation in society and work, there are still areas where gender inequalities persist such as unequal land ownership, women's low representation in public and political institutions, and unequal participation beyond secondary education—especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) subjects. Women also experience a higher unemployment rate, gender payment gaps, and gender-based violence. Male dominance in household decision-making has also been indicated by recent survey findings⁴.

The gender coordination mechanism in Bhutan is led by NCWC, which is also responsible to oversee implementation of CEDAW and CRC. NCWC is assisted by Sector / Agency-wise national Gender Focal Points (GFPs). NCWC has developed a Gender Equality Monitoring System (GEMS) and a gender indicator handbook to manage, monitor and track progress on gender-mainstreaming activities. However, capacity and resources across sectors to support mainstreaming and gender policy implementation remain still limited.

This gender analysis builds on previous analysis by the EU Delegation, the recently published NGEF, the NPAGE 2019-2023 and the newly published Gender and Climate Change in Bhutan study. It aims at guiding the Gender Action Plan III (GAP III) implementation by the EU Delegation to Bhutan which will be articulated along the three priorities identified under the (draft) 2021-2027 Multi Annual Indicative Programme (MIP) for Bhutan, namely:

- Priority 1 Climate Change, Green Growth for Resilient Bhutan
- Priority 2 Good Governance for inclusive socio-economic development
- Priority 3 Digital Transition: a driver for change in education and public services delivery

The analysis takes therefore a particular interest in assessing gender equality and mainstreaming opportunities associated with these priority areas.

1.0 Country Background

Bhutan is a land locked, mountainous and Least Developed Country (LDC) in the eastern Himalayas nestled between India and China. Bhutan has a total land area of 38 394 km² of which 72.5 percent of the total area is under forest cover. The terrain ranges from tropical foothills in the south to extremely rugged mountains in the north with a total population of about 780,000. Administratively, the country is made up of 20 dzongkhags (districts). Each dzongkhag consists of few to several gewogs (in total 205), which are a group of villages and represent the lowest level of local governments. Sixty-two per cent of the population live in rural areas and predominantly subsists on an integrated farming systems comprising of crop agriculture, livestock rearing and forest resource use.

³ Global Gender Gap Report 2021, World Economic Forum

⁴ Gender and Climate Change in Bhutan, Summary report, NCWC, February 2020

Bhutan has made significant achievements in reducing both income and multidimensional poverty during the 11th FYP period. The Multidimensional poverty rate has reduced remarkably from 12.7 % in 2012 to 5.8 % in 2017, whereas the income poverty has reduced from 12% in 2012 to 8.2 % in 2017. However, poverty still remains a rural phenomenon wherein 97% of the poor resides in rural area, where economic opportunities are limited. According to the Poverty Analysis Report 2017, on an average, female-headed households are observed to be less poor than male-headed households.

Despite the country's good development progress, a number of structural challenges have a bearing on its economy notably youth unemployment, limited economic diversification opportunities, extreme dependence on India and vulnerability to climate change and disasters. The last 10 years have witnessed recurrent extreme events including glacial lake outburst, flash floods, landslides, forest fires, droughts, drying of spring sheds, incidence of new pests and diseases. These pose a threat to the country's long-term economic prospects, which is largely reliant on agriculture and hydropower development. Despite these challenges, Bhutan has emerged as a leader in the environmental stewardship through its efforts to protect and govern natural resources sustainably, while striving to balance economic growth and development. The country has identified SDG 13 – Climate Action as one of its core priorities under the ongoing 12th Five Year Plan (FYP). In its draft second National Determined Contribution (NDC 2021), the RGoB envisages Low Emissions Development Strategy (LEDS) in the Food Security, Human Settlements, Transport and Industry sectors. In addition, the RGoB has established in 2020 a REDD+ National Strategy and Action Plan.

In addition, Bhutan has suffered a significant socio-economic setback in 2020 due to the COVID 19 pandemic and respective containment measures, with the tourism sector having suffered the most. GDP growth was revised downward to - negative 2.1 %. From 2021, the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) expects recovery with an estimated growth of 4.3%, provided the pandemic situation improves and a vaccine is made available. As in other countries, women in Bhutan have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic given their role in responding to the virus, including as frontline healthcare workers and care givers at home, the increase of unpaid care work as a result of school closures, and the violence they may have been subjected to during lockdowns. A National Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence COVID-19 Response Plan was developed and implemented by the NCWC and CSOs, with support from the UN.

The country has developed from an absolute to a democratic, constitutional monarchy after a peaceful modernisation and democratisation process since 2008. The overall development approach is based on the concept of **Gross National Happiness** which focuses on four pillars i) Good Governance ii) Sustainable Socio-economic Development iii) Preservation and Promotion of Culture and iv) Environmental Conservation. The development activities are planned in form of five-year plans, the current one being the 12th Five Year Plan (FYP) for the period 2018 – 2023.

As a young democracy, Bhutan is facing challenges related to limited capacities of the new political institutions at central but in particular at also local levels, a still progressing decentralisation process and a still weak civil society. Development efforts have led to positive results not only in terms of political stability, but also sustainable economic growth, a de-carbonised economy, and an accelerated progress towards achieving the international development goal targets.

2.0 Political Setting

Bhutan has witnessed a major change in the political system due to its transition from an absolute monarchy to a democratic, constitutional monarchy. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan came

into effect in 2008 with three parliamentary elections successfully held during 2008, 2013 and 2018. It is a bicameral system: the National Council consists of 25 members, 20 of which are each elected to represent a Dzongkhag (district), and five eminent members nominated by the King; the National Assembly consists of 47 members, each elected by a constituency. As per the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, Bhutanese women enjoy full equality, and are protected from any form of discrimination. In fact, non-discrimination and the equal rights of women and men are fundamental principles of the Constitution enacted in 2008.

In terms of women's political participation, the Constitution provides the right to vote and to participate in any lawful profession as a fundamental right of every Bhutanese citizen. However, women remain under-represented with respect to political participation whether at national or local levels. Bhutan ranks 130 out of 156 countries in the Global Gender Gap Report 2021, which uses indicators of political participation, health, education and economic empowerment to assess the extent of gender parity. In terms of political empowerment sub-index, Bhutan ranks at 137 out of 156 countries⁵. This means that women are not well represented in government and political structures. To illustrate the problem, in the National Council Election held during April 2018, only 3.1 % of women contested (9 female out of 289 candidates) and out of which 2 female were elected (10% - 2 out of 20 seats)⁶ as members of the National Council of the third parliament of Bhutan. With respect to 2018 National Assembly Election, only 17 women stood for the primary round out of 188 candidates, which is a substantial decline compared to 2013 National Assembly election which witnessed 31 women candidates. Ultimately, 7 women were elected for the National Assembly, an almost 50% increase from the previous election but nevertheless representing only 15% of the total number of seats. At the local government level, only 4% of the leadership roles are occupied by women. In 2020, women account for 39 % of the total civil service workforce. However women's representation is comparatively low in the executive (11%) and specialist (19%) category, pointing towards the 'glass ceiling' phenomena'. In the Judiciary, women's representation has increased over the years but the gender gap is wide at the higher positions. The increasing enrolment of girls in law increases the prospects of redressing the gender imbalance but this will require policy actions for the advancement of women in the judiciary.

Social and cultural perceptions are the reasons behind the lack of gender equality in leadership and decision making across all spheres. Enhanced women's participation in leadership and decision-making is one of the 10 outcomes of the NPAGE 2019-2023 as the RGoB recognises that improving women's participation and leadership in decision-making is aligned with overall development and good governance principles. As stipulated in the NPAGE, emphasis must be put on creating a conducive environment, research and development, enhancing advocacy and awareness aimed at changing socio-cultural mind sets around women's leadership, and building capacities for gender mainstreaming. The National Plan of Action to Promote Gender Equality in Elected Office (NPAPGEEEO) has been adopted. It consists of detailed actions to promote women's representation in elected offices.

The Bhutan-Network for Empowering Women (B-NEW), a CSO working for women's equality in Bhutan, is advocating women's reservation (quota system) for elected posts as a temporary measure to promote gender-balanced representation in the parliament.

⁵ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf

⁶ <http://www.ecb.bt/?p=5903>

3.0 Legal and human rights framework

The legislative framework in Bhutan is generally **non-discriminatory**. The Constitution of 2008 ensures equal rights to all citizens, regardless of sex, and state policy stipulates the “enjoyment of life by all citizens”. The early unconditional ratification of Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (**CEDAW in 1981**) and Convention on the Rights of the Child (**CRC in 1990**) reflects the political and legal commitment to gender equality in the country.

Bhutan positively interacted with the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in May 2019 where it received 220 recommendations, of which it accepted 157 and noted 63. These recommendations mainly covered LGBTI, GBV and gender equality, minority rights, children right's and trafficking in persons. As a follow up to the review and the recommendations, Bhutan conducted two national stakeholders' consultations in 2020 in order to move forward with the implementation of the recommendations.

The legal and rights based provisions that are conducive for promoting gender equality includes:

Fundamental rights (Article 7):

15. All persons are equal before the law and are entitled to equal and effective protection of the law and shall not be discriminated against on the grounds of race, sex, language, religion, politics or other status.

Fundamental duties (Article 8):

5. A person shall not tolerate or participate in acts of injury, torture or killing of another person, terrorism, abuse of women, children or any other person and shall take necessary steps to prevent such acts.

Principles of State Policy (Article 9):

3. The State shall endeavour to create a civil society free of oppression, discrimination and violence, based on the rule of law, protection of human rights and dignity, and to ensure the fundamental rights and freedoms of the people.

17. The State shall endeavour to take appropriate measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination and exploitation against women including trafficking, prostitution, abuse, violence, harassment and intimidation at work in both public and private spheres.

Besides the fundamental provision in the constitution, RGoB has enacted number of policy and legislative measures, which promotes gender equality. Some of which are outlined here:

- **The Labour and Employment Act, 2007**, provides for favourable working conditions for pregnant and nursing mothers, and equal pay for work of equal value. Female civil servants as well as women employed in Government owner corporations are entitled to six months of paid maternity leave along with six months of flexi-time for women (including for adoption), or one month with full pay in case of a miscarriage. The Act provides also for flexi feeding time in order to enable exclusive breastfeeding. Moreover, the Act emphasizes that there should not be discrimination based on sex against employees or job applicants in connection with recruitment, dismissal, transfer, training and demotion. The act also contained provisions on sexual harassment in the workplace; However the CEDAW Committee has expressed concern about the lack of access to justice for women experiencing sexual harassment in workplace.

- **The Penal Code of Bhutan** has dedicated an entire chapter, Chapter 14, to criminalize various degrees of sexual harassment, rape, and physical and verbal abuses. The Penal Code defined 11 different categories of rape, all of which were felonies of the fourth degree or higher, except for marital rape, which is a petty misdemeanour. A joint sitting of the Parliament in 2020 condemned the act of rape and passed harsher punishments for rapists after it amended eight clauses on rape. The law prohibits domestic violence and penalties for perpetrators include a fine and a prison sentence of one month to three years with longer sentences for repeat offenders.
- In terms of domestic violence, in 2013 the government enacted the Domestic Violence Prevention Act, which criminalizes the act – including physical, psychological and sexual violence, holds perpetrators accountable based on the gravity of the offence, and provides protection to the victims. Rules and regulations under this Act adopted in 2015.
- **The Land Act of Bhutan 2007** allows men and women to register land ownership at the age of 18. A spouse has no rightful ownership to sell that land. About 60% of rural women and about 45% of urban women have land and property titles registered in their name.
- **The Local Government Act (Amendment) 2014**, does not differentiate between sexes, as all registered Bhutanese are eligible for office, if they fulfil set criteria. However, one of the criteria include a certain level of education which is disadvantageous for women as they are on average less educated than men (female literacy rate in urban areas 60% vs. male 80%; in rural areas female 29% and male 57%).
- The National Policy for Persons with Disability (PWDs) was approved in 2019. It emphasises the rights based approach to programming to minimize the stigma and discrimination, which act as a barrier to PWDs and their families in accessing services.

Finding from a 2017 national survey⁷ indicates that 44.5% of women report having experienced one or other forms of partner violence in their lifetime. The study also shows that 53.4% of women and girls aged between 14-64 years continue to believe that their partners are justified to hit them under circumstances. There is therefore social acceptance of domestic violence. According to RENEW, a civil society organization that provides integrated services to survivors of domestic and gender-based violence, COVID 19 compounded the problem. Media report indicates that the number of people experiencing gender-based violence increased by 53.5 percent in 2020⁸. The Queen of Bhutan, expressed deep concerns on the number of domestic violence and abuse cases reported during the Covid lockdowns and commanded, “all necessary measures be put in place to assist those affected. This resulted in temporary shelter services being set up with the support of the district administrations across all the 20 districts and a revision of the Penal Code. Three police stations housed women and child protection units to address crimes involving women and children, and 11 police stations housed desks with officers specifically devoted to women and children’s issues, an increase from the previous year. The government operated a dedicated toll-free helpline to report violence against women and children. The leadership has made serious efforts to end violence against women and protect women's and children's rights, although it is generally acknowledged that more needs to be done. The legal framework and institutions for child protection have been strengthened in 2020 with the Government starting developing the first-ever National Child Policy; revising the National Youth Policy; endorsing national Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on Gender-Based Violence (GBV); and adopting Early Identification and Safe Referrals procedures for child victims. The national SOP to prevent and respond to GBV has helped clarify the roles and responsibilities of each agencies working on GBV

⁷ National Survey on Women’s Health and Life Experiences 2017, A Study on Violence Against Women and Girls in Bhutan

⁸ <https://kuenselonline.com/gender-based-violence-spikes-53-5-percent-in-2020/>

and thereby, improve the services for survivors of GBV. In 2020, the capacities of the Women and Children Committees and front liners in 20 districts and 4 municipalities was enhanced to deal with survivors. A number of CSOs have also been active in assisting victims and promoting the education of women. A National Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence COVID-19 Response Plan was developed and implemented by the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) and CSOs, with support from the UN, especially UNICEF. The Plan's goal was to ensure continuity of child protection services, and strengthen response capacities of service providers and frontliners. UNICEF led the rollout of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence (GBV). UNICEF also supported NCWC to develop a national system for GBV case management in line with international standards to be rolled out in 2021. The 2019-2023 NPAGE recognises that "gender based violence against women and girls has far reaching social and economic consequences, which ultimately creates gender power imbalances". It foresees actions to improve services for survivors/victims of GBV across various sectors (e.g. health, police), strengthened preventive measures, enhanced coordination and partnership, and improved collection and use of disaggregated information.

4.0 Policy Framework

4.1 Gender and Five-Year Plans

Bhutan is determined to address growing concerns of different forms of inequalities across all sections of society through various policies and legal frameworks. Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls have been recognized as an important cross cutting theme of socio-economic development in Bhutan. Gross National Happiness (GNH), Bhutan's development philosophy, which guides Bhutan's socio economic journey aims to promote a conducive and inclusive environment within which every man, woman and child can pursue happiness and wellbeing.

The Five Year Plans (FYP) provides the framework to formulate and implement all developmental activities in the country.

The objective of the 12th FYP is 'Just, Harmonious and Sustainable Society through enhanced decentralisation' particularly focuses on reducing poverty, creating gainful employment, providing quality health and education services, promoting democracy and decentralization, reducing corruption, improving justice system and promoting gender equality. The 12th FYP has identified "Gender equality" as a National Key Result Area with three specific KPIs, which includes the following:

- Women's representation in the Parliament (increase the number of women parliamentarians to more than 15.2% of the total parliamentarians)
- Gender Parity Index in tertiary education (increase the proportion of females to males to 0.89)
- Prevalence of violence against women and girls (reduce to less than 6% physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in the last 12 months)

Visible gender gaps and issues that need attention in the 12thFYP are in the areas of education (tertiary and vocational levels), employment, political representation and violence against women. The scope to introduce more gender sensitive indicators, the need to strengthen the collection and use of sex disaggregated data to develop gender responsive indicators, engendering and strengthening the national monitoring framework and capacity building of programme, budget and planning officials were some of the recommendations of the mid-term review of 11th FYP. The current five-year plan

strongly directs all ministries and agencies to address gender gaps and to do this on the basis of gender analysis and evidence.

GNHC has also issued a protocol for policy formulation that directs all policy proponents to mainstream gender issues in policy preparation. Compliance is monitored through a GNH policy screening tool, which includes gender impacts as one of the variables (Gender Equality Variable) to be scored under the governance theme, and a policy protocol report, which sets out four points to be addressed in the gender analysis of policy alternatives and/or implications and this ensures eliminating any negative impacts of a policy on gender equality. Bhutan also considers, where possible, generating gender disaggregated data in the 12th FYP, and towards this effort, a dedicated project for mapping the overall data ecosystem in the country is underway to assess data needs, gaps, processes including gender disaggregated data generation, analysis and dissemination for decision making⁹.

4.2 National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) and the 2020 Gender Equality Policy

The **National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC)** was established in 2004 and became autonomous in 2008. At that time, the government recognised the need for an independent organisation to stimulate and support the implementation of Bhutan’s aims and obligations toward women’s equality (and the protection of children).

Recognising the fact that there is an uneven mainstreaming of gender issues across policies, programs and projects as well as inadequate accountability or monitoring approaches in Bhutan, NCWC released in 2020 the NGEF. It provides the overarching policy directive to address the formal approach to women empowerment and gender equality. The NGEF is in line with the CEDAW committee general recommendations and aligns with the constitution of Bhutan, GNH Philosophy, Bhutan Vision 2020, 12th FYP of Bhutan, Beijing platform for action and Agenda 2030 – Sustainable Development Goals.

The NGEF of Bhutan “envisions a society where substantive equality is practiced providing equal opportunities for women and men to achieve their full potential and benefit equitably from the social, economic and political development in the country”. The purpose of the NGEF is to provide an effective framework within which policies, programmes and practices ensure equal rights, opportunities and benefits for women and men in the family, community, workplace and in society at large. The Policy serves as a guiding framework, which echoes and reaffirms the commitment of the RGoB to ensure gender equality is mainstreamed in policies and programmes.

The key policy objectives of the NGEF are to:

- Provide a coherent strategic framework of the government’s priority towards gender equality.
- Strengthen accountability and operational strategies to address priority gender issues.
- Facilitate deeper collaboration across sectors and stakeholders towards a common vision of gender equality in Bhutan.

The NCWC works closely with sectoral departments to ensure that their policies and plans are gender responsive. The GNHC and the NCWC, in consultation with gender focal points in government and other stakeholders, are responsible for preparing the **National Plan of Action for Gender Equality (NPAGE)**. The 2019 – 2023 NPAGE is a comprehensive document that provides analysis and sets out

⁹ https://www.gnhc.gov.bt/en/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Draft_29-th-Dec_NSDGR.pdf

an action plan in critical areas¹⁰ in order to support the effective implementation of the NGEF. The NPAGE is based on the three domain areas of the GEP (political, economic and social) and be supported with outcomes, outputs and activities as well as indicators and targets, based on the provisions outlined in the GEP.

4.3 Gender Coordination and Monitoring – initiatives by RGoB

The gender coordination mechanism in Bhutan is led by NCWC, which is responsible to oversee the implementation of CEDAW and CRC and is the lead agency for the implementation of the NKRA 10. NCWC is assisted by Sector/Agency-wise national Gender Focal Persons to consolidate the reporting of each ministry's gender related AKRA (Agency wise Key Result Areas). The Gender Equality Monitoring Systems (GEMS) are used to effectively coordinate monitoring of indicators, as well as reporting on results across sectors.

The NCWC prioritised strengthening its **Gender Focal Persons (GFP)** network in the 11th and the 12th Five Year Plans. Accordingly, since July 2013, the NCWC has made efforts to revitalise the GFP network at the Dzongkhag level, by inviting and having them participate at the capacity building and consultation programs. The NGEF foresees that the GFPs network should be institutionalised by ensuring that this function is integrated in job descriptions. Also, capacity building efforts of the GFPs will be strengthened.

The **Mainstreaming Reference Group (MRG)** was instituted in 2012 by an executive order from the Honourable Prime Minister to support mainstreaming of five cross-cutting issues, including gender in policies, plans and programs at all levels of the government and non-governmental agencies. The MRG has already conducted several mainstreaming sensitisation workshops and trainings and has facilitated mainstreaming exercises for all Local Governments (LG). Based on these activities, a mainstreaming framework has been developed to inform and guide the central agencies and the LGs in the formulation of an integrated, sustainable and smarter FYP and annual plans.

The Royal Government views **Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting (GRPB)** as a key strategy to build evidence and take necessary actions to address gender gaps and concerns. Although in comparison to several countries across the globe, Bhutan is at a nascent stage with respect to its engagement in GRPB, there have been several positive developments at the institutional as well as policy level that have facilitated GRPB in the country. The RGoB and UN Women jointly developed a Strategic Framework for Gender Mainstreaming and GRPB in Bhutan, which laid down institutional arrangements and strategies to operationalise GRPB in the country. The mid-term review of 11th FYP¹¹ indicated that the progress in gender mainstreaming through implementation of the GRPB was significant in the Health, Education and Agriculture sectors and highlighted the importance of including Ministry of labour and human resources in the next phase. The review also observed that the inclusion of mandatory gender equality indicators in the 2016-17 Annual Performance Agreements (APA) of all the ministries and sector-specific indicators for education, health, agriculture and national statistics bureau (NSB) were important developments for taking the mainstreaming gender forward. The NGEF took the roadmap on GRPB implementation further through mandatory gender analysis and a minimum percentage of budget allocation to ensure the integration of gender at the time of

¹⁰ Good governance, Health, Ageing Mental Health and Disabilities, Violence against Women, Prejudices and Stereotypes, Economic Development, Education and Training, Women and Poverty, Sports, Environment and Climate

¹¹ The upcoming Mid Term review of the 12th FYP should provide a more updated assessment

submission of budgetary proposals. For the Fiscal Year 2020-21, Nu. 494.110 million (app 5.5 M EUR) has been allocated for activities specifically responding to gender and other special needs, mostly in the health sector¹².

4.4 Gender in National Policies

Efforts have been undertaken by the RGoB to mainstream gender in all the national policies including National Human Resource Development Policy, Economic Development Policy, National Employment Policy, National Health Policy, Food and Nutrition Security Policy etc. The Ministry of Finance, the NCWC, the GNHC and the sectoral departments are working together to strengthen the implementation of **Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting**. Gender analysis and encouraging a minimum percentage of budget allocation to ensure integration of gender at the time of submission of budgetary proposals are now mandatory as per the NGEF.

The **National Human Resource Development Policy 2010** (NHRD) targets to address the specific needs of women to ensure that they participate and benefit from the technical and vocational training programs. The **Renewable Natural Resource (RNR) Research Policy** of Bhutan, 2011, acknowledges international Convention like Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC). The policy therefore intends to ensure participation of women in RNR research and decision-making, thereby including their needs into it.

In line with **Economic Development Policy 2010**, the Cottage Small and Medium Industries (CSMI) Policy 2012, targets to implement effective Micro Finance Institutions (MFI), consistent with the RGoB's Financial Inclusion Policy, especially with a focus on economic development, gender equality and poverty reduction in the rural areas. It also aims to promote women entrepreneurship to maximise the economic contribution of both genders and raise the relevance and quality of Technical & Vocational Education.

The **National Employment Policy** (NEP) 2012 intends to enhance female enrolment in tertiary education through provision of adequate infrastructure and facilities including hostels. It also targets to encourage greater women participation in the labour force and decision making bodies. Further, it also emphasizes on the importance of awareness and to advocate for gender equality in the means of employment. It targets to create employment opportunities for women.

The 2011 **National Health Policy of the Kingdom of Bhutan** (NHP) declares itself as a gender sensitive policy. The policy highlights and states on the importance of partnership through which gender responsive plans and programs can be developed. The policy intends to establish user-friendly facilities and adequate infrastructure including women's needs. From a maternal and child health perspective, it provides for a free and equitable access to safe, quality and cost effective vaccines for children and pregnant women. However, according to NCWC, the outreach clinics have been put in place in remote villages but doctors and staff are mainly men, which do not give confidence to women to use the clinics facilities. The NPAGE has identified a number of gaps and challenges in the health sector, affecting in particular women in rural communities. It outlines actions to increase gender responsive health infrastructure and facilities with adequately trained professionals.

¹² <https://www.mof.gov.bt/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/BUDGET2020-21.pdf>

Gender sensitivity and social inclusion forms a guiding principle of **Food and Nutrition Security Policy, 2014**. It acknowledges the impact of lack of adequate food and nutrition on women and children. Accordingly, in a targeted manner, it prescribes measures to enhance access to adequate food and nutrition for women.

Given the neutrality approach of Bhutan in its development planning and resourcing, it has been a challenge to accurately categorise the share of national budget for gender equality interventions. However, since the establishment of a **National Women's Machinery (NCWC)** in 2004, it has been relatively easier to compute the resources directly allocated for women's empowerment initiatives. Bhutan has also witnessed an incremental trend in the budget allocation for the NCWC. Comparing the budget in 2008 to 2014, there is an **increase of about 30%**.

Other efforts being made are towards gender mainstreaming the **Local Development Planning Manual (LDPM)**. The LDPM is the primary document that guides the formulation of plans at the local levels, including communities.

5.0 Socio-Economic-Cultural Context

Bhutan's socio-economic development has been guided by the philosophy of **Gross National Happiness (GNH)**, a multidimensional development framework that places people at the centre of development. Under the 12th FYP, the GNH framework encompasses nine domains namely: education, health, living standard, ecological diversity and resilience, time use, culture, psychological wellbeing, community vitality and good governance. The underlying principle behind the development philosophy is increasingly being recognised internationally as an alternate development model that offers a paradigm shift from the conventional development models.

Bhutan has made significant achievements in reducing both income and multidimensional poverty during the 11th FYP period. The Multidimensional poverty rate has reduced remarkably from 12.7 % in 2012 to 5.8 % in 2017, whereas the income poverty has reduced from 12% in 2012 to 8.2 % in 2017.

Bhutan's economy continues to be driven by hydropower and construction sector, which have limited potential for employment generation.

Labour force participation rate for women stands at 49.6% against 73.6% for men¹³, which indicates discriminatory practices in employment and persistence of gender stereotypes. The 2020 labour force survey also reports higher female unemployment rate (6%) than male (4.1%). The COVID 19 pandemic has accentuated this gender discrepancy in particular in the youth segment. The impact of the pandemic on employment was widespread with the overall youth unemployment rate increasing significantly from 11.9% in 2019 to 22.6% (female: 25.4%, male: 19.2%) in 2020¹⁴.

In terms of employment, according to the Labour Force Survey 2019, nearly 51% of the population are directly employed in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing sector. Women constitutes 61.7% of this workforce in the RNR sector. With male-out migration, the increasing **feminisation in the agriculture sector** calls for mainstreaming gender in agriculture and allied sectors as well as in designing and implementing climate actions as recommended by the 2021 Gender and Climate Change in Bhutan study. The recent study indicates that, "because of their roles and responsibilities, rural

¹³ NAPGE 2019-2023, May 2021

¹⁴ <https://www.nsb.gov.bt/>

women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change and they are more affected than men when climate-induced disaster hit”. Among the findings of the survey, it is found that:

- A majority of males and fewer females are aware of climate-smart and resilient agriculture initiatives. Participation of males and females in such initiatives varies. This needs to be remedied through differentiated awareness raising, training, access to inputs etc.
- There is an urgent need to empower and build the leadership of female farmers and to enhance their communication skills so as to strengthen their voice and decision making abilities in local governance and farming decisions.
- Integration of gender into plans, programmes and policies of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests is challenging due to lack of proper knowledge and skills.

The study also provides an analysis of gender gaps in the energy and waste sectors. Key recommendations from the study includes for example the need to:

- Integrate gender and climate aspects in policy reviews and formulation processes;
- Enhance capacity building on climate and gender issues across wide range of actors, including ministries, as well as strengthen the role and position of the Gender Focal Points (GFPs)
- Increase awareness raising activities on climate and gender across a broad spectrum of the Bhutanese society (private sector, academia, youths, CSOs, public at large)
- Guarantee the systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data, development of gender-sensitive statistics and other information in design, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of climate mitigation and adaptation efforts in all sectors and at all levels.
- Promote inclusive, active and meaningful participation and decision-making of women at all levels. Empower and train women to take on leadership roles and act as change agents in CC action.
- Integrate gender and climate change issues in education at all levels, from primary education to academic levels, vocational training and informal education.
- Address differentiated needs, priorities and knowledge systems of women and men in Climate change adaptation and mitigation programmes.
- Enhance women’s livelihoods and promote women-led green enterprises by ensuring their access to finance, including climate finance, insurance, technical training, and sustainable technologies, specifically in climate-related sectors such as agriculture, energy, transport and waste. Apply health, safety and labour standards in these initiatives. As well, enable women’s participation in CSA/CRA, renewable energy, and sustainable transport and waste management sectors, by supporting Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) and crèches for children of employees.
- Target CC mitigation and adaptation programmes, through Climate Smart Agriculture/Climate Resilient Agriculture, towards the needs and priorities of rural women and men, minimising the shocks induced by climate change.

The Bhutan Living Standard Survey (BLSS) 2017 estimates that in Bhutan, **35.3 percent of households are headed by females**. The proportion of female-headed households is much higher in the rural areas (38.8 percent) than in urban areas (29.1 percent). Rural women shoulder a range of unpaid and unrecognized reproductive work, productive or income generating activities and community and social responsibilities.

Time use studies and GNH surveys reveal that **women work longer hours** in the field than men (ranging from 14-18 hours/day) and have less leisure time. As a result of rural-urban migration (mainly male), many women stay behind in the villages and become primary labour in agriculture; these women face growing farm labour shortages while at the same time experience increasing pressure to take care of their household and the growing group of elderly.

Economic barriers are less pronounced in Bhutan than in most other South Asian countries, in part because of the **prevalence of matrilineal systems** of family formation (EU 2015/16 CSO formulation). Traditionally, particularly in northern Bhutan, daughters inherit the house and land while sons leave home to settle in their wives' homes. In most Bhutanese traditions, the household was run by the most capable member of the family, which often resulted in the mother or eldest daughter holding this position indicating that girls and women were no less capable than men.

In spite of the Bhutanese society being largely matrilineal and women enjoying equal status with men, there are certain beliefs and practices that set women apart, resulting in women being disadvantaged. **Gender gaps** exist in decision-making, both at the household and community level. Though household decisions are generally taken in a pleasantly democratic manner, in traditional Bhutanese society, **certain subtle 'patriarchal values'** exist, leading men to generally have more say in decisions concerning politics and major household matters. In a society where gender stereotypes and attitudes run deep, women are portrayed as less capable than men. This leads to women having lower expectations of them-selves, of their leadership capability and their proposed role in politics. Patriarchal values and society's attitude and stereotypes apart, this is most likely due to illiteracy or lower levels of education and training. In remote areas without roads families have been more reluctant to send girls to distant schools, and schools have often lacked suitable sanitary facilities for girls. These gaps are being rapidly closed, but have contributed to lower literacy and education levels among adult women.

6.0 Sectoral context

The gender equality diagnostic study carried out by **ADB** during 2014 provided a **comprehensive analysis** of eight important sectors that includes: agriculture and rural livelihoods, education, energy, environment, private sector development, transport, urban development, and work and unemployment. This study is considered a useful gender resource but also provides practical guidelines to facilitate gender mainstreaming in the selected sectors by all the development partners including government, donors, civil society organisations and private sector stakeholders. The Table 1 below provides a summary of sector context, gender equality issues, government commitments and opportunities for mainstreaming in 9 chosen sectors including health sector. The information related to health sector is derived from the **UN Women recent study** (2016) on Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting report. Additionally Gender Country Profile of JICA prepared during 2017 was also referred. The 2020 Climate Change and Gender Study has also been used to update the agriculture and rural livelihood, energy and urban development sector.

Table1: An overview of sectoral context, gender equality issues and government commitments to address gender equality

Sectors	Sector Context	Gender equality issues relevant to sector activities and outcomes	Government commitments to support gender equality in the sector	Looking forward: issues and opportunities to consider
Agriculture and rural livelihoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •About 70% of the population is rural, and most rural households depend at least in part on crop, livestock, and forest products for subsistence and income. •Agriculture sector challenges include low productivity, low technology, inaccessible markets, and labor shortages. •The 12th Five-Year Plan emphasis on water, food and nutrition security. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available data provide little insight into the functioning of rural households, particularly from a gender perspective. • Women predominate in the rural and agricultural labour force. • With the addition of household and community requirements, the work burdens of rural women are particularly heavy. • The common assumption that inheritance practices benefit women needs validation. • Limited information is available about women's access to other productive resources (labour, extension, and finance). • Cooperatives, farmers' groups, and other SHGs provide means to increase women's options. • Domestic violence is prevalent in rural areas and affects women's economic activities & their quality of life. • Women are differentially affected by climate change notably in the agricultural sector and have different level of preparedness and awareness on the issue. • Limited participation of women in disaster management committees, climate change policy making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efforts to bring extension services closer to local communities have benefited both women and men. • Previous National Plan of Action for Gender have aimed to increase the number of women extension workers and the participation of women farmers in training. • The 2019-2023 NPAGE aims to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to climate change and environmental degradation, and increase women's role in climate change and environment decision-making. It focuses on implementing targeted measures to reduce climate change vulnerability, building the capacity of women and girls on climate change and environment decision making, integrating gender into environment and climate change policies, plans and programmes, and strengthening the collection and use of gender disaggregated data. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data for informed policy development—beyond the household • Women's views on development priorities and strategies • Labour-saving technologies to reduce women's work burden • Collective / commercial approaches to certain household tasks • Mobile phones as an economic asset for women farmers • Domestic violence prevention
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The educational system has expanded significantly since the 1960s. •Basic education is publicly funded from pre-primary to class X. •Higher-secondary and tertiary students are supported on merit. •Most of the older generation remains illiterate, particularly women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Gender parity in enrolment has been achieved in basic education. •Other elements of gender equality in education have received less attention, including equality of learning and outcomes. •Girls' poor performance in math and sciences is a constraint on participation and options at higher levels. •Girls' classroom experience may undermine performance. •Poor school water& sanitation facilities are also gender issues. •Equal participation in tertiary education and across subjects remains a major challenge. •Girls and boys in rural areas have limited exposure to women in leadership roles, including teachers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Commitment to universal access to basic education has benefited both girls and boys. •The 12th Five-Year Plan aims to address the gender gap by improving the access and quality of education at tertiary education levels including technical and vocational education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Performance of girls in secondary education •Practical interpretation of the concept of "girl-friendly" schools •Role of the school system in promoting positive views on women's capacities and role in society •Leadership role of school principals on gender equality •Use of management tools to monitor and promote progress

Sectors	Sector Context	Gender equality issues relevant to sector activities and outcomes	Government commitments to support gender equality in the sector	Looking forward: issues and opportunities to consider
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •University students, particularly young men, seem to doubt women's capacities and potential for leadership. •Low literacy levels of adult women constrain their participation in a modernizing society. 		on the gender dimensions of higher education
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Hydropower is the engine of economic growth and development. •There has been considerable progress toward "electricity for all." •Households are the major energy users and are still heavily dependent on biomass. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Access to modern energy services and to fuel- and labour-saving technologies is important to equal opportunities for women. •Many rural households still rely on fuelwood for cooking. •Household labour-saving technologies are not yet in widespread use. •Improved cookstoves can reduce fuelwood use, particularly when designed in light of household needs. •Employees in the energy sector are much more likely to be male than female. •While women are still in the minority, they account for a good proportion of graduates in fields relevant to the energy sector. •Equitable access by women to technical, maintenance, and construction opportunities is important. •There are opportunities to support women's participation in sustainable energy-related livelihoods and entrepreneurship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The gross national happiness framework applied to energy sector planning promotes equitable access to new economic opportunities and household access to clean energy. •Legislative commitments to equal opportunities in employment also apply to the energy sector, including hydropower projects and the provision of energy services to households. •The commitments to support women's entrepreneurship in the 2012 Cottage, Small and Medium Industry Policy are also relevant to energy-related entrepreneurship. • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Women as agents for household energy efficiency •Women's participation in energy-related livelihoods and entrepreneurship •Women's participation as employees, professionals, and managers in the energy sector •Monitoring and targets for women's participation in the sector
Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Conservation and sustainable environmental management constitutes one of the four pillars of the gross national happiness framework that guides national planning. •Bhutan's forests and biodiversity are significant assets. •Environmental hazards include earthquakes and landslides. •Potential climate change impacts include increased risk of glacial lake outburst floods, changing rainfall and weather patterns, unpredictable agricultural conditions, and reduced water flow constraining hydropower production. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Insights of women and men into climate change impacts and adaptation approaches may differ due to gender differences in activities. •Women have interests in water resource management for households but also for crops and livestock. •Adaptation measures related to farming practices require women's participation to be effective. •Women's informed participation is also important in the management of parks and protected areas. •To date there has been limited attention to the gender dimensions of biodiversity management. •Women are involved in community forestry, but there is little information about how they participate or benefit. •Effective disaster risk reduction requires outreach to women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •There has been limited attention to date on the gender dimensions of climate change impacts or adaptation. •A commitment has been made to women's participation in disaster management committees at all levels. •The 2019-2023 NPAGE recognised the differentiated impacts of climate change on women especially due to their engagement in climate vulnerable sectors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Women are not just a vulnerable group, but vital partners in environmental management •Adequacy of sex-disaggregated data on activities and interests related to agriculture, forestry, and biodiversity management •Women's participation in water and waste management •Gender and payment for ecosystem services

Sectors	Sector Context	Gender equality issues relevant to sector activities and outcomes	Government commitments to support gender equality in the sector	Looking forward: issues and opportunities to consider
Private Sector Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Expansion of the private sector is seen as critical for employment generation, poverty reduction, and self-reliance. •Most enterprises are in the small-scale or cottage category. •A consolidated approach is set out in Cottage, Small and Medium Industry Policy, 2012. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Women are active as entrepreneurs in various enterprise size and activity categories. •Existing data provide limited insights into the characteristics of women entrepreneurs and their enterprises. •Constraints for women entrepreneurs include access to finance. •Women entrepreneurs also grapple with sociocultural factors. •Stereotypes persist about women's abilities to lead and manage. •Working conditions and pay for private sector employees remain an issue. •Women are an important component of the private sector labour force. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The Cottage, Small and Medium Industry Policy also makes a commitment to supporting women's entrepreneurship. Measures are specified in the related strategy. •Also relevant to development of an equitable private sector is the regulatory framework for employment conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Gender mainstreaming in support of women's entrepreneurship •Access to finance by women entrepreneurs in cottage, small, and medium industries •Regulatory environment and equality objectives •Role of business associations
Transport roads – and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Expansion of rural road networks has been pursued for several decades as strategic investments for improved quality of life and economic opportunity. •Road access is consistently a top priority of rural communities. •Transport services are also critical, as are feeder and national roads. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Rural road access promises many benefits to rural inhabitants. •More information is needed to assess whether increased road access benefits women and men similarly. •Increased road access entails potential costs and hazards. •Women seem to carry a disproportionate share of unpaid routine maintenance of farm roads. •Few women are involved in local decision making about roads. •Improved transport services and pedestrian facilities are also critical to mobility. •Women's transport safety can be enhanced through infrastructure and transport planning. •Working conditions for manual road workers, particularly women, merit review. •Employment in the transport sector remains largely male. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •There are no sector-specific gender equality commitments. •Emphasis on the role of transport investment in improving mobility of people and goods, and quality of life is conducive to addressing gender-related issues. •The Labour and Employment Act, 2007, which prohibits discrimination in recruitment, pay, conditions, is also relevant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Working and living conditions of the National Work Force •Capacity and management practices in the construction industry •Livelihood and entrepreneurial opportunities related to routine road maintenance •Livelihood and entrepreneurial opportunities in transport services and roadside amenities
Urban development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The urban population is projected to rise to 50% of the total by 2020. •Rapid urbanization is putting pressure on current centers. •The 2008 National Urbanization Strategy sets out a growth center approach aimed at balanced regional development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Rural-urban migration patterns may be skewed toward men. •Unemployment rates are higher and opportunities fewer for women in urban areas. •Limited child care options may also be a constraint to urban employment for women. •Urban services are important for all but particularly for women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The national government recognizes the desirability of more balanced representation of women and men in local government. •Planning by local governments uses the same framework as the national five-year plan, which includes gender mainstreaming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Data and information needs for informed urban and spatial planning •Women's interests and economic activities (women as actors and agents, not just a "vulnerable group")

Sectors	Sector Context	Gender equality issues relevant to sector activities and outcomes	Government commitments to support gender equality in the sector	Looking forward: issues and opportunities to consider
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •As yet, only four urban areas have full municipal status, but some 30 urban plans are in process with local government involvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Poverty is lower in urban areas but is an emerging issue. •Domestic violence and tolerance of it are also urban issues. •Few women participate in local decision-making. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Local governments are also bound by constitutional commitments and national policies for gender equality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Gender perspectives on spatial and infrastructure planning •Women's participation in employment opportunities in urban and infrastructure planning and management •Making cities and towns safe places for women
Work and unemployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Employment growth has not kept pace with growth in demand for employment from educated youth entering the labour market. •There is a mismatch between labour market needs and the skills, knowledge, and aspirations of youth. •Lack of skilled workers is a constraint in key sectors; foreign workers are used to bridge skill gaps. •The 12th Five-Year Plan emphasis on creating decent job opportunities for the Bhutanese, particularly the young population, and to ensure a safe and secure work environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Women and men have similar labour force participation rates but do different types of work. •Unemployment is higher for women than men (youth and adult). •Women are more prone to underemployment and low earnings. •Fewer women than men have benefited from training. •Women account for a substantial proportion of educated jobseekers entering the labour market. •Women's representation in the civil service has yet to catch up with the increase in educated women entering the labour market. •Availability of childcare has yet to be investigated and pursued as a public policy issue related to women's economic opportunities. •Young migrant women providing childcare is a two-sided employment equality issue for women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Discrimination in the labour force is prohibited by Bhutan's •Constitution and labour legislation. •The Eleventh Five-Year Plan sets targets for reduced female youth unemployment. •The plan also calls for gender mainstreaming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Gender mainstreaming in policies and strategies •Training and placement services for skills in demand •Employer attitudes and management practices •Protection provided by minimum standards legislation •Child care as an issue of equal employment opportunities •Leadership role of the public sector
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Expenditure on the health sector is about 11.4 % of the total budget (MoH, 2012) and 14 % of GNH (highest contribution among the 9 domains) •Very significant decrease in the incidence of the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Under Five Mortality Rate (UFMR) and Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR). •89 percent of deliveries were by skilled health personnel and plays an important role in reducing rates of IMR and MMR. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Females are more likely to be susceptible to sickness or injury than males, irrespective of area (urban or rural). •Females in the economically productive and elderly population tend to be sick or injured more in numbers than their male counterparts •Increasing teenage pregnancy affects girls more in terms of social and educational terms as well as in terms of access to employment. •High rate of adolescent fertility is one factor that reduces Bhutan's position in the gender inequality index. •Women's vulnerability to domestic violence is on raise due to the tendency to uphold traditional gender roles in which men are considered superior. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The National Health Policy of 2011 reiterates universalisation of quality public health services and emphasis on decentralization in delivery of health services •The National Adolescent Health Strategic Plan (MoH, 2013-2018) aims to provide comprehensive awareness raising, counselling and school health programmes. •Public health services – focus is on strengthening surveillance mechanism, implementing national strategy for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Launching a National Nutrition Mission •Strengthening monitoring to check mortality •Stressing on adolescent's reproductive health •Building a gender equitable delivery system •The need more sex-disaggregated data on health seeking behaviour

Sectors	Sector Context	Gender equality issues relevant to sector activities and outcomes	Government commitments to support gender equality in the sector	Looking forward: issues and opportunities to consider
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Significant improvement in accessing health facilities for antenatal care – increased from 51 % coverage for at least one antenatal visit during 2000 to 97.3 percent in 2010 with almost 78 percent making four Antenatal Care (ANC) visits. •General nutritional status has been improving, however the prevalence of stunting at 33.5 percent continues to remain a major public health issue •The prevalence of anaemia among women and children is very high with levels nearing 54.8 and 80.6 percent respectively •Human resource has been a constraint in health service delivery. The extreme shortage can be judged from the fact that in Bhutan there were two doctors for every 10,000 people in 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The Annual Health Bulletin does not have sex-disaggregated data on the composition of •The health workforce, but it is necessary to have adequate female staff as it makes easier for women to access the health facility 	<p>sanitation & hygiene, mainstreaming health in all sector programmes, integrating management of Neonatal and Childhood illness, nutrition programmes to improve health of mother & child, intensify implementation of HIV & TB programmes,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Medical services – focus is on standardisation of health services across all health institutions, improve access to healthcare / emergencies services, enhance preparedness and response to emergencies and disasters, ICT enabled health care solutions and strengthen nursing care services by creating Nursing Division. •The focus of 12th FYP NKRA is about promoting a productive and harmonious society build on strong foundation of a healthy population and a safe and caring society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •raising awareness of men and women, boys and girls is critically important for better health outcomes

7.0 EU response to mainstream gender in Bhutan programmes and way forward

7.1 Multiannual indicative programme (MIP) 2021 - 2027

EU's assistance to the Royal Government of Bhutan under the MIP 2021-2027 is expected to support partly the implementation of the 12th FYP (2018 to 2023) and the 13th FYP and the COVID 19 Economic Contingency Plan (which contains the plan for economic recovery - building back better).

The strategic interest of the EU and its Member States lies in the shared commitment to achieve the SDGs and to fulfil the commitments under the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030). Supporting Bhutan's ambitions of carbon neutral development, promoting Bhutan's unique model of Gross National Happiness, as well as initiatives that address gender equality, women empowerment and economic vulnerabilities, remain equally vital. Contributing to the EU's foreign policy, the partnership with Bhutan upholds and promotes the Union's values, protecting Human Rights, consolidating and supporting democracy, the rule of law and good governance, but also showcasing international responsibility and global solidarity to build trust and facilitate cooperation across policy areas.

The EU engagement in Bhutan under the MIP 2021-2027 will aim at supporting the country in its carbon neutral development, strengthening gender and women's empowerment, strengthening its democratic institutions, supporting the small and medium enterprises, and promoting private sector led green growth and digital opportunities in the country. These are all well aligned with the global EU priorities of "Green deal alliances", "Alliances for growth and jobs", as well as gender equality, digitalization, governance, peace, security and human development. Consequently, three priorities are envisaged:

- Priority 1 Climate Change, Green Growth for Resilient Bhutan
- Priority 2 Good Governance for inclusive socio-economic development
- Priority 3 Digital Transition: a driver for change in education and public services delivery

The GAP III Country Level Implementation Plan (CLIP), which will be developed in 2021, will provide a strategic approach to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Bhutan. Based on this gender analysis, and articulated around areas of engagement of the EU and EU Member States, the CLIP will identify the main areas of work for the next five years and objectives to be reached. Depending on the specific thematic objectives to be pursued, a number of GAP III indicators will be identified and monitored.

The Table 2 gives an overview of the ongoing EU Bilateral support to Bhutan upon which, the CLIP will also be built.

Table 2: An overview of on-going EU support in Bhutan

Sector	Title of the programme	Objectives	EU funding	Gender Marker	Specific Gender indicators identified in the programme
Good Governance	Capacity Development for Local Government and Fiscal Decentralisation in Bhutan	<p>The overall objective of the programme is to assist the Royal Government of Bhutan in reducing poverty and inequality and promote carbon neutral development.</p> <p>The specific objectives are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -improve the financial capability of the government to implement local government reforms; -promote decentralisation and local government reforms; -improve service delivery at local levels; and to -improve governance in particular at local level and in particular public finance management <p>One of the expected result area is: Improved main-streaming of gender, environment, climate and poverty cross-cutting issues; the promotion of good governance in local level service delivery.</p> <p>Implementation</p> <p>Sector Reform Contract (Budget Support): EUR 16 mil PFM by World Bank, Indirect Management: EUR 3 mil Technical Assistance, M&E, Visibility: EUR 1 million</p>	EUR 20 Million	G1 (significant objective)	<p>Number of elected women LG representatives</p> <p>Baseline: 7.2% of elected posts in LGs are female (2013)</p> <p>Target: 12% (2020)</p> <p>Number of LGs supported with performance based grants (PBG) focusing on GECDP mainstreaming</p> <p>Baseline: 6 LGs supported with climate resilience PBG (FY 2014/15)</p> <p>Target: At least 50 LGs (2020)</p>
	Support to Civil Society in Bhutan	<p>The overall objective of the action is to enhance the contribution of civil society to Bhutan's 11th FYP and future 12th FYP's objectives in the areas of sustainable development and good governance.</p> <p>The specific objective of the action is to improve the environment and operational capacity for civil society engagement in sustainable development and good governance by promoting an inclusive approach to strengthen civil society actors.</p> <p>The proposed programme will strengthen the attention to gender equality. Gender equality will be addressed by specific activities and will be main-streamed through both, the capacity building efforts and the grant fund mechanism.</p>			<p>CSOA carries out core mandate to improve legislative, regulatory and institutional environment for civil society.</p> <p>Indicator: More CSO-RGoB dialogue incl. gender</p> <p>Baseline: Multiple weaknesses. <3 dialogues/year</p> <p>Target: Fully functioning. >8 dialogues/year</p> <p>- Increased civil society engagement, particularly in</p>

Sector	Title of the programme	Objectives	EU funding	Gender Marker	Specific Gender indicators identified in the programme
		<p>All proposals will be subjected to a gender equality screening and where required, an environmental impact assessment.</p> <p>Implementation</p> <p>Helvetas: EUR 2.2 million Technical Assistance, M&E, Visibility: EUR 300,000</p>			<p>poorest districts and on gender issues</p> <p>Baseline: - CSO FF grants 3 / 20 districts. 10 poorest districts <25% funds, 1 / 68 grants, 2% funds gender focused</p> <p>Target: - EU grants 20 / 20 districts. 10 poorest districts >50% funds >15% grants funds gender focused</p>
	Promoting Good Governance - Support to Civil Society and Bhutanese Parliament engagement with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)	<p>The overall objective of the action is to support Civil Society Organisations and the Parliament's engagement with Civil Society Organisations.</p> <p>The specific objectives of the project are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Targeted Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) engage effectively with Parliament and participate in legislative and oversight processes. -Parliament provides an enabling environment for public participation in parliamentary business. 	EUR 1.4 million	G 0 – (Not targeted).	<p>Number of CSOs working on women's social and political issues with a focus on vulnerable groups and those affected by COVID-19 trained Baseline – 12 Target – 20</p> <p>Number of CSO and CBO representatives trained on thematic issues, particularly human rights, national budget analysis and monitoring service delivery, and accountability (disaggregated by type of CSO and gender) Baseline – 10 Target – 100</p> <p>Number of policy advocacy networking events, including among women's organisations Baseline – NA Target - 2</p>

Sector	Title of the programme	Objectives	EU funding	Gender Marker	Specific Gender indicators identified in the programme
Renewable Natural Resources (Agriculture, Forestry and Livestock)	Rural Development and Climate Change Response Programme	<p>The overall objective of the present action is to assist Bhutan in reducing poverty and inequality by developing sustainable rural livelihoods resilient to climate change impacts and by facilitating the key objectives of Bhutan's 11th and 12th five-year plans in the RNR sector.</p> <p>The specific objectives are to:</p> <p>1) To provide fiscal space and improve the financial capability of the RGoB to enable the MoAF to address and improve RNR sector policy reforms in the priority areas defined in the 11th FYP and future 12th FYP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Enhanced food and nutrition security ; b. Improved sustainable rural livelihoods and generate employment opportunities; c. Accelerated and sustainable growth of the RNR sector; d. Sustainable management and utilization of natural resources; <p>2) To support innovative actions undertaken by RGoB to enhance resilience to climate change.</p> <p>One of the expected results correspond to gender mainstreaming is: Improved RNR related public service delivery at the local level, notably with respect to the implementation of crop production, livestock, forestry, sustainable rural livelihoods, rural employment opportunities, and in particular climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as gender sensitive services.</p> <p>One of the main action correspond to gender mainstreaming is: Conduct policy dialogue with the authorities on RNR sector policy implementation taking into account all climate change issues; of particular relevance is a strengthened focus on 'results' in terms of RNR service delivery, gender issues, financial sustainability (e.g. user charges) and climate change resilience; This policy dialogue will be held in the context of the formal Donor Coordination meetings organised by Bhutan which was launched during the earlier sector budget support program. Opportunities to engage with the Ministry in mainstreaming gender issues into all plans and programmes are expected.</p>	EUR 21.5 million	G 0 – (Not targeted).	<p>No specific gender indicator referred in the log frame. However the program is expected to provide gender disaggregated data in all the result areas.</p> <p>This program also specifically envisages implementing activities and promoting technologies that are women friendly such as: promoting women friendly farm machinery; promote use of drudgery reduction technologies; encourage stall feeding; promote use of electric fencing; promote use of biogas and encourage women participation in farmer groups and cooperatives.</p>

Sector	Title of the programme	Objectives	EU funding	Gender Marker	Specific Gender indicators identified in the programme
		<p>Implementation</p> <p>Sector Reform Contract (Budget Support): EUR 20 mil (EUR 15 million from MIP and EUR 5 million from GCCA thematic instrument)</p> <p>Technical Assistance, M&E, Visibility: EUR 1.5 million</p>			
Trade	Trade Related Assistance in Bhutan (Implemented by International Trade Centre)	<p>The overall objective of the proposed action is to contribute to Bhutan's economic growth and poverty reduction. The specific objective of the action is to increase exports and export diversification, possibly contributing to and drawing upon the implementation of the "Brand Bhutan" initiative, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving the capacities of trade and investment policy formulation and implementation, and • Increasing exports in selected value chains, i.e. horticulture and handicraft textiles. <p>The Action will integrate gender, youth and environment-related issues (e.g. organic production) as cross-cutting issues. Sector value chains have been selected accordingly.</p> <p>Implementation</p> <p>International Trade Centre (Indirect Management): EUR 4 Million</p>	EUR 4 million	G1 (significant objective)	<p>The program is expected to provide gender disaggregated data in all the result areas</p> <p>Number of Horticulture Value Chain Action Plans - focusing on the 2 selected products and integrating gender and youth dimension - produced with and validated by country stakeholders (Baseline 0, target 2)</p> <p>Number of Horticulture value chain market penetration strategies - focusing on the 2 selected products and integrating gender and youth dimension, - produced with and validated by country stakeholders (Baseline 0, target 2)</p> <p>Status of Handmade Handicraft textile value chain analysis integrating gender and youth dimension</p>

Sector	Title of the programme	Objectives	EU funding	Gender Marker	Specific Gender indicators identified in the programme
Regional Programmes	- Switch Asia	Overall Objectives: to boost the transformation of Bhutan towards a green economy by enhancing sustainability and competitiveness of tourism as a key sector thus contribute to Vision 2030, Bhutan's national planning strategy which has identified tourism as a key sector. Specific Objectives: tourism is more sustainable having adopted and replicated proven SCP practices, developed greener products, integrated MSMEs, and has obtained competitive advantages within the global tourism market which is supported by enabling government policies.	EUR 1,302,895	G1	The project aims to create -at least 200 new jobs of which 50% are earmarked for women. -at least 40% of the participants in trainings are expected to be women. -of the 50 certified suppliers at least 40% are female owned/managed - At least 40% businesses are women owned/managed businesses. -2 workshops with 2X20 participants of which 40% are women and 2 reports produced -5 sub-sectoral multi-stakeholder meetings with 15 participants of which 25% are women, held. -2 audit and advisor trainings, with at least 20 participants, of which 40% are women. -100 managers trained and certified of which 40% are women
	SWITCH Asia "Sustainable Hospitality Industry Inclusive of Native Entrepreneurs"	Overall objective(s): To contribute to sustainable and inclusive tourism development in Bhutan with improved regional spread of the tourism activities and its value and to create income generation for the majority of rural poor Specific objective(s): 1) Fair distribution of sustainable tourism value between well promoted touristic hotspots and neglected rural areas in Bhutan. 2) Enable MSMEs and clusters of producers of agro products and handicrafts in rural areas to generate sustainable		G0	-8 trainings, 200 suppliers certified of which 40% are women. -100 hotel managers certified of which 40% are women. -200 key suppliers assessed of which 40% are women, 200 reports/action/improvement plans -2 workshops with 25 public and private stakeholders are conducted for defining problem analysis/common approach on sustainable destination management. Of these participants 25% are women.

Sector	Title of the programme	Objectives	EU funding	Gender Marker	Specific Gender indicators identified in the programme
					<p>-1 roundtable with at least 15 participants and one report prepared. Estimated 25% of the participants are women.</p> <p>-1 workshop, 20+ participants of which 40% are women.</p> <p>-1 workshop of 2 days, 15 participants trained of which 40% are women</p> <p>-20 tour operators joined the sustainable design workshop of which 40% are women.</p> <p>-200 hotels and restaurants by the end of the action and proportion of women entrepreneurs increased by 10%</p> <p>- Increase of number of network members & Proportion of women entrepreneurs (10%)</p>

8.0 Key stakeholders and means identified for gender mainstreaming in Bhutan

The key stakeholders identified in the budget support implementation as well as in mainstreaming gender issues are outlined in the table below:

Key stakeholders	Means of engagement
Royal Government of Bhutan (Policy dialogue, political dialogue, implementation of budget support deliverables)	
Gross National Happiness Commission (overall planning)	Overall planning, multisectoral coordination and mainstreaming gender in sectoral Ministries and Departments, Planning and Monitoring system of GNHC (PLaMS)
Ministry of Finance (MoF)	Budget planning and prioritisation, PFM, Decentralisation, Monitoring of fund utilisation, Gender Responsive Budgeting
Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Forests (MoAEF)	Gender mainstreaming programmes / policies in the RNR Sector, Implementation of GRPB, Ministry and Department as well as in the BS implementation
Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs (MHCA)	Gender mainstreaming programmes / policies in the Ministry and Department as well as in the BS implementation
Department of Local Government	Gender mainstreaming programmes / policies in the Local Governance Sector, Ministry and Department as well as in the BS implementation
Local governments, at dzongkhags and gewogs level	Implementation of specific gender mainstreaming interventions at district and below district level
Ministry of Economic Affairs	Coordination and implementation of EU Bhutan Trade support programme
Civil Society Organisation Authority	Provides regulatory framework for CSO engagement in democracy, inclusive development and addressing gender equality issues. Provides training, capacity building, grants to Bhutanese CSOs with a scope to mainstream gender.
National Commission for Women and Children	Nodal agency oversees gender equality and women specific issues in the country. Engaging with NCWC is critical to ensure addressing specific gender gaps identified.
Department of National Budget	Gender sensitive national budgeting process – engagement will be specific to EU supported to budget support programmes.
Department of Statistics	Monitoring and tracking sex disaggregated data specific to Budget support programme as well as national data
Other development partners as part of Donor / Gender coordination group (regular consultation, complement / supplement actions, specific studies / research, collective lobby with RGoB)	
Member States + (Austrian Development Agency, Swizz Agency for Development and	Regular consultation through donor coordination and gender coordination group. Complement the initiative of MS programme especially Austria in Bhutan. Joint reporting of GAP III.

Cooperation, Denmark, Netherlands)	
International Agencies	
World Bank	Engagement is through PFM assessment, ongoing regional programme on disaster preparedness and regular donor coordination
UN Agencies: UN RC, UNDP, WFP, FAO, UN Women, UNICEF, IFAD, ITC, ITU	UN agencies play an important role in gender mainstreaming across multiple sectors - e.g. UNDP engaged with RGOB on gender and climate change, domestic violence, WFP on food security and nutrition related programmes, UNICEF on Education, FAO and IFAD on RNR sector etc.
Japan International Cooperation Agency	Donor coordination / Mechanisation and drudgery reduction interventions in RNR sector
ADB	Besides regular donor coordination, specific consultation with ADB is envisaged to proactively use and implement the sectoral gaps (agriculture) identified the 'gender diagnostic study'
ICIMOD	As an inter-governmental agency, ICIMOD is a key player in climate change and rural livelihood related interventions.
International Cooperative Alliance (ICA)	ICA as an inter-governmental organisation, has been engaged with RGOB in mainstreaming gender in community institutions (e.g. farmer groups and cooperatives)
International NGOs: Helvetas, SNV Netherlands, WWF, IDEA	Mainstreaming gender is through implementation of CSO capacity development as well as through their engagement in EU policy dialogue with the budget support programmes.
National NGOs - Respect, Educate, Nurture and Educate Women (RENEW), Bhutan-Network for Empowering Women (B-NEW), Tarayana Foundation, Bhutan Youth Development Fund, Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs, Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy etc.	Engagement with CSOs is foreseen through CSO capacity development project and also through regular consultation including while preparing the CSO roadmap for Bhutan.