



Royal Government of Bhutan

(The National Commission for Women and Children)

**National Review Report on the Implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
June 2019**

(Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and Adoption of the Beijing
Declaration and Platform for Action (1995))

Table of Content

List of Acronyms	6
Introduction	9
Section I	10
Overview Analysis of Achievements and Challenges and the Future Prospects	10
Analysis of major achievements (2014-2019)	10
Analysis of major Challenges	16
Future Prospects	17
Section II	20
Analysis of the implementation progress across 12 critical areas of concern of the BPFA (2014-2019)	20
Dimension 1: Inclusive Development, Shared Priority and Decent Work (Critical Areas - Women and Poverty, Women and Economy, Human Rights of Women and the Girl Child)	20
Non-discrimination in recruitment, retention and promotion of women in public and private sector	20
Gender-responsive labour market policies.....	21
Sexual harassment at workplace	22
Land rights and tenure security	23
Financial inclusion and access to credit.....	24
Access to agricultural technology, infrastructure and services.....	26
Women’s participation in Economic Decision-making bodies	27
Childcare Facilities	27
Support for elderly persons.....	28
Leave.....	29
Access to labour-saving public infrastructure.....	30
Awareness of unpaid care and domestic work.....	30

Dimension 2: Poverty eradication, social protection and social services (Critical Areas - Women and Poverty, Education and Training, Women and Health, Human Rights of Women, the Girl Child)32

Targeted poverty alleviation measures	32
Women’s entrepreneurship and business development activities.....	34
Social Protection Programs.....	35
Legal Services.....	37
Universal and public health services.....	38
Sexual and Reproductive Health.....	40
Health Promotion	42
Comprehensive sexuality education programmes	42
Access to TVET	43
Gender-responsive education curriculum	44
Safe, harassment-free and inclusive educational environment	44
Menstrual Hygiene.....	45
Adolescent and Teenage Pregnancies	45

Dimension 3: Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes (Critical Areas - Violence against women, human rights of women, women and media, and the girl child).....47

Legislation to address violence against women and girls.....	47
National action plans to address violence against women.....	48
Institutional mechanism and services	48
Capacity Building and Awareness Programmes.....	50
Child, early and forced marriages.....	53
Trafficking in Women and Children.....	54
Access to Justice	55
Evidence generation and data collection.....	56

Dimension 4: Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions (Critical Areas: Women in power and decision-making, Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, Human rights of women, Women and the media and the girl child)58

Legal framework for women’s political participation	58
Capacity and awareness programmes	59
Violence in Politics	61
Data collection and evidence generation	61
Access to Information Communication and Technology	61
Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB)	62
National Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan	63

Dimension 5 - Peaceful and inclusive societies (Women and armed conflict, human rights of women and the girl child).....64

Mainstreaming women, peace and security in national planning and policy framework.....	64
Women’s participation in humanitarian and crisis response activities.....	64
Production, use of and trafficking in Illicit drugs.....	65
Child Labour	65

Dimension 6: Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation (Human rights of women, women and the environment and the girl child).....67

Women’s participation and leadership in environmental and natural resource management and governance.....	67
Gender-specific environmental and health hazards awareness.....	69
Participation in technical and environmental disciplines.....	69
Climate-smart agricultural technology and infrastructure	70
Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Practice.....	70
Green economy and decent jobs	71
Participation and leadership in disaster management.....	71
Evidence generation and awareness on the impacts of environmental degradation and disasters	72

Access to disaster services such as relief payments, disaster insurance and compensation	72
Gender-responsive disaster and climate laws, policies and programmes	73
<i>Section III</i>	74
<i>National Process and Institutional Mechanism to implement and monitor the critical areas of BPFA</i>	74
Institutional Mechanism.....	74
National Review Processes	75
<i>Section IV</i>	76
<i>Sex-Disaggregated Data and Gender Statistics</i>	76
Gender Statistics - Progress	76
Gender Statistics Priorities.....	78
<i>Section V: Conclusion</i>	80

List of Acronyms

ADB:	Asian Development Bank
AFHS:	Adolescent Friendly Health Services
BAOWE:	Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs
BCCI:	Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry
BCSR:	Bhutan Civil Service Rule 2018
BDBL:	Bhutan Development Bank Limited
BLSS:	Bhutan Living Standard Surveys
BNCA:	Bhutan Narcotic Control Agency
BNEW:	Bhutan Network for Empowering Women
BNLI:	Bhutan National Legal Institute
BPFA:	Beijing Platform for Action
CAA:	Child Adoption Act 2012
CBSS:	Community Based Support System
CCPA:	Child Care and Protection Act 2011
CCPCB:	Civil and Criminal Procedures Code of Bhutan 2001
CEDAW:	Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CICL:	Children in Conflict with Law
CMIS:	Central Management Information System
CRC:	Convention on the Rights of Children
CSMI:	Cottage, Small and Medium Industry Policy 2012
CSO:	Civil Society Organizations
DAMC:	Department of Agriculture Marketing and Cooperatives
DCSI:	Department of Cottage and Small Industries
DHI:	Druk Holdings & Investments
DLG:	Department of Local Governance
DLO:	Department of Law and Order
DNB:	Department of National Budget
DVPA:	Domestic Violence Prevention Act 2013
DVPRR:	Domestic Violence Prevention Rules and Regulation
DYS:	Department of Youth and Sports
ECB:	Election Commission of Bhutan

EDP:	Economic Development Policy 2016
GBV:	Gender Based Violence
GECDP:	Gender, Environment, Climate Change, Disaster and Poverty Alleviation
GEG:	Gender Expert Group
GEMS:	Gender Equality Monitoring System
GFP:	Gender Focal Person
GNHC:	Gross National Happiness Commission
GPI:	Gender Parity Index
GRPB:	Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting
JDWNRH:	Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital
LDPM:	Local Development Planning Manual
LEA:	Labour and Employment Act of Bhutan 2007
MoAF:	Ministry of Agriculture and Forest
MoE:	Ministry of Education
MoH:	Ministry of Health
MoIC:	Ministry of Information and Communication
MoLHR:	Ministry of Labour and Human Resources
MRG:	Mainstreaming Reference Group
MSTF:	Multi-sectoral Task Force
NAPA:	National Adaptation Plan of Action
NCWC:	National Commission for Women and Children
NEC:	National Environment Commission
NEP:	National Education Policy
NFE:	Non-formal Education
NFIS:	National Financial Inclusion Strategy
NFLS:	National Financial Literacy Strategy
NKRA:	National Key Result Area
NPACWP:	National Plan of Action on Child Wellbeing and Protection
NPAGE:	National Plan of Action on Gender Equality
NPAG:	National Plan of Action on Gender
NPAPGEEO:	National Plan of Action to Promote Gender Equality in Elected Offices
NSB:	National Statistical Bureau
OAG:	Office of the Attorney General
OSCC:	One Stop Crisis Centre

P4P:	Partners for Prevention
PCB:	Penal Code of Bhutan 2004
PHCB:	Population and Housing Census of Bhutan 2017
PLHA:	People Living with HIV/AIDS
PSL:	Priority Sector Lending
PWD:	Persons with Disability
RBP:	Royal Bhutan Police
RCSC:	Royal Civil Service Commission
REAP:	Rural Economy Advancement Programme
RENEW:	Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women
RMA:	Royal Monetary Authority
RNR:	Rural and Natural Resources
RUB:	Royal University of Bhutan
SAPA:	Sectoral Adaptation Plan of Action
SHG:	Self Help Groups
SoP:	Standard Operating Procedure (SoP)
STEM:	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TIP:	Trafficking in Persons
TVET:	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA:	United Nation Population Fund
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODC:	United Nation Office of Drugs and Crime
UNSC:	United Nation Security Council
VAC:	Violence Against Children
VAW/G:	Violence Against Women and Girls
WCPD:	Woman and Child Protection Division
WCPU/Ds:	Woman and Child Protection Units/Desks
WHO:	World Health Organisations
YDRC:	Youth Development Rehabilitation Centre
YDF:	Youth Development Fund
YES:	Youth Employment Skills

Introduction

The National Review is being undertaken in line with resolution E/RES/2018/8 of the United Nations Economic and Social Council which called upon all the states to undertake comprehensive national reviews of the progress made and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The National Review represents the progress made by the Royal Government of Bhutan in implementing the 12 critical areas of concern of BPFA and outcomes of the 23rd special session of the UN General Assembly 2000 since 2014. It also provides an assessment of the current situation, identifies gaps and focuses on the priority area of interventions for the Royal Government of Bhutan in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

The review is conducted by the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) in consultation with all the relevant government ministries, agencies, non-governmental organisations, the UN system and the private sector.

Section I

Overview Analysis of Achievements and Challenges and the Future Prospects

Analysis of major achievements (2014-2019)

Bhutan has always believed in and maintained a **non-discriminatory approach to development**. This has been the tradition and it is ever more evident from the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan 2008 wherein fundamental rights are equally bestowed on men and women; fundamental duties mandate every Bhutanese not to tolerate violence against women; principles of state policies intend and guide actions to eliminate discrimination against women and children; and recognises ratified international treaties like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as a deemed law of the Kingdom.

Bhutan ratified CEDAW in 1981 without any reservation, which underlines the Government's strong commitment to ensuring the rights of women. Since then, Bhutan has initiated many interventions through legislation, policies, institutional mechanism, strategies and actions to empower women and promote gender equality. The NCWC was established in 2004 as the National Women's Machinery (NWM) to coordinate, monitor, report and advocate for gender and child-related interventions in the country. The work of NCWC is largely guided by the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan and related Acts such as the Child Care and Protection Act (CCPA) 2011, the Child Adoption Act (CAA) 2012 and the Domestic Violence Prevention Act (DVPA) 2013 and the respective Rules and Regulations adopted in 2015. The global obligations like the BPFA, CEDAW and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) also provide a guiding framework in pursuing NCWC's mission of creating an equal society.

The institutional capacity of NCWC has been strengthened in the last five years both in terms of number and technical capacity. In addition to the recruitment of additional legal and programme officers, seven protection officers and counsellors have been recruited which has enabled the NCWC to discharge its responsibility as the Competent Authority for the CCPA 2011, DVPA2013 and the CAA 2012 in an effective manner.

The Gender Focal Persons (GFP) network established in 2005 with representation from all the government ministries, autonomous agencies, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the private sector

was strengthened at the local level with the appointment of the *dzongkhag*¹ legal officers as the GFP in all the 20 districts and four *thromde*². The GFPs are instrumental in mainstreaming gender issues in national and sub national levels plans, policies and programmes and in implementing targeted gender interventions at the sectoral level. The NCWC has carried out several capacity building programmes for them in the last five years. An **online Gender Equality Monitoring System (GEMS)** has been established to monitor the progress of gender mainstreaming initiatives in the sectors and generate periodic reports. The system has helped the NCWC in strengthening accountability of the sectors in gender mainstreaming. Additionally, a **Gender Expert Group (GEG)**, a pool of experts from different government and non-government agencies, has been instituted to provide technical support on gender.

The Gross National Happiness (GNH) philosophy guides Bhutan’s developmental agenda and process. GNH is integral to Bhutan’s growth process. More importantly, GNH strives to include every man, woman and child in the processes of development. Every policy in Bhutan today is mandatorily screened from a GNH perspective through the use of the GNH Screening Tool, which has gender equality as one of the parameters.

While Bhutan continues to strengthen its efforts to achieve gender equality, **the 11th Five Year Plan (FYP)** (2013-2018) as the central plan of the government addressed most of the gender issues. This is a huge positive shift to trigger stronger results and outcomes. The plan has reflected gender in the most significant and comprehensive manner with inclusion of ‘Gender Friendly Environment for Women’s Participation as a National Key Result Area (NKRA)’. The plan also included gender targets on employment, health, education, participation, protection, and awareness.

The government has initiated and approved **Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting (GRPB)** as a key strategy to support the implementation of gender mainstreaming targets of the 11th FYP. It was piloted in three key ministries: Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF), Ministry of Health (MoH), and Ministry of Education (MoE) where a gender assessment was conducted. In addition to the effort to include gender budgeting through the budget call circulars, a “Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming and Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting in Bhutan” was developed to provide strategic direction for GRPB. As such, **the Gender Budget allocation has increased by more than double in the last six years** from Nu. 225.208 million in 2014-2015 to Nu. 531.164 million in 2019-2020.

¹ *Dzongkhag refers to the districts*

² *Thromde refers to the Municipal*

A National Plan of Action to Promote Gender Equality in Elected Offices (NPAPGEEEO) was developed based on consultation with various stakeholders to achieve the target of women's participation in politics. The plan outlines various interventions and options to increase women's political participation and identifies implementing agencies. Subsequently, numerous initiatives, ranging from awareness on the importance of women's political participation to capacity building and preparing women to take part in elections, were carried out by the relevant government agencies and CSOs. These interventions resulted in the increase in women's representation in the Parliament from 8.3 percent in 2013 to 15.5 percent in 2018. Likewise, the proportion of women at the local government level increased from 7.8 percent in 2011 to 11.3 percent in 2016.

Subsequent to the endorsement of the Parental Benefit Proposal by the Cabinet in 2016, the paid maternity leave was increased from three months to six months and paternity leave from five to 10 working days for parliamentarians, local government leaders, civil servants, and the employees of state-owned enterprises and Druk Holding & Investments (DHI) companies. The government also initiated the **establishment of childcare centres at workplace** to create an enabling work environment for working parents. Currently, there are 21 childcare centres in various ministries/agencies/local governments, corporations and informal sector as part of the initiative. An internal framework to address gender issues at workplace was also developed and implemented by the ministries, agencies, corporations and local governments to complement the efforts to create a conducive working environment for women. The internal framework consists of an institutional mechanism to address sexual harassment at the workplace and also provides guidelines for creating an enabling gender friendly environment in terms of facilities, parental support and decision making. Women's representation in the civil service has witnessed a gradual increase from 35 percent in 2015 to 37 percent in 2019. The proportion of women in the executive level has also increased from 10 percent in 2015 to 12.5 percent in 2019.

For the first time, the government in 2019 carried out a study on the **valuation on unpaid care and domestic work** which otherwise remains invisible to many policymakers, economists, and national statisticians with the objective of documenting gender patterns of unpaid care work and estimate the value of unpaid care work in Bhutan. The findings of the study will play an important role in informing policy decisions on reducing the burden of unpaid care work on women and encouraging their participation in paid and productive work. It will also play a significant role in enhancing awareness on gender stereotyping and division of roles in society and in encouraging men to share the burden of unpaid care work.

The government accorded significant importance to enhancing access to quality education at all levels. Particular focus was given to strengthening the school **environment to increase and sustain girls'**

participation, especially at the tertiary level. Gender-friendly school infrastructure and facilities were made accessible in schools across the country and considerable efforts were made to improve menstrual hygiene. Further, due consideration was given to gender differentiated needs of the students and teachers through gender-responsive teaching and classroom initiatives. The school curriculum was reviewed from the gender equality perspective to change the traditional social and cultural norms and practices related to gender. Gross enrolment ratio at tertiary level for girls increased from 32.4 percent in 2015 to 39.7 percent in 2018. Furthermore, Gender Parity Index at tertiary level improved from 0.80 in 2015 to 0.82 in 2018. The adult literacy rate for women (15 years and above) increased from 45.2 percent in 2015 to 57.1 percent in 2018 which can be attributed to the impetus given to Non-formal and Continuing Education programme by the government.

Significant achievement has been made in terms of improving legal and policy provisions to develop **technical, vocational and entrepreneurial skills of women and girls** through the inclusion of specific provisions in the macro-economic and employment policies. Additionally, infrastructure and facilities were established across the country and various long-term and short-term skills development programmes were carried out by the government and non-government agencies. The Bhutan Education Blueprint (2014-2024) was developed in 2016 with the objective to increase the access to TVET through the facilitation of certification and lateral transition of students between the mainstream education, TVET institutes and universities

With major investments in facilities and services, the health outcomes and indicators have improved significantly over the last five years. The number of health facilities increased from 875 in 2014 to 909 in 2017 covering around 96 percent of the population now living within two hours' walking distance from a health facility. **The institutional delivery has increased 37.7 percent in 2012 to 93.4 percent in 2017 and the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) per 1000 live births reduced from 40.1 in 2005 to 15.1 in 2017 and the Under Five Mortality Rate per 1000 live births declined from 84 in 2005 to 37.3 in 2012.** Access to safe drinking water increased from 84.2 percent in 2005 to 98 percent in 2017 and access to improved sanitation increased from 54.8 percent in 2010 to 66.3 percent in 2016. Some of the significant developments that contributed to the increased health outcomes for women included: **construction of the 150-bedded Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Mother and Child Hospital to accelerate Maternal and Child Health**; development of Strategic Plan for Cervical Cancer Programme (2019-2023), development and implementation of the Suicide Prevention Action Plan (2015-2018) and establishment of Adolescent Friendly Health Services (AFHS) unit in 10 *dzongkhag* hospitals.

While the Constitution provides a broad legal basis to initiate and strengthen institutional mechanisms to eliminate domestic violence, the **DVPA 2013 specifies a focused approach to preventing domestic violence**, protecting victims and holding the perpetrators accountable. The Act also provides a legal basis for all the relevant agencies to work in a collaborative manner to address the issue. Accordingly, the Domestic Violence Prevention Rules and Regulations (DVPRR) was formulated and approved in 2015 to implement the provisions of the Act. Furthermore, various guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SoP) were developed to ensure minimum standards in the provision of services to women and children and enhance coordination among the various agencies. As such, these legal provisions, guidelines and SoPs have contributed to the **establishment of a comprehensive and sustainable protection mechanism** for women and children in difficult circumstances and improvement of service delivery.

The delivery of protection and other services is also enhanced by the expansion of **Women and Child Protection Unit/Desks (WCPU/D)** of the Royal Bhutan Police (RBP), establishment of Family and Child Bench at the Thimphu district court, the One-Stop Crisis Centre (OSCC) at Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital (JDWNRH), the establishment of the National Women and Children Welfare Committee (WCWC) and the *Dzongkhag/Thromde* Women and Children Committee (D/TWCC). A 24x7 Women and Children Helpline (1098) service and a Central Management Information System (CMIS) as an online case management system and repository of data related to women and children, were also established in 2017 and 2018 respectively to ensure well-coordinated services for women and children. The service provision for women and children was also strengthened by the presence of dedicated CSOs working towards eliminating Gender-Based Violence (GBV) like Respect Educate Nurture and Empower Women (RENEW)³, Bhutan Youth Development Fund (YDF)⁴ and Nazhoen Lamtoen⁵.

Several national level studies were commissioned on violence against women and children in order to generate data for evidence-based interventions. The rate of **intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence** decreased from 13 percent in 2012 to around six percent in 2017. Similarly, the acceptance of violence has decreased from 74 percent to 53 percent during the same period. With regard to **child marriage**, the proportion of women (20-24 years) who married before the age of 18 years decreased from 8.7 percent in 2012 to 5.5 percent in 2017.

³ *RENEW is a CSO dedicated to the empowerment of women and girls with special focus on the survivors of gender-based violence*

⁴ *YDF is a CSO working on the empowerment of youths*

⁵ *Nazhoen Lamtoen is a CSO that works towards supporting children in difficult circumstances and children in conflict with law*

Women's access to credit has improved over the last five years with concerted efforts made by the government and relevant CSOs. Specific provisions on women's access to credit and financial inclusion were included in relevant economic and financial policies and interventions carried out to implement the provisions. One of the significant initiatives to improve women's access to credit, particularly that of the rural women's, was the **formal registration of CSOs working on women's empowerment** like RENEW, Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs (BAOWE)⁶ and Tarayana Foundation⁷ as micro credit institutions. Other interventions, including the formation of microcredit groups, financial literacy training and introduction of various micro credit schemes, also contributed to a significant increase in the number of women availing credit and financial services.

Poverty reduction was one of the NKRA of the 11th FYP and the government set specific targets to reduce income poverty as well as **multidimensional poverty**. Several **targeted programmes** were initiated to reduce poverty. Under the National Rehabilitation Programme initiated on the command of His Majesty the King, 245 landless households were granted about 655 acres of land in addition to support for housing, water supply, education, health, power supply, road connectivity, culture and income. Further, 133,287.765 acres of land was granted to 123,265 beneficiaries as Land Kidu. Land Use Right System was launched in 2017 and 61 acres of land allotted to 58 youth for commercial farming.

The Rural Economy Advancement Programme (REAP) provided support for socio-economic development to 75 poorest villages comprising about 1,600 households selected using a Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index (MPI). **Gender equality** was included as one of the indexes and all the interventions took into consideration the gender equality concerns. Furthermore, efforts were also made at the household level through the Targeted Household Poverty Programme (THPP) whereby 2,678 poorest households were identified for targeted interventions to enhance their living standard. The intervention under the programme ranged from the provision of basic facilities such as **housing, water and sanitation to improving their access to income generating activities**. **Support to ECCDs and Childcare facilities** were also provided to reduce the childcare burden of women. As a result, the country witnessed a **substantial reduction of the multidimensional poverty rate** from 12.4 percent in 2013 to **5.4 percent** in 2017 and the income poverty rate from 12.4 to **8.21 percent**.

Concerted efforts have been made by the government to mainstream gender concerns in the environment and climate change policies and interventions. Gender concerns have been well integrated into the National Climate Change Policy and Climate Action Plans and a few studies have been carried out to

⁶ Tarayana Foundation works towards poverty alleviation of rural population

⁷ BAOWE is a CSO working to empower women entrepreneurs

assess gender-differentiated impact of key environment and climate change issues such as waste management and water. CSOs have been extensively involved in identifying and addressing gender issues in the area of environmental conservation and extracting optimum gender-specific benefits from the environment related activities.

Growing partnership with development partners and CSOs and their endeavours in promoting gender equality have also been successful in contributing to the achievements. While partnership with the NCWC has been growing, the development partners have also been successful in tabling and pursuing gender targets in every sector they support. This has brought enhanced level of awareness on the importance of the issue and also acknowledgement. Furthermore, the government has made increasing efforts to ensure that **the voices of CSOs are incorporated into any initiatives**, be it laws, policies, programmes or projects formulated by the government.

Analysis of major Challenges

Despite strong constitutional and policy mandates backed by political will and improved awareness levels, **understanding of gender issues still appears to be inadequate** among decision makers and implementers. This translates into lesser priority to address gender issues at the sectoral level and ownership of gender intervention, thereby limiting the achievement of gender mainstreaming targets. Similarly, the low level of **awareness on gender issues among the general public** continues to be one of the major challenges in addressing gender issues. The **traditional norms and practices** related to gender and gender division of roles prevalent in the country pose challenges to gender interventions, particularly at the local level. The belief that women are **better caregivers and the strongly gender stereotypical roles** impedes efforts to increase women's participation in decision making.

The **limited capacities** on gender at the national as well as local level continues to be one of the challenges for **effective gender mainstreaming** at the sectoral and the local government level. It also limits the **translation of the enabling legal, policy and political environment into actions**. The situation is also aggravated by the **high attrition** rates of officials (including GFPs) in the government and CSOs. Furthermore, women's empowerment issue is spread across the country in various forms and magnitudes. Given the fact that there are already capacity constraints, **challenging topography and demography** with mountainous terrain, scattered settlements, high rural population, porous borders etc. make it doubly challenging from a financial and human resource perspective to reach possible beneficiaries.

The crosscutting and evolving nature of gender issues requires **multi-sectoral approach to address them at all levels and inadequate collaboration and coordination** among different agencies remains a challenge. This is partly attributed to limited awareness and resources, including budget of the sectors. Therefore, there is a need for consistent resource flow on capacity development of officials working on gender issues.

While considerable progress has been made in collecting **sex-disaggregated data** by most sectors over the last five years, lack of data is still an issue in some of the sectors. Further, **effective use of data in the planning and decision-making process** is limited which can also be attributed to the lack of capacity on data analysis and use. In addition, the systematic compilation of disaggregated data, particularly in sectors such as urban development and infrastructure, economy, transport, the environment and energy, limits the scope to implement gender interventions.

The presence of only a few dedicated and specialised services for the promotion and protection of the rights of women and children, that too mostly concentrated in the urban areas, limits the provision of effective services in a timely manner. This also constrains women's access to services such as counselling, protection, legal, medical and police and reintegration services, particularly in the rural and remote areas. In a similar manner, lack of family court/bench or arrangements such as dedicated days for proceedings on cases related to violence against women at the local level also continues to remain a challenge. Furthermore, **lack of a national level policy or system** to address the needs of women in the informal sector remains a challenge in providing protection and other services for them. There are also very **few social protection schemes** for vulnerable groups of people which are not delivered in a coordinated manner mainly due to the lack of a national level social protection policy or a mechanism.

Future Prospects

The NCWC Bill will be drafted in 2020. The concept note for the bill has been approved by the government. The bill, if enacted, will provide a strong legal framework to position NCWC as the lead agency for the protection and promotion of the rights of women. It will also provide a legal basis for strengthening accountability of other institutional mechanisms for gender equality and child protection. Further, the bill is envisaged to improve the coordination and collaboration between the NCWC and its partners working on women and children.

The Organizational Development (OD) exercise for the NCWC was carried out in 2018 with the objective of repositioning itself meaningfully within the context of the changing political, economic, social, cultural

and legal situations. The document will be submitted for approval to the Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC) in 2019. Once approved, it will enable NCWC to restructure its programmes, structure, and human resources towards fulfillment of its roles and responsibilities in an efficient and effective manner.

The two-pronged approach to women's empowerment and gender equality in the 12th FYP with a dedicated **NKRA 10 and mainstreaming gender across several other NKRA**s provides the biggest window of opportunity to leverage various women's empowerment and gender equality initiatives. From a planning perspective, gender mainstreaming has been strengthened significantly. The key performance indicators of the NKRA and its related outcomes, outputs and activities are gender-sensitive. It attempts to ensure achievement of the targets through strategies such as the implementation of GRPB, collection and use of sex-disaggregated data, collaboration and coordination among the agencies and building capacities for and awareness on gender equality.

The draft **National Gender Equality Policy (NGEP)** submitted to the Cabinet for endorsement will provide clear policy directives for the government on gender equality and women's empowerment. It will also provide overall directives on strengthening institutional mechanisms, coordination and collaboration, and ownership of gender equality interventions, thus strengthening accountability. Simultaneously, a National Plan of Action on Gender Equality (NPAGE) will also be developed to implement the policy directives.

A **National Child Policy**, which will serve as a guiding framework for policies, plans, programmes and projects to ensure the protection and wellbeing of children, will be formulated over the next one year or two. The Concept Note for the Policy was approved by the Government. Furthermore, a draft National Plan of Action on Child Wellbeing and Protection (NPACWP) was developed through a series of consultations and discussions. These developments will leverage significant opportunities to initiate and implement actions to protect and promote the rights of the girl child.

The implementation of revised the NPAPGEEO will bring about huge opportunities for the Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB) to work in close coordination with the NCWC and other partners such as the Bhutan Network for Empowering Women (BNEW)⁸ to implement interventions aimed at increasing women's political participation. Similarly, **the Gender Equality Strategy (2018-2023)** developed by the RCSC in collaboration with the NCWC will lead to the implementation of strategies targeted at increasing

⁸ *BNEW is a CSO that promote, facilitate and strengthen women's representation in governance, leadership and development at all level*

women's representation at the **executive level** over the next five years. It will also support the institutionalisation of gender mainstreaming efforts in the civil service.

Continued efforts to increase and sustain **girls' participation at the tertiary level** education and in particular, the Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) courses will be made by the government in collaboration with relevant partners in the 12th FYP. The government targets to improve the **Gender Parity Index to 0.87** and increase the enrolment of girls in **STEM courses to 30 percent**. The draft National Education Policy (NEP) provides enabling policy directives to improve the **accessibility and quality of education** and support for girls' participation through a **gender-responsive teaching and learning** environment. Additionally, the TVET flagship programme in the 12th FYP will provide significant opportunities to improve women's and girls' access to technical and vocational education which will contribute to increasing their **employability** in the labour market. Furthermore, the inclusion of TVET as an **elective in the mainstream education** will provide them with greater choices for skills upgradation and career pathways.

Mainstreaming of gender-based violence against women and girls in the 12th FYP of the MoH will strengthen the **health sector's responses** to GBV, and the establishment of Comprehensive Forensic Services in the two regional hospitals will increase access to medico-legal services. Likewise, the RBP's plan to expand the **WCPU/Desks** to all the police stations and inclusion of women- and child-friendly police procedures in the curriculum of Police Training Institute (PTI) will provide the enabling environment for women and girls seeking police services. Further, the establishment of D/TWCC will contribute to the institutionalisation and better coordination and provision of women and child protection services at the local level.

The prioritisation of Cottage and Small Industries (CSI) and agriculture sector for financial inclusion and micro-credit through the implementation of **Priority Sector Lending initiative** will hugely benefit women in the agriculture sector who otherwise have limited access to such services. Furthermore, the inclusion of gender-related provisions in the revised Cottage and Small and Medium Industry Policy (CSMI) 2019 and the **National Financial Literacy Strategy (NFLS)** serves as significant avenues for the government and CSOs to initiate interventions to increase **women's access to credit and skills**. Furthermore, the draft Financial Inclusion Policy provides for significant opportunities in enhancing access to finance for women, including rural women

Section II

Analysis of the implementation progress across 12 critical areas of concern of the BPFA (2014-2019)

The implementation progress across the 12 critical areas have been clustered based on the six overarching dimensions that highlight the alignment of BPFA and the Agenda 2030: Sustainable Development Goals.

Dimension 1: Inclusive Development, Shared Priority and Decent Work (Critical Areas - Women and Poverty, Women and Economy, Human Rights of Women and the Girl Child)

Non-discrimination in recruitment, retention and promotion of women in public and private sector

1. The Labour and Employment Act of Bhutan (LEA) 2007 clearly defines discrimination at the workplace to protect the welfare of employers/employees and to create a conducive environment at the workplace. According to section 237 of the LEA 2007, “discrimination” means “if a person is treated less favourably, either directly or indirectly, on the basis of race, colour, sex, marital status, pregnancy, religion, political opinion, social origin or involvement in a workers’ association or as an occupational health and safety representative”. In addition, section 11 of the Act states that “an employer and an employment agent shall not discriminate against employees or job applicants for vacancies in connection with recruitment, dismissal, transfer, training and demotion.”
2. The Regulation on Working Condition 2012 contains various offences and penalties for contravening the provisions of the LEA 2007 and includes a complaints procedure. This serves as a remedial mechanism at the workplace to curb discrimination against a certain group of workers. The compliance to non-discrimination provisions of the Act is further strengthened by the mandatory requirement for all private and corporate agencies with more than five employees to have internal services manual that includes provisions for non-discrimination, sexual harassment, and leave entitlements, among others.
3. In a similar manner, the Bhutan Civil Service Rules and Regulations (BCSR) 2018 provides for equal opportunity for all eligible citizens for employment and career advancement in the Civil Service on the basis of merit, qualification, and fair and open competition without discrimination on grounds of sex, language, religion and other status. To avoid discriminatory practices, all matters related to promotion, recruitment, and transfers of employees within the sector are processed by the Human Resource Committee

(HRC) comprising the heads of all departments, divisions and services and chaired by the Head of the Agency.

4. The establishment of Civil Service Support Desk (CSSD) by the Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC) in 2014 for all the public servants ensures the implementation of the non-discrimination provisions of the Civil Service Act of Bhutan 2010 and the BCSR 2018.
5. The 12th FYP Human Resource Development (HRD) Masterplan for the Economic Sector (2018-23) seeks to provide different HRD interventions, including equity and inclusive access to HRD opportunities. The masterplan provides a framework for concerted efforts to provide equal access to both genders for different skilling avenues and opportunities and training partners to provide gender equity during the enrollment and execution of training programmes.
6. To ensure non-discriminatory practices in recruitment, training, promotion and transfer against female police personnel, the RBP has appointed a permanent senior female officer in the HRC since 2018. Further, the Police Service Board also has female representation.

Gender-responsive labour market policies

7. The National Employment Policy 2013 has specific provisions for targeted interventions to increase employment opportunities for women and other vulnerable groups at different levels, including the local level. It aims to increase women's participation in the labour market through the promotion of a gender-friendly environment at the workplace. The policy also states that "Women Self-Help Groups shall be promoted and further supported by the Royal Government to ensure better access to credit, infrastructure and skills for female entrepreneurs."
8. The Economic Development Policy (EDP) 2016 aims to contribute towards the achievement of the government's goal of full employment (97.5 percent) and self-reliance by 2020. It acknowledges the existence of gender skill gaps and aims to support the skills development of women entrepreneurs to enhance their economic participation. It states that "the government shall identify critical training needs and provide training free of cost to potential entrepreneurs on a regular basis with particular focus to encourage women entrepreneurship." Further, the policy encourages the involvement of women in the hydropower sector which is traditionally a male-dominated area.

9. The CSMI Policy 2012, aims to set up effective Micro Finance Institutions (MFI), consistent with the Government's Financial Inclusion Policy, with a focus on economic development, gender equality and poverty reduction in the rural areas. It also aims to promote women entrepreneurship in CSMI to maximize the economic contribution of both genders.
10. The draft NEP takes into consideration gender, socio-economic status and other vulnerabilities as criteria for entry into tertiary education institutions and award of government undergraduate scholarships within and outside the country. The policy intends to enhance the enrolment of girls in tertiary education through the provision of adequate infrastructure and facilities, including hostels. The policy also lays emphasis on gender-friendly curricula and pedagogy. It states that the curriculum framework shall take into consideration the gender-differentiated needs of the students.
11. To increase women's representation in the decision-making and leadership positions, the RCSC, in collaboration with the NCWC, developed the Gender Equality Strategy (2018-2023). The strategy aims to increase women in executive positions to 15 percent by 2023. In addition, a specific Agency Key Results Area, "Gender equality in the Civil Service promoted" is included in the 12th FYP. In 2019, the percentage of women at the executive level stands at 12.5.

Sexual harassment at workplace

12. The BCSR 2018 defines sexual harassment as "unwelcome verbal, visual, physical conduct of sexual nature that affects the working condition or creates a hostile working environment" and prohibits all civil servants from indulging in sexual harassment of any nature, including the use of position to gain or force sexual favours.
13. Under the CSSD initiative established in 2014, the RCSC provides windows for civil servants to complain and report sexual harassment, including the NCWC as a reference point if specialised interventions are required. The initiative also covers domestic violence issues and "Go To Person" to take up sexual harassment and related issues in the civil service.
14. All the Human Resource Officers (HROs) were sensitised on sexual harassment at the workplace by the RCSC in collaboration with relevant agencies in 2018. The sensitisation on sexual harassment at the workplace is also provided to 650 new recruits during their orientation programme in the same year.

15. To institutionalise a complaint and response mechanism for sexual harassment and ensure a gender-friendly environment at the workplace, an “Internal Framework to Address Sexual Harassment and Gender Issues at the Workplace” was developed and implemented by various ministries and agencies. There are 29 ministries and agencies, including the local government and corporations, with an internal framework as on May 2019. As per the internal framework, the GFPs of the organizations carry out awareness and sensitization on sexual harassment and gender equality issues.
16. With regard to the corporate and private sectors, the Regulations on Sexual Harassment 2012 prohibits sexual harassment at the workplace and during recruitment. It contains both internal and external sexual harassment complaints procedures. Furthermore, the internal service rule of all the corporate and private organisations with five and more employees are required to have provisions to address sexual harassment at the workplace. As per the complaints mechanism on sexual harassment, every employee has the right to register a complaint with the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources (MoLHR).
17. The MoLHR conducts regular orientation and training for their staff on gender and child protection issues. Likewise, regular awareness programmes are carried out on legal provisions on sexual harassment and existing mechanisms in place to address sexual harassment.

Land rights and tenure security

18. The Land Act of Bhutan 2007 provides for equal right and access to land ownership for all individuals irrespective of sex. It has a provision to access an equal share of land by all family members. Likewise, the Inheritance Act of Bhutan 1980 guarantees equal entitlement to a true member of the joint family to receive a share from the inheritance of the main house irrespective of gender.
19. As of 2018, 45 percent of women in rural areas own land as compared to 51 percent of men. The percentage of women with land ownership in urban areas is also 45 percent while 49 percent of men own land in urban areas. The percentage of joint ownership is 4 and 6 percent respectively in rural and urban areas.
20. The Land Use Certificate (LUC) programme for youth was introduced in 2016 to enhance the productive use of land and promote gainful employment. This is intended to encourage youth to take up large scale economic activities such as commercial farming. Around 2,500 graduates were oriented on the programme and its benefits. As of 2018, six youth groups comprising 58 members have availed themselves of the programme and are working on various projects.

Financial inclusion and access to credit

21. The CSMI policy (2012) provides a clear directive to promote women entrepreneurship in CSMI and also implement effective Micro Finance Institutions (MFI) with focus on economic development, gender equality and poverty reduction in rural areas. The policy is being revised and the revision re-emphasises women's access to skills and promotion of women entrepreneurship.
22. To operationalise and achieve the policy objectives, the CSMI Development Strategy (2012-2020) and Action Plan (2015-2018) were developed. The strategy outlines interventions to promote women entrepreneurs and facilitate their access to finances. It also intends to incentivise cottage and small industries.
23. The Action Plan also includes specific actions to promote women entrepreneurship and improve their access to finances. Accordingly, five microfinance institutions, namely BAOWE, RENEW, Rural Enterprise Development Corporation Limited (REDCL), Tarayana Foundation, and Bhutan Care Credit Limited were formally registered to improve access to finance among the disadvantaged groups, including women in rural areas. Besides, women's entrepreneurship award was institutionalised as part of the Annual Bhutan Enterprise Award.
24. Instituted in 2013, the REDCL⁹ also provides an avenue for collateral-free financing for non-formal rural enterprises. In 2018, the REDCL supported 3,964 small and micro projects.
25. To support the government's effort in making access to finance easier for unreached sections of the society, especially women in rural areas, CSOs like RENEW, Tarayana Foundation, Bhutan Care Credit Limited and BAOWE provide microfinance services.
26. The microfinance initiatives by RENEW and BAOWE benefited around 22,022 from 2015 to 2019 of which 90 percent are women.
27. The group saving and lending schemes operated and managed by the Self-Help Groups (SHGs) supported by the Tarayana Foundation and BAOWE also provide an avenue for access to finance. The scheme benefited around 3,000 members of which 70 percent are women.

⁹ REDCL is an enterprise which provides funds for non-formal activities at low interest

28. The NFIS (2018-2023) articulates the country's road map for financial inclusion. Recognising the gender gap in terms of access to credit, the strategy identifies CSI and the agriculture sector where women are mostly engaged as the priority sectors for financial inclusion in the next five years. Subsequently, the priority sector lending guideline was developed in 2017 by the Royal Monetary Authority (RMA) to promote and develop CSI through improved access to finance.
29. The accessibility to credit in the rural area is enhanced by the introduction of Farmers' Outreach and Gewog¹⁰ Banking introduced by the Bhutan Development Bank Limited (BDBL) which provides specific services aimed at rural poverty alleviation.
30. "Drinchen Ama Saving Scheme" was introduced in 2014 by BDBL to inculcate the habit of savings among women and to reduce economic burden for the rural Female Headed Households (FHHs). Likewise, Royal Insurance Corporation of Bhutan Limited (RICBL) has initiated "Ashi Nangsa Living Policy" targeted exclusively at women aged between 18 and 45 years.
31. The Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (BCCI), in collaboration with the BDBL, also initiated a Group Guarantee Lending and Saving Scheme in 2010 to increase accessibility to formal financial services for entrepreneurs. The scheme is now changed to 'Micro and Small Enterprises (MSE) Development loan and has benefited over 4,500 entrepreneurs of which 75 percent are women.
32. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between the Department of Agriculture Marketing and Cooperatives (DAMC) and Asian Confederation of Credit Union (ACCU) in 2015 to form five champion savings and credit cooperatives in the country. Subsequently, six credit cooperatives were registered and are operational. Six additional saving and credit cooperatives were also formed in five *dzongkhags* to diversify their business.
33. The initiatives to increase financial access is further complemented by the establishment of the Financial Inclusion and Literacy Unit in the RMA in January 2017. The unit aims to improve people's financial wellbeing through the advancement of their financial literacy capacity, knowledge, skills and behaviour. Subsequently, the NFLS (2018-2023) was developed in 2018. The strategy has provisions for significant opportunities for enhancing women's access to finance and their participation in income-generating activities through the women-focused financial literacy programme.

¹⁰ *Gewog refers to block*

34. Advocacy materials on basic financial literacy, including the concept, was developed and disseminated with the objective to inculcate entrepreneurship and saving culture in young people. Furthermore, since 2014, various capacity development programmes, including basic accounting, bookkeeping and marketing were conducted by the Department of Cottage and Small Industries (DCSI), NCWC, MoLHR, RMA and relevant CSOs for the CSI entrepreneurs, members of the Self-Help Groups, Farmers' Groups and Cooperative.
35. The MoAF in 2018 conducted training for 1,265 members who include 740 women from the SHGs and cooperatives. The training programmes were on financial management, leadership, record and bookkeeping, and formulation of by-laws and business plans.

Access to agricultural technology, infrastructure and services

36. Farm mechanisation and increasing access to modern technologies was given high priority and included as one of the key objectives in the 11th FYP to enhance agricultural productivity. Institutional development of the Farm Mechanisation Centres (FMCs) and Farm Mechanisation Training Centres (FMTCs) were carried out to enable them to provide adequate and efficient services to the farmers. Around 12,782 acres of land was brought under farm mechanisation to reduce drudgery and improve food production. In addition, 1,084 power tillers were distributed to the farmers across the country. Furthermore, during the plan period, 259 agricultural machinery, including power tillers, were provided to the socio-economically disadvantaged villages under the REAP.
37. Additionally, the Agriculture Machinery Centre (AMC) rolled out women-friendly machinery such as rice reaper, electric rice mill, oil expeller, hedge cutter, drum seeder, cone weeder and mini tiller which women can operate easily. Between 2018 and 2019, around 125 women have been trained to operate seeder machines. Similarly, FMCL has also introduced women-friendly farm machines such as mini tillers, brush cutters and electric rice mills.
38. The Agriculture Research and Extension Division was created in 2016 to strengthen the extension services for the agriculture sector in the country. The division conducted capacity building training on field experiments on agriculture science, developing research proposals and scientific paper writing, which was attended by 31 women from Agriculture Research Centres and Agriculture Machinery Centre.

Women's participation in Economic Decision-making bodies

39. The BCSR 2018 provides for equal participation of men and women in the decision-making bodies of the civil service. This is complemented by the adoption of “the internal framework to address gender equality at workplace” which requires the ministries and agencies to include women employees in the major decision-making committee within their organisations.
40. The Corporate Governance Rules and Regulations 2018 provides for equal representation of men and women in the Board of Directors and Senior Management Team which are the highest decision-making bodies in the banks, insurance companies, and pension and provident fund authorised by the government. In 2019, women comprise 35 percent of the total Board of Directors and Senior Management Team of the Central Bank (RMA).
41. The Corporate Governance Guidelines for State Enterprise 2019 outlines gender as a requirement for the formation of the board of directors, which is the governing body of the state enterprises. It further ensures that gender and sectoral representation is adequately considered during the nomination process for the board directors. As of 2018, women comprise 9.9 percent of the total board members.
42. The BCCI is the apex body of the private sector in the country and facilitates private sector development. It also acts as an advisory body to the government on all matters related to private sector development. The current elected president of BCCI is a woman.

Childcare Facilities

43. To support women's participation in the labour market and ensure proper care and protection for children of working parents, the government has initiated the establishment of childcare centres at the workplace during the 11th FYP period. The childcare centres were established based on a needs assessment conducted in all the government offices, including local government and the informal sectors. As of June 2019, there were 21 childcare centres established for children between 0 and 3 years in various sectors (including ministries, agencies, local government, informal sector, corporations).
44. Based on the directives of the Cabinet in 2015, a guideline for childcare centres in Bhutan has been developed by the NCWC in consultation with the MoE and MoH. The guideline outlines minimum standards for the establishment of childcare facilities at the workplace and ensures collaborative efforts among the relevant agencies.

45. Several rounds of training for the caregivers, including those from the CSOs and private sector, were conducted by the NCWC in collaboration with relevant agencies in 2018 and 2019.
46. The government continues to accord high priority to support the provision of affordable childcare facilities for working parents, and “establishment of childcare centres at work place to create enabling environment for women’s participation in all spheres” is being reflected as one of the national Key Performance Indicators (KPI) under NKRA 10: Gender Equality Promoted and Women and Girls Empowered. The government will also continue to encourage corporations and private companies to provide such facilities for their employees.
47. To ensure a holistic approach to physical, emotional, social and cognitive development of children between 3 and 5 years and to prepare them for school life with the right attitudes and dispositions, the MoE emphasises the establishment of Early Childhood Care and Development Centres (ECCDs) across the country. In 2018, there were 340 ECCD centres in the country catering to 8,499 children (4,204 girls and 4,295 boys) and 764 facilitators (710 women and 54 men). The Ministry aims to reach the facility to 50 percent of the children between 3 and 5 years in the 12th FYP.
48. The CSOs equally contribute to the establishment of ECCDs in rural areas. There are 35 Buzip centres and five ECCDs established by Tarayana and Loden Foundation respectively. These centres aim to provide equal opportunities for rural children to early learning and help rural communities reduce the double burden of unpaid care and domestic work, especially during the peak agricultural season. Tarayana Foundation has trained 35 high school leavers as ECCD facilitators in different *dzongkhags*.

Support for elderly persons

49. Support for the empowerment of vulnerable groups, including elderly people, comes from the highest level. The Office of the Gyalpoi Zimpon initiated a programme to support the elderly and other vulnerable groups since 2011. Under the programme, monthly allowances are provided to these people for their living expenses.
50. A retreat centre for elderly people was built under the His Majesty’s People’s Project in 2018. The centre with 13 cottages can accommodate around 78 people. The facility will cater to elderly people from poor socio-economic background and those without any caregiver. It provides specialised services, including healthcare and a full-time nurse.

51. To address the needs of the aging population, community-based elderly care programmes have been introduced in over 85 percent of the health facilities. Likewise, priority seats for elderly people are provided in hospitals and on public transport buses.
52. The Central Monastic Body established an old age home for retired monks in Punakha. The home with recreational centres can accommodate 70 monks.
53. A CSO, Royal Society for Senior Citizens, was established in 2011 to provide a platform for the senior citizens to share experiences and engage in meaningful activities. It also aims to provide support and assistance to underprivileged senior citizens such as legal assistance and advice, livelihood and information on other available services.
54. There were similar homes established in Rangjung, Trashigang and Mongar by other CSOs and Community-Based Organisations (CBO).

Leave

55. The RCSC in 2016 revised and increased paid maternity leave for women in the civil service from three months to six months. Flexitime is also implemented for additional six months to facilitate breastfeeding and proper care for children. Similarly, paternity leave has been increased from 5 to 10 working days.
56. 17 state-owned companies, 12 companies under the DHI and the colleges under the Royal University of Bhutan (RUB) have also increased maternity leave from three months to six months and paternity leave from five days to 10 days.
57. There is a provision of 6 months of maternity leave and 14 working days of paternity leave under the Parliamentary Entitlement Rules and Regulations for Members of Parliament. Similarly, the Local Government Entitlement Rules and Regulations 2018 provides for 6 months of paid maternity leave and 10 working days of paternity leave.
58. CSOs also provide paid maternity leave between three and six months. Efforts are being made to encourage similar revisions in the private sector by the NCWC and MoLHR

59. The regulations on working conditions in 2012 and the BCSR 2018 also guarantee the right to other forms of leave such as casual, earned, study and extraordinary leave, medical and bereavement leave.

Access to labour-saving public infrastructure

60. Significant progress has been made in the recent past in improving public infrastructure such as transport, electricity, water and sanitation to increase labour productivity, particularly in rural and remote areas. As per the Population and Housing census (PHCB) 2017, 98 percent of the population has access to safe drinking water and 99 percent of the rural households has access to electricity.

61. Supply of 24x7 safe drinking water is prioritised as one of the key NKRA's in the 12th FYP and will be implemented as a flagship programme. The programme will ensure that water resources are protected and managed in an economically efficient and sustainable manner so that every household has access to safe and reliable drinking water.

62. The Draft National Sanitation and Hygiene Policy 2017 aims to achieve universal coverage and access to safe sanitation and hygiene services for a healthy, happy and productive society. The policy gives special attention to gender-differentiated needs in the implementation of sanitation and hygiene interventions.

63. 147 of the 205 *gewogs* have been connected with public transport services in the last five years. Public transport system in the major towns has been enhanced with the provision of additional services that are friendly to different groups of people such as priority seats for the elderly, pregnant women, individuals carrying small children and ramps for people living with disabilities.

Awareness of unpaid care and domestic work

64. Numerous awareness and advocacy programmes on gender division of roles, women's participation in productive activities and gender stereotypes and prejudices were carried out by the NCWC and other government and non-government partners in all the 20 districts for the general public, schools, sector heads, and non-government officials. These programmes were carried out with the objective of enhancing the understanding of women's participation in productive work and encouraging men and boys to share the burden of unpaid care and domestic work shouldered by women and girls.

65. In 2017, NCWC in partnership with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) conducted a study on valuation of women's unpaid care work to document gender patterns of unpaid care work, reduce the burden of unpaid

care and domestic work on women and highlight the quantitative significance of unpaid care work to the national economy. The findings from the study were disseminated to the decision makers and other government and non-government officials during the awareness and advocacy programmes. In order to continue collecting information on unpaid care work, possibilities through strengthening of the Labour Force Survey and Gross National Happiness Survey questionnaires are being looked into.

Dimension 2: Poverty eradication, social protection and social services (Critical Areas - Women and Poverty, Education and Training, Women and Health, Human Rights of Women, the Girl Child)

Targeted poverty alleviation measures

66. REAP II was implemented during the 11th FYP to alleviate poverty in some of the poorest communities. 75 poorest villages across 18 *dzongkhags* were prioritised in the project based on multidimensional poverty index developed with women empowerment as one of the indicators. The project is based on five principles, including “gender sensitivity” whereby the activities under the programme were gender-sensitive and ensures equitable outcomes.
67. Under this programme, 829 houses were constructed and renovated, and 94 SHGs were established with 70 percent woman members. The programme also supplied 259 women-friendly machines and built 777 pour flush toilets.
68. To enhance agricultural productivity and product quality, increase access to the market and generate income for farmers, increasing emphasis is being placed on the formation of farmers’ groups and cooperatives. As of 2018, there were 332 cooperatives and farmers’ groups registered with 10,948 members, with 46.6 percent of them women.
69. Through its vegetable value chain programme in the east, MoFA supports farmers’ groups and cooperatives to produce and market vegetables to schools and local markets. About 70 percent of the beneficiaries under this programme are women, thus creating income opportunities for women and reducing the economic burden on woman-headed households.
70. The NCWC, in collaboration with BAOWE and Tarayana Foundation, established 21 SHGs with 68.2 percent women members. To ensure the sustainability of these SHGs, 31 marketing agreements were signed with various institutions to market their products.
71. Similarly, the DAMC also supported 111 farmers’ group and cooperatives to enter an agreement with 64 educational institutions for the supply of RNR products.

72. More than 2,000 members (80% women) of the SHGs were trained on Value Chain Development (VCD), Cost-Benefit Analysis and market access for their products. Further, to enhance production capacity and group dynamics of SHGs, 43 various training programmes were conducted from 2013 to 2018.
73. Commercial Agriculture and Resilient Livelihood Enhancement Programme (CARLEP) and Food Security and Agriculture Production Project (FSAP) focused on rural-based vegetable and dairy product value chain to enhance crop production and access to the market. The CARLEP project is implemented in six *dzongkhags* and FSAP in five *dzongkhags*. Between January and December 2018, the FSAP project directly benefited 3,597 women and 30 percent of the beneficiaries of the CARLEP project are women.
74. A capacity building programme to diversify the rural livelihood and reduce poverty has been conducted by the Department of Forests and Park Services in collaboration with International Centre for Integrated Mountain development (ICIMOD) under Kangchenjunga Landscape conservation and development initiative in which 23 women were trained for eco-tourism, seven for integrated farming, 13 for homestay operators, 12 for cooking and hospitality and 48 for eco-friendly marketing events.
75. BAOWE initiated "BAOWE Bazar" in the most frequented areas of Phuentsholing Bus Terminal, creating livelihood opportunities for over 20 single parents (women) residing in Phuentsholing. The programme provided infrastructure such as sales outlets and necessary equipment like yoghurt processing equipment. BAOWE also initiated a programme called "Touching Lives through English" which provided English courses for over 110 women in Thimphu with little or no education.
76. In addition, BAOWE also introduced Women-Owned Open Market (WOOM) to empower economically disadvantaged women in the major urban centres. The initiative provides vendors' market from where they can sell their vegetables, home-made food and dairy products. There are currently 110 women who are single mothers, and uneducated and unemployed youth benefiting from this initiative.
77. An innovative competition-based scheme called "Cooperative Business Development Scheme" was introduced by the MoAF in 2017 to support agricultural groups and cooperatives for the successful operation of their business. Around 106 groups and cooperatives have benefitted from this scheme in the form of essential equipment.

78. To enhance the business of the groups and cooperatives by creating market avenues, Bhutan Co-operative Shop or B-Coop Shops have been established at strategic locations since 2014. Currently, there are 6 B-Coop Shops benefiting farmers' groups and cooperatives.
79. The Rural Development Training Centre (RDTC) established in 2004 continues to enhance the skills and knowledge of modern day farming to increase the opportunity of economic sustainability for Bhutanese farmers. It conducts outreach programmes that are inclusive of responsiveness to the needs of the women's groups such as skills-based farm business training and community leaders training for groups and cooperatives. A total of 1,052 people, including 355 women, have undergone such training in the 11th FYP. Moreover, other relevant skills were integrated into the training modules based on the reassessment of the same carried out by the MoAF in 2017 to ensure an inclusive approach to capacity building.

Women's entrepreneurship and business development activities

80. Numerous initiatives to create employment opportunities, particularly for women, through skills development training and business advocacy workshops were undertaken by the Department of Cottage and Small Industries (DCSI). As of May 2019, 162 women entrepreneurs were trained in the areas of upholstery, bamboo and cane furniture making, apparel designing and tailoring, basic spa therapy, baking, hairdressing, small business management and natural dyes.
81. The "Women Entrepreneur of the Year" award was initiated as one of the categories for the Bhutan Enterprise Award 2015 to encourage more women entrepreneurs to take up entrepreneurial activities in the country. Since then, it has become an annual event.
82. The Youth Employment Skills (YES) programme was initiated by the MoLHR to promote gainful employment of the youth. Various capacity development programmes for 236 youth (167 female) in the area of ECCD, Sales Executives, Bakery, Commercial Cooking, Front Office, Food and Beverage Services, and Housekeeping were carried out under this programme. 89.5 percent of the youth trained in hospitality programmes was successfully employed. Similarly, 178 additional female youth were trained in Beauty and Spa in India.
83. The Graduate Skills Programme (GSP) was introduced in 2014 to support skills development of university graduates aspiring to set up their own business or seek employment in the private sector. Similarly, Skills for Employment and Entrepreneurial Development (SEED) introduced in the same year is an initiative to provide vocational skills to aspiring entrepreneurs.

84. The BCCI provided marketing and promotion avenues to women entrepreneurs through in-country and ex-country expos and trade fairs for better business networking. In order to enhance Business to Business linkages, facilitation of participation of women entrepreneurs in the regional conference/workshops and training programmes of the SAARC Chamber Women Entrepreneur Council (SCWEC) has been initiated.
85. To sustain self-employment and enhance employment opportunities in the private sector, the BCCI facilitated various in-country and ex-country training programmes. A total of 305 women have availed various training programmes from 2014 to 2019 in marketable fields like advanced tailoring and marketing, product designing and packaging, crockery, value chain management, advanced cosmetology and spa therapy.

Social Protection Programs

86. The Constitution provides a legal framework for the government to promote the extended family system and community life as a traditional social safety net. Article 9 section 19 on the Principles of State Policy states that “The State shall endeavour to promote those conditions that are conducive to co- operation in community life and the integrity of the extended family structure.”
87. The budget allocation for social services remained at around 25 percent over the past five years (2014-2019). However, in absolute terms, the budget allocated for the sector increased by Nu. 6,372.862 million (40%). The budget allocated for social services in FY 2014-2015 was Nu. 9,895.072 million and it has increased to Nu. 16,267.934 million in FY 2019-2020.
88. The draft Social Protection Policy 2013 intends to protect workers and reduce poverty by strengthening the delivery of social protection programmes that promote social justice, equality, economic security, employment, and productive capacity.
89. The draft National Policy for Persons with Disability (PWD) provides policy directives to empower the PWDs to enjoy their rights, promote inclusive development through mainstreaming disability initiatives in plans, policies and programmes in all sectors and improve access to opportunities and services for PWDs.
90. The National Pension and Provident Fund (NPPF) launched the pension and provident fund scheme in 2002 with the objective to increase the welfare of its members by providing post service retirement benefit and

social support to surviving families. It is also aimed at establishing mechanism and developing a system for saving plans, housing facilities and maintaining long-term financial viability.

91. The government revised the Rural Life Insurance Scheme to Nu. 30,000 from Nu. 15,000 in July 2017 to provide financial support to rural communities in times of bereavement.
92. The government has initiated Guaranteed Employment Programme (GEP) to reduce youth unemployment to 5 percent by the end of fiscal year 2014-2015. Since the start of the programme in July 2014, a total of 6,534 youth have been employed in government, corporations, private sector and CSOs of which 50.8 percent of those employed are women.
93. A conditional cash transfer programme is being designed under the accelerated Mother and Child Health - 1,000 days plus is being designed to deliver incentives for breastfeeding mothers who are not entitled for paid maternity leave.
94. His Majesty's Secretariat takes the initiative to monitor and ensure that every Bhutanese citizen is protected from the basic needs perspective, especially in the rural areas. Through the land rehabilitation programmes of the Secretariat, land has been granted to the landless and socio-economically disadvantaged groups. Other supports have been provided through housing, agriculture, health, water, electricity and income generating interventions.
95. The Rural Livelihood Fund was established under the Kidu Programme in 2013 to support the sustainable rural livelihood to improve the rural people and contribute towards rural poverty reduction. The majority of the beneficiaries of this programme are elderly people.
96. The "Gyalpoi Tozey"¹¹ scheme support is provided to needy students to enable them to receive education at par with other students. "Gyalpoi Tozey" beneficiaries comprise orphans, children of single parents without any source of income, and disabled students from poor socio-economic background, among others. They receive a certain amount of annual or monthly allowance based on their level of education. His Majesty's Scheme on education for needy students supports a total of 1,478 girls (Class PP to Class XII – 1,410 girls; Tertiary Education – 68 girls).

¹¹ *Gyalpoi Tozey is a scheme under his Majesty's Project that supports needy students with scholarship*

97. His Majesty's Secretariat provide a monthly allowance to the economically disadvantaged people with no family support system to meet their daily expenses. Currently, there are 850 beneficiaries, including elderly and economically disadvantaged people.
98. A "Winter Youth Enrichment Programme" to support the empowerment of vulnerable girls was organised by His Majesty's Secretariat in collaboration with the Division of Scouts and Culture Education Division from 2014 to 2016. More than 10,000 disadvantaged girls have benefitted from this programme.
99. The Department of Youth and Sports (DYS) conducted the annual Youth Leadership Training (YLT) programme for 1,543 economically disadvantaged girls from 2014 to 2016 with the objective of protecting the vulnerable girls from exploitation and harm during the school winter vacation. An assessment of these girls was carried out during the programme and the girls are placed in the central schools under the "Gyalpoi Tozey" scheme based on the assessment.
100. Various targeted intervention programmes such as REAP were implemented by the government during the 11th FYP for the poorest communities across the country to alleviate poverty.
101. The poverty intervention initiatives of the government were supplemented by the CSOs through the provision of support to disadvantaged rural girls to continue their education and livelihood interventions in the rural and remote communities. RENEW supported scholarships for 101 girls. In addition, Lhak-Sam supports education for children living with HIV/AIDS and a total of 89 children were supported since 2016.
102. The NCWC facilitates adoption and alternative care services for children in difficult circumstances to ensure that these children grow up in a stable living arrangement with love, care and protection. The Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children and Child Adoption Guidelines were developed in 2017 to provide minimum service standards.

Legal Services

103. Legal aid provision is enabled in Bhutan by the Jabmi Act of Bhutan 2003 (JA) and the Civil and Criminal Procedures Code of Bhutan 2001 (CCPC). However, to provide clear guidance on legal aid and explore different models, a draft report on legal aid in the country was drafted by the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) in 2016. The report highlighted an overview of various legal aid models provided in some jurisdictions, with emphasis on the advantages and disadvantages to enable us to develop a national regulatory framework that reflects the best international standards and practices to suit Bhutan's context.

104. The Bar Council of Bhutan was constituted in 2017 with the objective to strengthen and promote legal services in the private sector through regulated Bar Association whose members are the private practicing lawyers. The functions of the Bar Council include the provision of pro bono legal aid to indigent persons who include those from low socio-economic background, women, children and people living with disabilities.
105. The draft Justice Sector Implementation Plan (2018-2023) includes the formulation of Standard Operating Procedure on the provision of pro bono legal aid as one of the interventions to achieve the principle of inclusive and accessible judicial services.
106. The NCWC provides legal services, particularly legal advice to women and children in difficult circumstances, including victims of violence.
107. The Royal Society for Senior Citizens provides free general legal assistance to senior citizens who are 58 years or older. The service is provided by volunteer senior retired legal professionals. Furthermore, relevant CSOs also provide legal services to women and children in difficult circumstances.
108. The Bhutan Transparency Initiative (BTI) through its Advocacy and Legal Advice Programme (ALAP) provides free legal advice and follow-up complaints of corrupt activities. They also seek to inform and empower citizens, especially victims and witnesses of corruption and then translate their concerns into structural changes for better local and national governance.

Universal and public health services

109. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan mandates the state to provide universal health coverage. Article 9 section 21 states that “the state shall provide free access to basic public health services in both modern and traditional medicines.”
110. The National Health Policy (NHP) is a gender-sensitive policy and highlights the importance of partnership through which gender-responsive plans and programmes 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 free and equitable access to safe, quality and cost-effective vaccines for children and pregnant women.

111. Healthcare services in Bhutan are provided through a network of hospitals and BHUs at various levels. The number of health facilities increased from 875 in 2014 to 909 in 2017 covering around 96 percent of the total population within two hours' walking distance of a health facility.
112. To strengthen indenting, distribution and monitoring of drugs and medical supplies, an electronic Bhutan Medical Supplies Inventory System was instituted. Health facilities have at least 95 percent of essential medicines at any given time. Medical equipment is kept functional above 90 percent at all health facilities around the year.
113. Emergency medical evacuation services were introduced with the purchase of two helicopters. Some 368 patients have been evacuated using helicopter services.
114. In terms of professional strengthening, the number of doctors and *drungtshos*¹² increased from 238 in 2013 to 421 in 2017 and the number of doctors increased from 2.8 for every 10,000 people in 2013 to 4.3 doctors in 2017. Similarly, the number of nurses increased from about 10.9 for every 10,000 people in 2013 to about 15.4 in 2017. The number of nurses increased from 799 in 2013 to 1,352 in 2017.
115. In order to improve the access to quality healthcare and to accelerate Maternal and Child Health, the 150 bedded Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Mother and Child Hospital is under construction with the first phase of the community health block being completed.
116. To improve the quality of maternal and newborn care, Early Essential New-born Care and Kangaroo Care was introduced in 25 hospitals, including the three referral hospitals. Over 450 health professionals have been trained in this field.
117. In addition, several new services such as fertility clinic, renal clinic and epidural labour analgesia were introduced during the plan period.
118. A Point of Care Quality Improvement (POCQI) approach in maternal and child services was introduced in 2017 for minimum quality assurance in the provision of care. The POCQI addresses the clinical gaps in the health settings taking into consideration changing health needs to focus on quality care.

¹² *Drungtsho is traditional physician*

119. Based on the nationwide assessment of cervical cancer, a Strategic Plan was developed for cervical cancer programme from 2019 to 2023.
120. A health sector development programme was implemented in eight *dzongkhags* with lower health coverage from February 2019 with focus on primary healthcare services. The initiative will also include aspects of health financing, strengthen disease surveillance and Health Information System (HIS).
121. Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV) was introduced in January 2019 in the routine immunisation programme to prevent transmission of pneumococcal bacterial diseases in children under five years.

Sexual and Reproductive Health

122. The Bhutan National Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Control of STIs and HIV/AIDS (2012-2016) provides for the inclusion of women in the decision-making processes related to design, implementation and review of HIV/AIDS control programmes. It recommends responding to gender-based stigma and discrimination towards female sex workers.
123. Facilities for Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) are now available in all district hospitals and four stand-alone Health Information Service Centres (HISC) located in major urban centres to improve access. Since 2013, HIV rapid diagnostic facilities are also available in BHU II and I. Thus, information gathered from such facilities provide a basis for analysis and developing appropriate strategies.
124. AFHS unit was established in 10 *dzongkhag* hospitals to improve access and reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancies, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS, malnutrition and other medical problems, including mental health issues.
125. The National Adolescent Health Strategic Plan (2013-2018) was developed in 2013 to strengthen the AFHS and provide a comprehensive framework for implementation and facilitate holistic healthcare, awareness and development of adolescents and youth.
126. To prevent mother to child transmission of HIV, MoH initiated Anti-retroviral Therapy (ART) for People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHA) and mandatory HIV testing and counselling for pregnant women. As of November 2018, there were 627 people living with HIV availing themselves of the ART treatment of which 304 were women.

127. Lhak-Sam¹³ complements the government's effort to prevent HIV/AIDS and carries out various interventions which include awareness and advocacy on prevention of social stigma and discrimination against PLHA and social support for them. It also provides homes for children living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.
128. Mental health services are well integrated into the primary healthcare network and essential drugs are also provided free of cost. Every medical professional, including doctors, upon appointment, are oriented on basic mental health services.
129. Considering the increasing rate of suicides, particularly among youths, suicide prevention interventions are prioritised in the 12th FYP and the government aims to reduce the overall suicide rates by less than 12 persons per 100,000 (current rate) people by the end of the plan period.
130. A Suicide Prevention Action Plan (2015-2018) was developed in 2015 to implement universal prevention interventions in a coordinated manner by involving all the stakeholders. It outlines various strategies targeted at different ages and occupational groups including the most vulnerable sections of the population.
131. To ensure that the interventions are carried out in an effective and coordinated manner, efforts to establish institutions and systems for suicide prevention was taken up as a priority. A Suicide Prevention Unit with trained professionals has been established in the MoH for overall coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Suicide Prevention Action Plan. The unit also coordinates the meeting of the National Taskforce for Suicide Prevention that provides technical advice on suicide prevention efforts and oversees the situation of suicide in the country.
132. To institutionalise suicide prevention programmes in the schools, the Suicide Prevention Action Plan was disseminated during the biannual Dzongkhag Education Officers' Conference and central school immersion program in 2016.
133. Mental health facilitation training was made mandatory for all the counsellors certified by the Bhutan Board of Certified Counsellors (BBCC), a body established in 2016 to increase the pool of trained counsellors and develop certification standards and protocol for certification of counselling professionals such as psychologists, social workers and counsellors.

¹³ *Lhak-Sam is a local CSO supporting people living with HIV/AIDS*

134. To ensure systematic collection of information on suicide at the national level, a suicide registry has been set up in all the 20 districts and information was collected with effect from January 1, 2016. Furthermore, suicide indicators are also integrated in the Health Management Information System (HMIS).

Health Promotion

135. A National Health Promotion Strategic Plan (2015-2023) was formulated in 2015 to promote behavioural change in the communities and provide a broad strategic framework for development and strengthening of health promotion within the health sector and sectors across government, private and civil society organisations.

136. A sensitization programme on Gender, GRPB, and Violence Against Women (VAW) was conducted for the officials and project personnel of MoH in 2017 and 2019 respectively.

137. Sensitisation on Sexual harassment at the workplace and internal framework to address gender issues at the workplace was conducted for the officials of MoH in 2018 and 2019.

138. Various awareness and training programmes were conducted on health sector responses to gender-based violence by the MoH in collaboration with the Department of Forensic Medicine, JDWNRH, for the health officials, doctors, nurses, health assistants and district medical officers. In addition, a module on forensic medicine was included in the diploma courses for health assistants for the Faculty of Nursing and Public Health of Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan.

139. Besides the regular awareness programmes relevant to government and non-government agencies, a nationwide high-level advocacy programme led by Her Majesty Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck, the Goodwill Ambassador of UNFPA, was conducted in all 20 *dzongkhags* in 2016 and 2017 on reproductive health, gender-based violence, child rights issues such as child marriage, teenage pregnancy and services for women and children in difficult circumstance.

Comprehensive sexuality education programmes

140. Two teacher training colleges and one language college implement 60 hours of non-credited compulsory comprehensive sexuality education module for the first-year students.

141. Sexual and reproductive health education was included in the school curriculum and awareness programmes on sexual and reproductive health and life skills education on a regular basis was carried out by school health coordinators, school guidance counsellors and school health clubs.
142. Similarly, the capacity of young people was enhanced through Youth Peer Education Network (Y-PEER) programmes to advocate for sexual reproductive health and rights issues, including the prevention of GBV and VAW in higher learning institutions in the country.
143. Kuzoo FM radio conducted a nationwide campaign, reaching out to adolescent girls through media content addressing issues related to adolescents such as self-esteem and body image, menstruation and menstrual hygiene, mental health, sexual harassment and abuse and sex education. Six radio episodes, five video episodes and #GirlTALK campaign on Facebook and Instagram have been carried out in 2018. The #GirlTALK Facebook reached 152,000 users. Yeewong Magazine, the only female magazine in Bhutan, also featured two episodes on the issue.
144. Bhutan Pilot Project on GBV: the Gakey Lamtoen, which focuses on primary prevention, was launched in December 2018. This project engages adolescents and caregivers in Babesa community to address the root causes of problematic social norms that lead to Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC). This project is a partnership between NCWC and other national stakeholders and is part of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) global project Ending GBV and Achieving SDGs.

Access to TVET

145. The TVET Blueprint (2016 to 2026), which was developed in 2016 by the MoLHR, articulates a long-term strategic vision that will guide and influence reforms and development in TVET sector over the next 10 years. The strategy highlights the low participation of women in the sector and provides strategies to create a gender-friendly environment to encourage girls to take up vocational education.
146. The Bhutan Education Blueprint (2014-2024) developed by the MoE also aims to increase the access to TVET through the facilitation of certification and lateral transition of students between the mainstream education, TVET institutes and universities.
147. To improve the quality of TVET and provide meaningful employment opportunities for young people, the TVET programmes have been prioritised and taken up as a flagship programme in the 12th FYP.

148. Under the programme, the government will provide 1,000 scholarships to unemployed youth in the private technical training institutes as well as increase the intake capacity of the existing government training institutes by 400 trainees during the plan period.
149. The MoE developed a TVET curriculum for Classes IX and X, introduced TVET clubs, and conducted a pre-vocational orientation programme in schools. Additionally, TVET will also be introduced as an optional subject in Class IX in seven pilot schools and for Classes X-XII in subsequent years.
150. The MoLHR developed 10 new TVET curricula and revised six existing curricula to improve the quality of TVET. The programme includes capacity building of 11 curriculum officers of the Royal Education Council to support and integrate entrepreneurship in the education system.
151. A total of 488 female trainees were enrolled in carpentry, masonry, plumbing, electrical, welding, mechanical and automobile across eight technical institutes in 2018.

Gender-responsive education curriculum

152. The draft NEP 2018 seeks to ensure that the National School Curriculum Framework is inclusive of gender-differentiated needs and the teaching pedagogy is responsive to gender needs.
153. As part of the Educating for GNH programme that includes and supports gender responsiveness in school education, the Ministry of Education has initiated workshops on gender responsiveness in the classroom. This included components on gender awareness and advocacy, how to ensure equal participation of boys and girls, and work towards equal outcomes for both boys and girls in terms of quality of education.
154. An awareness programme on child protection, safety and security was carried out during the annual education conference. In a similar manner, all the principals were oriented on gender and rights of women and children in 2018.

Safe, harassment-free and inclusive educational environment

155. The draft NEP 2018 has provisions for school gender-responsive infrastructure and facilities that ensure accessibility, safety and effective teaching and learning environment.

156. All the schools are provided with separate water and sanitary facilities for girls and boys, thus addressing privacy and safety issues, and making schools more girl-friendly.
157. The government initiated the establishment of central schools in 2015 to mitigate a higher number of dropouts, provide quality education and enhance access for girls. The schools provide a gender-friendly learning environment. As of 2018, there were 63 central schools across the country with more than 50,296 students out of which 51.2 percent are girls.
158. Towards creating a gender-responsive environment in schools, 36 female counsellors and 40 male counsellors have been appointed in 76 secondary schools, and the efforts to deploy more counsellors in schools are underway. Till date, 1,706 girls have availed counselling services.
159. The MoE encourages the LGs to build teacher quarters in rural areas mainly to encourage female teachers to be posted in rural areas. The Bhutan Education Blueprint also recommends gender-friendly infrastructure and gender-friendly curricula

Menstrual Hygiene

160. A Menstrual Hygiene Management awareness was conducted in 2015 coinciding with the observation of the Menstrual Hygiene Day to support girls in learning and practicing good menstrual hygiene management and educate boys on menstruation and importance of providing peer-support to adolescent and menstruating girls in school. The MoE also distributed free sanitary napkins to girls on the day and it plans to supply free sanitary pads to 107 remote schools and 17 nunneries from 2019.
161. In 2019, the Menstrual Hygiene Day was observed with the Red Dot Campaign in schools across the country where students, teachers and the public are sensitised on responsible and safe disposal of sanitary pads. In Thimphu, 32 schools of Thimphu Thromde conducted a door to door awareness campaign in their school locality.

Adolescent and Teenage Pregnancies

162. Prevention of teenage and adolescent pregnancy through awareness and counselling was reflected as one of the key interventions of the National Adolescent Health Strategic Plan (2013-2018). Accordingly, various interventions were initiated in schools and other settings to prevent such issues by MoH, MoE, NCWC, schools and relevant CSOs.

163. The Comprehensive School Health Promotion Programme (CSHP) initiated in all the school includes the intervention to address adolescent and teenage pregnancies in schools. The CSHP guidebook for school health coordinators provides guidance to prevent teenage pregnancy.
164. The Women, Children and Youth Committee (WCYC) tabled the issue of teenage pregnancy during the sixth and seventh sessions of the National Assembly of the second Parliament. The WCYC of the third Parliament in consultation with the relevant stakeholders has initiated a comprehensive study on teenage pregnancy.
165. To enable adolescent girls who become pregnant to continue their education, the schools have initiated measures such as allowing them to continue their studies in the same school or a different school for the interest of privacy. In cases where such students prefer to discontinue their studies, they are allowed to avail the Continuing Education Programme where they can attend off-hour classes and sit for the same examinations. Once graduated from Continuing Education Programme, they are treated equally with the regular students and can sit for job interviews or pursue higher education.

Dimension 3: Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes (Critical Areas - Violence against women, human rights of women, women and media, and the girl child)

Legislation to address violence against women and girls

166. Article 9 section 17 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan states: “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.”
167. The Local Government Act 2009 mandates the members of the Local Government to provide protection of women, children and the physically challenged and eliminate physical, mental and emotional abuse and violence against women and children.
168. The DVPA 2013 recognises that women constitute the majority of the victims/survivors and mandates the establishment of appropriate procedures and services to adequately support the victims and hold the perpetrators accountable. The Act defines different forms of domestic violence and their scope. Recognising alcohol and intoxication as a recurrent factor for triggering domestic violence, the DVPA responds to any act of domestic violence under intoxication as an aggravating factor for a penalty.
169. To ensure effective implementation of the DVPA, the DVPR&R was adopted in 2015. The rules and regulations prescribe clear roles and responsibilities for different stakeholders dealing with cases of domestic violence.
170. A SoP for management and referral of cases related to women and children in difficult circumstances has been developed to ensure proper coordination and collaboration between the different stakeholders. It also aims to contribute to the government's objective of establishing a well-coordinated, sustainable and comprehensive protection mechanism for women and children in need of care and protection.
171. A guideline on accreditation of service providers and a guideline for shelter services were developed and disseminated to all the service providers. Furthermore, capacity building programmes for the CSOs providing services to women and children were conducted to ensure timely and effective provision of services.

National action plans to address violence against women

172. While there is no specific national plan of action on ending violence against women, elimination of violence against women will be included as one of the priority areas of action in the NPAGE, with the Violence Against Women and Girls Study 2017 as an important basis. Moreover, the policy statement on gender equality in the social domain under the draft National Gender Equality Policy includes clear policy directives for addressing violence against women and girls.
173. The 12th FYP also recognises violence against women and girls as a key area of concern and therefore included as one of the Agency Key Performance Indicators(AKPI) with specific budget allocation. This provides overall guidance for the formulation of work plans for the NCWC and other relevant agencies to address violence against women and girls on an annual basis.
174. The draft National Plan of Action for child Wellbeing and Protection for Children (2019-2023) has been developed which will lay down the strategies that the National Commission for Women and Children and its partners can work together to build a fully functional child protection system that effectively prevents and responds to violence, abuse and exploitation against boys and girls.
175. A Communication for Development (CD4) Strategy for Child Well-being in Bhutan (2018-2023) has been developed which focuses on protection of boys and girls from violence, abuse, and exploitation. The strategy aims to raise awareness and provide nudges to change the practice to positive behaviours, increase demand for services, and help develop the practice of positive attitudes, behaviours and social norms. It will address current social norms that do not ensure respect for and realisation of the rights of all boys and girls, adolescents/youth and women; inadequate knowledge and awareness, particularly at family level on good development practices and their benefits; and the gap of quality services.

Institutional mechanism and services

176. The institutional capacity of the NCWC has been strengthened over the years with the recruitment of protection officers and counsellors to provide support and protection for women and children in need. The increased institutional capacity also enabled the NCWC to fully take on the role of Competent Authority for the DVPA 2013, the Child Care and Protection Act 2011 and the CAA 2012

177. A WCWC with representation from the government (NCWC, Royal Bhutan Police (RBP), MoH, RUB) and non-government (RENEW, Nazhoen Lamtoen) has been formed at the national level to ensure effective implementation of the DVPA and institutionalise the support mechanism for women and children.
178. D/TWCCs have been formed in all the 20 districts and four *thromdes* to assist the Competent Authority (NCWC) in the implementation of the DVPA and provide timely and adequate services to the victims of domestic violence and improve the collection and use of data on the issue. Furthermore, the legal officers were designated as interim protection officers who will act as the member secretary for the D/TWCCs and assist the proper functioning of the committees at the local level.
179. A toll-free helpline (1098) for women and children was set up in 2017 at the NCWC to increase access to protection and other forms of support for women and children. It is managed by trained professionals who provide online counselling and referral services to those in need 24x7. Similar toll-free services are also available with the RBP (113), CSOs (Nazhoen Lamtoen, 1257) and the MoH (112).
180. The WCPD established in 2012 under the RBP coordinates all matters related to women and children. It also oversees the functioning of the Woman and Child Protection Units/Desks (WCPU/Ds) established across various police stations. Five additional WCPUs and WCP Desks were established since 2014, taking the total number to 13 with trained police personnel. The RBP has also started recruiting and training more women in the police. They are posted to the WCPU/Ds and police stations to create a conducive environment for victims of GBV. As of April 2019, there were 553 (528 Non-Commissioned Officers and 25 officers) female officers in the RBP.
181. Shelter services are rendered by the CSOs to women and children in difficult circumstances. RENEW provides services to victims of GBV and Nazhoen Lamtoen provides shelter and after-care services to children released from Youth Development Rehabilitation Centre (YDRC), RBP. The government through the NCWC provide financial support to meet the operational costs of the shelter services every year since 2016.
182. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the MoH and RENEW to strengthen coordination and collaboration between the Multi-sectoral Task Force (MSTF) and Community Based Support System (CBSS) and identify common approaches to addressing social issues, particularly GBV at the local level. This MoU resulted in forging stronger collaboration between the government and CSO thereby increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of interventions. An assessment is also being carried out

on improving the coordination mechanism between the government and CSOs to strengthen the protection services provided for women and children in need of care and support.

183. Counselling services for women and children in difficult circumstances, including victims of GBV, are provided by both government (NCWC) and non-government organisations (RENEW). Furthermore, Bhutan Narcotic Control Agency (BNCA) provides such services to those abusing harmful substances.

184. The Psychiatric Unit under JDWNRH also provides psycho-social support and counselling to victims of sexual abuse.

185. The OSCC established with the JDWNRH provides medico-legal services to the victims of GBV, including child sexual assault. The OSCC works in close collaboration with the NCWC, RBP and other service providers and facilitates referral services for those who are in need.

186. An assessment of health sector response to GBV was carried in 2016 to gauge the services at different levels provided by the health facilities across the country. A guideline on the management of domestic violence and sexual abuse cases in the healthcare setting was developed based on the recommendations from the assessment.

187. The MoH has plans to set up comprehensive forensic services in Mongar and Gelephu Regional Referral Hospitals in the 12th FYP to increase the accessibility of health services for victims of GBV.

Capacity Building and Awareness Programmes

188. To institutionalise the capacity building and awareness programmes at the local level, an awareness and sensitisation programme was conducted during the sensitisation tours for the establishment of the D/TWCCs on gender and child protection laws, relevant SOP and guidelines and existing services. They were also sensitised on the Woman and Child Helpline (1098) and the CMIS.

189. Additionally, training was conducted in 2019 on management and referral of cases related to women and children for 37 interim protection officers to enhance their knowledge and understanding of case management.

190. Women and child-friendly/sensitive procedures have been developed by the RBP with support from relevant partners and incorporated in the training curriculum of the Police Training Institute. Likewise, the

DVPA 2013 has also been incorporated in the training curriculum for the recruits and cadet officers, thereby ensuring that all police personnel graduating from the training institutes are adequately equipped with understanding of the Act and women and child-friendly police procedures.

191. Consistent and regular capacity building programmes are carried out for RBP officials to enhance their understanding of women and children issues and to ensure that the cases of GBV are dealt with in an appropriate and sensitive manner. The RBP also facilitated ex-country training, workshops, seminars and exchange programmes on GBV and other related issues. For instance, 11 officials were trained on implementing the GBV laws in Australia through the Australian Award Fellowship Programme from 201 to 2018.
192. To ensure that the cases of GBV are managed in an appropriate manner by the law enforcement agencies, a training on the standard operating procedure on management of cases related to women and children in difficult circumstances has been conducted for senior police officers and an awareness on the same has been carried out for the Officer Commandants of all the police stations.
193. Twenty-five officers (22 male and 3 female) were trained on Domestic Violence Prevention - Consensus Building by RENEW in collaboration with RBP. The consensus building programme was initiated by RENEW in partnership with relevant stakeholders to provide timely and adequate services to the victims of GBV. To ensure the sustainability of the training programme, an MoU has been signed between the RBP and RENEW and all Officer Commandants were trained on dealing with cases of domestic violence in 2017.
194. Capacity building programmes were also carried out on GBV for health professionals. A module on forensic medicine was included in the diploma courses for Health Assistants for the Faculty of Nursing and Public Health, Khesar Gyalpo University of Medical Sciences of Bhutan.
195. Using the SOP on GVB and relevant tools, service providers will be trained in 2019 to provide services in a sensitive and appropriate way, including making relevant/appropriate referrals to other services. Front-liners would also be trained on safe identification and referrals as per a simplified version of the SOP.
196. RENEW in partnership with the monastic institutions and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has initiated programmes to engage religious leaders in the prevention of GBV. The programme adopted the Life Skills Education based approaches to build their capacities on GBV. Advocacy on GBV was

conducted at various religious ceremonies across different communities by over 146 trained religious leaders on a regular basis.

197. RENEW also works with the Central Monastic Body and the Commission for Religious Organisations to advocate on the prevention of VAW through the integration of social messages in mask dances. This intervention aims to reach the most remote and rural communities.

198. Advocacy for the rights of women and children was also done through television series such as a four-part TV series called Yeshey Dawa and Acho Khegpa.

199. Besides the regular awareness programmes by relevant government and non-government agencies, a nation-wide high-level advocacy programme led by Her Majesty Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck, the Goodwill Ambassador of UNFPA, was conducted in all 20 dzongkhags in 2016 and 2017 on reproductive health, gender-based violence, child rights issues such as child marriage, teenage pregnancy and services for women and children in difficult circumstance.

200. A pilot project to prevent violence against women and children was launched in November 2018. The project adopting Partners for Prevention (P4P) model aims to address the root cause of GBV through community engagement.

Violence against women and girls facilitated by technology

201. Cyber violence such as computer pornography is a criminal offence and is punishable as per the Penal Code of Bhutan 2004. The Penal Code states that “defendant shall be guilty of the offence of computer pornography if:

“the defendant publishes and distributes an obscene photograph or picture on the computer or over the internet; or is an internet service provider, who knowingly acts as a host for pornographic material or acts as a channel for the image to be transmitted to an individual user.”

202. To include offences such as videos taken through any kind of electronic device, including recording of obscene videos on mobile phones, the National Assembly, during its second session of the third Parliament endorsed the amendment of the title from “Computer Pornography” to “Electronic Pornography” through Penal Code (Amendment) of Bhutan 2019.

203. Similarly, to address the rising issue of recording obscene videos without the victim's consent, the National Assembly, in the same session, criminalised such acts as a penal offence
204. The Information, Communications and Media Act of Bhutan 2018 ensures that all communication with children is made in a sensitive and appropriate manner and that the consent of legal guardians and parents are always considered.
205. The Department of Information and Media is in the process of drafting a child protection policy aimed at ensuring a coordinated effort to prevent online exploitation of children. Furthermore, addressing online safety and exploitation is prioritised as one of the key interventions in the National Plan of Action on Child Wellbeing and Protection.
206. The "Rule of Content" has been revised from gender and children sensitive lens and covers portrayal of women and children fairly in any media, enhancing awareness on issues related to women and children, adopting privacy standards, avoiding using sexist/discriminatory/derogatory language and provisions for reporting mechanisms for users who have concerns about content and behavior.
207. To address emerging concerns such as online safety and exploitation of children, particularly girls, the Ministry of Information and Communications (MoIC) has been sensitising students, teachers and the members of public on related issues through its Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Sensitisation Programme since 2013.

Child, early and forced marriages

208. The CCPA 2011 and the Penal Code of Bhutan 2004 provides the legal basis for the prevention of child marriage. These Acts classify any sexual act with a child below the age of 18 years as rape, calling for severe punishment against the perpetrator. In addition, the judiciary adjudicates cases concerning children with promptness and severity.
209. Several awareness and sensitisation programmes on the negative impact of child marriage, forced marriage and teenage pregnancies were carried out by the NCWC, BNLI, the judiciary and CSOs both in urban and rural areas. The general public are also made aware of the laws prohibiting child marriage, including the penalties, to prevent such harmful practices.

210. The NCWC conducted awareness programmes in seven districts and municipalities, eight communities and seven higher secondary schools. These programmes were based on data and evidence of risk and prevalence and, therefore, focused on GBV issues including child marriage and harmful practices. Awareness programmes supported by the NCWC were conducted for 3,199 RBP personnel and 1,862 spouses on the elimination of stereotypical and inferiority norms.

211. Secondary analysis of child marriage was conducted by the NCWC using the data from Bhutan Living Standard Survey (2012 and 2017) in 2018. The findings indicated that the incidence of child marriage decreased from 8.7 percent in 2012 to 5.5 percent in 2017.

Trafficking in Women and Children

212. The Department of Law and Order (DLO) was designated as the Lead Agency for coordinating interventions to combat Trafficking in Persons (TIP) in 2016.

213. To bring the definition of Human Trafficking in line with the 2000 UN TIP Protocol and to have a broader aspect on the purpose of human trafficking, the National Assembly, during its second session of the third Parliament, endorsed the amendment of the definition of TIP through the Penal Code (Amendment) Bill of Bhutan 2019 as; “A defendant shall be guilty of the offence of trafficking a person if the defendant recruits, transports, sells or buys, harbours or receives a person through the use of threat or force or deception within, into or outside of Bhutan for illegal purpose or exploitation.”

214. A project to enhance government and civil society responses to counter TIP has been implemented by the NCWC and relevant officials with support from the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) from 2014 to 2018.

215. A review of the legal and policy environment to prevent and respond to issues of Trafficking in Persons (TIP) was conducted in 2015 to assess the gaps and opportunities for addressing the issue. The review report contains analysis of the institutional mechanisms and capacities of relevant institutions on TIP. The SoP for Investigating and Response to TIP Cases has been finalised.

216. A taskforce has been formed with representation from relevant government and non-government agencies (DLO, RBP, MoLHR, NCWC, RENEW, Department of Law and Order (DLO), OAG) for coordination of TIP interventions.

217. A Training Manual on Human Trafficking for Law Enforcement Officials and Prosecutors was developed in 2017 and training of trainers was conducted for law enforcement officials along with CSOs in 2016.
218. Three rollout training programmes on combating TIP were also conducted for the law enforcement agencies, including the OAG, RBP, MoLHR, DLO, Department of Immigration (DoI), Bhutan National Legal Institute (BNLI) and the NCWC.
219. In 2018, 39 police officers (30 male and 9 female) have been trained to handle TIP cases. The officers conducted sensitisation and awareness on TIP to over 224 men and 304 women seeking overseas employment. Further, 2 roll-out training programmes were initiated wherein 13 police officers and 30 clerks from different police stations were trained on TIP.
220. A sensitisation programme on TIP for taxi drivers, hoteliers, local government officials, employees of entertainment places, labour recruitment agencies and schools was carried out by the DLO in collaboration with NCWC, RENEW and Ministry of Information and Communications (MoIC) in 2018.

Access to Justice

221. The DVPA provides for the issuance of interim/protection orders for victims of domestic violence if the court determines that an act of domestic violence is being committed or there is a threat to commit such act by the perpetrator. The interim protection/protection orders prohibit the defendant from committing or aiding to commit domestic violence.
222. The Justice Sector Strategic Plan (2018-2023) aims to improve the accessibility of judicial services to all the people and ensure that the services are inclusive taking into consideration the needs of the most vulnerable groups of people, including women, children and people living with disabilities.
223. The draft Justice Sector Implementation Plan further details out activities to improve access to quality and timely services for vulnerable groups of people, including women and children. One such activity is to develop a SoP for the provision of pro bono legal aid, including legal representation for those in need for such services, particularly women and children from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The implementation plan also mainstreams gender and children issues in all relevant actions of the justice sector.
224. In 2016, separate benches for criminal, family and child, civil and commercial cases were established in the Thimphu District Court. The family and child bench has a separate courtroom to hear cases involving

Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) and child victims. The Bench was established to fulfil the objectives in the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC) and the CCPA 2011.

225. The BNLI has taken initiatives to improve access to justice by training law enforcement agencies on procedures for dealing with VAW cases, creating awareness on their rights, integrating women's rights into Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) training and training local women leaders on ADR. It also conducts regular training for judges on the Acts that impact women and children.

Evidence generation and data collection

226. A CMIS, a web-based integrated system for online case management and referrals and for collection of information on cases pertaining to women and children was established by the NCWC in 2017 to improve coordination with all stakeholders and streamline the collection and management of data on cases related to women and children.

227. The data on all cases of women and children reported to the RBP is maintained in the Crime and Criminal Information System. Furthermore, the WCPD also compiled data on Rape and Sexual Abuse from 2008 to 30 April 2019.

228. To address the information gap on the prevalence of violence against women and girls in the country, a nationwide survey on violence against women and girls was carried out by the NCWC in 2017. The study adopted the World Health Organisation's (WHO) questionnaires on multi-country study on gender-based violence and covered 2,200 households and 2,184 women and girls.

229. A study on the Situation Analysis of the Employees of *drayangs*¹⁴ was conducted to generate baseline data and information on the *drayang* employees in Thimphu, Paro and Phuentsholing. It identifies the risks, challenges and different forms of harassment and violence that the female employees encounter in the *drayangs*. The findings of the study will guide policy and programme reforms to ensure the protection and promotion of their rights.

230. The NCWC conducted a three-phased Violence Against Children (VAC) study: Phase I (2013) identified priority data gaps through a literature review and secondary data analysis, Phase II (2014) was a qualitative research identifying the drivers of violence and knowledge, attitudes and practices related to VAC and

¹⁴ *Drayang is an established entertainment place where the performers dance to the recorded and/or live music*

Phase III (2016) was a quantitative research to understand the types and magnitude of violence against children in the country.

231. Thematic analysis for child protection was conducted by the NCWC to provide an overview of the major thematic aspects of child protection and wellbeing and the key challenges that children face vis-à-vis their right to protection. It uncovers key themes in child protection for which policy attention and programme interventions are required to engender greater equity and improved wellbeing and protection of children in schools.

232. Given the paucity of information on marriage and cohabitation practices in Bhutan, an empirical study of marriage and cohabitation practices in Bhutan was conducted by the NCWC in collaboration with Samtse College of Education to understand and document the patterns and drivers of marriage and cohabitation practices in Bhutan.

Dimension 4: Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions (Critical Areas: Women in power and decision-making, Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, Human rights of women, Women and the media and the girl child)

Legal framework for women's political participation

233. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan provides the right to vote and to participate in any lawful profession as a fundamental right of every Bhutanese citizen. The Election Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan 2008 requires the political parties to provide equal opportunity to qualified persons to participate in electoral activities.
234. In the 11th FYP (2013-2018), gender was mainstreamed from a planning perspective in a significant way. One of the indicators in the plan is to 'draft legislation to ensure quota for women in elected offices including the parliament and local government bodies.' Towards this, the NCWC, in collaboration with relevant agencies, came up with the draft NPAPGEEO.
235. The NPAPGEEO was revised in 2019 in consultation with the Members of Parliament, civil society organisations, ECB, Local Government and other relevant organisations.
236. In the 12th FYP, gender has been considered one of the main thrust areas for development and assigned a dedicated NKRA 10, 'Gender Equality Promoted and Women and Girls Empowered'. In addition, "Increasing women's representation in the Parliament from the current 15.27 percent" is one of the three Key Performance Indicators under the NKRA.
237. The Draft National Gender Equality Policy seeks to achieve gender equality through three domains - political, social and economic, and one of the policy statements is to "explore and adopt affirmative actions to improve women's representation in the political sphere". Furthermore, it includes provisions for creating a conducive environment in order to increase women's participation in politics.
238. The draft Decentralisation Policy under strategic policy actions also directs the implementation of new mechanisms for mobilising and ensuring meaningful participation and voice of women, youth and vulnerable groups.

239. Local Development Planning Manual (LDPM) 2014 provides for adequate participation of women and men of different segments of communities and take into consideration their concerns in the planning process at the local level.

Capacity and awareness programmes

240. Advocacy on the importance of women in politics and as community members was carried out by the ECB as part of voter education across the country. This advocacy programme has been particularly effective in educating rural communities on women's participation in politics.

241. To increase accessibility to voting facilities, Postal Ballot Facilitation Booths and Mobile Polling Booths were introduced in the 2018 Parliamentary elections. It helped women, PWDs, students, trainees, jobseekers, construction workers and prisoners as they could vote from the place of their choice.

242. Election officers were trained to conduct a smooth election and were urged to provide physical assistance and preferential access to voters with disabilities, old and women with children.

243. Volunteers for Voter Information, Communication and Education (Volunteer-VOICE) were trained and sent to the communities to conduct Voter Awareness Programme focusing on Electoral Process and Importance of Participation. Thirty-nine youth volunteers, including 19 girls and 20 boys as the youth role models, showcased women as the face of the Election Commission of Bhutan.

244. To provide an opportunity for children to build their leadership skills through hands-on experience and be able to voice their ideas, thoughts and feelings, the Bhutan Children's Parliament (BCP) was established with the adoption of its Constitution in 2015.

245. The Department of Local Governance (DLG) conducts regular awareness programmes for the LG members. To enhance the capacity of Mainstreaming Reference Group (MRG), training on mainstreaming cross-cutting issues - Gender, Environment, Climate Change, Disaster and Poverty Alleviation (GECDP) in plans and policies was conducted for members of all the 20 districts in 2019.

246. Two rounds of Gender training for Election Officers, Dzongkhag Tshogdu (DT)¹⁵ Secretaries and Gewog Administration Officers of 20 *dzongkhags* were conducted in 2018.

¹⁵ *Dzongkhag Tshogdu (District Council) is the highest decision making body*

247. The DLG also trained 24 woman Mangmis on “Gender in Planning and Governance” in Thailand in 2018 to increase their understanding of gender and governance and provide a platform for experience sharing.
248. The Community Monitoring System (CMS) is put in place to monitor all the development activities at the local level by the community members by forming a monitoring team. The monitoring team consists of at least a woman member.
249. The NCWC in collaboration with the Bhutan Network for Empowering Women (BNEW) provides a platform for key stakeholders to discuss critical issues affecting women’s participation and representation in politics and leadership on a regular basis. A series of National Conference on Women in Politics, Leadership and Governance was organised in 2014, 2017 and 2018. As an outcome of these conferences, efforts towards establishing a national women’s caucus is underway.
250. In a similar manner, three Annual General Meetings each with more than 200 women were conducted in 2013, 2015 and 2017 to provide a platform for networking/knowledge sharing.
251. To build the leadership capacity and skills of women, various training programmes were conducted for over 4,000 women on leadership, decision making, public speaking and political campaigning. In 2018, women politicians were oriented on media and communications. Intensive “Gender training for Women’s Empowerment” was conducted. Further, leadership workshops for elected women in local government were organised where 160 of 174 elected women representatives participated.
252. Initiatives to prepare aspiring women leaders to pass the Functional Literacy Test (FLT) were taken in 20 districts. Similarly, potential leaders’ workshop was conducted for more than 1,474 aspiring women leaders in preparation for the 2016 local government election.
253. To encourage more women to take part in FLT, the ECB located the Test Centres closer to the communities and additional centres were established. The number of centres was increased from 46 in 2011 to 205 in 2016.
254. Two rounds of “Workshop for Journalists on Gender Sensitive Reporting in the Media” were conducted for journalists of all media houses and bloggers.

Violence in Politics

255. The Election Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan 2008 prohibits every political party, candidate and their representatives from using inflammatory language, provocative actions, images or manifestation that incite violence, hatred or intimidation against another party or candidate or any person or group of persons.
256. The National Assembly Secretariat (NAS) has developed an internal framework to address gender-related issues at the workplace to eliminate all forms of discrimination, including sexual harassment at the workplace. The framework also covers Members of Parliament.

Data collection and evidence generation

257. The administrative data on women's participation and representation in politics, including information on women voters, are maintained by the ECB and other relevant government and non-government agencies.
258. The Gender Equality Monitoring System (GEMS) was established in 2016 to facilitate the collection of information pertaining to gender equality initiatives by GFPs. Women's participation in governance and decision-making is one of the outputs among seven in the GEMS.
259. 248. ECB conducted the "Study of Determinants of Voter's Choice and Women's Participation in Elective Offices in the Kingdom of Bhutan" in 2014. It indicated that the underlying biases towards women in leadership exist with 30.8 percent of the respondents believing that men are better leaders and have the necessary qualities mere 5.9 percent saying women make good leaders, and 59.1 percent, of the respondents saying that both male and female make equally good leaders.

Access to Information Communication and Technology

260. The Social Media Policy 2016 mandates all government agencies to come up with respective social media plans and consider cross-cutting issues, including gender, while designing the plan.
261. The MoIC conducts regular competency training for media professionals to impart media-related professional development with particular emphasis on protecting women practising journalism and gender sensitivity in reporting.

262. There are around 113 women ICT professionals in the civil service accounting for 37.7 percent of the total 300 ICT professionals. The majority of the ICT personnel in the corporations are female and 70 percent of the employees at the Tech Park are women.

Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB)

263. The 11th FYP encourages all government ministries and agencies to mainstream gender in their respective plans through the use of gender-responsive budgeting as a strategy.

264. In 2013, the GRPB Working Group was formed with representation from NCWC, GNHC, Department of National Budget (DNB), DLG) and a representative from the CSOs to advocate for making planning and budgeting process more gender-responsive.

265. In early 2014, the RGoB approved the “Strategic Framework and Action Plan for Gender Mainstreaming and Gender-Responsive Planning and Budgeting in Bhutan”.

266. The Budget Call Circular for FY 2013-2014 calls for the inclusion of gender, the environment, climate change and poverty concerns in the budget proposal. Further, the 2014-2015 BCC directed all agencies to submit a policy narrative statement and the budget proposal are to be gender-responsive. In 2015-2016, three sectors –Health, Education and Agriculture – were identified as pilot sectors for GRPB and issued clear guidelines for budget proposal.

267. A gender budget analysis was carried out in the three pilot sectors titled “Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting in Bhutan in 2016”.

268. A high-level sensitisation workshop on GRPB was organised for the Members of Parliament in 2017. A similar sensitisation and awareness programme for the officials of the three pilot sectors (MoE, MoH, MoAF) was conducted in 2018.

269. The DLG developed a manual and conducted Training of Trainers (ToT) for LG officials of all 205 *gewogs*. During the first round of ToT, 37 LG members participated. Eighty-seven and 495 participants attended the second and third round of training respectively in 2017.

270. The Gender Budget allocation has increased by more than double in the last six years from Nu. 225.208 million in 2014-2015 to Nu. 531.164 million in 2019-2020. The MoF regards GRPB as an important part

of their Annual Report and presents the performance on gender equality measures and GRPB to the Parliament.

National Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan

271. The NPAG (2008-2013) was endorsed by the government to strengthen and support gender mainstreaming and woman empowerment in the 11th FYP. The NPAG outlines priority actions across seven critical areas of interventions: Good Governance, Health, Education & Training, VAW, Mental Health, Ageing and Disabilities, Economic Empowerment, and Gender Stereotypes & Prejudices.
272. The NCWC Strategic Plan (2014-2019) was developed in 2014 to provide an overarching direction for the NCWC and partner organisations in prioritising its activities for the next five years to promote gender equality and child protection.
273. The Interim Plan of Action on Gender was developed based on reports and studies, review of past action plans, and the Concluding Observations of the 8th to 9th Combined CEDAW Report was approved by NCWC in 2018.
274. Agency-wise Mapping of the Concluding Observations on the 8th and 9th Combined CEDAW Periodic Reports was carried out in 2018 in consultation with all the stakeholders. It was mainly aimed at encouraging ownership and accountability to implement the recommendations.
275. The government is in the process of formulating a new NPAG (2019-2023) to implement the policy directives of the National Gender Equality Policy. The NPAG will be developed based on the review of the NPAG (2008-2013) and the 11th FYP progress. The Concluding Observations of the CEDAW and UPR and findings from various studies will be taken into consideration during the formulation of the plan.

Dimension 5 - Peaceful and inclusive societies (Women and armed conflict, human rights of women and the girl child)

Mainstreaming women, peace and security in national planning and policy framework.

276. The overall development philosophy of GNH ensures the sustainability of peace, security and an inclusive society for all, including women and children. As a member of the UN promoting international peace and security, Bhutan contributes trained and qualified men and women officers to UN peacekeeping missions.
277. Recognising the important role women play in the maintenance of peace and security, and in keeping with UNSC resolution 1325 (2000) on Women and Peace and Security, Bhutan remains committed to field more women peacekeepers and has accordingly achieved 15 percent of women in its deployment as required by the United Nations. The peacekeeping missions are trained on various aspects of peacekeeping, including gender, PSEA, and HIV, prior to their deployment. This training is undertaken by the UN and other agencies.
278. Bhutan is firmly committed to the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). It was among the first countries to contribute \$ 10,000 to the UN Trust Fund set up in support for victims of SEA. Upon the successful completion of their peacekeeping assignments, the officers who have served as training delivery officers in conflict areas return and train other officers and ranks on zero tolerance policy of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), and conflict-related sexual violence.

Women's participation in humanitarian and crisis response activities

279. Bhutan Red Cross Society (BRCS) was formally established on 8 May 2017 coinciding with the World Red Cross Day 2017 as a service provider in disaster management, health promotion, and social services. Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen is the President of the BRCS.
280. A number of training programmes have been conducted by BRCS since its establishment to enhance the services provided by volunteers and equip them with skills to provide sustainable responsive services in times of crisis. The core volunteers are members of His Majesty's Retired Armed Forces Society that is associated with a network of community volunteers consisting of a significant number of woman volunteers.

Production, use of and trafficking in Illicit drugs

281. The Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Substance Abuse (Amendment) Act of Bhutan 2018 prohibits cultivation, production, manufacture, wholesale and retail trading and distribution, import, export, and use of the plants, substances and preparations listed in Schedules III (Narcotic Drugs with medicinal value) and IV (Psychotropic Substances with medicinal value) for any person not expressly licensed for that purpose and at any establishment or on any premises not expressly licensed for that purpose.
282. Concerted efforts have been made by the government and non-government partners to reduce the supply of psychotropic substances, increase awareness on the harmful impact of substance abuse, provide support for those at the risk substance abuse and increase access to counselling and other support services.
283. In addition to the number of awareness programmes on the harmful impact of substance abuse in the schools by the BNCA, RBP and other partners, training of school guidance counsellors and teachers were conducted. Fourteen school guidance counsellors and school principals were certified as addiction counsellors after being trained on universal treatment curriculum to enable them to identify those who are at the risk of or into early initiation of substance abuse and provide the necessary support.
284. Family Support Groups in the communities were initiated to strengthen the engagement of communities in preventing the youth from engaging in substance abuse. These groups engage community members and parents to identify vulnerable youth, prevent them from indulging in harmful behaviours and provide support (including referral to relevant agencies). Over the last few years, a growing number of women were involved in these groups with 10 such groups established in the military centres numbering 1,969 women.

Child Labour

285. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan prohibits all forms of exploitation against children and requires the state to take appropriate measures to protect them from all forms of exploitation, including economic exploitation.
286. The LEA 2007 criminalises worst forms of child labour and prohibits forced or compulsory labour and worst forms of child labour.
287. The CCPA 2011 provides subsequent care and protection for children who are victims of exploitation.

288. The draft Child Labour Task Force Action Plan was developed following the formation of the CLTF in 2011, which is an interagency body comprising the representatives of the government, civil society, development partners and private sector chaired by the Director of Department of Labour, MoLHR, and co-chaired by Child Protection Specialist of UNICEF.

289. A child labour handbook on SoP to address child labour issues was developed in consultation with the relevant stakeholders which provides procedures and mechanism for receiving and responding to complaints of child labour.

Dimension 6: Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation (Human rights of women, women and the environment and the girl child)

Women's participation and leadership in environmental and natural resource management and governance.

290. Gender mainstreaming is outlined as the key means of implementation of the draft National Environmental Strategy to ensure gender-sensitive environmental plans, policies and programmes. The strategy particularly focuses on the role of women and men in the management of natural resource management and differential impacts of environmental degradation on men and women.
291. The Draft National Climate Change Policy (2018) provides strategic guidance to protect the wellbeing of all citizens by identifying differential effects of climate change on men and women. The policy acknowledges the differential adaptive capability, access and control over resources and differing capabilities to cope with climate change.
292. The Water Act 2011 provides for equal access to safe, affordable and sufficient water for all irrespective of gender and participation of communities in the integrated management of water resources. The Act requires adequate consultation with all the beneficiaries and stakeholders.
293. Bhutan Water Policy 2007 encourages equal participation of both men and women in the decisions pertaining to water resource management to ensure that the gender-differentiated roles and concerns are integrated into the interventions to address water-related problems.
294. A National Integrated Water Resources Management Plan (NIWRMP) was developed in 2016 to provide a strategic framework and priorities for the Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM). The Plan highlights the important role of women in water resource management. It is included as one of the modules under the capacity needs assessment of stakeholders.
295. Members of the Water User Committees are trained on watershed and land management along with sensitisation on climate change and gender-related issues to enable them to make informed decisions and accountability regarding development activities within their communities.
296. The CSI Policy emphasises the importance of entrepreneurship and its contribution to low carbon business as well as environmental and social protection, and poverty reduction, among others. As part of the

implementation of the Policy, a number of women entrepreneurs were trained on “Community Entrepreneurial Capacity and Rural Enterprise Development” which is aimed at accelerating the growth of CSI.

297. In order to address the growing waste management problem in urban centres and public threats it can create, the government has approved a National Waste Management Flagship Programme in the 12th FYP
298. Gender was regarded as one of the core cross-cutting issues in the Renewable Natural Resource (RNR) sector in the 11th FYP. It enabled the identification of challenges, gaps and opportunities in the engagement of women in the agriculture sector, including skills and capacities. It has provided a basis for further inclusion and intervention to address the vulnerability of rural women in future plans and programmes.
299. Bhutan adopted the National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA) in 2006 to address urgent and immediate adaptation needs arising from adverse impacts of climate change. Through the NAPA, Tarayana Foundation promoted climate resilient water harvesting techniques in 34 villages in four districts to ensure accessible water supply. It includes the construction of 52 water reservoir tanks and installation of 109 rainwater harvesting along with water source protection and management initiatives. Furthermore, 36 Water User Committees have been formed consisting of 702 members, 302 of them women.
300. The Sectoral Adaptation Plan of Action (SAPA) for the RNR sector adopted in 2016 acknowledges the gender-differentiated impact of water shortage and increasing hardship faced by women in securing reliable water for their households. It, therefore, seeks to protect watershed and water sources through integrated watershed management practices.
301. Opportunities availed by women to engage in and serve as executive members of the Community Forest Management Group (CFMG) contributed to building their capacity to be the leaders of the Local Government besides increasing their access to livelihood. In 2016, 10 percent of successful candidates for local government constitutes those who had previously served in CFMG executive committees, out of which 16 women CFMG executive committee members were selected as Deputy Heads of the Blocks and Heads of the villages.
302. National Waste Management Strategy highlights the importance of mainstreaming gender issues in all waste management actions. Furthermore, the situational analysis on gender issues and waste management is required to be carried out to determine the progress of implementation of the strategy.

Gender-specific environmental and health hazards awareness

303. An environmental health programme was instituted in the MoH in 1998 with the responsibility to implement interventions on environmental and climatic change related health impact. The interventions undertaken by the unit included targeted awareness and capacity building programmes to enhance understanding of and detect and monitor environmental and climate change impacts on health.
304. A Vulnerability and Adaptation assessment on health outcomes of climate change was conducted under the environmental health programme. Furthermore, integrated surveillance on climate-sensitive diseases is being piloted within six health facilities in four districts.
305. To inform and sensitise policymakers on climate change and its effects on health, the MoH conducted high-level advocacy on health needs and actions related to climate change in Thimphu. The meeting was attended by ministers, parliamentarians, developing partners, officials from government agencies and NGOs.
306. A study on “Meaningful and Equitable Gender Participation in Local Climate Adaptation and Governance in Rural Bhutan” was also undertaken.

Participation in technical and environmental disciplines

307. In order to enhance the introduction of STEM subjects, the draft (NEP) 2019 has provision to enable all students to opt for the environmental educational programme as an elective from higher secondary school level. In addition, counselling and advocacy programmes are also initiated to encourage girls to take up STEM subjects at the higher secondary level.
308. The MoE intends to increase the enrolment of female students in STEM courses from 25 to 30 percent and the number of girls scoring above 60 percent in STEM subjects from 16 to 23 percent in the 12th FYP.
309. Currently, there are 667 students (320 female) pursuing courses that support sustainable development at the College of Natural Resources (CNR). Similarly, there are 1,060 students (272 females) pursuing engineering and technology at the College of Science and Technology (CST).
310. A module on environment and disaster is embedded in the NFE Curriculum to provide knowledge and skills pertaining to natural resources and their relation to disaster and environmental changes. The majority of the NFE learners are women (4229 out of 6017)

Climate-smart agricultural technology and infrastructure

311. RDTC is implementing a project called “Enhancing Community Capacity for Biodiversity Conservation and Livelihood Improvement through Eco-based Farming” to build the capacity of rural farming communities, particularly women and youth, to effectively and sustainably manage the natural resources, and adapt to the impacts of climate change. A Climate Smart Agriculture Curriculum Framework was also published through the project.
312. In order to reduce carbon emissions and dependency on fossil fuels, the MoIC is implementing the “Bhutan Sustainable Low Emission Urban Transport System”. The initiative aims to have 300 taxi operators in Thimphu to trade their fossil fuel vehicles for electric vehicles (EV) within three years by maintaining carbon-neutral status. Under the project, preference is given to women taxi drivers to switch to EVs. Furthermore, capacity building programmes will be provided to women taxi drivers on the maintenance and operation of EVs. Security will also be enhanced through the installation of CCTV at numerous charging stations for EVs.
313. Subsidised electricity of up to 100 units is provided to rural households in order to reduce their dependence on the use of firewood and fossil fuels during the 11th FYP period.
314. The MoAF has initiated the Bhutan Biogas Project (BBP) covering 5,003 households between 2014 and 2018. The project is complemented by BAOWE through the supply of 1,929 Bio-Mass cooking stoves in three *dzongkhags*. In addition, the government supplied 14,179 cooking and heating stoves in 2017 across various communities.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Practice

315. The initiative to enhance conservation of plant and animal genetic resources and natural resources was carried out in the 11th FYP whereby an inventory of traditional knowledge (TK) for protection and preservation of knowledge and practices related to traditional medicines was established. A total of 789 TK holders in the country were listed of which 40 percent are women.
316. A training on TK was coordinated by the National Biodiversity Centre for 19,000 participants across 205 *gewogs* 50 percent of whom were women.

317. Six women groups were formed to produce various products through TK. They produce gooseberry, soap-nut and ginger products and cultivate rhododendron plants and chirata.
318. Tarayana Foundation, with support from Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation (BTFEC), has initiated the development of climate resilient communities through mitigation and adaptation measures. Electric fences are installed in 15 remote villages across five *dzongkhags* to mitigate the continuing problem of human-wildlife conflict faced by the farmers (mostly women).

Green economy and decent jobs

319. To increase women's engagement in commercial agriculture, the government has constructed marketing facilities in the form of temporary, semi-permanent and permanent sheds and huts. To increase economy of scale of their products, the MoAF facilitated the registration of vegetable vendors with the Centenary Farmers' Market (CFM). Currently, there are 474 vendors registered with the CFM, of which 391 (82.5 percent) are women. Around 560 farmers across nine districts were linked with the vendors of CFM for marketing of their vegetable products.
320. The DAMC, in collaboration with Food Corporation of Bhutan Limited (FCBL), during the 11th FYP established 173 farm shops and 101 (61.2 percent) women were employed as sales executives in these farm shops.
321. Equal opportunities are provided for aspiring women entrepreneurs. Four women are registered bidders of the annual cordyceps auctioning and seven women assisted the bidders during the auction in 2018-2019.
322. The Samdrup Jongkhar Initiative (SJI) has initiated income generation through sustainable waste management. The initiative promotes zero waste strategies by building waste management capacities. A women's waste craft group in Dewathang was formed under the SJI and the members were trained on diversification of plastic wrappers.

Participation and leadership in disaster management

323. The Disaster Management Act of Bhutan 2013 notes that due care should be taken to ensure women are adequately represented on Disaster Management Committees. The Act also emphasises taking special care of children, women, elderly persons and persons with disabilities during rescue, response and relief operations.

324. The platform for participation in disaster management skills development and training is enhanced through the introduction of Desuung Programme initiated under His Majesty's project. The participants are trained on disaster preparedness, relief and response. As of 2019, 34 batches have undergone the training comprising 4,147 volunteers, 1,202 women and 2,945 men.

Evidence generation and awareness on the impacts of environmental degradation and disasters

325. The NCWC, in collaboration with NEC, is implementing "Gender in Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) Project" aimed at scaling up investments, particularly in gender-responsive climate actions. Currently, the NCWC is conducting "Gender Analysis in Three Sectors: Agriculture, Waste and Energy.

326. The RGoB is investing in smart agriculture approaches to address issues of time, poverty and drudgery for women farmers. The MRGs at the local government level oversees the mainstreaming of climate, gender and disaster risk reduction in planning and implementation.

327. A Child Centered Disaster Risk Reduction (CCDRR) training was conducted in five *dzongkhags*. The training modules include an overview of disaster management, first aid and fire safety. A total of 200 school disaster focal teachers have been trained.

Access to disaster services such as relief payments, disaster insurance and compensation

328. The "Immediate Relief and Restoration fund" is administered by the Department of National Budget (DNB) to cater to affected communities during times of disaster. The fund is to be used for providing disaster relief and restoration needs of affected areas and people.

329. The MoAF has initiated cash compensation for loss of livestock to wild predators from 2003 to prevent farmers from retaliatory killing of wild animals. The Ministry will also explore alternative measures to provide cash compensation based on study of premium subsidy-based insurance scheme.

330. An Endowment Fund for Crop and Livestock Conservation to be implemented under a Royal Charter has been endorsed in principle. The compensation scheme is aimed at securing minimum household food security through compensation for crop and livestock losses due to natural calamities and wildlife predation.

Gender-responsive disaster and climate laws, policies and programmes

331. The development of SoP from gender and child perspective is an indicator under the NKRA 6 “Carbon neutrality, climate and disaster resilient” in the 12th FYP to ensure gender and child sensitive procedures during disaster.

332. The NCWC has implemented “Capacity Building of Government Officials and Rural Women on Gender Mainstreaming and Empowerment of Women” whereby officers from relevant agencies have been trained on mainstreaming gender in policies, plans and programmes, including Empowerment of Rural Women and Gender and Diversity in Disaster Risk Reduction in 2016 and 2017. As of 2018, 15 officials were trained in these fields.

Section III

National Process and Institutional Mechanism to implement and monitor the critical areas of BPFA

Institutional Mechanism

The NCWC as the **National Women's Machinery** in the country coordinates and monitors the implementation of the critical areas of the BPFA. It is also responsible for the dissemination of the strategic objectives and actions to relevant agencies for inclusion in their plans, policies and programmes. The critical areas are also considered during the formulation of national development and are mainstreamed in the plans of respective sectors. **The GFPs** is one such important institutional mechanism through which the critical areas are implemented at the sectoral level. In addition, they also carry out awareness and sensitisation programmes in their sectors and facilitate the collection of sex-disaggregated data. The NCWC monitors the implementation of gender interventions, including the actions under the BPFA through the annual report submitted by the GFP, which can now be done online through the GEMS. **The GEG, a pool of experts** instituted in 2016 to provide technical backstopping to the NCWC and GFPs, also forms an important institutional mechanism.

The GNH policy formulation protocol and screening tools are another mechanism through which gender issues across the critical areas of BPFA are mainstreamed in the national policies. The policy formulation protocol contains clear guidelines for the sectors formulating any policy to consider gender as a crosscutting issue and include adequate provisions to address concerns. It also requires the agencies to involve the GFPs of their sectors to ensure that gender issues are adequately addressed in the proposed policy. Furthermore, gender equality is one of the indicators under the GNH policy screening tools and all government policies are screened through the gender perspective. The NCWC is also a member of the GNH policy screening committee. Likewise, the **Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)** developed by the Cabinet Secretariat also ensures the integration of specific gender issues into the laws and legislation.

The FYP **plan formulation guidelines** which mandates all the sectors to integrate cross cutting issues like gender in their plan also serves as an important institutional mechanism in ensuring the integration of the critical areas into the respective sector plans. In a similar manner, the budget call circulars and guidelines for annual budget preparation ensures the inclusion of the gender activities with annual budgets provided for. In addition, the **LDPM** also ensure the participation of women in the local planning process and integrating gender concerns in the local plans. Likewise, **the MRG** which comprises representatives from agencies working on crosscutting issues such as climate change, gender and disaster is another avenue.

The WCWC and D/TWCC ensures the implementation of specific critical area of the BPFA at the national and local level. The WCWC serves as an advisory to the Competent Authority (NCWC) for issues of violence against women and children. **The D/TWCC** is responsible for ensuring the protection of the rights of women and children at the local level. The **WCPU/Desks of the RBP and OSCC** of the JDWNRH are also an important mechanism to implement the critical area of violence against women and girls, human rights of women, and the girl child.

The **CSOs play a vital role** in the implementation of the critical areas of the BPFA. In addition to their work in empowering women and girls in rural areas, they also advocate for integration of gender issues under various critical areas into the national plans, policies, legislation and programmes. They serve as a checks and balances mechanism to ensure effective implementation of the committees on BPFA.

National Review Processes

The national review on the implementation of BPFA was undertaken in line with the guidance note provided by the United Nations Social and Economic Council and in consultation with all government and non-government stakeholders. The guidance note was shared with all the GFPs, CSOs, private sector representatives and UN agencies in the country for their inputs prior to the review. The draft review report was prepared based on the inputs from the sectors following which a national consultative workshop was conducted. The workshop was attended by GFPs and representatives from the government, CSOs, private sector and UN agencies. To make the consultation more inclusive and participatory, small groups were formed under the different dimensions based on their relevance. To validate the information gathered in the smaller groups, the draft report was reviewed by a larger group. The review report was compiled and finalised by the NCWC officials following the consultative workshop. The final report will be made available to the public on the NCWC website.

Section IV

Sex-Disaggregated Data and Gender Statistics

Gender Statistics - Progress

With concerted efforts made and emphasis given by the government on the collection of the sex-disaggregated data to inform evidence-based planning since the 10th FYP, considerable progress has been made in **terms of collection and use of sex-disaggregated data**. The adoption of **NPAG (2008-2013)** further complemented the effort made through the plan guidelines and the plan document. The collection and analysis of VAW/G data, valuation of unpaid care work and strengthening the health information system were the three key areas of progress in gender statistics at the national level.

The NCWC developed **GEMS** in 2015 to manage, monitor and track progress on gender mainstreaming activities implemented by different sectors and agencies in the country. Currently, the GEMS is accessed and used by a network of GFPs at the national and local government level to plan and report progress on gender mainstreaming activities. The system manages data and information on **52 indicators** towards achieving seven outputs: women's access to health services, women's access to education, participation of women in sustainable rural development, female youth unemployment, women's competency and skills in entrepreneurship, mechanisms to address violence/sexual harassment against women, and women's participation in governance and decision-making.

A **Gender Sensitive Indicator Handbook** was developed in 2017 to improve the collection of sex-disaggregated data and adoption of uniform indicators to measure progress towards achieving parity between men and women. The indicators are broadly divided into various sectors related to relevant domains of **GNH and gender targets in Sustainable Development Goals**. The handbook provides overall guidance on collecting and maintaining data and information on gender equality by various agencies.

The statistical needs of the health sector have grown enormously due to the rapid growth in its infrastructure, expansion of healthcare services, public health, medical, and technological advancement to meet the needs of a growing population. Since May 2014, the MoH strengthened the Health **Management Information System (HMIS) as a web-based system (DHIS2)** from earlier stand-alone MS Access-based HMIS. All hospitals, all Basic Health Units Grade-I and 62 Basic Health Units Grade-II are directly reporting data

through web-based HMIS. The web -based HMIS will be rolled out to remaining BHU-II when they are connected to the Internet.

The global Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development recognises the critical importance of ending violence against women and called for the reduction of “all forms of violence everywhere”. Similarly, the 12th FYP emphasises the reduction of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAW/G) as a key national priority. Since 2012, efforts to collect data on violence against women have included building it into sectoral national surveys as well as conducting dedicated surveys on the subject. Strengthening administrative data related to VAW/G also received much attention in the country.

The National Health Survey 2012 collected data on VAW/G through the adaptation of WHO’s **Multi-Country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence Against Women**. The survey presents estimates of the current prevalence of physical, sexual and psychological violence against women by their partners. A focused national level survey was carried out by the NCWC in the same year. In 2017, the NCWC conducted a comprehensive national level survey on VAW/G by interviewing over **2,000 women and girls aged 15-64 years**. The findings of the study were widely disseminated, and the recommendations will fit into the NPAG and policy interventions for the 12th FYP. A comprehensive three-phase study (literature review, qualitative study, quantitative survey) on VAC was also carried out from 2014 to 2016.

On the **administrative data collection related to VAW/G**, relevant agencies maintain a well-documented information. The RBP, OSCC, RENEW and NCWC maintain their own data on cases involving VAW/G. To streamline definitions and management of case data, the **CMIS** was introduced in 2017 as a central repository of disaggregated data and online case management system for women and children in difficult circumstances and children in conflict with the law. The CMIS will also facilitate the provision of effective, well-coordinated and timely case management with all the stakeholders working together as a team.

Past studies on gender pointed to the “double and/or triple burden” for women as one of the main reasons for gender disparities and an impediment to furthering gender agenda in the country. Besides, numerous international treaties and documents, especially Goal 5 of the SDGs, articulate recognition of the economic contributions of both paid and unpaid work. Therefore, it is very important to generate evidence to ensure policy change and change of mindset among people. With support from the ADB, the NCWC conducted a first of a kind study on the **valuation of unpaid care work** using data from the GNH survey and the LFS in the country. The study documents the gender patterns of unpaid care work and estimates its monetary value. It also demonstrates that measuring and valuing unpaid care work is not only feasible, it is necessary

in light of the large amount of unpaid care work disproportionately performed by women. The findings of the study show that women perform 71 percent of unpaid care work, 2.5 times more than men and its value accounts for around 10-16 percent of GDP.

Gender Statistics Priorities

Despite enormous efforts in strengthening the national statistical system and making numbers more gender-sensitive, there are many areas that need further interventions in terms of collection, production and analysis of gender statistics. The NCWC will work closely with the National Statistics Bureau in **mainstreaming gender into national statistics**. The national surveys conducted by the NSB are strengthened from a **gender lens** while designing the questionnaires. The capacities of the GFPs and statistical officers are built on a regular basis. Numerous researches, studies and surveys on gender have been conducted to better inform planning and decision-making and efforts to analyse data and research work will be strengthened further. Efforts will continue in **updating the gender indicator handbook** and **strengthening the GEMS**. Surveys on VAW/G and VAC will continue to be a priority area of interest and capacity will be strengthened to do more in-depth analysis of the existing data. Some of the priorities in the next five years for Bhutan to strengthen gender statistics would be in the following areas:

The agriculture sector enhanced the collection and analysis of data over the years and it makes more sense to strengthen gender statistics in the sector because **60 percent** of the women are engaged in this sector. However, the challenge of **limited sex-disaggregated** data makes it extremely difficult to identify and address gender issues and concerns in the sector. The NCWC is currently conducting “Gender Analysis in three Sectors: Agriculture, Waste and Energy. The result of the analysis will find an entry point in enhancing gender statistics in the sector. The NCWC will collaborate with MoAF in making the annual agriculture census questionnaire gender-sensitive. Further, the administrative data and publication of reports will be strengthened to ensure that gender-disaggregated statistics are available.

Women’s economic empowerment is central to realising women’s rights and gender equality. Women’s ability to participate equally in labour markets, access to and control over productive resources, access to decent work, control over their own time, increased voices and visibility and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels are a cornerstone to women’s economic empowerment. However, lack of gender statistics hampers designing appropriate and targeted interventions. Thus, concerted efforts will be made to collect, analyse and produce gender statistics and information in the economic area.

Women and men have different access to education, health and economic opportunities. The same is true with their access benefits and impacts with regard to the environment. Specifically, there exists a strong **gender dimension** to how people access land and natural resources, participate in environmental management and vulnerability to environmental calamity. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to trace the relation between gender and the environment. Like most countries across the globe, Bhutan has a big gap in production and analysis of gender statistics in the sector. The NCWC started working with the NEC on gender analysis of agriculture, waste and energy through the **NDC project**. **Gender analysis framework** will also be developed for the environment sector, and MRGs and GFPs will be further trained in gender analysis and approaches. In line with the SDG and national priority framework, efforts will be made to produce gender statistics related to natural resources and biodiversity; access to food, energy, climate change and women in environmental decision-making at all levels.

Section V: Conclusion

While considerable progress has been made over the last five years in implementing the actions outlined across the twelve critical areas of the BPFA, the Royal Government of Bhutan acknowledges the need to put in further efforts towards achieving all the strategic goals highlighted under the BPFA. Therefore, the government is committed to consistently working towards realisation of the commitments made under the BPFA. The Royal Government of Bhutan is equally committed to upholding the rights of women and girls as enshrined in the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan. The government continues its effort to work together with its non-government partners to implement the other international instruments like CEDAW and SDGs particularly Goal 5, “Gender Equality” to promote gender equality and empower women and girls.

Bhutan appreciates the support and cooperation extended by the international community in its efforts to promote gender equality and empower women and girls in our pursuit to achieve, “a happy and inclusive society where children, women & men live in harmony with equality and respect in all spheres of life”.