

2018

ALTERNATIVE REPORT FOR BHUTAN

For the Committee on the Universal Periodic Review
(Third Cycle) 33rd Session

Prepared by:



Bhutan Transparency Initiative
Towards Accountability, Transparency and Integrity

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Acronym

1. ABS: Ability Bhutan Society
2. AIDS: Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
3. BCMD: Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy
4. BTI: Bhutan Transparency Initiative
5. BNEW: Bhutan Network for Empowering Women
6. CAT: The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
7. CBR: Community Based Rehabilitation
8. CCPO: The Child Care and Protection Office, Central Monastic Body
9. CEDAW: The Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discriminations Against Women
10. CRC : The Convention on the Rights of the Child
11. CERD: The Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination
12. CRPD: The Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities
13. CSO: Civil Society Organization
14. CSOA: Civil Society Organization Authority
15. CWDs: Children With Disabilities
16. CWSN: Children With Special Needs
17. DoPH: Department of Public Health
18. DPT: Druk Phuensum Tshogpa
19. DV: Domestic Violence
20. DVPA: Domestic Violence Prevention Act
21. ECCD: Early Childhood Care & Development Centre
22. ICERD: International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
23. ICCPR: International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
24. ICESCR: The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
25. ICT: Information Communication Technology
26. FYP: Five Year Plan
27. GNHCS: Gross National Happiness Commission
28. GNHCS: Gross National Happiness Commission Secretariat
29. KAP: Knowledge, Attitude and Practices
30. LDC: Least Developed Countries
31. LGBTI: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex
32. MBO: Mutual Benefit Organization
33. MHM: Maternal Health Management
34. MoH: Ministry of Health
35. MRI: Magnetic Resonance Imaging
36. MoWHS: Ministry of Works & Human Settlement
37. NA: National Assembly
38. NACP: National HIV/AIDS Control Programme
39. NHAC: National HIV/AIDS Commission
40. NAPA: National Adaptation Programme of Action

41. NC: National Council
42. NCD: Non-Communicable Diseases
43. NCWC: National Commission for Women and Children
44. NGO: Non Government Organization
45. NPAPGEEEO: National Plan of Action for Promotion of Gender Equality in Elected Offices
46. NSP2: National Strategic Plan 2
47. PWD: Persons with disabilities
48. OAG: Office of the Attorney General
49. RGoB: Royal Government of Bhutan
50. PBO: Public Benefit Organization
51. HIV: Human immunodeficiency virus
52. RENEW: Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women
53. RBP: Royal Bhutan Police
54. SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals
55. SEARO: South-East Asia Regional Office
56. SEN: Special Education Needs
57. SAARC: South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
58. WCPU: Women and Child Protection Unit
59. UN: United Nations
60. UNDP: United Nations Development Programme
61. UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund
62. UNFPA: United Nations Populations Fund
63. UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioners for Refugee
64. UPR: Universal Periodic Review
65. WHO: World Health Organization
66. YDRC: Youth Development and Rehabilitation Centre, RBP

Background and Framework

1. Bhutan participated in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) from the start of the first cycle in 2009 after Bhutan transitioned into Democratic Constitutional Monarchy in 2008. The unique constitution, that respects all possible human rights, provided the required framework and confidence to participate in the UPR.
2. The first UPR report was presented by the first democratically elected government formed by Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT). The subsequent UPR report was presented by the second elected government formed by the People's Democratic Party (PDP). The third UPR from the state will be presented by the third government that will be decided by the result of the general election on 18th of October 2018.
3. The third cycle provides an opportunity for CSOs to present an alternative report when an elected government is yet to be formed. Tarayana Foundation is an established CSO with experiences in preparing the alternative reports for CEDAW for the 7th (2008), and combined 8th and 9th (2016) reporting cycles. The Foundation's engagement in fulfilling the basic human needs (rights) of the most vulnerable sections of the Bhutanese population, in particular access to safe housing through her housing programme; access to clean and safe drinking water and toilets through her health and sanitation programme; access to food and nutrition security through her livelihood programme; access to education and safe environment for children through the Buzip (ECCD) and scholarship programmes; support to disabled members of the population through corrective surgical camps and livelihood support for the remotest and vulnerable members of the communities, provide first hand experiences and information required to lead the preparation of this report.
4. The Foundation, in compliance with the UPR guideline, reports with a focus on the follow-up to the preceding reviews, including an assessment of and comments on the implementation of recommendations and developments since the last review and any other human rights issues. The report follows the set of twelve clustered recommendations to the second cycle of UPR 2014 (annexed).

A. Cooperation with Human Rights Mechanism

5. Bhutan signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1980 and ratified it in 1981. Bhutan presented combined initial six periodic reports to CEDAW Committee in January 2003. The seventh periodic report was submitted in September 2007 was considered at its 44th Session on 23 July 2009. The 8th and 9th periodic report was considered at the 65th Session in 2016.

6. Bhutan ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1990. The two CRC Optional Protocols on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict were ratified in July 2009. Bhutan submitted its initial report to the CRC Committee in February 1999 and its second report in March 2007. The combined third to fifth periodic reports were considered by the Committee at its 2198th and 2199th meetings on 17th May 2017.
7. Bhutan signed the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) in March 1973 but has not yet ratified the same.
8. Bhutan has ratified the Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia; the Convention on Prevention and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution in September 2003; and SAARC Code for the Protection of Breastfeeding and Young Child Nutrition in August 2003. Bhutan signed the SAARC Social Charter in January 2004, which among others, calls for the promotion of the status of women and promotion of the rights and well-being of children.
9. Bhutan is party to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Yokohama Global Commitment made at the Second World Congress Against the Sexual Exploitation of Children in 2001.
10. Bhutan signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in September 2010.
11. The Government endorsed the Ministerial Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities: 2013-2022, and the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific in 2013. Other key international policy frameworks to which Bhutan subscribes include: WHO SEARO Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Strategic Framework 2012-2017; WHO Global Disability Action Plan; and the WHO Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020
12. Bhutan is also party to the International Conference on Population and Development(1994) and It’s Programme of Action

B. Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers (Recommendation cluster number 1)

13. The state policy ensures the prevention of illegal immigration into the country. Any solution to the people living in the camps in Nepal requires acceptance of this state policy. The latest report by United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor 2017 estimates approximately 8,000 Nepali-speaking people in two camps in Nepal administered by UNHCR after years of international efforts resulting

in the successful third country resettlement of more than 90 percent of the camp population.

14. The Bhutanese Civil Society Sector take this opportunity to thank the eight countries who have, on humanitarian grounds, collaborated with the UNHCR to bring about third country repatriation of the people living in the camps. We acknowledge their contribution in making this resettlement programme one of the most successful one implemented to date.

C Poverty Reduction (Recommendation cluster number 2)

15. The government has made good progress in reducing poverty in the country. The poverty rate has reduced from 12% in 2012 to 8.2% in 2017 according to the Bhutan Poverty Assessment Report 2017. The inequality measured by GINI's coefficient has increased from 0.36 in 2012 to 0.38 in 2017. In the same report, poverty remains predominantly a rural phenomenon at 11.9% above the national rate of 8.2%. Human-wildlife conflict still dominates problems faced by the rural farmers. Though resource allocation to local government follows a certain formula (Poverty rate, geographic area, population size) to address the equity issues, the bulk of resources are at the disposal of central agencies and dzongkhags. The gewog development grant and the dzongkhag development grant are allocated equally without considering the size of the dzongkhags, gewog and the household numbers and population size. Most political parties pledged to increase this grant, however, without proper utilization guidelines, these grants do not help address poverty directly.
16. With major achievement in poverty reduction in terms of basic and essential needs for survival, the government now needs to review its Poverty Reduction (PR) Strategy to move beyond the welfare approach to empowering and strengthening the capacities of the poor in the interest of sustainability. This approach will also reduce dependency while increasing confidence and independence. The PR strategy should also include a section on the emerging urban poverty particularly amongst the rural-urban migrating youth and the growing senior citizens category.
17. Youth unemployment is on the rise and adequate programmes for mentoring, counseling, capacity development etc. are still not adequate, hence adding to the growing issues of youth in trouble.
18. Poverty amongst senior citizens is another category that is an emerging issue and warrants proactive attention. Insufficient programmes and strategic interventions to address the needs of our senior citizens could result in diminishing quality of life for them. Geriatric care, including hospices, is absent at the moment except for a few charity programmes run by the Royal Family.

19. There is need for affordable and safe housing for young job seekers, especially for single women, in the urban areas. Decent living wages would help build resilience amongst the vulnerable communities, as they would be able to absorb more shocks, caused by both economic as well as natural disasters.
20. There is also a strong need for systematic social welfare and safeguards in place to deal with the fast changing development scene. Youth in search of better employment opportunities continue to be drawn into the urban areas, however, there are little to no provisions being made by the urban municipalities.
21. It is important to acknowledge that the human-wildlife conflict experienced in Bhutan is because of the expansion of the national forest cover, where forests have encroached on the open spaces and pastures in the countryside. This must be addressed through holistic studies, scientific knowledge, research, innovation and technology so that evidence based appropriate measures to address the root causes.

D. Right to Education (Recommendation cluster number 3 and 4)

22. Central schools with free facilities (uniform, tuition, and board) to provide opportunities to those children far away from the schools and families from the poor economic background, have been successfully implemented by the government. This continues to benefit many students from rural families, especially those from economically disadvantaged families, whose parents have not been able to provide the necessary socio-economic as well as academic support as needed. Although, no known complaints have been received, it will become imperative for the school management to ensure a safe and viable learning environment for all the students.
23. The government launched a pilot low-cost sanitary pad project to improve the menstrual hygiene of girl students. One of the leading causes of girls falling behind in class due to absenteeism is being addressed and this is a positive step forward. However, the production and provision of low cost pads must be accompanied with holistic menstrual hygiene education including disposal of soiled pads, and the provision of adequate toilets with running water (MHM need assessment for adolescent girls and nuns).
24. The study¹ reported 21% of children aged 2-9 experienced at least one functional domain most being cognition followed by behaviour and fine motor. The severe disability for cognition was 1.3% followed by behaviour with 0.7% and fine motor 0.5%. The government has introduced Special Education Needs (SEN) program in 14 schools across the country with more planned in addition to one special school for the visually impaired and one for hearing impaired in Khaling and Paro respectively. There is a lack of

¹Two-stage Disability Survey 2010-2011

resource teachers (special educators) who can support teachers in adapting the curriculum and their pedagogy to suit the needs of a CWSN². The adjusted net enrolment ratio is reported at 98.8 percent (98.9 percent girls and 97.3 percent boys) and national literacy rate at 71.4 percent in 2017.

25. While the improved access to education is laudable, sufficient safeguards need to be put in place so that risks are reduced in the areas of child safety, food and nutrition security, sufficient diversity in education programmes and extra-curriculum participations for well rounded growth and development. Given that most of the parents of rural children are farmers, it is also important to ensure that gardening activities and participation in food production and preparation be made available.
26. There is a need to ensure that the education system prepares our youth to face the challenges of the future. An independent review of the education system might be warranted, especially in the face of fast evolving teaching-learning scenarios across the globe in general and in the Scandinavian countries in particular. There is also a need to bring together relevant state and non-state parties including private sector to collaboratively work towards providing employment opportunities for those completing education.
27. The growing number of girls' enrolment in schools necessitates that the state provide facilities and infrastructure for safe and conducive learning environment. The state must monitor and continue to enforce the ban on corporal punishment. The state must move away from gender neutral to more gender sensitive infrastructure development in schools and institutions with special reference to the differing needs of the adolescent girls. Ensure implementation of the national standard of 1 toilet compartment for every 25 girls and 1 toilet compartment for every 40 boys. The location of learning resources like library needs to be gender sensitive – closer and safer for the girls - so that girls and boys have equal access.
28. The girls are more sensitive to nutrient deficiencies and as potential future mothers; they require more nutritive food, especially in terms of vitamins and iron. The schools and institutions with boarding and food facilities must ensure that the food menu provides the minimum nutrient requirement of the girls so that nutritional imbalances can be holistically corrected through proper school feeding plans.
29. While Special Education Needs (SEN) program is a good initiative to integrate the children with special needs with other children, the Children With Disabilities (CWDs) are taught by teachers without formal training in teaching students with special needs. The state needs to ensure the training of teachers teaching CWDs through specialized teacher education programmes.

²Bhutan Vulnerability Baseline Assessment, 2016

E. Right to Health (recommendation cluster number 5)

30. The government provides free health services as mandated by the constitution of Bhutan. Ministry of Health (MoH) has developed strategies and guidelines to provide free health services. According to the 2017 Population and housing census report, 98% of the household has access to safe drinking water and 66.3% has access to improved sanitation. Infant mortality rates reduced to 15.1; under five mortality rate reduced to 34.1; maternal mortality rate reduced to 89.
31. Despite the government's plans and achievements, there are serious human resources shortages in key health programmes. It is recommended that the government put in place critical numbers of professionals required for key programmes like nutrition and health to ensure efficient service delivery.
32. The government largely depends on donors for the purchase of equipment and outside technical expertise to service and maintain the equipment. There is room to explore opportunities to promote the in-country production of basic equipment like wheelchairs, walking sticks and bed trolleys. Similarly, support private individuals to build up technical capacities to maintain special equipment like dialysis, CT scans and MRIs, this could help create more local employment opportunities too.
33. Non-communicable diseases (NCD) are on the rise and climate-change impacts on health are unpredictable. It is recommended that the state steps up preventive measures to deal with NCD and climate- induced diseases, particularly vector- borne diseases like dengue, malaria and tuberculosis.
34. Establish networks with CSOs that engages in specific health agenda (for example, Lhak-Sam for HIV; Cancer Society for various cancer- related health issues and Kidney Foundation for renal disorders) and support them with capacity building and finance on a sustained basis.

People affected by HIV

35. Bhutan is signatory to the UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS 2001, the 2011 and 2016 Political Declarations on HIV/AIDS, the Millennium Development Goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Royal Decree on HIV/AIDS issued by His Majesty the Fourth King in 2004 has resulted into the formulation of National Strategic Plans for the Prevention and Control of STIs and HIV/AIDS (NSP2 of 2012-16), National HIV/AIDS Commission (NHAC) is in charge of coordinating HIV-related activities, National HIV/AIDS & STI Control Programme (NACP) is the department within the Ministry of Health tasked with implementing the HIV programme. There exist sufficient information and recommendations in the study reports.

36. Lhak-Sam, a lone CSO, takes on the responsibility to provide support to people affected by HIV with awareness, advocacy and most importantly moral support through its networks to fight social stigma and help bring about better acceptance and inclusion. As per the national epidemiological updates, a cumulative of 570 HIV cases were reported as of December 01, 2017³.
37. In line with the recommendations of other reports and need of the CSOs, in particular, Lhak-Sam, this report recommends unreserved state support for human capacity development and sustained fund for program-based interventions to deal with challenges of HIV/AIDS as a national issue. Support for economic growth and development and livelihood initiatives would help boost both morale and confidence in the rehabilitation programmes.

LGBTI

38. The LGBTI group operates under the umbrella of Lhak-Sam as RAINBOW Bhutan. The group operates openly in the public as LGBTI group and has not faced any objections from any authority of the state. However, the members of the group experience suppression and harassment from the society due to lack of understanding and knowledge about LGBTI indirectly forcing the community underground.
39. Section 213 of the Penal Code of Bhutan states that “A defendant shall be guilty of the offence of unnatural sex if the defendant engages in sodomy or any other sexual conduct that is against the order of nature” criminalizing the LGBTI community and prevents them from accessing justice to counter the injustices they suffer. In line with the actions taken by the international communities, the most recent being India, this report recommends revoking this aforementioned section and the subsequent related sections.

Persons with Disabilities (recommendation cluster number 6)

40. The Government endorsed the Ministerial Declaration on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities: 2013-2022, and the Incheon Strategy to “Make the Right Real” for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific in 2013. Other key international policy frameworks to which Bhutan subscribes include: WHO SEARO Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Strategic Framework 2012-2017; WHO Global Disability Action Plan; and the WHO Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. The state is yet to ratify the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recommended at the second cycle of the UPR.

³ Lhak-Sam Annual Progress Report 2017

41. Draft national policy for disabilities is available. Reports on disabilities exist through various assessments⁴. Over 21 % of children aged between 2-9 years have one or more disabilities. Knowledge regarding children with disabilities is extremely limited in terms of both legislation and the provision of relevant services.⁵
42. Three CSOs⁶ offer specific services to special groups of PWDs. They are constrained by professionals to deal with the multiple disabilities, committed fund to carry out programmes on a regular basis and inadequate appropriate infrastructure in place to offer services.
43. The procedures for the ratification of CRPD have been initiated with the formulation of a high-level panel (wherein relevant CSOs are members) to assist the drafting of the national policy on Disabilities. The draft national policy was prepared under the leadership of the Gross National Happiness Commission Secretariat (GNHCS).
44. This report reiterates the urgent need for the ratification of CRPD to help mainstream support to PWDs as recommended in the second cycle UPR of 2014. This report recommends the adoption of the disability policy with the inclusion of state support, both financial and capacity building of CSOs to deal with multiple disability situations.
45. In line with KAP recommendation, there is a need for a national policy for social and education inclusion of CWD. There is a need to help create awareness among the professionals and the general public through national campaigns. Specialist training needs to be provided to associated professionals so that quality services can be rendered to those with special needs.
46. In order for all the above to be spearheaded, this report also recommends the creation of a National Centre for Disabilities, that would house a critical mass of trained service providers. The research and development unit would look at new developments in the field and take up adaptation and adoption of solutions suitable locally. The training unit would train service providers and the Centre would also serve as the knowledge hub and advocate for disabilities in the country.

⁴ Bhutan Vulnerability Baseline Assessment 2016, Two-stage child disability study 2010-2011 and Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) study on children with disabilities 2017

⁵KAP study on Children with disabilities 2017 by Ministry of Education and UNICEF Bhutan

⁶ Disabled Person's Association of Bhutan, Ability Bhutan Society and Draktsho Vocational Training Centre for Special Children and Youth

F. Protection of Women and Children from Domestic Violence (recommendation cluster number 7)

47. The National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) takes the lead role to promote and protect the rights of women and children in Bhutan. Under the leadership of NCWC, Child Care and Protection Rules and Regulations of Bhutan 2015 and Domestic Violence (DV) Prevention Rules and Regulations 2015 are framed. NCWC coordinates Women and Child Protection Unit (WCPU) with the police, RENEW and medical services to respond to the issues of women and children. The reports reveal that an increasing number of incidences of violence are reported and recorded. The services are rendered through two separate divisions, one each for women's issues and children's issues respectively.
48. There is a need to scale the service provision and in the absence of a separate ministry to provide all the necessary assistance, it would be most imperative to strengthen both these service divisions with adequately trained human as well as financial resources.
49. All the agencies are constrained by physical infrastructures (Eg. limited shelters for victims of violence), professionals equipped with capacities to deal with multiple DV issues and provide sustained financial support. Financial assistance remains mainly donor-based. Lack of specialised courts on gender-based violence against women including domestic violence and there is a lack of a clear plan and adequate budget for the implementation of Domestic Violence Prevention Act 2013.
50. The study⁷ recommends the implementation of legal instruments (Acts, Rules and Regulations), awareness creation, building local networks, creating self- help groups and reporting. This report acknowledges the need for strategic interventions to support the victims of severe violence and assured access to justice, independent economic and livelihood opportunities. Holistic handling of all DV complaints would give women the confidence to both reports and follow through to the logical conclusion. Currently, there is a severe lack of social workers who follow through every case reported all the way through to rehabilitation.
51. There is a need to take a tough stance against child molestation and other sexual assaults committed against children. At present, the punishments meted out to the guilty are too light. Many times, the cases are not reported as the adults involved feel that it would only increase trauma for the child. These children do not receive trauma treatment or the

⁷ Bhutan Vulnerability Baseline Assessment 2016

necessary counseling services. As children, they think that the adults in their lives know best, often, the very ones who are placing them in harm's way unknowingly.

52. Child Rights advocacy has been taken to the rural communities via community radio in two districts through a pilot study. In conjuncture, child rights advocacy has been stepped up in all Tarayana project sited (350 villages) and caregivers and parents trained in child-friendly care giving.
53. In efforts to facilitate better access to justice for Women and Children the Government has introduced a family bench in Thimphu court.
54. Recently a 24x7 toll free Women and Child Helpline was also launched to help improve access to counselors and also lodge grievances. However, more sensitive family courts are required throughout the country.

G. Participation of Women in Politics (recommendation cluster number 9)

55. Bhutan Network for Empowerment of Women (BNEW), a CSO, works to enhance women's participation/representation in leadership, governance and politics; and vigorously prepares women to participate in elections through awareness raising, mobilization & motivation of women and capacity building pre and post elections. The representation of women in the local governments increased to 11.6% in 2016 from 6.9% in 2011. At the national level, representation of women in the Parliament {National Assembly (NA) and National Council (NC)} through elections show a decreasing trend from 8 women elected in 2008 down to 4 in 2013. His Majesty the King consistently appointed 2 women in the NC. In early 2018, the NC elections saw two women elected along with 18 men. The results of the Primary round of NA elections indicate that, at most, there will be nine women representatives in the house of 47. Both in 2013 and 2018, the political parties with women presidents lost in the primary round and failed to participate in the defining General Elections.
56. In the local government, elections education and training, functional language skills, decision-making, self-image and self-esteem and double or triple burden are seen as a barrier⁸ whereas for the NC and NA attitudes and stereotypes and patriarchal values appeared more relevant hurdles.

⁸Study Report on Participation of Women in 2011 Local Government Election

57. NCWC has prepared a Gender Equality Policy which is in the process of finalization and approval, NCWC with inputs from BNEW, drafted the NPAPGEEO⁹ strategy and submitted to previous Cabinet which approved only one part on education but not the part which proposes special measures.
58. This report recommends that continuous awareness to change the gender stereotyped mindsets and patriarchal values be supported on a sustained basis not limiting to election times. Encourage debates among men and women to explore ways and means to facilitate women's success in the elections.
59. To create awareness of special temporary measures and remove the misconceptions on the terminology. A list of special measures could be submitted for adoption to fast-track women's representation in the legislative bodies and leadership, adopt appropriate temporary specific measures for the equitable participation of women in politics and leadership.

H. UN Special Procedures and Rectification of Human Rights Instruments (recommendation cluster number 11 &12)

There is no action taken on these two recommendations.

60. The state must take responsibility to follow through the recommendations to the report reviews. It is recommended that the state re-vitalize agencies and officials tasked with recommendation follow-ups and liaise with relevant agencies for their implementation. It is also proposed that a small team lead by the Gross National Happiness Commission be appointed, particularly, to follow up with the UPR related recommendations along with access to required human resources and budget support.
61. Often times, there is a lag period after the reporting cycle, wherein follow-up is not mandated to the relevant agencies, the state must institute necessary protocols that allow for the continuous update and follow through of the recommendation to be implemented as well as ensure timely status reporting.
62. Some of the recommendations are easily implemented, while others require further discussion and collaboration between and amongst relevant stakeholders. In such cases, the lack of coordination and the identification of lead partners are necessary.

I. Right to Development and Environmental Issues

63. The Constitution of Bhutan ensures that 60% of the land be under tree cover for all time to come. Bhutan has also pledged to be carbon neutral and all her development plans are screened to ensure that they are clean and green. Many in the private sector worry that with such environmental commitments, infrastructure development and the growth of

⁹ National Plan of Action for Promotion of Gender Equality in Elected Offices.

local industries might suffer. However, as pointed out in the Economic Development Policy 2016, the government has identified hydropower, tourism, cottage and small industry, mining and agriculture as the priority sectors. In addition, it also listed ICT, health, education and transport services as important sectors. In the policy document, there are clear provisions for promoting a transparent and conducive environment for business and investment in the Bhutanese economy.

64. It is relatively easy to start and operate a business and the ease of running a business has improved vastly through one-stop shops in the last couple of years. The use of ICT to process applications has also reduced the wait time. The main drawback is the small local market and the lack of competitive manufacturer. Apart from tourism and the hospitality sector, bottling of spring/mineral water business has grown within the last few years.
65. There is a need for more support for the growth of the creative and fine arts industry. Handicrafts and other hand crafted traditional skills can be scaled as there is a growing interest in the arts and crafts of the country.
66. Finding a balance between, environmental conservation and material progress, is always a challenge. The growth and development in the country have led to higher living standard expectations of the people in general, thus the growth in both production and consumption. In keeping with the sustainable development goals and with our own GNH development philosophy, it is imperative that our economic development is not at the cost of our environment and our values.
67. Bhutan has some of the most progressive environmental conservations policies and plans in action. The Buddhist philosophies of respecting all life and the importance of living in harmony with our natural environment ensure that there is no untoward destruction of the environment and tree planting continues to be a way of life. Bhutan has successfully completed its second National Adaptation Plan of Actions (NAPA II) and has embarked on the implementation of the third (NAPA III) and has also set aside 51.44% of the total land under protected parks, nature sanctuaries and biological corridors.
68. Bhutan sits on highly active seismic zones (IV and V) and has experienced major earthquakes in its history, although, the last one is not in anyone's living memory. This coupled with the changing weather patterns especially erratic rains and dry spells, could be a recipe for climate-change induced disasters that could set the country back even as Bhutan is, for all purposes, poised to graduate from the LDC category in the next few years.
69. Bhutan's pristine environment, a result of careful and thoughtful development, is also under threat by global warming. Bhutan can do everything right and yet suffer the consequences of a rapidly warming earth. With more than one- third of the world's

population in the vicinity, their behaviors vis a vis climate change, will also determine the level of disasters Bhutan may face!

70. Bhutan has been known as the land of the ‘medicinal plants’ from time immemorial and this is one sector that has yet to be explored fully to benefit the country as well as the world. However, there is need to build local capacities and put necessary infrastructure in place before this can happen. This ‘blank cheque’ is yet to be en-cashed.
71. Social audits and holding office bearers’ accountable, ensuring transparency in governance is all gaining foothold along with citizen participation to ensure that corruption is nipped in the bud. The Bhutan Transparency Initiative, a registered national CSO, promotes accountability, transparency and integrity.
72. This report is submitted by Tarayana Foundation, Bhutan Network for Empowering Women and Bhutan Transparency Initiative. The report was prepared through several rounds of consultation with all relevant CSOs and service providers. We acknowledge the support and time given by all who have actively participated in the one on one interviews, focused groups discussion and general consultations in the preparation of this Alternate Report.
73. There are 47 registered CSOs in the country out of which 39 operates as Public Benefit Organizations (PBOs) and 9 Mutual Benefit Organizations (MBOs). The CSOs operates in different fields such as: Media & Democracy, Poverty, Youth, Women, Arts & Crafts, People Living with Special needs and HIV, Animal Rights and Environment Conservation.

Annexes

Annex. 1. Methodology

Reviews

- Review of the past recommendations especially that of 2014 UPR
- Actions taken on these recommendations (Legislations, rules and regulations, interventions)
- Government plans and programmes
- Parties to Human Rights Instruments
- Reports/issues raised in the reputed national and international media on human rights

Interviews/Focused Group Discussions

- Knowledge and awareness of the human rights issues among the national NGOs engaged in human rights issues
- Experiences with human rights interventions implementations among the national NGOs engaged in human rights issues
- Changes seen in the situations where recommendations were implemented among the national NGOs engaged in human rights issues

Consultation

- National level consultation with relevant NGOs to create awareness and confirm the correctness of the issues highlighted as relevant and need to be address.

Annex. 2. References

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11. Gross National Happiness, 2018. National Policy for Persons with Disabilities First Draft –May 2018
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13. Ministry of Health and UNDP 2016. Legal Environment Assessment of HIV in Bhutan Report 2016
14. Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, National Statistics Bureau and UNICEF 2010-2011. Two-stage Disability Survey
15. Ministry of Education and UNICEF, 2017. Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) study on children with disabilities
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17. National Statistics Bureau, 2017. Bhutan Poverty Analysis Report 2017

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19. National Commission for Women and Children, 2016. National Survey on Violence Against Children and Young People in Bhutan.
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21. RENEW 2017. Annual Report
22. Royal Government of Bhutan, 2009. National report Submitted in Accordance with Paragraph 15 (A) of the Annex to Human Rights Council Resolution 5/1
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28. United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 2016. Bhutan 2016 Human Rights Report
29. UPR Technical Guidelines 3rd Cycle

Annex 3. Implementation status of the recommendations of 2nd cycle (2014) of UPR

Summary (Clusters) of Recommendations	Actions taken / progress made
1. To intensify efforts with Nepal to find a lasting solution for the situation on Bhutanese refugees living in Nepal refugee camps;	No
2. To continue efforts to reduce poverty;	Yes
3. To continue to improve the education system and to make primary education compulsory and free for all children, including children from ethnic minorities and those with special needs;	Yes
4. To address the decline of female school enrolment rates; To strengthen efforts to eliminate illiteracy;	Yes
5. To adopt a comprehensive approach to include providing a healthy environment, safe water and sanitation and proper childcare; To continue to fight against the negative impacts of climate change;	Yes
6. To continue promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities;	Yes
7. To continue to give priority attention to the protection of women and children from domestic violence;	Yes
8. To increase efforts to prevent unacceptable forms of child labour;	Yes
9. To continue to encourage greater participation of women in politics;	Yes
10. To accept invitations from UN Special Procedures to visit the country, in particular the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief;	No
11. To issue a standing invitation to UN Special Procedures;	No
12. Ratification of human rights instruments : the ICCPR, the ICESCR, the OP to the ICESCR, the CAT, the CRPD, the Rome Statute of the ICC, the OP of CEDAW, the CERD, the three OPs to the CRC, the Convention on enforced disappearances, the Convention on the rights of migrant workers, the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.	No

Annex 4. List of organizations consulted

1. Ability Bhutan Society (ABS)
2. Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD)
3. Bhutan Transparency Initiatives (BTI)
4. Bhutan Network for Empowering Women (BNEW)
5. Department of Labour, Ministry of Labour & Human Resources
6. Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health
7. Draktsho Vocational Training Institute
8. Rainbow Bhutan - LGBTQ network
9. Lhak-Sam
10. Office of the Attorney General (OAG)
11. National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC)
12. Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women (RENEW)
13. Women and Child Protection Unit (WCPU), Royal Bhutan Police
14. Ministry of Foreign Affairs
15. Youth Development and Rehabilitation Centre, Royal Bhutan Police
16. Child Care and Protection Office, Central Monastic Body

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**Third UPR Alternate Report consultative meeting with the Civil Society Organizations
11th October 2018
Tarayana Centre**

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