



**Report on the High Level Sensitization Programme  
on  
Gender Mainstreaming**

**A Joint Initiative of  
The National Commission for Women and Children  
and  
The UN System in Bhutan  
July 10-13, 2010**

**SAARC Convention Centre, THIMPHU BHUTAN**



## Excerpts from Lyonchen's address to the participant



H.E Lyonchen Jigmi Y. Thinley, Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan

“The thrust of Bhutan’s political transformation has been to create a modern, democratic nation that would meet and uphold the full range of rights of its people. The Constitution of Bhutan articulates these aspirations. It enshrines the rights, freedom and dignity that every Bhutanese must enjoy irrespective of ethnicity, religion or gender. The letter and spirit of Bhutan’s Constitution is in full accord with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)....

Despite all the good things that exist in our culture, our laws and our development policies and programmes, we do know that women continue to be the primary victims of domestic violence, poverty, and that they suffer from various forms of comparative disadvantages. More compassionate and caring as they are by nature, our women often end up as single parents struggling to stay afloat while fending for the growth and development of their children.

I hope these and other concerns will be covered in the deliberations of this Workshop. I am confident that the NCWC, equipped with the mandate to function as an autonomous umbrella agency for women and children in Bhutan, will keep up with its good endeavours. As far as the government is concerned, we will continue to provide the fullest support to the NCWC, including the space and resources it needs to execute its very important tasks....”

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## 1. Executive Summary

The Royal Government of Bhutan has always maintained a gender-neutral position in the formulation and implementation of its plans, policies and programmes. Bhutanese women therefore do not face any institutionalized form of discrimination – politically, socially, economically or legally and enjoy equality in almost all spheres of life. However, there are several areas where women are at a disadvantage due to subtle and indirect forms of gender disparity that exist in the society. Gender gaps are apparent in key areas such as secondary and tertiary education, national economic and political participation and among victims of domestic violence. Therefore, the development process in the 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2008-2012) has itself evolved from a Woman in Development approach to a Gendered approach. While formulating the 10<sup>th</sup> Plan, its guidelines states that all sectors should mainstream gender issues.

With the recent transition from a Monarchy to a Constitutional Democracy and with the adoption of the Constitution, Bhutan needs to promote and respect basic democratic principles, which demand greater gender equality.

Bhutan signed the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1981 and is fully committed to achieve all its provisions in addition to other international and regional gender goals such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the SAARC Development Goals (SDGS). To facilitate the achievement of these goals, the Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC) and the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) developed the National Plan of Action on Gender (NPAG), as the operational guide to realize the above aspirations.

The NCWC since its establishment have conducted a series of awareness and consultation activities to sensitize stakeholders on issues related to women and their rights. Specific initiatives have also been undertaken with the legislative, judiciary, *Dratshang* and Royal Bhutan Police to review promote, protect and monitor the rights of women and children in Bhutan. These efforts have led to setting up of institutional mechanisms to safeguard women and children rights. While the Tenth Five Year Plan execution is already halfway, some main provisions of the NPAG are yet to be addressed. To bridge this gap, NCWC and the UN system in Bhutan agreed to conduct a ***‘High Level Sensitization Programme on Gender Mainstreaming’***.

### a) The sensitization programme recommended the following immediate actions:

1. Conduct national consultation for Gender Focal Points to re-orient their roles and responsibilities as focal persons to ensure that the gender mainstreaming component is streamlined in their respective sectors. The consultation would also explore ways to recognize contribution of the focal points in the performance appraisal system.
2. Strengthen capacity of National Statistic Bureau and the National Commission for Women and Children in generating sex disaggregated data and to strengthen the development of Bhutan Gender Info-Base.
3. Coordinate with relevant development partners to operationalize the recommendations of the National Consultation on human trafficking and cross-border collaboration to address trafficking.
4. Conduct Gender Responsive Budgeting and Child Budgeting training.
5. Develop a strategy on the Universal Birth Registration in collaboration with relevant agencies, particularly Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs.

## **b) Additional Recommendations:**

1. Train relevant members of parliamentary committees on gender equality and women's empowerment for practical and focused outputs such as matching the NPAG and 10<sup>th</sup> plan outputs, UNDAF, CEDAW and other targets.
2. Collaborate with the Non Formal Education Division to mainstream gender through their reading and learning materials.
3. Initiate discussions to increase women's participation in the electoral process.

The Sensitization Programme was conducted to inform parliamentarians and policy makers on NCWC's function and mandate and Bhutan's obligations to international and regional conventions such as the CEDAW, CRC, UPR and SAARC.

Challenges, opportunities and the roles of parliamentarians, policy makers, senior government officials including planners and implementers to promote gender equality in Bhutan were thoroughly discussed.

## **2. Inaugural Ceremony**

**10 July 2010:** The programme was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of Bhutan, Lyonpo Jigmi Y. Thinley. In his inaugural address, the Prime Minister outlined the commitment, challenges and aspirations of the government to promote, protect and monitor the rights of women and children. "Despite all the good things that exist in our culture, our laws and development policies and programmes, we do know that women continue to be the primary victims of domestic violence, poverty and that they suffer from various forms of comparative advantages," he said. He also commended NCWC for its commitments toward securing the rights of women and children in Bhutan and reaffirmed the government's support.

NCWC Chairperson and education minister, Lyonpo Thakur S. Powdyel said it was important to build a common understanding of gender issues to achieve the country's development philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH). He highlighted that in view of the new developments and rapid changes taking place in the country against the backdrop of a fast globalizing world it is important for us to seek a creative alignment between our obligations to the world community and our obligations to ourselves and said that the high level sensitization workshop on gender mainstreaming is a response to one of the critical areas of concern.

UN Resident Coordinator, Claire Van der Vaeren in her address congratulated the government for its commitment and outlined the progress made in the country to promote and protect the rights of women and children, and to bring a greater degree of gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of the region. She also called for a more focused approach to address the key gender concerns particularly in the areas reflected in the NPAG and the concluding observations of CEDAW. She made a particular reference to Gender Responsive Budgeting and how it can help maintain optimal focus on making national resource allocations more gender sensitive. She expressed the hope that these issues would be addressed in the upcoming mid-term review of the 10<sup>th</sup> Five-year Plan.

### 3. Programme Objectives:

The three-day sensitization workshop was conducted to create awareness and better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the NCWC among National Assembly and National Council members, Constitutional post-holders and government Secretaries, Commissioners, Director Generals, Directors and Chief Planning Officers. The other objectives of the workshop were:

1. Create better understanding and hence programming for key issues pertaining to Bhutan's obligations to CEDAW, CRC, UPR and SAARC Conventions. And the important roles that parliamentarians, policy makers, planners and implementers have in promoting gender equality in Bhutan.
2. Discuss and identify key issues and challenges related to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Bhutan as per NPAG findings and the 10<sup>th</sup> FYP.
3. Create understanding and appreciation of how gender mainstreaming in the RGoB plans and programmes can contribute towards a greater realization of the rights of women and children.
4. Strengthen understanding of how gender mainstreaming can be done and why it is important through examples and case studies.

### 4. Programme Implementation

#### 4.1 Day 1: 11 July 2010

##### 4.1.1 Technical Session for the Parliamentarians

##### Participants:

- Cabinet members
- National Assembly members
- National Council members.



Parliamentarians were briefed on the NPAG and CEDAW

## **Presentation 1**

### **NCWC- Roles and Mandates (Annex V)**

**Resource person: Dr. Rinchen Chopel, Executive Director, NCWC.**

Dr. Rinchen Chopel presented the roles and responsibilities of the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC).

## **Presentation 2**

### **Introduction NPAG and CEDAW Concluding Observations (Annex VI)**

**Resource person: Dr. Rinchen Chopel**

Dr. Rinchen briefly introduced gender planning in Bhutan and presented the background to the NPAG and its seven critical areas. He also presented the key issues concerning gender in Bhutan vis-à-vis the concluding observation of the CEDAW.

## **Presentation 3**

### **Existing laws and policies pertaining to women and Children in relation to international instruments and the constitution: (Annex VII)**

**Resource person: Dasho Jangchuk Norbu**

The presentation provided a detailed overview of the laws and policies of the country and how these were related to international instruments. He also explained how these international instruments can be harmonized with the Constitution.

#### **4.1.2 Key issues**

Each presentation was followed by extensive discussions during the question and answer session. Following are some key issues discussed during the session:

1. Involvement of NCWC in promoting women's participation in political and public decision making in the next election.
2. NCWC's mandate and its functions.
3. Increase understanding/appreciation of gender dimensions in Bhutan and its impact to the overall development process among policy makers.
4. Increase awareness on gender issues among children in schools and homes.
5. Set standards on portrayal of women and gender relations in the media including movies.
6. Monitoring and protect children from exploitation.
7. Status of maternity leave and its impact on rights of women and children.

#### **4.1.3 Recommendations**

1. Generate more and better gender disaggregated data and adequate monitoring and protection for children in labour market and exploitative trades.
2. NCWC to work on a comprehensive proposal on Universal Birth Registration and re-visit the current maternity leave policy and its impact on the rights of children and women.
3. Establish more day care centers and training programmes for prospective day care workers.
4. RGoB and NGOs to explore strategic approaches to enhance access to resources for rural women and initiate programmes to reduce drudgery of women in rural Bhutan.

## 4.2 DAY II: 12 July 2010

### Participants:

- Constitutional Post Holders
- Secretaries
- Director Generals
- NCWC Commissioners.

#### 4.2.1 Technical/thematic sessions covered the following topics:

1. Mandate, functions and scope of activities undertaken by NCWC.
2. Introduction to the National Plan of Action for Gender.
3. Concluding Observations of the CEDAW.
4. Existing laws and policies pertaining to Women and Children and
5. Case studies of women's economic empowerment in the Asia and Pacific Region.

As presented to participants of the 1<sup>st</sup> day session, the first 3 topics were on the same issues/topics which are presented by Dr. Rinchen Chopel, NCWC Executive Director.

Ms. Shashi Singh from the Consortium of Women's Entrepreneurs of India (CEWI) presented (Annex VIII) examples and case studies of women's economic empowerment in the Asia and Pacific Region. She said that economic empowerment was central to holistic development of women, which recognized women's roles in the family and the community. She highlighted the entrepreneur development and apprenticeship training program for the Self-Help Groups, placing particular emphasis on the importance of following up these training programs with coaching, ready access to knowledge, support to networking, etc.

#### 4.2.2 Key issues and suggestions following the Day 2 presentations:

1. Overlaps/duplication of interventions among implementing agencies for development of small women entrepreneur.
2. Inadequate data to address sexual harassment at workplace.
3. Training and its effectiveness in gender mainstreaming into relevant sectors.
4. Inadequate focus and lack of interventions to address urban poverty.
5. Current Gender neutral policy does not address different gender needs.
6. Lack of information on trafficking situation.
7. Need to bring into action legal instruments to address the concerns related to situation of fatherless children and the creation of a Universal Birth Registration system.

#### 4.2.3 Recommendations

1. Strengthen coordination among various implementing agencies to develop small women entrepreneurs. Support growth and expansion of cottage industries to increase economy of scale and productivity. Raise income level of rural women and create full time rural employment.
2. Generate sex disaggregated data and focused interventions to address increasing concern of sexual harassment at work places.
3. Conduct study on the situation of trafficking in Bhutan, including those trafficked from Bhutan to other countries.
4. Conduct study on urban poverty.
5. Urgent need to adopt Gender Responsive Budgeting.
6. Need NCWC to foster closer linkages and cooperation with the Office of Attorney General (OAG) on legal issues concerning women and children for advice and support.
7. Develop a policy framework to empower rural women and incorporate gender concerns in the NFE curriculum.
8. Undertake a comprehensive study on the implications of the rights and empowerment of women in a matrilineal society.



### 4.3 DAY III: 13 July 2010

#### Participants:

- Directors
- Chief Planning Officers
- NGOs
- Local media

#### 4.3.1 Technical/thematic sessions covered the following topics:

1. Mandate, functions and activities undertaken by NCWC.
2. Introduction to NPAG.
3. Concluding Observations of CEDAW.
4. Existing laws and policies pertaining concerning Women and Children
5. Case studies of women's economic empowerment in South Asia.

#### 4.3.2 Key issues and suggestions following Day 3 presentations:

1. The complex situation of NCWC as a Human Rights Organization as well as the responsibility of having to fulfill government's obligations to various international treaties and conventions.
2. Focus on migration issues for work and how migrant workers can be brought under the purview of state monitoring and protection including HIV/AIDs prevention.
3. Limitation of gender focal person's contribution due to inadequate recognition of their work in their parent ministries.
4. Health and protection reach for out of school adolescent.
5. Need to strengthen the role of GPFs to facilitate the implementation of international obligations.
6. Gender Responsive budgeting: Does the overall allocation of budget address the need of different groups? Dynamic of women's empowerment and ability to participate equally, and the whole issue of concerns regarding ability to hire domestic helpers

#### 4.3.3 Suggestions

1. The NCWC to mobilize resources for capacity building of NGOs as per its mandates.
2. To implement the section of the Labor and Employment Act on sexual harassment at the work place.
3. To institute Ministry's role in implementing recommendations of international treaties and obligation through strengthening GPFs.
4. To include contribution of Gender Focal Points (GFPs) in the performance appraisal system for recognition.

## 5. Conclusion

As indicated by the quality discussions in all the sessions and based on the feedback from the participants, the High Level Sensitization Programme on Gender Mainstreaming met the objectives with which it was organized. It was encouraging to see the interest and the commitment shown by the senior executives of the Royal Government of Bhutan. However the three-day programme also revealed the need for similar exercises among other stakeholders.

The concrete set of recommendations that emerged from the three days of presentations and discussions offer a way forward to deepen gender mainstreaming and enhance women's empowerment across sectors in line with constitutional principles, international obligations and national objectives. These recommendations will guide the work of NCWC going forward and the support of the UN System. It is hoped that they will also inspire the legislatures and government institutions in taking the gender agenda forward.

## 6. ANNEXURE I: Keynote address by Lyonchhen Jigmi Y. Thinley, the Prime Minister of Bhutan.

I am honoured to be able to share my thoughts with you at this Workshop on Gender Mainstreaming. While we have reasons to believe that the subject of gender is already a central element in our national policies and programmes, it is a matter concerning which we cannot afford to be complacent. It is also true that there are some of us who can benefit from an initial sensitization and others who need to take a closer look at the realities of the actual status, role and opportunities for women and children in our rapidly evolving society. Such a workshop, I believe, will give us cause to ponder on what and how much more needs to be done to promote true gender parity. No section of our society should face deprivation or discrimination – certainly not our mothers, spouses and children. As we commit ourselves to the worthy cause of building our democracy, we have the good fortune and responsibility, at the same time, to create or consolidate those conditions that will further and ensure, for all times, equal access to social, political, economic and spiritual opportunities, the basis for sustained societal justice, harmony and happiness.

It is indeed appropriate that this Workshop is targeting our law makers and senior government officials. For the creation of an environment that would enable human wellbeing, there must be good policies, laws, plans and programmes founded on strong and firm convictions. These, in fact, are the functions of the participants. These are our responsibilities. We must, during the course of the Workshop, discover and develop new knowledge and capabilities to augment our 10<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan and programmes in respect of this dimension. That the UNDP and UNICEF Representatives should be here with us and have helped us in organizing this event is demonstrative of their commitment to support us in our endeavours.

Where do we begin? I would imagine that the most obvious thing to do is to start by identifying the gaps between what ought to be and what actually exists in our homes and communities. We need to have an understanding of the challenges that we face and the limitations that will constrain us in our endeavours. We need to look at gender equity in enrolment in schools and other educational institutions; participation in civil and public service; ownership and role in business, access to credit, etc.. We need to look at the level of women's participation in the three branches of government, local governance, and decision making processes. We must look at the laws governing land, divorce, inheritance, child custody, right to maternity leave, etc.. And what of maternal mortality and access to general health services, jobs, domestic accord and security, etc?

We need to be mindful that even as we pride over our traditions of gender parity, ours has been and, in many ways, continue to be a society where the woman has modestly played the subordinate role (except in few matriarchal families and communities). For good or for bad, this is an inescapable factor influencing our perceptions and attitudes even as all things appear to be changing. We need to search out the deeper underlying truths.

As we survey the past, we find that the Royal Government has progressively promoted the interest of women and the girl child since undertaking the process of development and modernization in the sixties. These are manifest in the school enrollment drives, laws ensuring equity between men and women of the kind mentioned earlier, uniform wage rate, merit based civil service, access to rural credit, etc.. The women are shedding their inhibitions and competing without any hesitation in almost all fields. While they took a back seat in the local government and National Assembly elections earlier, their role has been more bold and open in the first democratic parliamentary elections.

To begin with, the voter turn-out among women was higher (51.8%) giving cause to believe that not only the women were more concerned voters, but that they actually determined who should govern

this country. The international observers in my constituency noted that they had rarely seen women playing such leadership role in electoral processes. They were fascinated by the fact that of the three gewogs in my constituency, two of the coordinators were women and that in all the party meets, there were more women playing the active role. I myself have learnt that the women were driven by a common feeling that they had a greater stake in the outcome of the elections. They were able to influence their husbands in their voting. I was truly convinced that the women were also more virtuous and were least likely to succumb to material incentives. This was evident in the fact that most of the cases of electoral misdeeds that came to the notice of the Election Commission were exposed by courageous women.

Today, it is the women, many of them from remote parts of the country who call me to express their feelings and concerns about developments in their villages and where the government needs to improve or where it is falling short. It was they who called to ask of the impact of natural disaster relief and rehabilitation efforts on funding for development projects. The fact that the people have no bias against women leaders was made known to me in a way that didn't really make me feel too good on the familiarization and election campaign road in which my wife too was actively involved. People in Trashigang and Samchi, the two largest constituencies, enquired, not very innocently, as to who would become the Prime Minister in the event the Druk Phuensum Tshogpa were to win. I or my wife?

The wellbeing of Bhutanese people, indeed of all sentient beings, has guided Bhutan's governance since Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyal in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. Based on the precepts of justice, equity and compassion, the laws he promulgated were continuously refined down the years, most notably by our successive kings, culminating with the introduction of Parliamentary Democracy and the adoption of our first written Constitution in 2008.

The thrust of Bhutan's political transformation has been to create a modern, democratic nation that would meet and uphold the full range of rights of its people. The Constitution of Bhutan articulates these aspirations. It enshrines the rights, freedom and dignity that every Bhutanese must enjoy irrespective of ethnicity, religion or gender. The letter and spirit of Bhutan's Constitution is in full accord with the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

Bhutan fully subscribes to the principles enshrined in the international and regional human rights treaties and recognizes accession as an important indicator of a State's responsibility and commitment. But accessions are meaningful only if State parties are not only willing but are in a position to fulfill all obligations. These include not only bringing about changes in legal and administrative arrangements and what actually happens on the ground within time bound periods, but also satisfying complex reporting obligations. We have, therefore, been very selective and more devoted to improving the wellbeing of our people and have had to delay our accession to the many international conventions or instruments even as we subscribe to these in spirit.

The Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) are two conventions ratified by Bhutan. Bhutan signed CEDAW on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1980, and ratified it a year later. In July last year, we successfully presented our seventh periodic report on the situation of women and the implementation of CEDAW. Despite resource and institutional capacity constraints, the Royal Government has taken consistent steps to progressively comply fully with the letter and spirit of the Convention, including strengthening the institutional capacity and augmenting the resources of the relevant legal and executive arms of the government.

As I briefly mentioned in my State of the Nation Report a week ago, I would like to reiterate that Bhutan has achieved one of the most important Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations – gender parity in school enrollment. And this is not only at the primary school level. I was delighted to note that there was a very large number of women students at the Gedu College during my recent visit. Upon enquiry, it was confirmed that men and women are indeed in equal numbers.

Education is the ultimate leveller of all inequities. This achievement is a testament to our unstinted effort to put our womenfolk on the same rung with men and that one does not stand on a pedestal in relation to the other.

The Royal Government of Bhutan accords similar priority to the wellbeing of Bhutanese children. This commitment not only clearly resonates in the words of His Majesty the King who said (quote) “The future of the nation lies in the hands of the children” (unquote), but also in the fact that Bhutan was among the first batch of countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children, in fact, are at the center of our development agenda, be it in our policies on education, health care, IT literacy or employment generation. Our entire thrust on GNH as the goal of development can be understood as an attempt to bequeath to our children a world that is as healthy and bountiful as the one we have been blessed to inherit.

In December last year, Bhutan achieved another milestone by successfully completing the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Human Rights in Geneva, another reflection of the Royal Government’s genuine commitment to promote and protect human rights in the country. And as many of us may have read in the papers, we have an active National Assembly Committee on Human Rights which has conducted a thorough study on prison conditions and made recommendations to improve the welfare of incarcerated women and youths. The Royal Government has already taken initiatives in regard to these recommendations.

But these are not enough. There are good reasons why we must not be complacent.

As a starter, the numerous milestones we have achieved and reported as part of our reporting obligations come with increasing challenges through the Concluding Observations of CEDAW and CRC and the Recommendations of the UPR. Each succeeding report becomes increasingly difficult to prepare and submit.

Beyond the complexities of reporting obligations, there is much that we need to change. For instance, the role of women in decision making and governance is still very negligible. There is just one lady Gup among the 204. Not one of the Dzongdags is a woman and there are no women ministers in the Cabinet while their proportion in parliament makes a mockery of our claims to gender equity. Coming to the private sector, even though it is often said that women are playing an increasingly dominant role, the actual figures speak otherwise.

The Royal Government is truly concerned just as my own party is. What additional and innovative measures can we take? One option that often comes to mind is the desirability and practicality of reservations for women. What would this mean for our society in the immediate and long run? In fact, what would the role changes brought on by our development policies and programmes lead to in the longer term even as we search for individual and collective happiness? What impact would these have on family, marriage, community vitality, gender harmony and above all, the mental and psychological well being of our children. What should society value more and most in terms of traditional and essential gender roles? How do we find ways to recognize and reward both in social and economic terms, the primacy of the role of women in marriage, family and child care? Putting these questions in the context of GNH, should we not understand success not only in economic and material terms, in career terms, but also in terms of successful motherhood, parenting and home making? How can we bring pride and consciousness of the vitality of women as mothers and



superior care givers even as they prove to be good leaders, managers, and professionals? Going further, should we institute arrangements within the civil service in particular, whereby either spouse will receive state compensation for staying home to care for children up to a certain age? These are some of the questions and indeed, challenges that we must address with wisdom and sense of equity and justice. I ask you to take time to reflect and contemplate on these and more.

As this is an event organized by the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC), it would be remiss on my part if I did not say something about it. The Royal Government established the Commission, as the national mechanism to promote, protect and monitor the rights of women and children in 2004. While it was launched with a semi-autonomous status, it has since been upgraded to a fully autonomous body in 2008 with a Cabinet Minister as its Chair. While still limited by its capacity in terms of infrastructure, financial and human resources, it has with the support of the different line ministries and in partnership with the collaborating partners made significant strides towards fulfilling its important mandates. The Gender focal Points in the different sectors deserve a special mention in this regard.

Bhutan is not only up to date with all our reporting obligations, but in the last six years, the NCWC has undertaken extensive advocacy and sensitization activities leading to increased attention and clearer focus on the rights of children and women. In close partnership with the Royal Court of Justice and the Royal Bhutan Police the Commission has also made noteworthy progress in making these institutions more women and child friendly. There are now systems in place for monitoring and providing service against violation of women's rights through the Women and Child Protection Unit and a Complaints and Response system in the Royal Bhutan Police. Extensive review of laws and policies has been undertaken besides many key studies and research.

The NCWC currently has prepared two Bills which the government has tabled in the parliament – the Child Care and Protection Bill and the Adoption Bill. I am also most pleased to learn that a Domestic Violence Bill is in its final stages of completion. I have seen and felt the crime of domestic violence too often where the victim is almost always women to realize the urgency of a strong law.

More critically, the NCWC in collaboration with the Gross National Happiness Commission, I believe, has in place the National Plan of Action for Gender (NPAG). This is an important resource and policy guide for gender mainstreaming in the 10<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan as well as for sectors to ensure that they are sensitive to gender issues in the preparation of their plans and programmes.

Despite all the good things that exist in our culture, our laws and our development policies and programmes, we do know that women continue to be the primary victims of domestic violence, poverty, and that they suffer from various forms of comparative disadvantages. More compassionate and caring as they are by nature, our women often end up as single parents struggling to stay afloat while fending for the growth and development of their children.

I hope these and other concerns will be covered in the deliverations of this Workshop. I am confident that the NCWC, equipped with the mandate to function as an autonomous umbrella agency for women and children in Bhutan, will keep up with its good endeavours. As far as the government is concerned, we will continue to provide the fullest support to the NCWC, including the space and resources it needs to execute its very important tasks.

I congratulate the Chairman and members of the Commission for the excellent guidance and Dr. Rinchen Chopel and his dedicated colleagues for their good work.

**Tashi Delek!**

## 7. ANNEXURE II: Welcome Address by NCWC Chairperson, Lyonpo Thakur S. Powdyel

Gender Mainstreaming! It sounds like a lie. Perhaps, it is a lie, after all. *Janani janma bhumischa swargadapi gaari yaeshi*, that is mother and motherland are greater than heaven, the wise ones had said. “You are the bone of my bone. You are the flesh of my flesh”. So, we were given to understand, Adam had told Eve. In our own local parlance, we were taught that when we meet an elderly woman, we should treat her like our mother. A woman who looks older than us should be treated like an elder sister. And a woman who is younger than us should be looked upon as our younger sister. What greater incentive could there be for gender mainstreaming? It took both man and woman for the human race to get the way it has.

Yet, we meet here this Saturday morning to go over the circuitous path of gender mainstreaming. It looks like the beginning of time, the infancy of evolution. There is no getting away from the miles we have not travelled. And there is much to travel.

Ten years since the declaration of the SAARC Decade of Children, two decades since the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, thirty years after the of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Discrimination Against Women, sixty years since the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, our world still leaves much to be desired in the area of women and children’s predicaments.

In many corners of our good earth, women and children could still be man’s third world.

With all the challenges of a developing economy within the inexorable logic of a rugged mountain terrain, the vision and wisdom of our leaders have been clear about our priorities, among them the centrality of human beings as the subject and object of development. The Bhutanese world view nourished by a deep understanding of the primal relationship amongst the human-natural-spiritual triad creates and upholds the sanctity of the human in the scheme of life.

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan provides that *the State shall strive to promote those conditions that will enable the pursuit of Gross National Happiness*. [Article 9.2].

*The State shall endeavour to create a civil society free of oppression, discrimination and violence, based on the rule of law, protection of human rights and dignity, and to ensure the fundamental rights and freedoms of the people*. [Article 9.3].

Bhutan is a signatory to all the relevant regional and international protocols and conventions related to the protection of the interests of women and children. It has established the necessary instruments and institutions to promote the welfare of its citizens.

As an autonomous agency of the Royal Government, the National Commission for Women and Children has been mandated, through education, training and awareness building, to protect, promote and report on the rights of women and children in the country, in collaboration with relevant institutions. The Commission has been working closely with the Royal Court of Justice, the



Royal Bhutan Police, Dratshang Lhentshog, the National Assembly Secretariat, the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Education, Health, Labour and Human Resources, the GNH Commission, RENEW,

Tarayana Foundation, NWAB. We have received generous support from our development partners - the UNDP, UNICEF, UNIFEM, DANIDA, Save the Children, among others.

As a country dedicated to building a GNH society, it is crucial for all public and private sector agencies to build a common understanding of gender issues and mount interventions to bridge the gaps, and there are many, in all our plans and programmes.

Moreover, in view of the new developments and rapid changes taking place in the country against the backdrop of a fast globalizing world, it is important for us to seek a creative alignment between our obligations to the world community and our obligations to ourselves. This high level sensitization workshop on gender mainstreaming is a response to one of the critical areas of concern.

Gender mainstreaming is a conscious process of creating a level playing field both for men and women, boys and girls as equal partners, and engaging their creative genius for the betterment of their life as well as the life of the society. Gender mainstreaming is not a function of being charitable or kind. It is a question of being just and right.

At the end of the day, all our visioning and planning boils down to creating a just space for all women and men, regardless of their race, religion, or economic background, to celebrate their unique gifts and possibilities. It is a tall order. But as a small nation with our own set of challenges, we have to make the most of what we have.

The stakes are very high. That is the reason why we have invited to this important assembly the movers and shapers of the destiny of our country. Gender mainstreaming is here priority mainstreaming. The rest will all fall into place.

Your time here is an investment into the future of our country.

Thank you so much for doing the honours.

**Thank you and Tashi Delek!**

## 8. ANNEXURE III: Address by UN Resident Coordinator



Hon'ble Lyonchhoen Jigme Y Thinley, Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Bhutan, Hon'ble Speaker, Hon'ble Chairman of the National Council, Hon'ble Chairperson of the National Commission for Women and Children, Hon'ble Members of Parliament, Excellencies, Other Distinguished Guests, Fellow Development Partners, UN Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen!

It is a privilege to be here this morning for this important Workshop on Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Empowerment. The presence of H.E., the Prime Minister, senior government officials, parliamentarians and other dignitaries here today is a clear testimony to the strong political will and commitment to mainstreaming gender into policies and programmes of the Royal Government of Bhutan, and to ensuring that the fundamental rights of

women, and men, are upheld in the process. In my capacity as UN Resident Coordinator, I would like to extend our full support to this workshop, which I hope will further strengthen the partnership between the UN system and the Royal Government, in achieving the objectives of the 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan and of the National Plan of Action for Gender.

At the onset, I would like to congratulate the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) for organizing this important event. I look forward to NCWC's continued leadership and cooperation to take the gender equality and mainstreaming agenda forward successfully.

### **Millennium Development Goals**

With less than five years to go, the world is accelerating its progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. While globally the MDG's serve as a practical road map for the Millennium Declaration, in Bhutan, the MDG's are also treated as a highly relevant and strategic development framework, contributing to the achievement of GNH and the nation's development plans.

The very existence of a separate millennium development goal addressing gender equality and women's empowerment demonstrates that the global community recognizes the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment to the sustainable development paradigm. Further, Goal 3 cuts across all 8 MDGs and is a prerequisite to achieving the other MDGs. In this regard, prioritizing sex-disaggregated data is critical in analyzing the situation of women and men, and bringing to light gender disparities, which itself is a prerequisite for strong, evidence-based policies and legislation that are well targeted and address gender concerns across all sectors.

*"The MDGs will not be achieved without investing in women"*. This message came out clearly at the recently held 'Women Deliver' Conference in Washington DC, one of the largest conferences on Women and Reproductive Health, where Bhutan was represented. The UN Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon and the Executive Director of UNFPA, Ms. Thoraya Ahmed Obaid were among the global leaders who were present. The meeting reaffirmed the global consensus that gender equality speeds up the development process both economically and socially.

### **Asia Pacific Human Development Report & International Women's Day 2010**

If we look at the Asia-Pacific Human Development Report published recently and launched on International Women's Day 2010 we see that while the Asia-Pacific Region has achieved remarkable progress in economic prosperity and the quality of life for populations in this region has improved, gender equality gaps remain.



Allow me to highlight some findings from this regional Human Development Report that also resonate in Bhutan.

- The MDGs (Goal 5) call for a reduction in the maternal mortality ratio by three-quarters by 2015. Globally, more than half a million women die each year because of complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. One third of these deaths occur in South Asia. Efforts are being made, but this remains an area of concern in Bhutan.
- Nearly half of the countries in South Asia – including Bhutan - do not have laws on Domestic Violence when crime and violence - especially violence against women – are a growing concern.

I would like to quote the powerful statement made by Her Majesty The Queen Mother Ashi Sangay Choden Wangchuck at the 8 March 2010 commemoration event; *“Without women’s rights there are no human rights”*.

### **Bhutan and Gender**

Bhutan is fortunate to have commitment and will at the highest level to address gender concerns, creating choices for girls by educating them, feeding them equally, and creating equal employment opportunities. The Royal Government of Bhutan must be commended for promoting equal opportunities for men and women in the country's 10th FYP. Further Bhutan has demonstrated its commitment to the fundamental principles of gender equality, by being signatory to international conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Universal declaration of Human Rights to name a few. Bhutan has invested in the creation of a National Commission for Women and Children and in organizations such as RENEW and Tarayana which along with the government, have developed awareness programs addressing women’s rights and in particular violence against women in communities across the country. It is also inspiring to see that the NCWC has finalized the first draft of the Domestic Violence Bill. A swift enactment and proactive implementation of such a bill is central for Bhutan to maintain the momentum and make good on its commitments under the CEDAW.

Progress has been made in recent years in girls’ access to primary and secondary education, reproductive health services which are provided at all levels, etc. Yet, some social traditions and norms continue to limit women’s roles resulting in gender gaps in education, employment, and decision-making. The National Plan of Action for Gender, of which the UN system is a proud partner, has set an ambitious target to reduce gender gaps by 2013 with:

- 20% women representation in parliament, currently it is 13.88%
- 40% in civil service, currently it is 30%
- 6-7% in local government, currently 1%, a very modest target if we consider Bhutan’s commitment to build an inclusive democracy where women on par with men not only vote but also have a public voice.

With regard to unemployment, there has been a rise in the rate of female unemployment, from 3.8 % in 2006 to 5.4% in 2009, while male unemployment has remained constant at 2.6% in those periods, according to the Labor Force Survey, 2009. This is significant in the context of rural to urban migration and vulnerabilities of young unemployed women to HIV/AIDs and trafficking.

As we know, the national budget is the most comprehensive statement of a government’s social and economic plans and priorities. If it is not the most comprehensive at least it will be measured and monitored, and what gets measured gets done. Making the budget gender responsive therefore, is the most sensitive yardstick to translate political commitment into concrete action for gender equality and women’s empowerment. However, gender-responsive budgeting is not about creating separate budgets for women, or solely increasing spending on women’s programs.

Rather gender-responsive budgeting seeks to ensure that the allocation of public resources effectively levels the playing field and enables women to be equal partners with men in achieving Bhutan's social and economic objectives. I would like to recommend that the Royal Government of Bhutan consider this approach going forward. The UN system will be happy to provide necessary support by reinforcing the capacity of the NCWC, GNHC and the Ministry of Finance.

Thus, there is ground to celebrate achievements and efforts made. But there is no room for complacency and there is also a need to continue to work towards reducing gender gaps to fulfill the promise of the MDGs effectively. We hope a lucid review of these issues will be included in the mid-term review of the 10th FYP.

### **Partnerships**

A coordinated and coherent collaborative approach is required to realize the targets of the NPAG. It is therefore equally essential, we recognize, for us as development partners to ensure that gender is mainstreamed across all our programmes. Under the approach of "Delivering as One" the joint RGoB-UN Gender Task Force, created last year, strives to ensure that the recommendations of the NPAG are implemented across the board. Our aim this year is to pursue our work with bilateral and multilateral partners and to see the Task Force further strengthened with participation of gender focal points that are empowered and have access to decision-makers in their respective organizations. This momentum needs to be sustained and deepened, to ensure a balanced development that benefits men and women, boys and girls equally. Only then can the nation realize its full potential in a manner consonant with the fundamental principles of democracy and the philosophy of GNH.

With its committed leadership, a development philosophy that promotes the well being of the whole of society, and a growing educated youth, Bhutan has tremendous potential to be an exemplary nation in the region. The UN system in Bhutan remains fully committed to working with all partners to advance women's empowerment, gender equality and women's rights.

**Thank you and Tashi Delek**

## 9. Annexure IV: Workshop Agenda

### Programme

#### High Level Sensitization workshop on Gender Mainstreaming

Dates: (July 10, 12 and 13, 2010)

Venue: Convention Centre

#### Day One: July 10, 2010

#### Inaugural and Opening Session: (For all the Participants).

Time	Agenda
9:00 am	Registration
9: 20 am	All the participants to be seated
9:30 am	Arrival of the Chief Guest, Lyonchen Jigmi Y. Thinley , the Hon'ble Prime Minister
9:45 am	Offering of Marchang
10:00 am	Welcome address by Lyonpo Thakur S. Powdyel , Chairperson, NCWC
10:15 am	Address by Ms. Claire Van der Vaeren, UN Resident Coordinator to Bhutan
10:30 am	Keynote Address by the Hon'ble Chief Guest, His Excellency the Prime Minister.
10:45 am	Vote of thanks by NCWC
10:50-11:30am	<b>Tea Break</b>
<b>(Post Tea Session-Business Session) For the Parliamentarians only</b>	
11:30 am	Presentation of NCWC's Roles and Mandates by Dr. Rinchen Chopel
	Presentation on Situation Analysis (10 <sup>th</sup> FYP, National Plan of Action for Gender (NPAG), CEDAW, UPR recommendations) by Dr. Rinchen Chopel
	Discussions
1:00-02:00 pm	<b>Lunch</b>
2:00 pm	Presentation on existing national laws and policies pertaining to women and children and its relation to the international instruments and the Constitution by Dasho Jangchuk Norbu, legal Advisor to NCWC
	Discussions
3:15-3:30 pm	<b>Tea Break</b>
3:30 pm	Presentation on Best Practices from the region and the role of Parliamentarians by Ms. Shashi Singh, TA to NCWC
	Discussion
	Wrap-up

**Day Two: July 12, 2010****Participants: (Hon'ble Constitutional Post Holders/ Secretaries/Commissioners/ Director Generals)**

Time	Agenda
<b>Morning Session</b>	
9:00 am	Registration
9: 20 am	All the participants to be seated
9:30 am	Presentation of NCWC's Roles and Mandates by Dr. Rinchen Chopel
	Presentation on SITAN (10 <sup>th</sup> FYP, NPAG, CEDAW, UPR recommendations) by Dr. Rinchen Chopel
	Discussions
1100-1130 am	<b>Tea Break</b>
	Presentation on existing national laws and policies pertaining to women and children and its relation to the international instruments and the Constitution by Dasho Jangchuk Norbu, Legal Advisor to NCWC
	Discussions
1.00-02.00 pm	<b>Lunch</b>
<b>Post lunch Session</b>	
2.00 pm	Presentation on Best Practices from the region and the role of Senior Executives by Ms. Shashi Singh, TA to NCWC
	Discussions
3:30-3:50 pm	<b>Tea Break</b>
	Discussion

**Day Three: July 13, 2010****Participants: (Directors and Chief Planning Officers)**

Time	Agenda
<b>Morning Session</b>	
09:00 am	Registration
09:00am	All the participants to be seated
09:30 am	Presentation of NCWC's Roles and Mandates by Dr. Rinchen Chopel
	Presentation on SITAN (10 <sup>th</sup> FYP, NPAG, CEDAW, UPR recommendations) by Dr. Rinchen Chopel
	Discussions
11:00-11:30 am	<b>Tea Break</b>
	Presentation on existing national laws and policies pertaining to women and children and its relation to the international instruments and the Constitution by Dasho Jangchuk Norbu, Legal Advisor to NCWC
	Discussions
1.00-2.00 pm	<b>Lunch</b>
<b>Post lunch Session</b>	
02.00 pm	Presentation on Best Practices from the region and the role of Planners by Ms. Shashi Singh, TA to NCWC
	Discussions
3:30-03:50 pm	<b>Tea Break</b>
03:50 pm	Discussion
	Wrap-up



**10. ANNEXURE V:**

Presentation on Roles and Mandates of NCWC (Attached)

**11. ANNEXURE VI:**

Presentation on Introduction to National Plan of Action (NPAG) and the CEDAW Concluding Observations (Attached)

**12. ANNEXURE VII:**

Presentation on Existing laws and Policies pertaining to women and Children and its relation to international instruments and the constitution (Attached)

**13. ANNEXURE VIII:**

Presentation on examples and case studies of women's economic empowerment in Asia and Pacific (Attached)