



**UNITED NATIONS
BHUTAN**

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Leaving No One Behind



UN BHUTAN

ANNUAL RESULTS REPORT 2020



KUZUZANGPO LA

“COVID-19 has been described as the biggest challenge to humanity since World War Two, which closed with the foundation of the United Nations. UN Bhutan is responding to the immediate needs of the people and the needs of the most vulnerable while strengthening economic resilience and building longer-term human capital in a comprehensive way so that we find new ways to ‘build forward better.’

Gerald Daly, UN Resident Coordinator, Bhutan

The 2030 Agenda requires bold changes to the UN as a new generation of UN Country Teams emerge and centered on a strategic framework and based on government priorities led by an impartial, empowered Resident Coordinator.

For the 31 UN agencies that work in Bhutan, 2020 was a challenging year.

As the world struggles through this COVID-19 battle, the UN is deeply moved by how Bhutan has come together in solidarity. His Majesty the King’s leadership inspired and encouraged all Bhutanese this past year to unite as one nation to combat COVID-19.

The UN in Bhutan is responding to the immediate needs of the people and the needs of the most vulnerable, while strengthening economic resilience and building longer-term human capital in a

comprehensive way so that we find new ways of 'building forward better.'

This pandemic is not only a wake-up call but is in fact the tip of an iceberg that will bring with it many challenges. As we look at building forward to a better Bhutan, we must be mindful of taking care of the most vulnerable so they are not left behind in our recovery from COVID-19.

In support of Bhutan's recovery, the UN developed a joint response framework aligned with the Royal Government of Bhutan's plans and priorities. This was captured in the 'UN Bhutan COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan' (UN Bhutan SERP) which includes short-term measures to mitigate negative health, social and economic consequences along with medium to long-term investments to strengthen the capacity of the country to build forward better and ensure our resilience to future crises.

In 2020, the UN also designed and implemented projects to support vulnerable women and youth after increasing evidence emerged of their situation in the wake of the pandemic. For example, the UN facilitated faster access to medical services through the introduction of an innovative One-Stop Crisis Seal at the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital. This work allowed survivors of Gender-based Violence to access medical services in a short span of time by enabling the hospital employees and doctors to prioritize their cases. Additionally, sensitisation workshops for the employees of the hospital were conducted, which aided in the successful implementation of the service. The UNCT's support to People with Disabilities was also the result of agile programming during the pandemic, delivering support within a month of receiving requests.

Partnership is the foundation for what the UN is doing in Bhutan. We the UN will therefore continue to strengthen our partnership with Bhutan for we know partnering is the lifeblood of great development. This includes self-reliance and as we move closer to LDC graduation we need to quicken the pace of our practical support.

On behalf of UN Bhutan, I thank the Royal Government of Bhutan, National Assembly of Bhutan, National Council, the Constitutional Bodies, Gross National Happiness Commission, the Judiciary, the National Environment Commission, the National Statistical Bureau, the Civil Society Organizations, the media and the people of Bhutan for your continued support.

Gerald Daly
Resident Coordinator
UN Bhutan

UN COUNTRY TEAM AND KEY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

On September 21, 1971, the Royal Government of Bhutan became the 128th member of the United Nations and the Office of the United Nations in Bhutan was established in early 1974. Since then, the country has hosted many UN agencies, funds and programmes that together support the Royal Government of Bhutan in delivering national development needs and improving the socio-economic conditions of the people of Bhutan. UN Bhutan currently comprises eight resident agencies and 23 non-resident agencies.



The United Nations Non-resident Agencies (NRAs) of which there are 23, are an integral part of the work that the UN does in Bhutan. Working through the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, the NRAs support the UN Country Team by adding diverse technical expertise to the initiatives under the United Nations Sustainable Development Partnership Framework.



The UNCT is committed to the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Partnership Framework (UNSDPF) 2019–2023 in partnership with the Royal Government of Bhutan, with the overall goal to support Bhutan in being a just, harmonious and sustainable society where no one is left behind. To do so, the UN aims to achieve results in four strategic outcome areas, by 2023:

Outcome 1

Enhanced access to and use of reliable and timely data for inclusive and evidence-based policy and decision making.

Outcome 2

Vulnerable and unreached people have access to and receive quality health, nutrition, protection, education, water, sanitation, and hygiene services.

Outcome 3

National stakeholders strengthened to provide equal opportunities for all, particularly women and vulnerable groups.

Outcome 4

Bhutan’s communities and its economy are more resilient to climate-induced and other disasters and biodiversity loss as well as economic vulnerability. The UN system widely supports the Government’s digitization agenda.



PARTNERS OF UN BHUTAN



ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF BHUTAN

The Prime Minister’s Office, National Assembly of Bhutan, National Council of Bhutan, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Gross National Happiness Commission, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Information and Communications, Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, Ministry of Works and Human Settlement, Department of Disaster Management, Office of the Attorney-General, Dzatshang Lhentshög, Royal Civil Service Commission, Royal Monetary Authority, National Commission for Women and Children, National Statistics Bureau, Anti-Corruption Commission, National Environment Commission, National Center for Hydrology and Meteorology, Tourism Council of Bhutan, Dzongkhags, Royal Bhutan Police, Agency for Promotion of Indigenous Crafts.

ACADEMIA

Royal University of Bhutan, Wangsel Institute for the Deaf, Jigme Singye Wangchuck School of Law, Royal Thimphu College, Norbuling Rigter College.



CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

RENEW, Tarayana Foundation, Bhutan Foundation, Bhutan Nuns Foundation, Bhutan Youth Development Fund, Draktsho Vocational Training Centre for Special Children and Youth, Ability Bhutan Society, Disabled Persons Organisation of Bhutan, Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy, Bhutan Ecological Society, Royal Society for Protection of Nature, Nazhoen Lamtoen, Loden Foundation, Bhutan Transparency Initiative, Lhomon Society, Clean Bhutan, Greener Way, Handicrafts Association of Bhutan, CSO Core-Coordination Committee.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

Asian Development Bank, Austrian Development Agency, Bhutan Canada Foundation, Bhutan Foundation, World Bank, Bhutan Red Cross Society, Bhutan Trust Fund for Environment Conservation, European Union Delegation to India and Bhutan, Helvetas, International Finance Corporation, International IDEA, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Korea International Cooperation Agency, SAARC Development Secretariat, Save the Children, Savings Bank Foundation for International Cooperation, SNV, World Wildlife Foundation, Bangladesh Embassy, Indian Embassy, Kuwait Embassy, Consulate of France, Consulate of the Netherlands, Consulate of Sweden, Consulate of the UK, Austrian Embassy (New Delhi), British High Commission (New Delhi), High Commission of Canada (New Delhi), German Embassy (New Delhi), High Commission of the Republic of Singapore (New Delhi), Embassy of Switzerland to India and Bhutan (New Delhi), Embassy of Sweden (New Delhi), Embassy of the United States of America (New Delhi)



PRIVATE SECTOR

Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Druk Holding and Investments Limited

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN THE COUNTRY AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Bhutan remains largely rural, with two-thirds of the people residing in villages. Critically, however, internal migration and urbanisation have increased. Projections vary as to how soon and by what degree Bhutan will be urbanised, with one estimate at over 50% urbanisation by 2040. The year 2040 is seen as an important turning point as this is when the demographic dividend window will start closing, the working-age population will start declining, the elderly population will start increasing, and the urban population will surpass the rural population.

Such demographic dynamics points to the need for greater investments in the development

needs of young people, care for the elderly population, and a strategy for addressing increasing internal migration and urbanisation.

As a globally recognised leader in sustainable development and environmental stewardship, Bhutan gives balanced importance to the health and wellbeing of the planet and to the needs of its people. This is embodied in its development philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH) and the protection of the environment is further enshrined in the

Constitution as a fundamental duty of all Bhutanese citizens for the benefit of present and future generations. In its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to tackling climate change, Bhutan has committed to remaining carbon neutral with greenhouse gas emissions not exceeding carbon sequestration by its forests. Forests currently cover 72% of the land area of Bhutan and sequestration by forests is estimated at 6.3 million tons of CO₂, while current emissions are estimated at 2.2 million tons of CO₂.

While Bhutan is one of the smallest economies in the world, it is also one of the fastest growing, and is classified by the World Bank as a lower Middle Income Country

(LMIC). A combination of prudent fiscal and monetary policy, as well as robust investments in hydropower has largely facilitated its growth over the years. While the economy was severely impacted by COVID-19, the Royal Government of Bhutan remained focussed on Bhutan's planned graduation to lower middle-income status by 2023

The COVID-19 pandemic was described by the Secretary-General as **"a global health crisis unlike any in the 75-year history of the United Nations"**.

**"A GLOBAL HEALTH CRISIS UNLIKE ANY IN THE 75-YEAR HISTORY OF THE UNITED NATIONS".
- UN SECRETARY GENERAL**



In response to COVID-19, the Royal Government of Bhutan took swift and decisive measures to contain the outbreak and quickly formed unconventional alliances with the Civil Society Organizations, local innovators and the private sector to ensure continuation of essential services to the most vulnerable. With 670 people testing positive for COVID-19 in 2020, Bhutan managed to avert a public health crisis but was not able to escape the pandemic's crippling economic impacts that hampered the country's ability to achieve its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Economic growth decelerated and exports and imports decreased significantly in line with weak foreign and domestic demand and disruptions to trade.

According to the Budget Report for the Financial Year 2020-21, tax deferrals for businesses resulted in a fiscal deficit of 6.18% of GDP in 2019/2020, the highest in recent years and is likely to worsen to 7.36% in 2020/2021. Given Bhutan's dependence on tourism, recovery is expected to be slow and difficult, with about 50,000 people engaged in tourism directly impacted and unemployment rates increasing from 2.7 % in 2019 to more than 14 % in 2020, the majority of which were youth.

The Druk Gyalpo's (His Majesty's) Relief Kidu granted approximately USD 16.3 million to over 33,000 beneficiaries in six months. Along

with these fiscal and monetary measures, the Royal Government of Bhutan also launched its Economic Contingency Plan (ECP) in tourism, agriculture and construction while taking advantage of the crisis to transform systems for greater self-reliance. This included actions to diversify energy sources and increase energy security, reducing dependency on hydropower for both local consumption and export. The situation also presented opportunities to fast-track digital transformation of processes and data management, resulting in accelerated introduction of digital solutions across sectors. Despite the slowdown in government activities, Parliament continued its work, including the revision of critical policies related to human rights protection and advancement and the amendment of the Penal Code.

In the second year of implementing its Sustainable Development Partnership Framework (UNSPF) 2019-2023, the UN continued to expand its strong partnership with the Royal Government of Bhutan and adapted the UNDPF to national priorities for its COVID-19 response. This included focus on capacity strengthening initiatives, including support to the Ministry of Health and engaging in policy dialogue and advocacy, generating evidence and data and developing innovative approaches to building Bhutan back stronger.

OVERVIEW OF UN RESULTS



This United Nations Sustainable Development Framework (UNSDPF) articulates the collective vision of the UN system in Bhutan for 2019-2023. Achieving 'Agenda 2030' and graduating from the Least Developed Country (LDC) category in a sustainable manner are national priorities and requires a strong and continued partnership between the Royal Government of Bhutan, its development partners, key stakeholders, as well as between UN agencies. The overall goal of the United Nations' programme in Bhutan from 2019 to 2023 is to support **"A just, harmonious and sustainable Bhutan where no one is left behind"**.

The Royal Government of Bhutan's actions in steering a response to COVID-19 in 2020 was commendable. After the first positive case was detected on 5 March 2020, His Majesty the King personally guided implementation of the National Preparedness and Response Plan. Under His Majesty's guidance, the Prime Minister's Office, Ministries, agencies, local governments, the private sector and CSOs also moved quickly to respond. This included several key measures designed to prevent the spread of the virus and cushion the socio-economic impact.

In support of Bhutan's recovery, the UN developed a joint response framework aligned with the Royal Government of Bhutan's plans and priorities. This was captured in the 'UN Bhutan COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan' (UN Bhutan SERP) and was integrated into the UNSDPF. This framework—with support from eight resident and six non-resident agencies included both short-term measures to mitigate negative health, social and economic consequences along with medium to long-term investments to strengthen the capacity of the country to build forward better and ensure resilience to future crises. The revised UNSDPF thus complemented and supported government response plans, including the National Preparedness and Response Plan (NPRP), Economic Contingency Plans (ECPs) and other recovery initiatives. This also supported resource mobilization for a scaled up COVID-19 response, providing a baseline evidence of country needs, mapping of priorities, and costing of activities and on preparing for future health crises, including long-term strengthening of the health system

and its responsiveness to public health emergencies.

The flexibility of the UN Country Team (UNCT) was a major factor that enabled this kind of timely support. For instance, projects were designed and implemented in under two months to support vulnerable women and youth after increasing evidence emerged of their situation in the wake of the pandemic. The UNCT's support to Persons with Disabilities was also the result of agile programming, delivering support within a month of receiving the request.

While the COVID-19 pandemic hampered the implementation of many activities, it also presented an opportunity to programme differently, using innovative strategies and technologies to adapt case management strategies to mitigate the pandemic's effects. This meant incorporating new approaches and technology needed for the emergency response in ways that might also help after the crisis, such as the use of new digital solutions for information-sharing, inter-agency coordination, and service delivery. Case management protocols for child protection and Gender-based Violence, for example, were adapted to the COVID-19 situation to ensure that the social service workforce had adequate resources, such as Personal Protective Equipment and updated referral pathways, while ensuring the continuous provision of services. Face-to-face meetings and workshops could not be carried out due to COVID-19 related restrictions and virtual platforms were used for innovative capacity building.



UN BHUTAN PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES



Outcome One: Data and Policy

By 2023, there is enhanced access to and use of reliable and timely data for inclusive and evidence-based policy and decision-making.

In Bhutan, the UN's work on Data and Policy recognises the importance of strong and accurate data to ensure Central Agencies and Local Governments can better integrate, monitor and report on Five Year Plans and the SDGs and is under-pinned by evidence-based decision making. There is a growing demand among stakeholders for data, statistics and research disaggregated by gender and vulnerable groups, covering multi-hazard preparedness and risk reduction. To meet these needs, the UN is supporting the Royal Government of Bhutan to strengthen the production of timely, reliable, relevant and accurate official data.

Key Results

An integrated platform called the DEWA (Dashboard to Enhance Wellbeing of All) was developed with the support of the UN to enhance the Royal Government of Bhutan's

capacity to collect, manage and integrate socio-economic data related to its Five Year Plan (FYP), the Gross National Happiness (GNH) index and the SDGs. The DEWA provides information on Bhutan's progress on the SDGs, the FYP and GNH at the national and sub-national level and will help strengthen evidence-based planning and decision making at both levels.. A Rapid Socioeconomic Impact Assessment of COVID-19 on Bhutan's Tourism Sector was also conducted to understand how the COVID-19 crisis affected individuals, households, and businesses engaged in Bhutan's tourism sector. A National Statistical Quality Assurance Framework was also developed and a set of statistical standards and codes were made widely available. Finally, access to reliable data improved in line with the results from a Data Users' Satisfaction survey conducted to enable a better understanding of the data needs of the public.

The UN also completed a desk-review mapping exercise of vulnerable groups (VGs) in the wake of the pandemic, assessing overlaps and

gaps between VGs as identified by the Gross National Happiness Commission and those identified through the UN Secretary General's Socio-Economic Response Framework. The UN provided further support to improve sub-national data sources to better identify vulnerable children and continued to build the capacity of district administrations and communities to strengthen planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring to achieve results for children and adolescents. The first ever thematic report targeting adolescents and young people dynamics (demography, education, literacy, employment, health status, vulnerability and the impact of COVID-19) was developed and a policy brief prepared for planning and programme development.

Supported by the UN, a needs assessment was conducted to upgrade the Education Management and Information System (EMIS)

enabling enhanced reporting on SDGs and 12th FYP indicators. A situation analysis was conducted of the Evaluation Association of Bhutan in an action to further professionalise evaluation processes. The National Statistics Bureau and the Department of Local Governance developed a comprehensive local database system to coordinate efficient data collection at a local level and strengthened the enabling environment for official statistics through the harmonization of classifications used by government entities. In addition, the capacity of the Department of Disaster Management's capacity to plan and respond to disaster was strengthened through the development of a 72-hour Rapid Assessment Approach. This includes a spatial database with geo-referenced vulnerability layers including demographics, poverty, food insecurity and access to roads, health stations and schools, which can also be used for pandemic response.

SDGs supported



Lead Agency



Participating Agencies



Outcome Two: Essential Social Services

By 2023, vulnerable and unreached people access and receive quality health, nutrition, protection, education, water, sanitation and hygiene services

Despite the challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, close collaboration between the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) and the UN ensured that Bhutan's people, across the life cycle, had equitable access to quality health, nutrition, protection, education, water, sanitation and hygiene services. Children and women were protected through investments in gender-responsive children and women rights interventions. Essential maternal health care continuity was ensured through the development and implementation of operational guidelines for the continuity of reproductive, maternal, newborn, child health

and nutrition services during the pandemic and women who were detected with cervical cancer during a screening of more than 12,000 women continued to receive treatment services during the pandemic.

The UN provided comprehensive emergency support to the RGoB during the pandemic. Health and nutrition public awareness campaigns were conducted and critical medical supplies including personal protective equipment (PPE), diagnostics, cold chain equipment, WASH supplies, learning and communication materials were delivered to health facilities, schools and other institutions with UN support. The UN also targeted support to overall health system strengthening, with the aim of building a strong and resilient health system over the longer-term beyond the immediate crisis.



Supplies to the Royal Government of Bhutan to protect front-line health workers. A total of 66 quarantine facilities across the country were provided with sanitary products to maintain menstrual hygiene.

The UN supported the Royal Government with adequate training, simulation exercises and provision of infection control equipment, which resulted in Bhutan recording zero COVID-19 infections among health workers. The UN also supported the development of National Contingency Plan for ensuring Essential Health Services in the context of the pandemic as an overarching guide for hospitals and primary health centers, alongside regularly published operational guidelines on the evolving epidemiological profile of COVID-19 transmission across the globe.

National Youth and Child Policies were developed with UN support, promoting more quality integrated services, protection and empowerment of children, adolescents and youth. Through financial and technical assistance, the UN in partnership with the RGoB and CSO partners was able to harness the power of young people to address matters affecting them and their communities during the pandemic.

During the review of the Youth Policy, the UN

and its partners provided a platform for 1,200 youth from different backgrounds to have their inputs included.

As a result of the child justice system being strengthened with the UN's support, 516 children who came in contact with the law benefited from child-friendly interventions and 123 children were cautioned and diverted from formal judicial proceedings. In addition, the UN supported upstream work on public finance for children and social protection by establishing new partnerships at both the central and sub-national level, supporting development of these policies, capacity building on social policy and the development of policy briefs and investment cases. The certified course on social policy for local government officials represented a milestone in the UN's upstream policy work. The course helped officials from local governments understand the interlinkages and gaps between policy making at the central level and implementation at the local level and factors determining effective policy formulation and implementation.



Despite the pandemic disrupting transportation, life-saving vaccines arrived in the country on time to ensure immunization services for infants, children and mothers continued.

A National Child Protection and Gender-based Violence COVID-19 Response Plan was developed and implemented by the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) and CSOs with UN technical assistance. It's implementation facilitated the delivering of quality gender and child-responsive services during the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to a 53% increase in reported Gender-based Violence cases during the year, the UN supported the Royal Government of Bhutan in establishing shelter homes and 24-hour help-desk services were provided with UN support focussing on case management and psychosocial support. The UN also led the rollout of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

The UN supported a pilot e-health system using mobile cardiotocography devices (iCTGs) in support of "reaching every pregnant woman with quality gynecological and obstetric services through iCTG." The UN also supported the emergency services (Health Help Centre) with critical IT equipment to ensure business continuity amidst heightened demand during the pandemic. The UN contributed to enhancing the Government's capacity to monitor and detect COVID-19 cases by supporting the establishment of an integrated health facilities system and helped collect real time information from over 60,000 people visiting flu clinics across the country.

One-Stop Crisis Seal

In 2020, the UN helped facilitate meetings for the introduction of an innovative service at the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital, called the One-Stop Crisis Seal. The seal, facilitated through the One-Stop Crisis Centre, allows survivors of Gender-based Violence to access medical services in a short span of time by enabling the hospital employees and doctors to prioritize their cases. Through this service, more female survivors were able to avail themselves of urgent medical services. Sensitisation workshops for the employees of the hospital were also conducted, which aided in the successful implementation of the service.

facilitate better storage conditions and training to warehouse and store staff to better manage the National Food Stocks Reserve of essential food commodities for half the population for six months.

Despite the lockdowns, the UN supported the transition to a school nutrition programme through the development of advocacy materials and social media campaigns on healthy eating for children during a pandemic. The development of a Social Behaviour Change Communication Strategy for sustainable improvement in nutrition and health through positive dietary habits of school aged children (5-18 years) saw progress with an establishment of a national multi-sectoral taskforce, completion of a desk review and the roll-out of good nutrition campaigns to advocate for healthier dietary choices.

Continuity of school learning was ensured during the nationwide closure of schools due to COVID-19 through a collaborative approach between the Ministry of Education and development partners, including the UN. The UN contributed to an Education-in-Emergencies COVID-19 Response Plan and Guidelines for re-opening schools/centers were developed and curricula adapted to ensure continuity of school learning and addressing psychosocial needs.

Course materials were developed and a course certification confirmed with the Asian Institute of Journalism and Communication (AIJC) for the new International Programme for the Development of Communications (IPDC) focussed on the development of a in multimedia journalism at the Bhutan Media

An increase in the awareness of Trafficking in Persons using social and mass media and an increase in awareness among national level stakeholders, led to the amendment of the definition of Trafficking in Persons under Section 154 of the Penal Code of Bhutan, bringing it in line with the Palermo Protocol definition of the term.

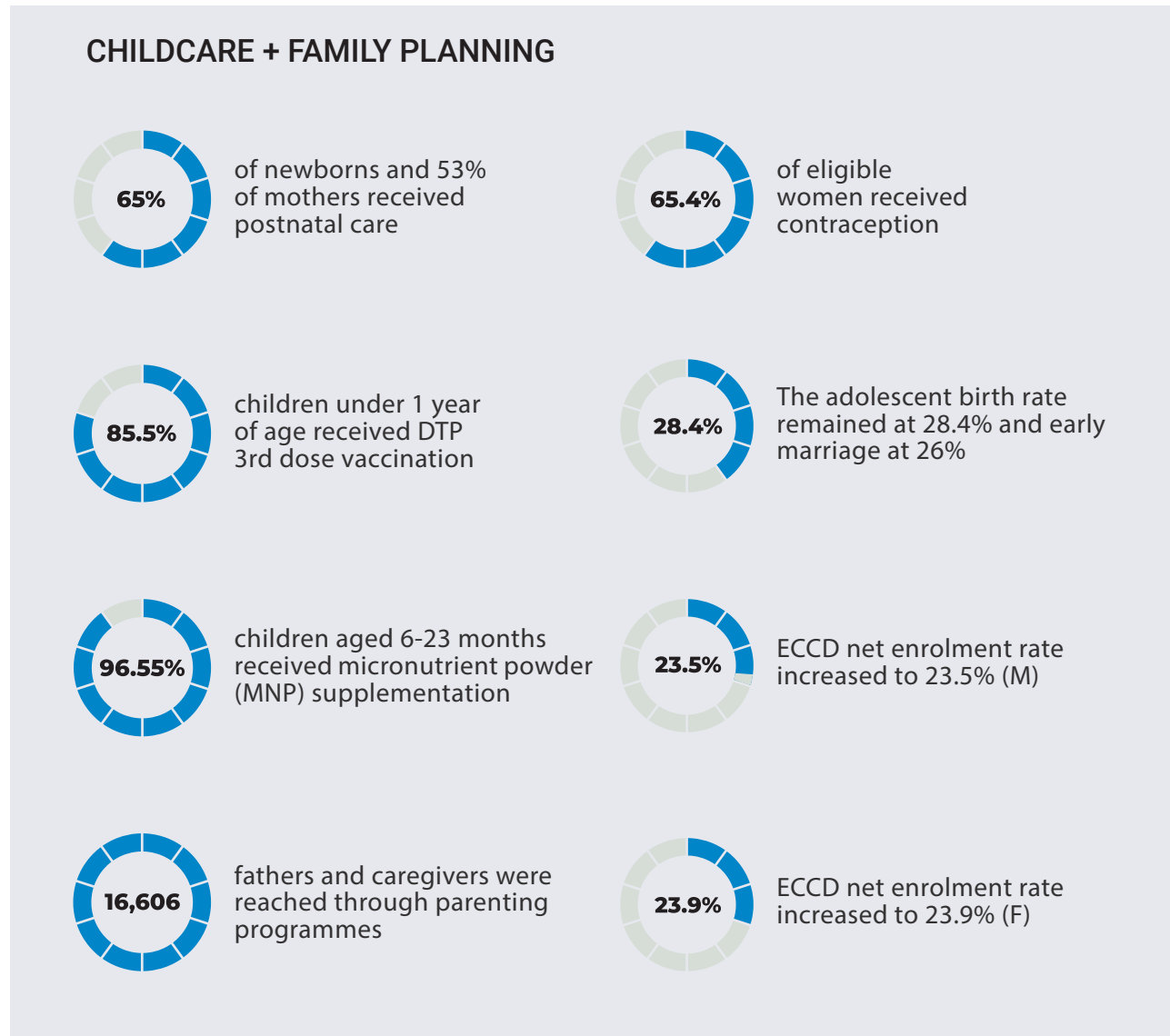
National standards for fortified rice were developed to ensure safety and quality of rice consumed through the national school feeding and nutrition programme. In addition, fortified rice was included in select private schools, hospitals and colleges. Food and nutrition security became a concern for the Government with the onset of COVID-19 and its related measures of import restriction to control the pandemic. The UN supported the Government with technical assistance by developing food safety guidelines, storage equipment to

A total of 220 front liners (40% F) including the police, health officials, local government officials, education officials, patrol officers and Desupps (Civil volunteers), were trained in GBV awareness through this SOP.

About 600 (242 F) members of district women and children committees and front-liners in all 20 districts and four municipalities, were trained in early identification and safe referrals (EISR) of child protection cases and GBV.

More than 3500 people living in temporary dwellings in high risk areas were provided with information regarding COVID-19 and GBV prevention.

and Communications Institute (BMCI). The project trained 10 journalism lecturers and 17 journalists.



GBV+CHILD PROTECTION

24,774 children (12,502 F) and 457 parents and caregivers (179 F) received remote counseling and psychosocial support and 1,750 children (713 F) were taught to stay safe while accessing online education.

600 (242 F) members of district women and children committees, frontliners, and other members of the social service workforce in all 20 districts were trained in early identification and safe referrals (EISR) of child protection cases and GBV.

More than **19,625** representatives from the monastic institutions, MSTF-CBSS members, LGBTQ community and youth were trained in GBV, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and referral systems for survivors

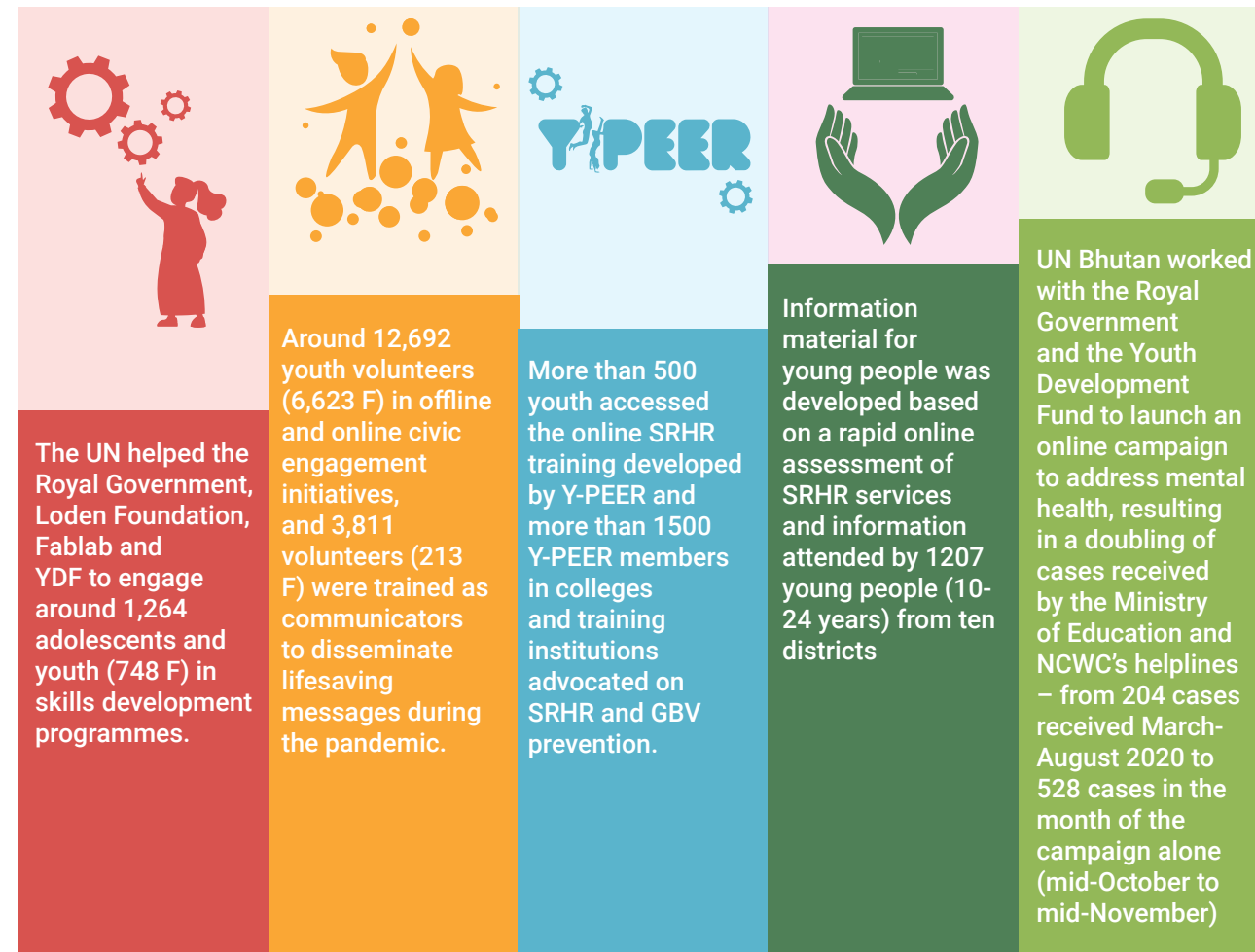
20 districts and 4 municipalities implemented the SOP on case management for women and children in difficult circumstances

25% of district hospitals implemented clinical protocols for the management of Gender-based Violence.

10% of the social service workforce were equipped with skills to recognize and respond to child protection issues.



YOUTH ENGAGEMENT



SDGs supported:



Lead Agency Participating Agencies



Outcome Three: Governance

By 2023, national stakeholders strengthened to provide equal opportunities for all, particularly women and vulnerable groups

Bhutan is a young democracy and there is still a need to strengthen experience and capacities related to various levels of governance and forms of democratic engagement, including with Parliament. This Outcome strives to ensure all of Bhutan's poor and vulnerable enjoy the full benefits of development and supports the implementation of National Key Results Areas (NKRA) on Justice and Gender (including Decentralization and Corruption reduction). This is achieved through strengthening democratic institutions, supporting decentralization, broadening civic space for participation, supporting the achievement of gender equal elective offices and promoting women's participation at decision making levels, and enhanced delivery of justice services, particularly for vulnerable groups.

The UN's interventions in 2020 contributed to government institutions providing equal opportunities for all, through an equitable and inclusive legal and policy environment. This was especially evident in the successful amendment of the 2004 Penal Code de-criminalizing same-sex relations and an increased penalty for rape in the Civil and Criminal Procedure Code as a result

of many years of advocacy and programmatic support to Parliament. The UN's engagement with Parliament and primary stakeholders also included supporting participation in the Salzburg Global LGBTQ forum by Members of Parliament and members of the LGBTQ community, supporting learning visits for stakeholders and actively participating in discussions of the Women and Child Committee of Parliament. The UN's support of the first ever alternate Universal Periodic Report (UPR) by local CSO, the Tarayana Foundation, enabled robust participation and in-depth discussion by Members of Parliament and other the key stakeholders during the legislative change process.

The amendment of the Local Government Act 2009, amended provisions for citizen participation, resulting in a more inclusive local decision-making environment for previously marginalized groups. The UN provided technical advice in the form of a preliminary analysis paper on electoral and decentralisation issues which helped shape and inform discussions during the amendment process.

The UN also supported the RGoB and CSO's in sustaining an enabling environment for advancing the rights of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). The capacity to mainstream disability across all sectors, including education, health, access to finance and infrastructure was

improved, through the adoption of the Action Plan for the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities. This Action Plan lays the foundation for adopting the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which the Royal Government is yet to ratify, ensuring that PwDs are not left behind. The Disability Equality Training (DET) model gave PwDs the platform to share their experiences and raise awareness of their challenges, helping participants (service providers, local leaders and women networks) take concrete actions towards inclusion. According to a report by the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the DETs led to a marked increase in the confidence levels of the participants in providing services to PwDs, with a 100% increase in participants responding “very confident” in providing services to wheelchair users, a 300% increase for those providing services to the hearing impaired, 177% increase for those providing services to the blind and 200% for those providing services to people with an intellectual disability.

As a result of the child justice system being strengthened with the UN’s support, 516 children who came in contact with the law benefited from child-friendly interventions and 123 children were cautioned and diverted from formal judicial proceedings. In addition, the UN supported upstream work on public finance for children and social protection by establishing new partnerships at both the central and sub-national level, supporting development of these policies, capacity building on social policy and the development of policy briefs and investment cases. The certified course

on social policy for local government officials represented a milestone in the UN’s upstream policy work. The course helped officials from local governments understand the interlinkages and gaps between policy making at the central level and implementation at the local level and factors determining effective policy formulation and implementation.

The UN enhanced the Government’s capacity to mainstream gender equality across all its work, through the new National Gender Equality Policy. The policy provides a framework for laws, policies, programmes and practices to ensure equal rights, opportunities and benefits for women and men in the family, community, workplace and society at large. The UN also facilitated support for strengthening the mechanisms and procedures for the protection of victims and survivors of GBV through the development and implementation of a GBV Contingency Plan and provided livelihood skills for 300 vulnerable groups of women impacted by COVID-19. The UN also supported CSOs to build resilience in targeted vulnerable groups by partnering with CSOs to deliver livelihood and skills training, as well as conduct awareness raising campaigns on sexual and reproductive health. Participants were women who lost jobs and livelihoods, survivors of trafficking in persons, youth with substance abuse disorders and mental health issues. To ensure child-friendly justice delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN supported the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) develop guidelines on “COVID-19 and Children Deprived of Liberty”. To strengthen evidence-based decision-making and services for women and children, the UN assisted the

Royal Bhutan Police in improving the reporting of women and children related cases in the Crime Information Management System (CIMS).

The UN worked with the Jigme Singye Wangchuck School of Law to develop a child-centred curriculum and a family law course based on international and national standards. Together with the Law School and Nazhoen Lamtoen, an assessment on the diversion of children in conflict with the law (CICL) was carried out to help standardize procedures and design diversion programmes for effective rehabilitation of CICL. In partnership with the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG), the UN produced a policy brief on child-sensitive and shock-responsive social protection in Bhutan. The brief advocates for child-sensitive cash transfers in Bhutan through

the introduction of a universal child benefit.

UN’s support to the Parliament and the Justice sector in 2020 helped to engage meaningfully with citizens and led to increased inclusion, transparency and accountability. For the first time in Bhutan, the Parliament of Bhutan institutionalized public hearings and conducted the first public hearing session, which was broadcast live on national television and on social media platforms. The UN also supported an assessment for establishing a joint centre for both Houses of Parliament, making its operations more efficient and enhancing its capacity to carry out its core functions. UN support for the Business Continuity Plan of the Parliament helped ensure critical oversight and legislative and representational functions during the pandemic.

During the review of the Youth Policy, the UN and its partners provided a platform for 1,200 youth from different backgrounds to have their inputs included.



To enhance the capacity of Bhutan’s criminal justice system to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, a judiciary training manual was developed in close collaboration with the Bhutan National Legal Institute (BNLI). Another important achievement was also the amendment of the definition of Trafficking in Persons (TIP) under Section 154 of the Penal Code of Bhutan in line with the Palermo Protocol definition. The UN continued to sensitize criminal justice practitioners in international conventions and protocols and advocate for the ratification of UNTOC and the Supplementary TIP Protocol.

Training in TIP was also completed for 172 law enforcement agencies, service providers and frontliners. As a result, the criminal justice system was strengthened and 157 women, trafficked to Iraq were rescued in 2020. The National Prevention Strategy to prevent and combat TIP in Bhutan was also finalised which will result in the relevant agencies incorporating TIP related activities in their annual work plan from 2021.

In partnership with the UN and the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, the RGoB successfully hosted the second South Asia

Religious Leaders’ Platform for Children to discuss the role of religious leaders and groups in advancing children’s rights. 2020 was also the 30th anniversary of Bhutan ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child. To mark the occasion, a decree was issued on 20 November by His Holiness the Je Khenpo (Chief Abbot) calling on all duty bearers to ensure the wellbeing of Bhutan’s children and “...urge all to continue the efforts and work together to build a society fit for our children, one that cares for the happiness and best interests of our children at all time.”. These commitments alongside the RGoB’s alignment to the UN’s global “Protect Our Children” campaign, increased media coverage and public awareness on issues impacting children and young people.

Through the conversation series “Reimagining Bhutan: Building Forward Better Beyond COVID”, the UN was successful in sparking discussions and submitting policy briefs to the Royal Government around sensitive but pertinent key national issues and such as social protection, anticipatory governance, the future of skills and education, green recovery and the future of the economy.

SDGs implemented:



Lead Agency Participating Agencies

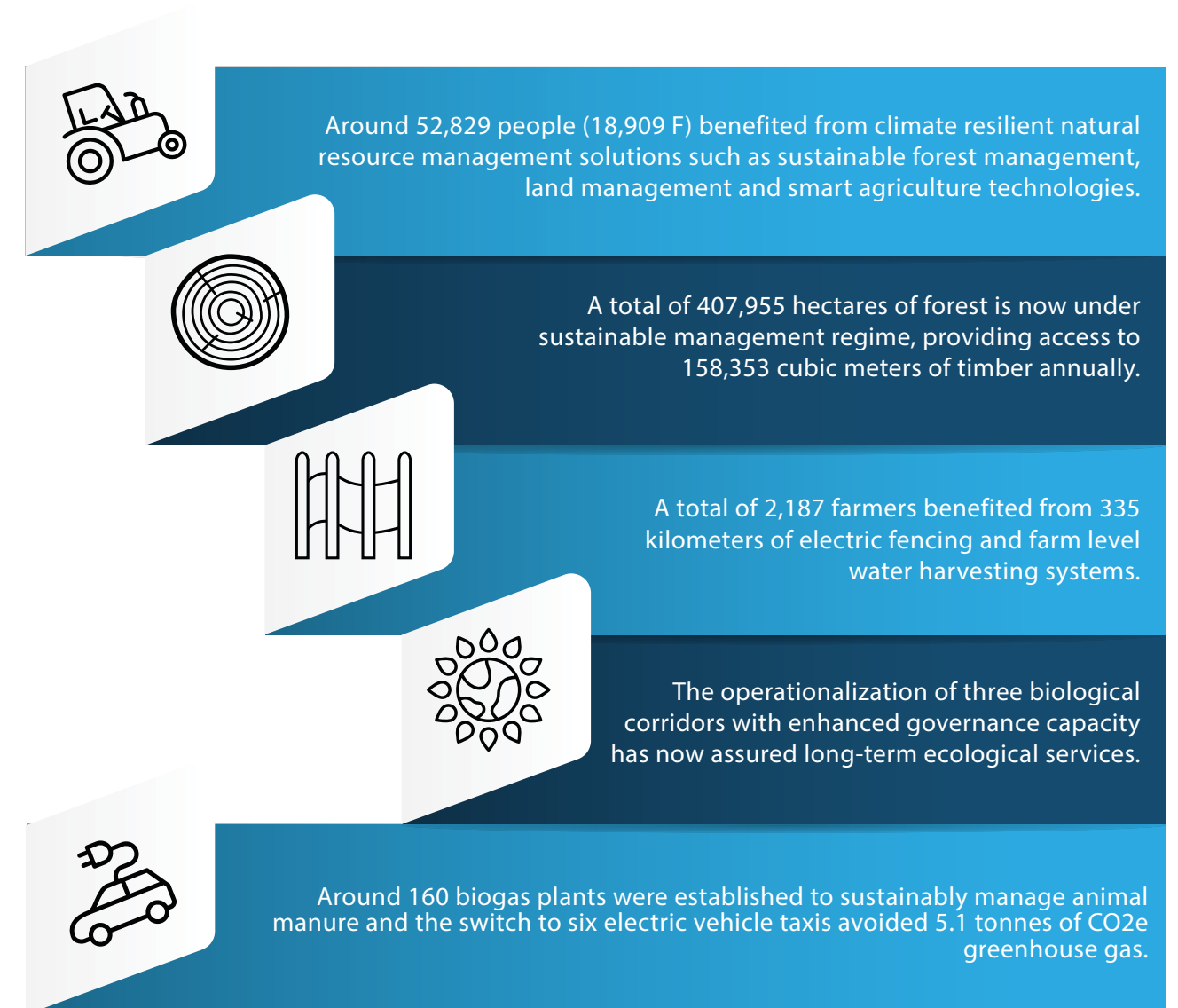


Outcome Four: Climate Change + Disaster Risk Reduction

By 2023, Bhutan’s vulnerable communities and its economy are more resilient to climate-induced and other disasters and biodiversity loss

The UN made significant contributions towards making the economy, foremost agriculture,

more robust and making Bhutan’s vulnerable communities more resilient to climate-induced disasters and biodiversity losses. The UN continues to contribute to climate action by supporting the update of Bhutan’s 2nd Nationally Determined Contribution and the development of the National Adaptation Plan.



A total of 1883 (189 F) artisans, engineers, technicians, instructors, trainees, and local leaders were trained in 'seismic resilient stone masonry construction', 'confined masonry construction' and 'windstorm resilient roofing systems' through the 'Capacity building in Disaster Resilient Construction' initiative. A GIS-based building inventory system was developed for Paro, Punakha and Trashiyangtse and an earthquake risk analysis was conducted and shared with relevant stakeholders. The project was implemented by the Department of Engineering Services with funding support from the UN.

The UN and academia completed the Earthquake Impact Assessment Modelling Study, which for the first time quantified potential earthquake impacts in terms of fatalities, injuries and displaced persons in Bhutan's 20 districts in a number of scenarios. The UN also started supporting the Department of Disaster Management to strengthen the disaster management contingency planning (DMCP) process, budgeting and linkages to national plans. As a result, the Disaster Management Officers and District Statistical Officers representing all districts were trained on how to update their district specific DMCPs to enhance practicality and ensure implementation.

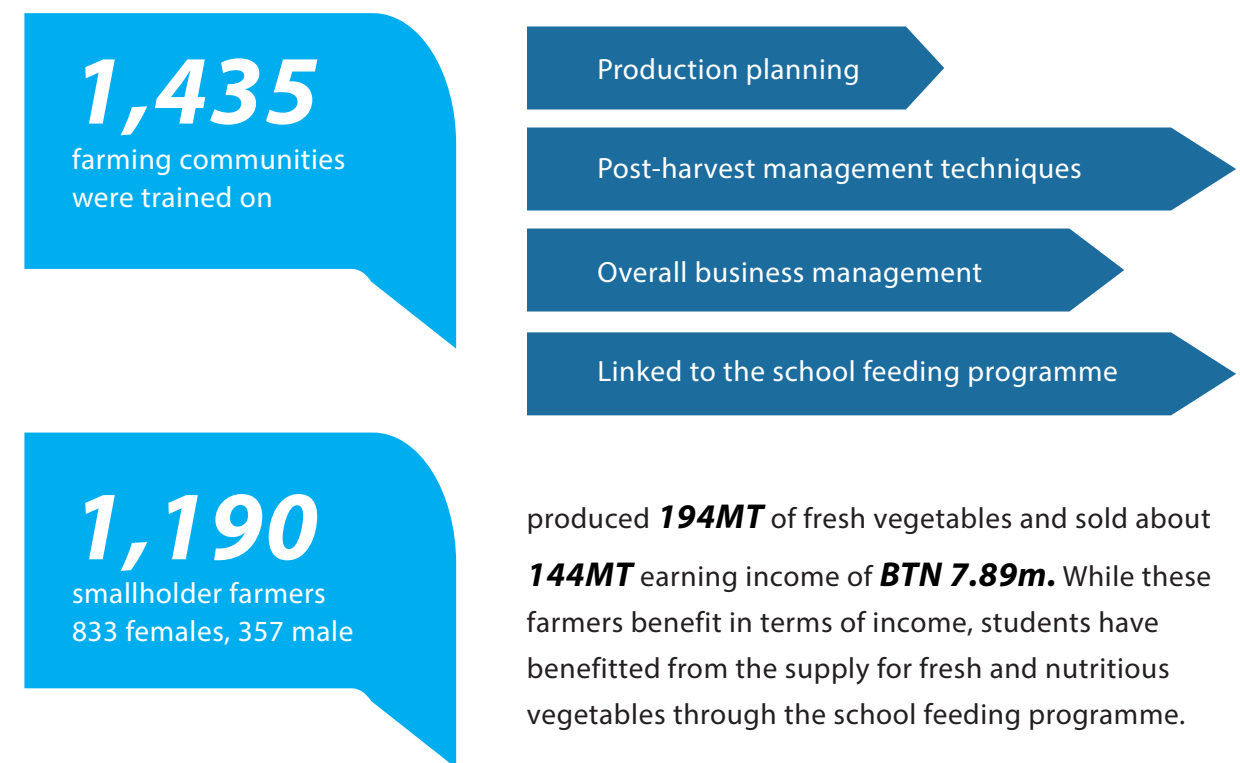
A mapping exercise among the key DRM stakeholders was completed among the UN and development partners to find synergies and opportunities for joint programming. The findings of the report will identify pathways to harness coordination and amplify the impacts of the DRM interventions.

In line with the government's vision to move from aid to trade, the UN supported opportunities to enhance the business environment, facilitate Foreign Development Investment, support CSOs and the competitiveness of small and medium enterprises. The UN supported the establishment of 15 social enterprises led by youth on agriculture, waste management and online learning and Bhutanese CSOs and exporters were provided an opportunity to promote Bhutanese textiles in new overseas markets, generating renewed interest and orders from France, the UK and Germany. This trade-related technical assistance diversified Bhutan's exports by improving the national trade and investment regulatory framework, and increasing exports of horticulture products and handicraft textiles. Advisory support on trade policy, investment promotion and business advocacy was provided, integrating critical aspects for business growth after COVID-19. More than 200 public and private sector stakeholders including 50 women were trained on trade negotiations, business advocacy, public-private dialogue, investment regulations, trade facilitation, market access. Support included capacity building for government officers and the private sector to make informed trade, investment and regulatory policy decisions.

The support also contributed to climate smart agriculture and building resilience at a farm level through improved agro-ecology practices. In addition, two segregated waste stations were established in Thimphu to manage organic waste and limit greenhouse gas emissions.



In line with the key objectives of building strengthening livelihoods, strengthening institutional capacities and systems across food systems in Bhutan, the UN supported the Government in promoting agriculture sector transformation and enhancing food self-sufficiency.





Support of the Royal Government of Bhutan's Economic Contingency Plan, November 2020 in Buli, Zhemgang

01/10 **72-hour Rapid Assessment Approach** established to respond to disaster

18 **4,000 mt** of additional storage build to strengthen the national emergency food reserve

Earthquake assignment developed with quantifiable numbers of the impact of earthquakes in Bhutan

95 government officials trained to respond disasters, including pandemics

SDGs implemented:

To mitigate natural disaster risks, the UN worked closely with the Department for Disaster Management (DDM) to enhance national disaster data preparedness and response capacities and coordination and contingency planning. A total of four capacity strengthening programs related to disaster risk management were completed despite the pandemic. The UN handed over eight mobile storage units to the Government and trained 50 officials from the DDM and frontline volunteers on handling and setting-up the units during the pandemic. Further, to

strengthen the capacity of the DDM in disaster data management, the UN started training DDM officials in data preparedness and vulnerability assessment mapping.

Strategic achievements included completion of the 'Climate Risk Assessment and Refinement of PRA Methodology', an earthquake impact assessment modelling and the launch of the 72 hour Rapid Assessment Approach enabling predictions that the impact of future disasters will have and comprising a core part of the COVID-19 response plan.



KEY CHALLENGES

- Timely delivery of critical medical supplies including vaccines was a challenge due to the interruption of international flights. However, despite these challenges imposed by limited international flights, the coordinated efforts of the Royal Government, the UN, other development partners and the private sector resulted in all planned vaccines for routine immunizations being procured on time, and the country maintaining a six month stock of reserves.
- Provision of essential health and nutrition services were interrupted due to a reduced public demand, with coverage of routine essential health services declining in comparison to 2019. This was primarily due to the fear of contracting COVID-19 while receiving the services. In response, SOPs were developed to ensure continuity of essential health and nutrition services to ensure people could access essential services during the pandemic and during periods of lockdown and community awareness campaigns were conducted
- No data or only partial data is currently available in Bhutan for two thirds of the 244 indicators of the SDGs. The legislation governing official statistics is outdated and provisions of an Executive Order from 2006 are not always implemented. The statistical system remains fragile due to lack of human resources, limited coordination, data weaknesses, and the absence of a legal framework for statistical interventions. A national statistics development strategy has been adopted but is not yet fully implemented.

OVERALL PROGRESS OF LEAVING NO-ONE BEHIND

- More could be done to collect disaggregated data so that development challenges and programmatic impact are understood better through the lens of vulnerable groups. Given vulnerability is not static (as highlighted by the National Statistics Bureau's Rapid Socio-Economic Impact Assessment), the UN will continue to build on the mapping of these groups to ensure no one is left behind. In addition, focused efforts are required to design projects that would help integrate, monitor and report on SDGs at the sub-national level.
- Projects funded through global programmes, such as the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, were difficult to modify to the ever-evolving COVID-19 situation. By the very nature of global programmes, the process of repurposing funds for a COVID-19 response (or for any other purposes that were not explicitly stated in the project document) proved to be long and cumbersome.
- Implementation of the CSO Engagement Framework was hampered due to COVID-19, which would have otherwise created an enabling environment for CSOs to collaborate with the RGoB to deliver key services to vulnerable groups and provide citizens with the platform to engage in decision-making. The UN supported the Anti-Corruption Commission in drafting the CSO engagement programme for anti-corruption, justice and governance. However, COVID-19 slowed down the finalization progress, and much remains to be done before the enabling environment for CSOs to collaborate with the Royal Government in advancing development goals is adequately enhanced.
- In addition, largely because of restrictions posed by COVID-19, the planned pilot for the use of social accountability tools in local governments was put on hold. The social accountability tool, most likely community scorecards, will allow the citizens to provide feedback on the quality of local public services. The UN is in discussion with key stakeholders to ensure this activity is carried out in 2021.



Timely delivery of critical medical supplies including vaccines was a challenge due to the interruption of international flights but despite these challenges all planned vaccines for routine immunizations were procured on time



SUPPORT FOR PARTNERSHIPS AND FINANCING THE 2030 AGENDA

SDG Financing

Bhutan's 12th Five Year Plan is likely to be the last plan before Bhutan graduates from the LDC category and therefore represents a critical opportunity to accelerate SDG progress and facilitate a smooth and sustainable transition. To support this aim, the UN focused on creative partnerships designed to address priority challenges and leverage skills and resources toward the goals of sustainable development. This included partnerships with national and local government counterparts, civil society and other multilateral organisations to design and implement innovative projects. These initiatives aligned with national priorities and support of the SDGs include:

The Joint SDG Fund



One of the most critical challenges facing Bhutan and countries around the world is ensuring financial resources for both COVID-19 responses and long-term development priorities. The UN and the Royal Government partnered to launch the Joint SDG Fund Programme: *'Building a Bhutan Integrated National Financing Framework for the Sustainable Development Goals and Gross National Happiness.'* Running through the end of 2022, the programme is financially supported with USD 872,051 by the Joint SDG Fund, a multi-partner trust fund administered by the UN system. The programme aims to make a transformative contribution to the way Bhutan finances its development, especially to support Bhutan's goals of long-term financial sustainability, social spending that benefits all people, and green finance to protect the environment and respond to climate change.



Launch of the Joint SDG Fund
 Right to Left: Secretary of Gross National Happiness Commission, Dasha Thinley Namgyel, Secretary for Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dasha Kinga Singye, Resident Representative, UNDP, Ms Azusa Kubota, Representative, UNICEF, Mr Will Parks.

To date, Bhutan’s development has been primarily resourced by public finance both domestic and international. A comprehensive long-term financing strategy that mobilizes private capital towards development priorities can open new windows of opportunity and is especially important given the changing financing landscape resulting from COVID-19. In addition, improved efficiency in public expenditure and coherent policies and institutions related to planning and financing will support Bhutan’s short and long-term sustainable development aspirations, including its responses to COVID-19 and longer-term vision of a “Just, Harmonious and Sustainable Society through Enhanced Decentralization”. The fund will focus on:

- Exploring innovative financing approaches, including building on the first sovereign bond launched in 2020.
- Developing new financing strategies, including for strengthened health care provision.

- Introducing new approaches to green finance, such as for climate change adaptation and biodiversity protection.
- Strengthening public-private partnerships to invest in Bhutan’s sustainable future.

Sovereign Bonds

With UN support, the Royal Government of Bhutan successfully concluded its first-ever sovereign bond issuance for public subscription in September. The UN has been providing technical assistance to the Royal Government and other key stakeholders since 2017. This included support to the pre-issuance process and then, with the pandemic bringing an even greater demand for new financing, the launch of the first bond in 2020.

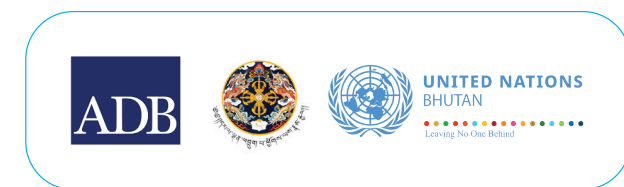
The successful launch demonstrated how sovereign bonds can be tools for economic recovery and capital market development and represented a major step to independently finance Bhutan’s fiscal needs. The bond is the first of its kind in Bhutan, showcasing a unique

partnership between the UN and the Royal Government.

“This historical move has significantly expanded our fiscal management space while diversifying debt resources through opening up a new channel for long-term public borrowing. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to ESCAP which has provided us valuable technical assistance on the issuance of the sovereign bond since 2017 through various modalities, such as policy advocacy, research studies, training workshops and study tours.”

- Dasha Nim Dorji, Finance Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Royal Government of Bhutan.

A Partnership with Asian Development Bank and Ministry of Finance



The UN, ADB and the Royal Government launched a joint initiative to strengthen capacity in macroeconomic forecasting and modelling. This initiative analyzes current forecasting approaches, maps data availability and needs, and develops new models to complement existing government methods. Specifically, the initiative will help the Government:

1. Simulate the relationships and interactions between different sectors of the economy.
2. Estimate economy-wide impacts of shocks, including scenarios related to the impact of

COVID-19.

3. Model the multi-dimensional effects of different policy actions.
4. Adapt simulations to changes in assumptions and circumstances.
5. The joint initiative launched in 2020 and will continue through the first half of 2021. The resulting new approach to macroeconomic forecasting will support future evidence-based decision making, including helping to prepare for future shocks and understand the impacts of different policy responses across dimensions of the economy.

Biodiversity Funding

The UN continued its work supporting the Royal Government with solutions for biodiversity financing, including through the Biodiversity Finance Initiative (BIOFIN). Bhutan has been a global pioneer in biodiversity financing, such as through the Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation and Bhutan for Life. The UN’s work complements these national actions, such as through biodiversity financing needs assessments and related proposals for solutions. These financing solutions can amplify the impacts of isolated interventions on biodiversity, climate change and poverty reduction. They also support Bhutan’s resource mobilization and reinforce its global political and technical leadership in sustainable development.

WORKING BETTER TOGETHER-COHERENCE, EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

UN Bhutan adopted an inter-agency approach and collective action in support of the priority needs of the country and the 2030 Agenda. This more collaborative approach to the UN's country presence and the configuration of the UNCT was driven especially by the priorities of the Royal Government of Bhutan and other national stakeholders based on their nationally-defined plans. The UN's One Programme is valued by the Royal Government and partners for helping to consolidate and harmonize UN programming, communications, advocacy, investment mapping, and reporting.

The Resident Coordinator and the UNCT in Bhutan act together. In 2020, decisions on joint programmatic and financial matters relating to activities were made to support oversight of implementation and existing coordination mechanisms. These included the Joint Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation team, the UN Communications Group and the Operations Management Team. UN Bhutan is guided by the UNCT Code of Conduct. The UNCT also fully implements the Management and Accountability System of the UN, and consists of the UN system heads or deputies of agencies

and local representatives of non-resident UN agencies. The team met monthly and also met with non-resident UN agencies twice during the year.

To leverage communication for results, the UN Communications Group supported the Results Groups in their capacity to advocate for development and worked towards enhancing the overall visibility of the UN and key RGoB and other partners through speaking with one voice and consistent messaging. The team promoted and coordinated social media and other outreach campaigns, engaged with citizens on their view of the UN's work (particularly relevant during the UN's 75th anniversary year), and maintained the UNCT website. The team consists of Resident Coordinator's Office and UN agency communications staff and is chaired by the RC.

Further work is being done to improve Delivering as One in Bhutan with greater coordination among UN agencies to jointly implement initiatives, report on contributions and focus on a programme approach and results-based management. There is also

room for more effective communication among UN agencies regarding joint financing opportunities and practices.

Business Operations

Modern, transparent and accountable governance for the organization

With the majority of UN agencies housed under one roof, UN Bhutan provides a comparative advantage when it comes to agencies working cohesively together, sharing resources and pooling services such as reception services, facility management and other Common Services. In the last year, the UNCT has taken up more operational responsibilities from the Operations Management Team (OMT), allowing it to focus on supporting the work and operations of respective agencies.



ones and in 2020 29% of its total fleet were Hybrid/electric cars. It also implemented the trial launch of a WFP Fleet Management System in order to streamline carpooling solutions and created a virtual connectivity network with its local bank to reduce the carbon footprint

In line with Business Operation Strategy 2.0 the installation of a photovoltaic solar system was completed which will offset 100% of the electricity consumption of the UN House in 2021. This initiative makes the UN House the first carbon neutral office in Bhutan. The 83 KV grid rooftop solar PV system and the 20 KW space heater use innovative energy efficient measures and will encourage offices and other institutional buildings to replicate the initiative. This initiative will also save over USD 7000 in annual energy costs and will help the government export surplus energy to India resulting in the mitigation of 132.62 tons of carbon dioxide per year. The office also began a partnership with Bhutan Power Corporation for grid integration.

All UN agencies committed to replacing high fossil fuel consuming vehicles with eco-friendly



by drivers travelling to the bank by 95%. These actions are testament to the UNCT's commitment to increase and improve sustainable development practices in a more climate-smart manner when it comes to business operations.

Agency Name	Hybrid/electric	Petrol/Diesel	Total % of Hybrid/ electric vehicles
FAO	0	2	0%
RCO	1	0	100%
UNFPA	0	2	0%
UNICEF	1	4	20%
UNDP	2	1	66%
WEP	1	3	25%
WHO	1	3	25%
Total	6	15	29%

Almost 30% of all UN Bhutan vehicles in 2020 were hybrid/electric vehicles

In addition, the UN Human Resources Working Group conducted nine common learnings during the COVID-19 crisis with no cost to individual agencies and developed a Common ICT Disaster Recovery Plan.

Under the One UN initiative, 10 Peer Support Volunteers from all UN agencies were trained by UN Regional Staff Counsellors to provide support to all UN staff during the pandemic. As a part of UN Bhutan's COVID-19 response, the UN HR Task Team, in collaboration with the Staff Association, organized numerous learning sessions on different topics such as safety and security, preventive measures for COVID-19, Yoga, Mindfulness, and Meditation.

The One UN Business Operating Strategy was endorsed by the UN Country Team with reporting to begin in 2021 and was successful in reducing costs in procurement, ICT, human resources, logistics, administration, and finance.

Business Operations Management

Team

Lead Agency: UNDP

Chair: Juergen Nagler (UNDP)

Secretary: Choney Lhazom Wangchuk, Phurpa Tshering (UNDP), Suraj Pradhan (UNICEF), Melam Zangmo (WFP), Sangay Wangmo (FAO), Tshering Wangdi (UNFPA), Ugyen Wangchuk (WHO), Tashi Dukpa (RCO), Pema Namgyel (UNODC).

Highlights of UN Reform

The last year highlighted the benefits of strengthened capacity in the Resident Coordinator's Office with the addition of a dedicated Economist. This appointment has been crucial in adding an analytical depth to the work of the RCO, in initiating collaborations with new government partners such as the Ministry of Finance (a first in the work of UN Bhutan) and in providing support to the government in the development of key economic strategies such as Bhutan's 21st Economic Roadmap and approach to LDC graduation transition. In the face of COVID-19, this opportunity to support the government's financial and economic capacity has never been more important.

This was further evidenced with the development of innovative programs in the fiscal space. These approaches to innovative financing represent 21st century development and are tools for economic recovery and capital market development for economies where resources and financial infrastructure are limited.

Implementation of ongoing reform also resulted in less duplication within agency operations and with government and improved engagement with Non-Resident Agencies. Greater collaboration, improved communication and more regular meetings, including meetings with the Resident

Coordinator, resulted in a willingness to collaborate and a strengthening of these partnerships. The stronger relationships with NRA's has also resulted in tangible development achievements especially in the field of education such as school access to digital technology.

Non-resident agencies

In 2020 Non-Resident Agencies made significant contributions to the Annual Work-plan of the UN through the development of management tools for sustainable human wildlife conflict, infrastructure for farm level water harvesting, the implementation of bio-gas plants for dairy farms to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, developing climate-resilient mountain ecosystems to protect livelihoods and flagship mountain species and support for Bhutan's compliance to the Montreal Protocol.

In addition, they have also enhanced the performance of local governments to plan, budget, invest and report, developed new funding mechanisms for public and private climate financing, strengthened the enabling environment for official statistics through harmonisation with the International Standards of Industrial Classification and developed a dashboard to track SDG data against the 12th Five Year Plan and the Gross National Happiness index.

JOINT PROGRAMMING

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Through its convening power, the UN was able to bring together the Royal Government, CSOs, and UN agencies to develop and implement the child protection and GBV response plan to COVID-19 and strengthen the response capacities of Bhutan's social service workforce to support survivors of violence. All members of the Gender Interagency Task-force were invited to support its implementation, avoiding duplication and strengthening collaboration across agencies. The UN supported awareness campaigns in the media regarding the heightened risk of GBV during lockdown and highlighting services available for the public to access. The UN also supported the training of front-liners on the GBV Standard Operating Procedures, focusing on identification, referrals and roles.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Task Team

Lead Agency: UNDP

Chair: Azusa Kubota, Resident Representative, UNDP

Agencies: UNICEF, UNFPA, UN Women

Focal: Tshering Choden (UNDP)

Alternate: Tashi Choden (UNDP)
Karma Tshering (UNFPA), Deki Dema (UNICEF), Tashi Dukpa (RCO)

Disability

A collective representation for people with disability was formally recognised for the first

time in the country, with the official launch of the Disabled People's Organisation of Bhutan. Six CSO's working in the disability space now function under this umbrella. In addition, the UN Disability Inclusion Strategy was adopted by the UNCT ensuring greater coordination within the UN on disability and the Action Plan for the National Policy for Persons with Disability was also finalised.

Disability Task Team

Lead Agency: UNICEF

Chair: Will Parks, Representative, UNICEF

Agencies: UNDP, WHO

Focal: Bishnu B. Mishra (UNICEF)

Alternate: Sangay Wangmo (UNDP)
Kencho Wangdi (WHO), Tashi Dukpa (RCO),
Dungkhar Dukpa (WFP)

SDGs and Data

The National Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan 2020-2025 addressing the life cycle approach was developed through a cross-sectoral collaboration with the Royal Government, Academia, CSOs and the UN. The strategy aims to accelerate nutritional outcomes through nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions and meet SDG commitments. The National Sanitation and Hygiene Policy 2020, developed through a multi-partner approach, was endorsed by the Government to advance implementation of environment-friendly and climate-resilient WASH interventions. In addition, the Joint SDG Fund was established - a multi-partner trust fund administered by the

UN system and designed to support Bhutan's long-term financial sustainability.

SDG and Data Task Team

Lead Agency: UNDP

Chair: Azusa Kubota, Resident Representative, UNDP

Agencies: UNICEF, UNFPA, WFP

Focal: Ugyen Dorji (UNDP)

Udaya Sharma (WFP), Wangchuk Lhamo (FAO), Scott Standley (RCO)

Emergency Preparedness and Response

Bhutan sits in one of the most seismically active zones in the world. Thus, it is prone to multiple hazards like earthquakes, glacial lake outbursts, fire and landslides. This year, the UN supported the Royal Government

of Bhutan to address gaps in disaster awareness, coordination and governance, data preparedness, logistics and technical capacity. Strategic achievements this year included completion of the 'Climate Risk Assessment and Refinement of PRA Methodology', an earthquake impact assessment modelling and the launch of the 72 hour Rapid Assessment Approach enabling predictions that the impact of future disasters will have and comprising a core part of the COVID-19 response plan.

Emergency Preparedness and Response Task Team

Lead Agency: WFP

Chair: Svante Helms, Head of Office, WFP

Agencies: UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO

Focal: Laksiri Nanayakkara and Dechen Yangzom (WFP)

Sonam Gyeltshen (UNICEF), Nawaraj Chettri (UNDP), Sonam Tshoki (RCO)





PARTNERSHIPS FOR DEVELOPMENT

In 2020, the UN worked closely in partnership with the Royal Government of Bhutan, the Parliament of Bhutan, bilateral and multilateral donors, civil society organizations, academic institutions, local community, the media and the private sector to deliver results.

Bhutan Dialogues

Jointly organized by local CSO the Loden Foundation and UN Bhutan, Bhutan Dialogues is a public platform for deep dialogues, discourse and mindful listening focused on the country's big development issues. In 2020, ten sessions of Bhutan Dialogues were organized

which included a Special Edition focusing on capturing the voices of Bhutanese youth, with the theme 'The Future We Want.' Discussions on the performance of civil servants, retirement, human wellbeing, education and enterprise, digitalizing Bhutan, climate change, COVID-19 and the role of the private sector were all covered this year.

Engaging with CSOs

Civil society organizations are key development partners to the UN. To ensure Government-CSO collaboration aimed at achieving the broad goals of GNH in the country, the UN supported To ensure Government-CSO collaboration aimed at achieving the broad goals of GNH in the country, the UN supported the Royal Government in drafting guidelines on Government-CSO Collaboration. Through the process of developing these guidelines, it became evident that the CSO sector has the prerequisite expertise, strength and capacity to collaborate with the government in the areas of advocacy, awareness and sensitization, can conduct valuable independent research and has the capacity to reach the previously unreachable.

Engaging with the Media

The development of strong partnerships

with the media was an important milestone for the UN in 2020. The UN supported media development through capacity building of journalists through training and by recognizing outstanding journalism as part of the Annual Journalism Awards organized by the Journalist Association of Bhutan and Bhutan Media Foundation. In 2020, the UN supported journalists and social media influencers with a four-week online training programme to provide them with the necessary knowledge and tools to cover the COVID-19 health crisis effectively and the social, economic and political consequences. UN Bhutan partnered with the Journalists' Association of Bhutan, Bhutan Media and Communications Institute, Bhutan Media Foundation and Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy.

The Development Partners' Group

The Development Partners' Group (DPG) is a valuable platform for finding opportunities for synergies and partnerships amongst the development partners in the country and plays a catalytic role in aiding transformative development in Bhutan. In 2020, the UN led a series of bi-monthly DPG meetings to deliver results together with Bhutan's bilateral and multilateral partners.





BHUTAN'S COMMITMENT TO INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY

Bhutan's commitment to International Peace and Security, and Bhutan's participation in UN Peacekeeping Operations began in 2014 and since this time Bhutan has continued extending its support for peacekeeping operations. In 2017, Bhutan became the first troop-contributing country to sign a Rapid Deployment Level agreement with the United Nations, providing 45 peacekeepers to 10 UN field operations. This commitment

enables Bhutanese Force Protection Company to deploy troops with just 60 days' notice. Bhutan is currently ranked 77 out of the 90 contributing countries. Additionally, 191 Bhutanese peacekeepers completed their assignments as of December 2020 and 35 peacekeepers from Bhutan, including those deployed during the period of reporting, are still serving in UN Peacekeeping Missions.

UN AT 75

To commemorate 75 years of the Charter of the United Nations in 2020, UN Bhutan launched a series of Climate Change Roadshows entitled 'Art for Change' involving students from different schools across Bhutan. The theme of the roadshow was 'The Future We Want' and raised awareness of climate change and other major environmental issues and asked students to visualize the future they want through art in different forms such as theatre, painting, photography and writing. The roadshow was planned in three parts, with roadshow events taking place online as part of a COVID-19 response in August, September and October. These events culminated in a special performance voicing the hopes and dreams of young people with regards to climate change by a selection of students at UN House on UN Day.

The UN also curated a special edition of 'Bhutan Dialogues' giving young people a platform to voice their opinions and concerns under the umbrella topic of 'The Future We Want.' UN Bhutan hosts a civil conversation called 'Bhutan Dialogues' each month with thought leaders and changemakers of Bhutan, aimed at drawing on their expertise and achievements to inspire development thinking in the pursuit of human progress. This 'special edition' consisted of a panel of young people talking about the issues that are important to them, facilitated by an experienced moderator. The event was held at Royal Thimphu College with an audience of 300+ students and a larger audience engaging online with an opportunity for this audience to submit questions at the conclusion of the discussion.



Students and staff of Wangsel Institute for the Deaf participate in the 'UN75 Art for Change Roadshow'

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

In 2020, over USD 10.5 million was mobilized for COVID-19 response and recovery (these additional resources constitute part of the work-plan), including the recent approval of a Rapid Financing Facility. Similarly, USD 300,000 was raised to meet the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic, for supporting students to continue learning during school closures through alternative modes and also for protection of livelihoods and reinforcing the tourism and

agriculture sectors in Bhutan under the UN Secretary General's MPTF Fund. In addition, the UN mobilized USD230,000 through DFAT (Australian Federal Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade) to support vulnerable women and girls by ensuring continuous and timely accessibility to Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights and GBV related information and services.

The UN mobilized USD 2.9 million through its Humanitarian Action for Children (HAC) appeal with support from the Government of Japan, Asian Development Bank, Global Partnership for Education (GPE), GAVI, UN MPTF (COVID-19), Global Thematic Funds (General and WASH), the Lego Foundation, and various UNICEF National Committees. In partnership with the RGoB, the UN also secured USD 872,051 from the Joint SDG Fund for building a Bhutan Integrated National Financing Framework for SDGs and Gross National Happiness. The SDG Fund Programme will be implemented in 2021 and 2022.

Based on projections in the Common Budgetary Framework and through the implementation of the UNCT Joint Resource Mobilization Strategy, UN Bhutan mobilized resources to meet the UNSDPF resource gap. This strategy was based on a mapping of potential and existing partners at the global, regional and country level, as well as their priority areas.

Further, the UN Bhutan Country Fund (One Fund) co-chaired by the GNHC and the UN, was used as a pooled mechanism to receive contributions from multiple financial partners. The Common Budgetary Framework required a strategic approach by the UNCT and the RGoB in partnership, to finance the outcomes and outputs agreed in the UNSDPF. As a development partner to the Royal Government of Bhutan, the UN explored innovative and multi-financing opportunities from a variety of sources to meet the projected funding gap.

These successful funding strategies were a result of strong leadership, clear and robust communications (that showcased results widely leading to further resource mobilization opportunities) capitalizing on strong partnership in the country and building on lessons learnt from past and ongoing projects, which all resulted in the development of high quality, bankable projects.



USD 4.3 Million
Mainstreaming biodiversity into ecotourism



USD 10.5 million
COVID-19 response & recovery



USD 2.9 Million
Humanitarian Action for Children



USD 872,051
National Financing Framework

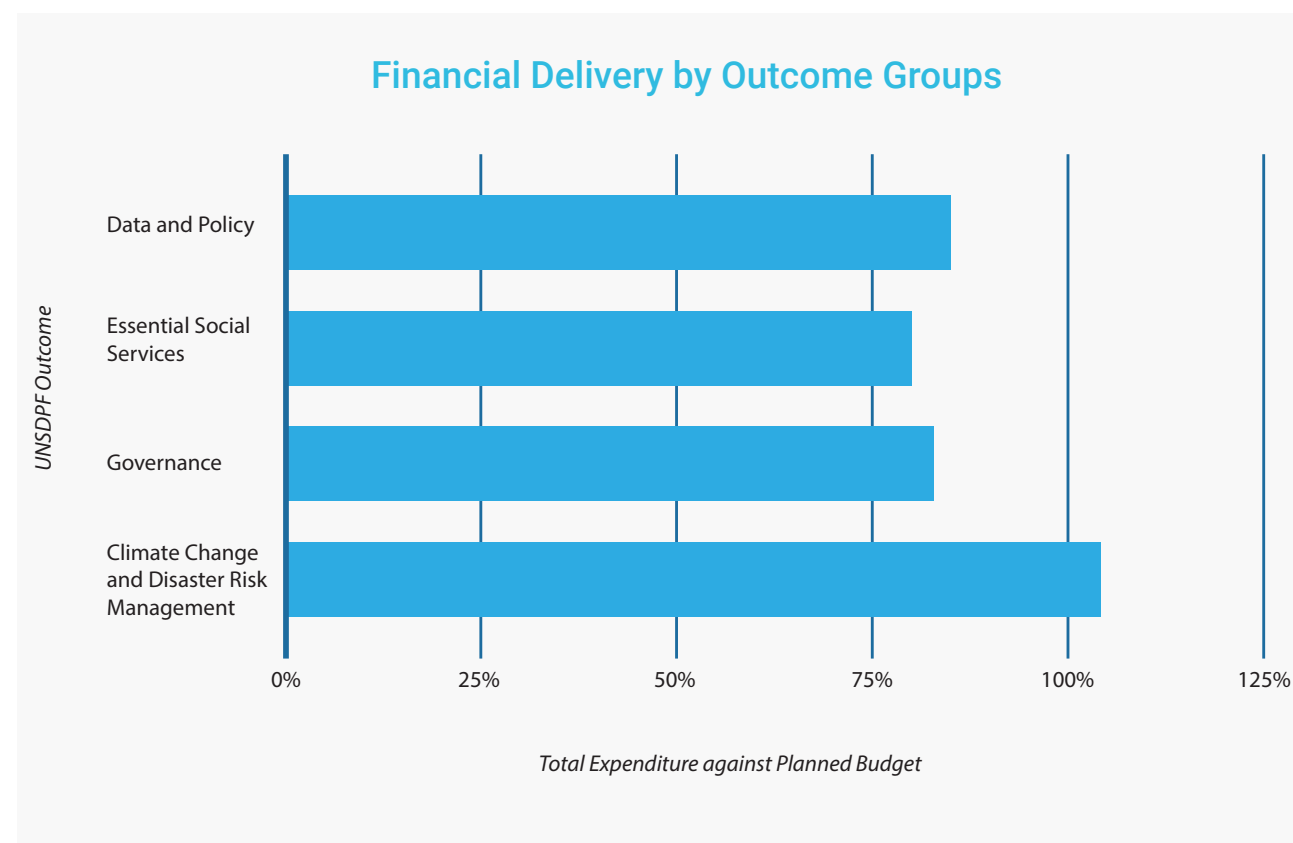


USD 300,000
Socio-economic impacts of the pandemic

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The figures below represent the financial delivery for 2020 by Outcome Group

UNSDPF Outcome	Planned Budget (USD)	Expenditure	Total Expenditure against planned budget
Data and Policy	228,264	194,109	85%
Essential Social Services	21,091,100	16,891,616	80%
Governance	648,347	535,203	83%
Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management	13,785,669	14,330,132	104%
Total	35,753,380	31,951,060	89%



The table below represents the One Programme Financial Delivery for 2020 at the agency level

Agency	Planned Budget for 2020			Achievement for 2020		
	Regular Resources	Other Resources	Gap(to be mobilized)	Total Planned Budget	Total Delivery of 2020	Achievement (%)
FAO	-	854,754	-	854,754	854,754	100%
ITC	-	1,598,000	-	1,598,000	1,598,000	100%
IFAD*	-	333,000	-	333,000	333,000	100%
UNDP	567,386	10,123,647	7,000**	10,698,034	11,691,187	109%
UNEP	-	855,000	-	855,000	417,956	49%
UNFPA	652,992	256,057	-	909,049	908,185	100%
UNICEF	479,288	7,576,752	-	8,056,040	7,682,872	95%
WFP	-	2,246,500	-	2,246,500	2,090,137	93%
WHO	9,839,373	-	-	9,839,373	6,113,094	62%
DESA	-	39,750	-	39,750	-	0%
ESCAP	7,000	20,000	-	27,000	20,000	74%
UNCDF	-	185,930	-	185,930	171,051	92%
UNRCO	6,950	-	-	6,950	6,950	100%
UNODC	54,000	50,000	-	104,000	63,874	61%
TOTAL	11,606,990	24,139,391	7,000	35,753,381	31,951,060	89%

** These activities were cancelled due to COVID -19 restrictions. Additional resources mobilized were allocated for immediate COVID response activities

*IFAD:Loan

THE WAY FORWARD

As the focus for the Royal Government of Bhutan going forward will be on recovering from the economic impacts of the COVID crisis, the work of UN will be a steady implementation of the four key outcomes of the Sustainable Development Partnership Framework with an additional emphasis on building on COVID-19 response and recovery activities.

As continuation of its COVID-19 pandemic response, the UN will prioritize the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccination in conjunction with other preventive measures. This includes coordinating with donors and the COVAX Facility to mobilize resources for COVID-19 emergency response during the recovery phase. It also includes supporting advocacy campaigns, access and delivery of the vaccines.

2021 is a 'super year' for nature with the COP26 scheduled to take place later in the year. Greening Bhutan's recovery from the pandemic and supporting climate work will remain priorities. The UN will continue

to support the implementation of Bhutan's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Bhutan will submit its 2nd NDCs to UNFCCC with clear targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the agriculture, industry, human settlement, and transport sectors by mid 2021.

The UN will also continue its work with the Government, academia and CSO partners to strengthen prevention of violence against children and women, including improved access to essential services. The UN will also intensify efforts with Government agencies and CSOs as well as existing youth groups to explore more avenues to empower adolescents, especially girls,

including the most vulnerable who are not in education, employment or training. Focus will continue on the development of a national roadmap for disaster management and the establishment of a National Disaster Management Coordination Committee. This will also comprise a joint programme on data, including formulation of data infrastructure for emergency responses and designing social protection programmes.

In further support of UN reform and collaboration, a joint UNCT funds mobilisation strategy will also be developed. This will aim to find synergies and avoid duplication of resource mobilization efforts, including exploring Multi-partner Trust Funds and other UN internal instruments. From a business operations perspective, there will also be a focus on making UNINFO fully operational and establishing a Common Back Office as part of the third phase of the global roll-out.

The year, 2021 also marks 50 years of Bhutan's membership to the UN and will be an important year of commemorating a strong and enduring partnership between the Royal Government of Bhutan and the UN. This will comprise a year-long programme of events, activities, dialogues and campaigns, underpinned by support to the government in the development of an LDC graduation strategy.

UN Bhutan is proud of its achievements in 2020 under challenging circumstances. But it also recognizes the space for strengthening its support activities and building on the past. With this in mind, UN Bhutan looks positively towards the future and beyond. This includes helping ensure a sustainable future for Bhutan through supporting choices today that lead to the inclusive, green, and sustainable tomorrow embedded in the SDGs and the Bhutanese philosophy of Gross National Happiness (GNH). This agenda will be the center-piece of UN Bhutan's work in 2021 and beyond.





The UN Bhutan Country Team includes Ms. Argentina Matavel Piccin Country Director, UNFPA Bhutan and Representative UNFPA India

UN Country Team from left to right:

- First row:
 Tandin Wangmo, National Project Coordinator, UNODC; Gerald Daly, UN Resident Coordinator, Bhutan; Azusa Kubota, Resident Representative, UNDP;
- Second row:
 Svante Helms, Head of office, WFP; Chadho Tenzin, Assistant Resident Representative, FAO; Dr. Rui Paulo de Jesus (Representative, WHO);
- Third row:
 Kiran Subedi, National Project Coordinator, ITC; Will Parks, Representative, UNICEF.

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50 Years of Partnership and Building a Better Future