

**United Nations Development Programme**

**BHUTAN**

**Project Strategy Document**

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| **Project Title** | **Civic Engagement and Accountability** |
| **UN One Programme Outcome:** | UN One Programme Outcome 4: By 2018, governance institutions and communities exercise the principles of democratic governance at the national and local levels with a focus on inclusiveness, transparency, accountability and evidence-based decision-making. |
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| **Expected Output(s):**  *(Those that will result from the project)* | **Output 4.3:** Women and youth have increased opportunities to participate in leadership as well as in policy making, planning, and implementation of development plans **Output 4.4:** Media and CSOs are better able to promote the participation of people, in particular youth, in democratic processes, public dialogue and discourse |
| **Executing Entities:** | Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB), Department of Local Governance (DLG, MoHCA), Department of Information and Media (DoIM, MoIC), Civil Society Organisation Authority (CSOA), Royal Audit Authority (RAA), iGNHaS (RUB), Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), Ministry of Education (MoE), Civil Society Organizations including RENEW, Tarayana, BCMD, Lhak-Sam, YDF, Ability Bhutan Society, and others. |
| **Implementing Agencies:** | United Nations Development Programme |

**Brief Description**

Over the past decade Bhutan has embarked on a process of democratization, building on its cherished traditions and cultural specificities, and shaped by the guidance of its King and framed by the 2008 Constitution. The 2013 general elections have seen an orderly transfer of power from one political party to another. Although the practice of democratic governance is still new in Bhutan, the Royal Government of Bhutan, especially in the elaboration of its Five Year Plans, has reached out to communities in the interest of promoting participation. Civil society has also begun to play an increasingly visible role through CSOs, media and academia.

This project aims to support the governance institutions and communities of Bhutan in further exercising the principles of responsive democratic governance at the national and local levels with a focus on inclusiveness, transparency, accountability and evidence-based decision making**.**

In order to reach its aim, the project will work with partners from the Royal Government of Bhutan, civil society, media and academia towards the following **objectives**:

1. The state’s capacity for inclusive and consultative decision-making is enhanced
2. Effective democratic dialogue takes place amongst Government, media actors and civil society
3. Bhutanese people, especially women and youth, are able to meaningfully participate in the democratic process

The Project will provide donors with the information they need to avoid overlap, duplication and confusion, and will identify gaps that might be filled with donor support. It will implement effective monitoring and evaluation and provide donors with regular reports on its progress.

Programme Period: 2014

Project ID:

Project Duration: 2014-2018

Budget $121,290

GMS Fee $9,703

Total budget: $130,993

* Allocated resources: $86,290
* In-kind contributions: NA

Unfunded 2014 budget: $35,000

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# I. Situation Analysis

**1.1 Background**

Since embracing democracy in 2008, Bhutan has continued to advance on democratic advocacy and awareness for people’s participation. UNDP has been one of the principal development partners collaborating with the Royal Government of Bhutan and civil society to strengthen democratic governance systems, with the overall aim of achieving sustainable development and achievement of Gross National Happiness.

Developments of particular significance since the adoption of the Constitution include the successful conduct of the second local government elections and Parliamentary elections in 2011 and 2013 respectively, and the establishment of constitutional bodies such as the Election Commission of Bhutan, Royal Audit Authority and Anti-Corruption Commission. Important recent pieces of legislation include the Anti-Corruption Act 2011 and the Civil Society Act of 2007. The significant improvements in terms of strengthening democracy and good governance made by Bhutan are also reflected in international governance indicators measured by Bertelsmann Transformation Index, Transparency International, Economist Intelligence Unit and the Democracy Index among others.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Nonetheless, it is recognized that Bhutan still faces a number of key challenges. Bhutan is a young democracy where many are still learning about the concepts of citizenship and democracy. Facilitating the meaningful participation of rural communities, as well as those who are not part of the 64% literate population[[2]](#footnote-2) or the 23% with access to the internet.[[3]](#footnote-3) Engaging young people and women will be particularly critical.

**1.2 Inclusive Governance in Bhutan’s 11th Five Year Plan and UN One Programme**

Good Governance is one of the pillars of “Gross National Happiness” (GNH) and recognized as the “fundamental basis for the other three pillars of GNH, and … [as] vital for establishing a vibrant democracy."[[4]](#footnote-4) The 11th Five Year Plan (FYP), Bhutan’s development plan for the period 2013-2018[[5]](#footnote-5), acknowledges that as a young democracy, Bhutan has many new challenges to overcome. It is envisioned that gradually the country will learn to further develop democratic systems and mechanisms. This is planned to be "complemented by education and awareness, promotion of female participation in governance, capacity building of legislators, strengthening of the media and other efforts".[[6]](#footnote-6)

For 2013-2018, the FYP stipulates six National Key Result Areas (NKRAs) under the good governance pillar, namely “Improved Public Service Delivery; Democracy and Governance Strengthened; Gender Friendly Environment for Women’s Participation; Corruption Reduced; Safe Society; and Needs of Vulnerable Group Addressed”. The strategies for implementation include a "Government Performance Management System, national Anti-Corruption Strategy, Improving Public Service Delivery through G2C, G2B, G2G services, capacity building and awareness campaigns to enhance transparency, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in governance".[[7]](#footnote-7) More specifically, within the Information, Communication, Technology and Media Sector the FYP expresses "to promote Bhutanese information society, strengthen good governance, enhance economic development and develop a responsive vibrant and creative information and media industry"[[8]](#footnote-8).

The UN One Programme 2014-2018 establishes that in order to consolidate democracy, widening the democratic space for the active participation of the general public in discussions about public policy will be critical. A key strategic choice will be to strengthen support and engagement with civil society—including the media and CSOs—as both providers of services as well as policy advisors and advocates. It will also be vitally important to tap into the immense potential of young people to contribute meaningfully to public discourses and to engage them as partners in local and national development to create space for their voices to be heard.

All of the emerging development challenges identified in the UN One Programme, also have significant relevance for civic engagement, democratic participation and the role of civil society. The One Programme lists decent employment, rapid urbanization, quality of education: gender equality and women’s empowerment: adolescent sexual and reproductive health: non-communicable diseases (NCDs) resulting from rapid demographic and socio-economic transitions, the endemic threat of natural disasters and vulnerability to climate change and social support for vulnerable groups as such emerging challenges. Vulnerable groups are defined as youth, vulnerable children, single parents, survivors of gender-based violence, differently-abled people, and senior citizens which have also been explicitly recognized in the 11th FYP.

## 1.3 Electoral Administration

In May 2013, the Election Commission of Bhutan sent a request letter to the UNDP Bhutan for support in civic and voter education during the next programming period (2014-2018), which also coincides with the 11th Five Year Plan of the Royal Government of Bhutan. The request has been approved by the Electoral Assistance Division, Department of Political Affairs, which encourages UNDP Bhutan to engage in civic and voter education activities during 2014-2018. Activities particularly tailored to target women, youth and illiterate are recommended.

From a technical point of view, the ECB is well-organized and well-equipped to hold elections in a manner that, according to the EU Election Observation Report of 2008, “generally meets international standards for democratic elections.” Although there was a much smaller presence of international observers in 2013, the general tone of the observer reports was along the same lines, even though a number of areas for improvement were also highlighted and further reform recommended.

According to the Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB), it is important that the lessons from the conduct of the second parliamentary elections are taken to improve the electoral system, processes and procedures, and conduct and manage elections better in the future. A post-election analysis was therefore conducted by the ECB to document the lessons learned and suggest improvements between November 2013 and January 2014.

The Learning from Experience Programme was conducted by the ECB through surveys of the candidates and other stakeholders; review of the consolidated reports of the National Election Observers, the Returning and Assistant Officers; as well as evaluation workshops held with election officers across the country. UNDP Bhutan provided the ECB with technical and financial support in order to undertake the exercise, and provided advice on the areas the ECB could focus on in its further efforts in developing Bhutan’s electoral framework, in particular through its planned Electoral Training and Resource Centre.

The ECB has noted that electoral education and training programmes will be one of the important services that are necessary to be provided on a continuous basis on a nationwide scale. It has therefore developed a concept note for an Electoral Training and Resource Centre (ETRC) with purpose to provide educational programmes on the Bhutanese electoral system. For the time being, the programme of the ETRC is conducted by the Division of Electoral Training and Education of the Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB).

Civic engagement in elections and democratic governance is an area of great need and action from the point of view of the general public, the government, and the development partners in order to deepen democracy and make democratic governance in Bhutan more vibrant. Through the proposed project support in this area, it is expected that a new ground will be covered and relevant policies and strategies could be developed to support the civic engagement in elections and democratic governance in consultation with the relevant state authorities, electoral stakeholders, and civil society.

A number of initiatives already exist. However, the proposed project will seek to build partnerships with already existing projects and institutions and strengthen homegrown initiatives, in terms of civic and voter education and the fostering of participation. The Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB) has generally focused on voter education, but is increasingly making efforts to help ensure a better understanding of democratic governance and accountability systems more broadly. For instance, democracy clubs initiated by the ECB in schools will continue to teach young people about how Parliament and the State operates and how elections are held. The Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy (BCMD) is a Bhutanese CSO focusing on civic and media education to foster a strong democratic society. Students in Bhutanese schools are educated on the principles of Gross National Happiness, which includes a component on governance and citizenship.

### The ECB is open to finding a way to talk more regularly and systematically with civil society, in particular those CSOs, media and academics that focus and specialize in the area of democratic consolidation and governance reform.

## 1.4 Political Parties

Political parties have so far played a marginal role in the development of democratic governance in Bhutan. Parties serve as candidate platforms for only one of the two elected houses of parliament, and are excluded from playing a role in subnational or local politics. In meetings with the UN, parties expressed a sense of frustration and disappointment with regard to their opportunities to contribute to the process of shaping policy and with regard to the space they are generally given in society, but also with the support they have received so far from the international community. They have received a number of delegations and have discussed their issues with a series of foreign organizations, but have yet to see any concrete outcome from these conversations.

Opposition parties, in particular those left without any parliamentary representation (despite having together obtained some 23% of the votes in the first round), are in serious doubt about the role they can and will play in Bhutan’s emerging democracy. They require significant support in terms of financial and human resources, but also capacity building, office management, constituency visits, and policy support. The parties’ internal structures are often underdeveloped and it was not clear who is in charge of what in some cases. Following elections, the party infrastructure practically collapses and is reduced to its headquarters. Very few district level offices operate, and links with communities – including with the participation of women, youth and all members of the community – seem to be less strong.

The electoral law limits possibilities for fundraising, memberships, registration, and voluntary contributions. At the same time, the type and amount of contributions is also limited in order to avoid a ‘money politics’ development in Bhutan. Businesses are not allowed to donate to parties, and individuals are able to make contributions of up to 500,000 Ngultrum. In the past, elected MPs had received a type of constituency fund, which they were able to use more or less according to their discretion, and which provided a certain degree of financial autonomy to the elected members. However, the system was now changed and the constituency funds are transferred to local government budgets.

## 1.5 Civic Education in Schools

### The role of the Education Ministry with regard to the democratization process has so far been the support to “Democracy Clubs” in schools across the country. In these clubs, student leaders are elected. Civics education has been integrated into the curriculum, as part of the subject of history. According to consultations held with the UNDP in December 2013, the Ministry sees a lot of room for improvement, but is also wary of the risk of overloading school curricula with agendas related to social and economic development and politics.

### The ICT mater plan for schools, which has been financed to the extent of 700m Ng (with 200m Ng yet to be financed), will provide internet connectivity to most schools in the country. The hardest targets to reach are remote areas (“the last mile”), but the availability of internet has already transformed teaching and learning in many schools, and is likely to provide future opportunities also in terms of networking in the interest of deepening democracy.

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## 1.6 Civil Society in Bhutan

In 2007 the National Assembly approved the Civil Society Organization Act and the CSO Authority (CSOA) was established in 2009. According to the CSO Act 2007, Civil Society refers to "associations, societies, foundations, charitable trusts, not-for-profit organizations or other entities that are not part of the government and do not distribute any income or profits to their members".

As mentioned above, the CSO Act stipulates the need to complement Government and Kidu efforts, and forbids CSOs from involvement in “political activity” (Art. 7e), as well as engaging in “any activities that are directly related to public elections” (Art. 7b). The CSOA has the authority to register the establishment of a CSO, as well as to remove the registration of a CSO, and requires annual reports from CSOs, including audits undertaken by the Royal Audit Authority. CSOs are required to adhere to the CSO Rules and Regulations for registration and operation of their organizations.

According to an issues paper conducted for the Civil Society Organizations Authority in 2010, the CSO Act of 2007 signals an approach whereby civil society organisations can supplement government efforts by greater outreach, complement government efforts by drawing attention to new development challenges that require political attention and by launching initiatives that pilot new approaches which subsequently may inform government policies, and encourage greater development effectiveness by promoting accountability whereby legislators and central government institutions are receiving feedback on the relevance and impact of policies and programmes.[[9]](#footnote-9) Besides the CSO Act, the Co-operatives Act 2001 and its 2009 amendment are worth noting as certain organizations and community tshogpas/associations come under its jurisdiction, and may be considered as civil society actors in accordance with the broader UNDP definition. The Act defines a co-operative as “association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and effectively governed enterprise”. The implementation of the Co-operatives act is monitored by the Department of Agriculture Marketing and Cooperatives, Ministry of Agriculture and Forest. A wealth of informal and non-registered farmers’ and other agriculture related groups exist throughout Bhutan, and are defined in the amendment to the Co-operatives Act as “a group of not less than three members deriving economic benefits from one or more economic enterprises related to Renewable Natural Resource Sector”. No formal women’s groups operate at the local level, though with coordination from CSOs such as RENEW, there are women-led initiatives taking place.

The *Capacity needs assessment of Civil Society Organisations in Bhutan* from May 2012[[10]](#footnote-10) found that many registered CSOs have weak management processes and systems in place, difficulty in retaining staff, and suffer from critical sustainability issues because funding sources rarely contribute to CSO core funds (salaries, vehicles, office supply, office equipment, etc.). A need was felt to build the relation and link with government agencies to plan collaboration or opportunity for complimentary roles, as the CSO Act stipulates. CSOs’ relationships with the media were thought to need strengthening as currently their relation is limited to using the media for advertising purposes.

The 2012 assessment *Link between CSOs/CBOs (Community Based Organisations) and Local Government in Bhutan* [[11]](#footnote-11) found that a key weakness of CBOs is the lack of capacity to engage in “grassroots planning (or promoting) transparency of local governments”, since essentially “activities are related to religious work, environmental protection and maintenance of basic farm infrastructure such as roads, irrigation channels and water sources”.

Since most CSOs in Bhutan are at a relatively a nascent stage, they are challenged by understandable financial and human resource constraints. The findings from the two above-mentioned studies highlight the lack of capacity and financial resources to achieve their respective goals.

**1.7 Media in Bhutan**

As far as the media is concerned, unlike countries where media has been existent for centuries and matured progressively, in Bhutan the media was introduced in the 1980s with the creation of a national newspaper and radio station. The country opened to television and internet in 1999 and in 2003 mobile telephony was launched. Since then media in Bhutan has progressed and undergone rapid development. For a population of 634,982 (Population and Housing Census, 2005), Bhutan's media environment is relatively vibrant.

The liberalization of media licensing with the enactment of the Bhutan Information, Communication and Media Act 2006 and establishment the Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority (BICMA) has led to the creation of several private media houses, in addition to the state media houses Kuensel and BBS. At time of writing, there are 15 print press outlets (9 newspapers and 6 magazines, 6 radio stations and one national television broadcaster.)[[12]](#footnote-12)

The transition to constitutional democracy has attributed to the growth of the media, which is perceived as a "vital forcethat touches all national priorities".[[13]](#footnote-13) The Information and Media Policy from July 2012 acknowledges Media as an "appropriate tool that overcomes the challenges posed by a rugged geography, to reach scattered communities in all corners of the country, and to help the nation deal with the globalized world in a new century". Furthermore, the country's development philosophy of Gross National Happiness can be strengthened by the media in contributing to the pillar of Good Governance by promoting efficiency, accountability and transparency.

Given the amount of media houses registered with BICMA, the overall media landscape in Bhutan is broad, but the Bhutan Media Impact Assessment study from 2013 states that it is “important to develop and maintain key measures to evaluate diversity, plurality and professionalism of information and media in Bhutan and in fulfilling the objectives of creating a connected and informed citizenry”[[14]](#footnote-14).

Based on the findings of the Bhutan Media Impact Assessment, the difference in access to media between urban and rural settings is a significant issue. Only two radio stations, one TV station and one newspaper have cross country coverage. Although the number of TV sets in the country has increased from 47,125 in 2008 to 74,836, the same study found that while 86.8% of urban households have access to TV, only 43.9% of rural households do. Only 23% of survey respondents had access to the internet.

# II. Project Strategy and Objectives

## 2.1 Overall Objective

This project is implemented within the overall framework of the **UN One Programme Outcome 4**: “By 2018, governance institutions and communities exercise the principles of democratic governance at the national and local levels with a focus on inclusiveness, transparency, accountability and evidence-based decision making”, but will also help to enhance the components of Outcomes 1-3 which emphasize equitability and inclusiveness, as well as gender equality and women’s empowerment.

The specific overall objective of the project is

**Media and CSOs are better able to promote the participation of people, in particular youth, in democratic processes, public dialogue and discourse (UN One Programme Outcome 4.4)**

One Programme outputs 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.5 will also be addressed, in particular the effective and equitable delivery of public services (output 4.2), increased opportunities for women and youth to participate in leadership and policy-making (output 4.3) and greater people’s awareness of rights and access to justice (output 4.5).

The overall approach of the project can be demonstrated in the following simple diagramme.

**(Outcome 2)**

**Facilities for exchange developed**

**State capacities enhanced**

**(Outcome 1)**

**People empowered to participate**

**(Outcome 3)**

The UNDP Bhutan project will complement and build on the existing activities taking place so as to develop a coherent and well-coordinated programme on civic engagement, and to build on experiences from across the UNDP network. In particular, this project is informed by an assessment of civil society and media in facilitating people’s participation, which is to be finalised in the second quarter of 2014.

## 2.2 Primary Outcomes

### The project will have three main outcomes:

1. The state’s capacity for inclusive and consultative decision-making is enhanced
2. Effective democratic dialogue takes place amongst Government, media actors and civil society
3. Bhutanese people, especially women and youth, are able to meaningfully participate in the democratic process

It should be noted that the project bears close correlation to the other three projects of the Inclusive Governance Portfolio: Women’s Participation and the UN Joint Programme on Gender; Access to Justice; and Parliamentary Development.

In particular, the project will build on the work of the UN Joint Programme on Gender, which emphasizes women’s participation as decision-makers and in the public sphere and proposes specific activities towards this, including through the development of a national action plan on women’s participation, capacity development for aspiring female political candidates, and reviews of legislations from a gender-sensitive perspective. The programme will contribute to the project by ensuring gender-sensitive approaches and the inclusion of women throughout.

Close links also exist naturally with the Parliamentary project in terms of providing opportunities for participation of civil society in parliamentary decision-making as well as a conducive environment for women’s participation in the Parliament. Finally, the Access to Justice programme also emphasizes the role of civil society and the inclusion of marginalized groups as well as women.

The Programme approach is also closely in line with the 11th Five Year Plan which places a strong emphasis on strengthening governance by strengthening democracy, improving public service delivery, promoting gender equality, curbing corruption and enhancing safety.

## 2.3 Project Outputs

### The overall objective will be pursued through three Outcomes and corresponding Project Strategy Outputs, as outlined in the diagramme on the following page:

**Overall objective: One UN Programme (4.4) Ensure that “media and CSOs are better able to promote the participation of people, in particular youth, in democratic processes, public dialogue and discourse”**

### **2.3.1 Project Strategy Outcome 1:** The state’s capacity for inclusive and consultative decision-making process is enhanced. This priority area focuses on the supply side, i.e. the state actors and decision makers’ responsiveness for policy making, legal reform, service delivery and so on. The Government can be more responsive to people’s needs and voices, and hence be more effective, by consolidating its efforts to further its existing consultative processes by making them more accessible and systematic and increasing feedback mechanisms and information sharing. In that vein, it will ensure that populations, civil society and media actors feel heard and noted when raising their voice at all levels, especially if promoting participation at the Gewog and Dzongkhag levels.

### **Strengthen Government’s capacity to include citizens, including women and youth, in decision-making processes:**

* The project will strengthen **consultation and feedback processes at the Dzongkhag and Gewog levels.**
* Support the development and implementation of **Participatory Impact Assessments in partnership with Cabinet Secretariat**

**Promote transparency and prevent corruption through inclusion, accountability, and responsiveness:**

* **Corruption prevention activities** will be carried out at the local and national levels for stronger accountability and responsiveness.
* A strong and vibrant democracy depends on well-informed citizens who have access to comprehensive and reliable information about their government's activities. To this, the government should encourage ministries and autonomous agencies to propagate **transparent decision-making processes** and minimize any forms of opaqueness.
* Proactive **consultation and information-sharing processes** **for policy-making and impact assessments** will be promoted and supported in close partnership with the DoIM and relevant agencies, such as the ACC, GNHC, the Parliament, relevant ministries and the ECB. **Social accountability** should be fostered through collaborative efforts with the ACC, CSOs, and other relevant partners. An initial risk assessment to identify the internal and external barriers to strengthening social accountability and how they can be addressed will be an important starting point

### **2.3.2 Project Strategy Outcome 2:** Effective democratic dialogue takes place amongst Government, media and civil society.

Given the existing and perceived limitations that civil society and media actors are currently facing in Bhutan, the following actions aim to facilitate a conducive environment for exchanges on policies and laws and to allow civil society to bridge the gap between the population and decision-makers, to reduce the perception by civil society and media actors of not being equal partners with state actors in dialogues, and to promote civil society’s role towards participation without perceived limitations by the CSO Act regarding advocacy.

**Develop “dialogue spaces” and then capacity for meaningful amongst, civil society and media actors:**

* The development of an open access public facility which will bring together government, members of parliament, civil society, media actors and the general public in a formal space. The open access facility will foster learning, debate and innovative approaches aimed at widening the democratic space and enabling dialogue amongst multiple stakeholders.
* **“UNDP Talks”** aims to provide a neutral, non-political and informal space for discussion about issues of current interest to human development in Bhutan, in the region, and globally. Discussants will be experts from Bhutan, the Asia-Pacific region, or beyond; and represent research institutions, UN agencies, private organizations, civil society, or governments. **The focus is on constructive and evidence-based discussion, exchanging experiences and ideas, and creating opportunities for connecting**. This format can feed into the process of promoting voices from the “demand side” and eventually contribute to national planning processes.
* The **iGNHaS think tank** will be consolidated as a facilitator of policy dialogue between different actors in society, and evidence-based decision-making for effective decision-making.
* Innovations on **information sharing and public consultation** will be explored.

**Foster enabling environment policy and media actors to facilitate people’s participation**

* Civil society awareness and engagement with community radio will be promoted along with support for **community radio development**. This should be carried out alongside output activity 1.2.1, which aims to formulate and implement an enabling policy on community radio for Bhutan. The development of community radio will promote access to media and strengthen democratic foundations for remote communities, and also overcome bottlenecks of reach and scale that currently confronts media in remote areas.
* Building capacity of media professionals to cover civic engagement issues and increase citizen engagement is considered as critical component of vibrant democracy.

**Strengthen capacity of civil society and media actors to meaningfully inform and engage decision-making processes:**

* Mobile applications/**and/or web-based services** should be created to promote social media for participation and social accountability. The application should facilitate the population, commenting on policies and laws through the government’s and parliament’s portals; comment on public service delivery (organized by location and type of service); facilitate access to social media sites by decision makers; promote anti-corruption; etc. The key challenge will be to ensure the participation of young people from marginalized communities and ensuring gender equality. **Training on system management and maintenance of system administrators** will be crucial for effectiveness and sustainability of mobile applications and web-based services**.**
* Noting the extremely widespread use of radios by all sectors of the population, and given listener’s use and enthusiasm for call-in shows and participatory radio programmes, evaluate the possibility of setting up a **participatory radio station** (or regular programmes) dedicated to state bodies, which includes
  1. The Parliament, where National Assembly staff explain the role and functioning of the Parliament, MPs have call-in shows and respond to their constituents, etc.;
  2. Dzongkhag-level decision making bodies and processes are broadcast and call-in shows are organized for people to contribute their ideas.
* Building on existing UNDP and BBS partnerships, and the example of the BBS series with the BNLI on legal awareness, a **TV series** will be devised and supported **which promotes the values of people’s participation**. This could be accomplished through a competition for journalists/writers to write a mini-series set in Bhutan that brings out issues related to participation, empowerment and raising the voice of all groups in society, as well as through the possibility for private sector investment in the series. Support will also be provided for **research and policy talks to be broadcast on national TV** through partnerships with iGHNaS and the BBS.
* Support to the consultative process will be provided through **social media policy development**, in partnership with the Department of Information and Media.
* To ensure the sustainability of CSOs in Bhutan, capacity development of CSOs is of paramount importance. It is also important to collaborate within the CSOs for maximize effort and minimize on resource mobilization.
* Support and networking opportunities will be developed for **rural based CSOs**, or for CSOs to extend their reach to rural regions, in order to strengthen the voice of rural regions within civil society. In particular, the possibilities for strengthening women’s groups at the local level will be explored.

### **2.3.3 Project Strategy Outcome 3:** Bhutanese people, especially women and youth, are able to meaningfully participate in the democratic process.

**Youth and women leadership development:**

* Capacity development will be carried out for the **democratic leadership of tertiary students** through iGNHaS and RUB.
* Through the school club system, and in partnership with relevant actors (MoE, Local Government, School Administrations, Parent-Teacher Associations), **student visits will be promoted to Dzongkhag GYT deliberations, Parliament, etc**, as observers or as participants on behalf of youth.
* The development of a **“Youth Academy on Democratic Governance”** along with a parallel **“Youth Leadership Program”** will be explored to equip youth from across the country with essential leadership skills and as a means to invest in the future generation of leaders for Bhutan. The key challenge will be to ensure the participation of young people from marginalized communities and ensuring gender equality. As a first step, a National Human Development Report could be commissioned on youth issues as a means of identifying key areas for action, influencing policy-makers and development specialists in Bhutan and signalling UNDP’s commitment in this area.
* In partnership with Election Commission of Bhutan, establish youth parliament and support young people from all backgrounds a chance to develop their political voice and skills.
* Promote women to take up leadership role in community development programmes

**Continuing civic education, especially targeting rural and marginalized populations, as well as young people through a holistic civic education curriculum:**

* **Trainings and Awareness programs on Civic and voter education** will be undertaken at the community level including youth, women, persons with disabilities and marginalized groups in partnership with the Election Commission of Bhutan. Various outreach awareness activities such as door to door awareness campaigns, youth volunteer mobilization, awareness seminars, walks, consultative events and corner meetings will be organized.
* Development of and support to a civic education curriculum in partnership with UNICEF, the ECB, Parliament, BCMD, YDF, iGNHaS, and RUB. It will be useful to draw from the experiences of democracy clubs and support these clubs to widen the democratic discourse beyond elections. A **civil society advocacy fund** initiation workshop will be held, and pilot funds distributed, in partnership with CSOA-TBC.
* **Political parties’ civic engagement** and links with the community will be strengthened in partnership with the Election Commission of Bhutan, with a particular emphasis for developing inclusive party membership with equal participation and leadership by women.
* Civic education efforts will be supported, with a particular emphasis on promoting youth volunteership as well as reach out to rural communities.
* International **Democracy Day** will be organized annually in partnership with universities, civil society and the ECB.

## 2.4 Approach

The project will emphasize the following key approaches and principles:

1. State buy-in and national ownership:For the project to be effective, it will be essential to garner full buy-in by the authorities. The GNHC will be a strong partner to ensure coordination and leadership of participatory processes from the Government’s side. Direct support will be provided to the ECB, its members and its staff, with “on time” and ‘as requested’ provision of services and advice they need to do their job effectively, but also to other state institutions, such as the parliament, the CSO Authority, BICMA, DoIM, Ministry of Education, Department of Local Government, the National Commission for Women and Children, Dzongkhag Administrations and Municipal Corporations and other relevant stakeholders..
2. Civil Society:The project will provide support to the most effective possible engagement of the public in the continuing process of deepening democracy in Bhutan, increasing their knowledge of the process and their capacity to make meaningful contributions. This will be done through building on existing and creating new mechanisms for consultation, including a facility which should be developed as a democratic dialogue space that supports constructive interaction among and between elected representatives, other public officials, and the public, with a particular focus on youth and women.
3. Coordination:The project will provide the government and other stakeholders, as well as donors with the information and advice they need to avoid overlap, duplication and confusion and to identify gaps which must be filled to provide additional support for the democratization process beyond what is envisaged through this project.
4. Regional knowledge exchange:Wherever possible, the project will draw from resources and networks available in the region and internationally, and will facilitate regional knowledge exchange.
5. UN standards and principles: The project and all of its activities will be guided by all applicable international standards and principles, such as international human rights norms and the commitments undertaken by Bhutan in this regard, the MDGs and the post-2015 global development goals, and the neutrality of the UN and respect of its Members States sovereignty and national specifics. Gender equality and non-discrimination, as well as a human rights based approach to development will be firmly integrated in all project components.

Importantly, the project approach emphasizes national ownership, capacity development, and harmonization with national planning instruments:

1. **National ownership** – The project and all its activities need to be nationally owned, which is achieved through an inclusive and consultative process involving government, civil society, elected representatives, and other key stakeholders.
2. **Capacity development** – The project will provide critical entry points and opportunities to develop the capacities of national stakeholders (including government and civil society) in exercising the principles of democratic governance at the national and local levels with a focus on inclusiveness, transparency, accountability and evidence-based decision making. This also entails support to national and local participative processes that assess and monitor governance with a focus on building national and local capacities to collect, analyze, and share governance data and information.
3. **Harmonization** – The project’s strategy and activities must be harmonized and aligned with national development plans and related instruments where relevant.

It is also worth mentioning that complementary planned activities under the other UNDP inclusive governance projects include strengthening parliamentary communications, including directly between MPs and their constituencies. Under Women’s Participation, UNDP is supporting awareness raising for increased women’s participation, amongst others.

# IV. Management and Coordination Arrangements

## 4.1 Organizational Structure

The Inclusive Governance Portfolio of UNDP Bhutan will coordinate the implementation of the planned activities in close coordination with the partners, including: GNHC, Parliament, Department of Local Government, Election Commission of Bhutan, Civil Society Organization Authority, Department of Information and Media, Ministry of Education, Royal University of Bhutan (iGNHaS), Bhutan Centre for Media and Democracy, Bhutan Media Foundation, civil society organizations and development partners.

A Project Board (PB) shall be constituted to provide qualitative inputs, guidance and provide oversight to the project implementation process. It will ensure timely delivery of inputs and achievement of objectives and also coordinate with other departments/sectors and stakeholders. The Project Board shall be headed by the GNHC Secretary.

The Project Board shall meet at least twice a year to review the implementation progress and to provide direction and guidance for fine-tuning the activities. The PB may be convened as and when considered essential by the Government. The PB shall provide strategic management and oversight to ensure qualitative and quantitative inputs/directions to the project activities. A detailed TOR for the PB shall be developed in due course.

Fund Management Arrangements (for One Fund)

The fund management arrangement for this joint project is a combined modality of 1) parallel for UN agencies, funds and programmes which support from, among others, their core funding; and 2) pooled funding for non-UN development partners through the UN Bhutan Country Fund (One Fund).

One Fund, under the management leadership of the Joint Government-UN Steering Committee, is to support coherent resource mobilization, allocation and disbursement of resources to support the un(der)funded portions of the One Programme[[15]](#footnote-15) (2014-2018) and new initiatives responding to emerging needs. This will enhance the flexibility and responsiveness of the UN system through the One Programme to address existing and emerging national priorities. The Fund will support allocation and disbursement of donor resources and coherent resource mobilization.

The UNDP, upon endorsement by the Royal Government of Bhutan, serves as the Administrative Agent. UNDP, through its Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTF Office), administers the Fund in accordance with the provisions of the Memorandum of Understanding for the UN Country Fund and the ToR.

The Administrative Agent (AA) and the Participating UN Organizations will be entitled to deduct their indirect costs on contributions received as stated in the Memorandum of Understanding. The Administrative Agent’s administrative fee is 1per cent. The fee will be deducted from the contribution to the One Fund at the time they are deposited. The indirect costs of the Participating UN Organizations will be 8per cent.

Governance Arrangements

The One Programme document, as well as joint programmes and agency programme documents falling thereunder is the programmatic planning document that serves as the basis for funding requests and allocations.

The Steering Committee reviews the proposed priorities and approve the initial prioritization if required, and based on it, the Steering Committee submits an overview of the Resource Gap matrix to the development partners in December each year.

Upon receipt of funds from donors, the Steering Committee makes the allocation decisions, based on the financial status of the Fund and the needs of the Government. For decision making, at least half of the Steering Committee members should be present or provide delegated authority. Decisions are based on a consultative process and documented jointly by the Office of the Resident Coordinator and the GNH Commission.

The Resident Coordinator

The overall management of the UN Bhutan Country Fund is led and coordinated by the Resident Coordinator in consensus with the Heads of the Participating UN Organizations. The Office of the Resident Coordinator serves as the Secretariat of the One Fund and is responsible for support to strategic leadership role of the Resident Coordinator.

The Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is comprised of UN signatories to the UN Bhutan Country Fund and the Gross National Happiness (GNH) Commission, and is co-chaired by the Secretary of the GNH Commission and the UN Resident Coordinator. The Steering Committee is responsible for prioritization and allocation decisions of the un-earmarked contributions to the UN Bhutan Country Fund and guides the operations and management of the Fund.

The Administrative Agent

The UNDP (UNDP MPTF) Office as the Administrative Agent, receives contributions from donors, administer such funds received in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding, disburse funds to each of the Participating UN Organizations in accordance with instructions from the Steering Committee, and consolidate statements and reports to be provided to each donor that has contributed to the Fund Account and to the Steering Committee.

## 4.2. Monitoring and Evaluation

The project will be monitored in accordance with UNDP guidelines by the Inclusive Governance Portfolio, UNDP Bhutan.

**Monitoring:** Regular monitoring will be held by UNDP Governance portfolio as well as implementing partners in consultation with the UNDP M&E group and the GNHC. The standard monitoring framework will be developed specifying indicators, baselines and means of verification.

**Evaluation:** The evaluation will be held in the fourth year of the project cycle to ensure that evaluation recommendations be incorporated in executing project activities in the final year.

**Reporting:** There will be a common progress reporting at the end of each year – capturing results – both quantitative and qualitative, as well as financial delivery.

## 4.3 Legal Context

This project document shall be the instrument referred to as such in Article 1, paragraph 1, of the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement between the Royal Government of Bhutan and UNDP, signed by the parties on 14 May 1978. The host country-implementing agency shall, for the purpose of the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement, refer to the Royal Government Co-operation Agency described in the Agreement.

The following types of revisions may be made to this project document with the UNDP Resident Representative only, provided he is assured that the other signatories of the project document have no objection to the proposed changes:

1. Revision in or addition of any of the annexes of the Project Document;
2. Revisions which do not involve significant changes in the Immediate Objectives, Output(s) or Activities of a project, but are caused by the rearrangement of inputs already agreed to or by cost increases due to inflation and

Mandatory annual revisions, which re-phase the delivery of, agreed project inputs or increased expert or other costs due to inflation or which take into account agency expenditure flexibility.

# V. Results and Resources Framework

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Project Title** | **Civic Engagement and Accountability** | | | | | | | | | |
| ***Project Objective*** | **Ensure that media and CSOs are better able to promote the participation of people, in particular youth, in democratic processes, public dialogue and discourse** | | | | | | | | | |
| *Project Outputs* | Indicative activities for each Output | | UN Participating Organization | Implementing Partner | Resource allocation and indicative time frame | | | | | Total |
|
| Y1 | Y2 | Y3 | Y4 | Y5 |
| 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 |
| **Project Outcome 1:** **The state’s capacity for inclusive and consultative decision-making is enhanced** | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1.1 Strengthen Government’s capacity to include citizens in decision making processes  ***Indicators:***  *No. of awareness and sensitization programmes, meetings, and workshops conducted*  *No. of joint projects initiated and implemented by Government and CSOs*  *Participatory Impact Assessment report published and implemented.* | 1.1.1 Democratic discourse for participatory facilities at the national, Dzongkhag, and Gewog levels are strengthened | | UNDP | GNHC /DLG |  |  | 25,000 | 25,000 | 20,000 | **70,000** |
| 1.1.2Development and implementation of Participatory Impact Assessments with the cabinet secretariat | | UNDP | Cabinet Secretariat |  | 10,000 | 20,000 | 20,000 |  | **40,000** |
| 1.1.3 Provide opportunities for government agencies to learn about different formats for engaging with civil society for improved decision-making | | UNDP | CSOA / GNHC |  | 15,000 | 15,000 | 15,000 |  | **45,000** |
| 1.2 Promote transparency and prevent corruption through inclusion, accountability, and responsiveness  ***Indicators:***  *Financial Resource Management Accountability Index published and implemented*  *Percent of citizen consulted and communicated in decision-making processes* | 1.2.1 Enhance accountability and transparency in financial management | | UNDP | RAA | 14,000 | 10,000 |  |  |  | **24,000** |
| 1.2.2 Promoting transparency in Government decision-making and communications | | UNDP | ACC/RAA/ DLG | 11,290 | 20,000 | 20,000 | 20,000 | 20,000 | **91,290** |
| 1.2.3 Strengthen social accountability and use of citizen score cards together with civil society | | UNDP | ACC, CSOA |  |  | 25,000 | 25,000 | 25,000 | **75,000** |
| **Sub-total Project Outcome 1** | | | | | **25,290** | **45,000** | **105,000** | **105,000** | **65,000** | **345,290** |
| **Project Outcome 2: Effective democratic dialogue takes place amongst Government, media and civil society** | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2.1 Develop “dialogue spaces” and the capacity for meaningful dialogue amongst government, civil society, and media actors  ***Indicator:***  *Open access public facility in place*  *No. of democratic dialogue organized and/or held amongst government, civil society and citizen.*  *No. of research publications on civic engagement and civic development* | 2.1.1 Development of an open access public facility to foster dialogue amongst government and civil society actors | | UNDP | ECB/ iGNHaS |  |  | 45,000 | 30,000 | 30,000 | **105,000** |
| 2.1.2 UNDP provided facilities for democratic dialogue | | UNDP |  | 3,000 | 2,000 | 2,000 | 2,000 | 2,000 | **11,000** |
| 2.1.3 Support the development of independent think tanks and research institutes to contribute to evidence-based decision-making | | UNDP | iGNHaS, RUB | 8,000 | 15,000 | 15,000 | 15,000 | 15,000 | **68,000** |
| 2.2Foster an enabling environment media actors to facilitate people’s participation  ***Indicators:***  *No. of community radio started by local populations*  *No. of media professionals trained to cover civic engagement issues*  *No. of civic engagement and education stories covered in media* | 2.2.1 Implement community radio for increased access to media and democratic engagement for remote communities | | UNDP | DoIM |  |  | 14,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | **24,000** |
| 2.2.2 Building capacity of media professionals to cover civic engagement issues and increase citizen engagement, in particular women and youth | | UNDP | DoIM, BMF, BCMD |  |  | 25,000 | 25,000 | 25,000 | **75,000** |
| 2.3 Strengthen capacity of civil society and media actors to meaningfully inform and engage decision-making processes  ***Indicators:***  *No. of creative mobile/internet applications and information services for people’s participation developed*  *Social Media Policy developed and implemented*  *CSO Partnership forum*  *is established to share their knowledge, experiences and challenges.*  *No. of locally based CSOs initiated*  *% of local population engaged in local based CSOs programs* | 2.3.1 Support creative Internet applications and information services to promote social media for participation and social accountability | | UNDP | ACC, DoIM | 10,000 |  | 45,000 | 20,000 | 15,000 | **90,000** |
| 2.3.2 Development of regular programs, which enable citizens to engage with state actors and civil society for evidence-based decision-making | | UNDP | DoIM, BICMA/BBS | 1,500 | 10,000 | 10,000 | 10,000 | 10,000 | **41,500** |
| 2.3.3 Development and implementation of a social media policy to encourage people’s participation | | UNDP | DoIM | 5,000 | 10,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | **30,000** |
| 2.3.4 Work with civil society and strengthening their collaboration, research and communications capacity | | UNDP | CSOA |  | 15,000 | 35,000 | 40,000 | 40,000 | **130,000** |
| 2.3.5 Provide support and networking opportunities to locally based community based organizations and CSOs – including women’s groups – to strengthen the voice of rural regions in civil society in an inclusive manner | | UNDP | DLG | 35,000 | 10,000 | 8,000 | 8,000 | 8,000 | **69,000** |
| **Sub-total Project Outcome 2** | | | | | **62,500** | **62,000** | **204,000** | **160,000** | **155,000** | **643,500** |
| **Project Outcome 3: Bhutanese people, especially women and youth, are able to meaningfully participate in the democratic process** | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3.1 Youth and women leadership development  ***Indicators:***  *No. of tertiary students trained in democratic leadership*  *No. of students visited DYTs, GYTs and Parliament sessions.*  *Youth Academy is established*  *Youth parliament is established*  *Percent of women in leadership role* | 3.1.1 Capacity development for tertiary students for democratic leadership | UNDP | | iGNHaS, RUB | 3,500 | 4,000 | 4,000 | 4,000 | 4,000 | **19,500** |
| 3.1.2 Promote and allow student visits to Dzongkhag GYT deliberations, Parliament, etc, as observers or as participants | UNDP | | MoE, DLG |  |  | 12,000 | 12,000 | 12,000 | **36,000** |
| 3.1.3 Explore the establishment of a Youth Academy on Democratic Governance | UNDP | | DYS, MoE |  |  | 40,000 | 20,000 |  | **60,000** |
| 3.1.4 Establish and support to institutionalize Youth Parliament to give young people from all backgrounds a chance to develop their political voice and skills. | UNDP | | ECB, Parliament |  | 35,000 | 25,000 | 10,000 | 10,000 | **80,000** |
| 3.1.5 Promote women to take up leadership role in community development programmes | UNDP/  UNW | | NCWC |  | 8,000 | 8,000 | 8,000 | 8,000 | **32,000** |
| 3.2 Continuing civic education, especially targeting rural and marginalized populations, as well as young people through a holistic civic education curriculum  ***Indicators:***  *Percent of population aware on civic responsibilities*  *No. of schools implemented Civic education curriculum* | 3.2.1 Civic education initiatives targeting women and youth, as well as remote constituencies and communities | UNDP | | ECB | 9,000 |  | 9,000 |  | 9,000 | **27,000** |
| 3.2.2 Development of a civic education curriculum and support democracy clubs to widen the discussion beyond elections | UNDP | | ECB, Parliament, BCMD, DCRD | 8,000 | 25,000 | 15,000 |  |  | **48,000** |
| 3.2.3 Promote rural internet adoption through education, awareness, and training | UNDP | | DoIM |  | 8,000 | 8,000 | 8,000 | 8,000 | **32,000** |
| 3.2.4 Development of a network for Bhutanese Elections and Democracy | UNDP | | ECB | 3,000 |  |  |  |  | **3,000** |
| 3.2.5 Strengthen the ability of political parties, candidates and representatives to engage with broad constituencies. | UNDP | | ECB | 10,000 | 30,000 | 30,000 | 30,000 | 30,000 | **130,000** |
| 3.2.6 Annual International Democracy Day celebrations as a collaborative effort between universities, civil society, government and the UNDP | UNDP | | iGNHaS, BCMD, ECB | 5,000 | 8,000 | 8,000 | 8,000 | 8,000 | **37,000** |
| **Sub-total Project Outcome 3** | | | | | **38,500** | **118,000** | **159,000** | **100,000** | **89,000** | **504,500** |

# VI. Budget Overview

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Y1 | Y2 | Y3 | Y4 | Y5 | Total |
| Outcome 1 | 25,290 | 45,000 | 105,000 | 105,000 | 65,000 | 345,290 |
| Outcome 2 | 62,500 | 62,000 | 204,000 | 160,000 | 155,000 | 643,500 |
| Outcome 3 | 38,500 | 118,000 | 159,000 | 100,000 | 89,000 | 504,500 |
| M&E |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Policy Specialist (P3) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Total** | **126,290** | **225,000** | **468,000** | **365,000** | **309,000** | **1,493,290** |

1. Gross National Happiness Commission, Royal Government of Bhutan (2011), Eleventh Round Table Meeting. Turning Vision into Reality: The Development Challenges Confronting Bhutan. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. NSB, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. BMIS 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 11th Five Year Plan, p8, at <http://rtm.gnhc.gov.bt/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Eleventh-Five-Year-Plan-Volume-I-Final.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://rtm.gnhc.gov.bt/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Eleventh-Five-Year-Plan-Volume-I-Final.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. ibid, p. 37 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. ibid, p24 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid, p19 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Issues Paper: The role of civil society organisations in development – recent trends and emerging challenges. February 2010. Lars Udsholt, capacitate a/s Copenhagen & Vietnam [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Namgay, Phuntsho, 2012 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Undertaken by DANIDA [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Full list in annex. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Information and Media Policy of the Royal Government of Bhutan, September 2006; www.moic.gov.bt/policies/ [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Bhutan Media Impact Assessment study 2013, p7 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. The One Programme is the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the Kingdom of Bhutan covering 2014-2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)