



Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of Bhutan, adopted by the Committee at its forty-fourth session (20 July-7 August 2009)

Addendum

Information provided by Bhutan on the follow-up to the concluding observations of the Committee*

Progress Report on Para. 18 and Para. 20 of the concluding observations of the CEDAW Committee

Royal Government of Bhutan

Progress report on Para. 18 of the Concluding Observations

The Committee requests that the State party implement, as a matter of urgency, sustained policies aimed at the promotion of women's full, active and equal participation in decision-making in all areas of public and political life. In particular, the Committee encourages the State party to review criteria required for certain positions when such requirements turn into obstacles or barriers to women's access to decision-making. It also recommends the use of temporary measures according to article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and in the Committee's general recommendations Nos. 25 and 23. The Committee further recommends the implementation of awareness-raising activities about the importance of women's participation in decision-making positions during the current transition of society as a whole, including in its remote and rural areas.

1. Policies

The National Commission for Women and Children are now a part of the policy review protocol, which enables review of policies from a gender perspective.

* In accordance with the information transmitted to States parties regarding the processing of their reports, the present document has not been edited.



Therefore, while no particular policy has been initiated, there are opportunities to engender other policies of the Royal Government thus creating an enabling environment for women.

2. Temporary measures

No temporary measures have been instituted in the period. However, various awareness programs are helping to create environment and procedures wherein direct and explicit discrimination in availing opportunities does not take place.

3. Research and studies

i. “Study of Gender Stereotypes and Women’s Political Participation” was carried out with the objective to identify the existing religious, traditional, societal and cultural perceptions towards women in various spheres of life. The study also helped in understanding obstacles to women’s equal and meaningful participation in the decision-making process and assessing the adequacy of the institutional and legal framework affecting women’s active participation and representation, especially in political and professional life.

ii. Strategy on Women and Elections — Gender Assessment and Strategy for Local Government (LG) Elections to Enhance Women’s Participation as Candidates, Election Commission of Bhutan.

The main objective of the strategy paper was to:

- (a) Create enabling environment for women’s political participation
- (b) Encourage more participation of women in politics
- (c) Address existing cultural stereotypes and gender biases which creates obstacles for women’s effective participation
- (d) Build public awareness and acceptance of women as leaders
- (e) Effectively communicate the need and value of having gender balanced representation in politics and decision making.

This study points out that while men and women enjoy equal opportunity to participate in politics, other factors such as social, economic, historical, geographical, political and cultural, may be holding them back. This study recommends the need to create an enabling environment for effective political participation of women with immediate implementation of 5 “Fast Track” Strategies with numerous activities under each of them. These Strategies include:

- (a) Identification & screening of potential qualified women and preparation for the Functional Literacy Test.
- (b) Sensitization and advocacy.
- (c) Capacity building of certified candidates.
- (d) Coaching, mentoring and training of elected women candidates.
- (e) Engendering election management.

iii. Survey on Women's Political Participation in LG

A survey on women's political participation was carried out by the National Commission for Women and Children with support from the UN-Women South Asian Regional Office (UN W SARO). It was part of the regional programme on gender responsive governance. This was conducted coinciding with the first local government elections. It was carried out with the following objectives:

- a. Document the process of women's participation in the institutions of elections/democracy in Bhutan, taking into consideration the following; to what extent are women active participants in local politics; what issues do women politicians bring to the fore as contestants, electorate, political leaders; what is the perception of women's political empowerment among ordinary men and women; issues of violence against women in daily life and politics; do women participate in household decision making; how do men perceive women's role in household decision making/community decision making/participation in local politics; so on and so forth.
- b. Create baseline information for the women's political participation which will help understand the specific issues that needs to be addressed with regard to women's political empowerment in Bhutan.

The study found out amongst others, education & training, functional language skills, decision making, self image & self esteem, and double & triple burden¹ as the primary reasons constraining women's participation.

4. Awareness and sensitization programmes

a. Preparation of the Potential Women leaders for Functional Literacy Test (FLT)

A preparatory exercise was carried out for the potential women's leader to prepare them for the FLT which is mandatory for all participating in the elections. The training was conducted at the Institute of Management Science (IMS) with the support of Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). This was conducted in line with the recommendations from the survey on women and elections.

b. Leadership training for the FLT passed Women

Based on the recommendation of the above mentioned studies, women who passed FLT, were given a training on leadership. The training included building skills regarding public speaking, decision making and campaigning.

c. National Consultation of Elected Women Leaders

As evident from the findings of the studies, the lack of a "platform for empowerment of elected women candidates at local level" was identified as one of the factors for women's low political participation, the National Commission for Women and Children in collaboration with Dept. of Local Governance with support from UN-Women and Danish Institute of Parties and Democracy (DIPD) conducted a national consultation of elected women leaders. This was basically to bring the elected women together with an idea to formalize the network thus laying down a

¹ Triple Burden — The burden of reproductive, productive and care giving responsibilities.

foundation for self-governance in the long run. The main objective of the consultation was to:

(i) Take stock of opportunities and challenges confronting elected women representatives of Bhutan at national and local levels;

(ii) Facilitate the establishment of a Network of Elected Women in Bhutan (NEWB) to empower, support and strengthen leadership capacities of elected women representatives; and

(iii) Promote greater participation by women in politics in Bhutan for gender responsive governance thereof.

Based on the recommendation of the workshop, a quasi non-governmental organization called Bhutan Network to Empower Women (BNEW) was formed, comprising of members including elected women leaders and other aspiring women leaders.

d. Sensitization of Local Government Functionaries on Gender equality and Women's Empowerment, Women's Political Participation

In collaboration with the Department of Local Governance, a nationwide awareness and sensitization programme on gender equality and women's empowerment was conducted for the functionaries of the local government. The participants were sensitized on the equal rights by law, policies of the government to empower women and the need for gender equality.

**Progress Report on Para. 20 of the Concluding Observations
Para. 20**

The Committee urges the State party to give priority attention to eliminating all forms of violence against women, as well as increasing access to justice for women victims of such violations, including in remote and rural areas. The Committee encourages the State party to enact legislation, including on domestic violence, as a matter of priority. Such legislation should ensure that violence against women and girls constitutes a criminal offence and the basis of a civil claim; that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished in accordance with the seriousness of the offence; and that women and girls, including in remote and rural areas, who are victims of such violence have access to protection. The Committee encourages further training and awareness-raising for law-enforcement officials and health-care providers to ensure that they are sensitized to all forms of violence against women. The Committee also recommends that the State party adopt measures to increase the number of women working on these issues, including in the police force and other law-enforcement agencies.

1. Legislation and Policies

I. Domestic Violence Prevention Act 2013

The Act was finalized through a series of consultation and focus group discussion amongst the relevant stakeholders including the members of the Parliament. The Bill was submitted to the Parliament and was passed by the 9th Session of the National Assembly after extensive deliberation. Upon its enacted by the National Assembly,

the Bill was discussed in the 10th Session of the National Council, wherein it was enacted. Given the inconsistent observation of the two houses, the Bill was then discussed at the joint sitting of the National Council and the National Assembly, wherein it was enacted.

The Bill criminalizes the act of domestic violence and will hold perpetrators accountable based on the gravity of the offence. It also looks at providing all forms of protection services to the victims/survivors including shelter and security. There are provisions of expanding the services at the district and police station levels, which will ensure the reach and also support strengthened reporting and data collection on the prevalence of domestic violence.

The rules and regulations are being drafted, upon completion of the first draft; major stakeholder will be consulted before endorsement. A period of six months is envisaged for the drafting.

2. Studies/Survey/Research

I. Study on Prevalence of Violence against Women (VAW)

With increasing number of cases pertaining to VAW and also given the limited understanding on the dimensions of VAW and its prevalence, the NCWC commissioned the conduct of a study on the prevalence of VAW in Bhutan using the World Health Organization methodology. The study was conducted with the objectives of obtaining reliable data, different types of violence, the needs (health and social), inter linkages between different forms of violence and to identify the required interventions.

The study was conducted categorizing women into different age groups and partner status; therefore, the findings differed as per the categories. However, the study did show that overall; there was a prevalence of about 30-40%.

The study given its findings, recommended that there is a need to strengthen the national commitment and action to eliminate discrimination and exploitation of women as a long term preventive measure. This included, instituting legislations and policies on the issue of VAW, reviewing existing institutions and mechanisms, building capacities of service providers and key agencies, spreading awareness on rights and developing national indicators for VAW.

The study also recommended strengthening community responses and services for women living with violence. This included instituting counselling services for women suffering from emotional violence; institute programmes that will educate communities' in providing support services to their family members in need of such services and to engage men in the awareness programs.

II. Study: Situational analysis on trafficking in persons in Bhutan

The NCWC commissioned the conduct of a study on Trafficking in Persons (TIP), mainly because TIP is a rising organized crime across the world, Bhutan being in a region where trafficking is quite rampant and also because women and children comprise more of the victims of TIP. The study was conducted mainly with the objectives of evidencing TIP in Bhutan and to review institutional arrangements, gaps and challenges, be it laws, policies or institutions.

The primary finding was that the lack of awareness and capacity at all levels, created gaps in law and policy making and thus at implementation levels. Therefore, capacity building and awareness programs are all being conducted, which will be detailed under relevant sections.

3. Training and awareness programme on Violence against Women

I. Training of Health Workers on Domestic Violence and Sexual assault Management

Responding to the increasing number of reported cases on violence against women including domestic violence, training was conducted for the health workers on domestic violence and sexual assault management. This was basically to introduce and orient the participants on the dimensions of sexual assaults and other forms of violence against women and children and scope and nature of health care interventions. This enhanced the skills and knowledge of the health workers to effectively deal with the victims of such violence and be able to provide victim friendly health services.

II. Training of Trainers for the Senior Police Officials on Domestic Violence/Gender Based Violence to break the existing stereotypes

Since the Royal Bhutan Police (RBP) are at the forefront of the criminal justice system, it is highly imperative for them to understand the dynamics of domestic violence and develop a standard operating manual so that their response to the victims is prompt and non judgmental. Therefore, Police officers at all levels were provided with trainings and workshops to provide prompt and effective services to the victim

III. Training of dealing clerks of Royal Bhutan Police (RBP) and Bench Clerk of Royal Court of Justice (RCJ) on Women and Child Friendly Procedures

Capacity building of the police personnel and the judiciary officials has been collaborative efforts of the National Commission for Women and Children, the Royal Bhutan Police and the Royal Court of Justices to provide better judicial and legal services for the victims of violence against women (VAW). As part of this effort, two rounds of trainings were conducted for the dealing clerks of RBP and bench clerk of RCJ to educate the clerks on the laws and legislations related to women and children and give hands on training to dealing with the victims of violence against women and children.

IV. Sensitization/Awareness programme on Gender Based Violence, Crime Prevention in collaboration with RBP to the Dzongkhag Yargay Tshogdey² and Geog Yargay Tshogdu³

Recognizing the important role played by the community in crime prevention in general and domestic violence in particular, a sensitization programme on crime prevention and gender based violence was conducted for the members of

² Dzongkhag Yargay Tshodey — The DYT consists of all the local leaders namely Gup, Mangmi and Chimi of the Dzongkhag (District). The Gup, Mangmi and Chimi elect the Chairperson from amongst themselves.

³ Geog Yargay Tshogdu — The GYT is the local level form of government chaired by the Gup who is supported by the Mangmi.

Dzongkhag Yaray Tshogdey and Geog Yargay Tshogdu. They were oriented on the statistics and types, causes of crimes. They were also introduced to the mechanism through which they could either support the victims or carry out immediate reporting to hold perpetrators accountable.

V. Sensitization and awareness program in the tertiary institutes on Violence against Women (SG Unite Campaign)

This was conducted under the United Nations Secretary General's G UNITE Campaign.⁴ The College of Education in Samste, the College of Science and Technology in Phuntsholing and the Gaeddug College of Business Studies were targeted for the first phase. The turnout of students averaged to about 80%, of which most had very minimal understanding of VAW till the sensitization program. It was assessed to be very educative. It was also suggested that more of such programs should be conducted at regular intervals.

VI. National Consultation on countering human trafficking and cross border collaboration and follow up consultation

For the first time in Bhutan, a consultation on combating Human Trafficking was conducted in 2009 at the national level. It resulted into a set of recommendations which amongst others included conducting a situational analysis, developing a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) on cross border collaborations to combat TIP and to build capacities and enhance awareness. As a follow up to the 2009 consultation, a similar activity was conducted in 2010 to take stock of the progress. The workshop reiterated the 2009 recommendations and resulted in a plan of action. The plan of action again included the situational analysis on TIP in Bhutan.

VII. Mapping of partners within and across the border on human trafficking

As a result of the 2011 study on TIP, which recommended the need to map partners within and across borders, the activity was conducted to identify partners to combat TIP. A mechanism was developed based on which each agency was assigned with roles and responsibilities as and when cases arise. The mechanism is a currently used in lieu of a SOP.

VIII. Training of law enforcement agencies and immigration officials on anti-human trafficking

Given the lack of capacity and limited awareness levels, and based on numerous and continued recommendations, trainings to combat TIP was conducted for the relevant law enforcement agencies. About 25 officials from the Police, Prosecution, Judiciary, NGOs, Immigration and other relevant agencies attended the training.

⁴ SG UNITE Campaign — a multi-year effort aimed at preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls in all parts of the world. The programme by 2015 aims to eliminate violence against women and girls by adopting and enforcing national laws to address and punish all forms of violence against women and girls, adopting and implementing multi-sectoral national action plans, strengthening data collection on the prevalence of violence against women and girls, increasing public awareness and social mobilization and address sexual violence in conflict.

4. Services for Victims of VAW

I. Establishment of Community Based Support System in all the 20 Dzongkhags (Districts)

The Community Based Support System (CBSS) is a mechanism to ensure the safety and security of victims and survivors of domestic violence through partnerships with community members. It is a long-term approach towards sustainability and community ownership of RENEW's services particularly Counselling services for survivors of GBV/DV. The CBSS has been now established in all the 20 dzongkhags and it comprise of a group of 10-20 Para-professionals who are multi-taskers, with basic knowledge on gender based DV and Counselling and act as focal person responsible to coordinate support towards clusters of CBSS.

II. Expanding of Women and Child Protection Unit (WCPU)/Desks

Establishment of new WCPU in Paro. In response to the increasing number of cases related to women and children, the third WCPU was set up in Paro in 2011 and it is manned by an officer in charge and support personnel. Accordingly, separate detention centre for women and children has been established. The WCPU in Thimphu has also been upgraded to a division, with a Superintendent as the head of the Division.

Establishment of Women and Child Protection Unit under the Royal Bhutan Police was a joint initiative to institutionalize the protection of women and children who come in conflict with law and who are under difficult circumstances (for example — women victims of violence). The WCPUs work in close collaboration with the NCWC and the service providers for example RENEW. There are plans to expand to the services further, with two districts identified for its establishment.
