



BHUTAN ECOLOGICAL SOCIETY

BES Gender Strategies

Gender Equality & Prevention of Gender Based Violence

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ACRONYMS

BES	Bhutan Ecological Society
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DECC)	Department of Environment and Climate Change
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GRPB	Gender Responsive Planning & Budgeting
ICIMOD	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LFPR	Labour Force Participation Rate
LG	Local Government
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
NSB	National Statistical Bureau
NC	National Council
NCWC	National Commission for Women and Children
NGEP	National Gender Equality Policy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSB	National Statistical Bureau
RENEW	Respect Educate Nurture & Empower Women
SACEP	South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme
SFS	School for Field Studies
RGoB	Royal Government of Bhutan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 About BES

The Bhutan Ecological Society (BES), a Bhutanese non-profit, aims to foster resilient communities and functional landscapes by connecting education, science, business, and policy, with a vision of a prosperous society in harmony with nature, focusing on biodiversity, climate change, and natural resources.

The Bhutan Ecological Society (BES) is dedicated to advancing environmental sustainability through education, research, and policy advocacy. We connect science, business, and communities to address climate change, restore landscapes, and promote nature-positive, carbon-negative solutions.

The main focus areas of BES are: biodiversity, climate change, natural resources, and sustainable development, while the priority activities include: research, education, policy engagement, and collaborations. The key partners and collaborators are the Royal University of Bhutan, World Bank, the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme (SACEP), the [School for Field Studies \(SFS\)](#) in the US), Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC), and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

Bhutan Ecological Society (BES) acknowledges the intrinsic link between ecological sustainability and social justice, particularly gender equality. In alignment with the Bhutan National Strategy and Framework of Action on Eliminating Gender-Based Violence (GBV) 2024–2028, and National Gender Equality Policy 2023, BES commits to a multi-pronged approach that integrates gender considerations into its ecological mission. This strategy brief presents five strategic pillars and associated key actions to guide BES's contributions to GBV prevention, survivor support, and systemic transformation.

1.2 Gender Equality and Prevention of Gender based Violence

Gender equality and the elimination of GBV are central to Bhutan's development goals, including the pursuit of Gross National Happiness. The policy and strategy documents on gender equality and GBV emphasize the Importance of gender equality and GBV prevention in Bhutan. The CSOs play a vital role in reaching grassroots communities, raising awareness, delivering services, and influencing policy.

1.3 Purpose and Objectives

The main objective of this study is to develop a comprehensive BES Gender Strategy based on in-depth reviews and gender analysis. This includes aligning BES's programming and institutional practices with national goals to eliminate gender-based violence (GBV), promote gender equality, and strengthen gender integration in ecological and community development initiatives.

2 SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

2.1 Gender Equality status

Bhutan improved its Global Gender Gap Index ranking, moving from 126th in 2022 to 103rd in 2023¹, with the index score rising from 0.637 to 0.682. While the country has advanced in education and health, its female labour force participation has declined.

Key Areas of Gender Equality:

- **Education:** The adult literacy rate remains lower among women. In 2022, the gender gap in literacy (15.3 percentage points) was larger than the South Asian average (14.6)².
- **Labour Force Participation:** In 2023, 64.5% of women and 73.9% of men were economically

¹ World Economic Forum - Global Gender Gap Report 2023. Insight Report June 2023.

² Gender Data Portal. The World Bank (2022) <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/countries/bhutan/>

active³. The gender gap here is narrower than in other lower-middle-income countries, though women still lag behind⁴.

- **Unpaid Work:** Women spend 2.5 times more time on unpaid domestic and care work than men⁵. In 2015, women devoted **15%** of their day to unpaid work, compared to 5.9% for men.
- **Gender and Unemployment** - The unemployment rate is higher in urban areas compared to rural. Thimphu has the highest unemployment rate at 15.8%. Unemployment rate among females is much higher compared to male population⁶.
- **Leadership Roles:** Women made up 40% of the civil service in 2022, but only 20% held senior or mid-level management positions⁷, an increase from 14% in 2019. Most women are employed in support roles.
- **Political Representation:** In the 2024 general elections, only 2 out of 47 MPs were women. The National Council had just one female out of 25 members⁸. Similarly, in local governance, only 7 women were elected gups out of 205 positions in 2022. Bhutan ranks 131st out of 191 countries for women in politics.

Despite Bhutan's strong policy commitment to gender equality, gaps persist in education, employment, leadership, and unpaid work. While overt discrimination may not be widely observed, and certain customs do benefit women, systemic gender disparities remain evident across various sectors.

2.2 Present Policies and Strategies on Gender equality

Bhutan's Revised National Gender Equality Policy by the NCWC⁹ establishes the framework for achieving gender equality across various sectors of society. It emphasizes the country's commitment to ensuring equal rights, opportunities, and treatment for all genders, particularly women and marginalized groups. It outlines the need for gender-responsive policies and practices in areas such as governance, education, employment, and healthcare.

It highlights the importance of collaboration across sectors and stakeholders to achieve a shared vision of gender equality. It also stresses the need to strengthen accountability and operational strategies to address gender-related issues, ensuring that both men and women benefit equitably from Bhutan's social, economic, and political development.

Key highlights of the policy include:

- **Equal Participation and Leadership:** The policy seeks to enhance women's participation in decision-making processes, leadership roles, and governance at all levels, including economic and political spheres.
- **Economic Empowerment:** It emphasizes creating equal economic opportunities by addressing gaps in employment, entrepreneurship, access to resources, and vocational training for women and marginalized groups.
- **Education and Skills Development:** The policy promotes gender equality in education, aiming to reduce dropout rates for girls and encourage participation in technical and professional courses, ensuring equitable access to quality education.
- **Health and Well-being:** It focuses on improving women's access to healthcare services, particularly reproductive health, nutrition, and mental well-being. The policy also addresses gender-based violence and promotes the protection of rights for victims.

³ National Statistical Bureau (2022). Labour Force Survey Report

⁴ Gender Data Portal. The World Bank (2022) <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/countries/bhutan/>

⁵ <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/metadata/> (Source: National statistical database and publications compiled by United Nations Statistics Division)

⁶ National Statistics Bureau, Labour Force Survey Report 2022

⁷ Royal Civil Service Commission, Bhutan Civil Service Statistics (BCSS) 2022

⁸ Kuensel January 13, 2024

⁹ NCWC (2023) Revised National Gender Equality Policy. Available from:

[https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ncwc.gov.bt%2Fdocuments%2FFinal%2520version-NGEP%2520\(LGBT%2B%2520integration\)%2520revised%252010.01.23.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ncwc.gov.bt%2Fdocuments%2FFinal%2520version-NGEP%2520(LGBT%2B%2520integration)%2520revised%252010.01.23.docx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)

- **Social and Cultural Norms:** The policy targets discriminatory social and cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequality. It advocates for changing attitudes toward gender roles, reducing stigmatization, and promoting inclusion for LGBTQ+ individuals.
- **Legal Framework:** Strengthening laws and policies that protect against gender discrimination, violence, and human trafficking is a key part of the policy, ensuring that legal structures support gender equality.
- **Monitoring and Accountability:** The policy includes mechanisms for monitoring progress and holding institutions accountable for implementing gender equality measures.

2.3 Present status of Gender Based Violence in Bhutan

The following sections describe the status of GBV in Bhutan

2.3.1 Violence Against Women

Intimate partner violence is the most common form of violence against women globally. In Bhutan, 1 in 3 women (33%) aged 15–64 have experienced some form of violence—emotional (24%), physical (12%), or sexual (5%)—from their partners according to a study¹⁰.

Between 2018 and 2023, the Royal Bhutan Police (RBP) recorded nearly 2,500 domestic violence cases¹¹, although underreporting remains a challenge due to stigma and societal norms. According to the World Bank, 27% of Bhutanese women have experienced intimate partner violence, which is below the global average.

Domestic violence cases increased during COVID-19 lockdowns. From 2016 to 2021, 900 cases were reported to NCWC¹², and cases reported to NGO RENEW¹³ rose by 36.6%, highlighting the pandemic's impact.

2.3.2 Violence Against Children

A 2016 national survey revealed that 64% of children aged 13–17 experienced physical violence, with many facing it before their teenage years. Schools were the most common setting (67.3%), followed by homes (43.6%)¹⁴. Additionally, 12.8% of children reported experiencing sexual violence, with slightly higher rates among girls (13.5%) than boys (11.9%)¹⁵.

2.3.3 Legislation and Advocacy on GVB issues

Legal measures include the Domestic Violence Prevention Act (2013), Child Care and Protection Act (2011), and the Penal Code (2004). The Child Care and Protection Rules and Regulation of Bhutan 201516 provides detailed procedures on how to implement the law, ensuring that its provisions are carried out effectively.

The revised National Gender Equality Policy aims to enhance responses to gender-based violence (GBV). Organizations like NCWC, RBP, and RENEW provide support and raise awareness¹⁷, but rural areas still face limited access to services such as shelters, legal aid, and medical support, which are

¹⁰ National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) (2017) Summary Report, National Study on Women's Health and Life Experiences 2027, A Study on Violence against Women and Girls in Bhutan, Available from: https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/bt/Vaw-report_small.pdf

¹¹ BBS (2023) Tackling domestic violence. Available from: <https://www.bbs.bt/news/?p=185543>

¹² NCWC (2021) Covid-19 Impact on Women and Children Study (Bhutan). Available from: <https://ncwc.gov.bt/publications/COVID19-Impact%20of-Women-and-Children-Study1646648937.pdf>

¹³ RENEW (2024) Respect Educate Natura & Empower Women Website. Available from: <https://renew.org.bt/>

¹⁴ NCWC (2016) Research on Violence Against Children in Bhutan A Report. Available from: <https://www.unicef.org/bhutan/media/341/file/Research%20on%20Violence%20Against%20Children%20in%20Bhutan.pdf>

¹⁵ "Ibidem"

¹⁶ <https://ncwc.gov.bt/publications/Child%20Care%20and%20Protection%20%20Rules%20%20and%20Regulation%20of%20Bhutan%2020151559107053.pdf>

¹⁷ NCWC (2020) Assessment Report of Implementation Progress of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act of Bhutan 2013 and its Rules and Regulation. Available from:

mostly concentrated in Thimphu. Despite progress, Bhutan lacks a dedicated body for preventing or addressing harassment¹⁸.

2.3.4 Policy frameworks and strategies in preventing/managing GBV

The National Gender Equality Policy (NGEP) 2020 – This policy is envisaged to provide an overarching policy directive for the government to promote gender equality and gender mainstreaming in legislation, policies, plans, and programmes¹⁹ The policy serves as a guiding document which echoes and reaffirms the commitment of the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) to ensure the achievement of substantive equality through gender responsive policies, plans, and programmes.

GBV Strategy 2024–2028) - Bhutan launched National Strategy and Framework of Action on Eliminating Gender- Based Violence (2024-2028 on March 8, 2025 on the occasion of International Women’s Day. The report, which lays out the country’s ambitious plan to combat all forms of GBV, highlights key contributing factors such as low education, childhood trauma, alcohol abuse, harmful masculinity, and gender inequality²⁰. The strategy aims to eliminate GBV through a multi-pronged approach that focuses on fostering gender equality, transforming social norms, strengthening data collection, and providing inclusive services that empower survivors to live free from violence.

2.3.5 Major Challenges:

The major challenges include: (1) Cultural norms, stigma (2) Weak enforcements, limited services, and (3) Gaps and challenges in implementation

2.4 National GBV Strategy

The Strategy adopts a comprehensive and inclusive approach, ensuring that every relevant agency is engaged and that no issue is overlooked. It seeks for a coordinated response and prevention strategy to address GBV as follows:

- Ensure a Holistic, System-Wide Approach: The Strategy engages all levels of society, from grassroots communities to top decision-makers, including youth, women, community leaders, government agencies, and the private sector.
- Improve National Commitment and Leadership: The Strategy aims to bring GBV and any harmful social practices to the forefront of national consciousness, emphasizing leadership commitment as crucial for achieving sustained progress in their elimination.
- Secure Strategic Resource Allocation and improve outcomes: The Strategy aims to enhance and channel resources effectively to areas where they can have the greatest impact while focusing on outcomes.
- Align with National and Global Goals: Developed in collaboration with key stakeholders and supported by UN agencies, the Strategy aligns Bhutan’s national efforts with the global standards and practices

The Strategy is organized around four interconnected pillars:

- (1) Response refers to the services and resources provided to mitigate the harm caused by violence. These include policing, case management, counselling, access to justice, shelters, and reintegration programmes. While primarily aimed at reducing immediate harm, response services also play a preventive role by curbing early signs of violence, preventing recurrence, and minimizing long-term impacts
- (2) Prevention focuses on stopping GBV before it occurs by addressing the root causes, such as gender inequality and other drivers of violence, across all levels of the social ecology. It is a long-term goal that requires efforts across the population to challenge norms, practices, and

¹⁸ NCWC (2022) Gender Assessment in Hydropower, Road and Bridge Construction sites in Bhutan – Key Indicators, Findings and Recommendations. Available from: <https://www.ncwc.gov.bt/publications/Policy%20Brief1670299783.pdf>

¹⁹ National Gender Equality Policy (2020). National Commission for Women and Children Royal Government of Bhutan.

²⁰ NCWC 2025 - National Strategy and Framework of Action on Eliminating Gender- Based Violence (2024-2028)

societal structures that perpetuate GBV role by curbing early signs of violence, preventing recurrence, and minimizing long-term.

- (3) Enabling Environment consists of the laws, policies, and systems that facilitate both prevention and response. It operates across individual, interpersonal, community, and societal levels, ensuring that structural and institutional mechanisms are in place to support GBV interventions.
- (4) Data and Evidence are essential for understanding the scope of GBV and measuring the effectiveness of interventions. The primary sources of information come from the systematic monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes implemented to address GBV. However, generating data alone is not enough; robust systems must be in place to ensure that relevant insights are fed back to policymakers and programme designers, enabling continuous improvement of laws, policies, and initiatives

3 THE ROLES OF BES IN PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND ADDRESSING GBV

The main roles of BES in promoting gender equality and addressing Gender based violence are proposed below:

- Advocacy and awareness raising
- Facilitating community mobilizing, dialogue and norm/behaviour change
- Collaboration with government and other stakeholders
- Prompting policy and accountability
- Service provision and support systems for survivors (e.g., shelters, counselling, legal aid)
- Capacity-building and education

4 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR BES ENGAGEMENT

Five guiding principles for BES engagement in promoting Gender equality and addressing Gender based violence

- (1) Partnership and Collaboration
- (2) Inclusivity (gender, disability, rural populations)
- (3) Rights-based and survivor-centered approaches
- (4) Cultural sensitivity and community ownership
- (5) Accountability and transparency

5 STRATEGIC PILLARS AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The key strategic pillars and recommendations for promoting Gender equality and addressing Gender based violence are described below.

5.1 Community Engagement and Norms Change

- Support community engagement, awareness campaigns and education on gender issues
- Promote gender-sensitive cultural programs and media
- Partnering with religious and traditional leaders
- Establish community champions and peer educators (engaging men and boys as allies)
- Using local media and art for gender-sensitive messaging

5.2 Advocacy and Policy Influence

- Participating in policy consultations - for gender laws, policies, and plans
- Promote representation of women in local governance
- Promoting gender-responsive governance at local levels

- Lobby for budget allocations for women’s programs
- Advocating for enforcement of laws and budgets

5.3 Service Delivery and Support for Survivors

- Develop referral pathways in coordination with government
- Providing or supporting legal aid, counselling, support shelters access to health,
- Creating safe spaces for women and girls
- Train frontline workers in trauma-informed care
- Strengthening referral and case management systems

5.4 Capacity Building

- Training BES staff, volunteers, other agencies on Gender and GBV
- Developing community leaders as gender champions
- Promoting gender inclusion through capacity building and outreach
- Supporting women and youth leadership programs
- Institutionalizing gender-sensitive practices within CSOs
- Conducting internal gender audits of BES practices

5.5 Partnerships and Multi-Sectoral Coordination

- Collaborating with government (NCWC, health, police, local leaders)
- Partnering with donors, other CSOs, and the private sector
- Joining national and district-level task forces on GBV
- Engaging private sector in joint campaigns and funding
- Contributing to national GBV monitoring and reporting mechanisms

6 STRATEGIC ACTION POINTS

6.1 Community Engagement and Norms Change

Goal: Transform harmful gender norms and promote inclusive, respectful communities through sustained local engagement.

Key Actions:

- Support inclusive community outreach and awareness campaigns to increase understanding of gender roles, rights, and the impacts of GBV.
- Promote gender-sensitive cultural programs and media that celebrate equity and challenge stereotypes through music, theater, storytelling, and local traditions.
- Partner with religious and traditional leaders to champion gender equality messages rooted in Bhutanese values of compassion and non-violence.
- Establish and train community champions and peer educators, including men and boys as allies, to lead local conversations and serve as role models.
- Use local media, art, and storytelling platforms to share positive narratives of gender equality and women’s empowerment in relatable formats.

6.2 Advocacy and Policy Influence

Goal: Shape policies and local governance systems to be gender-responsive and inclusive, with stronger accountability for protecting women and girls.

Key Actions:

- Participate in policy consultations and dialogues to inform the development and revision of gender-related laws, national plans, and local regulations.
- Advocate for women's representation and leadership in local government bodies, environmental decision-making spaces, and community committees.
- Promote gender-responsive governance practices by encouraging inclusive planning, budgeting, and service delivery at the gewog and dzongkhag levels.
- Lobby for increased budget allocations dedicated to women's programs, GBV prevention, and survivor support services.
- Monitor and advocate for enforcement of existing gender laws and budget implementation, especially those related to protection and access to justice.

6.3 Service Delivery and Support for Survivors

Goal: Ensure that survivors of GBV have access to timely, holistic, and compassionate support systems.

Key Actions:

- Collaborate with government and partners to develop referral pathways that ensure survivors can safely access support services such as health care, legal aid, and shelters.
- Support or provide essential survivor services, including trauma-informed counseling, legal assistance, emergency shelter, and healthcare referrals.
- Create and sustain safe spaces for women and girls, both physical and psychological, where they can find refuge, support, and empowerment opportunities.
- Train frontline workers and community responders - including health workers, police, and educators - in trauma-informed care and survivor-centered approaches.
- Strengthen local referral and case management systems to ensure coordinated, efficient responses to GBV cases with confidentiality and dignity.

6.4 Capacity Building

Goal: Build internal and external capacities to mainstream gender equality and improve the effectiveness of GBV prevention and response.

Key Actions:

- Provide ongoing training for BES staff, volunteers, and partner organizations on gender sensitivity, GBV prevention, and inclusion practices.
- Support the development of community leaders as gender champions, capable of leading advocacy and awareness efforts in their regions.
- Promote gender inclusion through outreach programs, ensuring women, youth, and marginalized groups are part of environmental and developmental conversations.
- Facilitate women and youth leadership programs to build confidence, skills, and networks for civic participation and organizational leadership.
- Institutionalize gender-sensitive practices within BES by integrating gender into operations, programming, HR policies, and governance structures.
- Conduct internal gender audits to assess BES's alignment with gender equity principles and identify areas for improvement.

6.5 Partnerships and Multi-Sectoral Coordination

Goal: Strengthen collaboration with stakeholders across sectors to amplify impact and ensure a coordinated response to GBV and gender inequality.

Key Actions:

- Collaborate with key government agencies, including the NCWC, Ministry of Health, Royal Bhutan Police, and local leaders, for program alignment and policy support.
- Build partnerships with donors, CSOs, and private sector entities to mobilize resources, share technical expertise, and co-develop initiatives.
- Join and contribute to national and district-level GBV task forces to ensure representation, coordination, and shared learning.
- Engage the private sector in awareness campaigns and co-investment efforts, promoting workplace safety, gender equity, and community outreach.
- Contribute to national GBV monitoring and reporting mechanisms, sharing data, insights, and community feedback to inform evidence-based policymaking.

6.6 Gender-responsive Planning and Budgeting

Goal: Gender-responsive budgeting seeks to ensure that the collection and allocation of public resources is carried out in ways that are effective and contribute to advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment²¹.

Key Actions:

- It should be based on in-depth analysis that identifies effective interventions for implementing policies and laws that advance women’s rights.
- It provides tools to assess the different needs and contributions of men and women, and boys and girls within the existing revenues, expenditures and allocations and calls for adjusting budget policies to benefit all groups.
- There is no ‘one-size fits all’ approach to GRB as they are shaped by the institutions and people involved in it. GRB may be initiated and organized by government agencies, academics and researchers, and civil society organizations (CSOs). Interactions between these groups may be done in formal and informal ways.

6.7 Aligning with National Strategy on Promoting Gender Equality and Addressing Gender-Based Violence (GBV) 2024-2028.

Bhutan Ecological Society (BES) recognizes that environmental sustainability and gender equality are inherently interconnected. In alignment with Bhutan’s National Strategy and Framework of Action on Eliminating Gender-Based Violence (GBV) 2024–2028, BES has developed a set of strategic pillars and actionable priorities to support national efforts, promote gender equity, and respond to GBV. This strategy brief outlines BES’s approach to integrating these priorities across its operations, partnerships, and community engagement.

Strategic Pillar 1: Community Engagement and Norms Change

Goal: Transform harmful gender norms and promote inclusive, respectful communities through sustained local engagement.

Key Actions:

- Conduct inclusive community awareness campaigns in line with national messaging on GBV prevention.
- Promote gender-sensitive cultural programs and traditional media that reinforce positive gender roles and values.
- Collaborate with religious and traditional leaders to integrate gender equality messages into community gatherings and religious events.
- Identify, train, and mobilize community champions and peer educators - including men and boys - to advocate against GBV.

²¹ Strategic framework for gender mainstreaming and gender responsive planning and budgeting in Bhutan – UN Women and the Department of National Budget, Ministry of Finance, RGoB.

- Use local storytelling, digital platforms, and creative arts to disseminate gender equality messages aligned with national campaigns.

Strategic Pillar 2: Advocacy and Policy Influence

Goal: Shape and support national and local policies that are gender-responsive and advance GBV prevention and response.

Key Actions:

- Participate in consultations on the development and implementation of gender laws, policies, and national plans.
- Advocate for increased representation of women and marginalized voices in governance, particularly in local environmental governance.
- Promote local gender-responsive governance by encouraging integration of GBV-related indicators in gewog-level development planning.
- Advocate for adequate and sustained budget allocations to GBV prevention, response, and women's empowerment programs.
- Support the enforcement and monitoring of GBV-related laws in coordination with government and civil society partners.

Strategic Pillar 3: Service Delivery and Support for Survivors

Goal: Ensure that survivors of GBV have access to timely, holistic, and survivor-centered services.

Key Actions:

- Develop and support localized referral pathways in line with the national GBV service standards.
- Facilitate or connect survivors to trauma-informed legal aid, psychosocial counseling, shelters, and health services.
- Establish and maintain safe spaces within BES programs and community hubs where women and girls can seek support.
- Train BES field staff and local partners in survivor-sensitive and trauma-informed care protocols.
- Collaborate with multi-sector actors to improve coordination, case management, and follow-up mechanisms.

Strategic Pillar 4: Capacity Building

Goal: Strengthen the gender and GBV-related knowledge and competencies of BES, partners, and community actors.

Key Actions:

- Regularly train BES staff, volunteers, and collaborating organizations on gender equality, GBV, and inclusive programming.
- Develop and mentor community-based gender champions who support local GBV prevention efforts.
- Promote the inclusion of women and youth in environmental and climate action through leadership programs.
- Institutionalize gender-sensitive standards and conduct internal gender audits to align BES policies with national strategy.
- Collaborate with national institutions to access certified GBV training and technical support.

Strategic Pillar 5: Partnerships and Multi-Sectoral Coordination

Goal: Work with national and local stakeholders to contribute meaningfully to Bhutan's coordinated GBV response and gender equality goals.

Key Actions:

- Collaborate with key government agencies such as NCWC, Ministry of Health, Royal Bhutan Police, and local authorities.
- Align BES's GBV-related efforts with the National Strategy and contribute to shared goals and outcomes.
- Join district and national GBV coordination mechanisms, including technical working groups and task forces.
- Engage the private sector in gender advocacy and mobilize support for joint awareness campaigns and funding.
- Contribute data and evidence from BES programs to national GBV monitoring systems to support data-driven decision-making.

7 OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Opportunities

- Policy Momentum and Institutional Support: Bhutan's national frameworks, including the GBV Strategy (2024–2028), GNH policies, and gender-responsive governance structures, offer strong institutional alignment and legitimacy for BES to contribute meaningfully.
- Youth Engagement and Digital Platforms: With Bhutan's youthful population increasingly active in digital spaces, BES has a key opportunity to harness youth-driven innovations and social media campaigns for GBV prevention and gender equality advocacy.
- Cultural Alignment with GNH Principles: The core values of Gross National Happiness (GNH), such as equity, compassion, and community harmony, resonate with gender equality goals and provide a culturally grounded narrative for BES engagement.
- Collaborative Landscape: The active presence of government agencies, CSOs, and donors working on GBV opens avenues for synergistic partnerships, knowledge exchange, and co-implementation of gender programs.
- Empowerment Through Environmental Leadership: Integrating women and girls into climate and ecological leadership roles empowers them socially and economically, reinforcing BES's environmental mission and gender goals.

7.2 Challenges

- Social Stigma and Cultural Resistance: Deeply entrenched gender norms, taboos around discussing GBV, and stigma toward survivors hinder open dialogue and service uptake, especially in rural areas.
- Institutional Capacity Gaps: BES and its partners may face limited expertise or human resource constraints in mainstreaming gender and implementing GBV-sensitive programming across technical fields.
- Funding and Sustainability: Limited and project-based funding for gender-specific work poses challenges for sustained GBV prevention and long-term impact.

7.3 Recommendations for Overcoming Challenges:

- Invest in long-term staff capacity building on gender and GBV issues, including hiring gender focal points and accessing certified training programs.
- Integrate gender and GBV objectives into core BES projects to secure mainstream funding and donor support.
- Foster inclusive dialogues and community outreach that emphasize shared values between GNH and gender equality to reduce resistance.
- Develop strategic youth partnerships and digital content to address stigma and promote peer-to-peer learning.

- Establish internal systems for gender audit and monitoring to institutionalize learning and accountability.

Through these aligned actions, BES reinforces its dual mission of ecological stewardship and social equity. By embedding gender equality and GBV prevention across its work, BES contributes meaningfully to Bhutan’s vision of a safe, inclusive, and sustainable society for all.

8 MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING (MEL)

Participatory Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) methods involve actively engaging stakeholders in all stages of monitoring, evaluation, and learning to ensure that their voices, experiences, and insights are integrated into the process, leading to more effective, relevant, and sustainable outcomes. This approach emphasizes collaboration, shared ownership, and adaptive management.

- Develop Key indicators for gender equality and GBV response
- Participatory approaches for tracking progress (use participatory MEL methods²²)
- Feedback loops from communities and survivors
- Document and share best practices and lessons

9 CONCLUSION

BES is uniquely positioned to bring transformative change in Bhutan’s gender landscape. With sustained commitment, collaboration, and capacity development, they can significantly advance gender equality and help eliminate gender-based violence.

Through these strategic pillars, BES affirms its commitment to gender equity and supports the Bhutan National Strategy on Eliminating Gender Based Violence. By mainstreaming gender in its environmental work, strengthening institutional capacity, and collaborating across sectors, BES aims to create safer, more inclusive communities where all individuals can thrive.

Through these aligned actions, BES reinforces its dual mission of ecological stewardship and social equity. By embedding gender equality and GBV prevention across its work, BES contributes meaningfully to Bhutan’s vision of a safe, inclusive, and sustainable society for all.

²² Monitoring, evaluation learning (MEL) toolkit for grant-makers and grantees - <https://www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/monitoring-evaluation-learning-mel-toolkit-for-grantmakers-grantees->