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**Situation Analysis of Mainstreaming Cross-cutting Issues (Gender, Environment, Climate Change, Disaster and Poverty) into the Local Development Plans and Programmes Assessment Report**

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AKRA	: Agency Key Result Areas
APA	: Annual Performance Agreement
CCM	: Council of Cabinet Ministers
CEDAW	: Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
DFC	: Dzongkhag Finance Committee
DKRAs	: Dzongkhag Key Result Areas
DLG	: Department of Local Governance
DTC	: Dzongkhag Tender Committee
ECP	: Environment, Climate Change and Poverty
EU-TACS	: European-Union Technical Assistance Complementary Support
FGD	: Focus Group Discussion
FYP	: Five Year Plan
GCF	: Green Climate Fund
GDP	: Gross Domestic Product
GECDP	: Gender, Environment, Climate-change, Disaster and Poverty
GEF	: Global Environment Facility
GLOF	: Glacial Lake Outburst Floods
GNH	: Gross National Happiness
GNHC	: Gross National Happiness Commission
GPMS	: Government Performance Management System
IIED	: International Institute of Environmental Development
JSP	: Joint Support Programme
KII	: Key Informant Interview
KPI	: Key Performance Indicator
LDPM	: Local Development Planning Manual
LG	: Local Government
LGKRAs	: Local Government Key Result Areas
LoCAL	: Local Climate Adaptive Living Facility
MRG	: Mainstreaming Reference Group
NAPA	: National Adaptation Programme of Action
NEC	: National Environment Commission
NKRA	: National Key Result Areas
PWD	: Persons with Disabilities
RAF	: Resource Allocation Formula

RNR	:	Renewable Natural Resources
SDG	:	Sustainable Development Goals
SGP	:	Small Grant Programme
SKRA	:	Sector Key Result Areas
ToR	:	Terms of Reference
WRI	:	World Resource Institute

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The primary focus of Bhutan’s development approach within the Gross National Happiness (GNH) framework is the pursuit for a broad based and holistic sustainable economic growth to embrace quality of life as the ultimate goal. With the deepening of devolution and democratic governance system resulting in the increase in the decentralised functions of Local Governments (LGs), supporting LGs and building their capacity to foster self-reliance and equitable socio-economic development at the local level is deemed critical. To this effect, one of the important measures adopted by the Government has been in building the LGs’ capacity in mainstreaming cross-cutting issues (gender, environment, climate-change, disaster and poverty – GECDP) into the local development plans and programmes.

The support for GECDP mainstreaming in the LGs’ development plans and programmes began from the 11<sup>th</sup> Five-Year-Plan (FYP)<sup>1</sup>. The activities included: capacity-building, sensitisation and orientation programme for key LG functionaries at the Dzongkhag level; formation of local Mainstreaming Reference Groups (MRG), training of local MRG members on theoretical as well as practical aspects of GECDP mainstreaming; and facilitation of implementing mainstreaming activities through provision of discretionary monetary grants.

In this context, the assessment on the situation analysis of GECDP mainstreaming was carried by the Department of Local Governance (DLG) in collaboration with Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC), as a hands-on training and capacity-building of the Department. It was assessed to understand the best practices, challenges and lessons learnt, and to take stock of the activities that are necessary to strengthen GECDP mainstreaming at the local level. The study was intended to inform DLG on the suitable means and methods of designing the LGs’ capacity programme on GECDP mainstreaming based on the underlying challenges, opportunities and monitoring systems.

The study was conducted in 17 Dzongkhags (district), representing 85% of the total Dzongkhags. Although, the study was intended to cover all 20 Dzongkhags, the three southern Dzongkhags could not be accommodated due to the travel restrictions (COVID-19 high risk area). This study was supported by EU-Technical Assistance Complimentary Support (EU-TACS) project, in particular, activity A1.5 of the Project that pertains to supporting DLG in building capacity of LGs in mainstreaming GECDP into the development plans and programmes.

The study adopted a qualitative assessment method. The literature review and secondary research established a strong case of policy context of Bhutan’s development principles, approach and strategies that form the basis for GECDP mainstreaming. The primary data in the field was based on a purposive sampling of respondents determined by their previous involvement in GECDP mainstreaming process as local MRG members, or their current positions with responsibilities related to GECDP mainstreaming. The primary data was collected by using the two main tools of Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and Key Informant Interviews (KII). While the FGD was conducted with the key sector heads of the Dzongkhag using a set of guiding questions, the KII was carried out with the local MRG members, both existing as well and the past MRG members, using a semi-structured questionnaire (Attached as Annexure). Prior to the field visit, all those officials engaged was oriented on the process-steps of carrying out the FGD and compilation of findings.

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<sup>1</sup> GNHC, 11<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan 2012/2013 – 2017/2018.

The main findings of the study are:

1. GECDP mainstreaming is an important intervention that supports the country's overall development principles, framework and objectives. The capacity-building of LGs on GECDP mainstreaming is a critical process to ensure that the country's development process is in line with its own development framework as well as other international development such as SDGs.
2. There is a satisfactory level of understanding, awareness or exposure to the concept of mainstreaming cross-cutting issues at the LG level. The LG officials are familiar with terminologies, such as green development, sustainable development, inclusive growth and importance of cross-cutting thematic areas. More importantly, there is a general acceptance on the importance of the need for GECDP mainstreaming and to reinforce its process.
3. Formation and coordination by MRG is a good mechanism of steering GECDP mainstreaming at the local level. However, the functioning of MRG must not remain independent of the other sectoral functions. MRG must function as an overall coordination committee and must play a critical role in designing the local development plans and programmes.
4. The Dzongkhag must take ownership of the existence and functioning of MRG. Most MRGs functioned under a project-tied mandate, and became non-functional as soon as the financial support of a donor-funded project is ended. The Dzongkhag must ensure that the MRG remains for all time as a key coordination unit for integrated local development governance and management.
5. Leadership plays a crucial role for the sustainable and successful implementation of GECDP mainstreaming. Leaders should be made more aware of the importance and inclusion of GECDP component in the Dzongkhags plans and programmes.
6. Some of the best practices of GECDP mainstreaming products are the promotion of fuel-efficient cooking systems (such as biogas stoves); solar/electric fencing, land development; plantation; and payment for environmental services. Formation and management of farmers' groups; food/nutrition programmes; afforestation/reforestation and community forestry programmes; rain-water harvesting systems; climate-smart technologies in agriculture; promotion of organic farming and post-harvest agri-business; improvement in livestock management such as indigenous breed promotion; improved waste management; wildlife protection; gender-friendly bathrooms in public places; and promotion of community eco-tourism can be also attributed to the GECDP mainstreaming influence.
7. However, effective GECDP mainstreaming have been constrained by the following challenges:
  - (a) Poor coordination between the key development sectors;
  - (b) Frequent transfer of MRG members and non-replacement resulting into gradual dissolution of the MRG;
  - (c) Lack of institutional knowledge-transfer and capacity—building for new MRG members.
  - (d) Lack of a reference point at the central level in the absence of central MRG, for the local MRG to seek technical assistance and support.
  - (e) Poor monitoring and evaluation of the GECDP mainstreaming activities.
8. The key recommendations of the study are:
  - (a) Need for a clear policy directive from the Government with strategic guideline to advance GECDP mainstreaming.
  - (b) Revive the central and local GECDP mainstreaming mechanisms and practices.
  - (c) Identification and appointment of a champion at the drivers.
  - (d) Strengthen GECDP mainstreaming leadership and management at the local level.
  - (e) Focus on capacity-building on technical skills and tools for the local level.
  - (f) Integrate the mandate of GECDP mainstreaming programme within the Government's planning and budgeting system.

- (g) Coordination and linkage between the functions and priorities of central agencies, LGs, and regional offices.
- (h) Provide adequate financial and technical support.
- (i) Strengthen monitoring and evaluation system.
- (j) Create more awareness to the appointed and elected LG functionaries.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Study Context and Rationale

Within the country's overall development objective of Gross National Happiness (GNH) that calls for a broad based and holistic sustainable economic growth, Bhutan's recent five-year plans (FYP) have been focussed on mainstreaming cross-cutting issues, such as Gender, Environment, Climate-change, Disaster and Poverty (GECDP), into the development plans and programmes. GECDP mainstreaming is considered as a critical strategy to achieve the country's GNH-based development goals of sustainable and equitable socio-economic development; preservation and promotion of cultural values; conservation of natural environment; and good governance.

The process of GECDP mainstreaming at the local level gained an increased momentum from the year 2015, with the financial support of various donor-supported projects. GECDP mainstreaming at the local level was aimed at:

- Building the capacity of LGs to design and implement an integrated local development plans and programmes for equitable socio-economic development that is inclusive, holistic and sustainable.
- Promotion of best sustainable practices and integrated local area-based planning, and fostering enabling conditions for green development at the local level.
- Helping the LG representatives in visioning a sustainable future by enhancing their capacity to assess cumulative impacts of development activities (degradation of watersheds and climate-change impacts - especially to women, children and other socially disadvantaged groups) on environmental resources and social conditions.

The technical support to GECDP mainstreaming at the local level was facilitated by the central level Mainstreaming Reference Group (MRG), composed of relevant officials from different Ministries and agencies. The support to local MRG included: establishment of local MRG with the functional responsibility terms of reference (ToR); sensitisation and orientation of local MRG group members on theoretical as well as practical aspects of GECDP mainstreaming; and, providing Training of Trainers (ToT) programmes to local MRG members. The critical aspects of capacity-building of local MRGs were the provision of discretionary monetary grants with which LGs prepared GECDP mainstreaming plans and implemented them.

However, GECDP mainstreaming practice at the local level seems to have been decelerated since the past few years. One of the key challenges reported is that the local MRG groups have become non-functional because of various reasons. Many local MRG members have left their positions on transfer to other districts or jobs, and the non-replacement of the members have affected the continuity of the MRG functions. Secondly, the central MRG have discontinued their functions on the assumptions that GECDP mainstreaming has been streamlined and institutionalized through various systems pertaining to the Government planning and budgeting process. Absence of the central MRG has resulted into discontinuation of the coordination and necessary support to the local MRGs. Thirdly, GECDP mainstreaming activities at the local level have been implemented as a project-tight programme of the donor-funded projects, and the programme was discontinued when those projects have ended.

### 1.2 Study Purpose and Objectives

The Department of Local Governance (DLG) had a plan under the support of the EU-TACS Project to carry out the capacity—development programme for LG functionaries on mainstreaming of GECDP



during the Financial Year 2020-2021. However, prior to implementing the programme, DLG identified the need to understand and be informed of the current situation of mainstreaming activities at the local level as inputs to designing the capacity-building programme for LG functionaries. Therefore, this study was conducted to understand the situation of the current GECDP mainstreaming practices and challenges on the ground, in terms of the best practices, constraints and needs, for incorporation in the design of the capacity-building training programmes. The specific objectives of the study were:

- a. Review policy focus and development rationale for GECDP mainstreaming in Bhutan as an integral part of sustainable development approach within the national development goal of GNH's four pillars and its domains.
- b. Take stock of the GECDP mainstreaming best practices and challenges based on the experiences of implementing GECDP mainstreaming activities in the past years.
- c. Make recommendations of strategies with the most suitable modality(s) to implement GECDP mainstreaming activities at the local level.
- d. Make recommendations on how DLG and other stakeholders may best support and monitor the implementation of GECDP mainstreaming activities by LGs.
- e. Prepare action-plans with sustainable strategies to revive the GECDP mainstreaming programme.

### 1.3 Study Approach and Methodology

The study used the qualitative assessment method with exploratory approach. It covered 17 Dzongkhags (district), representing 85% of the total Dzongkhags. Although, the study was intended to cover all 20 Dzongkhags, the three southern Dzongkhags (Sarpang, Samtse and Samdrupjongkhar) could not be included due to the travel restrictions by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The desk review (literature and secondary research) was carried out to put the meaning of GECDP mainstreaming into the context of the Bhutan's development policy and regulatory framework. It also helped to review the past GECDP mainstreaming activities, their rationale and benefits in terms of best practices.

Stakeholders' consultation at the central level was also conducted, mainly with the former members of the central-level MRG. It helped in understanding their experiences of involving in implementation of GECDP mainstreaming activities at the local level, and seeking their feedback on the strategies to design future programmes and strengthen GECDP mainstreaming activities.

The field assessment was based on the purposive sampling of respondents. The respondents were determined based on their previous involvement in GECDP mainstreaming process as local MRG members, or their current positions with responsibilities related to GECDP mainstreaming. The primary data from the field was collected by using the two main tools of Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and Key Informant Interviews (KII). While the FGD was conducted with the key sector heads of the Dzongkhag using a set of guiding questions, the KII was carried out with the local MRG members, both existing as well and the past MRG members, using a semi-structured questionnaire (Attached as Annexure).

The key study-findings were based on the KII results and the outcome of the FGDs which were used to triangulate and validate the GECDP mainstreaming situations.

### 1.4 Limitation

The study could not cover three southern Dzongkhags (Samtse, Sarpang and Samdrupjongkhar) since these Dzongkhags were identified as COVID-19 high risk area. Apart from that the pandemic has also limited the participation of some targeted KII respondents from the key sectors such as Agriculture and Forestry.

The transfer of local MRG members to other agencies have left most of the local MRGs non-functional, due to which there were not enough MRG members for KII in the Dzongkhags. At least one Dzongkhag (Punakha) did not have anyone for the KII as the district had no MRG members. As a result of this, some study findings had to be generalized based on the responses of the respondents who made it for the study.

Although some LG functionaries at the Gewog (block or the lowest tier of LG) level were involved in the past in the GECDP mainstreaming sensitization and implementation of activities, the study could not conduct any consultations at the Gewog level. This has limited the study assessment to the activities and experiences at the Dzongkhag level.

## **2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Meaning of GECDP Mainstreaming and What It Does**

Mainstreaming is understood as the process of integrating the cross-cutting socio-economic issues and opportunities (gender, environment, climate-change, disaster, poverty and other issues) into the Government's decision-making process of formulating all developmental policies, plans and programmes, including the budgeting for the planned programmes (GNHC, 2013)<sup>2</sup>. It is a process of proactively identifying the issues and opportunities, based on which right interventions are framed in the beginning of the planning stages or process (rather than when social, economic and environmental degradation have already occurred) to avoid negative consequences/impacts at a later stage (CANARI, 2008).

According to the World Resources Institute (WRI), it is the active promotion of GECDP incorporation in the identification, planning, design, negotiation, and implementation of strategies, policies and investment programs (WRI: 2005)<sup>3</sup>. It is a strategy of enhancing social, economic & environmental conditions or outcomes in an integrated & sustainable manner while pursuing the planned development goals and objectives.

The benefits of GECDP mainstreaming are many. At the level of designing development programmes, it strengthens the collaboration and partnership between the relevant stakeholders, changes the stakeholders' ways of thinking, attitude & mindset, and expands the capacities of line agencies to integrate the cross-cutting issues in the policies, plans and programmes. At the planning stage, it allows an informed inclusion of relevant socio-economic cross-cutting concerns into the decisions of institutions that drive national and sectoral development policy, rules, plans, investment and action (IIED, 2009)<sup>4</sup>. At the implementation level, it helps to incorporate cross-cutting considerations, including both opportunities and risks, into all processes and activities in the society, from the overall policy and strategic level to the daily actions.

GECDP mainstreaming recognizes that the environment is the ultimate resource on which all development depends. It also recognizes that environment while providing an opportunity for development has a limit, which if overexploited can be constraining to the health of the environment and detrimental to sustainable socio-economic development. The mainstreaming approach changes the "development versus environment" debate to one of "development that utilizes resources sustainably", placing particular emphasis on the opportunities the environment provides for development that is sustainable, inclusive and pro-poor.

Specifically, GECDP mainstreaming has the following benefits:

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<sup>2</sup>GNHC, 2013: Framework to mainstream GECDP issues into Local Government Plans and Programmes.

<sup>3</sup>Seymour et al, 2005: World Resources Institute.

<sup>4</sup> IIED, 2009.

- Help understand the development from the systems perspective (e.g environmental assets & services, bio-physical, social & economic features, parameters & conditions, inputs & outputs of plans, projects & activities, etc)
- Promotion of awareness of how plans and projects, & engineering designs/activities result in changes to the systems.
- Seeking the best ways and means of avoiding, minimizing and remedying impacts in development plans, projects and activities.
- Be able to identify social, economic and environmental issues/pressures, opportunities, unintended and negative impacts associated with the development plans, projects and activities.
- Help formulate interventions, design modifications and alternatives (engineering) to mitigate impacts for improvements and changes to plans, projects and activities.
- Incorporation of sustainability components of resource efficiency and its fair use, pro-poor and decent jobs, climate-change adaptation, in the course of planning, designing and implementing development programmes.

GECDP mainstreaming is a multi-year and multi-stakeholder effort. It requires the involvement of policy-makers, planners, finance personnel and implementers at the national, sectoral and sub-national levels. It involves use of specific tools depending on the nature and level of program and activities. Effective GECDP mainstreaming increases the possibility of identifying interventions that are “win- win” in nature, *i.e.*, programs and operations that produce clear co-benefits for both long-term socio-development prospects and environmental sustainability. Better sequencing of development interventions and technical assistance

## 2.2 Relevance of GECDP mainstreaming with Bhutan’s Development Policy Focus and Framework

Although Bhutan is a small and landlocked Himalayan country, it prides in its abounding ecological richness. From having been the protective shield from the alien political intruders to becoming the cause for evolution of a uniquely Bhutanese tradition and culture, it is, today, the country’s iconic conservation element to the envy of ‘developed’ countries whose industrialization and GDP-maximising development approach has failed to provide the fundamental human value and need of ‘happiness’ (RGoB, 1995)<sup>5</sup>. Bhutan’s comfort and wellbeing of its people in today’s global community is defined in its lush environment being the single-most soul and lifeline of strengthening its social, economic, cultural as well as political security (*ibid*).

This has given the otherwise economically-and-technologically-poor Bhutan no better reason for its cautionary move right from the inception of planned development process, for the pre-emptive notion that environmental degradation and unsustainable consumption of natural resources would be metaphoric to digging one’s own grave, notwithstanding depriving future generation the right of a meaningful life. Such an indisputable consideration of environmental protection and conservation of the country’s natural fortune has justified for its adoption as one of the pillars of the country’s overarching development goal of ‘Gross National Happiness’. To this effect, environment preservation and safeguarding biodiversity to ensure pursuit of ecologically balanced sustainable development is secured as constitutional provision<sup>6</sup> that stipulates maintaining 60% of the country’s total land area under forest cover in all time to come.

Within the framework of GNH-based development approach, Bhutan’s development focus lies in the pursuit for a broad based and holistic sustainable economic growth to embrace quality of life as the ultimate end of development. With people’s wellbeing and happiness at the center of this overall development goal, environment conservation, preservation of traditions and culture, and good governance mutually reinforce each other as the key development strategies.

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<sup>5</sup> RGOB, 1999: Bhutan 2020 - Vision for Peace, Prosperity and Happiness.

<sup>6</sup> Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, Article 5, Clause 2 & 3.

Poverty alleviation is at the core of all these development strategies. With about 70% of the country's population living in rural areas on subsistence agriculture, poverty incidence in the rural areas is higher than urban areas. As a means to accelerate poverty alleviation and strengthen balanced socio-economic development, the country continues to focus on empowering people at the local level in terms of providing greater support for development assistance as well as capacity development of the LG functionaries.

The Government's emphasis on integrated development governance capacity at the LG level is founded on two key premises. Firstly, about 70% of the country's population is still rural-based and that poverty incidence at the local level (30.9%) is higher than urban areas (1.7%)<sup>7</sup>. The rural populace depends largely on environment for their livelihoods, and therefore, they are affected the most by the environmental hazards. Various development activities aimed at poverty alleviation are implemented with substantial cost to environment, making the environment more vulnerable to degradation. Further, as a result of increasing human development activities, climate-change effects are emerging as a substantial threat to the local economy.

Secondly, the governance system is based on strengthening of decentralization with increased devolution of functional and financial assignments to LGs<sup>8</sup>. Financial resources are channelled directly to LG Administrations, at whose discretion the local-level development activities, including those related to environment and climate-change, are planned and implemented locally with least dependency to the central agencies (GNHC, 2018)<sup>9</sup>. In this respect, in order for LGs to ensure that their development plans and programmes are climate-proof and responsive to environment degradation, they must be capable to integrate and mainstream cross-cutting linkages and effects so that the short-term development priorities do not affect them with long-term livelihood sustainability cost. Therefore, the Government puts considerable efforts to train and build the capacity of LG functionaries to handle the LG affairs in a manner that befit national objective of decentralization and democratic governance, while empowering themselves to take care of their present as well as future wellbeing through sustainable development planning and implementation approaches (DLG, 2015)<sup>10</sup>.

### 2.3 Rationale for GECDP mainstreaming in Bhutan, in particular at the local level

Bhutan's rich ecology and natural environmental assets is an indispensable partner to the country's development. As such, environment degradation and unsustainable consumption of natural resources would deprive both the present as well as future generation the right to a meaningful life.

Environment protection and conservation of the country's natural fortune is one of the pillars of the country's development goal of 'Gross National Happiness'. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan (Article 5) upholds environment preservation and safeguarding biodiversity for ecologically balanced sustainable development, and promulgates to maintain 60% of the country's total land area under forest cover for all time to come. To this effect, Bhutan's Five-Year Plans have been always designed to uphold the national goal of sustainable development planning and implementation, and to pursue carbon neutral and climate resilient development, through development plans and programmes that are environment/eco-friendly, sustainable and use natural resources efficiently.

However, with the increasing population and urbanization taking place, pressure on natural resources for development has also increased which has result into a lot of negative impacts. The importance of environmental sustainability and sustainable use of natural resources is often realized in the end, only when there is a crisis affecting the society or general public. This is primarily because the cravings for the immediate economic and personal gains overpower possible negative consequences in the future from the inappropriate use of ecological and natural resources. Driven by the need to satisfy present desires, environment is used as a one-time development tool, instead of using it as a resource for all

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<sup>7</sup> GNHC, 2013: Guideline for Preparation of 11<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan, RGoB.

<sup>8</sup> Parliament of Bhutan, 2009: Local Government Act 2009, RGoB.

<sup>9</sup> GNHC, 2018: Guideline for Preparation of 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan, RGoB

<sup>10</sup> DLG, 2015: Mainstreaming GECDP into the Development Policies, Plans and Programmes in Bhutan: Experiences, challenges and Lessons, RGoB.

times. The most common practice today is to pursue a development against environment, instead of considering environment as an opportunity for development.

Most socio-economic development implemented for poverty alleviation impacts environment sustainability, since the primary source of livelihood for a majority of rural poor is the natural resources in their locality. Ecosystem goods and services form critical components of good health, habitable environs and resiliency for the poor people. Degradation of ecosystem goods and services for socio-economic development activities reduces access for the rural poor to the natural resources resulting in exacerbation of poverty incidence, while compromising the natural resource capital for economic development (GNHC, 2013).

The need for GECDP mainstreaming in Bhutan is also fostered by rising incidences of natural disasters that makes the country's economy more vulnerable. The country is facing the challenges posed by glacial lake outburst floods (GLOF), changes in weather pattern, temperature rise, and land degradation caused by landslides, soil erosion, droughts and pest & diseases.

Bhutan is also a partner to the ratification of international conventions, such as Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for its international partners to address the urgent human development priorities such as "eradicating extreme poverty, promoting inclusive economic growth with decent work for all, reducing inequalities in all its dimensions, creating sustainable cities and addressing climate-change" (United Nations, 2015). Gender, environmental, climate-change, poverty and disaster-risk reduction concerns were placed as top priorities among these important 17 Sustainable Goals and 169 targets setting out an ambitious vision for sustainable development that integrates its economic, social and environmental dimensions.

## 2.4 Impetus of GECDP mainstreaming in Bhutan and Practices

GECDP mainstreaming in Bhutan came into a full force with the preparation of the 11<sup>th</sup> FYP. The 11<sup>th</sup> FYP consolidated the Bhutan's efforts of mainstreaming the cross-cutting issues by adopting its overall development goal as 'Self-reliance and Inclusive Green Socio-economic Development'. This FYP's goal paved the path for low-carbon and environment friendly development while at the same time prioritizing economic and social development through resilient, inclusive and sustainable approaches. It reinforced the development and economic growth along a GNH-based middle path, focussing on the real-life outcomes built on the strategies that integrate gender, tradition and culture, pro-poor, low carbon, eco-friendly, disaster and climate adaptation and mitigation, energy and cost-efficient modalities. In order to make mainstreaming more pragmatic with a sustainable and holistic plan formulation, the guideline for the preparation of 11<sup>th</sup> FYP put a requirement for all central and local agencies to formulate and integrated GECDP mainstreaming into development plans and programmes.

To this effect, there have been formal Government-led initiatives to mainstream these cross-cutting issues by establishing national GECDP Mainstreaming Reference Group (MRG) with an executive order from the Prime Minister based on the decision of the 151<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Council of Cabinet Ministers (CCM)<sup>11</sup>. The executive order was accompanied by the ToR for the MRG and appointment of members from various relevant agencies, including the academic and training institutes. The MRG then initiated series of advocacy on the concept and capacity-development workshops on GECDP mainstreaming including the advisory support to the key stakeholders at different levels of the development sectors.

In line with the 11<sup>th</sup> FYP guideline requirement, the MRG facilitated to carry out a hands-on exercise to the LGs on identification of GECDP pressures and mitigation measures. The outcome of the exercise was later compiled and published as the GECDP mainstreaming framework. In subsequent years, the MRG carried out series of trainings, orientation and workshops for the LG functionaries as well as the stakeholders at the community level. At the same time, local MRGs were established with the objective of institutionalizing the responsibility and practice of GECDP mainstreaming at the local level. With the

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<sup>11</sup> Executive Order of the Prime Minister, RGoB dated 15 January 2013.

support of the central MRG, local MRGs carried out GECDP mainstreaming activities using the discretionary grants they availed.

In addition, the Government has made various efforts on GECDP mainstreaming through other interventions, such as i) the rural economic advancement programme, ii) targeted household poverty programme, iii) adoption of national gender equality policy, iv) national waste management strategy 2019, v) national environment strategy, vi) climate change policy 2020: national strategy and action plan for low carbon development 2012, vii) nationally determined contribution 2021, viii) disaster contingency planning guidelines for Bhutan 2014, ix) national recovery and reconstruction plan, x) GNH policy screening tools; and many others. These formal documents lay out the principles and framework for effective mainstreaming of these GECDP issues into the development plans and programmes.

The need for GECDP mainstreaming has also influenced the preparation and implementation of the 12<sup>th</sup> FYP<sup>12</sup>, with an inclusion of three key Local Government Key Result Areas (LGKRAs) for gender, climate-change, disaster and poverty. The 12 FYP Guideline also included a separate chapter requiring the sectors to implement the six-step mainstreaming framework while formulating their development plans and programmes.

## 2.5 Best Practices and Constraints of GECDP mainstreaming at the local level, and the Needs for Reinforcement

There is no study done on the impact and outcome of GECDP mainstreaming in the LG plans and programmes. The evaluation on 11<sup>th</sup> FYP's mid-term and end-term were general and did not have specific relevance to GECDP mainstreaming.

However, a rapid assessment study commissioned in 2017 by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the MRG as a GECDP mainstreaming mechanism has some analysis done on the effectiveness of the GECDP programme<sup>13</sup>. The assessment has found out that the influence of the central MRG mechanism has resulted in the improvement of the country's policy formulation process. Under the central MRG's recommendation, the National Protocol for Policy Formulation was revised incorporating GECDP factors and was endorsed by the Cabinet in March 2015. The revised protocol clearly stipulates that all GECDP issues are required to be addressed from the early stage of policy formulation and that GECDP focal persons (if they are appointed) are to be engaged in the policy screening process.

The other outcome of the central MRG mechanism was the production of the 11<sup>th</sup> FYP programme that adopted a GECDP-integrated overall plan objective of self-reliance and inclusive green socio-economic development. A separate GECDP Mainstreaming Framework was developed and issued as a guideline to help LGs prepare a GECDP-integrated programmes. Further, to strengthen the GECDP-integrated planning process, the Local Development Planning Manual (LDPM) 2009 was revised in 2014 with incorporation of three new GECDP mainstreaming tools: (a) critical reflection and challenging assumption; (b) situation assessment through GECDP lens; and (c) situation assessment through GNH lens.

The assessment has also revealed that the series of sensitisation workshops, orientations and trainings conducted by central MRG have helped a wide range of target groups at the central and local levels in understanding GECDP mainstreaming concept and rationale. To sustain the GECDP mainstreaming, the central MRG has facilitated in the development and infusion of GECDP mainstreaming modules in relevant regular courses of the College of Science and Technology, Sherubtse College, and Royal Institute of Management.

The whole process of GECDP mainstreaming exercise in the 11<sup>th</sup> FYP has spilled over to the formulation and implementation of the 12<sup>th</sup> FYP, which adopted the overall objective of "just, harmonious and sustainable society through enhanced decentralization." Just society emphasises on the need for providing equitable access to resources and opportunities to all citizens, and include two of the GECDP

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<sup>12</sup> 2018-2023.

<sup>13</sup> UNDP/UNEP, 2017: Mainstreaming Reference Group Mechanism in Bhutan – Rapid Assessment Report and Sustainable Plan.

elements: eradicating poverty and reducing inequality; and promoting gender equality. Similarly, harmonious society envisages a harmonious society in nature, culture and traditions while maintaining healthy eco-system for carbon-neutral and climate-resilient development. Priorities to achieve a sustainable society include the GECDP-relevant elements of enhancing economic diversity and productive capacities; and ensuring water, food and nutrition security.

Out of 16 National Key Result Areas (NKRAs), four were incorporated in the 12<sup>th</sup> FYP that are directly related to GECDP: poverty eradication of and inequality reduction; enhancement of climate-neutral and climate/disaster-resilient development; and, empowerment of gender equality, women and girls. There are three mandatory GECDP-related Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the Agency Key Result Areas (AKRA), including the disaster management and contingency plan. Eight mandatory KPIs are specified for Local Government Key Result Areas (LGKRAs), including waste management, water security, employment creation, and disaster management and contingency plan. These requirements for the 12<sup>th</sup> FYP has led to incorporating a separate chapter (Part X: Mainstreaming Cross-cutting Themes) in the 12<sup>th</sup> FYP preparation guideline (GNHC, 2017)<sup>14</sup>.

However, the rapid assessment report (ibid) pointed out that there is little evidence of how GECDP mainstreaming at the policy level and in upstream strategic and planning frameworks has translated to mainstreaming of local development investments on the ground. Local development investments, such as farm roads, bridges, irrigation systems and rural water supply schemes, continue to be immensely vulnerable to climate change and disaster risks. The local MRGs' capacity is limited to their fair understanding on the concept and rationale of GECDP mainstreaming, but lacked in-depth hands-on knowledge, skills and tools on 'how to' mainstream GECDP aspects at the local development investment/activity level. The other constraints of GECDP mainstreaming process is the higher associated costs, which impinge on available local development funds, resulting into the reluctance and resistance from LG authorities for GECDP-mainstreamed activities. The long-term benefits of GECDP-mainstreamed activities are overpowered by the immediate short-term benefits costs.

The report also attributes unsustainability of GECDP mainstreaming at the local level to the premature dissolution of central MRG that withdrew guidance and technical backstopping to the local MRG. Finally, the GECDP mainstreaming at the local level was supported by the limited and thinly spread-out resources. The resources were allocated from the time-bound donor-funded projects, and the whole mainstreaming activities had come to an end when the projects ended. Therefore, the GECDP mainstreaming at the local level were ended just when the process was beginning to make some effect. The GECDP mainstreaming action plans at the local level were effective only when there were financial resources and support from the central MRG.

### **3. FINDINGS**

#### **3.1 Knowledge and Responsibility of GECDP Mainstreaming at the Local Level**

The participants of the study composed of representatives of the key sectors responsible for the coordination of planning and implementation of development activities at the local level. They included the Dzongkhag Planning, Environment, Finance, Engineering, Agriculture, Gender focal, and Disaster-management units. All these were relevant to the GECDP mainstreaming. Specifically, for the KII, the respondents were limited to the local MRG members, either in the past or the incumbent members of the Dzongkhag concerned. The respondents also had a fair representative of females (18%).

In terms of qualification, all respondents had a minimum of bachelor's degree, with some of them with master's degree as shown in the below figure 1. The figure 2 shows the experience in GECDP mainstreaming varied from one to nine years.

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<sup>14</sup> GNHC, 2017: Guideline for the Preparation of 12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan 2018 -2023.

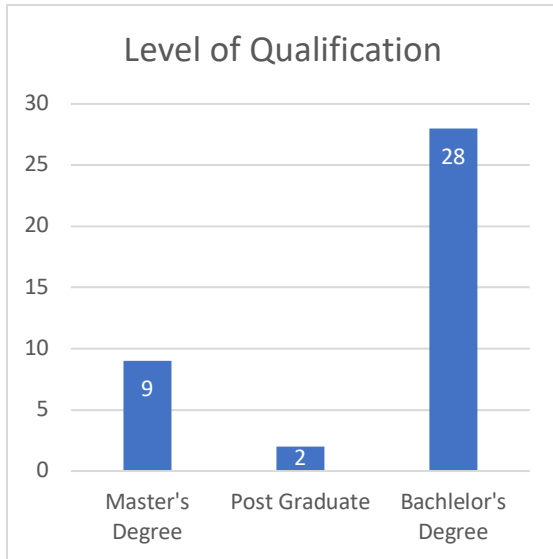


Figure 1: Respondents (KII) by level of academic qualification.

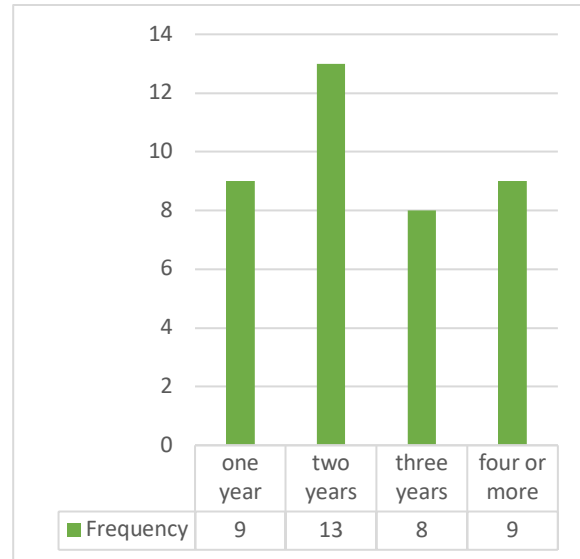


Figure 2: Number of years as MRG member

Both in terms of qualification and experience in GECDP mainstreaming, it is evident that the respondents have the basic knowledge of the concept and rationale of GECDP mainstreaming. While the general sector representatives could link the concept of GECDP mainstreaming with the overall focus of the country's development, those KII respondents had the skills and knowledge on the GECDP mainstreaming tools. There were no respondent both in the FGD and KII who disagreed with the meaning and benefits of GECDP mainstreaming as:

- An integration of cross-cutting issues and opportunities in the decision-making processes with proactive interventions at early stages to enhance social, economic and environmental development outcomes.
- An active promotion of GECDP elements in the identification, planning, design, negotiation, and implementation of strategies, policies and investment programmes.
- An informed inclusion of relevant social, environmental and economic concerns into the decisions of institutions that drive national and sectoral development policy, rules, plans, investment and action.
- The process of integrating environmental considerations, including both opportunities and risks, into all processes and activities in the society, from the overall policy and strategic level to the daily actions of each and all of us.

More specifically, the KII results showed that 95% (37 out of 39) of the respondents considered the importance of GECDP mainstreaming to be able to integrate the cross-cutting issues and opportunities in the decision-making processes with proactive interventions at early stages. At least 33% (13 out of 39) of the respondents considered all four as the meaning and benefits of the GECDP mainstreaming.

The respondents also indicated a good knowledge and understanding of the long-term benefits of GECDP mainstreaming. A majority of them confirmed their understanding that GECDP mainstreaming would reinforce fundamental interdependence of socio-economic development and environmental resources with impacts that cut across all development sectors. Other respondents shared their opinion on GECDP mainstreaming as the tool to change the mindset and attitude in not using the natural assets unsustainably, and preventing the social and economic crisis resulting from natural hazards induced by



man-made development activities from the initial stages of development plan formulation and implementation.

It can be observed in the figure 3 that 33 out of 39 (85%) of the respondents agrees that Bhutan as a landlocked and mountainous country which is highly dependent on natural resources for its social and economic subsistence. The GECDP mainstreaming plays important role for the sustainable revenue generation out of the natural assets. The respondents believed that without proper GECDP mainstreaming, Bhutan’s economic sectors such as agriculture, hydropower & tourism would be susceptible to climate-change impacts, and affects the sustainable development activities with negative impacts on the people, especially the poor and the disadvantaged, including women and children. These results show that the study participants at the LG level are aware of why the Government is encouraging GECDP mainstreaming.

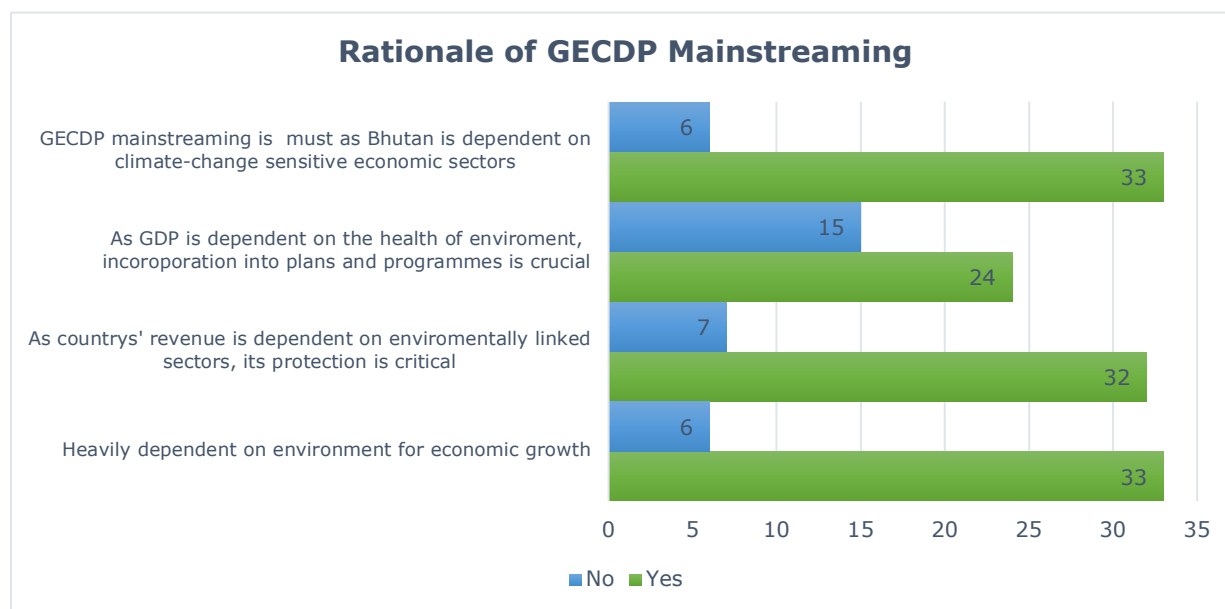


Figure 3: Rationale of GECDP mainstreaming in Bhutan

Almost all the respondents know that the GNH-based development principles, constitutional provisions and sustainable development requirements are put in place as the GECDP mainstreaming measures. Based on their understanding of the meaning and benefits of GECDP mainstreaming, respondents also shared their acknowledgement and acceptance that GECDP mainstreaming at the local level is more important as the negative impacts of climate-change are more on the people in the rural areas who live with higher poverty incidence.

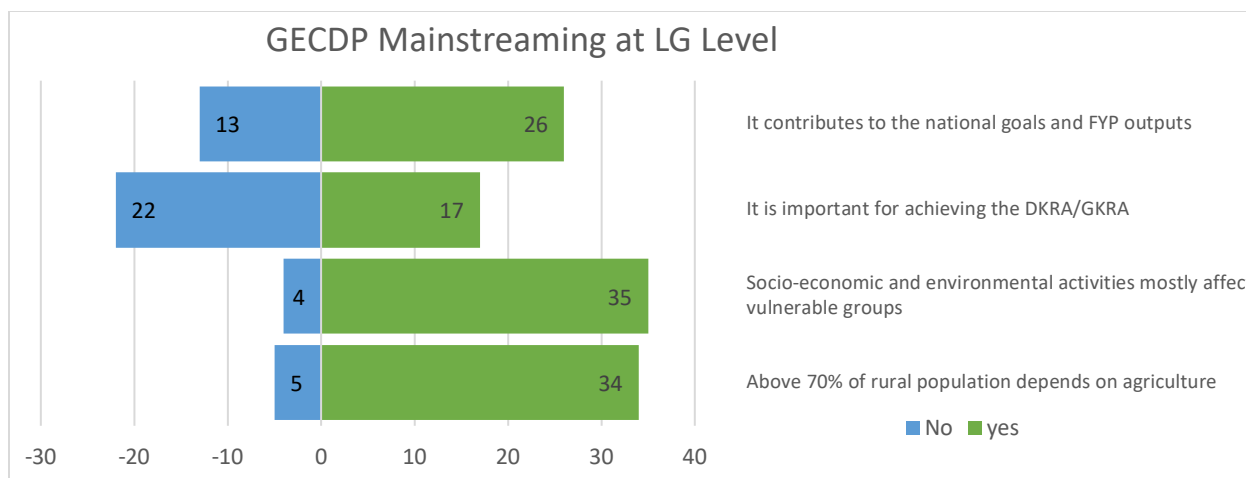


Figure 4: Reason for GECDP mainstreaming at LG level

However, FGD results revealed that the LG functionaries are not fully aware of how the GECDP mainstreaming concept and tools are implemented in the process of their routine development plan formulation and implementation. For instance, they did not agree that some of the SKRAs and LGKRAs of the 12<sup>th</sup> FYP are put as a strategy for GECDP mainstreaming. It indicates that their knowledge and understanding on the GECDP mainstreaming are limited to the theoretical concept, and there is a need to translate the theory of GECDP mainstreaming into practice.

### 3.2 Institutional Mechanisms and Practice of GECDP Mainstreaming at the Local Level

The assessment shows that prior to the formalization of GECDP mainstreaming at the local level through the establishment of local MRGs, the individual sectors or units took the responsibility of GECDP mainstreaming. However, most respondents thought that the practice of GECDP mainstreaming came into force only with the activities of local MRG.

The below figure 5 shows a large number of the respondents (64%) said the appointment of the local MRG members was made from the relevant sectors and composition was good for its roles and responsibilities. However, a significant number of respondent (53%) also said that they were not satisfied with how they coordinated within themselves. It shows that there were differences among the MRG members representing different sectors in terms of implementing the type of GECDP mainstreaming activities.

In general, there is an undisputed acceptance that the formation of MRG at the Dzongkhags helped increase the sensitization and enhance the knowledge on GECDP mainstreaming. Local MRGs' activities were influential in advocating and bringing on board other important development stakeholders for inter-sectoral collaboration and coordination. Nevertheless, some respondents thought that the impacts were not significant, as constraints like lack of adequate financial resources did not allow implementation of activities that are tangible.

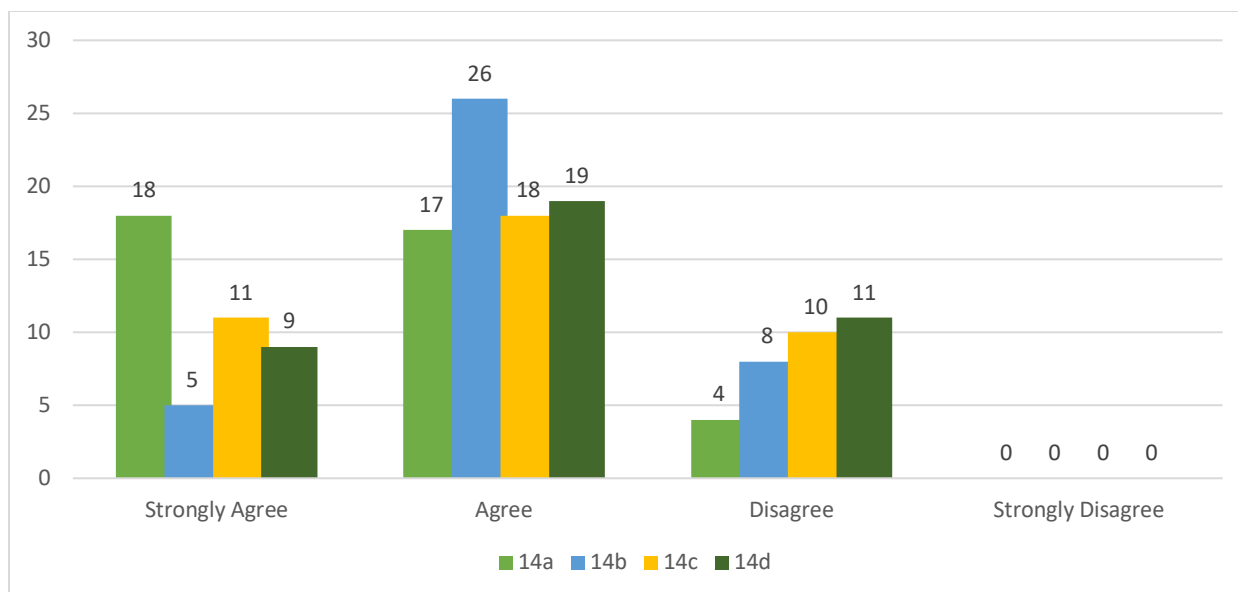


Figure 5: Level of agreement on the impact made by local MRG

### 3.3 Status of MRGs at the local level and their functions

The study shows that the current situation of local MRG is ambiguous. It exists in terms of the availability of members. However, they do not function, and therefore, inactive. 82% of the respondents said that local MRG was not functional and 18% reported that it was operational in some manner.

The reasons cited for non-functional and inactive of the local MRGs are:

- The erstwhile MRG members were transferred to other agencies or jobs, and they were not replaced. New members were not trained on GECDP mainstreaming and did not have the capacity to coordinate activities.
- In some cases, the membership was individual-based and not by the position. For example, if a Planning Officer who was a member got transferred to another agency, the incoming planning officer did not become the member of MRG.
- Previous MRGs functioned well because of the support made available from the donor-supported-projects. When the projects ended, MRG became non-functional as there was no financial support and activities got discontinued.
- Change in leadership, member composition and absence of dedicated focal points or officials to coordinate the mainstreaming activities.

The KIIs findings is validated with the findings of stakeholders' consultation with the former central MRG members. In addition to the frequent transfers of MRG members who were not-replaced, the whole GECDP mainstreaming programme was intended to be supported until the time it is integrated and institutionalized within the formal planning and budgeting system of the Government. As per the UNEP's rapid assessment report, it has found out that the central MRG was not conceived to function as a perennial entity and was envisaged to become defunct after awareness and capacity for mainstreaming was built within the sectors and LGs. This objective was assumed to be achieved after the formulation of the 11<sup>th</sup> FYP, with incorporation of the GECDP-integrated SKRAs, LGKRAs and the GECDP mainstreaming guiding framework. Moreover, with the revision of LDMP with some GECDP-inclusive process steps, it was presumed that GECDP mainstreaming got institutionalised. This was reassured with the formulation of the 12<sup>th</sup> FYP with a full emphasis on GECDP mainstreaming criteria.

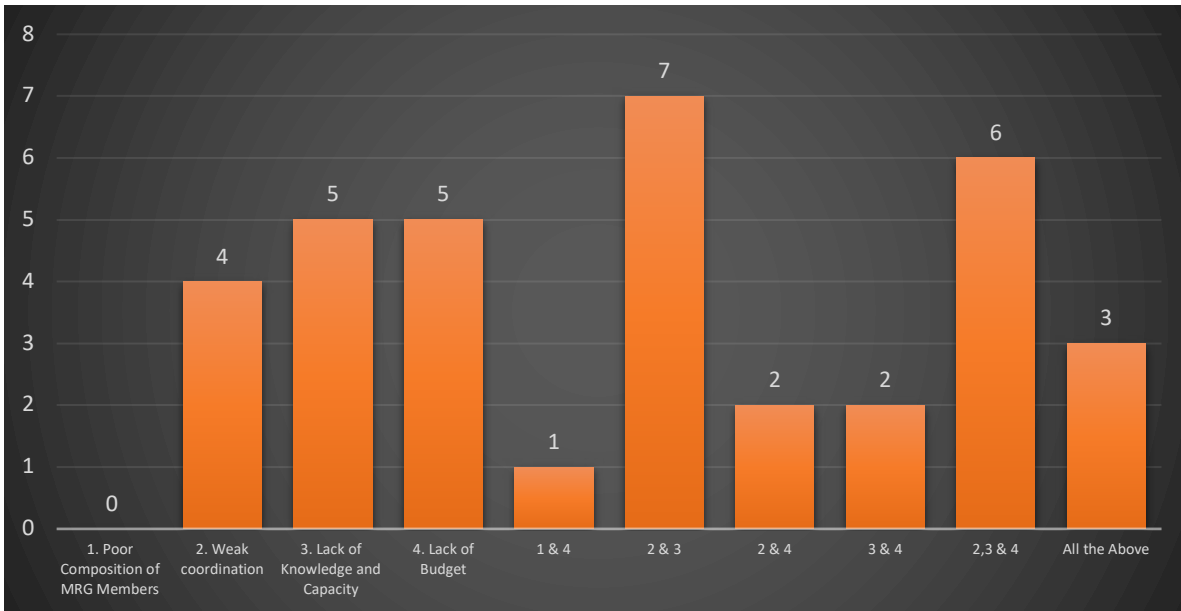


Figure 6: Reasons for local MRGs to be non-functional and inactive

However, there is a general agreement that the local MRG should be revived, with a proper mandate, responsibilities and financial support with sustainable functioning modality. This is because even though GECDP mainstreaming appeared to have been integrated at the policy level, it is far from making an impact on the ground with visible results of implementation. The central level MRG played a critical role in sensitising, orienting and training the local MRGs with basic GECDP mainstreaming tools, and also supported with mobilisation of financial support to fill up the funding gaps at the local level for GECDP mainstreaming activities. However, just as the local MRGs were beginning to get formalised with some activities, the central MRG has been dissolved and that led to a natural death of the local MRGs as they could not sustain without policy support to continue, or the technical back-up of skills and financing strategies.

Today, the local MRGs stand non-existent, mainly because of their non-functionality even when there are members. As such, they do not take-up any GECDP mainstreaming activities apart from a few related activities that are included in the FYP or annual plan.

### 3.4 Practices, Constraints and Perspectives of strengthening GECDP Mainstreaming at the Local Level

It was found out that there are some good practices in the LG level where some activities implemented are linked with the GECDP mainstreaming. For example, activities such as sustainable land management plans, application of bio-engineering techniques in construction works, flood prevention and mitigation work, watershed management and conservation, disaster-risk reduction works (construction of storm water drainages), supplying hybrid/improved seeds, developing protected agriculture, including improved irrigation, improved cattle rearing, solar fencing and plantations are the visible GECDP mainstreaming activities.

Some specific examples of GECDP mainstreaming activities implemented by LGs are: Chukha Dzongkhag's monthly cleaning of Chudzom-Rinchending highway by the Gewogs, regional offices and institutions; construction of waste collection centers in three villages (Wangjikha, Rinchengang and Jatshokha) of Thedtsho Gewog under Wangduephodrang Dzongkhag.



Punakha Dzongkhag has developed around 80 acres of land for the climate-change adaptation activities. In Lhuentse Dzongkhag, women were trained to sustain the traditional practice of producing the locally-famed *Kushuthara*<sup>15</sup> as a means to not only preserve the culture, but also as a way of sustaining the revenue for household economy. Trongsa Dzongkhag has up-scaled the waste management activities, and Bumthang Dzongkhag has collaborated with the Natural Resources Development Corporation Limited in sustainable collection of non-wood forestry and river products. Bumthang Dzongkhag has also streamlined and rationalized the allocation of timber for household use, with the objective of reducing unreasonable extraction of timber and inculcating sustainable consumption habits in the people.

Other activities include formation of farmers' groups; afforestation/reforestation and community forestry schemes; rain-water harvesting practices; adoption of climate-smart technologies and machinery in agriculture; promotion of indigenous livestock breed; gender-friendly public toilets; and, promotion of community eco-tourism activities.

These evidences indicate that the practice of GECDP mainstreaming at the local level is not totally non-existent. With the continuity of sensitization and capacity-building programmes, there are opportunities of strengthening, particularly with the Government's policy focus and drive for sustainable, inclusive and holistic growth.

The following perspectives of constraints and means of strengthening GECDP mainstreaming at the local level:

(a) Financial support

Lack of funding has affected the strengthening of GECDP mainstreaming in LGs. Respondents shared that the implementation of GECDP activity is costly. It requires huge investment depending on the

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<sup>15</sup> A popular handwoven silk textile with intricate design.

nature of the investments/activities. The additional costs over the available local development fund results in the reluctance and resistance to mainstream GECDP issues effectively. The current practice in LG is that the limited budget is thinly spread over numerous activities, rendering the MRG plans the least priority or partial implementation. There is no separate fund allocated for the implementation of GECDP activities. Moreover, there is a lack of funding to build the capacity of local MRG members and sector officials. This finding also shows that GECDP mainstreaming concept and rationale could be oriented or sensitized to central and local level officials, and influence the authorities concerned to make separate fund allocation using the RAF modality.

#### (b) Technical Capacity

Even though there is a good understanding of the concept and principles of GECDP mainstreaming, LGs are constrained by skills and capacity to implement the GECDP mainstreaming practically. This is due to most of the relevant LG functionaries being new to the GECDP mainstreaming practice as they were not previously involved in the programme. This has hindered their capacity to take GECDP mainstreaming process to the next level. Lack of technical backstopping support from central agencies impeded the growth of expertise at the local level.

In this regard, the GECDP mainstreaming at the local level needs to be supported by the central agencies concerned through an appropriate mechanism to drive the implementation of GECDP mainstreaming activities.

#### (c) Ownership and sustainability

The assessment found out that GECDP mainstreaming has been considered as a stand-alone programme initiated as a project-tied activity. It has resulted in the discontinuity of the programme when the donor-supported projects and support by the central MRG have been withdrawn. LGs have failed to build the linkage of the GECDP mainstreaming concept and practice with the Government's development framework of sustainable development, inclusive growth and integrated development. This has resulted in the Dzongkhags not taking the ownership and responsibility of GECDP mainstreaming as the part and parcel of their regular development plan formulation and implementation. As such, the MRG members were not replaced when transferred or the existing MRG members have not pursued the responsibility of GECDP mainstreaming. It was observed that the LGs feels GECDP is the mandate of the central agencies like DLG and GNHC.

In this respect, there is a need to promote GECDP mainstreaming as a tool for sustainable plan formulation and implementation of the LGs' regular FYP and annual programmes. The LGs need to be sensitized and inculcate the sense of ownership and responsibility on how the LG plans and programmes would go without mainstreaming GECDP at the LGs level.

#### (d) Coordination and linkage between the functions and priorities of central agencies, LGs, and regional offices

The success of the GECDP programmes largely depend on the proper coordination between the sectors in the LGs. The assessment observed that there is a poor coordination system between central agencies and LGs, and between sectors, Dzongkhags and regional offices. With regards to terms of GECDP mainstreaming, it was felt that it is the core mandate of the Dzongkhags.

There is an absence of integrated planning system across the sectors and regional offices and thus the planning and implementation of activities are carried out in isolation. There is also a lack of integrated and area-based planning carried out in the LGs which impedes the integrated planning system.

Different agencies have developed laws and policies that are not consistently applied. Some locally conflicting activities not accorded approval at the LG levels are accorded approval from the central agencies. For instance, huge number of farm roads are constructed without compliance to environmental and disaster safety concerns.

This has resulted in having the main objective of GECDP mainstreaming defeated and not achieved any benefits of promoting participatory engagement, consultative approach of local economic development,

inclusive growth and sustainability. The whole idea of constituting MRG with members from all relevant sectors have not benefited, and appropriate interventions are necessary to strengthen sectoral coordination.

(e) Aligning GECDP components against LG pledges and political will

The assessment found that Dzongkhags and Gewogs find difficult to align the GECDP components with political pledges, as the focus of pledges are short-term interests without so much of concerns on the negative impacts, while the GECDP mainstreaming needs a long-term investment with higher costs. This sidelines the GECDP mainstreaming of the LG plans and programmes as the limited budget is thinly spread over a greater number of short-term deliverables. Also, it was shared that GECDP activities are also superseded by interventions from central government, whereby LGs are required to implement ad hoc activities.

(f) Nationally-driven Guideline and mandate for GECDP Mainstreaming

The literature review reveals that the local MRGs were established with a clear ToR. Stakeholders' consultation at the central level also revealed that the local MRG members were adequately sensitized on the ToR, based on which they were trained on the GECDP mainstreaming process and skills. However, in the due course of time, non-replacement of some members who left the positions and unawareness of the new members on the MRG functions displaced the presence of MRG. The change of leadership also affected the GECDP mainstreaming differently, as some leaders did not take the ownership of the responsibility of GECDP mainstreaming through the use of the local MRGs. Further, the MRG was considered as a group that had to do with a project-based activity and not like other regular committees.

In this regard, the study participants shared their perspectives on the need to put in place at the outset a clear nationally-driven guideline on GECDP mainstreaming, and mandate the LGs to institutionalize the GECDP mainstreaming process. Based on this guideline, the GECDP mainstreaming mechanism should be reviewed, with the revival of local MRG or other appropriate arrangement in place. It should be function based on a clear ToR/Guideline and their deliverables should be linked with the performance-based evaluation system.

(g) Lack of constant monitoring and evaluation

It was shared that there is a lack of constant monitoring and evaluation of GECDP mainstreaming system and process by the central agencies (DLG and GNHC). Even though the local development planning and prioritization matrix seems to require incorporation of GECDP mainstreaming elements, they are often ignored and missed during the actual plan formulation and prioritization process. The GECDP mainstreaming tools incorporated in the LDPM are hardly used, and the effective use of LG plan formulation and budgeting process are least monitored.

There is also no linkage between GECDP mainstreaming process and Annual Performance Agreement (APA) system. Thus, GECDP mainstreaming and its outcome are not counted in the performance evaluation system. This resulted in the GECDP mainstreaming to be ignored or given the least preference over other performance-based responsibility that are evaluated by the APA system.

## **4. SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED ACTION PLAN**

### **4.1 Synthesis of Findings and Lessons**

#### **Rationale of GECDP Mainstreaming and Knowledge of LGs to Mainstream GECDP Issues:**

The study shows that the initiative of GECDP mainstreaming has direct relevance and linkage with the country's development philosophy and principles. Literature review reveals that the drive for GECDP mainstreaming is based on the country's overall development goals and objectives within the GNH-framework. The policy and regulatory instruments such as the Constitution, Acts and Regulations also uphold the need for GECDP mainstreaming in local development plans and programmes. Further, the Government reforms of deepening decentralisation and democratic governance system requires enhancement of LGs' capacity to manage their own affairs in a manner that is inclusive and sustainable.

The study findings indicate that Dzongkhags' sector representatives have good knowledge and understanding of the concept and rationale of GECDP mainstreaming. They acknowledged the importance of GECDP mainstreaming and understand the long-term benefits the GECDP mainstreaming process would bring.

However, there is a gap in translating the theory into practice. The sector representatives are not fully aware that the reasons for some SKRAs and LGKRA of the FYP are put as GECDP mainstreaming checks. Therefore, there is a wide gap between the theoretical knowledge and practical implementation of GECDP mainstreaming.

#### **GECDP Mainstreaming Practices and Mechanism at the LGs Level:**

GECDP mainstreaming at the local level is based on the national drive for GECDP mainstreaming across the development sectors at all levels. The central MRG played a critical role in taking the GECDP mainstreaming forward, including the facilitation of establishing local MRGs and capacitating them on the GECDP mainstreaming concept, needs and tools.

The drive from the central government on GECDP mainstreaming provided a strong basis and opportunity to cascade the practice in LGs. Even though the individual sector took the responsibility of GECDP mainstreaming in some ways before, it gained an increased momentum after the establishment of local MRGs. The activities of Dzongkhag MRGs helped increase the knowledge on GECDP mainstreaming and improved the intersectoral collaboration and coordination of LG plan formulation and implementation.

However, various issues limited the effective implementation of GECDP mainstreaming at the local level. Currently, the local MRGs are non-functional and inactive. The reason ranges from unclear policy directive from the central government, limited or lack of resources, lack of ownership & effective leadership and absence of technical support on practical skills of implementing the activities. Nevertheless, the study shows strong recommendation to revive the local MRGs supported by other backstopping arrangements in place under central government's leadership and support. The fact that GECDP mainstreaming process has been integrated at the policy level, there are still gaps in making impact on the ground with visible results.

#### **Strengths and Opportunities of GECDP Mainstreaming at the LGs level**

At the outset, the impetus for GECDP mainstreaming programme originated from the central Government, and is pushed down to the LGs as a policy directive. The process is based on the country's key development objective and approach within the overarching development philosophy of GNH.

GECDP mainstreaming initiative is also in congruence with the Bhutan's ratification of SDGs and MDGs. The 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> FYP of Bhutan are designed to integrate the relevant SDG targets, in the form of



NKRAs, SKRAs and LGKRAs. All these initiatives offer the inspiration and opportunity to pursue and strengthen GECDP mainstreaming as a vital tool and approach.

The assessment study also found out that the Dzongkhags are highly receptive to the continuation of GECDP mainstreaming. They are able to relate and link the process to their nature of work and responsibilities at the local level. They were of the opinion that GECDP mainstreaming would enhance the quality of the LG plans and programmes, and do not see it as an additional administrative burden. Furthermore, unlike the central level agencies which are spread out in different ministries operating in silo, inter-sector coordination for GECDP mainstreaming in the Dzongkhags is comparatively easier. With the increase in local capital investments, it is paramount to ensure that these investments are of high quality and sustainable over the long term. With the annual increase of national budget allocation to the LGs, GECDP mainstreaming will be a valuable mechanism to pursue sustainable development at the local level in a cost-efficient manner, drawing good value for money invested by the government and its development partners.

The other strength and opportunity of GECDP mainstreaming is the in-house capacity in the form of central MRG members. Although the group is not active anymore, the members are available in different Government agencies and private organisations. These people were trained on the various GECDP mainstreaming tools and groomed as the local experts to steer the programme across all sectors. With the Government's policy directive, these members can be regrouped and continue their erstwhile responsibility of facilitating GECDP mainstreaming, including the capacity development of LGs.

Last, but not the least, GECDP mainstreaming programme has close linkage and synergy with most ongoing programmes implemented in different ways. Some of them are: the EU budgetary support project on upscaling performance-based grant; GEF/NAPA project on enhancing sustainability and climate-resilience activities with a sub-component on strengthening the MRG mechanism; UNCDF's LoCAL; SGP and so on. There is an opportunity to combine resources and complement future efforts to strengthen the GECDP mainstreaming process across the country.

## 4.2 Recommendations and Proposed Action plan to Strengthen GECDP Mainstreaming at the LGs level

### (a) Policy directives/Orientation:

The study findings and literature review show that there have been formal Government-led initiatives to mainstream these cross-cutting issues into the development plans and programmes of central and local government. This is evident from the official government documents, such as the 11<sup>th</sup> FYP, which mentions "inclusive, green, socioeconomic development" as the overall objective of the FYP, the 12<sup>th</sup> FYP, that clearly lays out three key LGKRAs and executive order from the Prime Minister. In addition, the Royal Government has made various efforts to mainstream them through other interventions, such as the rural economic advancement programmes, targeted household poverty programmes, national gender equality policy, national waste management strategy 2019, national environment strategy, climate change policy 2020, national strategy and action plan for low carbon development 2012, , disaster contingency planning guidelines for Bhutan 2014, GNH policy screening tools, LDPM and etc. These formal documents lay out the principles and framework for effective mainstreaming of these GECDP issues into the development plans and programmes.

However, in the course of time, this policy directive of the Government lost its thrust on its own with no agency at the central level taking the responsibility to ensure its continuity. The central-level MRG groups gradually began to dissolve as the key members changed jobs and got transferred to different agencies. Neither the Government nor the GNHC, which was identified as the coordinating agency by the executive order, took actions to look into the fate of the central MRG.

In this regard, a new nationally-driven policy directive with a clear strategic guideline is required, with specific roles and responsibilities of the relevant central and local government agencies and focal persons. The policy directive could clearly state why GECDP mainstreaming is necessary to achieve the

country's overall development goals and objectives, identify the champion to coordinate and steer the process at the central and local levels, and mention the areas and strategies of mainstreaming.

(b) Revive the central and local GECDP mainstreaming mechanisms and practices:

Although the GECDP mainstreaming driving mechanisms such as the central and local MRGs were never formally closed, they have become non-functional and inactive. The central MRG has become defunct with the change in focal person and membership whereby GECDP mainstreaming mandate is not taken forward. The defunct of central MRG had negative impact on the local MRGs as they were fully dependent on central MRG in the areas of technical backstopping of the GECDP mainstreaming activities at the local level, including facilitation of skills, tools and institutional support. With the absence of institutional and financial support from the central MRG, the local MRGs have become non-functional and inactive.

While it is argued that the central MRG was created to facilitate GECDP mainstreaming only till the process got institutionalised within the Government's plan formulation and implementation system, the study shows that GECDP mainstreaming was far from institutionalisation. It can be said that the central MRG's drive has helped the GECDP mainstreaming concept to be integrated in some policy formulation process and the FYPs, there was no tangible impact made from the practice. When the local MRGs were beginning to pick up GECDP mainstreaming activities, the central MRG got prematurely dissolved.

In this regard, the study findings recommended that the GECDP mainstreaming mechanisms need to be revived, either in the same form as MRGs, or other appropriate arrangements. Revival of the mechanisms will ensure the responsibility of GECDP mainstreaming within the Government system and help strengthen the process at the LG level. The revival of GECDP mainstreaming should have terms of reference to stipulate clearly the functioning modality and sustainability assurance arrangement.

(c) Identification of a champion of the driver's seat:

Within the central Government's policy directive and mandate of GECDP mainstreaming, there is a need to identify and appoint a lead entity or champion to steer the implementation of the Government's policy directive and facilitate GECDP mainstreaming at the LG level. A review of the past assessment through this study shows that although the GECDP mainstreaming mechanisms in the form of central and local MRGs were useful, they would not have functioned without a central agency with a mandate to lead.

The past experience also shows that the champion at the driver's seat can be either an existing agency or a separate entity formed with members from relevant agencies that have cross-cutting institutional mandate and roles. The advantage of having two or more agencies taking care of the mandate ensures sustainability of the process as one agency can continue if the other does not. GNHC was identified as the overall lead agency for the GECDP mainstreaming, but it focused only on the processes at the central level, and the GECDP mainstreaming at the local level was partially taken care of. Coordination of GECDP mainstreaming at the LG level would have been better led by DLG.

Whatsoever, it is important that the lead entity should be made of the agencies that have some authority over the design of plan coordination, monitoring and evaluation, and allocation of financial resources.

(d) Provide adequate financial and technical support:

Most of the participants from FGDs attributed that ineffective implementation of GECDP mainstreaming and unsustainable at the LG level was due lack of financial and technical support. GECDP activities cost higher than the normal activity, and they require huge investment. The additional costs over the available local development fund results in the reluctance and resistance from the LG functionaries to mainstream GECDP issues effectively. When the limited budget has to be thinly spread over to meet many planned activities (some are political pledges), GECDP mainstreaming gets the low priority. Moreover, there is not separate funding for the capacity-building of local MRG members and sector officials. To this effect, it is recommended to include GECDP mainstreaming budgeting in the national budgeting process, and allocate LGs with certain amount of GECDP mainstreaming fund separately.

The other alternative for better fund mobilization and coordination is to pool the various ongoing GECDP-related projects under one implementation umbrella. Such projects include GEF's, NAPA, UNEP activities, UNCDF's LoCAL, UNDP's GCF activities and SGP.

(e) Strengthen GECDP mainstreaming leadership and management at the LG level:

The study clearly shows a lack of leadership and proper management gaps at the Dzongkhag level resulting in the unsustainability of local MRGs. For instance, the ToR for local MRG clearly mentions the mandates, operational framework and leadership roles. However, during the study, some participants claimed that there is no clear ToR or guidelines for the local MRGs to function. This indicates the unawareness of the Dzongkhag about the existence of MRG and its functions. This has resulted in the non-replacement of MRG members who went on transfer, and the failure in proper handing-taking over of the MRG responsibilities to the new member/group.

The study findings also show that the GECDP mainstreaming programme has been considered as a stand-alone programme initiated as a project-tied activity. As a result, the MRG functions were discontinued with the termination of the donor-supported projects or withdrawal of the central MRG. LGs have failed to build the linkage of the GECDP mainstreaming concept and practice with the Government's development framework of sustainable development, inclusive growth and integrated development. This has resulted in the Dzongkhags not taking the ownership and responsibility of GECDP mainstreaming as the part and parcel of their regular development plan formulation and implementation.

In this respect, there is a need to instill a sense of responsibility and ownership of MRGs in the leaders of the Dzongkhag. They need to be sensitized and trained in promotion of GECDP mainstreaming as a tool for sustainable plan formulation and implementation of the LGs' regular FYP and annual programmes.

(f) Focus on capacity-building on technical skills and tools for the LG level:

The study found out the sector representatives have a fair level of knowledge and understanding of the concept and principles of GECDP mainstreaming. However, effective implementation of their GECDP mainstreaming role is constrained by lack of technical skills to translate the knowledge into practical mainstreaming works. While some sector representatives are new to the MRG roles and responsibilities, the old members lacked the knowledge and skills in applying appropriate GECDP mainstreaming tools.

Therefore, apart from the periodic sensitization and orientation programme, the Dzongkhag sector representatives need to build their capacity in technical skills and application of GECDP mainstreaming tools.

(g) Integrate the mandate of GECDP mainstreaming programme within the Government's planning and budgeting system:

The study findings indicate that GECDP mainstreaming at the local level were implemented as a stand-alone programme based on the availability of financial support from the donor-supported projects. The programme was not integrated with a clear linkage with the Government's planning and budgeting system. For instance, there is no separate budget allocation made for GECDP mainstreaming, and the LG plans are not monitored and evaluated based on the performance in successful GECDP mainstreaming. As such, the GECDP mainstreaming has no linkage to performance management systems such as APA.

In this respect, there is a need to promote GECDP mainstreaming needs to be integrated within the regular FYP and annual plan formulation and implementation of the LGs.

(h) Coordination and linkage between the functions and priorities of central agencies, LGs, and regional offices:

The success of the GECDP programmes largely depend on the proper coordination between the sectors in the LGs. The assessment observed that there is a poor coordination system between central agencies and LGs, and between sectors, Dzongkhags and regional offices. Regional offices and other agencies think that GECDP mainstreaming mandate is the sole mandate of the Dzongkhag sectors. This has resulted in absence of integrated planning practice across the sectors and regional offices and thus the planning and implementation of activities are carried out in isolation.

Different agencies have developed laws and policies that are not consistently applied. Some locally conflicting activities not accorded approval at the LG levels are accorded approval from the central agencies. For instance, huge number of farm roads are constructed without compliance to environmental and disaster safety concerns.

(i) Strengthen monitoring and evaluation system:

Currently, GECDP mainstreaming results are not monitored and evaluated either at the LGs or national level. It is learnt that there was no periodic monitoring of the achievement of the GECDP mainstreaming at the end of the implementation. As such, they receive less effort and preferences.

While the LDPM requires screening the LG plans and programmes from the GECDP lens, this overlooked and hardly done. With absence of a system to cross-check on it, most LG plans come up without integration of GECDP mainstreaming elements. The GECDP mainstreaming tools incorporated in the LDPM are hardly used. There is no linkage between GECDP mainstreaming process and APA system (APAs currently have no direct linkage to GECDP outcome). Thus, GECDP mainstreaming and its outcome are not counted in the performance evaluation system, and the absence of institutional mechanism to account the GECDP mainstreaming results discourage the LG functionaries engaged in GECDP mainstreaming to take the GECDP mainstreaming activities seriously. This resulted in the GECDP mainstreaming to be ignored or given the least preference over other performance-based responsibility that are evaluated by the APA system.

Therefore, the GECDP mainstreaming activities need to be monitored periodically and integrate the evaluation within the national performance evaluation system.

(j) Do Not ignore the Gewogs:

Development plans and programmes at the LG level has high relevance to the activities in the Gewogs and communities. Therefore, local GECDP mainstreaming process and mechanisms must include representatives from the Gewog Administrations (GAO, RNR Extension sectors). They should be included in the local MRG mechanism or in the GECDP-integrated plan formulation and implementations at the local level.

### 4.3 Proposed Plan of Action to implement the Recommendations

Sl. No.	Strategy/Recommendation	Activity/Sub-activities	Timeline	Lead Agency	Implementing partners	Budget
1	Develop a clear policy directive of the Government on GECDP mainstreaming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carry out stakeholder consultation.</li> <li>Issue policy directives.</li> <li>Organize policy dialogue.</li> <li>Integrate GECDP mainstreaming into 13<sup>th</sup> FYP.</li> </ul>	April 2022	GNHC	DLG, MoF, DDM, MoAF, NEC, NCWC	1.00 million
2	Revive the central and local GECDP mainstreaming mechanisms and practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholder consultation on GECDP mainstreaming mechanisms at central and local levels.</li> <li>Develop institutional mechanisms at the central and local level with operational guideline and responsibilities.</li> <li>Develop GECDP mainstreaming guideline for LGs.</li> </ul>	May 2022	GNHC/DLG	DLG, MoF, DDM, MoAF, NEC, NCWC, Dzongkhag focal	1.5 million
3	Identification and appointment of a champion at the driver.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the lead or champion to steer GECDP mainstreaming at the national level</li> <li>Develop a clear ToR for the lead agency (champion), including composition of relevant sector focal persons/departments</li> <li>Executive order from the Government on</li> </ul>	April 2022	GNHC	DLG	0.7 million

		GECDP mainstreaming, together with the institutional mechanisms and ToRs				
4	Financial and technical support for GECDP mainstreaming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct stakeholders' workshop to brainstorm on the financial and technical support.</li> <li>• Develop sustainability plan.</li> </ul>	May 2022	GNHC/DLG	DLG, MoF, MoFA, NEC, Donor agencies	1.00 million
5	Strengthen GECDP mainstreaming leadership and management capacity at the LG level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct sensitization programme focusing the leaders of Dzongkhags and Gewogs.</li> </ul>	June 2022	GNHC/DLG	DLG, MoF, DDM, MoAF, NEC, NCWC	2.00 million
6	Capacity-building on technical skills and tools for the LG level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity building program for central mainstreaming focal persons.</li> <li>• Capacity building program for local mainstreaming focal persons.</li> <li>• Sensitisation and orientation for general stakeholders</li> <li>• Develop awareness materials</li> <li>• Conduct center-local-regional coordination</li> </ul>	August 2022	GNHC/DLG	DLG, MoF, DDM, MoAF, NEC, NCWC	2.5 million

7	Integrate the mandate of GECDP mainstreaming programme within the Government's planning and budgeting system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct bi-lateral meeting with GPMD and MoF.</li> <li>• Orient DPOs and GAOs on the new system</li> </ul>	September 2022	GNHC/DG	DLG, GPMD, MoF, Dzongkhags and Gewogs	0.5 million
8	Coordination and linkage between the functions and priorities of central agencies, LGs, and regional offices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institute a practical coordination mechanism.</li> </ul>				
9	Strengthen monitoring and evaluation system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a practical M&amp;E system to monitor GECDP mainstreaming activities and evaluate the results (if possible, build within the Government's M&amp;E system).</li> <li>• Sensitisation and orientation of LGs on GECDP mainstreaming M&amp;E system and reporting.</li> </ul>	June 2023	GNHC/DLG	GNHC, DLG, MoF, NEC, GPMD	1.2 million
10	Include the Gewogs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion of GAO or RNR sector as in the GECDP mainstreaming mechanism.</li> </ul>		DLG		

## 5. ANNEXURES

### 5.1 List of gender-segregated KII respondents by Dzongkhags

Name of the Dzongkhags	Male	Female
Bumthang	2	0
Chukha	3	1
Dagana	3	0
Gasa	1	1
Haa	0	1
Lhuntse	2	0
Mongar	1	1
Paro	5	2
Pemagatshel	4	0
Thimphu	2	0
Trashigang	2	0
Trashiyangtse	1	0
Trongsa	4	0
Tsirang	1	1
Zhemgang	1	0
Punakha	0	0
Wangduephodrang	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>7</b>



## 5.2 List of FGD participants by Dzongkhags

Sl. No	Name	Designation	Dzongkhag
1	Tshering Penjor	Finance Officer	Bumthang
2	Rinzin Wangmo	DT Secretary	
3	Nedup Dorjee	Surveyor	
4	Pema Yangki	Adm. Asst	
5	Sonam Tenzin	ADHO	
6	Tashi Penjor	ADLO	
7	Sangay Pemo	Asst. Monitoring and Coordination officer	
8	Sonam Gyeltshen	CDAO	
9	Rinzin Wangmo	Municipal Engineer	
10	Chedup Dorji	DPO	
11	Chungla Dorji	CDEO	
12	Ugyen Lhendup	DLO	Zhemgang
13	Tshering Choden	Finance officer	
14	Tashi Rabten	GAO	
15	Phuntsho	DAO	
16	Phub Tshering	Cultural officer	
17	Sonam Dorji	Dzo. Engineer	
18	Sonam Nima	DDMO	
19	Sherab Zangmo	Asst. Environment officer	
20	Kinzang Lhamo	Land Record officer	
21	Lhakpa Tshering	MCO	
22	Phuntsho Rinzin	DPO	Trongsa
23	Jigme Chopel	DLO	
24	Tharchen	CDE	
25	Karma Wangchuk	Dy.CDAO	
26	Norbu Tshering	Finance Officer	
27	Dorji Khando	Engineer	

28	Tashi Dorji	GAO	
29	Tshering Norbu	DT Secretary	
30	Tashi Yangzom	GAO	
31	Ratu Drukpa	GAO	Wangduephodrang
32	Nidup Tshering	Asst. Engineer	
33	Sarita Gurung	GAO	
34	Shacha Gyeltshen	Cultural officer	
35	Tsheltrim Dorji	FO	
36	Pelden	Sr. Livestock officer	
37	Leki Ngazom	AMCO	
38	Sonam Wangchuk	DT Secretary	
39	Zangmo	PDHO	
40	Karma Tshering	DCDEO	
41	Tshewang Namgyal	Dzongrab	
42	Tenzin Phuntsho	HRO	
43	Domang	CDAO	
44	Dawa Dorji	DLO	Lhuntse
45	Kelzang Loday	DE	
46	Sangay Dorji	HRO	
47	Karma Chewang	CDAO	
48	Dorji Tshering	GAO	
49	Ngajay	Environment officer	
50	Pema Tshewang	DPO	
51	Manisha Biswa	Finance officer	
52	Tashi Gyeltshen	DT Secretary	
53	Tenzin Lhendup	GAO	
54	Tshering Dekar	Environment officer	
55	Sonam Choden	AMCO	
56	Cheda	SLPO	
57	Kinzang Tshering	DAO/Offtg. Drungpa	
58	Sonam Chophel	GAO	
59	Namgay Wangmo	GAO	

60	Sherab Tenzin	District Engineer	
61	Tshewang Jamtsho	AFO	
62	Karma Cheda	PO	
63	Pema Tenzin	PO	Thimphu
64	Tandin Wangchuk	DT Secretary	
65	Chhabi Lal Das	Engineer	
66	Wangdi la	ADAO	
67	Yonten Dorji	FO	
68	Namgay Wangmo	GAO	
69	Lemo	GAO	
70	Pema Choki Sherpa	AMCO	
71	Kul Brd Gurung	DLO	
72	Ugyen Tshewang	Finance officer	
73	Tshering Wangchuk	Asst. Environment	
74	Deki Yangzom	DT Secretary	
75	Dorji Wangmo	MCO	
76	Thinley Jamtsho	ADLO	
77	Kezang Wangchuk	DE	
78	Sangay Phurpa	HRO	
79	Singye Wangchuk	AEO	
80	Chewang Gyeltshen	Offtg. DAO	
81	Tashi Dendup	Planning officer	
82	Gaylong	Dy. CDAO	Punakha
83	Phub Tshering	Planning officer	
84	Ugyen Dorji	DLO	
85	Sangay Thinley	FO	
86	Parsuram Rai	CDE	
87	Damcho Wangmo	Legal	
88	Tshewang Phuntsho	DT Secretary	
89	Phub Tshering	Environment officer	
90	Phurpa Dorji	GAO	
91	Thuji Zangmo	GAO	

92	Pema Wangchuk	Dy. CDLO	Dagana
93	Sonam Jamtsho	DPO	
94	Passang Tshering	Offtg. DAO	
95	Jamyang Dorji	DE	
96	Jamyang Norbu	Offtg. Legal	
97	Rinchen Wangdi	GAO	
98	Tashi Dorji	GAO	
99	Sunder Tamang	Offtg. AFO	
100	Tshering Phuntsho	Offtg. DT Secretary	
101	Karma Dorji Jimba	AEO	
102	Sonam Phuntsho	DT Secretary	Tsirang
103	Dawa Dema	Finance officer	
104	Karma Wangmo	Planning officer	
105	Kintu	Chief DE	
106	Dorji Wangdi	Environment officer	
107	Mindu Wangzom	GAO	
108	Cheten Gyeltshen	GAO	
109	Dorji Wangdi	Environment	
110	Ugyen Tshewang	DAO	
111	Lam Dorji	Dzongrab	
112	Tshering Tobgay	MCO	
113	Namgay Tenzin	AE	
114	Dawa Dema	AES	
115	Tshering Dolkar	GAO	
116	Rinchen Dorji	DFO	
117	Chekey	ADLO	
118	Kuenzang Namgay	Sr. Dzongrab	Pemagatshel
119	Tashi Phuntsho	DAO	
120	Sangay Tenzin	ADLO	
121	Norbu Tenzin	Cultural officer	
122	Kuenzang Wangchuk	Engineer	
123	Singye Dorji	DHO	

124	Nima Zangmo	EDO	
125	Lhendup Dorji	AMCO	
126	Sonam Tashi	LRO	
127	Sangay Wangdi	Census officer	
128	Sonam Zangpo	DBO	
129	Pelzang	DCDEO	
130	Tshewang Dorji	DT Secretary	Chukha
131	Gyem Tshering	AFO	
132	Nima Dorji	ACDE	
133	Sonam Choden	Sr. Environment officer	
134	Sherub Pelmo	Legal officer	
135	Ugyen Sha	Sr. ES	
136	Thinley Phuntsho	ADLO	
137	Wangdi Gyelpo	Planning officer	
138	Chane Zangmo	Chief DE	Paro
139	Naphey	DT Secretary	
140	Ngawang Dorji	DLO	
141	Tshegay Norbu	Sr. LPO	
142	Kesang Choden	Dy. ICTO	
143	Phuntsho Tashi	PO	
144	Tshering N. Penjor	CDAO	
145	Karchung	CDAO	
146	Kipchu	LPO	Haa
147	Sonam Norbu	Environment officer	
148	Tshering Peldon	EDO	
149	Ugyen Lhamo	Legal	
150	Nakchung	DE	
151	Tendrel Zangmo	DT Secretary	
152	Tshering Peldon	GAO	
153	Cheda Jamtsho	Planning officer	
154	Santosh Rai	GAO	

155	Chhimi Tshering	Planning and Monitoring	Trashigang
156	Dorjee	Dy. CDAO	
157	Chimi Dorji	Internal Auditor	
158	Lakjey	Chief DE	
159	Namgay Wangchuk	GAO	
161	Tandin Wangchuk	GAO	
162	Naina S Tamang	Dy. CDLO	



Haa Dzongkhag



Dagana Dzongkhag



Thimphu Dzongkhag



Wangdue Dzongkhag



Trashigang Dzongkhag



Pemagatshel Dzongkhag



Zhemgang Dzongkhag



Trongsa Dzongkhag



Punakha Dzongkhag



Lhuntse Dzongkhag



Gasa Dzongkhag



Trashiyangtse Dzongkhag



Bumthang Dzongkhag



Paro Dzongkhag



Tsirang Dzongkhag





Mongar Dzongkhag



Chukha Dzongkhag

### 5.3 List of FGD participants by central agency level

1. Phuntsho Wangyal, Chief Programme Officer, GNHC
2. Wangchuk Namgay, Chief Programme Officer, GNHC
3. Tandin Wangmo, Chief Programme Officer, GNHC

### 5.4 FGD guiding questions

#### GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD)

#### I. ASSESSMENT OF THE GENERAL CROSS-CUTTING (GECDP) ISSUES EXPERIENCED IN THE DZONGKHAGS:

1. What are the prominent pressures such as climate-change impacts encountered in the different development sectors (Agriculture, Livestock, Health, Environment, Education, Culture, Forests, and other natural assets) in the Dzongkhags? Let's discuss and list different impacts of each sector?

Table 1: Different pressures on development, such as climate—change impacts

Development sector/Theme	Description of Impacts
Agriculture	
Livestock	
Forests	
Health	
Environment	
Education	
Culture	
Other sectors/development areas	

2. How do the different climate-change impacts affect different social and economic development areas? For example, let's discuss how each of the impact affects:

Description of impacts	Sector/Development Theme	Affects?
XXX	Forests	
XXX	Environment or Natural Resources/Assets	
XXX	Livelihoods security of the people/Poverty	
XXX	Gender-balanced development	
XXX	Culture	
XXX	Other sectoral areas	

## II. ASSESSMENT OF THE MECHANISMS ADOPTED BY THE DZONGKHAG FOR MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION OF CLIMATE-CHANGE IMPACTS, AND CAPACITY NEEDS

3. What are the different adaptation and mitigation strategies implemented by the Dzongkhag to respond to the different impacts?
4. To what extent have the strategies been effective in responding to the issues on different people (male, female, old, women, children, and disadvantaged, vulnerable)?
5. How are the different strategies and responses for mitigation and adaptation processed and implemented? What is the most common mechanism for sectoral coordination?
6. What are the challenges faced in effective mitigation and adaptation of climate-change impacts?

## III. ASSESSMENT ON MAINSTREAMING CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES (ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE-CHANGE IMPACTS, POVERTY, DISASTER AND GENDER) INTO THE DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

7. The overall development objective of 11<sup>th</sup> FYP was: **Self-reliance and Inclusive Green Sustainable Socio-economic development**. What does inclusive social development and green sustainable development mean? What kind of activities were implemented to achieve this development objectives?
8. What kind of activities are implemented to achieve the GNH pillars of Sustainable and Equitable Socio-Economic Development, and Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of Environment? (Review in terms of the Dzongkhag/Sector Key-Results Areas, etc)
9. Part X of the 12<sup>th</sup> FYP Guideline requires Mainstreaming Cross-cutting Themes (Environment, Climate Change and Poverty (ECP), Disaster, Gender, Vulnerable Groups, GNH 9 Domains, and integration of relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). How would you assess the progress and best practices on this requirement? (Review in the context of the Dzongkhag's 12 FYP plans and programmes, and their progress). JNKE

## IV. KNOWLEDGE, AWARENESS AND CAPACITY FOR MAINSTREAMING GECDP IN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

10. What is your awareness and knowledge of GECDP mainstreaming? How would you link GECDP mainstreaming to Bhutan's GNH goal and principles?
11. Have you been engaged as a member of local MRG, and what is your experience? What do you think are the best practices in GECDP mainstreaming in the Dzongkhag?
12. Please tell about the current set-up of the local/Dzongkhag MRG and what kinds of activities are implemented?
13. What are the challenges faced in effective GECDP mainstreaming in the Dzongkhag's development plans and programmes?

14. What could be the best strategy to strengthen GECDP mainstreaming in the Dzongkhag's development plans and programmes? What are the needs?

### 5.5 KII Questionnaire

**(This information sheet is to be filled up by the Dzongkhag MRG members. The membership would pertain to both past and present MRG)**

#### SECTION A: INTRODUCTION TO THE SURVEY

Kuzuzangpo la!

This key-informant information-sheet has been prepared and being distributed as part of the assessment on the situation analysis of GECDP mainstreaming activities at the local level. The purpose of this assessment is to take stock of the best practices, lessons learnt and challenges faced in implementing GECDP mainstreaming activities at the local level. These findings from the assessment would be used to inform the Department of Local Governance (DLG) and GNHC in designing future programmes to improve and strengthen GECDP mainstreaming at the local level.

These questions are aimed at the local MRG members as the key-informants of GECDP mainstreaming at the local level. In this respect, you are requested to kindly provide the necessary information in this sheet, based on your experience of having engaged as a member of the local MRG.

The responses you provide for the questions in this questionnaire would be used solely for the purpose of understanding the status of GECDP mainstreaming at the local level. Highest confidentiality will be maintained to not disclose any personal information pertaining to your responses to the questions. Your name will not be reflected in the assessment report.

***Thank you for your cooperation and support.***

**Do you have any questions? Are you ready to start?**

Tick this box as an indication of your acceptance and agreement to participate in responding to the KII questions.

#### SECTION B: PERSONAL PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENT

**Note: The details under this section will be used only to communicate by the DLG officials, in case there's anything that needs to be clarified during data compilation and analysis. The details will not be used and mentioned in the report)**

##### 1. Personal Profile: *(please fill up the details below)*

a. Name of the respondent: .....

b. Gender: .....

c. Title of Respondent: .....

d. Dzongkhag: .....

e. Mobile Number: .....

f. Email address: .....

**2. Highest Education qualification: (Please tick one of the following options)**

- a. PhD
- b. Master Degree
- c. Bachelor Degree
- d. Secondary High School
- e. High School

**SECTION C: KII Questions – Membership in the Local MRG**

**3. How long have you been a member of the Dzongkhag MRG? (Please tick one answer in completed years)**

- a. One Year
- b. Two Years
- c. Three Years
- d. Four and more years

**4. Which sector did/do you represent in the Local MRG?**

- a. Agriculture
- b. Livestock
- c. Forestry
- d. Health
- e. Education
- f. Culture
- g. Environment
- h. Disaster
- i. Finance
- j. Engineering
- k. Others (please specify): .....

**SECTION D: Knowledge and Responsibility of GECDP Mainstreaming at the Local Level**

5. What is your general understanding on GECDP mainstreaming? **(tick all relevant answers)**.
- a. Integration of cross-cutting issues & opportunities in the decision-making processes with proactive interventions at early stages to enhance social, economic and environmental development outcomes.
  - b. Active promotion of GECDP elements in the identification, planning, design, negotiation, and implementation of strategies, policies and investment programmes.
  - c. Informed inclusion of relevant social, environmental and economic concerns into the decisions of institutions that drive national and sectoral development policy, rules, plans, investment and actions.
  - d. Process of integrating environmental considerations, including both opportunities and risks, into all processes and activities in the society, from the overall policy and strategic level to the daily actions of each and all of us.
6. In your opinion, GECDP mainstreaming helps in: **(tick all relevant answers)**
- a. Changing the mindset and attitude of policy makers, planners and implementers in not using the natural assets and resources as development tool.
  - b. Not pursuing development against and beyond the limits of natural resources that will negatively affect the rights and needs of future generation.
  - c. Preventing from the beginning the social and economic crisis resulting from natural hazards induced by man-made development activities, instead of reacting to the natural hazards at a later date.
  - d. GECDP mainstreaming reinforces fundamental interdependence of socio-economic development and environmental resources with impacts that cut across all development sectors.
7. Indicate your understanding of the following in terms of the degree of your agreement or disagreement? **(Tick the appropriate answers)**.

<b>GECDP mainstreaming statements</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
a. The way we manage the economy and political and social institutions, critically impacts on the environment, whose quality and sustainability, are vital for the performance of the economy and social well-being.				
b. GECDP mainstreaming is a multi-year, multi-stakeholder effort involving the coordination and collaboration of policy-makers, planners, finance personnel and implementers at the national, sectoral and sub-national levels.				
c. The basic reason why mainstreaming cross-cutting issues is important is that the socio-economic development and the environmental resources are fundamentally interdependent – the way we manage the economy and political and social institutions has critical impacts on the environment, while environmental quality and sustainability, in turn, are vital for the performance of the economy and social well-being.				

d. GECDP mainstreaming is all about not using the environmental resources and other national assets as a development tool, but as a critical resource and opportunity for future growth.				
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8. Which of the following rationale are true for GECDP mainstreaming in Bhutan? (*Tick all relevant answers*).

- a. Bhutan is not only small, landlocked and mountainous country, but it is also a resourceful country, with heavy dependence to environmental resources for its social and economic subsistence.
- b. Hydropower and tourism are the major sources of revenue for the country, and protection of environmental resources are critical for the country's sustainable revenue sources.
- c. More than half of Bhutan's GDP can be attributed to sectors directly or indirectly dependent on the health of our environment such as the RNR. Therefore, GECDP mainstreaming into development plans and programmes would determine the size of the country's GDP.
- d. Without proper GECDP mainstreaming, Bhutan's is highly dependent on the climate-sensitive economic sectors such as agriculture, hydropower & tourism. Therefore, climate-change impacts on tis sectors would determine the lives of Bhutan's population.

9. Which of the following are the current vulnerabilities demanding careful GECDP mainstreaming in Bhutan? (*Tick all relevant answers*).

- a. Glacial Lake Outburst Floods due to increasing temperature.
- b. Land Degradation (Landslides, erosion due to changes in weather pattern, high intensity rainfall, cyclones).
- c. Flash floods (intense rainfall periods, cyclones), droughts (drying water sources due to temperature rise, longer intervals between rains), winds and thunder-storms.
- d. Pests and diseases.

10. GECDP mainstreaming in Bhutan has policy and legislative reference to (*tick all relevant answers*):

- a. Principles and pillars of the development objective of Gross National Happiness.
- b. Constitutional provision of maintaining 60% of the land under forest cover in perpetuity.
- c. Upholding sustainable development goals and activities.
- d. Meet the requirement of Bhutan's international ratification.

11. The key reasons for the need for GECDP mainstreaming at the local level are: (*tick all relevant answers*):

- a. More than 70 % of the country's population live in rural areas, depending on agriculture and related services for their livelihood, with higher poverty incidence than in the urban areas.
- b. The outcomes of social-economic and environmental activities directly affect the people, particularly the 'poorest' who are in the rural areas and remain the most vulnerable.
- c. GECDP mainstreaming is important to achieve the Dzongkhag/Gewog Key Result Areas (DKRAs) & Outputs.

- d. GECDP mainstreaming at the local level is important to contribute to the national goals & obligations, & achieving FYP goals & Outputs.

12. Effective GECDP mainstreaming at the local level can help in: **(tick all relevant answers).**

- a. Increases the possibility of identifying interventions that are “win- win” in nature.
- b. Greater cost-effectiveness in the programme design and operations.
- c. Better sequencing of development interventions and technical assistance.
- d. Better coordination and collaboration between different sectors for collective interests of meeting the planned development goals.

**SECTION E: Institutional Mechanisms and Practice of GECDP Mainstreaming at the Local Level**

13. In your opinion, what were the GECDP mainstreaming mechanisms and practices prior to the formation of MRG at the Dzongkhag level? *(Tick all relevant answers)*

- a. Respective Sector Heads.
- b. Dzongkhag Planning Unit.
- c. Dzongkhag Environment Unit.
- d. There was no GECDP mainstreaming body as such.

14. Indicate your agreement or disagreement on the following statements: *(Tick appropriate responses)*

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. The formation of MRG at the Dzongkhag level helped in enhancing the knowledge and responsibility of GECDP mainstreaming into the local development plans and programmes.				
b. Dzongkhag MRG activities contributed in advocacy and sensitization of other development stakeholders in application of integrated and sustainable development approach.				
c. As a result of the Dzongkhag MRG’s contribution, it helped in integration of GECDP mainstreaming into the local planning system and FYP activities.				
d. Institution and activities of Dzongkhag MRG has been helpful in strengthening coordination, collaboration and cooperation of different development sectors and thematic areas in streamlining planning and implementation of development activities.				

15. Indicate your agreement or disagreement for the following statements: *Tick appropriate responses)*



Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. The Dzongkhag MRG was well designed with well representation of all relevant development sectors.				
b. The functional coordination and responsibilities within the Dzongkhag MRG worked well.				
c. The Dzongkhag MRG has members that were not so useful. There were too many members and created coordination issues.				
d. The functions and responsibilities of the Dzongkhag MRG were easy to understand and implement.				

**SECTION F: Status of MRGs at the local level and their Functions**

16. Is there MRG in the Dzongkhag at the present? (***Tick the appropriate answer***)

- a. Yes. (Skip question 17)
- b. No.

17. If there is no MRG in the Dzongkhag at present, what are the reasons?

- a. The previous members were transferred and no replacements were made.
- b. The functions of MRG in GECDP mainstreaming activities were discontinued after the end of the project that provided financial support, and no financial support was discontinued.
- c. GECDP mainstreaming as a separate activities were not considered relevant after the 12<sup>th</sup> FYP, which integrated GECDP mainstreaming activities.
- d. Other reasons – Please specify: .....
- .....
- .....

18. In your opinion, do you think the current MRG is functioning well?

- a. Yes. (skip question 19).
- b. No.

19. If the current MRG is not functioning well, what do you think are the reasons?

- a. The composition is not good.
- b. Weak coordination.
- c. Lack of knowledge and capacity in GECDP mainstreaming.
- d. Lack of budget.

20. Would you recommend maintaining MRG as the institutional mechanism and strategy to continue GECDP mainstreaming into the local development plans and programme?

a. Yes (*skip question 21*)

b. No.

21. If you think MRG is not a good mechanism to strengthen GECDP mainstreaming, what are the suggestions for other strategies?

.....

#### **SECTION G: Best Practices and Constraints of GECDP Mainstreaming at the Local Level**

22. In your opinion, what were/are the best practices of GECDP mainstreaming?

23. What do you think are the challenges faced in effective GECDP mainstreaming?

#### **SECTION H: Perspectives of LGs in Strengthening GECDP Mainstreaming at the Local Level**

1. What are your suggestions and recommendations for improvement of the GECDP mainstreaming?

#### **5.6 List of documents referred**

1. 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan document, Gross National Happiness Commission(2003), Thimphu.
2. 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan document, Gross National Happiness Commission (2018), Thimphu
3. Framework to Mainstream Gender, Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Risk Reduction and Poverty (GECDP)-2013, Thimphu
4. The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals: An opportunity for Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/G.2681-P/Rev.3), Santiago, 2018- United Nations.
5. The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2021. United Nations.
6. MRG Rapid Assessment Report and Sustainability Plan, Final Draft(2017), Thimphu
7. Bhutan 2020: Vison for Peace, Prosperity and Happiness
8. Consitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan
9. Local Government Act 2009 (Ammended 2014)
10. Local Government Rules and Regulations 2012
11. Mainstreaming GECDP into the Development Policies, Plans and Programmes in Bhutan: Experiences, challenges and lessons – DLG, 2015.
12. Local Development Planning Manual
13. Gups’ Handbook
14. The Challenges of Environmental Mainstreaming: Experience of integrating environment into development institutions and decisions (Barry Dalal-Clayton and Steve Bass, IIED)

#### **5.7 List of Figures**

1. Figure 1: Respondents (KII) by level of academic qualification
2. Figure 2: Number of years as MRG member
3. Figure 3: Rationale of GECDP mainstreaming in Bhutan
4. Figure 4: Reasons for GECDP mainstreaming at LG level
5. Figure 5: Level of agreement on the impact made by local MRG
6. Figure 6: Reasons for local MRGs to be non-functional and inactive

## 5.8 Terms of Reference

Project	Technical Assistance for Renewable Natural Resources and Climate Change Response and LGs and Decentralisation (EU-TACS) – EuropeAid/139521/DH/SER/BT
Activity	A1.5 – Situation analysis of mainstreaming cross-cutting issues (Gender, Environment, Climate-Change, Disaster and Poverty) into the local development plans and programmes).
Implementing institution	Department of Local Governance (DLG)
Start/end date	October 25 to November 30, 2021.
Travel	Travel within Bhutan, to the Dzongkhags mentioned in this specification/ToR as per the schedules agreed through the inception report.
Supervision	Day to day accountability will be to the EU-TACS/TL/SKE-2 through JNKE-3 for technical aspects of the assessment process, and for approval of outputs and reports (subsequent to Quality Assurance (QA) by DAI-EU-TACS).  JNKE-3 is responsible for operational supervision and monitoring: coordination and provision of content, as well as preliminary QA.  TL/SKE-2 responsible for QA of deliverables.  Reporting to Senior Project Manager at BPV offices in Bhutan for local administrative and logistics matters; and collaborating with BPV to progress EU-TACS local governance project activity planning and monitoring.
Location	Thimphu and targeted Dzongkhags of Bhutan.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### 1.1 Beneficiary Country

Kingdom of Bhutan

#### 1.2 Contracting Authority

The EU-Bhutan TA Complementary Support Project (EU-TACS), Project Management Office, Thimphu.

#### 1.3 Relevant country background

Bhutan’s development approach of Gross National Happiness (GNH) calls for a broad based and holistic sustainable economic growth to embrace quality of life as the ultimate end goal of development. With people’s wellbeing and happiness at the centre of this overall development goal, sustainable and equitable socio-economic development; preservation and promotion of cultural values; conservation of natural environment; and good governance reinforces each other as the key development strategies.

Poverty alleviation is at the core of all these development strategies. With more than 70 per cent of the country’s population living in rural areas on subsistence agriculture, poverty incidence in the rural areas is higher than urban areas. As a means to accelerate poverty alleviation and strengthen balanced socio-economic development, the country continues to focus on empowering people at the local level in terms of providing greater support for development assistance as well as capacity development of LG functionaries. This is also done in the face of ongoing decentralisation and devolution of functional and financial assignments to LGs, to foster effective and sustainable democratic governance and development management at the local level. In this context, the Government recognises the importance of supporting LGs and building their capacity to create an enabling and level-playing field to foster self-reliance and equitable socio-economic development, by mainstreaming their socio-economic development activities into policies, plans and programmes.

In preparation for the 11<sup>th</sup> Five-Year-Plan (FYP), an extensive capacity-building sensitisation and orientation programme was implemented for the LGs under the multi-donor Joint Support Programme (JSP) on capacity development of LG functionaries in mainstreaming environment, climate-change and poverty issues into the development policies, plans and programmes. The programme support was continued later through the Local Governance Sustainable Development Programme (LGSDP) Project, which included other cross-cutting issues such as gender, disaster and climate-change impacts, making it GECDP mainstreaming. This was later integrated into the EU's Budget Support (EUR 20m) to DLG that is still ongoing. Other donor-supported projects such as UNCDF's Local Climate Adaptive Living (LOCAL) facility complimented the programme.

The technical support to GECDP mainstreaming at the local level was facilitated by the central level Mainstreaming Reference Group (MRG) that was instituted by an Executive Order from the Cabinet. The central MRG members composed of relevant officials from different Ministries and agencies with expertise on the cross-cutting themes. The support to local MRG included: developing detailed terms of reference (ToR) of the Local MRG; sensitisation and orientation of local MRG group members on theoretical as well as practical aspects of GECDP mainstreaming; and providing Training of Trainers (ToT) programmes to local MRG groups. The critical aspects of capacity-building of local MRGs were the provision of discretionary monetary grants with which LGs prepared GECDP mainstreaming plans and implemented them.

The primary objectives of the capacity-building of local MRG were:

- Empower LGs in the promotion of conservation and sustainable use of natural assets and resources.
- Build the capacity of LGs to mainstream all crosscutting issues such as gender, environment, climate-change, disaster and poverty (GECDP).
- Knowledge and technology transfer on strengthening the monitoring, advocacy and capacity development to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of mainstreaming cross-cutting issues in formulation of local development plans and programmes.
- Promote best sustainable practices and integrated local area-based planning, and fostering enabling conditions for green development at the local level.
- Help LGs representatives in visioning a sustainable future by enhancing their capacity to assess cumulative impacts of development activities (degradation of watersheds and climate-change impacts - especially to women, children and other socially disadvantaged groups) on environmental resources and social conditions.

Apart from the capacity-building of local MRG members at the individual level, the immediate results of GECDP mainstreaming were in the integration of the mainstreaming programme into the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> FYP. Besides the main guideline for preparation of the 11<sup>th</sup> FYP, a separate framework to mainstream GECDP into the 11<sup>th</sup> PFY was issued and LGs made use of it in preparation and implementation of the 11 FYP programmes and activities. Coinciding with the preparation of the 11<sup>th</sup> FYP, the Local Development Planning Manual (LDPM) was revised in 2013 (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) mainly to ensure integration of GECDP mainstreaming into the local development plans and programmes. In the 12<sup>th</sup> FYP Guideline, a separate chapter (Part IX) was included to ensure effective GECDP mainstreaming across the development sectors, including the local economic development (LED) plans and programmes.

The following documents are a few of the many documentations on GECDP mainstreaming in Bhutan:

- Public Environmental Expenditure Review of the Royal Government of Bhutan, Fiscal year 2008-2009 and Fiscal Year 2009-2010.
- Mainstreaming GECDP into the Development Policies, Plans and Programmes in Bhutan: Experiences, challenges and lessons – DLG, 2015.
- National Gender Equality Policy- National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC), 2019
- National Plan of Action for Gender Equality NCWC, 2019
- Gender and Climate Change in Bhutan, NCWC, February 2020

At least two assessments related to GECDP mainstreaming were carried out:

- a. UNDP/UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative: Mainstreaming Reference Group Mechanism in Bhutan - Rapid Assessment Report and Sustainability Plan (Final Draft, 29 November 2017).
- b. UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative 2013-2018: Terminal Evaluation (Final Report), July 2018.

These two assessment reports explain the concept of GECDP mainstreaming, rationale for GECDP mainstreaming programme in Bhutan, challenges faced, functions of local MRGs and activities, and the recommendations for way-forward.

The findings from the two assessments also indicate the following reasons for unsustainability or discontinuation of local MRG and GECDP mainstreaming activities at the local level:

- a. The local MRG group members kept on changing, as a result of resignation, transfer or other reasons within the local administrations and no replacement were made.
- b. The GECDP mainstreaming worked well under the project-tied support of JSP and LGSDP projects, but the sustainability was threatened in the event of the phasing out of the projects, and the continuation of the discretionary grants.
- c. Lack of technical support in formulation of GECDP mainstreaming plan and implementation due to dissolution of central-level MRG, which earlier provided technical backstopping support to local MRG capacity-building and implementation of activities.
- d. Financial constraints due to high cost of mainstreaming activities.

A National Gender Equality Policy<sup>16</sup> (NGEP) and National Plan of Action for Gender Equality (NPAGE) are in place. Their vision is to promote “equal opportunities for women and men, boys and girls to achieve their full potential and benefit equitably from the social, economic and political development in the country”. The NGEP notes that currently there is uneven mainstreaming of gender issues across legislations, policies, programmes and projects and a key policy aim is to provide a framework to ensure systematic mainstreaming to address existing gender gaps and inequalities. It seeks to strengthen accountability and operational strategies to address priority gender issues and facilitate deeper collaboration across sectors and stakeholders towards a common vision of gender equality. This includes mainstreaming gender within national planning processes. From a broader policy perspective, the Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC) also promotes gender-sensitive policy development by sector line ministries and agencies. They have issued a protocol to guide policy formulation as such and compliance with gender-mainstreaming is checked through a GNH policy screening tool.

## 2. OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES, AND EXPECTED RESULTS

### 2.1 Overall objective

The Overall Objective of the EU TA Complementary Support (TACS) Project of which this SNKE assignment is a part is: “to assist Bhutan in achieving the reforms envisaged in its 11th and 12th Five Year Plans in two sectors: (1) Renewable Natural Resources including Climate Change Response and (2) LGs and Decentralization, through complementary support to the on-going EU budget support programmes.”

### 2.2 General Purpose

The General Purpose of this TACS project is as follows: “to provide consulting services including technical assistance and studies in support of sound implementation (including communication aspects) of the EU-bilateral development cooperation strategy in Bhutan, with particular focus on the two sector budget support programmes currently being implemented in Bhutan under the Multi-Annual Indicative Programme 2014-2020 i.e. (1) Capacity Development for LG and Fiscal Decentralization and 2) Rural Development and Climate Change Response”.

### 2.3 Specific Objectives

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<sup>16</sup> NATIONAL GENDER EQUALITY POLICY, NCWC, RGoB, 2019

The Department of Local Governance (DLG) carries out routine action research and situation analysis on key development governance pertaining to development processes and activities at the local level. The findings of such research and assessments are used to inform the Department in addressing the challenges and feeding the future programmes with recommendations for improvement.

The Department currently implements the EU-Technical Assistance Complimentary Support (EU-TACS) project, which provides technical assistance in carrying out capacity development activities of the DLG within an overall programme of "Capacity Development for LG and Fiscal Decentralisation EU-Budget in Bhutan". EU-TACS activity A1.5 pertains to supporting DLG in building capacity of LGs in mainstreaming GECDP into the development plans and programmes. The activity aims to revive and continue GECDP mainstreaming programme at the local level, based on the experiences of the programmes in the recent years.

As part of this activity, DLG intends to carry out situation analysis of the GECDP mainstreaming at the local level to inform the Department on the best practices, challenges, lessons learnt and recommendations. The findings of the assessment will help DLG to design a modality of capacity-development of LG functionaries in GECDP mainstreaming. More specifically, the objectives of the assessment are:

- f. Review policy focus and development rationale for GECDP mainstreaming in Bhutan as an integral part of sustainable development approach within the national development goal of GNH's four pillars and its domains.
- g. Take stock of the GECDP mainstreaming best practices and challenges based on the experiences of implementing GECDP mainstreaming activities in the recent years.
- h. Update the assessment carried out in 2017 and 2018 as mentioned in section 1 of this ToR.
- i. Validate the challenges faced by local MRGs in implementing GECDP mainstreaming activities, mentioned in Section 1 of this ToR, and find out other issues.
- j. Make recommendations of strategies with the most suitable modality(s) to implement GECDP mainstreaming activities at the local level with strategic approach that will support sustainability of integration of GECDP mainstreaming within the system of local development plans, programmes and activities.
- k. Make recommendations on how DLG and other stakeholders may best support and monitor the implementation of GECDP mainstreaming activities by LGs.

### 3. SCOPE OF WORK

#### 3.1 Activities and Tasks

The assessment will be carried out guided by the concept and objectives of GECDP mainstreaming in Bhutan initiated as an integral part of the sustainable development under the framework of GNH principles, pillars and domains.

An extensive literature review and secondary research (desk review) will be done to establish a strong case of policy context of Bhutan's development principles, approach and strategies that form the basis for GECDP mainstreaming. As such, references to relevant policy and legislative instruments such as the Constitution, Acts, Regulations and Rules, frameworks, strategies, study reports, past assessments, etc will be made.

The assessment will be conducted in the Dzongkhags where GECDP mainstreaming activities were carried out from the year 2015 through 2019. Dzongkhags and Gewogs where other aspects of GECDP mainstreaming such as LOCAL are implemented will be included, both in terms of definition of GECDP mainstreaming as well as assessment areas.

An extensive literature review and secondary research (desk review) must be done to establish a strong case of policy context of Bhutan's development principles, approach and strategies that forms the basis for GECDP mainstreaming. As such, references to relevant policy and legislative instruments such as the Constitution, Acts, Regulations and Rules, frameworks, strategies, study reports, past assessments, etc would be made.

The assessment will include a detailed study of factors influencing best practices of GECDP mainstreaming, challenges and lessons learnt in order to make evidence-based recommendations of strategies for strengthening the methods of building local capacity in GECDP mainstreaming.

The assessment would be done through qualitative methods, supported by quantitative data based on facts on the ground. In particular, the assessment will be carried out deploying the following methods:

**a. Extensive Literature Review: to establish a strong case of context for GECDP mainstreaming.**

i. Establish policy context of GECDP mainstreaming in Bhutan.

- ◆ Bhutan 2020: Vision for Peace, Prosperity and Happiness (Volume I & II).
- ◆ Enhancing Good Governance: Promoting Efficiency, Transparency and Accountability for GNH (GG99).
- ◆ Good Governance Plus: In pursuit of Gross National Happiness 2005 (GG+).
- ◆ Economic Development Policy 2016.
- ◆ Cottage and Small Industries Policy 2019.
- ◆ Renewable Energy Policy
- ◆ National Forest Policy of Bhutan 2009.
- ◆ Statement by his excellency Jigmi Y. Thinley, former Prime Minister, Kingdom of Bhutan at the United Nations conference on sustainable development (rio + 20) wednesday, 20th June, 2012, Rio de Janeiro)  
<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16693bhutan.pdf>
- ◆ Sustainable Development and Happiness: Bhutan's Voluntary National Review Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, July 2018.  
[https://www.gnhc.gov.bt/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/VNR\\_Bhutan\\_July2018.pdf](https://www.gnhc.gov.bt/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/VNR_Bhutan_July2018.pdf)
- ◆ Second Nationally Determined Contribution, Kingdom of Bhutan, July 2021  
<file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/1627008203.pdf>
- ◆ National Gender Equality Policy- National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC, 2019).
- ◆ National Plan of Action for Gender Equality NCWC, 2019
- ◆ Other relevant policies.

ii. Establish legislative and regulatory context of GECDP mainstreaming in Bhutan.

- ◆ Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan.
- ◆ LG Act 2009 (Amendment 2014).
- ◆ LGRR 2012.
- ◆ Waste Prevention and Management Act of Bhutan 2009.
- ◆ Waste Prevention and Management Regulation of Bhutan, 2012.
- ◆ National Environment Protection Act of Bhutan 2007.

- ◆ Disaster Management Act of Bhutan 2013.
- ◆ Land Act of Bhutan 2007.
- ◆ Water Act of Bhutan 2011.
- ◆ Other relevant legislations.

iii. Take stock of the GECDP mainstreaming programme, progress and status through review of:

- ◆ JSP Project Document
- ◆ LGSDP Project Document
- ◆ Financial Agreement between the RGOB and EU: Capacity Development for LG and Fiscal Decentralisation in Bhutan.
- ◆ Central MRG ToR.
- ◆ Central MRG activities.
- ◆ Local MRG ToR.
- ◆ Local MRG activities.
- ◆ LOCAL programme and activities.
- ◆ Public Environmental Expenditure Review of the Royal Government of Bhutan, Fiscal year 2008-2009 and Fiscal Year 2009-2010.
- ◆ Mainstreaming GECDP into the Development Policies, Plans and Programmes in Bhutan: Experiences, challenges and lessons – DLG, 2015.
- ◆ UNDP/UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative: Mainstreaming Reference Group Mechanism in Bhutan - Rapid Assessment Report and Sustainability Plan (Final Draft, 29 November 2017). UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative 2013-2018: Terminal Evaluation (Final Report), July 2018.
- ◆ 11 FYP Guideline.
- ◆ Framework to mainstream GECDP into the 11<sup>th</sup> PFY for LGs.
- ◆ Local Development Planning Manual (second edition).
- ◆ Guideline for preparation of the 12<sup>th</sup> FYP.
- ◆ Other relevant documents.

***b. Field visit: for stakeholders' consultation***

The assessment team will make field visits to Dzongkhags listed under the target geographical areas for assessment. The team will carry out stakeholders' consultations in three ways:

- (1) Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with key sector officials:
- Dzongkhag Planning Officer (DPO);
  - Dzongkhag Agriculture Officer (DAO);
  - Dzongkhag Livestock Officer (DLO);
  - Dzongkhag Environment Officer.



- Dzongkhag Finance Officer.
  - Dzongkhag Gender Focal Person.
  - Dzongkhag Disaster Management focal officer.
  - Dzongkhag Engineer.
  - 2 GAOs of nearby Gewogs from each Dzongkhags.
- (2) Key-Informant Interviews with local MRG members (at least one or two members)  
The FGD and KII will be done with the guiding questions attached as Annexures.
- (3) Observation of GECDP mainstreaming activity at sites.
- c. *Compilation and analysis of findings: to report on what are the key findings are*
- d. *Synthesis of findings: to inform the best practices, challenges and lessons learnt*
- e. *Recommendations: to inform DLG of the most suitable methods of LG capacity building on GECDP mainstreaming with strategies of implementation, and the monitoring thereof.*

### 3.2 Key Task and Activities

Under the overall monitoring and supervision of the EU-TACS TL/SKE2, the key tasks and activities of the assessment to be undertaken by DLG officers are:

- a. Review the final concept notes/ToR and discuss among the officials engaged for the assessment with the objective to build common understanding of the ToR and the objectives, process and main deliverables.
- b. Review the assessment questionnaire, and guiding FGD and KII questions designed for the assessment to familiarise with the assessment methods and information to be gathered.
- c. Draft and present the inception Report within 5 working days of the commencement of the work.
- d. Carry out extensive literature review and secondary research (reviewing key documents pertinent to GECDP mainstreaming) to establish overall GECDP mainstreaming context, and implementation progress and status (refer (a) under section 3 of this ToR).
- e. Conduct stakeholders' consultation at the central level, primarily with the former central level MRG members (below) at different agencies, including UNDP, UNEP and UNCDF to understand the overall background of the GECDP mainstreaming process, status and challenges.
  - Wangchuk Namgay, GNHC (DCD).
  - Phuntsho Wangyal, GNHC (RED).
  - Karma Jamtsho, GNHC (PPD).
  - Karma Tshering, MoAF (PPD).
- f. Make field visits to 17 Dzongkhags for primary data and detailed of GECDP mainstreaming experiences, status and challenges.
- g. Update EU-TACS-TL/SKE-2 through JNKE-3 on weekly basis with the progress of the planned tasks and activities.
- h. Undertake systematic analysis of data and information gathered to identify findings based on the tools deployed to develop coherent evidence-based findings.
- i. Present draft report of the assessment to DLG with deliverables clearly stated and submit final assessment report after incorporation of comments within five days of receiving the comments.
- j. Produce and submit the final report in English.

The EU-TACS JNKE3 (with the support of the SKE-2 for LGs and Decentralisation) will be responsible for quality assuring all content-related aspects.

### 3.3 Key Outputs and Deliverables

The following are the key outputs and deliverables (quality assured by the EU-TACS JNKE/SKE2):

- i. Inception report within 5 working days of commencement of work, including a realistic work-plan with time schedules for achievement of deliverables.
- ii. Report of literature review and secondary research, that reports a clear context setting of GECDP mainstreaming encompassing, section (a – i, ii & iii) under Scope and Methodology of this ToR, namely:
  - Policy context of GECDP mainstreaming in Bhutan.
  - Legislative and regulatory context of GECDP mainstreaming in Bhutan.
  - Stock of the GECDP mainstreaming programme, progress and status.
- iii. Comprehensive draft report coherent with the assessment purpose and objectives, assessment scope, methodology and analysis, in line with the assessment reporting structure provided as Annexure.
- iv. Final report, after incorporating comments from EU-TACS team, including TL/SK-2 and JNKE-3.

Note: Report must be written and submitted in the EU-TACS reporting template, using the same font, font sizes of different section headings and write-ups.

### 3.4 Dzongkhag Coverage

Sl. No	Dzongkhags	Remarks
1	Thimphu	Exact travel dates and time schedules will be worked out by DLG and submitted as part of the inception report.
2	Lhuntse	
3	Mongar	
4	Wangdue	
5	Punakha	
6	Gasa	
7	Chukha	
8	Paro	
9	Haa	
10	T/Yangtse	
11	T/Gang	
12	P/Gatshel	
13	Bumthang	
14	Trongsa	
15	Zhemgang	
16	Tsirang	
17	Dagana	

### 4. ROLE OF EU-TACS TEAM LEADER/SKE-2 AND JNKE-3

The EU-TACS Team Leader/SKE-2 and JNKE-3 shall be responsible for:

- a. Provide technical support in developing questions (guiding FGD questions and KII questions) and standard reporting structure.
- b. Facilitate orientation of DLG officials on use of questions.
- c. Quality assurance of inception report, methodology including data-collection and analytical processes, draft reports, and other content-related aspects of the.
- d. Participate in periodic monitoring as well as to facilitate with technical support of the process to respective DLG team members.
- e. Liaise TL/SKE-2 for technical aspects of the assessment, wherever necessary and guide DLG to achieve the expected deliverables.

- f. Provide overall operational guidance to the DLG team in carrying out the assessment.

### 3. TIME SCHEDULE

Sl. No.	Key Tasks and Activities	Timeframe	Deliverables
1	Review the final ToR/concept notes and sensitise the officials engaged for the assessment for common understanding of the ToR and the objectives, process and main deliverables.	25 – 29 Oct. 2021	ToR finalised and DLG officials engaged in the assessment familiarised with the purpose, objectives, key tasks and deliverables of the assessment.
2	Review the assessment questionnaire, and guiding FGD and KII questions to familiarise with the assessment methods and information to be gathered.	25 – 29 Oct. 2021	Assessment questions finalised and DLG officials oriented on execution of questions.
3	Draft and present the inception report of the assessment within 5 working days of the commencement of the work.	28 Oct. – 5 Nov 2021	Inception report finalised with QA by TL/JNKE.
4	Carry out extensive literature review and secondary research (reviewing key documents pertinent to GECDP mainstreaming) to establish overall GECDP mainstreaming context, and implementation progress and status (refer (a) under section 3 of this ToR).	2 – 12 Nov. 2021	Comprehensive report of literature review and secondary research with clear context of policy focus on GECDP mainstreaming and past activities of GECDP mainstreaming in the previous years.
5	Conduct stakeholders' consultation at the central level	2 – 10 Nov. 2021	Result of stakeholders' consultation at the local level.
6	Make field visits to Dzongkhags for primary data and detailed assessment of GECDP mainstreaming experiences, status and challenges.	2 – 22 Nov. 2021	Stakeholders' consultation at the local level.
7	Undertake systematic analysis of findings based on the tools deployed to develop coherent evidence-based findings.	23 – 26 Nov. 2021	
8	Present draft report of assessment with deliverables clearly stated and submit final assessment report after incorporation of comments within five days of receiving the comments.	26 Nov. 2021	Draft report
9	Produce and submit the final report.	30 Nov. 2021	Final Report

### 4. COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT

Mr. Melam Zangpo, Chief Programme Officer, will be the overall lead for the assessment. His roles and responsibilities are:

- a. Liaise with Mr. Sonam Tashi (Sr. Programme Officer), EU-TACS focal person to ensure that all administrative and logistics for the assessment are in place in a timely manner.

- b. Coordinate the implementation of the key tasks and activities of the assessment. He will designate team members who will carry out literature review, secondary research and stakeholders' consultation.
- c. Be the focal person to write and present Inception Report, compilation, and analysis of assessment findings of respective Dzongkhags, draft report as per the standard reporting structure agreed (in EU-TACS template), incorporate comments and prepare/present final report.
- d. Ensure that other DLG officials/team abide by the standard assessment process and submit deliverables on time.
- e. Liaise with TL/SKE-2 and JNKE-3 for any technical support and facilitations in the process of the assessment.
- f. Liaise with DAI/EUD through TL/SKE-2 to respond to technical comments on the findings of the report, and strategies of implementation.
- g. Carry out any other activities necessary as the lead official for the activity.

## 5. COORDINATION AND MANAGEMENT

The following expenditure areas are foreseen for the activity:

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Expenditure Item/Heads</b>	<b>Expenditure Type</b>
1	One-day workshop on orientation DLG officials on the assessment ToR, purpose and objectives, key asks and activities; deliverables, reporting requirements; and its process in Thimphu.  Testing of assessment questions	Working lunch, two-times refreshments for about 18 heads, and conference hall charges.
2	Visit to Dzongkhags. a. FGD with the participants- first day b. KI, discussions, and field visit- Second day	1. Working lunch and refreshments for participants. 2. Hall charges 3. DSA for officials involved (MRG members, GAOS, GNHC and DLG)
3	One-day workshop on presentation of draft report and comments.	Working lunch, two-times refreshments for about 12 heads, and conference hall charges.
4	One-day workshop on presentation of final report and comments.	Working lunch, two-times refreshments for about 12 heads, and conference hall charges.

## 8. ASSUMPTIONS AND RISKS

### 8.1 Risks

The LG Election timing and Covid-19 travel restriction.

## 9. Project Management

### 9.1 Responsible body

The Contracting Authority is DAI Brussels, appointed by the EUD in New Delhi to manage the EU-Technical Assistance Complementary Support (EU-TACS) Project.

### 9.2 Management structure

The EU-TACS Project is implemented by DAI Brussels. The EU-TACS project is headed by a Team Leader appointed by the Delegation of the European Commission to Bhutan, New Delhi.

The TL-SKE 2 will take technical, administrative, and financial decisions for this activity. Since the TL-SKE 2 is only intermittently in Bhutan, when she is not on-site, communication will be carried out through e-mail or VOIP.

She will be supported by a Bhutanese Senior Project Manager and a Project Officer, who are based at the DAI Partner's Office in Bhutan (Bhutan Philanthropic Venture – BPV, Thimphu, Bhutan).

10. Annex: EU-TACS PROJECT TOR

The Terms of Reference for the overarching project, to which this activity will contribute, titled: *Technical Assistance for Renewable Natural Resources and Climate Change Response and LGs and Decentralisation* (EU-TACS) – EuropeAid/139521/DH/SER/BT