

DRAFT UPR REPORT

I. METHODOLOGY AND CONSULTATION

1. This Report was prepared with the full involvement of relevant stakeholders from government, private and CSOs in accordance with the General Guidelines for the preparation of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) contained in document A/HRC/6/L.24. Under the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), a Preparatory Committee (PC), CSO was formed and a drafting group constituted from within the PC members. The Ministry also conducted a comprehensive briefing on the UPR for PC members and concerned government officials. The briefing covered all aspects of the UPR process, including principles and objectives; outcome of review; adoption of outcome; follow-up process; and Bhutan's preparations.
2. To maximize public awareness, information on the UPR was uploaded on the MFA website: www.mfa.gov.bt with hyper links to websites of the UPR, Human Rights Council and OHCHR. A booklet on the UPR was published and distributed and information disseminated through print and broadcast media (relevant press clippings attached).
3. All stakeholders and CSO dealing with human rights matters were fully involved in the preparation of the report. The PC held regular meetings during the entire UPR process.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON BHUTAN

A. Overview

4. Bhutan is a landlocked least developed country situated in the eastern Himalayas. It is bordered on the east, south and west by India and the on the north by China. Bhutan was unified under one rule in the 17th Century by Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel, who promulgated the dual system of governance. In 1907, Bhutan became a monarchy with the election of King Ugyen Wangchuck as the first hereditary monarch. Bhutan made a peaceful transition to a democratic constitutional monarchy in 2008.

B. Government

5. The executive authority is vested in the Prime Minister, who heads a government of ten other Cabinet Ministers elected for a term of five years.

C. Constitution

6. The Constitution of Bhutan has 35 Articles with several unique features. These include the retirement age of the Monarch and requiring the government to ensure that a minimum of 60 percent of total land area remain under forest cover at all times. Another notable feature is the elaboration of the fundamental rights and duties of citizens.

D. Legal System

7. The Constitution is the supreme law of the Kingdom. The Code of Zhabdrung Ngawang Namgyel (first theocratic ruler of Bhutan), which is based on the fundamental teachings of Buddhism, serves as the foundation of contemporary Bhutanese legal system. All people are treated as equal before the law, which has safeguards to ensure that people are not deprived of their rights arbitrarily or unfairly. Procedural fairness and separation of powers are fundamental principles in the Bhutanese legal system. The judiciary is independent

from other branches of government and its decision cannot be subordinated to any non-judicial authority.

8. As per the Constitution, the Judiciary comprises of the Supreme Court, the High Court, District and Sub-Divisional Courts and such other Courts and tribunals that may be established from time to time by His Majesty the King on recommendation of the National Judicial Commission. The Supreme Court is in the process of being established. Each court has its own jurisdiction defined under the Civil and Criminal Procedure Code (CCPC) of Bhutan. As per Section 25 of Article 10 of the Constitution, all international instruments acceded to by the government and ratified by Parliament are deemed to be the law of the Kingdom unless otherwise inconsistent with the Constitution. Section 29 of the CCPC also states that the Courts shall apply international conventions, covenants, treaties and protocols that are duly acceded by the government and ratified by Parliament.
9. The normative framework for the protection of human rights consists of the Constitution of Bhutan, Acts of Parliament, court decisions or jurisprudence and customs and traditional practices.

E. Official Languages

10. Dzongkha is the national language and English is the medium of instruction in schools and the language of communication in most government offices.

F. Land Area and Geography

11. Bhutan has a total land area of 38,394 km² of which 72.5% of the total area is under forest cover. The terrain ranges from tropical foothills in the south to extremely rugged mountains in the north.

G. Population

12. The total population of Bhutan is 634,962 (Population and Housing Census of Bhutan (PHCB), 2005) and is projected to grow by 7.6 percent to 683,407 by 2009. The majority of the population inhabits the rural parts of the country.
13. The population of Bhutan can be broadly categorized into two groups: people in northern, western and eastern Bhutan who speak one or the other form of Tibeto-Burman language and who are mainly Buddhists, and people in Southern Bhutan who speak Nepali and are mainly Hindus.

H. Gross Domestic Product

14. 2007: US\$ 1.1 billion (World Bank)

I. Human Development Index

15. Bhutan ranks 131 in the Human Development Index 2008, and falls in the category of Medium Human Development.

J. Political Reforms and Constitutional Framework

a. Brief Overview of Political Institutions

16. Major political reforms were undertaken by the successive monarchs since the institution of monarchy in 1907. The most notable reforms were initiated by the Third King with the establishment of the National Assembly in 1953. It was composed of elected representatives and government officials. This set in motion a gradual and steady process of decentralization and democratization that received added momentum after the

enthronement of the Fourth King in 1972. He devoted 34 years of his reign to set up every political and public institution necessary for the introduction of parliamentary democracy in 2008.

b. Devolution of Executive Powers

17. In 1998 His Majesty transferred full executive powers to Ministers, who were elected by the peoples' representatives in the National Assembly for a period of five years. Under this system, the Prime Minister was the Head of Government and took office on rotational basis for a term of one year amongst the Cabinet Ministers according to the number of votes secured during the election.

c. Drafting of the Constitution

18. In September 2001, the Fourth King issued a Royal Decree to draft a written Constitution for Bhutan that would, *inter alia*, provide a basis for the creation of a democratic political system best suited to Bhutan. A 39-member, broad-based drafting committee, composed of government, judicial, religious and elected people's representative from every district, was formed. The committee released the first draft of the Constitution to the public in March 2005.

d. Public Consultations on the Draft Constitution

19. To ensure people's participation to the greatest extent possible, the draft Constitution was distributed to all the people throughout the country well in advance of the initiation of the public consultations. The draft was also posted online; unfamiliar terms were explained and anyone from inside or outside the country could post comments directly to the drafting committee. In October 2005, the Fourth King opened the first public consultation in Thimphu, the capital city. The public consultations were an open process where His Majesty, accompanied by the members of the drafting committee, held discussions on the draft Constitution article by article, soliciting views and comments on every aspect of the draft. The Fourth King travelled to 7 districts while His Majesty the King, the then Crown Prince, covered the remaining 13 districts to chair the consultations. The consultations were completed on 27 May 2006.

e. Formation of Political Parties

20. The encouraging kick-off to the new political process, with the early formation of The People's Democratic Party, Bhutan's first political party, was followed by a worrisome lull and despite constant pleas from the Throne and the Election Commission of Bhutan for the commencement of the electoral process well in advance, few people showed interest in forming political parties. By March 2007, four months prior to the closure of formal registration, only two political parties were reported to be active. The process received a boost after seven of the ten serving cabinet ministers resigned and joined politics. After much internal negotiations, two political parties – the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and Druk Phuensum Tshogpa (DPT) or Party of Blissful Harmony – emerged to contest the elections in 2008.
21. In preparation for parliamentary elections, two rounds of Mock Elections were held. The primary round of mock election, held on 21 April 2007, had a 50.9 percent and the general round, on 28 May 2007 recorded a 57.17 percent voter turn-out.

f. Elections to the National Council

22. Elections of 20 members to the National Council, or the Upper House, from 20 Districts were held on 31 December 2007 and 29 January 2008. The average voter turnout was 48.5

percent. The 5 Eminent Persons for the National Council were nominated by His Majesty the King on 30 March 2009, thereby completing the formation of the National Council. The National Council is an apolitical legislative house of review.

g. Elections to the National Assembly

23. Elections to the National Assembly in all 47 constituencies were held on 24 March 2009. The voter turn-out was 79.4 percent. Since there were only two parties contesting the election, there was no need for the primary round of elections and only the general round of elections to the National Assembly were held.

h. Formation of first elected government

24. The DPT won a landslide majority winning 45 of the 47 seats in the National Assembly. PDP, with two seats became the opposition. The Cabinet was formed in April 2009. The DPT was elected on a platform of equity and justice.

i. Adoption of Constitution

25. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan was adopted by the first session of the first Parliament on 18 July 2008. With this, Bhutan formally became a Democratic Constitutional Monarchy.

j. Experiences and Challenges with parliamentary democracy

26. The new government is fully cognizant of the historic role which has come along with its victory: in entrenching the values and culture of democracy in order to make it irreversible. The Third and Fourth Kings of Bhutan, the architects of modern Bhutan, took painstaking efforts over more than 50 years to establish every essential institution for a smooth transition to democracy. The government has made concerted efforts to promote awareness and activate these at all levels of decision making and has shown acute awareness, for instance, of the lack of a strong opposition in the National Assembly – with only two members from the opposition party. In this context, it has made a conscious decision to accommodate the views of the opposition party in all debates and has taken the view that the 2 MPs from the PDP are nevertheless representative of the 33% of the votes which the party won. The ruling party has also encouraged its own MPs to freely express views independent of the official party stand on any issue. Another note-worthy development has been the manner in which the National Council has, perhaps conscious of the negligible presence of the opposition, acted as an alert and active house of review and has and has questioned the constitutionality of several important decisions made by the National Assembly. The Government has also continuously engaged with the media with a view to encouraging and empowering them to fulfill their important role in the new democracy. The Prime Minister has gone on record time and again to pledge a transparent and open government which will not only respect the role of the media as a watchdog but also give them enough room and time to mature.
27. As expected in any new system, many issues need to be ironed out. There needs to be clearer demarcation of the roles and responsibilities, between the two houses of the Parliament on certain matters. These include the authority of the Council in approving financial bills and on some of the Cabinet decisions. In the meantime, the enthusiastic support of Bhutan's development partners in strengthening democracy cannot go without honorable mention. Office bearers of the new Parliament and MP's have been able to undertake study tours to several other countries to interact with their counterparts and learn from their experiences. Even casual observers are noticing the improvement in the quality

of debates in the Parliament. All these augur well for the development of a vibrant and dynamic democracy in Bhutan.

III. International and Regional Commitments

28. Bhutan signed the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) on July 17, 1980 and ratified it on August 31, 1981. It presented its combined initial through sixth periodic reports to the CEDAW Committee in January 2003. The Committee considered the report at its 30th Session in January 2004. Bhutan submitted its seventh periodic report in September 2007 and the Committee considered the report at its 44th Session on 23 July 2009.
29. Bhutan ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1990 and signed the two CRC Optional Protocols on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography; and on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, in September 2005. Bhutan submitted its initial report to the CRC Committee in February, 1999. At its 715th and 716th meetings (see CRC/C/SR. 715-716), held on 5 June 2001, the Committee considered the initial report of Bhutan (CRC/C/3/Add.60) and adopted the concluding observations, which recognized positive developments and made recommendations for improvement. Bhutan's submitted its second report in March 2007 and the Committee considered this report at its 49th Session in September 2008.
30. Bhutan has also signed the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) in March 1973.
31. Bhutan is an active member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Under SAARC, Bhutan has ratified the Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia and the Convention on Prevention and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution in September 2003, and SAARC Code for the Protection of Breastfeeding and Young Child Nutrition in August 2003. This reinforces Bhutan's international commitments made for the rights of children and women. Further, it has signed the SAARC Social Charter in January 2004, which among others, calls for the promotion of the status of women and promotion of the rights and well-being of children.

IV. PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

A. The Constitution

32. The Constitution of Bhutan guarantees and protects the human rights of every citizen and provides speedy and effective remedies if they are infringed or violated. Article 7 of the Constitution specifically protects human rights such as right to life, liberty and security of persons, right to freedom of speech, expression and opinion, freedom of thought, conscience and religion etc. and such rights cannot be abridged except by the due process of law. Section 3, 5, and 6 of Article 9 of the Constitution obligates the state to create a civil society and to protect human rights and dignity, and to ensure fundamental rights and freedom of people; to provide justice through fair, transparent and an expeditious process; and, to provide legal aid to secure justice. The Constitution also provides for the application of international instruments by providing that all international instruments

acceded to by the government and ratified by Parliament are deemed to be the law of the Kingdom unless otherwise inconsistent with the Constitution.

B. **Gross National Happiness**

33. The guiding principle of Bhutan's development philosophy - Gross National Happiness (GNH) - first pronounced by the Fourth King in 1974, lays the framework for the integration of human rights into the fabric of society at the micro level and its protection and promotion by the state at the macro level. The philosophy upholds strong principles of equality of all human beings, our interconnectedness with other living beings and the rights and responsibilities that must guide human conduct. It has received added value with its enshrinement in the Constitution that mandates the state "...to strive to promote those conditions that will enable the pursuit of Gross National Happiness."
34. In essence, GNH seeks to maximize the happiness of individuals, by creating an enabling environment for them to achieve their full potential as human beings by forging an alternative path that goes beyond the conventional income-based measures of development. The GNH approach to development seeks to integrate the aspirations for happiness, which includes the spiritual and cultural needs of the people into the development equation.
35. The principles of human rights are embodied in various dimensions of GNH as reflected in its four pillars. On the economic front, the first pillar aspires towards **sustainable and equitable socio-economic development** and ensures that the present development does not compromise the right to development of future generations. Secondly, it ensures that socio-economic development is sustainable and that every person in the country benefits from development activities.
36. The second pillar is a commitment to the **preservation and promotion of cultural and spiritual heritage** of the people. This reflects the protection of cultural rights and the non-discriminatory approach of the state of a diverse people. The **conservation of the environment** as the third pillar reflects the state's commitment beyond the economic realm of development. **Good Governance** as the final pillar gives responsibility to the state in acting as an efficient, transparent and ethical dispenser of public services. This also imposes the necessary constraint of accountability on political leaders and demands transparency in all government and political institutions. The people, of course, now hold the power of the ballot to decide how each government is living up to the high standards built into the GNH matrix.

C. **Legislative Framework**

A number of important Bills are being deliberated upon by the current session of the Parliament. These include the Royal Bhutan Police Bill, Prison Bill, Tobacco Control Bill and the Royal Civil Service Bill.

The two houses of Parliament combined has a total of 21 committees. These include the legislative committee, human rights committee, cultural committee, labour and employment committee, women and children committee, poverty reduction committee, media and ICT committee, youth and sports committee and education development committee in National Assembly and the legislative committee; new economic and

wellbeing committee; social and cultural affairs committee; environmental and natural resources committee; and, good governance committee in the National Council.

37. In order for the legislature to have a prominent role in the promotion and protection of human rights, a Committee on Human Rights has been established in the National Assembly. Among others, its functions include the following:
- i) Review and recommend amendments of the existing laws and policies relating to human rights and also propose new legislation.
 - ii) Shall as and when directed by the Speaker or the House, visit prison cells and detention centres to check any incidences of human rights violations and gather information from victims.
 - iii) Review and report to the House on the status of implementation of National Assembly resolutions related to human rights by the government and other agencies.
 - iv) Carry out responsibilities related to human rights referred to by the House and submit its findings, opinions and recommendations.

D. The Judiciary and rights of fair trial

38. Bhutan is committed to the rule of law and the administration of Justice is carried out fairly, impartially and independently in accordance with the laws. The right to fair trial is guaranteed by the Constitution. The Constitution also provides for equality before law and equal and effective protection by the law. Laws are applied to all citizens without exception and trials are conducted in public. Anyone charged with a penal offense has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. The defendant has the right to access government-held evidence and the state provides free legal service to an indigent accused where the interest of justice so requires and to ensure that justice is not denied to any person by reason of economic or other disabilities.
39. Besides the Constitution, the CCPC elaborately guarantees the right to fair trial by providing measure of fairness in criminal proceedings. The incorporation of such procedural measures in the CCPC demonstrates Bhutan's commitment to ensure that the constitutional rights to a fair trial are meaningful and further confirm its commitment to human rights and values of social justice. The CCPC provides for unrestricted rights to appeal against the decision of a judge. The judiciary incorporates international standards in their decision making and the government respects the independence of the judiciary and their decisions.
40. The current government has made concerted efforts to guarantee the independence of judiciary, to dispense justice expeditiously, fairly and inexpensively, and to ensure due process. These have been done through physical separation of entire court system from the other branches of government in six districts and 15 sub-districts; by prescribing a standing rule by the judiciary for all courts to clear all cases within a year; and by institutionalizing continuing legal education to the judicial staff to enhance their capacity in the new democratic setup and to contribute to the building of a reliable and efficient legal system.

E. Specific Groups

i) Women

41. Women in Bhutan are treated equal to men. Traditional Bhutanese society, which is largely grounded on Buddhist precepts and principles, has provided a secure environment for

women. Large parts of the country are matrilineal and women not only inherit property, but also have substantive decision making power over property and family matters.

42. However, the Gender Pilot Study, the first of its kind in Bhutan, noted that “despite the absence of any overt gender discrimination in Bhutanese society, there are still fairly well ingrained traditional perceptions and stereotypes that accentuate male superiority”.
43. The 10th Five Year Plan (2008 – 2013) of the country is also a landmark as it has incorporated gender mainstreaming as a central strategy and gender disaggregated data as an output of the plan. The National Plan of Action for Gender, which tables seven key strategic areas for implementation in the 10th FYP, is expected to give greater focus to gender and women’s empowerment in all national plans and policies.
44. In addition to CEDAW, Bhutan is also a party to Beijing Platform For Action (BPFA) and SAARC Conventions that promote and protect the rights of women. Bhutan is up to date with its reporting obligations to these conventions.

ii) Children

45. Bhutan made explicit commitment to ensure the security and welfare of children and this was evident by being one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Child in 1990.
46. The Constitution guarantees the right to free education up to class 10 for all children of school going age and availability of technical and professional education and equal access to higher education for all on the basis of merit. Bhutan has also made impressive progress towards realizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to achieving universal primary education and ensuring gender equality in education. Building of schools in rural and remote areas has particularly contributed to reducing the gender gap at primary level, to only 1 percentage point in 2006 (NER for girls 79%; boys 80%). By 2008, this gap was not only removed, but NER for girls exceeded that of boys by 2 percentage points (NER girls at 89% and NER boys at 87%).

iii) People with disabilities

47. The PHCB 2005 shows a total of 21,894 persons, representing 3.4% of the population, as having one or more disabilities. There were 6,476 persons with disability at birth and 15,867 persons with disability developed in later life. Sex disaggregated data for types of disabilities (overall male proportion 54 percent, female 46 percent) does not reveal any wide disparity between men and women, except with regard to seeing and moving, the latter of which may be due to gender division of labor. More men are involved in driving and other hazardous occupations and are more susceptible to injury-related events.

Due to institutional capacity constraints, Bhutan has not yet signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is, however, under review by the government. Meanwhile, the government has integrated disability related programmes into its socio-economic development plans by streamlining proper budget allocation, overall planning and coordination.

48. In 2007, the Youth Development Fund and the Department of Special Education of the Ministry of Education, launched a project to enhance educational opportunities for children with special needs.

F. Establishment of the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC)

49. The NCWC is a fully autonomous agency entrusted with a mandate that encompasses functional responsibilities both within and outside the country. This includes coordinating submission of periodic country reports to Treaty Bodies, coordinating activities of conventions such as CRC, CEDAW and others within and outside Bhutan, coordinating any other activity that helps to address the concerns and well being of children and women. The NCWC also provides a forum for receiving and investigating reports on violations of rights of children and women, besides monitoring the implementation of activities under CRC, CEDAW and other conventions. The NCWC also undertakes review on issues, policies, actions and legislation pertaining to children and women and advises the government to undertake necessary action. The principal accountability of the NCWC is to function as the 'Rights Watch' arm of the government, particularly in its regional and international obligations.

G. Establishment of CSOs

H. The Civil Society Organizations Act of Bhutan was enacted in 2007. The CSO Authority, which was formed in 2009, is responsible for implementing the provisions of the Act including overseeing the formation and functioning of CSOs. Currently, 28 organizations including the ones already functioning as CSOs, have applied for CSO status with the Authority. These organizations, most of which are working to help economically marginalized people, will have legal status once listed as CSOs with the Authority. Even before the enactment of the Act, CSOs made their presence felt by supporting key areas and needs of a changing society.

I. Voluntary commitments

50. Bhutan is committed to continue participating actively in all UN human rights activities with the objective of drawing on international best practices that can be incorporated into relevant domestic policies and legislation.

i) Human Rights Education (This could be deleted)

51. Please see part K, paragraph 65 and 70, below.

J. Public Awareness of Human Rights

52. The NCWC has organised a number of trainings on human rights such as on CRC, CEDAW, gender and development for law enforcement officials, judiciary, parliamentarians, local government officials, media and youth and children. In-country trainings on CRC have been conducted for the staff of the **Women and Child Protection** Unit of the Police. The NCWC also supported trainings outside Bhutan for different stakeholders on child rights sensitisation and on human trafficking. Study tours to Sri Lanka and Thailand were organized for the police and judiciary personnel to review women and child-friendly procedures, and assess how and to what extent they could be adopted in Bhutan.

53. The Royal Court of Justice conducted a campaign titled 'Know the Law to Protect Your Rights' to raise awareness of law in various schools and educational institutions, emphasising issues related to rights and duties of children for better protection of rights. The NCWC with UNICEF conducted a child rights and protection training for monks, principals and heads of monastic institutions, and a long term plan has also been developed.

54. Although CRC has not been integrated into the formal school curriculum, but child rights and protection issues have been included in various activities targeting minors including the scouts programme, in youth leadership trainings, in school life skills programme and in other extra-curricular activities.
55. A training of trainers' workshop was held in early 2009 for the Judicial and Law Enforcement officials on Laws & Policies, Violence Against Women (VAW) and Rights. The workshop was attended by over 40 personnel from the Judiciary and the Police.

K. Accountability and Oversight of the Royal Bhutan Police (RBP)

56. As a trained uniform force, the RBP is primarily responsible for maintaining law and order, and the prevention of crime. They are also considered an important part of the nation's security force. The Draft Police Bill of 2008 reinforces the roles and responsibilities of police personnel in society. The Bill also provides mechanisms to check any abuse of power by police personnel. The CCPC provides a safety valve for any abuse of power in criminal investigations by an investigating officer of RBP. The Police Service Board consisting of senior officers and a representative from the Ministry of Home & Cultural Affairs reviews and conducts inquiries and investigates cases involving abuse of powers by the police. The Draft Police Bill also authorizes the Chief of Police to take appropriate action to give concurrence to the inquiry reports submitted by the Board and award punishment accordingly to police personnel.
57. The police in Bhutan are not immune from criminal prosecution for any violation of human rights. They are expected to function with greater efficiency and effectiveness in securing the rights of the accused during an investigation. The Draft Police Bill embodies international standards and principles to handle the rights of an accused with positive expression of good behavior and best practices essential for effective, lawful and human policing for police personnel.
58. The RBP is making concerted efforts to transform itself into a rights respecting organization that simultaneously provides protection and fights crime. It is also trying to improve its public service image by undertaking institutional reviews and through various training courses on human rights to its personnel. The accountability mechanisms that are provided in the Draft Police Bill helps to ensure police discipline, adherence to human rights and inculcating an institutional police culture to protect the rights of people in Bhutan.

L. Past cooperation with UN human rights bodies

59. Bhutan has taken active interest in UN human rights activities, particularly through the Commission on Human Rights (CHR) and the Human Rights Council (HRC). Bhutan served as an active member of the CHR for three terms from 1995-2000 and from 2004-2006. Although not a member, Bhutan actively participates in the work of HRC. Bhutan also participated actively at Ministerial level in the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna and the World Conference on Racism in Durban and its Review Conference.
60. Bhutan was among the first group of countries that invited Mr. Jose Ayala Lasso, the first High Commissioner for Human Rights, to visit the country in August 1994 after assuming office in April 1994. During his visit, the High Commissioner had wide ranging discussions with all relevant government officials on the situation of human rights in Bhutan. The

government requested the High Commissioner for assistance of the Centre for Human Rights (now the OHCHR) in advancing the national implementation of international human rights norms in Bhutan. As a result, Bhutan was the beneficiary of an OHCHR Technical Cooperation Project.

61. Following the High Commissioner's visit, there has been active interaction and cooperation between Bhutan and OHCHR, especially with the implementation of the Technical Cooperation Project. Visiting Bhutanese Ministers to Geneva have also continuously interacted with the OHCHR ever since. The Permanent of Mission of Bhutan in Geneva continues to interact regularly with the OHCHR.
62. The Technical Cooperation Project BHU/95/AH/20 – Strengthening National Human Rights, resulting from the High Commissioner's visit, was implemented by the OHCHR from 1997 – 2001. The total project cost was US \$ 300,600 including the government's in-kind contribution of US \$ 10,000. Through this project, Bhutan was able to strengthen the administration of justice, train law enforcement officials on the theoretical aspects and practical implications of international human rights standards, and to support Bhutan's capacity to report under international human rights instruments and its understanding of international human rights norms and obligations. Under the Project, the following activities were undertaken:
 - a) Seminar for High Court Judges on International Human Rights Standards;
 - b) Training Course for paralegals in Bhutanese criminal procedure and international human rights standards on the administration of justice;
 - c) Training course for police on human rights and law enforcement;
 - d) Training course for district judges on judicial structures;
 - e) Training of Judges on administration of justice and human rights through an OHCHR fellowship programme in cooperation with the Human Rights Centre of Essex University;
 - f) Training of policewomen on human rights of detainees through an OHCHR fellowship programme in cooperation with the Human Rights Centre of Essex University; and
 - g) Fellowships to relevant government officials on treaty accession and reporting obligations.

At the end of the Project, the OHCHR engaged (Mr. Louis Joinet) as an independent expert, to carry out a Project Evaluation Mission. The evaluation report stated that the government's engagement in the project was positive. In particular, highlighting cooperation extended in its overall implementation and administration, the selection of suitable participants for various activities under the project, and also taking special note of the follow-up by the government agencies that builds upon the benefits of the technical cooperation.

63. Bhutan was also the first country to invite the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) to visit the country in October 1994 undertaken by the Group's Chairman-Rapporteur, Mr. L. Joinet, and by two of its members, Mr. L. Kama and Mr. K. Sibal. The WGAD was invited to visit Bhutan in connection with an alleged case of arbitrary detention being considered by them. The scope of the visit was not just confined to this particular case, but covered other areas of its mandate. In a spirit of openness and transparency, the government extended full cooperation in facilitating the visit.
64. The government invited the WGAD for a follow-up visit in April 1996 undertaken by Mr. Louis Joinet, Chairman-Rapporteur. The WGAD followed-up on the recommendations it

had made on the administration of justice; visited courts, prisons and police stations in other provinces outside the capital; and evaluated the case that the WGAD had declared as non-arbitrary that a party asked to be reviewed. The WGAD noted that its earlier recommendations were implemented and also noted the government's intention to deal effectively with issues brought to its notice. The WGAD once again declared the particular case submitted for review as non-arbitrary.

65. The government invited Mr. Miguel Alfonso Martinez, Special Rapporteur for Human Rights and Human Responsibilities, to Bhutan in September 2002. He interacted extensively with relevant officials of the government for the preparation of his final report E/CN.4/2003/105 dated 17 March 2003 on the study requested by the CHR in its resolution 2000/63, and submitted pursuant to ECOSOC decision 2002/277.
66. Cooperation between Bhutan and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) began with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the government and ICRC in November 1993. This MoU, which is renewed annually, allows the ICRC to visit all persons arrested or detained for offences against national security. The ICRC is given access to all places where such prisoners are located to determine their treatment and the material and psychological conditions of detention. By June 2009, the ICRC had conducted 27 visits to Bhutan.
67. The ICRC has conducted approximately 14 seminars/workshops on implementation of international humanitarian law with specific focus on the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1997 Ottawa Convention for relevant law enforcement and government officials of Bhutan. In support of the work of ICRC, the government has been making annual voluntary contributions to the ICRC averaging annually at US \$ 16,000. Both the government and ICRC are satisfied with the present state of cooperation.

V. IDENTIFICATION OF CHALLENGES, CONSTRAINTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND BEST PRACTICES

A. Challenges & Constraints

i) Poverty

68. Despite significant strides in the reduction of poverty, 23.2% of the population still lives below the poverty line. Hence, it is the overarching objective of the 10th FYP to reduce poverty to 15%. This requires mobilization of proportional resources. The government recognizes that poverty is not just about the lack of basic necessities and material needs, but is a debilitating condition that deeply affects the non-material well being of people. It denies them the rightful opportunity to lead happy lives; robs them of dignity, confidence and self-esteem; aspects of deprivation that can be extremely dehumanizing. The prevalence of poverty is the biggest obstacle to achieving Bhutan's vision of a GNH society. This is further exacerbated by the fact that 98% of the poverty-stricken population reside in rural areas. Lack of education and awareness impose significant constraints.

ii) Problems of Access

69. Due to the difficult terrain, rural settlements are highly scattered separated by rugged mountains and deep valleys. These factors make delivery of social services such as health, education, electricity and safe drinking water in many rural areas extremely difficult and expensive.

iii) Unemployment

70. Unemployment has become an overriding issue over the past few years. Reducing youth unemployment is one of the major challenges facing the government. With an estimated 10,600 young women and men unemployed among a total population of 634,962, the need for employment creation efforts focusing on youth is undeniable. The national unemployment rate has increased from 1.4% in 1998 to 3.7% in 2007. While the figure is not alarming compared with global trends, the situation is critical in Bhutan's context as more than 6,300 (60%) unemployed youth today are between the ages of 15 and 24 and youth comprise nearly 23% of the country's population.

71. It is expected that by 2013, the number of youth will increase to 194,417 (male – 102,530 & female – 91,888). According to the labour force surveys, youth unemployment is growing at the rate of 0.44% (male – 0.21% & female – 0.68%) annually. The PHCB 2005 shows youth unemployment at 6.19% (male – 5.53% & female – 7.19%). Further, the steady increase in rural-urban migration can aggravate the existing youth unemployment problem. The PHCB 2005 also shows urban unemployment rate of 10.7% (male – 5% & female – 16.3%). Despite concerted efforts of the government to reduce youth unemployment, approximately 10,000 job seekers were still unemployed at the time of writing this report. Currently, the government is taking measures such as labour market information, employment services, entrepreneurship and self-employment through SMEs, apprenticeship training programmes and pre-employment engagement programmes to curb youth unemployment.

iv) Climate change

72. As a small, landlocked least developed country with a fragile and mountainous ecosystem, Bhutan is seriously threatened by climate change despite contributing least to this problem. It has one of the lowest greenhouse gas emissions and is committed to a development path that is clean and green in line with our development philosophy of GNH. With low emissions and 72.5% of our country forested, and with a commitment to always maintain a minimum of 60% of our land under forests, Bhutan is already beyond being carbon neutral and has a net sequestration of greenhouse gases. Yet Bhutan is one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change.

73. If, as mandated by the Bali Action Plan, the world does not limit the rise of global temperatures well below two degrees, it could cause devastating impacts on Bhutan's mountain glaciers and hydrological systems, and the signs are already visible with the rapid melting of glaciers. Bhutan has 26 glacial lakes that are increasing in size to dangerous levels and in danger of bursting as Glacial Lake Outburst Floods as a direct result of global warming. Such dangers to lakes if not addressed, threaten the lives, livelihoods of people, infrastructure and economy not only in Bhutan, but in downstream countries as well. A recent flooding in May demonstrated the destructions such calamities can unleash. As a result of incessant rainfall from cyclone Aila in the Bay of Bengal, the whole river system in country flooded to levels not seen before. Apart from damages to properties worth Nu. 719 million, the calamity claimed twelve lives. 69% of Bhutanese depend on subsistence farming, but water shortages and erratic monsoons threaten their livelihoods. Hydropower, which finances development activities like health and education, will also be adversely impacted. Malaria and dengue are now appearing more frequently as they spread upwards from lower elevations, something unheard of before.

- v) Financial and economic crisis
74. Bhutan is fortunate to have been spared the full effects of the first wave of the global economic crisis. However, the World Bank warns that Bhutan will be vulnerable to the effects of the second wave of the global economic slowdown that could affect export earnings, the tourism sector and external financing. Therefore, while Bhutan is on track to achieve to the MDGs, it is concerned such effects on the economy can impede progress.
- vi) Illegal immigration
75. As Bhutan is located in a region marked by vast population movements, poverty, environmental degradation and political instability, it has faced problems of illegal immigration since the early 1960s, especially when it began the process of planned socio-economic development. Most of the illegal immigrants were from the neighboring region and the areas contiguous to Bhutan's southern borders, and who took advantage of Bhutan's long and porous border. Bhutan with its small population and favourable land-people ratio, and with the employment and business opportunities arising from rapid socio-economic progress and expanding development programmes in recent decades, has been looked upon as an economic haven for illegal immigrants, who have long faced population and job scarcity in their own areas.
76. The illegal immigrants, who were actually economic migrants, mingled easily with the local Lhotshampa population of southern Bhutan, who are mostly of ethnic Nepalese origin. The government remained ignorant of large numbers of illegal immigrants that had managed to get themselves registered as Bhutanese citizens through fraudulent means. They escaped detection because of racial, cultural and linguistic affinities with the Lhotshampas, who had received citizenship in 1958. The first nation-wide census in 1988 revealed the presence of a large number of illegal immigrants and an unnatural population increase in southern Bhutan.
77. On realizing the gravity of the situation, the government instituted a mechanism to effectively identify illegal immigrants and implement the country's citizenship laws more strictly but not deprive bonafide Lhotshampas of their citizenship rights. These measures were undertaken to curb the serious problem of illegal immigration faced by Bhutan and to protect the interests of genuine Bhutanese citizens of Nepalese origin.
78. As a tiny country with an open border and free movement of people by a Treaty with India, Bhutan provides an attractive destination for economic migrants. This problem is likely to continue to pose a serious demographic threat to Bhutan's survival as a distinct political and cultural entity. The only safeguards that Bhutan has against this daunting threat are its citizenship laws.
- vii) Terrorism
79. Bhutan has serious security concerns arising from increasing terrorist activities in Bhutan. These terrorist activities have been carried out by armed groups formed outside Bhutan that have declared their intention to enter the country to achieve their political aims through violent means, including an armed revolution to (end the Monarchy and) destabilize the democratic government in Bhutan. In the past two years, these groups have been responsible for 15 bomb blasts inside Bhutan, some of which were aimed at discouraging people from participating in Bhutan's first historic democratic elections. They have also

attempted to establish terrorist camps inside Bhutan (and spread Maoist ideology) and instigate the people to start a people's war against the democratic government.

80. At a critical juncture, when Bhutan is in the process of consolidating democracy in the country, it cannot afford any disruptions from terrorist activities (originating from neighboring regions). These are a grave security threat to Bhutan and if unchecked, have the potential to destabilize the entire region. At such an important stage in its history, Bhutan needs the full cooperation and understanding of the international community to ensure that such acts of terrorism do not undermine the success of democracy in Bhutan.

B. Achievements

i) Achievement of MDGs

81. By subscribing to the MDGs, Bhutan has decided to share in a global vision for the new century based on the fundamental values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance and respect for nature. Bhutan is on track to achieving most of the MDG goals. Poverty has been reduced by more than a third from 36.3 % in 2000 to 23.3% in 2007 is likely to surpass the first goal of halving poverty by 2015. This creates a level platform that addresses the social and economic rights of the citizens. Bhutan faces significant challenges in providing gainful employment to its disproportionate youth population. The failure to address this could result in major social ramifications. However, the achievement thus far has been instrumental in propelling Bhutan to a higher level in the HDI ranking. This is crucial to create a platform for addressing human rights since it is these social and economic rights that have to be fulfilled together with civil and political rights.

ii) Achievements in SAARC Development Goals

The SAARC Development Goals (SDGs) 2005 – 2010 is a reflection of the regional will to do better than the goals set by MDGs. The SDGs have identified 22 priority goals in the areas of poverty alleviation, education, health and environment of which eight SDGs pertain to livelihood, four to health, four to education and six to environment. Bhutan has made considerable strides in all of these areas.

iii) Achievements in Health

82. Starting with two hospitals and 11 dispensaries manned by a few health workers in 1961, when Bhutan began socio-economic development activities, the health sector has made tremendous achievements in healthcare delivery system. The table below is reflective of the significant improvements in health.

Selected Indicators

Sl.No.	Indicators	Baseline	Current Statistics
1	Expectation of life at birth	45.6 years (1985)	66.9 years (2009)
2	Infant mortality rate per 1000 live births	102.8 (1985)	40.1 (2005)
3	Child – under 5 mortality rate per 1000 live births	211 (1984)	61.5 (2005)
4	Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births	770 (1984)	255 (2000)
5	Access to safe drinking water	54% (1985)	82.5 % (2008)
6	Access to safe excreta disposal/sanitation	60% (1987)	90.8 % (2008)
7	Number of hospitals	27 (1986)	31 (2009)
8	Number of Basic Health Centres	67 (1986)	178 (2009)
9	Number of Outreach Clinics	46 (1986)	
10	Number of doctors including specialists and	145 (1986)	2007 (2009)

	indigenous physicians		
11	Number of nurses	252 (1986)	567 (2009)
12	Number of technicians	119 (1986)	

83. The Bhutanese healthcare system is based on the primary healthcare approach geared towards promotion of health and prevention of diseases and conditions of ill-health for which the country has received international acclaim. Universal child immunization was achieved in 1991, leprosy and iodine deficiency disorders were declared no longer as a public health problem in 1997 and 2003 respectively. The other success story is the essential drugs programme. The health sector is fully committed along with other stakeholders in spearheading the country's commitment on the sustenance of ban on the sale of tobacco and tobacco products.

84. From having general medical practitioners in the early 1960s, Bhutan now has numerous specialists in various fields including sub-specialty services such as cancer surgery, neuro-surgery, urology, foeto-maternal medicine, prosthodontics, spine surgeries, etc.

iv) Achievements in Education

85. Modern education was first introduced in the country in the early 1960s with the launch of the First Five Year Plan. Until then, only monastic education was available in the country. The government has consistently accorded high priority by allocating Nu.9.5 billion to education in the 10th FYP. From just 11 schools with 400 students in 1960, the education system has grown to over 552 schools and institutes with 166,409 students taught by 6,585 teachers and lecturers in 2008.

86. There has been substantial progress in enhancing primary school enrolment and Bhutan is on track to achieving universal primary education. The Gross Primary Enrolment Ratio (GER) is currently 114% and Net Primary Enrolment Ratio (NER) is 91.5% with a target to achieve 100% by the end of the 10th FYP in 2013. There is near gender equity at the primary level and the gap is narrowing at higher educational levels. Curriculum is being continually reviewed and revised to ensure relevance to the workplace and needs of the country.

87. Since 1973, Bhutan has made extra efforts to provide education to children who have a wide range of disabilities and learning difficulties by strategically locating institutes for such children in different parts of the country to enable easy access. During the 10th FYP, more such institutes and centers will be established.

88. Notwithstanding achievements, the education sector is faced with major constraints and challenges. These include, *inter alia*, teacher shortage; enormous pressure on limited facilities at secondary level; ensuring quality education while enhancing enrolment; and adopting an inclusive approach to education for children with physical disabilities and learning difficulties. The government is making every effort to address these challenges.

v) Environment

89. Forests cover 72.5% of Bhutan's total area while 30% of the area is designated as protected. These have been possible due to strong political commitment, traditional values and a way of life that reveres nature and a relatively small population. Notwithstanding these, environmental conservation is becoming increasingly challenging due to pressures exerted by new demands of a growing, modernizing population.

vi) Growth of the media

90. There is freedom of speech and the freedom of the press in Bhutan. The freedom of speech is guaranteed under Article 7, Section 2, of the Constitution, which explicitly states that “A Bhutanese citizen shall have the right to freedom of speech, opinion and expression”. The freedom of the press is guaranteed under Article 7, Section 4, of the Constitution, which states that “There shall be freedom of the press, radio and television and other forms of dissemination of information, including electronic media”. The government strongly believes that a free and independent media is vital for a vibrant democracy.
91. In addition to Kuensel, which became a daily national newspaper in May 2009, two private independent newspapers started publications in mid-2006. This was preceded by the beginning of another daily which began publication in 2008. Besides the Bhutan Broadcasting Service, three FM radio stations began operating - one in 2006, one in 2007 and the other in 2008 – in Thimphu and which cover a few other districts. A private television station is in an advanced stage of being established. Bhutan is witnessing an increasingly vibrant media that is indeed performing its functions as the fourth estate.
92. The internet and satellite TV have also been available since 1999. All types of other foreign media publications have always been freely available in Bhutan.

C. Best Practices

i) Free Healthcare Services

93. In accordance with the Constitution, all levels of healthcare are provided free to all citizens and residents in Bhutan. The government even bears the cost of medical treatment including travel and living expenses for patients who are referred outside the country for specialized tertiary level care. The employees of the civil service are also given paid ‘medical leave’ for one month to enable them to escort their relatives who are referred outside the country for medical treatment. The medical personnel make periodic visits to religious institutions, schools and prisons to conduct medical checkups and impart health education on various topics of interest to beneficiaries.
94. As a matter of health policy, the emphasis is given on institutional delivery of babies and exclusive breast feeding for four months. The other healthcare best practice is the institution of ‘village health workers’ (VHWs), which has taken the healthcare accessibility to the community level. The VHWs are volunteers from the villages who actively participate in tandem with the health workers on the promotion of community health, such as through sanitation, kitchen gardening, maternal and child health clinics for immunization, family planning and antenatal services.
95. To ensure long term sustenance of healthcare services in Bhutan, the Bhutan Health Trust Fund (BHTF), was established in 2004. With an envisioned target of achieving US \$ 24 million reserve through the contributions of the royal government of Bhutan matching contributions of donors on one to one basis, the fund will ‘ensure health and well-being of the Bhutanese people for generations to come.’

ii) Free Education

96. The government provides free education to all children from pre-primary to Class 10. Students are not only given free tuition, but also provided with stationery, textbooks, sports items, boarding facilities and meals based on need. To ensure access to schools within one

hour walking distance, the government has established community primary schools in remote areas with the help of communities using locally available materials. Government support is provided in terms of building materials not available locally. Where it is not feasible to build community primary schools due to the lack of a critical mass of students, the government has introduced extended classrooms, which are a branch of a school located closer to communities. Given the mountainous terrain and dispersed settlements, providing schools within walking distance is not always possible. Therefore, provision of free hostel facilities and school feeding programmes continues to be key incentives to encourage enrollment and retention, especially of girls in remote and difficult locations.

iii) *Kidu* System

iv) Non-Formal Education (NFE) and Continuing Education Programme

97. The Non-Formal Education programme was introduced in the early 1990s with the objective of eradicating illiteracy. Currently, there are 13,829 learners taught by 736 instructors in 747 NFE Centres. This programme has had a positive impact, especially on rural women, who constitute two-third of the beneficiaries, in enabling them to read, write and participate effectively in developmental activities and the democratization process. The national literacy rate is currently assessed at 59.5 per cent and the target is to achieve 70 per cent by the end of the 10th FYP.

98. A Continuing Education Programme offers adults who have had to leave school before completing their secondary education the opportunity to upgrade their qualifications. The programme is gaining popularity and is in high demand and there are plans to expand it.

VI. KEY NATIONAL PRIORITIES, COMMITMENTS AND INITIATIVES

A. National Priorities

99. To achieve equitable socio-economic development, the government has adopted poverty alleviation as its overarching objective for the 10th FYP. Thematically, five strategies constitute the core approach through which poverty reduction will be addressed. While poverty is mainly in the rural areas, these strategies take into account the need for an integrated approach in both rural and urban areas for mutual benefit.

i) Vitalizing Industry

100. This encompasses investment in a range of productive economic areas like accelerated development of hydropower and sunrise industries like tourism, cultural industries and ICT. These collectively represent the core economic sectors expected to boost economic growth significantly through increased market orientation, enhanced export capabilities and competitiveness and active private sector engagement. The 10th FYP places special emphasis on development of the industrial sector primarily because of the recognition that balanced industrial growth is the principal means for continued socio-economic transformation of the country, particularly for poverty reduction through enhancing quality employment, entrepreneurial opportunities and income generation. Balanced industrial development is intended to allow proper spatial dispersal of economic activities around the country based not only on competitive production advantages, but decentralize economic activities and catalyze industrial development in less developed regions. This reflects the government's commitment to function beyond the commercial motive and deliver services to uplift the lives of less privileged people despite competitive disadvantages.

ii) National Spatial Planning

101. The government aims for regional development that is balanced and based on the strength of each area that is consistent with maximization of economic potential and opportunities, while also being mindful of the principles of sustainable development thereby conserving environmental resources. Hence, this new approach presents a framework that views every planning process in the context of the total national space and not on a mere fragmented or sectoral basis. The overriding motivation derives from the conviction that all Bhutanese should have equal opportunities to share in the benefits of economic and social growth, regardless of where they choose to live. This theme is further decomposed into management of sustainable urban development and housing, conservation of environment. With increasing urbanization that is exerting significant pressure on the limited urban space, living conditions are witnessing a steep decline. A major consequence has been the lack of affordable housing with rents skyrocketing. The government is committed to ensuring affordable housing through public-private partnerships. The mitigation of urban problems is critical to stem the emergence of potential social problems.

iii) Synergizing Integrated Rural-Urban Development for Poverty Alleviation

102. Owing to increasing rural-urban connectivity and interdependence, rural, urban and regional development is viewed from a more integrated and holistic approach that seeks to synergize linkages for socio-economic development and poverty alleviation.

iv) Expanding Strategic Infrastructure

103. Accessibility affects living conditions and welfare of communities all across the country and determines their livelihood opportunities. Given that 97% of the poor reside in rural areas, an important target for the 10th FYP will be to ensure that three fourths of the rural population lives less than half a day's walk from the nearest road-head.

v) Investing in Human Capital

104. Human capital is an invaluable asset considering the geo-physical constraints and limited resources of Bhutan. Moreover, to empower and equip them with rights, the ultimate guarantee rests on the provision of education to all citizens. The government under this track strives for excellence in education recognizing it as a means for sustaining growth and ensuring a vibrant democracy, and a desirable end in itself within the context of the eventual emergence of a progressive and enlightened Bhutanese society.

vi) Fostering an Enabling Environment through Good Governance

105. The role of government is crucial in facilitating an enabling environment by ensuring equal opportunities, fair play and justice. These are particularly indispensable in the framework of human rights as it is the responsibility of the state to ensure the protection of the rights of its citizens, especially in the context of Bhutan's successful transition to democracy.

B. Commitments

106. The two CRC Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography have been tabled for adoption by the June Session of the Parliament.

107. Bhutan became an Observer to the International Labour Organization (ILO) in June this year with a view to becoming a member in the near future.

108. The government is currently studying and reviewing other human rights instruments. It has always been the view of the government to first build the necessary social and political institutions and develop the human resources of the country before it assumes any international treaty obligations. In the absence of strong institutions and adequately qualified personnel, the government is seriously constrained in fulfilling obligations as specified in many of the international treaties and conventions. As Bhutan's capacity is enhanced, it will in the near future look forward to ratifying the other international human rights instruments.

C. Initiatives

i) Women and Child Protection Unit

109. The first Women and Child Protection Unit at the RBP was established in the capital in May 2007 with a 20 member staff. Since its establishment, the Unit has seen an increasing number of cases. There are plans to establish four more WCPUs by 2013 at the other major towns to provide quick and sensitive response to children and women's rights violations, especially to deal with domestic violence and abuse cases.

110. The WCPU is strengthening its efforts to make police procedures more child friendly, and is focusing on being prompt and sensitive in responding to investigations and receipt of complaints. To this effect, three mobile police vans have been deployed in the capital city. Similar programmes will be established in other towns in future. With the absence of professional social workers, the police officers at the WCPU provide advice and counselling to children in conflict with the law. They focus on mediation in cases involving family issues or children. Together, the WCPU and the NCWC also conduct 'family conferencing' or 'group conferencing' where they bring together the victim, the perpetrator and the family of the minor and mediate the case in the best interests of children and women.

ii) Initiatives of the National Women's Association of Bhutan (NWAB)

111. The NWAB was the first CSO established in Bhutan by a resolution of Parliament in 1981. The NWAB was structured according to strategies adopted at the 1985 UN Conference in Nairobi and as per the provisions of CEDAW. It was the only national organization working for the advancement of women. It undertakes activities to promote the socio-economic conditions of disadvantaged women through promotion of economic opportunities, development of capabilities and raising awareness of women's rights and potential. The NWAB has been particularly effective in areas with large rural communities through rural credit and savings scheme for women, and the numerous vocational training programmes conducted regularly for rural women. These efforts have contributed to uplifting the status of rural women.

iii) Initiatives of the Youth Development Fund (YDF)

112. The YDF is a CSO established in June 1999 under Royal patronage. The aim of YDF is to ensure that Bhutan has a national financing mechanism to sustain youth development programming. With 59% of Bhutanese under the age of 24 and 21% between the ages of 10 – 19, the target groups of YDF include the disabled, juvenile delinquents, out of school youth, school leavers and economically disadvantaged youth. The YDF provides financial support for youth development activities like scouting, games and sports, basic skills and vocational training, advocacy, research and education.

iv) Initiatives of Tarayana Foundation

113. Tarayana Foundation is a CSO established in 2003 under Royal patronage to uplift and enhance the lives of people in rural communities. Tarayana complements and supplements government efforts in poverty reduction, especially in remote communities. It assists communities achieve self sufficiency through small and targeted interventions. The programmes of Tarayana include: i) Support to vulnerable individuals to achieve greater socio-economic security; ii) Sponsorship of students in disadvantaged circumstances through an endowment fund for education; iii) Support to needy patients to receive medical care by facilitating access to medical services; and iv) Promotion of relevant artisan skills to enhance rural income. In addition, Tarayana has been active in fostering the spirit of volunteerism in youth through 43 Tarayana clubs in schools and higher educational institutions close to rural communities.

v) Initiatives of RENEW

114. RENEW (Respect, Educate, Nurture, and Empower Women) is a CSO established in 2004 under Royal patronage, dedicated to the empowerment of vulnerable girls and women. RENEW is a well targeted organization to address the indirect forms of gender bias faced by women, and to supplement the efforts of the government. RENEW's mission is to provide safety services to victims of domestic violence and gender based violence, and reduce vulnerability of such disadvantaged population to improve the quality of their lives. It seeks to achieve these through activities such as emergency shelters and counseling to victims of domestic violence, vocational training to needy women and girls to increase their economic independence, and community based support network by volunteers to curb violence against women and girls.

vi) Realizing that scientific evidence is a vital tool in supporting justice and therefore the rule of law, the royal government of Bhutan has established a Forensic Medicine Unit (FMU) at the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital in Thimphu in January 2005. The FMU is manned by a Forensic Specialist who is also trained on the 'Istanbul Protocol - the UN manual on the effective investigation and documentation of torture, and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.' The FMU also undertakes human rights advocacy and training of various stakeholders on the effective management of forensic cases with particular reference to preservation of forensic evidentiary integrity and documentation.

The government has committed to further strengthening the forensic services through the establishment of a full-fledged National Forensic Science Laboratory (NFSL) during the current FYP. The NFSL will be expected to provide a prompt, impartial, and scientifically sound multi-disciplinary forensic services, trainings and research to address the contemporary forensic issues including human rights violations in order to facilitate fair and timely administration of justice and ultimately to promote and safeguard public health and security.

VII. CAPACITY BUILDING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE REQUESTS

- Further technical assistance for capacity building to fulfill international treaty reporting obligations.
- Technical assistance and cooperation in order to strengthen individual and institutional capacities in international human rights treaties.

- Technical assistance for capacity development for gender, women's empowerment and child protection.