

# Chapter 5

## Local Livestock Resource Planning in Bhutan

Tashi Samdup and Koinchok Wangdi  
Department of Agriculture and Livestock Support Services  
Ministry of Agriculture, Thimphu, Bhutan

Bhutan is extremely mountainous. This imposes tremendous restrictions on scope for agricultural development. Agriculture is essentially for subsistence, providing a livelihood to 85% of the population. Farming systems are generally mixed and, depending on the agro-ecological zone, crops or livestock are predominant. Among livestock, cattle predominate, with individual households owning an average of 5-6 head of cattle. Livestock production contributes 10% of GDP and crop production 25%. However, this does not take account of the value of livestock for draught power and farmyard manure. Cattle are reared mainly for draught power, milk, and manure.

Bhutan is divided into 20 dzongkhags or administrative districts. These are divided into 201 geogs (blocks). The geog is comprised of villages. Agricultural planning has centralised and decentralised phases. Centralised planning takes place at the national level; policy-making, programming, budgeting decisions, and resource allocation to the various sub-sector is undertaken. Decentralised planning and programming occur at the regional or district level, and at the geog level.

### **Institutional settings in the planning process**

#### *Geog Yargey Tshogchung (GYT)*

The lowest level of planning is at the geog or community level. This type of planning is becoming increasingly important as decentralisation takes hold in Bhutan. Such planning has the twin functions of providing information for higher planning levels by means of participatory analysis, and also of setting community priorities and action plans that can be carried out either independently or with external assistance.

Planning at the geog level is done by the Geog Yargey Tshogchung (GYT) or Block Development Committee. The gup (village headman) is the chairman and is assisted by the mang gup (assistant to the gup). Other members of the GYT are the school headmaster, who functions as the secretary, the tshogkpas or village permanent members, and the choepoens or messengers. The gups and mang gups are elected by the villagers and have a three-year term. The job of choepoen is entrusted to all households of the village and is done on a rotational basis.

#### *Dzongkhag Yargey Tshogchung (DYT)*

District-level planning is the middle level of the decentralised planning system. It is charged with aggregating and coordinating plans and programmes initiated at lower levels. It attempts to reconcile them with policy and budgetary constraints at the national level. District planning takes place in sub-sector line agencies, such as the livestock, agriculture, and forestry extension agency. This is a multi-agency institutional setting and is called the renewable natural resources (RNR) sector in Bhutan.

At the district level, the Dzongkhag Administrator is chairman of the Dzongkhag Yargey Tshogchung (DYT) or District Development Committee. Members include the gups, mang gups, chimis or National Assembly Members, who are elected at the geog level for a term of three years, and the heads of various development sectors. The Planning Officer of the district coordinates the planning process of the various sectors.

## **National level**

In Bhutan's decentralised system of agricultural planning, the national level focuses on setting goals and targets, and on formulating agricultural policies to guide government agency programming and project planning. National planning also provides technical support and coordination, and monitoring and evaluation services for lower levels of planning.

The Department of Agriculture and Livestock Support Services is essentially responsible for all livestock planning at the national level. The department focuses on developing strategies to meet targets that have come from the district level, and also on providing technical support and coordination, and monitoring and evaluation. The department also aggregates and coordinates all plans and programmes that come from the districts. A major task is, therefore, the need to reconcile lower level plans with policy and budgetary aspects at the national level.

## **Livestock resource planning: the past**

Until the Eighth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002), local planning was directed from the district level. The GYT discussed needs in a series of meetings with communities and submitted their requirements to the DYT for final endorsement. In essence, planning at the grassroots level was minimal. As a result, planning was ad hoc and development activities were not focused. The result was a lack of impact on livestock development activities.

## **Livestock resource planning: the present**

The Ninth Five-Year Plan, initiated in 2002, is essentially geog-based planning with a focus on impact-oriented development at the grassroots level. Planning begins at the geog level. It is then followed by district-level planning, and national or departmental level planning. The key aspect is participation; this refers to active involvement in planning by all stakeholders in the programme.

The current planning process is directed from the geog. The results will be geog plans (201), district plans (20) and a National Livestock Master Plan (1). The main objective is to involve local stakeholders in the planning and development process. At the same time, it will obtain an overview of people's needs, constraints, and development potentials. At the national level, workshops are conducted to discuss livestock policies and objectives framed by the department.

## **Geog-level planning**

The GYT is the focal agency in developing the geog plan. It is assisted technically by livestock extension staff. Generally, a representative from every household in the geog participates in the planning process. Livestock extension officers are equipped

with GIS maps of the region and statistical data to supplement information generated by participatory rural appraisal. At the start, livestock extension officers explain the national livestock policy and objectives to the GYT and farmers.

Farmers are divided into groups based on criteria such as age, gender, wealth/income, and education. Each group uses participatory tools to identify group constraints, resources, needs and priorities. Specific tools used are resource mapping of the geog, envisioning mapping, problem trendlines, and institutional profiles assisting in analysis of community issues. These tools have greatly facilitated research and action processes managed by local communities. They are a powerful method for involving communities in information generation and analysis, and setting priorities. Listing constraints to livestock development, and prioritising or ranking activities using a matrix are an integral part of local livestock resource planning. Other tools, such as farming system diagrams, seasonal calendars, daily activity profiles, and household resource maps, while useful for analysis and facilitating studies on the livelihood systems of socioeconomic groups, are not commonly used in Bhutan.

### **Dzongkhag level and national level**

Dzongkhags are responsible for co-ordinating the geog-level plans. Each DYT discusses its geog plans in depth before final endorsement. Key aspects taken into account are whether needs come within the framework of national policy and objective directives.

All district and geog plans are received by the Department of Agriculture and Livestock Support Services. They are thoroughly scrutinised and fitted into the overall national-level master plan for livestock development.

### **Case study: local livestock resource planning in Uesu Geog, Haa Dzongkhag**

The concerned District Official of the RNR sector was contacted and a date agreed upon for the planning team to visit. Training materials were procured and logistical arrangements made. A courtesy call was paid on the Dasho Dzongkhag (District Collector) and the Sector Head of Livestock, Agriculture and Forestry.

RNR staff, the District Planning Officer, Rural Credit Officers and GYT members attended the orientation workshop. They were briefed on the Ministry of Agriculture's plans and policies pertaining to livestock, arable agriculture, horticulture, and forestry. They were then introduced to participatory planning tools such as resource mapping, envisioning mapping, problem identification, and ranking of activities. Participants were grouped by geog and taught how to use the tools.

Following the orientation workshop, the planning team consisted of members from the Ministry of Agriculture, the District Planning Officer, and dzongkhag RNR staff. They visited a pilot geog called Uesu. A representative from each household of the villages within the geog attended an introduction to the planning exercise. The gathering was briefed on the purpose of the visit and introduced to the various planning tools that they would be using to prepare a geog plan. Participants were divided into three groups: progressive farmers (both male and female), males, and

females. Two to three dzongkhag RNR staff were also put in each group to guide and advise. Villagers did the planning with support from extension agents.

### ***Natural Resource Management Background***

Uesu is a small geog in the heart of Haa Dzongkhag. It has 75-80% forest cover. The altitude ranges from 2,600 to 3,900m; the climate is cool temperate in the valleys and alpine at higher elevations. The geog has a total area of 67.7 sq.km with 12 villages and 199 households. The forest type is blue pine in valleys and mixed conifer at higher altitudes. Forest products include mushrooms, ferns, fuelwood, leaf litter, and fodder. The geog has forest roads for transporting logs, and a sawmill for rural timber-sawing. A new sawmill will soon be opened. The logging depot supplies logs and timber to the dzongkhag and other dzongkhags. This is the first geog to plant three community plantations as a trial.

Natural resource management constraints include inadequate local technical know-how for management of forest, benefits being long-term not immediate, and pressure on forest and its products by the growing population. Natural resource management potentials are good forest cover, availability of forest products required by the locality, continuous water source, training of community on silviculture, establishment of community forestry, and establishment of private forestry on registered household land.

Livestock development constraints are shortage of animal feed and fodder, inadequate landholdings for pasture development, and shortage of labour. Livestock development potentials are the high demand for milk and livestock products. The geog has the potential to intensify livestock production activities.

Farmers in the geog depend to a great extent on livestock for cash income. The main livestock reared are local cattle, Mithun cross, Jersey cross, yaks, poultry, pigs, mules, and horses. The veterinary hospital provides veterinary and livestock production services such as AI, and pasture-related services. Strengthening livestock development activities and animal quality are priorities within the geog. This will be achieved through supply of improved germplasm and development of small-scale dairy, poultry, and pig farms.

The main programmes are summarised in Table 6.

### **Conclusion**

Previously, participation in the agricultural planning process consisted of people legitimising activities identified and formulated by the government. Farmers did not participate in the detailed planning process. Geog-level planning involves farmers, including women and the poor, in agricultural planning. However, for such a process to take root, it is important that the planning and organisational capacities of GYT members are strengthened.

Decentralisation is increasingly important in current agricultural policy-making and planning in Bhutan. This approach presents an opportunity for participatory planning that is responsive to gender and to socioeconomics. Interestingly, when men and women were separated their priority in ranking activities for livestock development

**Table 6: Livestock and natural resource management programmes**

Programmes	Activities	Rank
<b>Livestock</b>		
Rural livestock support	Yak bulls, Mithun bulls, Jersey-cross bulls, pullets, piglets, pasture seeds Training of village animal health workers	II
Income generation	Pig farms, dairy farms, poultry farms	I
Institutional and capacity building	Training of farmers; Farmers' study tours; Supply of livestock product processing equipment	III
<b>Natural Resource Management</b>		
Income generation		
a) Private forestry	12 ha of private land registered as private forest in geog Seedlings supplied free to farmers	II
b) Community forestry	10 ha of community forestry established in geog Dzongkhag forestry sector supply seedlings	
Nature conservation and environment protection		
a) Forest fire management	Fire-fighting equipment purchased and distributed to geog Fire lines made during forest fire outbreak	I
Institutional and capacity development		
a) Training	Farmer training Farmers' study tours	III

did not much differ. This may indicate that men and women are equally involved in the day-to-day activities of the household. Even in group discussions, women expressed their needs as much as men did.

Monitoring, through frequent visits to project areas by government officials, is also an important aspect of the planning agenda. The emphasis of these visits is to identify both positive and negative outcomes of the planning process. Use of participatory rural appraisal tools benefits the farmers, since they learn skills such as problem analysis and priority-ranking that can be used to lobby support from government and other agencies.

The goal of current local livestock resource planning in Bhutan is to increase the responsiveness of agricultural planning and policy-making to the needs of men and women farmers. This reflects national policy directives to increase participation of farmers and other local stakeholders in planning, and ensure women's interests are reflected in plans and policies.