

The principle of non-discrimination is reflected under the principles of State Policy in the draft Constitution, including **Article 9.17** of the **Draft Constitution of Bhutan** which affirms “the State shall endeavour to take appropriate measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination and exploitation against women including trafficking, prostitution, abuse, violence, harassment and intimidation to work in both public and private spheres” while **Article 9.18** affirms “the State shall endeavour to take appropriate measures to ensure that children are protected against all forms of discrimination and exploitation including trafficking, prostitution, abuse, violence, degrading treatment and economic exploitation”.



A Snap Shot of gender gaps in Bhutan

	Female	Male
National Assembly (85th session)	3%	97%
Civil Service	28%	72%
Local Levels (Gups)	1%	99%
Access to Credit (BDFC)	38%	62%
Labour Force Participation	42.7%	67.5%
Urban	27.5%	72.2%
Rural	47.6%	65.8%
Unemployment	3.4%	1.9%
Urban	4.3%	1.1%
Rural	3.2%	2.2%
Tertiary Education	32%	68%

Source: NGAP 2006

Women in Bhutan enjoy equality in almost all spheres of life, free from overt forms of discrimination. The various marriage and family domestic laws such as the **Inheritance Act of 1980**, the **Marriage Act of 1980 and its 1996 amendment**, the **Penal Code of Bhutan 2004** ensure that women have adequate legal protection from being exploited. However, the Royal Government has recognized that certain groups of women are vulnerable and require assistance to increase their opportunities and improve their quality of life.

The draft Tenth Five Year Plan reaffirms the major strategy of mainstreaming the gender perspectives in all sectoral policies and programmes and plans of action. This will help achieve the ultimate goal of eliminating gender discrimination and creating an enabling environment of

Not all women and men are the same. There are differences by age and socio-economic status. Marriage, caste, race and education level can influence needs and opportunities and should be taken into account in programming.

gender justice, which would encourage women and girls to act as catalysts, participants and recipients in the country’s development process.

Gender mainstreaming is therefore necessary for ensuring the success of social justice, and equitable and sustainable human development, for which governments are responsible.

The first **Gender baseline study** conducted in 2001 by the Royal Government with support from UN agencies revealed that although Bhutan enjoyed a generally high level of gender equality, more subtle and indirect forms of gender bias did exist. The study highlighted gender gaps in key areas such as higher education, national economy and political participation.

These areas are covered under the **draft National Plan of Action for Gender (NPAG)**. It was spearheaded by the National Commission for Women and Children (**NCWC**), and has a time frame of 2007-2013, coinciding with the end of the Tenth Plan. The seven critical areas for action covered are: Good Governance, Economic Development, Education and Training, Health, Ageing; Mental Health and Disabilities, Violence against Women, Prejudices and Stereotypes.

This document identifies specific interventions related to the seven critical areas and the responsible implementing agencies. These seven interdependent priorities are the minimum necessary to empower women and bring about gender equality. The UN is committed to support implementation of the interventions included in the NPAG.

# UNDERSTANDING GENDER



## BASICS

### Useful links:

- UN gender related websites:  
<http://www.un.org/esa/progareas/women.html>  
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/index.html>  
<http://www.mdgender.net>  
<http://www.undp.org.bt/gender.htm>  
NCWC website: <http://www.ncwcbhutan.org>



### United Nations in Bhutan

Dremton Lam, Post Box 162, Thimphu, Bhutan  
Tel: 975 - 2 - 322424 , Fax: 975 - 2 - 322657, <http://www.undp.org.bt>

Concepts  
Mainstreaming  
Scenario



United Nations  
in Bhutan

## Basic Concepts



### What is Sex?

Sex is a biological category, which is universal, unchangeable and naturally given. All of us are born as humans whether men or women.

### What is Gender?

Gender refers to the social roles, responsibilities and behavior assigned to men and women in a certain society and culture. It is socially constructed, and gender roles are dynamic and can change over time. It does not refer to the biological differences between men and women.

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### Gender equality

Implies to the provision of equal conditions for women and men to enjoy their human rights. It

is also about providing women and men with equal opportunities to contribute to political, economic, social and cultural developments in their society and benefiting equally from the results.

### Gender equity

Means fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and



men. The concept recognizes that women and men have different needs and power and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies the imbalance between the sexes. It often requires women-specific programmes and policies to end existing inequalities.

Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment is an essential part of the UN mandate. Since the founding of the UN, the principle of gender equality has been enshrined in the charter of the UN, defining the UN's mission *"to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women"*.



By accepting the Convention, Bhutan commits herself to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms various areas such as education, employment, health, political and public life, marriage and family life, etc.

The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action is a broad-based agenda for promoting and protecting women's human rights worldwide, which establishes the principle of shared power and responsibility between women and men in all arenas.

In September 2000, Bhutan with the other UN member states also agreed to a set of time bound and measurable goals and targets called the **Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs) achievable by 2015.

*Gender analysis allows you to understand who in the population is affected; what they need; and what they can do for themselves.*



## Gender Mainstreaming

Based on this mission the UN mandate on gender equality and women's empowerment has evolved through international conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which defines women's rights as human rights.

Gender equality is considered fundamental to international and regional instruments, including **CEDAW** and the **1995 Beijing Platform for Action**, to which Bhutan is a party.

**The CEDAW**, adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Bhutan ratified the CEDAW on 31 August 1981.

The very existence of a separate goal demonstrates that the global community has accepted the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment to the development paradigm. **Goal 3**, promote gender equality & empower women crosscuts along all the 8 MDG goals, because gender equality is a prerequisite to achieve the other MDGs.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights—civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights for every girl and boy child. Bhutan was one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, and has since been investing steadily in services to benefit children.

In the United Nations system, **gender mainstreaming** was defined and adopted in 1997. The official UN definition of gender mainstreaming is:

*"... the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated."*

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Bhutan, women form a large portion (47.5 percent) of the population, with men at 52.5 percent. It is therefore essential that any data or action recognizes and addresses both genders equally in order to ensure credibility and accountability.

The Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) has maintained a gender-neutral position in the formulation and implementation of its plans, policies and programmes. There is a strong consensus that women in Bhutan enjoy a degree of equality and freedom their counterparts in many regions of the world are deprived of. Women even have an advantage in inheritance and property rights in most parts of the country.