



Office of the Resident Coordinator
United Nations System's Operational Activities
for Development in Bhutan

2004 RC ANNUAL REPORT

Letter from the UN Country Team

Introduction:

The year 2004 in Bhutan was marked by intense preparations to produce the country's first written Constitution. The draft is in its final stages. The King handed over the draft to the Council of Ministers in November for final comments. The Constitution will be distributed among the people of the 20 districts for public discussion in early 2005.

The National Assembly during its 2004 session tabled the following conventions and ratified them.

- The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control
(The house resolved that taxes for tobacco should be 100% and that a nationwide ban on the sale of tobacco products will come into effect from 17 December. The ban is in force).
- The Additional Protocol total SAARC Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism
- The Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic work
- The Vienna Convention for the Protection of Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on substances that deplete the Ozone Layer
- The agreement with the USA on Immunity from Surrender of Nationals to the International Criminal Court

With UN system support, the RGoB presented its first ever report to the CEDAW Committee. Excerpts of the report and committee comments were subsequently disseminated widely in – country in three languages.

A landmark in the promotion and protection of children and women's rights in Bhutan came with the establishment of the National Commission for Women and Children, in May 2004. As a part of UN collaboration, the Commission members received Child Rights training and orientation, with the joint support of UNICEF and UNDP.

The first comprehensive national poverty profile was prepared and launched in October 2004 with the UN support. It's sparked a healthy debate on growing in equalities, targeting the poor, and the threshold set for establishing the poverty line.

Part I. UN COLLABORATION HIGHLIGHTS:

The two overriding objectives of the UN Country Team – Bhutan in 2004 were to (a) jointly assess MDG priorities for Bhutan, (b) align the work of the UN system behind the MDG through joint programming, wherever possible.

- 1.** Based on a joint assessment¹ on progress towards the MDGs in Bhutan, the UNCT finalized its position on priority areas that require further efforts to achieve the MDG targets. This common UN position on MDGs was the culmination of a series of UNCT assessments and discussions on the MDGs, which began in 2003.

- 2.** Under the UN system's specific responsibilities to support national efforts to monitor the MDGs, the UNCT supported the Government to identify and operationalize a national level monitoring and reporting system. The UNCT supported a series of workshops of focal points from the National Statistical Bureau, Government Ministries, partner agencies and District Statistical Officers to train on the use of DrukInfo as a tool for monitoring the MDGs in Bhutan. In addition, 45 planning officers from the districts, officials of the National Statistical Bureau, Department of Planning, and the UN agencies attended a three-day in-country workshop on analysis and use of statistics for achieving the MDGs. Participants received hands-on experience in analyzing and using the data to formulate plans and policies. The workshop also provided a platform for a common understanding of the MDGs, sharing information and data and, a clarification on what each sector is doing to achieve the goals.
The UN system is assisting the Government to undertake a food security vulnerability analysis and mapping. The National Census, which is scheduled to take place in May-June 2005, will update basic demographic information and socio economic indicators.

- 3.** UNICEF and WFP signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on collaborative efforts in support of the RGoB goals of attaining gender parity in primary education by 2005 and Universal Primary Education by 2015. Specific programme activities under the MoU included iron supplementation at schools, upgrading of water and sanitation facilities at WFP-assisted primary and community schools and deworming programme at primary and community schools. As a result, Iron Day was launched in Bhutan on 8 September and students in all community, primary and lower secondary schools receive iron tablets every week. A booklet on the importance of iron supplementation was published and widely distributed. Water supply and sanitation facilities are being upgraded under the MoU.

- 4.** The HIV/AIDS Integrated Work plan prepared by the UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in 2003 is a good model of collaborative planning used by the UN agencies in Bhutan. It was developed on the basis of a common UN situational analysis to review Bhutan's response to HIV/AIDS, and joint identification of priority funding gaps. The Work plan has formed the basis for ongoing collaborative discussions with the National AIDS Commission and the World Bank, which recently approved a \$5.7 million IDA grant project for a five-year period for HIV/AIDS related activities.
The UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS conducted an HIV/AIDS UN Staff Needs Assessment Survey in March 2004. Accordingly, a series of seminars for UN staff and their dependents was planned to address the substantive knowledge gap that surfaced in the survey. The first such seminar for UN staff covering basic and important facts about HIV/AIDS was conducted in November 2004. The UN inter-agency collaboration in assistance to the national commemoration of World AIDS Day in December was considered by RGoB as a model of UN/RGoB collaboration. Countrywide advocacy on prevention and compassion for those affected by the disease was undertaken.

- 5.** The findings of the 2004 household survey on literacy carried out jointly with assistance from UNICEF, UNDP and WFP indicate that Bhutan's literacy rate is much lower than

¹ UNCT assessment of MDGs attached as Annex 1

thought. Discussions are currently taking place among the UN agencies to work together to scale up support to the non formal education programme, which currently caters to about 10,000 adults a year. This is seen as an important area for future joint programming initiatives for the UN agencies.

6. The UN country team prepared a Joint UNCT Work Plan² for commemorating International/UN Days in Bhutan and to advocate collectively for the MDGs. The work plan will now form an integral part of the RC annual plan and will expand to include other platforms for advocacy, besides the international days. Joint advocacy events in 2004 included:
- UN Day fun run – Race to the MDGs;
 - Inter-School quiz competition focused on the MDGs;
 - MDG Poster Design Competition visioning Bhutan by 2015;
 - Joint Commemoration of International Days such as World AIDS Day; International Women’s Day; World Food Day; World Population Day; World Literacy Day; World Environment Day; World Health Day;
- The joint commemoration of these international days and other MDG advocacy activities with the Government and the related ministries provided forums to create greater awareness, understanding of, and support for, the MDGs in Bhutan. UNCT also used sports as a medium to advocate for the MDGs.

Highlights of UN inter-agency joint programming and collaborations during 2004 were:

MDGS	Specific Areas	Agencies Involved
Overall MDGs:	MDG communications/advocacy - Inter-school Quiz competition; - MDG Poster Design competition; UN Day fun run; - Commemoration of international days focused on MDGs; etc	All UN agencies
MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	- Rural Enterprise Development; - Entrepreneurial training (CEFE); - Hidden malnutrition at school level; - Poverty/MDG monitoring;	FAO, UNCDF, UNDP, SNV UNDP, SNV, GTZ, Helvetas WFP, UNICEF (MoU), WHO UNICEF, WFP, FAO, UNDP
MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education:	- Construction of new community schools & school gardens initiative introduced: - Household survey on literacy;	UNICEF, WFP UNICEF, WFP; UNDP
MDG 3: Promote gender equality and empower women	- Establishment of National Commission for Women and Children; - Vulnerable women’s NGO start-up	UNICEF; UNDP, UNFPA, WFP, WHO, FAO, UNFPA, UNDP

² Joint work plan on MDGs attached as Annex 2

MDG 4: Reduce child mortality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neo-natal care; - IMCI/ vaccination; - De-worming programme at Primary and community schools - Iron supplementation at Schools; 	<p>UNICEF, WHO;</p> <p>UNICEF, WHO;</p> <p>UNICEF, WFP (MoU), WHO;</p> <p>UNICEF, WFP (MoU), WHO;</p>
MDG 5: Improve maternal mortality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - EMOC plus family planning; - Anemia reduction 	<p>UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO;</p> <p>UNICEF, WFP</p>
MDG 6: Combat HIV/AIDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UN HIV/AIDS Integrated Work plan 	<p>UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, UNDP</p>
Combat other major diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child Immunization 	<p>UNICEF, WHO;</p>
MDG 7: Ensure environmental sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fuel Efficient Stoves - Upgrading school WAT/SAN 	<p>WFP, UNDP (SGP)</p> <p>WFP, UNICEF (MoU) WHO</p>
Good governance for MDGs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decentralization 	<p>UNDP, UNCDF, SNV, Danida</p>

Next CCA/UNDAF for Bhutan:

Following the CCA/UNDAF workshop in Bangkok in October 04, the UN country team has discussed possible timeframes for the next CCA/UNDAF rollout for Bhutan, to synchronize it better with the country's Tenth Five-Year Plan (2007 – 2012).

It has now been agreed that the CCA/UNDAF for Bhutan will be prepared in 2005. The RGoB has informally said that it views the CCA as the needs assessment for its 10th Plan (2007- 2012). The CCA analysis will be done with a focus on the MDGs and human rights based approach to programming.

UN House:

Subsequent to the visit to Bhutan by the Chair of the UN Inter-agency Working Group on Common Premises and Services based in New York in April, an international consulting firm was hired by the UN system in Bhutan to assess the UN House in the aftermath of a 5.5 Richter scale earthquake of March 2003.

The consultants have completed the task, and the Government is currently verifying the costing information. The international consultants have stated that the UN House is currently safe for UN occupancy, as the structural elements of the building were not impacted by the earthquake. However, retrofitting is recommended to bring the edifice up to current national building code standards as the building is estimated to be about 60% below the India Zone 5 Earthquake standard, required for all new constructions in Bhutan. This code came into operation long after the UN building was constructed in the 1970s.

The UN country team sought advice from the Working Group on Common Premises and Services on what the current policy is on constructing new UN Houses with full costs borne by the UN system, as the costs of retrofitting are close to the costs of constructing a new building of the same size. A new UN House would a) provide us with more space (about 25% more space in the

costing estimate), and b) would provide us the opportunity to improve our security conditions – notably our standoff distance.

In finalizing this letter, a decision has now been taken to go for a new UN House, on the assumption that the costs would be comparable, with the blessings of the UN inter-agency Working Group on common services and premises as well as the RGoB.