



GENDER ANALYSIS AND ACTION PLAN (GAAP)

Enhancing Productive and Sustainable Food Systems in
Bhutan for Environmental Benefits and Gross National
Happiness (FSP)

GEF-8 Food Systems Integrated Program (FSIP) Project
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AWP/B – Annual Work Plan and Budget
CSOs – Civil Society Organizations
ESS – Environmental and Social Standards
ESMP – Environmental and Social Management Plan
FAO – Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FSIP – Food Systems Integrated Program
GAAP – Gender Analysis and Action Plan
GAP – Gender Action Plan
GBV – Gender-Based Violence
GEBs – Global Environmental Benefits
GEF – Global Environment Facility
GRM – Grievance Redress Mechanism
M&E – Monitoring and Evaluation
MoAL – Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock
MoF – Ministry of Finance
PMU – Project Management Unit
PPRs – Project Progress Reports
ProDoc – Project Document
SEAH – Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
SEP – Stakeholder Engagement Plan
ToR – Terms of Reference

1. INTRODUCTION: POSITIONING GENDER IN BHUTAN'S FOOD SYSTEMS TRANSFORMATION

This Gender Analysis and Action Plan (GAAP) has been updated to ensure that gender equality is systematically integrated into the design and implementation of the “Productive and Sustainable Food Systems in Bhutan for Environmental Benefits and Gross National Happiness” project under the GEF-8 Food Systems Integrated Programme (FSIP).

The project represents a strategic national intervention aimed at transforming agrifood systems to achieve environmental sustainability, biodiversity conservation, land degradation neutrality, and climate change mitigation. It operates across multiple gewogs and dzongkhags and is implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MoAL) in partnership with FAO. The project operates across 23 gewogs in six eastern dzongkhags, targeting diverse agroecological zones and rural communities.

Gender equality is both a development objective and a compliance requirement under GEF policy. As outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Gender Expert, gender must be systematically integrated across all components, including policy, production systems, value chains, and monitoring frameworks.

This GAAP builds on:

- Gender analysis (Annex K)
- Stakeholder consultations
- Environmental and social safeguard assessments
- Project document (ProDoc) and annexes

These sources consistently show that while women play a central role in Bhutan's agrifood systems, structural barriers limit their access to resources, decision-making, and economic opportunities.

Purpose of the GAAP:

- Identify gender-based constraints and opportunities
- Ensure equitable access to project benefits
- Prevent risks such as GBV/SEAH and exclusion
- Provide clear, actionable implementation measures
- Strengthen monitoring, accountability, and learning

This document translates evidence into practical actions across the project lifecycle.

This GAAP is aligned with the project's three components as defined in the Project Document:

- (i) Component 1 – Supportive enabling conditions for sustainable and healthy food systems;
- (ii) Component 2 – Transformation of food systems at farm, landscape and value chain levels; and
- (iii) Component 3 – Knowledge management, monitoring and adaptive learning systems. Gender considerations are integrated across these components and linked to the project's results framework, including outputs, outcomes, and indicators, to ensure that gender equality contributes directly to the achievement of global environmental benefits (GEBs) and food systems transformation.

1.1 Project Overview

The project aims to transform Bhutan's food systems to be:

- **Sustainable**
- **Resilient**
- **Inclusive**

It operates across three key domains:

- Farms and landscapes
- Agricultural value chains
- Policies and institutions

The primary beneficiaries are rural communities whose livelihoods depend on agriculture and natural resources.

A key finding is the **“feminization of agriculture”**, with women comprising over half of the agricultural workforce. However:

- Women are concentrated in low-value activities
- They face limited access to resources and services
- Their participation in decision-making remains constrained

Gender equality is therefore essential to achieving:

- Increased productivity
- Climate resilience
- Inclusive economic growth

1.2 Gender Mainstreaming Approach

The project adopts a **gender mainstreaming and gender-transformative approach**, meaning gender is integrated across all components rather than treated as a standalone issue.

This includes:

- Equal participation of women and men
- Gender-responsive design of interventions
- Integration of gender into policies, planning, and monitoring

Strengthened focus areas:

- Inclusive and meaningful consultations
- Gender-responsive policy and governance systems
- Systematic use of sex-disaggregated data
- Addressing structural inequalities and social norms

1.3 Methodology

This GAAP is based on a synthesis of existing project documentation, including:

- Gender analysis findings

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- Stakeholder consultation reports
 - Environmental and social safeguard assessments
 - ProDoc and annexes

This GAAP is based on secondary analysis of project documentation and validated through stakeholder consultations conducted during project formulation. These consultations included engagement with government agencies, local authorities, community representatives, and producer groups as documented in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan. The analysis draws on gender-disaggregated insights, institutional assessments, and environmental and social safeguard screening processes.

2. GENDERED CONTEXT OF BHUTAN'S AGRIFOOD SYSTEM

2.1 Feminization of Agriculture and Structural Shifts

Bhutan's agrifood system is undergoing structural transformation due to:

- Rural outmigration
- Declining agricultural employment

Despite this, women constitute a significant proportion of the agricultural workforce, reflecting a trend towards the feminization of agriculture.

However:

- Women are often engaged in lower-return and unpaid labor activities, with more limited access to higher-value opportunities
- They carry significant household and community responsibilities

This creates a structural imbalance between contribution and benefit.

2.2 Gender Roles in Food Systems

Women are actively involved in:

- Farming and food production
- Household food security
- Local market sales

Despite their central role:

- They may have more limited ability to benefit from income-generating opportunities
- They benefit less from commercial opportunities

2.3 Access to Resources, Services, and Technologies

Women face barriers in accessing:

- Agricultural inputs
- Extension services
- Climate-smart technologies

Key constraints include:

- Limited access to appropriate and accessible technologies and training
- Lower participation in training

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- Mobility and time constraints

This limits productivity and innovation uptake.

In the eastern dzongkhags targeted by the project, geographic remoteness, difficult terrain, and limited infrastructure further constrain women's access to extension services, markets, and technologies. These constraints are particularly pronounced in areas located within or near protected areas and biological corridors, where mobility, service delivery, and infrastructure development are more limited.

2.4 Participation and Decision-Making

Women participate in household decisions but are underrepresented in:

- Community leadership
- Cooperatives and committees
- Policy platforms

Barriers include:

- Social norms
- Confidence gaps
- Limited opportunities for leadership

2.5 Economic Opportunities and Value Chains

Women are less engaged in:

- Commercial agriculture
- Agribusiness and entrepreneurship
- Processing and marketing

Constraints include:

- Limited access to finance
- Weak market linkages
- Mobility restrictions

This reinforces their concentration in low-value activities.

2.6 Knowledge and Technology Gaps

Limited access to:

- Extension services
- Market information
- Climate-smart practices

Disproportionately affects women, widening productivity gaps.

2.7 Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Social Risks

Gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation and abuse/harassment (SEAH) are critical risks.

Evidence indicates:

- GBV/SEAH as a potential risk that may affect participation and wellbeing
- Risks may increase when women engage in new economic roles
- Reporting is often limited due to social norms

In line with the Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP), GBV/SEAH risks will be addressed through the integration of preventive and response measures within project implementation. These include:

- (i) awareness and sensitization activities for communities and project workers;
- (ii) incorporation of codes of conduct for service providers;
- (iii) strengthening of grievance redress mechanisms (GRM) to enable confidential and safe reporting; and
- (iv) coordination with relevant national service providers supporting survivors. These measures aim to ensure that women's participation in project activities does not increase exposure to risk.

2.8 Climate Change and Gender

Women are more vulnerable due to:

- Greater dependence on natural resources
- Limited access to adaptation tools and information

Without targeted support, climate impacts may deepen inequalities.

2.9 Policy and Institutional Context

Bhutan has strong gender equality policies. However:

- Implementation gaps persist
- Institutional coordination is limited
- Capacity for gender integration remains weak

2.10 Summary of Key Gender Gaps

- Unequal access to resources and services
- Limited decision-making power
- Barriers to economic opportunities
- Exposure to GBV/SEAH risks
- Disproportionate workload burdens
- Weak institutional capacity
- Risk of exclusion of vulnerable women, including those with limited mobility, lower literacy levels, and those living in remote or marginalized communities

3. SYSTEMIC BARRIERS IN FOOD SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

3.1 Policy and Institutional Barriers

- Weak coordination
- Limited gender-responsive policy implementation
- Gaps in gender data systems

3.2 Production-Level Constraints

- Low mechanization

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- Limited access to irrigation and inputs
 - Time burdens from unpaid care work

3.3 Value Chain Barriers

- Weak infrastructure (storage, processing)
- Limited market access
- Low participation of women in high-value nodes

3.4 Knowledge and Technology Barriers

- Limited access to extension and innovation systems
- Gender gaps in digital and climate information

These gender-specific barriers are consistent with the broader systemic constraints identified in the Project Document, including limited inter-sectoral coordination, low economies of scale, inadequate value chain infrastructure, and restricted access to technologies and markets. Addressing these constraints through a gender-responsive approach is critical to achieving the project's intended outcomes.

4. GENDER INTEGRATION ACROSS PROJECT COMPONENTS

4.1 Component 1: Policy and Institutional Systems

- Gender parity in multi-stakeholder platforms
- Gender-responsive policy evaluation
- Integration of sex-disaggregated data

4.2 Component 2: Production Systems and Value Chains

Farm Level:

- Equal participation of female- and male-headed households
- Gender-responsive climate-smart agriculture

Value Chains:

- Women's participation in enterprises and aggregation centers
- Gender-sensitive infrastructure and services
- Gender inclusion measures in investments such as aggregation centers, milk collection systems, and processing facilities to ensure equitable access and benefits

4.3 Component 3: Monitoring and Knowledge Systems

- Gender indicators integrated into M&E
- Sex-disaggregated data collection

5. RISKS, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Key risks include:

- Reinforcement of existing inequalities
- GBV/SEAH risks
- Increased workload for women
- Exclusion of vulnerable groups

Mitigation approach:

- Safe and inclusive participation mechanisms
- Gender-responsive design of activities
- Promotion of women's leadership
- Gender-sensitive grievance redress systems
- Continuous monitoring and adaptive management

These mitigation measures are aligned with the Environmental and Social Standards (ESS) triggered by the project, including risks related to natural resource management, infrastructure development, labor conditions, and community safety. Gender-responsive mitigation ensures that women and vulnerable groups are not disproportionately affected by risks such as increased workload, exposure to unsafe working conditions, or exclusion from project benefits.

6. STAKEHOLDERS AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Key stakeholders include:

- Government (MoAL, local governments)
- Gender Focal Points
- Community groups and cooperatives
- Civil society organizations
- Private sector actors
- Development partners

Key gaps:

- Coordination challenges
- Limited gender capacity
- Weak monitoring of gender outcomes

6.1 Institutional Responsibilities for Gender Implementation

The implementation of gender-related activities under this GAAP will follow the institutional arrangements defined in the Operational Partnership Agreement (OPA):

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MoAL), as the Operational Partner, is responsible for integrating gender into project implementation, including planning, execution, and reporting.
- The Ministry of Finance (MoF), as the Recipient, is responsible for financial oversight and ensuring resources are allocated in accordance with approved plans.
- FAO provides technical oversight, quality assurance, and compliance with GEF and FAO policies, including gender and safeguards requirements.
- Gender Focal Points at national and local levels support coordination, monitoring, and capacity building.

These roles ensure accountability for gender integration across all levels of implementation.

7. GENDER-RESPONSIVE STRATEGY

Core Approaches

- Prevention – address structural inequalities
- Promotion – strengthen inclusive systems
- Empowerment – build women's capacity and leadership

- Advocacy – shift discriminatory norms
- Gender-transformative approaches – tackle root causes

These approaches aim not only to increase women's participation but also to transform underlying power relations, social norms, and institutional practices that perpetuate gender inequality within agrifood systems.

Operational Measures

- Gender-responsive technologies
- Inclusive training and governance
- Market access for women
- Childcare and mobility support

8. REVISED GENDER ACTION PLAN

Note: Indicators are aligned with the project's results framework where applicable and will be further refined during implementation and annual work planning.

Objective	Action	Indicator (Aligned with Project Results)	Timeline	Responsibility
Equal participation	Ensure balanced participation in all project activities	% of women among total direct project beneficiaries (aligned with project M&E framework) participating in project-supported activities	Annual (AWP/B)	MoAL, Local Govts
Leadership	Increase women's representation in decision-making platforms	% of women in project-supported committees, platforms, and producer groups	Annual	Local Govts, PMU
Access	Improve access to services and inputs	# and % of women accessing extension services, inputs, and training	Annual	Extension Services
Economic inclusion	Promote women's participation in value chains	# and % of women engaged in project-supported value chain activities (production, processing, marketing)	Annual	Project Team
Technology adoption	Promote gender-responsive technologies	# and % of women adopting project-supported technologies and practices	Annual	Technical Agencies
GBV/SEAH risk mitigation	Implement awareness and safeguards	# of GBV/SEAH awareness sessions conducted and GRM cases addressed	Annual	CSOs, MoAL
Data systems	Strengthen gender data systems	Availability and use of sex-disaggregated data in M&E reports	Annual	M&E Team

Objective	Action	Indicator (Aligned with Project Results)	Timeline	Responsibility
Capacity building	Strengthen institutional gender capacity	# of staff trained on gender integration and safeguards	Year 1–3	FAO, MoAL
Inclusion	Target vulnerable groups	% of vulnerable women (e.g. remote, low-income) reached by project interventions	Annual	Project Team

9. LESSONS LEARNED AND GAPS

Lessons

- Production-only approaches are insufficient
- Value chain integration is essential
- Participation drives success
- Alignment with national frameworks is critical

Remaining Gaps

- Disconnect between women's labor and economic returns
- Weak gender integration in markets
- Limited gender-data linkage

10. IMPLICATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Priority areas include:

- Gender-responsive policy and governance
- Equal access to inputs, land, and technologies
- Women's participation in value chains
- Strengthened gender indicators and data systems
- Capacity building at all levels
- GBV/SEAH risk mitigation

Implementation of this GAAP will be integrated into annual work plans and budgets (AWP/B), ensuring that gender-responsive activities are planned, resourced, and monitored on an annual basis. Progress will be tracked through the project's monitoring and evaluation system, including regular reporting through Project Progress Reports (PPRs) and mid-term and terminal evaluations.

11. CONCLUSION

Gender equality is a central pillar of Bhutan's food systems transformation. While women play a dominant role in agriculture, systemic barriers continue to limit their access to resources, decision-making, and higher-value opportunities.

The FSIP provides a strong framework for addressing these challenges through integrated gender-responsive interventions across policy, production, value chains, and monitoring systems.

However, success depends on effective implementation, ensuring that commitments translate into measurable, equitable outcomes for both women and men.

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