



# STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

2024 - 2028

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## VISION

To achieve the Kingdom of Bhutan's overarching goal of Gross National Happiness enshrined in the Constitution through an inclusive and vibrant democracy.

## MISSION

To effectively carry out legislative, representational, and oversight functions to fulfill the aspirations of the Bhutanese people.

## CORE VALUES and PRINCIPLES

### **Ethics and integrity:**

As peoples' House of conscience, the conduct shall be with strong moral principles and trustworthiness at all times.

### **Accountability and result:**

As the highest legislative institution, endeavor to achieve results with high accountability standards.

### **Consensus building:**

Consciously create an environment that promotes deeper understanding of issues, generate healthy debates, and resolve to find shared solutions.

### **Democratic values:**

Shall be guided by principles of representative, transparent, accessible, accountable, and effective.

## STRATEGIC GOALS

1. Enhance capability for effective legislation;
2. Strengthen representational role in governance;
3. Enhance oversight roles; and
4. Strengthen institutional capacity.



# Background

Article 10, Section 2 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan states that Parliament shall ensure that the Government safeguards the interests of the nation and fulfills the aspirations of the people through public review of policies and issues, bills and other legislations, and scrutiny of State functions. This mandates the Parliament to uphold the national interest and be the conscience of the people by ensuring responsible governance. Therefore, the National Assembly of Bhutan as a part of Parliament has the responsibility to review public policies and issues, and legislate laws for the advancement of public welfare. It is also the core institution of democracy through which the aspirations of the people are communicated and fulfilled.

Under the current organizational structure, the Speaker provides leadership to the National Assembly. The nine parliamentary standing committees are the organs of the Assembly. The National Assembly members have three primary roles of legislation, representation, and oversight. The Secretariat supports the Assembly in its management.

This Strategic Development Plan 2024 - 2028 is aligned with the 13<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan that sets goals for the next five years through prioritization of its strategies and activities, sources of finance, and time frame for implementation. Furthermore, the 13<sup>th</sup> FYP's long term goal of a Developed Bhutan, with national priorities of Prosperity, People, and Progress for economic and social development, Security and Governance objectives has helped to guide setting goals of the SDP.

The National Assembly falls under the Governance cluster in the 13<sup>th</sup> FYP. It has the objective to build strong institutions with enhanced accountability for which the National Assembly or Parliament has the mandate to uphold the rule of law, enhance public trust and confidence in the governance system. By this, the National Assembly or Parliament has to harmonize all the inconsistent laws, enact new laws where required and review policies to consolidate and strengthen the governance system. These are

the broad key performance indicators to be achieved within this planned time frame.

The National Assembly's strategic development goals to enhance capability for effective legislation; strengthen representational role in governance; enhance oversight roles; and strengthen institutional capacity is geared towards achieving the institution's vision and aspiration of the 13<sup>th</sup> FYP.

# Enhancing Capability for Effective Legislation

Laws enable conditions for a peaceful and harmonious society as it protects rights and ensures safety. The National Assembly of Bhutan as one arm of governance is vested with the sole constitutional mandate - to initiate, amend, and adopt laws for the country. With the passage of time and emerging challenges on account of socio-economic development, the peoples aspiration for efficient and effective public service delivery is on the rise, which invariably requires to harmonize the existing laws. Thus, in order to shoulder responsibility of this mandate, the National Assembly aspires to explore ways and means to strengthen the legislative capacity for which the three strategies have been identified.

## **1.1 Enhance Legislative Process:**

There are procedures and stages through which a bill has to pass in order to become a law. Qualitative scrutiny is important at each stage. It is important to build the capability of members and staff to take up the responsibility effectively. For this strategy, the following activities are prioritized:

### **Reform of laws:**

Legislation being one of the most important instruments of good governance, it is inevitable to legislate consistent laws, avoid duplication, and amend the existing laws to meet its intended purpose with changing times. The National Assembly will carry out reform of laws by ensuring that new laws are in line with the constitution, consistent with existing laws, and harmonize where possible. For example, with transformation exercises in the civil service system by the Civil Service Reform Act, the restructuring



of existing agencies has impacted several existing laws. The National Assembly will introduce and amend the impacted laws and ensure the laws are harmonized.

**Develop legislative scrutiny guidelines and build capability:**

A framework to develop the legislative scrutiny guidelines is in place. Based on the framework, the legislative scrutiny guidelines will be developed and build capacity of the members and Secretariat staff to carry out the legislative scrutiny effectively.

**Enhance awareness of laws:**

When a bill is adopted, the National Assembly shall formally handover the Act to the concerned agency and present the salient feature of the Act. The National Assembly shall also disseminate and create awareness of the laws through all communication channels including various social media platforms and during constituency visits.

**Enhance research and consultative process:**

The committee secretaries (CSs) shall analyze and carry out research on bills, and present to the committee. The committee shall conduct extensive consultation with relevant agencies and the general public.

**Conduct plenary sessions on bills:**

The committee to conduct plenary sessions to present and seek views on the bills from the members before submitting to the House for deliberation.

## **1.2 Strengthen Parliamentary Committees:**

Parliamentary committees are essential to conduct the parliamentary business as enshrined in the Constitution. Through consultative meetings, investigations and hearings, committees gather information in draft, consider and recommend legislation. They are the organs of the Parliament. Recognizing this importance, the capability and functions of the committees and committee secretaries has to be supported and strengthened. Three key activities have been prioritized to support this strategy:

**Build legislative drafting capability:**

Capability building on legislative drafting will be provided to the members and committee secretaries. Experts and former members of the member of Parliament can be roped in to conduct the capability building activities.

**Build capability on public hearing:**

With the adoption of the Public Hearing Manual, the members and Secretariat staff shall be provided with adequate training to conduct public hearings.

**Ensure fair representation of women in the committees:**

The National Assembly shall ensure fair representation of women in the committees during its appointment and encourage female members to chair at least three committees.

### **1.3 Enhance Transparency in Legislative Process:**

The process of rule-making must be transparent, as the decision and its enforcement impacts the stakeholders. Transparency would mean making information and decisions accessible to the public. The transparent legislative process would enhance the acceptance and ownership by the stakeholders. Therefore, the following activities will be carried out to enhance transparency:

**Ensure committee meeting outcomes are accessible to the public:**

A separate committee page on the website will be created where the committee meetings' outcome and relevant documents are made available.

**Enhance public feedback mechanism on bills:**

The committees will enhance mechanisms to engage with the stakeholders through use of social media to gather feedback while reviewing bills.

**Conduct public hearings on bills:**

Committees shall conduct at least two formal public hearings in a year on bills.



# Strengthen Representation Role in Governance

Apart from the legislative role, one of the core mandates of the National Assembly is to represent the people. Thus, it is the responsibility of parliamentarians to ensure a fair, inclusive, and effective representation of the people to enact laws that promote wellbeing of the people, and also serve as a link between the people and the Government, on issues and developmental activities. In order to effectively carry out the mandate, the following strategies will be pursued:

## **2.1 Build Public Trust in Parliament:**

Parliament must strive to gain the confidence of the people to remain relevant. Parliament with the elected representatives is the conscience of the people and remains indispensable in a democratic setup. Therefore efforts must be made to meet the aspirations of the people. The National Assembly will:

### **Carry out awareness programs on parliamentary roles:**

The members and Secretariat staff will conduct awareness programs on the roles of parliamentarians and parliamentary functions to the constituencies, local governments, and educational institutions. The awareness will also be carried out through other print and mass media.

**Establish parliamentary youth engagement forum:**

Create an online platform where the members and youth can engage in discussions on parliamentary affairs and its processes. Forums for the members to interact with the youths and internship programmes shall be explored and facilitated.

**Develop Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to collaborate with local governments:**

A SOP shall be developed to enhance channels of communication and collaboration with local governments.

**Initiate parliamentary exchange program:**

Organize parliamentary exchange programs on a yearly basis through institutional collaborations both at the regional and international levels. Besides strengthening the existing friendship groups, explore establishing new parliamentary friendship groups.

## **2.2 Promote Parliamentary Affairs through Media:**

The Parliament has adopted a Communication Strategy 2022-2025 aimed at improving and enhancing parliamentary engagement with the citizens and encouraging their participation in parliamentary democracy. Therefore to meet the objectives of the communication strategy of the Parliament namely Promote Parliament, Connect and Engage, Make Parliament accessible, Build Partnership and Build Capacity, the following activities have been identified:

**Conduct parliamentarian-media symposium:**

The Secretariat will conduct a periodic parliamentarian-media symposium during which a wide range of topics on parliamentary affairs will be covered.

**Conduct press conferences during sessions:**

Press conferences will be conducted during sessions to brief on the agenda, the issues that arise during the deliberation, and on its outcome.



**Facilitate talk shows on national TV:**

Secretariat will facilitate talk shows on national TV during the session and as and when required.

**Development of yearly communication plan:**

A yearly communication plan will be developed to achieve the objectives of the Communication Strategy of Parliament.

**2.3 Develop Mechanism To Address Constituency Issues:**

In order to enhance member's relationship with their constituency, member has the mandate to visit constituency at least twice a year. The following activities are identified to improve constituency-members rapport:

**Strengthen mechanism to address constituency issues:**

In order to address constituency issues raised in the plenary, a SOP shall be developed.

**Enhance video-conference (virtual zomdu) to facilitate consultation:**

Create and equip a specific video conference room. Facilitate conduct of virtual zomdu (meeting) on a regular basis.

## STRATEGIC GOAL 3

# Enhance Oversight Roles

Oversight is an essential function through which legislators determine whether the current policies, laws, and government initiatives are achieving the intended results. The following strategy can enhance the oversight capacity:

### **3.1 Strengthen Oversight Role:**

Currently, the Parliament's supervisory and monitoring role is confined to overseeing the government's public expenditures. The National Assembly has developed the Oversight Manual and to fulfill its oversight roles, the following activities have been identified for implementation:

#### **Conduct training on oversight tools:**

The members and Secretariat staff will be trained on the oversight tools such as Motions, Questions, Petitions, and Resolutions.

#### **Participation of the members in plan reviews:**

Since proper planning, budgeting, and their regular review is crucial for nation building, the Secretariat will facilitate participation of members during such review in their respective dzongkhags and at the central level.

#### **Conduct public hearings on policies:**

The public hearings will be conducted on selected policies as decided by the committees or as recommended to the specific committee by the House. It can happen when the committee or House desires public input or awareness on sensitive or contro-



versial policy issues during their framing or at the times of implementation.

**Facilitate independent committee review on policies, programmes, and budget:**

To strengthen the committee roles and to exercise the powers conferred to the committees by the existing laws, the committees will facilitate independent review on government policies, planned national programmes, and budget proposals.

## Strengthen Institutional Capacity

The Secretariat shall continually review and renew its approach to strengthen institutional capacity through innovation, use of technology, and enabling environment. Thus, the achievement of the above strategic goals largely depends on the level of institutional capacity. To achieve this goal, the following strategies are prioritized:

### **4.1. Promote Research and Development:**

For quality legislation and informed decision making, access to evidence based reports and reliable data is crucial. This will be possible through conscious investment on research and development. Although the Secretariat has a research unit, it has not been able to serve the purpose as desired. There is a need to reform and strengthen the existing research unit at the Secretariat.

#### **Build capacity on research and policy analysis:**

For research based and effective analysis of policies, research and policy analysis capacity buildings will be carried out for research personnel under the Secretariat.

#### **Build capacity on minutes drafting and translation:**

To improve the standards of recording the parliamentary resolutions, translation, and report of the committees, training on minutes drafting and translation will be provided to the staff.



**Publish research papers:**

The research section will provide research and information services to members in support of their parliamentary duties. Along with it, the research section will publish parliamentary research papers.

**4.2 Strengthening of e-Parliament:**

With rapid growth of technology, ICT has become an indispensable tool in carrying out the mandates effectively and efficiently. The e-Parliament initiative has helped in transforming the management of Parliament in conducting its session efficiently, reducing resource inefficiencies, improving documentation management and enhancing the service deliveries. The following activities are prioritized to leverage technology:

**Design and develop digital tools:**

A basic ICT training curriculum will be developed and training for the same will be provided to the members and staff. The Members Information System (MIS), Parliament Resources Management System (PRMS), and a web based e-learning platform will be developed.

**Develop constituency dashboard:**

To strengthen the capacity, engagement, and mechanisms for oversight in the constituency, the constituency dashboard will be created containing information on budget planning, investments related to developmental activities, information on the present membership of the House, and breakdowns by party, gender, age, and length of service rendered.

**4.3 Build Human Resource Capacity:**

Human resources are critical to productivity of the institution. Therefore, it is important to invest in their growth through enhancement of knowledge, skills, attitude, and career ladder. The Secretariat values her employees and ensures that the specialized knowledge and skills required for parliamentary needs are considered. Owing to this need, the following activities are prioritized:

**Orient the new members on parliamentary process:**

To introduce the new parliamentarians to their roles, the Secretariat will conduct orientation programs for new members on parliamentary process covering topics on the core mandates of the members. The Secretariat will develop the program and collaborate with RIGGS to provide leadership courses to members and Secretariat staff.

**Recruit and build critical HR requirement:**

Among others, the pool of professional committee secretaries and researchers are the backbone to efficiently assist the members and committees in their daily functioning. The Secretariat will recruit and explore means of retention of these critical HR requirements. Training, peer-to-peer learning exchanges, and apprenticeships with foreign Parliaments will be undertaken.

**Establish network of professionals and avail expertise:**

The Secretariat shall determine the field of expertise required and facilitate availing them for the committees.

**4.4 Provide a Conducive Working Environment:**

The National Assembly recognizes the importance of providing a conducive workplace that promotes safety, comfort, conveniences, and growth that will enable members and employees to perform to their highest ability. Towards this end, the following activities are identified:

**Relocation of MP office into Parliament building:**

Currently, the offices of members are located in a private building causing inconveniences to the members in carrying out their legislative function. The Secretariat will continue to work towards housing all the members in the Parliament building.

**Establish crèche facility for members and staff:**

To help the members and staff carry out their responsibilities effectively, the Secretariat will provide a crèche/child care facility in the office.



## **4.5 Resource mobilization**

On the financial resource front, the SDP will be aligned and mainstreamed in the Nation's 13th Five Year Plan. It will enable the Assembly to secure the budget required for the implementation of the SDP. In addition, collaboration and support from international organizations keen on Parliamentary democracy will be explored.

On the human resource front, the members and Secretariat will contribute and collaborate to achieve the strategic goals and realize its vision and mission. The National Assembly will explore technical expertise and capacity building scope externally through partnership with Parliaments in the region and other international organizations.

## **4.6 Implementation**

An implementation roadmap for the Strategic Development Plan will be developed as part of annual work plans by the Divisions under the Secretariat. The SDP will be further shared with the members as they have a high stake in its implementation.

## **4.6 Monitoring and Evaluation**

Based on the implementation roadmap and annual work plans, the achievement and progress of the strategic goals and its activities will be assessed and monitored annually. Furthermore, a midterm review will be conducted to assess the progress and recommend reprioritization of activities based on the review recommendation.

# IMPLEMENTATION PLANS

Strategy	Activity	Accountability	Budget Estimation	Source of funding	Time frame					
					2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	
STRATEGIC GOAL 1: ENHANCE CAPABILITY FOR EFFECTIVE LEGISLATION										
1.1 Enhance Legislative Process	Reform of laws	LPD			-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Develop legislative scrutiny guidelines and build capability	LPD	0.5 m	External	✓	✓	✓	-	-	-
	Enhance awareness of laws	LPD	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Enhance research and consultative process	LPD	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Conduct plenary sessions on bills	LPD	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1.2 Strengthen Parliamentary Committees	Build legislative drafting capability	LPD		External	✓	-	-	-	-	-
	Build capability on public hearing	LPD		External	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Ensure fair representation of women in the committees	LPD	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-
1.3 Enhance Transparency in Legislative Process	Ensure committee meeting outcomes are accessible to the public	LPD	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Enhance public feedback mechanism on bills	LPD	-	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Conduct public hearings on bills	LPD	1 m	RGob	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓



Strategy	Activity	Accountability	Budget Estimation	Source of funding	Time frame					
					2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	
					2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	
STRATEGIC GOAL 2: STRENGTHEN REPRESENTATIONAL ROLE IN GOVERNANCE										
2.1 Build Public Trust in Parliament	Carry out awareness program on parliamentary roles	SSD	1 m	RGoB & External	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Establish parliamentary youth engagement forum	SSD	1.5 m	External	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Develop Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to collaborate with local governments	RHD	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Initiate parliamentary exchange program	SSD		RGoB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Conduct parliamentarian-media symposium	ICD		External	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.2 Promote Parliamentary Affairs Through Media	Conduct press conference during sessions	ICD		RGOB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Facilitate talk shows on national TV	ICD		RGOB	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Development of yearly communication plan	ICD	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.3 Develop Mechanism to Address Constituency Issues	Strengthen mechanism to address constituency issues	RHD	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Enhance video-conference ( <i>virtual-zomdu</i> ) to facilitate consultation	ICD	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



Strategy	Activity	Accountability	Budget Estimation	Source of funding	Time frame				
					2023-2024	2024	2025	2026	2027-2028
STRATEGIC GOAL 3: ENHANCE OVERSIGHT ROLES									
3.1 Strengthen Oversight Roles	Conduct training on oversight tools	LPD		External	✓	-	-	-	-
	Facilitate participation of the members in plan reviews	RHD			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Conduct public hearings on policies	LPD			-	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Facilitate independent committee review on policies, programmes, and budget	LPD			-	✓	✓	✓	✓
STRATEGIC GOAL 4: STRENGTHEN INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY									
4.1 Promote Research and Development	Build capacity on research and policy analysis	RHD	1m	External	-	✓	-	-	-
	Build capacity on minutes drafting and translation	RHD			-	✓	-	-	-
	Publish research papers	RHD	1m	RGoB	-	-	✓	✓	✓
4.2 Strengthening of e-Parliament	Design and develop digital tools	ICD		External	-	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Develop constituency dashboard	ICD	-	External	✓	✓	-	-	-

Strategy	Activity	Accountability	Budget Estimation	Source of funding	Time frame						
					2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028		
					2024	2025	2026	2027	2028		
4.3. Build Human Resource Capacity	Orient the new members on parliamentary process	SSD	-	-	✓	-	-	-	-		
	Recruit and build critical HR requirement	SSD	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Establish network of professionals and avail expertise	SSD	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
4.4 Provide a Conducive Working Environment	Relocation of MP office into Parliament building	SSD	-	-	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Establish creche facility for members and staff	SSD	-	-	-	✓	-	-	-		