

## STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP) FOR FIELD/STUDY VISITS BY THE COMMITTEES OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF BHUTAN

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### Preamble

1. Parliamentary field visits are a critical tool in the parliamentary oversight process, enabling Members of Parliament (MPs) and committees to gather information, assess situations on the ground, review policy implementation, and potentially expose corruption or ineffective policies. These visits are part of a structured process and should lead to follow-up parliamentary activities. Monitoring, evaluation, and reporting are essential to ensuring effective oversight, influencing future legislation, and supporting the implementation of development policies and projects.
2. As per Section 299 of the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly 2022 stipulates that *"The Committees shall deliberate, inquire, investigate, review, recommend, legislate, and draw attention to any important matter of national importance to the Speaker and the House and to give advice for matters connected therewith and incidental thereto."* Additionally, Section 345 stipulates that, *"A Committee may undertake field visits to consult, review, and ascertain issues that are under its consideration."*

### Purpose

3. The purpose of this SOP is to provide a structured approach to planning, approving, executing, and reporting on parliamentary committee field visits. It aims to ensure that such visits are conducted efficiently, with clear objectives, effective use of resources, and comprehensive follow-up.

### Identifying Clear Objectives

4. **Setting Clear Objective:** The Committee proposing a field visit must clearly define the objective of the visit. The objective should align with national policy priorities and be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). The objective should aim to address specific issues, gather pertinent information, or assess the impact of policies or legislation on the ground.
5. **Link to Parliamentary Agenda:** The objective of the field visit should be linked to the committee's broader agenda and the legislative priorities of the National Assembly.

### Identifying Participants

6. **Selection of Members:** The Committee may identify members to participate in the field visit. The selection may be based on the expertise, interest, and the relevance of the members' roles to the objectives of the visit. It is recommended to limit the number of participants to ensure efficiency and focus.



7. **Inclusion of Technical Experts:** Where necessary, the Committee may propose to include technical experts or advisors to provide additional insights and analysis during the visit. This enhances the quality of findings gathered and the overall effectiveness of the visit.

#### Planning for the Field Visit

8. **Preparation and Research:** Prior to the visit, the Committee should conduct thorough research on the issues to be reviewed. This includes identifying key stakeholders, witnesses, and information sources. Committees should develop a detailed itinerary and prepare questionnaires or checklists to guide the information-gathering process.
9. **Effective Coordination:** Effective communication with local authorities and relevant government agencies is crucial. This ensures that the necessary logistical arrangements, such as accommodation, transportation, and security, are in place.
10. **Budget Provision:** A detailed budget plan should be prepared and submitted in advance to secure the budget, outlining all anticipated expenses, including travel, accommodation, meals, and other related costs. The financial rules should be strictly adhered to, ensuring that funds are used effectively and efficiently.

#### Approval of the Visit

11. The proposal for the field visit shall be reviewed by the Chairperson/Dy. Chairperson of the House Committee and concurred by the Speaker based on the recommendations.

#### Conducting the Visit

12. **Adherence to the Itinerary:** The Committee should adhere strictly to the pre-planned itinerary to ensure that all objectives of the visit are met. Any deviations should be documented and justified.
13. **Data Collection:** During the visit, the Committee should systematically collect data, document observations, and engage with stakeholders. All interactions should be recorded to ensure transparency and accountability.
14. **Efficient Use of Resources:** The Committee should make use of government guesthouses, vehicles, and other resources to minimize costs. All logistical arrangements should be made well in advance to avoid delays or disruptions during the visit.

#### Writing the Report

15. **Comprehensive Reporting:** Following the visit, the Committee should prepare a detailed report that includes the objective of the visit, findings, observations, and recommendations. The report should be inclusive, timely, and submitted to the





Speaker/Deputy Speaker. Sensitive information that may undermine national security should be handled with discretion.

16. **Follow-up Actions:** The report should outline any necessary follow-up actions, including further inquiries, legislative amendments, or policy recommendations. The Committee should ensure that these actions are tracked and reported back to the National Assembly.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

17. **Post-Visit Evaluation:** After the visit, the Committee should conduct a post-visit evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the visit in meeting its objectives. This evaluation should include feedback from members, stakeholders, and any other participants.
18. **Impact Assessment:** The Committee should track the impact of its field visits on subsequent parliamentary activities, such as debates, legislation, or policy changes. This ensures that the visits contribute to the overall goals of the National Assembly.

### **Compliance and Review**

19. **Adherence to SOP:** All Committees must adhere to this SOP when conducting field visits. Any deviations should be documented and reported to the Speaker of the National Assembly.
20. **Regular Review of SOP:** This SOP should be reviewed annually to incorporate any necessary updates based on feedback, changing circumstances, or new best practices.

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### **Format for the Committee Field Visit Report**

- 1) An executive summary;
- 2) The terms of reference and mandate of the visit;
- 3) The name list of the committee members with brief background of expertise;
- 4) The dates and places of the visit;
- 5) Sufficient background information to enable readers to contextualize the evidence gathered;
- 6) The methodology used during the visit, especially regarding interviews;
- 7) As appropriate and where safety and confidentiality would not be compromised, a list of the organizations visited and categories of people interviewed;
- 8) Identification of any sources of information relied upon, including disclosure of unverified third party evidence;
- 9) Any applicable laws;
- 10) Where applicable, complementary secondary sources should be identified as such; Guide to Parliamentary Field Visits;
- 11) Identification of any circumstances relevant to the visit, including anything that impeded it;
- 12) Findings of the report;
- 13) An acknowledgment of any contributions by people or organizations who rendered assistance to the committee, where it would not compromise their safety;
- 14) Conclusions and recommendations;
- 15) Details of any significant developments occurring after the visit;

**Note:**

1. The report may be provided in advance to the relevant government ministry in advance of release to the public and any comments received should be included in the report if possible and agreed upon; and
2. Finally, the report should be written and published within a reasonable time frame following the conclusion of the field visit.

**Endorsed by: 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the House Committee**



**Sangay Khandu**  
**Chairperson**  
**House Committee**

Chairperson  
House Committee  
National Assembly of Bhutan