

**ROYAL SOCIETY FOR
PROTECTION OF NATURE**



STRATEGIC PLAN

2016 - 2020

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 4th Strategic Plan for RSPN covers the period from 2016 to 2020 and is expected to guide RSPN and its programs while taking into consideration the challenges and opportunities presented by changing political, economic, social, and technological environment. The plan has been developed based on the findings from the review of RSPN's 3rd Strategic Plan, exhaustive consultation process, self assessment exercise, and a 2-day stakeholder workshop.

Despite its size, Bhutan is internationally applauded for placing high priority on environmental conservation. With highly populated neighbor to its south and rugged terrain to its north, Bhutan continues to play a critical role in providing the safest landscape level corridor for migration of flora and fauna between east and west Asia. While the government and people of Bhutan places high priority on environmental conservation, increasing population and developmental projects are exerting immense pressure on its fragile ecosystem and natural resources. The magnitude of this pressure is exacerbated by the recent transition to democracy, which allows people's priority to override conservation needs. The recent approval to construct a road through the core zone of Phrumshingla National Park is a shining example of the impacts of democratization on environmental conservation. At the community level, localized forest degradation is often associated to unsustainable harvesting of timber and firewood, high demand for forest resources

and overgrazing. Forest fires destroy thousands of acres of forest every year. With increasing pursuit of economic development, degradation of natural resources, forest habitats around communities are becoming prominent with increasing incidences of human-wildlife conflict. Access to water is also becoming an increasing issue in rural areas of Bhutan. Increasing demand for water against decreasing availability from drying water sources make water an increasingly scare resource.

The RSPN's 4th strategic plan is focused on 7 goal areas: 1. sustainable forest and land management; 2. species and habitat management; 3. water resources management; 4. sustainable development and livelihoods; 5. climate change; 6. environmental education and advocacy, and; 7. Research. To improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of the RSPN secretariat, the plan for the first time focuses on strengthening its governance, human resource management, fund raising and management. In addition, strategic approaches also include building partnerships with relevant national and international agencies and increasing its membership base. However, generating funds and technical support remains a pre-requisite to achieving the goals and as such aggressive fund raising effort must be invested. The plan shall provide overall strategic guidance and as such should be instituted at different levels of implementation including annual review of work plans, mid term review, and terminal evaluation.

INTRODUCTION

BHUTAN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Bhutan is a mountainous landlocked country on the eastern Himalayan range with a geographical area of 38,394 square km, and population of 745,600 people. The forest (tree) cover of the country is about 70.46%, arable land 2.93%, meadow land 4.10%, shrub land 10.43%, snow cover land 7.44% and bare areas 3.20% of the total geographic area. The country is rich in biodiversity and water resources.

Bhutan is widely recognized for its unusually high levels of biological diversity, which arise due to its position at the meeting of four biogeographic divisions and the many different habitats that exist along an enormous elevation gradient. Though small in size, Bhutan is a primary steward of some of the world's most exceptional mega-fauna, many of which are endangered elsewhere in the Hindu Kush-Himalayas. For centuries a strong religious and cultural ethos based on Buddhism has provided a safe refuge for this extraordinary richness. Beginning in 1993, Bhutan has steadily gained international recognition for its organized conservation efforts, including the establishment of an extensive network of protected areas, and interconnecting biological corridors. Indeed, about 40% of the country's total land area of 38,394 km² (NSB, 2007) has been set aside for conservation, and 60% of the country is mandated by the Constitution of Bhutan to remain in forest cover for all times.

The rivers and streams are being fed by the glacial lakes, glaciers, snowfalls and monsoon rains flow from the high northern mountains

to the southern foothills with a potential to generate more than 30,000 MW of clean energy. Although there are numerous rivers and streams in the country, agriculture is still dominated by the dry land farming that depends on the southwesterly monsoon rain that accounts to 60 to 90 % of annual precipitation. A wide range of agriculture and horticulture crops can grow year round in the agro-ecological zones from the wet-subtropical (150-600 masl) with a mean annual rainfall of 2500-5500 mm to temperate zones (2500-3500 masl) of mean annual rainfall of about 500 - 1,000 mm. The livelihood of over 69 % of the population, mostly rural based is dependent on the agriculture sector, and this sector also provides employment to over 56 % of the total population. The rural communities make up over 90% of this total poverty figure. The farmers living in remote and difficult terrains mostly remain disconnected from the main settlements during the heavy monsoon rains in summer and snowfalls in winter. There are incidences of landslides, flash floods, and landslips that frequently wash away cultivated land, disconnect food distribution system and distort food prices in the local markets. The food security is at high risk under these geographical settings where settlements are scattered across very mountainous terrains.

The protection of nature and the environment is central to governmental efforts to promote Gross National Happiness for all Bhutanese and serves as an ideal for governments everywhere. The Government is determined to pursue its developmental plans to reduce poverty and maintain its reputation as an environmental leader through green development.

RSPNS' ENDURING COMMITMENTS

Established in 1987, the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (RSPN) is a pioneering and the only conservation civil society in Bhutan with the mandate to assist the country in safeguarding natural biodiversity and the environment and in promoting sustainable development in Bhutan. RSPN enjoyed popular recognition both within and outside the country when the concept of civil society or non-governmental organization was barely understood by the Bhutanese population. In addition, RSPN was given tax-exempt status way before the adoption of the civil society organizations act by the parliament of Bhutan in 2007.

Today, RSPN is partnering with the government at various levels, NGOs, and international organizations to address fundamental issues facing our communities and the environment. RSPN's efforts are directly enhancing environmental conservation whose benefits are enjoyed nationally and internationally.

RSPNs achievements (major achievements can be taken)

RSPN has designed and implemented project interventions that have significantly contributed towards achieving its mission and goals. In close consultation with the Government, national and international partners and local communities, RSPN has improved conservation of natural resources and changed life for better.

The conservation of the endangered black-necked crane and their habitat especially the Phobjikha valley represents a shining testimony to this. Phobjikha valley is a critical wetland

habitat not only hosting the Black-necked Crane and other rare wetland birds and fauna, but it is a repository of carbon in its peat bogs and a source of water for many people and wildlife down stream including hydropower. RSPN has brought the residents of the valley together, built their capacities, and mobilized them to conserve the important habitat. Similarly other areas including Ada, Punatsangchu area, etc. received scientific interventions to conserve habitats for White-bellied Heron and other significant wildlife. .

The far reaching nature of the RSPN's efforts are also reflected in the East of Bhutan, where RSPN's interventions have successfully mitigated water scarcity issues, waste, and unsustainable natural resource mining. These initiatives have enhanced the conservation of wildlife such as tigers, Blyths Tragopan, as well as Ringshu bamboo which is a key resource from which farmers can actually generate a revenue stream, I turn aiding the community in a win – win situation.

RSPN Mission

The official mission statement of RSPN is as follows:

RSPN's mission is to inspire personal responsibility and active involvement of the people of Bhutan in the conservation of the Kingdom's environment through education, research, and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

The mission statement is directly borrowed

from Charter of Association. This strategic plan draws on the mission in two respects. The three dimensions of the mission outlined as, education, research, and sustainable livelihood opportunities, provide us with the foundation upon which tailored goals can be established and put into effect. Inspiring personal responsibility and active involvement of the people of Bhutan in a solid model for interweaving fundamental and practical knowledge that puts people in charge of their natural environment.

Vision

The RSPN vision states that:
Future generations of Bhutan will live in an environmentally sustainable society.
RSPN vision captures succinctly the core values ingrained in the harmonious relationship between Bhutanese society and nature as well as the more recent effort to promote this relationship through the principle of Gross National Happiness.

Core values

Core values are defined as inviolable commitments that express “who we are as an

organization” and what principles or qualities should infuse all practices and activities within the organization. The nature and implicit values of RSPN are based on clear, concise, and shared beliefs of the organization that will contribute towards achieving its mission in the long run.

1. Provide leadership in conservation;
2. Promote innovative technologies and methods;
3. Be proactive towards environmental issues;
4. Be accountable and transparent;
5. Be efficient and effective in delivering programs

The RSPN’s 4th strategic plan (2016-2020) has identified 7 goal areas: i) sustainable forest and land management; ii) species and habitat management; iii) water resources management; iv). sustainable development and livelihoods; v). climate change; vi). environmental education and advocacy, and; vii). research under its programs theme and three goal areas: viii). governance; human resource management; ix). Fund raising and fund management under its institutional and organizational theme.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

Situational analysis is carried out through: i) identification of certain assumptions about the external (political, economic, social, and technological (PEST factors and internal environments (resources or inputs, processes, and performance or outputs); ii). Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT).

Environmentally friendly way of life and respect for all sentient being including mountains, rocks, and water bodies has endowed Bhutan with unprecedented natural richness. Realizing this intricate relationship, environmental conservation in Bhutan has received undiscounted support at national policy and international levels. Aside from framing environmental conservation as one of the four pillars of Gross National Happiness, the constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan requires that at least 60% of the country remain under forest cover for all times. This is translated into implementation with over 60% of the country's land area declared under protected areas systems, ban on export of logs, closing of the country's only plywood factory, and mandatory scientific management of all natural resources in the country.

Creation of RSPN as the first NGO to help enhance sustainable socio-economic development through environmental conservation is a direct offshoot of these pro-environmental policies.

Environmental issues

At the cross roads of the twenty first century, international and national governments and

organizations are grappling with the need to safeguard the environment and ecosystem integrity. Increasing population, pursuit of economic development, democratization and politics, and globalization continue to inhibit environmental protection and pose immense pressure on the natural resources and ecosystems. About 69% of Bhutan's population lives in rural areas depending primarily on agriculture and natural ecosystem and are the poorest and the most vulnerable. To these people local natural resources are their source of life and lack of access to these resources means denial of basic right to livelihood. However, traditional resource sharing institutions that enabled communities to sustainably manage local resources such as water, tsamdrog (grazing lands), and sokshing (leaf litter forests) are losing significance under nationalization policies. The progress and food security of these vulnerable groups are constantly threatened by wildlife damages, water scarcity, and erratic rainfall patterns resulting from climate change, and climate variability. The issues are exacerbated by limited technologies, expertise, and skills rendering these communities incapable of uplifting themselves to decent standards of living. We are now faced with a number of environmental issues and challenges that in the long term may have a direct impact on the future development and welfare of Bhutan.

Environmental issues in the country are on the rise. Some of the prominent issues include:

Land degradation and loss of forest cover

Over 69% of the Bhutanese population are directly dependent on crop agriculture, livestock

rearing and forest products. The stability of forestland, rangeland, and arable land is therefore, of critical importance to communities across Bhutan, especially to sustain livelihoods and rural economies. Land management problems such as loss of soil fertility and erosions stem from both human-induced and natural processes. At the outset, anthropogenic pressures are multifaceted and substantial often appearing in the form of forest degradation, unsustainable agriculture, mining, industries and infrastructure development. These problems are further compounded with increasing demand for infrastructure and economic development putting the constitutional goals of maintaining 60% forest cover for all times to come under pressure. Pressures from human population, agriculture, and livestock coupled with monetization and development of the economy are adversely affecting forest sustainability in Bhutan in general. The emphasis on providing infrastructure to rural communities of all 202 gewogs and building mega hydropower dams on almost all rivers has largely scarred the country. Many of the roads and electric grids that inevitably are aligned through forested areas cumulatively demand significant parts of forests to be destroyed leading to habitat fragmentation and reduction of the forest cover. At the community level, localized forest degradation is often associated to unsustainable harvesting of timber and firewood, high demand for forest resources and overgrazing. Social and environmental studies have indicated an increase in resource use with a decline in the resource base. Among other issues, deforestation caused by shifting cultivation and overexploitation; unregulated exploitation of non-wood forest products and overgrazing were some of the prominent issues challenging both forest quality and livelihoods of the communities. Land slides and soil erosion from roads aligned on the fragile

mountain slopes expose them to monsoon rainfall and flooding causing severe erosion and destabilizing the slopes. The potential of small slope erosions developing into massive landslides causing entire mountainsides to erode is very high. This will entail loss of forest cover and increase the need for expensive restoration, reforestation, and relief programs. The associated costs in maintenance and disaster management could potentially be beyond affordability. Every year several hundred acres of forest are lost to agricultural or infrastructure development purposes. There is increasing demand for private and institutional ownership of land that earmark huge areas of forest land for development purposes. Government institutions, NGOs and private agencies have taken on lease and reserved huge areas of government reserved forests. This is further aggravated by the inevitable need to provide land to the landless.

Forest fires destroy thousands of acres of forest every year. In addition to the continuing pursuit of communities, especially in the east, to intentional burning of forests for grasses, accidental fires from increased human interactions with forests during hikes, treks, grazing, picnicking, electrical short circuiting and careless disposal of cigarettes have resulted in significant loss of forests to fires.

Threats to biodiversity

Bhutan is home to several globally significant species that are categorized as endemic, endangered or critically endangered. Of the many, the Black-necked cranes (BNC) and White-bellied Herons have been identified as threatened by development impacts on their habitats. Rural communities of Bhutan are located in close proximity to forests from which they derive timber, non-wood forest products,

and other eco- system services including water, grasses for livestock and protein supplements from hunting. With increasing pursuit of economic development, degradation of natural resources and forest habitats around communities are becoming prominent with increasing incidences of human-wildlife conflict. Livestock predation and crop damages continue to inflict unimaginable loss to agricultural households. Wildlife species including elephants, guar, wild pig, deer, birds, and monkeys have been reported as frequent crop raiders with reported crop loss ranging between 0.3 to over 70 percent. In Wamrong and Kangpara, at least 30-70% of households were affected by wildlife, and suffered food insecurity ranging anywhere from 1.5 months to 6 months a year. The often-significant financial and labor (spent in guarding and building other protective measures) losses farmers and livestock owners endure at the hands of predators and prey species lead to revenge killing, and antipathy towards wildlife, protected areas and their managers. Such negative feeling towards conservation of wildlife presents significant threats especially when high profile species such as tiger, Black-necked Cranes, White-bellied Herons etc. are involved. Habitats of White-bellied Heron and blacked necked cranes continue to be threatened by economic development and population growth triggered by land conversion leading to loss of critical wetlands that harbor these endangered species. The White-bellied Heron (*Ardea insignis*) is one of the 50 rarest bird species in the world, which historically occurred in Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Bhutan. Its population in the world is still unknown with global population ranging from 50 - 200 birds. Information on the life history of the species is negligible and restricted to the study carried by the RSPN. Today hydropower projects pose immense threat to the conservation of the

White-bellied Heron. Roads and infrastructure facilities concentrated along the river, increasing human settlements and related economic activities are already looming threats to the habitat of this endangered bird. The best known habitats along the Punatsangchhu are extremely disturbed from sand mining, recreations, and human interventions during infrastructure development, especially the Punatsangchhu hydropower projects.

Degrading water quality and quantity

Bhutan is considered to have an abundance of water per capita, but there is an unequal distribution, both spatially and seasonally. Increasing pressures on the water resources caused generally by rising demands and competition from various users further exacerbates this issue. From domestic consumption and agriculture to new water users such as hydropower projects, manufacturing industries, and recreation, demand for water is expected to intensify in the future. Simultaneously, there is a decline in the quantity of water mainly attributing to loss of forest cover and critical watersheds. Today only 78% of the population has access to safe drinking water and only about 12.5% of the arable land is irrigated. Further, the quality of available water is often compromised from non-point sources and point sources.

Sedimentation and suspended particles from increasing soil erosion, construction, and extraction of sand and boulders are transforming the fresh water of the streams and rivers into polluted inhabitable and undrinkable water. Water pollution is more pronounced in the urban areas where wastewaters, garbage and industrial effluents find their ways into water bodies. Unregulated sanitation outlets and toilets contribute to fecal contents of water

causing diseases and health risks. Effluents from industrial, mining activity and road construction are main contributors to chemical and increased sediments in water depriving rivers of biotic life. Some of the major areas of concern include Pasakha Industrial Estate, Jimina stone quarry, coal mines in Eastern Bhutan, dolomite & limestone mines in Southern Bhutan etc. In the rural areas however, runoffs from excessive use of fertilizers, as in the case of Phobjikha seriously undermines the quality of water. In recent times, farm roads and their construction process remain the major contributors to soil erosion and suspended soil particles in water. Access to water is becoming an increasing issue in rural areas of Bhutan. Increasing demand for water against decreasing availability from drying water sources make water an increasingly scare resource.

Increasing waste issues

The issue of waste management poses a phenomenal challenge. On the one hand, inadequate management of solid wastes and wastewaters are some of the conspicuous problems arising either due to insufficient infrastructure planning or inadequate municipal facilities and services. On the other hand, levels of economic growth, subsequent changes in consumption pattern and a high urban population growth rate have all led to increase in the quantity and composition of wastes. As per the report on the study of solid wastes carried out by the RSPN major waste problems arise from change in the consumption pattern of urban residents, lack of public awareness and advocacy, lack of civic responsibilities among the public at large, lack of coordination among institutions responsible for waste management, lack of strong legal framework and implementation mechanisms, and rural-urban migration contributing to rise in population.

Challenges

Bhutan has earned global recognition for spearheading environmental conservation. However, with democracy and choice of the people, maintaining its position as a global leader in environmental protection and conservation will be challenging.

Fragility and terrain

Being located in the young fold mountains of the Himalayas, Bhutan remains vulnerable to its fragile mountain terrain i.e. the unstable geology and soil structure. Any small disruption in the geology could destabilize the entire slopes and associated mountain ecosystem and services emanating from them. Hence, any development activity in the country requires extra caution and timely environmental consideration.

Democracy vis-a-vis the environment

Bhutan is categorized as least developed country with majority of its population dependent on subsistence agriculture. With globalization and modern economic development, the aspiration for economic development is understandably strong. The launch of parliamentary democracy and power to vote has enabled the people to prioritize development over conservation. Preservation of the environment, though an important pillar of Gross National Happiness, remains low on the priority list of the people. People have repeatedly reported that they don't want wildlife near their settlements and that the government should get rid of them. Priorities for road, electricity, modern economic amenities etc. have scarred the country with network of farm roads that cut along fragile mountain sides. Such priorities of the communities, if not changed, will drive future governments to

continue prioritizing economic development over the environment.

Infrastructure development

Bhutan is home to numerous globally threatened and endangered species. Infrastructure development especially hydropower projects pose immense threat to species and habitat especially if they are not planned on run off river and rely heavily on dams. For example, the critically endangered White-bellied Heron habitat is heavily disturbed under the ongoing Punatsangchu hydropower project. The subsequent phases rely heavily on dams that will submerge villages, agriculture farms, forests and associated species. Lack of measures to ensure aquatic migration and minimum flow requirements threaten aquatic life and other species dependent on them. Similarly, the Phobjikha conservation area is vulnerable to unregulated tourism development. The lack of staunch regulatory measures and legal protection of the valley will lend the valley's wetland and watershed vulnerable to destruction and ultimate loss of the Black-necked Cranes. The pristine state of nature in the valley, the beautiful landscape, and the magnificent Black-necked cranes make Phobjikha valley a potential ecotourism destination. Unplanned management and associated infrastructure development in the valley pose immense threats to maintaining its environmental significance as a source of economic welfare for the people. Bhutan is potentially experiencing high per-capita destruction of natural environment for meeting economic development goals.

Human interface with forests and wildlife
With 72% forest cover and 69% of the population under agriculture based rural livelihoods, the interface between humans and

wildlife is extensive. In recent times, the issue of human wild- life conflict has attracted the attention of the parliament owing to the loss of livestock and crops to wildlife by rural farmers. However, the challenge lies in separating wildlife from forest. Forests are an integral part of rural livelihood. All rural communities are nestled in the forests and depend on them for timber, fuel wood, water supply for drinking and irrigation, fodder, manure, and to some extent on wildlife for protein supplement. Managing and maintaining natural forests are essential to maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem services. With the recent nationalization of leaf litter forests (Sokshing) and the promotion of community forestry by the Royal Government, communities are showing increasing interest in community forest that entitles them to rights over timber and other forest products. Considering that community initiatives are driven by economic rationalities, management by communities may eradicate certain plant species over desired economically valued species thereby reducing diversity. In the past, Sokshings have lost diversity through human management over time.

Climate change

Over the last decades, human activities, particularly burning of fossil fuels have increased carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions directly leading to global warming and subsequently changing the climate patterns irrevocably. Climate change is a looming threat to humanity and its consequences stretch over time and space. From ecological and economic losses to social aggravations, climate change will have adverse impacts on the environment, human health, food security, economic activity, natural resources and physical infrastructure. It is assumed and at the same time predicted that

the world's developing countries and the most marginalized groups of people in these countries will be affected severely by climate change consequences. This will mainly stem from their incapacities to mitigate adequately and adapt inevitably to the chain of events from floods and sea level rise to water and food issues. Many Asian countries including Bangladesh and Bhutan are susceptible to climate change especially in terms of health, food and water security. Besides natural processes and geological factors causing land degradation, the complex relationship between climate change and loss of productivity of land and related issues needs specific mention given that climate change is expected to be an additional stress on rates of land degradation in the future. The Bhutanese are considerably vulnerable to climate change and its impacts, especially as a mountain community and with low economic/human capacity to deal with impending risks and disasters. Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) leading to morbidity and mortality, agricultural pests and diseases giving rise to food security, and water security are some issues already occurring without forewarning. Although Bhutan's contribution to climate change is considered very minimal, strengthening its capacity to adapt to climate change is a challenge and a necessity.

Policy implementation deficiencies

Bhutan is perhaps one of the few countries in the world with strong environmental policies and regulations. However, it is also among the many countries with serious deficiencies

in implementation of the environmental regulations. While regulations to curb pollution and environmental degradation exist, on the ground situations reveal immense gap between policy as written and policy as implemented. Economic development is occurring at a rapid pace. Industrialization and infrastructure development have become the major demand of the people and therefore the focus of the government. Air and water quality are being compromised with competent authorities in the construction, mining, and manufacturing industries, automobile workshops and farm roads sectors failing to prevent or mitigate the environmental impacts of their sector. Environmental impact assessment and clearance processes for projects have suffered at various stages including lack of public consultation, compliance monitoring and enforcement to the extent that the processes have become more of rubber-stamping exercise. In many instances defaulters can get away with environmental damages for a modest penalty. Two major factors are primarily responsible for causing these deficiencies. First, the Bhutanese society is small and closely-knit wherein most of the people especially at the bureaucracy and business levels are known to the other and bound by traditional social obligations. Such relations at the level of the empowered and affluent often get in the way of official undertakings, making policy enforcement difficult. Second, the provisions of the law are not matched by adequate institutional set up with required human resources, equipment and budgetary support for effective enforcement.

THE RSPN STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2020

The RSPN's 4th strategic plan is a five-year document (2016-2020) to build capacity (human resource, financial resources, infrastructure of RSPN) and resilience of the Bhutanese people to meet the emerging environmental and developmental challenges. The needs of the poor and the vulnerable groups including women and children will be mainstreamed in all the strategic activities of the plan. The plan was prepared by Dr. Sonam Wangyel Wang with contributions made by RSPN staff and relevant partners during the two day planning

workshop and follow up meetings. The strategic plan will focus on: sustainable forest and land management; species and habitat management; water resources management; sustainable development and livelihoods; climate change; environmental education and advocacy, and; research under its Programs theme, and; governance; human resource management; fund raising and management; under its institutional and organization theme. The goals, objectives, and strategic actions along with output indicators and timelines are described below:

Program	Conservation and sustainable livelihoods.	
Goal	Establish and promote environmental conservation as a means to economic development.	
Objective	To promote sustainable development and livelihood options.	
Rationale	Environmental conservation and livelihood options are inseparable for Bhutan. Bhutanese way of life and environment are interdependent. To both enhance this relationship for mutual benefit and to realize the maximum benefits from the environment, it is important to pursue integrated conservation and development programs. Such programs when designed and implemented judiciously in partnership with communities enhance conservation and alleviate poverty, thereby creating win-win situations.	
	Strategic Actions	Timeline
	1. Garner community support to implement sustainable and eco-smart livelihood options in priority communities.	2020
	2. Implement CBST in target areas.	2020
		Indicators
		6 communities supported by sustainable and eco-smart livelihood options.
		Implement 4 CBST in at least 3 target areas

Program	Soil and Land Management.		
Goal	Minimize land degradation through appropriate land management techniques and ecosystem-based approaches to natural resource management (NRM).		
Objective 1	To conserve soil fertility and reduce land degradation.		
Rationale	<p>Land is central to macro-economic growth. Productive soil, fresh water, forests, clean air, animal life, and other renewable resources underpin the survival and prosperity of people across the planet. Practices that reduce nutrients in the earth, limit carbon sequestration, degrade the top soil, and ultimately reduce the productivity of land and its water retention capacity have long-term impact on the ecosystem, on economic development and even whole societies. Soil and land degradation becomes even more challenging when it comes to mountainous ecosystem such as in Bhutan. Bhutan's rugged terrain exposes its land to greater risk of degradation. Only 8% of Bhutan's total land area is arable for the 69% of the population that depends directly on agriculture thereby magnifying the threat from land and soil degradation. This resource is threatened by economic development, deforestation, leading to a loss of about 29Mt/ha of fertile topsoil. However, land management practices are carried out on a very small scale, thus requiring extra focus on land and soil management.</p>		
	Strategic Actions	Timeline	Indicators
	1. Introduce soil conservation measures in 10 communities.	2020	10 communities involved in soil conservation measures.
	2. Introduce appropriate land management programs in 10 communities.	2020	10 communities involved in land management programs.

Program	Soil and Land Management.		
Goal	Minimize land degradation through appropriate land management techniques and ecosystem-based approaches to NRM.		
Objective 2	To promote eco-system based approach to NRM.		
Rationale	Recent researches and practice have demonstrated that eco-system based approaches to natural resource management yields socio-economic and ecological benefits. This approach considers complex interactions between humans and the living, and non-living environment over multiple scales in space and time, thereby reducing or eliminating threats to soil, land, and ecosystem management and rendering sustainability. It is essential that ecosystem based approaches to natural resource management be promoted to reap long terms benefits without hurting the health of our ecosystem.		
	Strategic Actions	Timeline	Indicators
	Implement ecosystem based approaches to NRM in two communities	2020	2 communities adopt ecosystem approaches to NRM

Program	Soil and Land Management.	
Goal	Reduce waste through feasible waste management models and up-scaling initiatives.	
Objective 3	To reduce waste through innovative waste management systems and public education.	
Rationale	Waste and wastewater is increasingly becoming a problem that needs immediate action. Poor infrastructure and technology coupled with lack of awareness and education on waste management and its impact on human health and general environment are the main reasons for escalating waste problem in Bhutan. RSPN will, in partnership with communities and urban authorities continue to adapt and implement innovative methods to reduce and manage waste and wastewater.	
	Strategic Actions	Timeline
	Study the efficacy (policy and implementation gaps) of the current waste management strategy, including public opinion and behavioral study.	2018
	Develop appropriate and affordable waste management mechanism for rural or semi-rural communities.	2018
		Indicators
		At least one report on the state of the waste management strategy implementation.
		Waste management mechanism developed and implemented in at least two communities (rural or semi-rural).

Program	Species and habitat.		
Goal	Enhance the conservation of key threatened species and their habitat.		
Objective	To conserve key threatened species and their habitat.		
Rationale	<p>Bhutan is a biodiversity hotspot with high levels of floral and faunal diversity. As a result, Bhutan enjoys high quality ecosystem services and good international repute for its conservation success. However, economic development including mega hydropower project, mining, road construction, and other activities pose imminent threat to the integrity of our biodiversity. These threats are exacerbated due to impact of climate change and climate variability. At high risks are high profile species such as the black necked crane, White-bellied Heron, red panda, tiger, snow leopard, etc., that need uncompromised conservation support. RSPN has made unprecedented progress in safeguarding these species especially the blacked necked crane and White-bellied Heron. These birds and others that are in urgent need of conservation efforts will be taken up by RSPN.</p>		
	Strategic Actions	Timeline	
		Indicators	
	1. Deepen knowledge on at least three key threatened species and their habitat.	2020	Study reports on three key species.
	2. Identify and implement appropriate conservation measures for the identified specie's habitat.	2020	Conservation measures implemented for at least 3 habitats.

Program	Water Resource Management.		
Goal	Address water quality and security issues at community level through integrated community management models.		
Objective	To improve knowledge on water resources for water conservation and water security.		
Rationale	<p>Water is a key driver of socio-economic development as well as maintaining the integrity of the natural environment. However, water is becoming scarce in many parts of the world jeopardizing socio-economic development and life itself. There is also variability of supply through time as a result of both seasonal variation and inter-annual variation. Most of the time these variabilities are not predictable which pose overwhelming challenges to all sections of the society from managers to farmers. Bhutan is part of the water towers of Asia, yet it is increasingly grappling with water scarcity and security issues. Water sources across the country are reported to be drying by the years affecting agriculture, livelihoods, and creating insecurities, conflicts, and anxiety amongst the people. These problems are compounded by global warming and clearing of forests for development especially hydropower plants. The water demand, over all is increasing and it is projected to rise further. Options of improved conveyance and efficient means to irrigate crops are not explored in great depth. This calls for a good water management strategy to face the challenges posed by local, regional and global changing environment.</p>		
	Strategic Actions	Timeline	Indicators
	1. Promote IWRM at grass roots level in three priority Gewogs.	2020	Three Gewogs adopt IWRM.
	2. Adopt and implement appropriate measures for conservation of three critical wetlands.	2020	3 critical wetlands under conservation.

Program	Climate Change.	
Goal	Increase resilience to climate change impacts through knowledge and adaptation programs.	
Objective	To enhance the climate change resilience of communities through innovative adaptation programs.	
Rationale	<p>Global warming will escalate as long as economic development especially by the industrialized nations continues. This will result in altering the ambient conditions under which we live and grow crops. Climate change and climate variability are increasingly impacting farmers and farms in big ways. In Bhutan, farmers are facing increasing incidences of erratic rainfall patterns, emergence of pest and diseases, storm surges, and health problems. The climate prediction reports are not very encouraging according to the mainstream science in climatology and Bhutan cannot afford to ignore these early warnings. The consequences of inaction today will make future response strategies all the more difficult and expensive. RSPN will, in collaboration with partners and communities increase and sustain the awareness, expand our knowledge and understanding of the science behind climate change sensation and institute proactive measures in the national development policies and plans to support and empower remedial actions in the near future.</p>	
	Strategic Actions	Timeline
	1. Implement climate change adaptation based on CC vulnerability assessment in five communities.	2020
	2. Generate CC data from priority areas.	2019
		Indicators
		Adaptation adopted in 5 communities.
		Climate Change database.

Program	Environmental Education and Advocacy.	
Goal	To increase the level of environmental awareness through advocacy and public participation in conservation.	
Objective 1	Improve the quality, access and coordination of environmental education information, resources and programs in Bhutan.	
Rationale	<p>Environmental degradation is deeply rooted in the way human beings perceive the environment. The belief that humans are the master of the world and all else is created for the selfish consumption of the humans is threatening the environment's abilities to sustain life on earth. If environmental conservation is to succeed, changes in human behavior and attitudes must take place. Researches have proven that this change is best affected through education and first-hand experience episodes. In Bhutan respect for all forms of life and nature presents itself as an additional vehicle for taking environmental conservation messages to the people. RSPN will take advantage of these opportunities and affect lifestyle changes to support conservation through environmental education and advocacy programs.</p>	
	Strategic Actions	Timeline
	Build capacities of key stakeholders by 2020 to implement EE.	2020
		Indicators
		Number of key stakeholder engaged in implementing EE.

Program	Environmental Education and Advocacy.		
Goal	To increase the level of environmental awareness through advocacy and public participation in conservation.		
Objective 2	Enhance stakeholder capacities for effective participation in environment conservation.		
Rationale	Enhancing the stakeholder capacities for effective participation in environmental conservation is a pre-requisite to introducing environmental education and advocacy programs. It is crucial that the audience for such programs is prepared in advance through capacity building initiatives and the best platforms to do this are at educational institutes. RSPN will pursue this objective by developing environmental education resources and awareness tools for target audience such as the secondary and tertiary institutions, communities and policy makers.		
	Strategic Actions	Timeline	Indicators
	EE resources and awareness tools developed for secondary and tertiary institutions, communities and policy makers.	2020	EE resources and awareness tools developed for at least two target stakeholders and beneficiaries.

Program	Research.		
Goal	Enhance capacity and research for informed (science-based) decision making.		
Objective 1	To strengthen capacity through joint research on key environmental and developmental issues.		
Rationale	<p>Research, which is a systematic process of critical inquiry leading to valid propositions and conclusions that are communicated to interested others, is a fundamental requirement to undertake any meaningful decision. Research produces objective and empirical inferences that will guide decisions, strategies, and projects. Research capacities are in its infancy in Bhutan resulting in unsubstantiated decisions. This issue is further compounded by lack of adequate infrastructure for research. To address these challenges and promote research based decisions RSPN will embark on joint research on key issues.</p>		
	Strategic Actions	Timeline	Indicators
	1. Formulate a research strategy for RSPN.	2017	Research strategy developed and in implementation.
	2. Develop endowment fund for research.	2020	1 million UD\$ endowment raised.

Program	Research.		
Goal	Enhance capacity and research for informed (science-based) decision making.		
Objective 2	To provide technical backstopping to RSPN programs with research outputs.		
Rationale	<p>Research is needed to solve new and existing problems of immediate concern through gathering of information. The more information we have, the closer we get to making our own decision. The most developmental decision would fail if decisions were not backed by the scientific information. Programs, projects, and interventions tend to suffer when not supported by research.</p> <p>The research component of RSPN needs to be strengthened to backstop its programs.</p>		
	Strategic Actions	Timeline	Indicators
	1. Identify specific areas that need research backstopping.	2020	List of research needs for backstopping and number of researches carried out.
	1. To publish at least two issue-based research papers each year.	2020	2 research papers published.

Program	Communications and Outreach.		
Goal	Enhance RSPN visibility through strengthening communications and outreach.		
Objective 1	To improve communications and outreach of RSPN.		
Rationale	Communication and outreach are critical tools for improving organization's visibility as well as for sharing information. Organizations with well-developed communications and outreach strategies can gain a lot of appreciation for its works and generate additional resources. RSPN has generated substantial information from its programs implemented over several years that has brought changes at the grassroots and the national level. Such information needs to be made available to the public through communication and outreach channels.		
	Strategic Actions	Timeline	
		Indicators	
	1. Develop and enhance self-sustainability mechanisms for Jigme Khesar Environmental Resource Centre (JKERC).	2017- 2020	JKERC generating steady income and able to meet its operational cost.
	2. Develop and implement effective approach and tools related to publicity and IT to improve RSPN's visibility and to backstop fund raising program.	2020	Increased number of RSPN members, donors and supporters.
	3. Expand RSPN membership to at least 1000 active members.	2020	Number of new members increased to at least 1000.
	4. Introduce appropriate program management software for improved program management and monitoring	2018	Number of programs introduced. Type of Program management tools adopted for program management.
	5. Mainstream the RSPN's data center in the program operation to strengthen the organization's knowledge management	2016	Data input status of the RSPN data center.

Program	Governance.	
Goal	Enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of RSPN Board members for continued support to the growth of RSPN.	
Objective 1	Improve the involvement and participation of the board members to provide visionary and strategic guidance and direction in the continued growth of RSPN.	
Rationale	Success of RSPN will be dictated to a large extent by the visionary and strategic guidance from its eminent board members. It is then crucial for the board members to fully engage their expertise, wisdom, and leadership. It is imperative to put on record by the way of bylaws on how recruitment and workings of the esteemed board members take place.	
	Strategic Actions	Timeline
	Enhance Board Initiative to support RSPN through: 1. Involvement of Board Members in Fundraising.	2016-2018
	2. Institute policies and procedures in the recruitment of new Board Members.	2016
	3. Establish formal and informal communication platform for exchange of information between the secretariat and the board.	2016
		Indicators
		Number of board members, number of events, and resources acquired.
		Records and basis (guiding documents) of recruitment process. Number of procedural documents in place.
		Meetings, and frequency of exchanges.

Program	Human Resources Management.		
Goal	To enhance the human capacity of RSPN to efficiently and effectively support RSPN programs.		
Objective	To build/strengthen human resource capacity of RSPN.		
Rationale	Human resource is key to the success of any organization. As an NGO, RSPN must also target to hire ready-made employees with requisite skills and qualifications who only need short-term orientation training and refresher courses. Once recruited, top employees must be retained with progressive compensation packages and other perks. RSPN must draw up a strategic plan to manage its HR efficiently and effectively for top results.		
	Strategic Actions	Timeline	Indicators
	1. Human Resources Training needs assessment.	2016	Number of trainings planed
	2. To develop a master plan for RSPN human resource development including recruitment, retaining, training, ToR, performance evaluation, promotion, etc.	2016	RSPN master plan for human resource development.

Program	Fund Raising and Management.	
Goal	To ensure financial sustainability of RSPN and its programs.	
Objective 1	To develop a fund raising strategy for ex and in country donors.	
Rationale	<p>Sustainability of RSPN and its programs depends on the availability of resources including funds. Fund raising and fund management must be given top priority.</p> <p>Appropriate strategies for both fund raising and management are imperative.</p>	
	Strategic Actions	Timeline
	1. To prepare a fund raising strategy.	2016 - 2020
		- Fund raising strategy - Amount of fund raised by 2020
	2. Embark on a fund raising campaign both abroad and in Bhutan.	2017
		Number of fund raising receptions and funds raised

Program	Fund Raising and Management.	
Goal	To ensure financial sustainability of RSPN and its programs.	
Objective 2	To sustainably manage and invest RSPN funds into international markets.	
Rationale	<p>Fund raising and fund investment must go hand in hand. A fund raising effort with no fund investment and management strategy will not be sustainable. A proper fund investment and management strategy that will guide RSPN to administer the fund systematically and tap into the most beneficial investment opportunity available is extremely crucial.</p>	
	Strategic Actions	Timeline
	To develop a fund management and investment strategy	2017
		Fund management and investment strategy operational.

Program	Fund Raising and Management.		
Goal	To ensure financial sustainability of RSPN and its programs.		
Objective 3	To institutionalize the sustainability mechanism for RSPN's operational cost.		
Rationale	<p>Variety of indirect services and inputs provided by the office to facilitate the implementation of a project is usually not accounted and supported by projects/ programs. Such services and inputs have implication on the operational cost of RSPN. RSPN is a non-profit, public benefit organization and therefore does not have regular income source to finance its operational cost, so without cost recovery mechanism it would be difficult for the organization to sustain the institution and its programs.</p> <p>The cost recovery mechanism is therefore essential to meet the organization's overhead cost that is incurred in management and administration of project/ programs that RSPN implements</p>		
	Strategic Actions	Timeline	
		Indicators	
	1. Streamline and regularize the existing cost recovery mechanisms (such Management fee, contribution from Professional service etc.) as a part of project financial plans.	2016	Number of approved projects with management cost.
	2. Design additional innovative ways of cost recovery to meet the institutional overhead cost.	2016	''

INSTITUTIONALIZATION THE PLAN

No strategic plan can help an organization to make and sustain forward momentum if it is “shelved,” not updated or revised in light of subsequent events or new realities, or perceived as a document with limited relevance to ongoing organizational growth, development, and priorities. Strategic plans can help achieve goals and targets if the organization –at all levels – is committed to using the plan as a tool for organizing annual or operating, sustainability or resource mobilization, and unit planning. The plan should be fully integrated into ongoing planning, financial management, monitoring, reporting, resource mobilization, and other activities so that the organization follows a coherent, strategic path towards results and achievement of its goals.