



# DESTINATION CHHUKHA

## Authenticity with Diversity

### TOURISM ACTION PLAN (2021–2025)



**Dzongkhag Administration, Chhukha**  
**Royal Government of Bhutan**

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April 2021

# Contents

Glossary of Bhutanese Terms	v
Foreword	vi
Acknowledgements	viii
Executive Summary	ix

## Part 1: THE POWER OF TOURISM AND WHY IT MATTERS 1

<b>1.1 Why Tourism</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 Tourism Development in Bhutan</b>	<b>3</b>
Background	3
Management and key agencies dealing with tourism development	6
What attracts visitors to Bhutan?	9
What are the major source markets?	10

## Part 2: SCOPE OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN CHHUKHA DZONGKHAG 12

<b>2.1 Background</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2.2 Socio-economic Development</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Vision and mission of the dzongkhag</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>2.3 Opportunities for Tourism Development</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>2.4 Situational Analysis of Tourism Development</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>2.5 Challenges</b>	<b>23</b>

## Part 3: THE ACTION PLAN 26

<b>3.1 Guiding Principles for Tourism Development</b>	<b>26</b>
Destination Vision	28
<b>3.2 Prerequisites to Support the Strategic Components</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>3.3 Strategic Components</b>	<b>31</b>
Strategic component I: Planning and development of products and services	31
Strategic component II: Promotions and marketing	34
Strategic component III: Management and sustainability	36

<b>3.4 Activities and Budget</b>	<b>41</b>
Strategic component: planning and development of products and services	41

## **Part 4: CONCLUSION** **49**

### **List of Tables**

Table 1: An overview of tourism operations in Bhutan for 2019	4
Table 2: Tourist arrivals over the years	5
Table 3: Visitor arrival trends	10
Table 4: Visitor market source 2019	11
Table 5: Profile of gewogs	13
Table 6: Number of industrial firms by scale and Dzongkhag	16
Table 7: Percentage distribution of economically active population by sex and Dzongkhag	17
Table 8: Tourist arrivals in the last five years	21
Table 9: Comparison of arrivals and bed nights of the Dzongkhags	22

### **List of Figures**

Figure 1: Global impacts of tourism and why it matters	2
Figure 2: Key milestones in tourism development in Bhutan	3
Figure 3: Some key tourism management agencies	7
Figure 4: Attributes that have contributed to creating Brand Bhutan	9
Figure 5: Chhukha dzongkhag profile	12
Figure 6: Chhukha location map and gewogs	14
Figure 7: Vision and mission of Chhukha Dzongkhag	18
Figure 8: Monthly arrivals by mode of transport	19
Figure 9: SWOT analysis of tourism development in Chhukha	20
Figure 10: Affinity between the principles of GNH and sustainable tourism	27
Figure 11: Guiding principles for tourism development	26
Figure 12: Three basic ingredients of tourism product development	32
Figure 13: Basic principles of product development as per the guidelines of TCB	33
Figure 14: USPs for tourism of the 11 gewogs of Chhukha	35
Figure 15: Tourism management structure	37
Figure 16: Attributes of tourism sustainability – harmony of ecology, culture, economy and local community	38

## Appendixes

Appendix I: Chronology of consultations with participants for plan preparation

50

# Glossary of Bhutanese Terms

<b>Chiwogs</b>	Cluster of villages as part of local government
<b>Dzongkhag</b>	District
<b>Dzongdag</b>	District governor
<b>Gewog</b>	Administrative block within the district consisting of several villages
<b>Gup</b>	Local leader of gewog (local government)



# Foreword

Chhukha Dzongkhag is located in south-west Bhutan and comprises an area of 1,879.5 square kilometers. It is divided administratively into 11 gewogs, one sub-district and one major township. Two of the biggest hydro power plants, the Chhukha and Tala hydropower plants, are located in the Dzongkhag. The main sources of income for the people of Chhukha Dzongkhag are livestock rearing, vegetable farming and cash crop cultivation. In 2018, Chhukha received 2,490 tourists (Bhutan Tourism Monitor, 2019), which is 3.99% of the total number of tourists who visited the country during the year. Phuentshogling, which is the main land route to Bhutan, runs through Chhukha. It thus carries huge potential for tourism development in Chhukha as more than 55% (TCB, 2019) of the tourists enter the country through Phuentshogling.

The Dzongkhag has rich biodiversity in terms of flora and fauna. Thus, the scope for ecotourism development in Chhukha is immense but it has only been scantily explored to date. There are multiple trekking routes which can be developed while river rafting has been recommended in the lower parts of Wangchu and Amochu by the Tourism Council of Bhutan. In addition, Chhukha has the potential to serve as a favorite winter destination for tourists. The warmer parts of Chhukha are already gaining popularity among the Bhutanese as a spot to spend their winters.

The main bottleneck currently facing the Dzongkhag is under-development of the tourism products and the related tourism infrastructure. Most of the tourists entering the country through Phuentshogling travel straight through Chhukha to the better developed tourist destinations in the northern districts due to lack of tourist attractions along the way. There is need, therefore, to take advantage of the vast untapped potential for product development along the Phuentshogling-Thimphu highway.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2018–2023), Chhukha aims to increase tourist arrivals by 500 numbers from the baseline. The first step in realizing this target is to have a Tourism Action Plan in place. The draft document was **endorsed** at the 8<sup>th</sup> Dzongkhag Tshogdu session held on 6 April 2021.

This Tourism Action Plan will enable Chhukha to establish itself as a favorable winter destination for international as well as domestic tourists. Identification of ecotourism sites and development of new trekking routes are ongoing. Tourism development is also recognized as an integral part of the local economic development strategy in the Dzongkhag.

The Economic Development Sector of the Dzongkhag Administration has been delegated with the responsibility of undertaking tourism development activities and the present collaboration with the Nature Conservation Division (NCD) and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Nepal, is the first step in realizing the potential of Chhukha in the tourism sphere. I am thankful to ICIMOD and NCD for supporting the Dzongkhag to develop this Action Plan. The support of the Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB), Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators (ABTO), Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) and Bhutan Sustainable Tourism Society (BSTS) has been invaluable throughout the development of this destination plan. The personal commitment of Dr. Karma Tshering, as Consultant (EcoCall Consultancy Services), in producing this document is acknowledged with gratitude.

Once this Action Plan has been published, I look forward to the support and cooperation of all agencies within Bhutan and outside to accomplish the activities laid out herein to develop tourism in Chhukha. It will be a major contribution to improving the livelihood of the people in Chhukha and contribute to the happiness and prosperity of the Dzongkhag in years to come.

**Minjur Dorji**  
District Governor  
(Dzongdag)

# Acknowledgements

The Chhukha Dzongkhag Administration thanks the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), Nepal, the Nature Conservation Division (NCD) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, the Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB), the Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators (ABTO), the Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN), Gedu Forest Division and Bhutan Sustainable Tourism Society for their support in producing this document. We are indebted to Dr. Karma Tshering for sharing his expertise in drafting this Action Plan. We would also like to thank Dr. Anu Kumari Lama, ICIMOD, for the technical guidance and inputs to the draft document.

The efforts of Dr. Tashi Dorji and Dr. Nakul Chettri at ICIMOD led to the success of this important collaboration between ICIMOD, Nepal, NCD and Chhukha Dzongkhag. From the Dzongkhag side, Sr. Dzongrab Sherub Dorji and Sr. Economic Development Officer (EDO) Sangay Thinley coordinated the production of this document.

Lastly, we would like to thank the gups and gewog Administrative Officers of the 11 gewogs and all the stakeholders who contributed their inputs to the development of the Tourism Action Plan.

**Chhukha Dzongkhag Administration**

# Executive Summary

Tourism is considered vital for the success of many economies around the world. It has the power to boost revenues, create employment opportunities, develop the infrastructure of a country, incentivize the protection of the cultural and natural heritage, and promote goodwill between different countries. The extent of the reliance of economies on tourism has been further underscored during the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic in which the tourism sector has been one of the hardest hit throughout its value chain. Many countries nevertheless remain hopeful about international travel resuming in the near future so that economies can bounce back. While tourism matters, the need to scale up climate action also remains urgent for those in charge of developing the sector as emissions could rapidly rebound once tourism operations restart. Recognizing the multiple benefits that tourism development can offer, Bhutan too has been pursuing the development of the sector from the early 1970s. While tourism has had a significant impact on the country, its development still remains concentrated in only a few dzongkhags of the country. To change this trend and promote equitable distribution of tourists, the government is exploring various strategies to spread tourism development to all the dzongkhags of the country. Thus, the present 12<sup>th</sup> plan of the government has identified tourism as one of its flagship programs. Acknowledging the accelerated adverse changes in climate the tourism development programs and initiatives will adopt a low carbon pathway.

In accordance with the tourism development aspirations of the government, the Tourism Action Plan of Chhukha aims to promote responsible tourism that is economically, ecologically, culturally, and locally sustainable and fits into the overarching developmental vision of Gross National Happiness of the country. Chhukha Dzongkhag is endowed with several advantages for tourism development. These include its location in the western part of the country where the

maximum arrivals of visitors are concentrated, ease of accessibility both by air and land to all market sources, a preferable winter destination during periods that are considered off season for other western dzongkhags, and diversity of culture and nature-based products. The Dzongkhag has 11 gewogs. Although the tourism products are in general similar in all of them, there are also significant differences in the products among the gewogs that offer opportunities to develop unique selling propositions (USPs). Therefore, the objective is for each gewog to prioritize one USP so that collectively Chhukha can market a diversity of products and services that would enhance visitor experience and maximize opportunities for the locals while contributing toward low carbon tourism.

The Action Plan is designed under three strategic components.

### **Component 1: Planning and development of products and services**

To make Chhukha Dzongkhag a vibrant tourism destination, feasibility studies will need to be conducted to identify and develop appropriate products and services. Thus, unique products and activities will be explored in all the 11 gewogs of the Dzongkhag. The development of products and services will focus on promoting low carbon tourism under the overall guiding principles of sustainable tourism development.

### **Component 2: Promotion and marketing**

A suitable promotion and marketing strategy needs to be designed to inform the visitors about the tourism product on offer and highlight its most attractive and unique attributes in order to stimulate and motivate visitor interest. Appropriate marketing and promotional approaches will need to be considered for the different markets, among them, international, regional, expatriate and domestic markets.

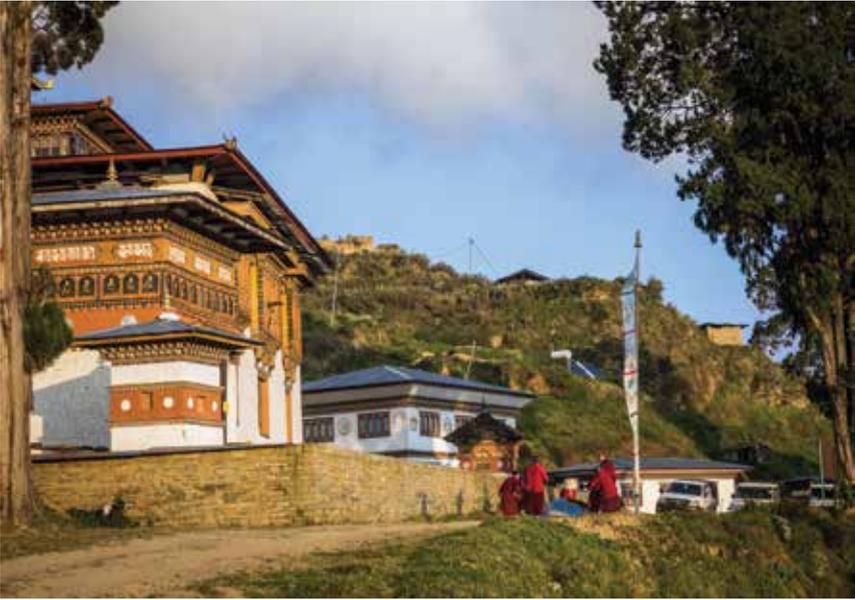
### Component 3: Management and sustainability

The Action Plan will guide the development of a good management system based on economic, ecological, cultural, and local sustainability. Thus, enhancing transparency, coordination, collective ownership and responsibility will be essential. Effective monitoring and evaluation systems need to be in place to safeguard the principle of sustainability and promotion of low carbon tourism.

Further, the Action Plan lays down the prerequisites that would be needed to achieve the above three strategic components. These requisites include the need for enabling policies and regulations that are conducive to promoting tourism and capacity development, fostering partnerships and enhancing coordination, and attracting investment opportunities and financial capacity.

The Action Plan is designed for a period of five years from 2021 to 2025. It is hoped that this period will be adequate to put in place the road map for Chhukha Dzongkhag to confidently navigate itself on the journey to sustainable tourism development and enhanced socio-economic, cultural, and environmental benefits.





# Part I:

## THE POWER OF TOURISM AND WHY IT MATTERS

### 1.1 Why Tourism?

Tourism is considered one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world. It has the power to offer immense opportunities for economic diversification even as it has wide-ranging impacts on societies and the environment. Representing 10% of the world GDP, 1 in 10 jobs and 7% of global exports, tourism matters<sup>1</sup> (see Figure 1). There is enough evidence to demonstrate that, if properly designed and managed, tourism can incentivize the preservation of the natural and cultural heritage, empower local host communities, be an economic engine for development, and foster peace and understanding. Considering the enormous opportunities that tourism offers, almost all the countries in the world have pursued its development. In line with this overall global interest, the Kanchenjunga Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative (KLCDI) of the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), the landscape of which encompasses parts of Bhutan, India and Nepal, has identified transboundary ecotourism as a means of redefining the opportunities that tourism provides for marginalized rural mountain communities<sup>2</sup>.

Regional cooperation on ecotourism provides opportunities for inclusive economic growth, connectivity, and mutual benefits that transcend national boundaries by collaboratively harnessing the tangible and intangible natural and cultural attributes and values of the landscape in partnership with diverse stakeholders. The geographical, natural,

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<sup>1</sup> UNWTO, 2017

<sup>2</sup> *Transboundary cooperation for mountain tourism in the Kangchenjunga Landscape* (Chettri et al. 2020)

Figure 1: **Global impacts of tourism and why it matters**



Source: UNWTO, 2017

cultural, economic, and political interdependency of destinations and communities within the Kanchenjunga Landscape highlights the need, scope and opportunities for transboundary ecotourism across the landscape<sup>3</sup>.

Acknowledging the power of tourism and the positive benefits it can offer, Bhutan aspires to embrace its development based on sustainability and its contribution toward the country's overarching developmental vision of Gross National Happiness.

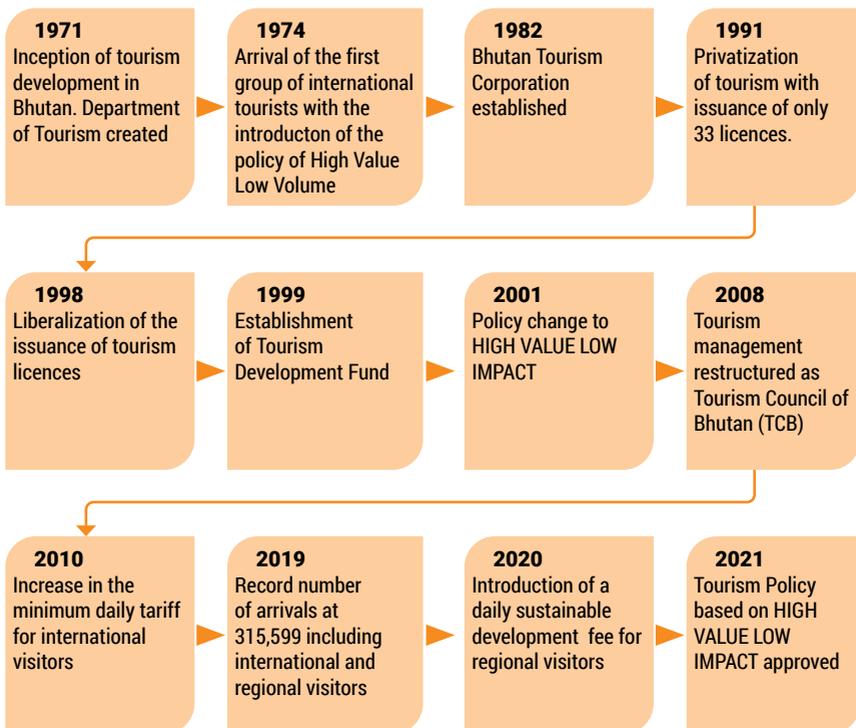
<sup>3</sup> <https://lib.icimod.org/record/34635>

## 1.2 Tourism Development in Bhutan

### Background

Bhutan opened its doors to international tourism in 1974 following the royal coronation of the fourth king. The first group of American tourists was brought into the country by the pioneer adventure operator Lars Eric Lindblad of Lindblad Travel based in New York. Since its inception, a model of tourism development stimulated by the unique, vibrant culture and rich natural environment of Bhutan has emerged as a prospective option to support the sustainable development aspirations of the country (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: **Key milestones in tourism development in Bhutan**



Bhutan, as a country destination, is a relative newcomer to the international tourism market. While international tourism officially commenced in 1971, it was only in 1991 that the operation of tours was privatized. Since then, tourist arrivals in the country have been increasing annually, starting at 287 visitors in 1974 to 315,599 in 2019 (see Table 1). Tourism has become a significant sector in the development of the country as the highest foreign exchange earner and the second highest revenue generator after hydro power. Equally significant is its potential to boost the economy of the country by providing direct employment opportunities besides other socio-economic and environmental benefits.

Table 1: **An overview of tourism operations in Bhutan for 2019 (TCB, BTM, 2020)**

<b>Foreign exchange earnings</b> – USD 88.65 m (an increase by 3.79%)	
<b>Direct revenue (SDF)</b> –USD 23.42 m (an increase by 3.49%)	
<b>Gross tourism receipts</b> –USD 345.88 m	
<b>Visitor arrivals</b> - 315,599 (an increase by 15%)	Average length of stay - 7 nights
Average expenditure	<b>Tourism enterprises</b>
<b>Trip expenditure</b> USD 1,354	Tour operators – 3,020
<b>Daily expenditure</b> USD 235	Guides – 4,600
	Hotels – 160
	Village home stays – 149
	Handicraft shops – approx. 300

Recognizing the benefits of tourism while also apprehensive about its adverse impacts, Bhutan has adopted a cautious policy based on the principle of ‘High Value, Low Volume’. It is in harmony with the country’s larger developmental framework of Gross National Happiness (GNH), accepted as an enhanced and broader strategy to measure a country’s development and success by the UN General Assembly in 2011 as part of the Millennium Development Goals. The policy affirms that tourism must be environmentally and ecologically friendly, socially and culturally acceptable, and economically viable. A landmark feature of the tourism

policy in Bhutan is a mandated daily tariff for all international tourists, who are required to pay a daily rate of USD 250 per person per night in the high season and USD 200 per person per night in the low season. Although the ‘High Value, Low Volume’ policy and tariff structure have been successful in creating an image of exclusivity for Bhutan, the Royal Government of Bhutan is keen to further capitalize on the potential of tourism to become a major pillar that supports not only economic benefits but also the country’s rich cultural and natural heritage.

The 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2018–2023) of the country has given further impetus to tourism growth by prioritizing it as one of the flagship programs of the Plan. The focus has been on promoting ecotourism<sup>4</sup> to address the diversity in geography and seasonality of the country. As Table 2 shows, arrivals have been increasing steadily for international visitors, which has been accompanied by a rapid surge in regional arrivals. The increase in visitor demand has made it imperative to strategize approaches to maximize the opportunities presented.

**Table 2: Tourists arrivals over the years (BTM, TCB)**

Year	International arrivals	Regional arrivals	Total arrivals
1974	287	*	287
1990	1,538	*	1,538
1995	4,765	*	4,765
2000	7,559	*	7,559
2005	13,626	*	13,626
2010	27,196	13,587	40,783
2011	36,765	27,263	64,028
2012	43,931	61,476	105,407
2013	52,783	63,426	116,209
2014	68,081	65,399	133,480
2015	57,537	97,584	155,121
2019	72,199	243,400	315,599

<sup>4</sup> While there are many definitions of “ecotourism”, the most commonly accepted definition coined by the International Ecotourism Society (TIES) in 1990 is “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of the local people.”

## Management and key agencies dealing with tourism development

The Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB) is the apex decision-making body in the government responsible for tourism development. It plays the role of facilitator, regulator and coordinator of tourism growth, thus highlighting the critical role played by the government in developing the sector. Considering the importance of tourism and its multiple sectors, TCB has gained more autonomy over the years in executing its operations and is not placed directly under any ministry. The secretariat is staffed by civil servants and is headed by a director. There are four Divisions – Marketing and Promotion Division, Infrastructure and Product Development Division, Services Division, and Quality Assurance Division. The secretariat reports directly to the Council chaired by the Foreign Minister and comprising the following members: Secretary, Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs; President, ABTO; President, Guides Association of Bhutan (GAB); President, HRAB; Founding President, BSTS; and two dzongdas selected on a rational basis to represent the six eastern dzongkhags and the Sarpang Dzongkhag in the south. The tenure of the Council members is 5 years. A Technical Advisory Committee has also been formed comprising relevant members from the government and private sector to provide advisory support to the Council.

As shown in Figure 3, the other relevant government agencies actively involved in tourism are the Agency for Promotion of Indigenous Crafts (APIC) under the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, the Department of Culture, and the Department of Immigration.

A brief history of the private sector associates in tourism is given below.

### ■ **Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators (ABTO)**

It was established in the year 2000 as a civil society organization (CSO) to represent the local tour operators and act as their official voice. Membership is voluntary. ABTO presently has close to 900 members out of a total of 3020 registered tour companies in the country. ABTO is

Figure 3: Some key tourism management agencies

<b>Government agencies</b>	<b>Tourism Council of Bhutan</b> <a href="https://www.tourism.gov.bt/">https://www.tourism.gov.bt/</a>
	<b>Department of Forests and Park Services</b> <a href="http://www.dofps.gov.bt/">http://www.dofps.gov.bt/</a>
	<b>Department of Culture</b> <a href="http://www.mohca.gov.bt/">http://www.mohca.gov.bt/</a>
	<b>Department of Immigration</b> <a href="http://www.mohca.gov.bt/">http://www.mohca.gov.bt/</a>
	<b>Agency for Promotion of Indigenous Crafts (APIC)</b> <a href="https://www.apic.org.bt/">https://www.apic.org.bt/</a>
<b>Private sector associates</b>	<b>Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators (ABTO)</b> <a href="http://www.abto.org.bt/">http://www.abto.org.bt/</a>
	<b>Hotel and Restaurant Association of Bhutan (HRAB)</b> <a href="https://www.hab.org.bt/">https://www.hab.org.bt/</a>
	<b>Guides Association of Bhutan (GAB)</b> <a href="http://www.gab.org.bt/">http://www.gab.org.bt/</a>
	<b>Handicrafts Association of Bhutan (HAB)</b> <a href="https://www.handicraftsbhutan.org/">https://www.handicraftsbhutan.org/</a>
	<b>Bhutan Sustainable Tourism Society (BSTS)</b> <a href="http://www.bhutantourismsociety.com/">http://www.bhutantourismsociety.com/</a>

run by a secretariat headed by an executive director and governed by a board consisting of 10 members elected for a period of three years by its members. The association actively engages in tourism development and strives to promote good practices and sustainability to add value to the growth of tourism.

- **Hotel and Restaurant Association of Bhutan (HRAB)**

HRAB is a confederation of hotels and restaurants from across the country. It was established in 2007 with the mission to represent the interests of its members and foster professional growth by uplifting the standards of hotels and contributing toward sustainable tourism development in the country. The secretariat is headed by an executive director and governed by a board of seven members.

- **Guides Association of Bhutan (GAB)**

Established in 2009 as the entity to represent the collective voice of the local tour guides in the country, its mission is both to represent the guides as well as to promote their professional growth. The secretariat is headed by an executive director and is governed by a 6-member board serving for a period of 3 years.

### ■ **Handicrafts Association of Bhutan (HAB)**

Recognizing the importance of traditional handicrafts and concerned over the observed phenomenon of dying crafts, the HAB was established in 2005. Its mission is to build an integrated, entrepreneurial and vibrant handicrafts sector in Bhutan actively supported by international and local stakeholders that would increasingly contribute to the creative, cultural and economic life of Bhutan. Its membership consists of individuals, organizations and institutions and comprises both associate and honorary members. The secretariat is headed by an executive director and is governed by an 8-member board.

### ■ **Bhutan Sustainable Tourism Society (BSTS)**

Recognizing that partnerships are critical in promoting sustainable tourism, BSTS was launched in 2018 by a group of like-minded volunteers. The rationale for its establishment is to promote coordination and harmony between the relevant tourism stakeholders. As an independent neutral body, it acts as a bridge between the various tourism bodies. The society aims to promote collective planning and management for tourism development in the country, serves as a think tank to help provide informed decisions, and promotes awareness and research to enhance the growth of sustainable tourism development in the country.

In addition to the above tourism sector associates, the Royal Society for the Protection of Nature (RSPN)<sup>5</sup> is also actively involved in promoting ecotourism. Established in 1987 as a citizen-based non-governmental organization (NGO), RSPN is the only local environmental NGO in the country. Over the years it has successfully evolved into a complementary partner of the government in the preservation of Bhutan's rich natural heritage. RSPN has played a pioneering role in promoting ecotourism, especially in the Phobjikha valley dedicated to the protection of the endangered migratory Black Necked Cranes that winter in parts of Bhutan. Tourism development remains an important program of the RSPN and it works with the local communities to promote sustainable livelihoods.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.rspnbhutan.org/>

## What attracts visitors to Bhutan?

Currently, the main attractions for tourists coming to Bhutan are the country's unique cultural heritage, ancient religious traditions, and pristine nature. The thriving practice of Buddhism combined with the pristine natural environment has captivated the imaginations of many visitors drawing a comparison between Bhutan and 'Shangri La.' The major attractions of the country are thus based on the two pillars of culture and nature. Further, the peace and stability that the country has enjoyed over the years owing to good governance under visionary and enlightened monarchs has helped cultivate an image of Bhutan as a model for happiness. These positive features, as shown in Figure 4, has enabled Bhutan to create Brand Bhutan positioning it as one of the top travel destinations in the world.

The overarching developmental vision based on GNH and the status of Bhutan as a carbon negative country have captivated the imagination of people around the world making them very keen to visit the country.

While the positive image and associated attractions appeal to visitors, it is in the interest of the country to continue developing tourism to further strengthen and enhance the attributes that go into the making of Brand Bhutan.

Figure 4: **Attributes that have contributed to creating Brand Bhutan**



## WHAT ARE THE MAJOR SOURCE MARKETS?

Visitor arrivals for both the international and regional categories have been increasing over the years as shown in Table 3. While the increase in international visitors has been gradual, there has been a rapid surge in regional visitors (namely, Indian, Bangladeshi and Maldivian nationals, as shown in Table 4). The surge in regional arrivals can be attributed to the open policy which exempts them from paying the minimum daily tariff. This exemption along with easy road access from India makes India the major source market. The major markets for international visitors are USA, China, Singapore, UK, Thailand, Germany, Australia and Japan.

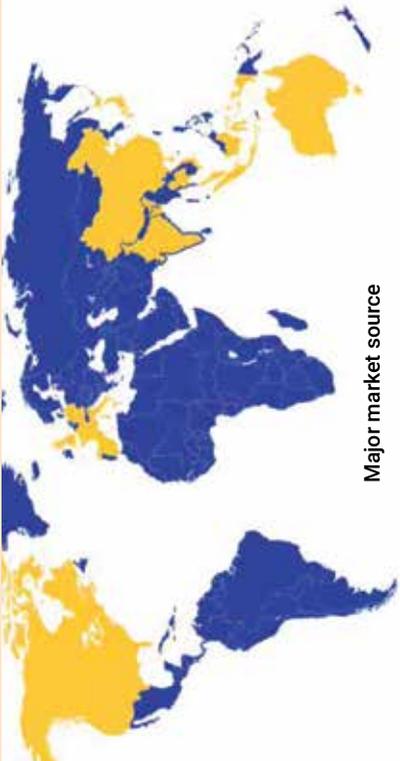
Table 3: **Visitor arrival trend (BTM, TCB, 2019)**

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Arrivals	105,407	116,209	133,480	155,121	209,570	254,704	274,097	315,599
% change		10.5	14.86	16.21	35.10	21.54	7.61	15.14



Table 4: **Visitor market source 2019 (BTM, TCB)**

<b>REGIONAL ARRIVALS</b>	
Country	Visitors
India	230,381
Bangladesh	13,016
<b>INTERNATIONAL</b>	
USA	11,707
China	7,564
Singapore	4,744
UK	4,241
Thailand	4,086
Germany	3,375
Australia	3,253
Japan	3,010
Malaysia	2,761
Vietnam	2,072
France	1,953
Canada	1,870
Spain	1,659
<b>OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES</b>	10,080
East Asian and Pacific countries	5,893
Other South Asian countries	1,892
Other American countries	1,519
Other Middle-eastern countries	314
Other African countries	309
<b>Total</b>	<b>315,599</b>



Major market source



## Part II:

# SCOPE OF TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN CHHUKHA DZONGKHAG

## 2.1 Background

Chhukha Dzongkhag, established in 1987, is located in the southwest of the country sharing a border with the dzongkhags (districts) of Samtse, Haa, Paro, Thimphu, Dagana, and Sarpang. It shares its international border in the south with India. The Dzongkhag spans an area the size of 1,879.32 sq. km with an elevation range from 160 to 4,480 meters (see Figure 5). The climate is mainly subtropical with hot and humid summers and cool and pleasant winters. As in the other parts of Bhutan, the people in the Chhukha Dzongkhag are mainly dependent on agriculture.

The Dzongkhag harbors some of the country's major economic projects: for example, the Chhukha hydropower project commissioned in 1988, and generating 336 MW of electricity, and the Tala hydropower project with an installed capacity

Figure 5: Chhukha Dzongkhag profile

<b>Geographical area:</b> 1,879.5 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Population:</b> 68,966 (2017)
a) Male: 36,041
b) Female: 32,925
<b>No. of dungkhags:</b> 1 (Phuentshogling)
<b>No. of gewogs:</b> 11
<b>No. of villages:</b> 123
<b>No. of households:</b> 12792
<b>Literacy rate:</b> 70.5 %
<b>Altitude range:</b> 160 – 4,480 meters
<b>Climate:</b> mainly subtropical with hot summers and pleasant winters
<b>Forest cover:</b> 85.77%
<b>Natural resource renewal centers:</b> 11
<b>Health centers:</b>
a) Hospital: 3
b) BHU: 14
c) ORC: 38
<b>Educational institutes:</b>
a) Tertiary institutes: 2
b) Public schools: 32
c) NFE centers: 23
d) Religious institutions: 8
<b>Tourist arrivals/bed nights (international):</b>
<b>2017</b> <b>2018</b> <b>2019</b>
3276/3605    2971/3141    2490/2768
<b>Major development projects:</b>
Chhukha hydro project
Tala hydro project

of 1020 MW commissioned in 2007. Further, some of the oldest industrial companies of Bhutan such as Bhutan Board Products Limited, established in 1982, and Bhutan Carbide Chemical Limited, established in early 1990s, are also in the Dzongkhag. Easy access through India has given it an opportunity to establish several industries at the border. Phuentshogling, which is the main town of Chhukha, shares its border with India. Adjacent to the Indian town of Jaigoan, Phuentshogling is the gateway to Bhutan and serves as a vital economic center for the western and central parts of the country. The Phuentshogling – Thimphu highway is the oldest in the country built in 1962. In 2018, the highway was improved and realigned making travel time shorter.

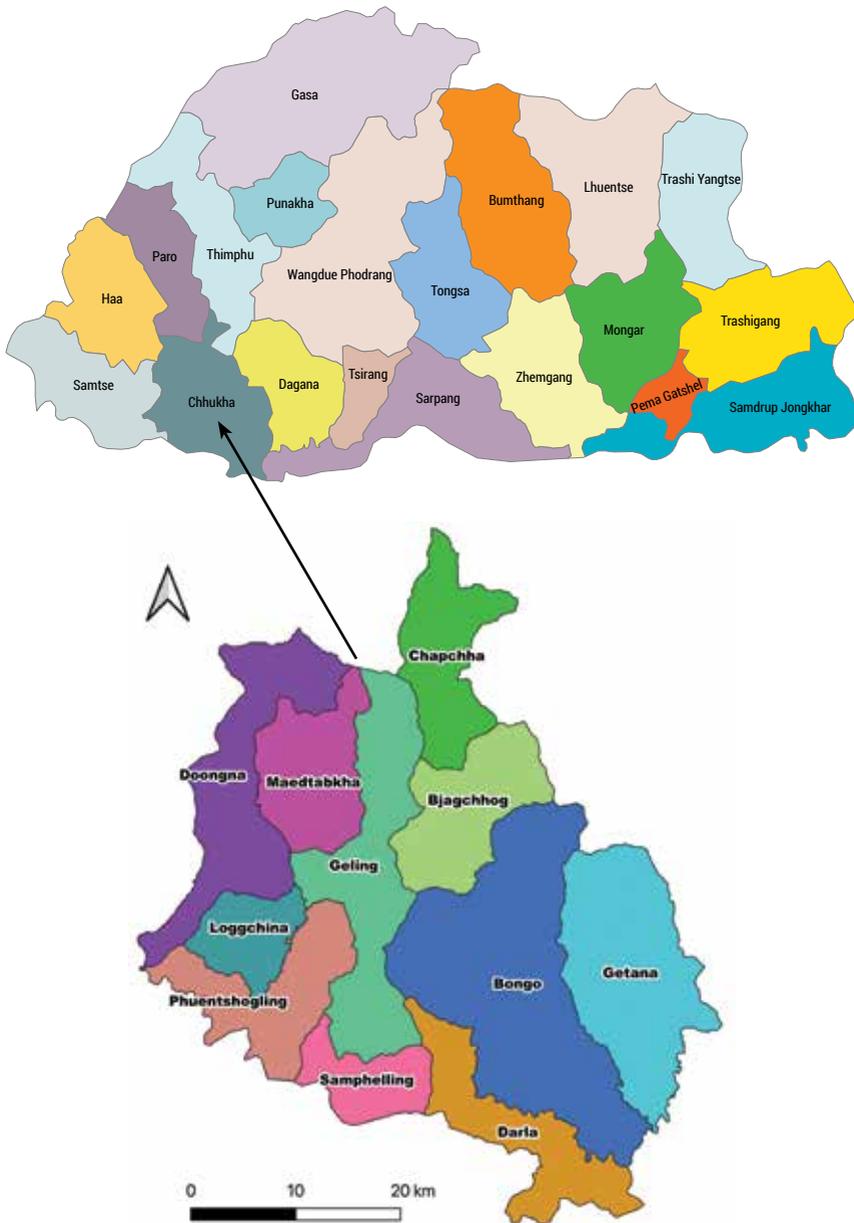
For administration purposes, Chhukha is divided into 11 gewogs, namely, Bjagchhog, Chapchha, Bongo, Darla, Doongna, Getana, Geling, Loggchina, Maedtabkha, Phuentshogling and Samphelling (refer to Figure 6). A profile of the gewogs is given in Table 5.

Table 5: **Profile of gewogs**

Gewog	Area km <sup>2</sup>	Population	H/H	Villages/chiwogs	Altitude in meters	Crops
1. Bjagchhog	140.6	1656	175	6/5	1400-400	Paddy Wheat Buckwheat Maize Millet Barley Mustard
2. Chapchha	112.6	3836	386	11/6	1590 - 2805	
3. Bongo	396	5850	700	15/6	2800-5000	
4. Doongna	165.5	1445	128	11/5	1100 - 2400	
5. Getana	214.9	1550	154	7/5	650 - 2000	
6. Geling	247	1206	135	11/5	500 - 2075	
7. Maedtabkha	100	873	96	6/5	1000-12000	
<b>Phuentshogling Dungkhag</b>						<b>Cash crops:</b>
8. Darla	139.7	8740	890	18/6	500 - 1800	Potatoes Cardamom
9. Loggchina	80.4	2854	365	12/5	600 - 1200	Ginger
10. Phuentshogling	135.8	3887	575	19/5	300 - 1500	Areca nut
11. Samphelling	73.0	3389	379	17/5	300 - 1200	Mandarin Vegetables

Source: BOIC 2015 report on resource inventory and business opportunity

Figure 6: **Chhukha location map and gewogs**



In the region, Chhukha, along with Samtse, Haa and Paro, fall within the Kanchenjunga Landscape (KL), one of the transboundary landscape initiatives identified and promoted by the ICIMOD in the Hindu Kush Himalayan Region. The KL stretches 25,081 km<sup>2</sup> across the western and southwestern parts of Bhutan (23%), the states of Sikkim and West Bengal in India (56%), and the eastern part of Nepal (21%). At the heart of the landscape lies Mount Kanchenjunga, the third highest peak in the world, that sustains vital Himalayan rivers and watersheds. Mount Kanchenjunga is considered sacred by local communities and is revered by Tibetan, Sikkimese and Kiranti people. Thus, promotion of mountain tourism within a scenario of transboundary cooperation offers scope for tourism development in Chhukha.

## 2.2 Socio-economic Development

Chhukha Dzongkhag has a comparative advantage as regards economic development against other dzongkhags because of the first national highway which passes through the Dzongkhag and its close proximity to the Indian border from where much of the supplies to the country originate. Further, a majority of the production industries are located in the Chhukha Dzongkhag. As shown in Table 6, Chhukha harbors 2,788 industries, second only to Thimphu. In addition, out of the six large hydro projects that have been commissioned to date, two, namely, Chhukha and Tala hydro power projects, are in the Chhukha Dzongkhag. While these indicators may give an impression of Chhukha as one of the most developed dzongkhags in the country, barring the town of Phuentshogling which is a bustling economic hub, the rest of the Dzongkhag still remains relatively backward. The overall poverty rate of the Dzongkhag stands at 3.5%, ranking 10th among the 20 districts in Bhutan, with the national poverty rate at 8.2% (NSB, 2017). The main source of livelihood is agriculture with over 70% of the population in the rural areas dependent on agriculture and livestock. The main agriculture products are cardamom, potato, ginger, mandarin, maize and areca nut<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> A resource inventory and business opportunity for CSI is under production for 178 manufacturing sectors (BOIC, 2015).

Table 6: **Number of industrial firms by scale and Dzongkhag**<sup>7</sup>

Dzongkhag	Total industries (includes cottage, small, medium and large)
Bumthang	764
Chhukha	2,788
Dagana	474
Gasa	99
Haa	343
Lhuentse	261
Mongar	874
Paro	1,927
Pema Gatshel	634
Punakha	683
Samdrup Jongkhar	938
Samtse	1,115
Sarpang	1,506
Thimphu	8,789
Trashigang	799
Trongsa	472
Tsirang	386
Wangdue Phodrang	933
Zhemgang	423
<b>Total</b>	<b>24,595</b>

Among these, potato gives the highest yield. Chhukha is the second highest producer of cardamom in the country after Sates. A large variety of vegetables too are produced under favorable climatic conditions. Some of the farming challenges are wildlife predation, disease, insufficient irrigation supply, and labor shortage.

In terms of the active workforce, Chhukha stands third among the 20 dzongkhags after Thimphu and Samtse (see Table 7). The total active workforce of 24,208 constitutes a resource for the Dzongkhag when it comes to socio-economic development.

<sup>7</sup> Department of Cottage and Small Industries, MoEA, Thimphu. As of 2019, Chhukha ranks as the second highest in the country after Thimphu.

**Table 7: Percentage distribution of economically active population by sex and Dzongkhag<sup>8</sup>**

Dzongkhag	Total	Sex (%)	
		Male	Female
Bumthang	7,115	47.2	52.8
Chhukha	24,208	62.6	37.4
Dagana	12,240	53.2	46.8
Gasa	1,372	50.6	49.4
Haa	6,349	51.7	48.3
Lhuentse	6,471	46.8	53.2
Mongar	18,159	49.2	50.8
Paro	21,681	50.1	49.9
Pema Gatshel	11,075	51.8	48.2
Punakha	11,958	50.0	50.0
Samdrup Jongkhar	15,571	53.6	46.4
Samtse	34,976	54.4	45.6
Sarpang	16,004	64.5	35.5
Thimphu	49,551	61.1	38.9
Trashigang	22,217	48.9	51.1
Trashi Yangtse	8,037	51.2	48.8
Trongsa	8,146	47	53
Tsirang	11,300	51.6	48.4
Wangdue Phodrang	18,224	52.3	47.7
Zhemgang	6,202	58.3	41.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>310,856</b>	<b>54.5</b>	<b>45.5</b>

## VISION AND MISSION OF THE DZONGKHAG

Considering the development opportunities presented by the Dzongkhag and recognizing the need to uplift the socio-economic conditions of the local residents, the Dzongkhag administration has framed its vision and mission as shown in Figure 7.

<sup>8</sup> Labour Force Survey Report, 2018, NSB. Chhukha ranks third after Thimphu and Samtse.

Figure 7: Vision and mission of Chhukha Dzongkhag

**Vision**

An economically prosperous dzongkhag with a cohesive society, vibrant culture, sound environment and balanced development

**Mission**

To provide a conducive environment for diversified economic activities for the well being of the people in the Dzongkhag

## 2.3 Opportunities for Tourism Development

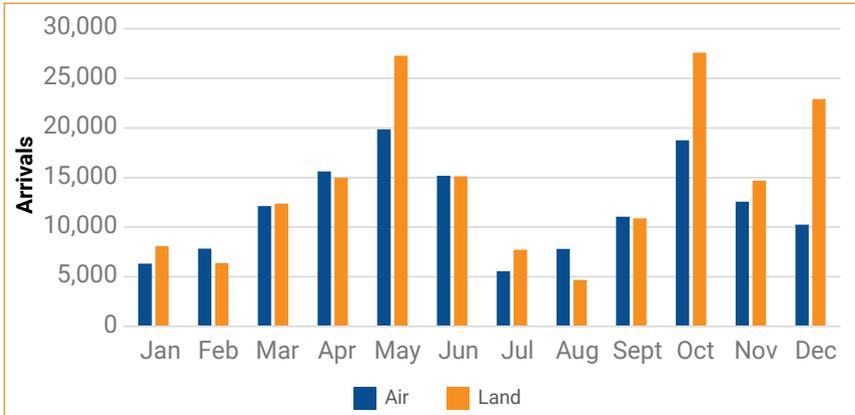
Chhukha Dzongkhag has several advantages over other dzongkhags with regard to tourism development. Some of the key advantages are as follows.

**Accessibility:** This is a key prerequisite for tourism development. Chhukha Dzongkhag is well placed in this regard because of the national highway, which runs through the Dzongkhag, and border with India. Phuentshogling offers the most popular overland entry/exit point for visitors. Of the total arrivals of 315,599 tourists in 2019 to the country, 142,928 came by air while the remaining 172,671 came by land as shown in Figure 8. Hence, a majority of arrivals (55%) used a land route. Almost all these visitors who arrived overland used Phuentshogling in Chhukha as the point of entry and exit. Besides arrivals by land, Chhukha is also accessible to arrivals by air due to its proximity to Paro International Airport. This ease of access gives a significant advantage to Chhukha in attracting arrivals from all market sources.

**Geographical location:** The positioning of Chhukha in close proximity to the western dzongkhags where the majority of the arrivals are concentrated serves as another big advantage. The arrival trends show that the western dzongkhags captured approximately 87%<sup>9</sup> of the total bed nights of international visitors for the year 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Data source: Bhutan Tourism Monitor, 2019, Tourism Council of Bhutan.

Figure 8: **Monthly arrivals by mode of transport**<sup>10</sup>



Source: BTM, TCB, 2019

**Seasonality:** The winter months are considered off season in Bhutan resulting in a lower number of arrivals in the country. However, the climatic condition of Chhukha, which offers pleasant winters, makes it a preferred winter destination among both local and international visitors. With the neighboring western dzongkhags considered too cold, Chhukha has the potential to market itself as a favorable alternative.

**Diverse offerings:** Like the other dzongkhags in Bhutan, Chhukha too offers opportunities to explore the unique cultural and natural heritage of Bhutan. The altitudinal range from 160m – 4,480m offers significant biological diversity with opportunities to experience diverse fauna and flora. Further, the warm climatic conditions make it suitable for diversifying organic agriculture products making it attractive for promoting agro-tourism which could supplement the development of a unique tourist experience.

Although there are plenty of opportunities as mentioned above, the Dzongkhag to date has not been able to capitalize on these benefits. This situation can be largely attributed to the fact that the Dzongkhag

<sup>10</sup> The graph demonstrates that there are visitors arriving overland year round either entering or exiting via Phuentshogling. This accessibility constitutes a big advantage for Chhukha dzongkhag.

has not given priority to promoting tourism. However, recognizing the multiple opportunities that tourism can offer for economic development, Chhukha Dzongkhag now aspires to take advantage of these prospects and initiate the development of tourism.

## 2.4 Situational Analysis of Tourism Development

A situational analysis of tourism development is provided using the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) method as shown by the figure 9. The SWOT analysis helps to understand the strengths that the Dzongkhag has in order to achieve the goals and objectives. Likewise, the weaknesses need to be identified so

Figure 9: SWOT analysis of tourism development in Chhukha

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
INTERNAL ATTRIBUTES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Commitment of the Dzongkhag administration to promote tourism;</li> <li>▪ Interest of local communities;</li> <li>▪ Ease of access via the national highway;</li> <li>▪ Altitudinal/climatic variation contributing to diversity of flora and fauna;</li> <li>▪ Cultural diversity;</li> <li>▪ Shared border with India making it easy to access the Indian market;</li> <li>▪ High number of youth and active workforce.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of skills, capacity and awareness on tourism development;</li> <li>▪ Lack of infrastructure and services;</li> <li>▪ Lack of proper tourism plan for guidance and development;</li> <li>▪ Lack of product development and strategy to retain tourists to visit the gewogs;</li> <li>▪ Lack of investment and funding;</li> <li>▪ Rural-urban migration of especially youth in search of employment opportunities.</li> </ul>
EXTERNAL CONDITIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ National interest in promoting tourism to support rural economic diversification;</li> <li>▪ High volume of regional tourists using overland entry/exit;</li> <li>▪ Proximity to Paro International Airport and the capital city of Thimphu;</li> <li>▪ Increasing interest in and demand from tourists for immersive experiences in rural and remote areas;</li> <li>▪ Geographical location in the western region, which sees maximum tourist arrivals;</li> <li>▪ Seasonal advantage of winter visitation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Higher concentration of transit/ short-stay tourists resulting in overcrowding in Phuentshogling;</li> <li>▪ Perceived security issues due to porous border with India;</li> <li>▪ Possibility of transmission of contagious diseases across the border, for example, in global pandemic situations like COVID 19;</li> <li>▪ Natural disasters such as landslides causing road blocks;</li> <li>▪ General perception that there are no worthwhile tourism activities/products in the Dzongkhag.</li> </ul>

that strategies can be put in place to either eliminate or curb the weaknesses. While opportunities from external conditions should be capitalized, threats too must be identified so that appropriate measures may be prepared for mitigation purposes.

“The trends in arrivals in the country, as seen in Table 8 below, suggest a rapid increase in regional tourists in recent years while the increase in international tourists has been marginal. Although over 95% of these regional arrivals used Phuentshogling to enter and exit the country, the benefits to the Chhukha Dzongkhag have been insignificant. Indeed, a comparison of the number of bed nights recorded vis-à-vis international arrivals show that the number for Chhukha is lower than that of many other dzongkhags in relation to their visitors. A case in point is Gasa Dzongkhag, which records a significantly high number of bed nights despite a fairly low number of visitors (see Table 9). This is largely attributed to the popular trekking routes in the Dzongkhag which are able to retain the visitors who arrive, thereby increasing the bed nights and the opportunities to maximize benefits. Thus, capitalizing on these high arrivals and working on strategies to retain the guests is important. This is where the challenge for Chhukha lies: With the increasing trend in arrivals, what needs to be done to keep at least some of them in the Dzongkhag. Besides the advantage of being geographically located in the west where the major arrivals are concentrated, the Dzongkhag also has the added advantage of a mild winter. This seasonal advantage would help Chhukha to attract visitors during a time-period where the other dzongkhags suffer from either more severe winters or longer distances to travel.

**Table 8: Tourists arrivals in the last five years (BTM, TCB)**

Arrivals	Years				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
International	57,537	62,773	71,417	71,807	72,199
Regional	97,584	146,797	183,287	202,290	243,400
<b>Total</b>	<b>155,121</b>	<b>209,570</b>	<b>254,704</b>	<b>274,097</b>	<b>315,599</b>

Table 9: **Comparisons of arrivals and bed nights of the Dzongkhags (BTM, TCB)**

Dzongkhag	2017		2018		2019	
	Arrivals	Bed nights	Arrivals	Bed nights	Arrivals	Bed nights
Paro	61,523	140,571	62,781	142,663	60,706	138,900
Thimphu	59,164	106,271	60,100	107,063	58,593	104,307
Punakha	51,831	73,179	53,555	75,355	53,904	77,443
Bumthang	11,321	28,942	11,636	30,137	11,950	30,580
W/Phodrang	17,781	26,333	19,581	28,998	20,529	30,090
Haa	5,225	6,727	6,615	8,095	5,751	7,233
Trongsa	5,956	6,548	5,864	6,614	5,364	5,934
Trashigang	1,886	3,408	2,374	4,489	2,648	5,616
Gasa	693	3,733	675	3,341	813	4,605
Mongar	2,036	3,124	2,600	4,404	2,593	3,808
Chhukha	3,276	3,605	2,971	3,141	2,490	2,768
S/Jongkhar	1,682	1,840	1,937	2,144	1,721	1,981
T/Yangtse	705	894	820	1,031	1,031	1,411
Lhuentse	385	990	594	1,120	761	1,215
Zhemgang	259	702	332	931	346	915
Sarpang	284	403	231	309	263	396
Pema Gatshel	71	199	122	250	96	175
Tsirang	27	33	68	91	74	107
Dagana	10	15	24	37	30	67
<b>Total</b>	<b>224,115</b>	<b>407,517</b>	<b>232,880</b>	<b>420,213</b>	<b>229,663</b>	<b>417,551</b>

The Table clearly indicates that the number of bed nights to visitors is low in the Chhukha Dzongkhag compared to the other dzongkhags.

Nevertheless, tourism, when well-planned and managed, has the potential not only to increase revenue but also act as a positive force to safeguard cultural traditions and natural heritage. Local participation is crucial in achieving this balance as tourism growth can inspire local people to act as custodians of precious cultural and natural resources as experience worldwide shows. Therefore, to maximize the potential social and economic benefits in Bhutan, a high degree of local

participation and engagement and a strong tourism marketing and product development plan is critical.

Considering the immense opportunities that tourism offers for sustainable development and the potential that is available within the Chhukha Dzongkhag, the management has accorded priority to its development and promotion.

## 2.5 Challenges

While the challenges are many when initiating a tourism development plan, some of the important ones that need to be addressed on a priority basis in Chhukha are as follows.

**Low priority given to tourism development:** Although Chhukha receives a significant portion of the tourist arrivals in the country, it is not recognized yet as a tourist destination but only as a transit point. This tendency to see Chhukha as a transit point needs to be changed. In view of Chhukha's evident tourism potential, it is necessary to mainstream tourism development within the Dzongkhag's development plan and promote Chhukha as an attractive travel destination.

**Low visitor night halts:** The reason for this is the absence of tourism promotion. This leads visitors to regard Chhukha more as a transit point, which in turn leads to the low bed nights that it records. A comparison of the number of total visitor arrivals and the number of bed nights shows that the Chhukha Dzongkhag records the lowest number of bed nights. For example, take the case of Gasa Dzongkhag. While the visitor arrival figures for 2019 show Gasa with only 813 arrivals, it records 4,605 bed nights whereas Chhukha, whose visitor arrival figures for 2019 are 2,490, which is almost three times that of Gasa, records only 2,768 bed nights, almost half that of Gasa (Table 9). Thus, given the natural advantage of high visitor numbers traveling through the Dzongkhag, a strategy should be devised to capitalize on this and arouse visitor interest in traveling to the rural areas of the Dzongkhag. For this, products and activities will have to be developed to interest visitors in spending more nights in Chhukha.

**Perceived border threat:** The open porous border with India, while offering opportunities, has also acted as a constraint due to perceived security threats. This prevents the local communities from capitalizing on business opportunities. Whether perceived or actual, the threat to security can be addressed through activities like tourism that would keep inhabitants gainfully employed and prevent them from abandoning their areas of residence. But favorable policies and regulations are needed to facilitate development of tourism in the area, which would in turn indirectly contribute to resolving the other issues of concern.

**Engaging the youth and capacity building:** Rural-urban migration is a national concern. This is on the rise because the youth lack both the skills and the interest to get involved in farming-related activity in their villages. However, urban areas do not necessarily provide alternative avenues for gainful employment as there, too, employment opportunities are scarce. Thus, there is an urgent need to elevate agriculture-based livelihoods beyond subsistence and to approach them from a business viewpoint. Building entrepreneurial skills, practicing high value cropping, having access to markets, and boosting tourism opportunities would encourage the youth to work at their traditional livelihoods in rural surroundings as well as instill pride in them and appreciation for the same. As shown in Table 7, Chhukha Dzongkhag is only second to Thimphu Dzongkhag in terms of the number of men and women in the active workforce. This remains an untapped resource to be utilized.

**Strengthening partnerships:** Since tourism is multidimensional, it cannot be promoted by the Dzongkhag authorities alone. It will instead need the active participation and concerted efforts of all relevant stakeholders, both public and private. Building effective partnerships is vital to overcome constraints and to maximize benefits through combined efforts. The Dzongkhag management will need to improve its networking strategies to strengthen its collaboration efforts and partnerships. The private sector in particular needs to be encouraged to participate in tourism ventures.

**Enhancing investments and private sector engagement:** Tourism is largely driven by the private sector. This makes their participation vital for investment in product development and service provision. The Dzongkhag authorities will need to liaise with the relevant government authorities to create enabling regulations to encourage the participation of investors and private entrepreneurs.



## Part III:

# THE ACTION PLAN



### 3.1 Guiding Principles for Tourism Development

Chhukha Dzongkhag aspires to develop tourism not only for economic benefits but also to promote socio-cultural preservation and protection of the cultural and natural heritage. Thus, the approach to tourism development in Chhukha will be in line with the national objectives of pursuing tourism development based on the principles of sustainable tourism. This will mean that its development must ensure effective sustainable planning and management, maximizing social and economic benefits for the local host communities, enhancing the cultural heritage, and reducing negative impacts on the natural environment. The principles of sustainable tourism bear a strong affinity to the overarching developmental vision of GNH as reflected in Figure 10. Thus, to ensure coherence with national objectives, tourism in the region will have to be developed keeping the principles of sustainability in mind.

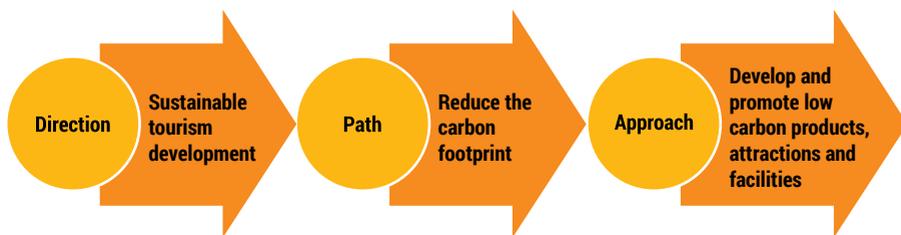
Figure 10: **Affinity between the principles of GNH and sustainable tourism**



Further, considering that Bhutan is a carbon negative country and that tourism will be developed under the overarching principles of sustainable tourism, priority should be placed on promoting low carbon tourism. Accordingly, in line with the image of Brand Bhutan, the path to tourism development too will commit to reducing the carbon footprint as shown in Figure 11<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>11</sup> Modified from the article by Huang Can and Deng Hongbing on "The model of developing low-carbon tourism in the context of leisure economy", 2011, available online at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

Figure 11: **Guiding principles for tourism development**



## **DESTINATION VISION**

The long-term vision for tourism development in Chhukha will be guided by the principles of sustainable tourism. Therefore, based on these principles and in keeping with the overall national interest, the Tourism Action Plan for Chhukha shall endeavor to achieve the following objectives:

**TO DEVELOP** high value tourism by delivering enriching experiences through unique, authentic and quality services;

**TO PROMOTE** low impact by minimizing negative socio-cultural and environmental impacts through promotion of good practices, safeguards and standards;

**TO DELIVER** tangible benefits to host communities, nature conservation and cultural preservation; and

**TO IMPART** education and awareness to visitors and hosts so that they understand, appreciate and support the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage.

To achieve the above objectives, the Action Plan has been developed based on three strategic components as shown below.

Component I Destination planning and product development	Component II Destination promotions and marketing	Component III Destination management and sustainability
		
		

### 3.2 Prerequisites to Support the Strategic Components

While the plan of action will be elaborated under three strategic components, there are bound to be cross cutting common issues that will have general applicability for the activities to be undertaken. These issues will, directly or indirectly, impact the strategic components. Hence, it is imperative that these issues be taken into consideration and addressed for successful implementation of the Action Plan. These issues can be considered as prerequisites when achieving the three strategic components of the Action Plan.

- Enabling policies and regulations: Tourism growth relies on enabling and conducive policies to enhance and promote responsible tourism development. As tourism development is largely driven by the private sector, the policies and regulations need to be favorable to stimulate their participation. Existing policies and regulations may need to be reviewed and framed accordingly to encourage and suit the development of tourism. Equally imperative is the need for effective translation of the policies on the ground.

- **Capacity development:** As tourism is a service sector, having the appropriate knowledge and skills is necessary. Capacity building at all levels of tourism development is, therefore, vital. These levels include planning, product development, marketing, visitor management, and overall destination management and sustainability. Capacity building, moreover, needs to be all inclusive. Hence, the awareness and capacity of Dzongkhag and gewog officials, local communities, women and youth, and local entrepreneurs need to be built. The lack of adequate knowledge and know-how will pose a challenge in product development, providing quality services, and achieving sustainability. Furthermore, awareness and skills enhancement of those involved in tourism from a safety, health and hygienic standpoint has also become necessary in light of the current pandemic and the lessons it offers for such future global health crises.
- **Fostering partnerships and enhancing coordination:** Tourism as a multidimensional sector involves people from different walks of life. Policy makers, public officials, hoteliers, food suppliers, tour operators, guides, transporters, local communities and private entrepreneurs are all engaged in tourism in one way or the other. Therefore, fostering partnerships among the relevant stakeholders is critical for maximizing benefits and increasing sustainability. Institutional mechanisms need to be built to encourage partnerships. As emphasized by the government, it is important to focus on the 3Cs – Collaboration, Coordination and Consolidation.
- **Financial capacity and attracting investment opportunities:** Whether it is to build capacity, create infrastructure, or develop products, funds will be required. Therefore, investment opportunities need to be encouraged through local internal sources or foreign direct investments. The two hydro power projects – the Chhukha and Tala hydro projects – which generate substantial revenue for the country, constitute a potential investment opportunity for Chhukha. Although the projects are under the control of the national government and not the local administration of the Dzongkhag, since they are located in the Chhukha Dzongkhag, they could be approached for funds to

support the implementation of the Tourism Action Plan as part of their corporate social responsibility on behalf of the communities of Chhukha Dzongkhag. Similarly, the industrial projects located in the Dzongkhag could be requested to extend their support as well. Considering the significant volume of regional visitor arrivals through Phuentshogling, a mechanism could be devised to allocate a certain percentage of revenue earnings from permit royalty to be plowed back to the development of tourism in Chhukha Dzongkhag. The Dzongkhag administration should explore and pilot possible avenues through which to secure and generate revenue to enhance the financial capacity to sustain tourism growth. Engaging the private sector in management is also an option whereby certain trails, attractions, and events could be handed over to private investors, NGOs, schools and other agencies for adoption. Such a mechanism would not only reduce the burden on the Dzongkhag administration for maintaining those resources but also cater to better service and upkeep of those products.

### 3.3 Strategic Components

#### **STRATEGIC COMPONENT I: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF PRODUCTS AND SERVICES**

Keeping in mind that tourism is an opportunity for economic diversification, it needs to be approached as a means to complement and support other livelihood options and not as a replacement. Local communities regard tourism favorably primarily because of its economic benefits. However, the delivery of these benefits should not place the natural and socio-cultural resources at risk. Therefore, planning must be holistic with the aim of achieving the overall objectives of not only economic benefits but also, equally importantly, environmental and cultural benefits. It must be kept in mind that tourism is not a panacea for all ills. Indeed, it carries its own pitfalls. Thus, feasibility studies need to be conducted in selected areas to understand its viability taking into consideration cultural and ecological sensitivities at stake. Involving the resident local community is imperative at the planning stage so that they become aware of and interested in

promoting its development. While their interest may be mainly driven by economic need, they need to be actively engaged in understanding the larger context in which tourism operates. Understanding will empower and encourage them to take ownership of and responsibility for implementation and management. Viable product development and identification of attractions to promote visitation also need to be undertaken.

What is meant by a tourism product? A tourism product is the set of assets and services that are organized around one or more attractions in order to meet the needs of visitors<sup>12</sup>. The key ingredients of a tourism product consist of an attraction that awakens the visitor’s interest and motivates his/her action, facilities and services that make the tourism activity possible, and accessibility to the destination (see Figure 12).

What is important is a holistic delivery of the visitor experience. It should include the attractions, accommodations, services, people, food, tours, transportation, weather and activities. Therefore, in developing tourism products, it is important to deliver on visitors’ expectations regarding the whole experience. This means not only focusing on the particular product or event but all other services and accompanying paraphernalia. This is where opportunities for engagement and participation become available leading to increase in benefits for the participating communities. The role of the Dzongkhag administration and other tourism authorities like the TCB should be to facilitate tourism development while the private sector is given the opportunity to participate, develop and deliver the services.

Figure 12: **Three basic ingredients of tourism product development**



<sup>12</sup> The International Labour Office, Toolkit for poverty reduction through tourism. Module 3 Promotion and Marketing of Tourism. October 2012.

Further, in developing products, those in charge must be aware of the global trends in traveler motivations. For example, visitor interest is changing from “sightseeing” to “sight doing”. They are looking for immersion opportunities with the host communities and are, increasingly, in search of authentic experience.

To diversify products and promote authentic and unique experiences, the Tourism Council of Bhutan (TCB) has developed the Bhutan Tourism Product Development Guidelines as shown in Figure 13. The guidelines have classified the products under culture; nature and ecotourism; adventure; spiritual and wellness; meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE); sports; and other products, which

Figure 13: **Basic principles of product development as per the guidelines of TCB**

### Basic principles of product development (TCB, 2018)

- The development of tourism products to uphold and contribute to realizing the aspirations of GNH.
- According importance to the key principles of sustainable tourism development, which require products to be:
  - authentic and indigenous, reflecting the unique attributes of the destination;
  - community friendly;
  - responsible toward the natural and socio-cultural environments;
  - or
  - innovative with value addition.
- Giving consideration to basic market research while developing proposals.
- Complementing tourism circuits, zones or clusters of attractions through:
  - highlighting the strengths of each region; and
  - equitable distribution of the socio-economic benefits of tourism among the community.

may be reclassified as and when required. The guidelines also specify prohibited products such as mountaineering (i.e., scaling any mountain with a height over 6000 masl), game hunting, prostitution and gambling.

Globally, market trends indicate visitor interest in discovering authentic local foods and crafts. Considering the variety of organic vegetables, fruits, crops, and natural breeds of livestock, many of the gewogs have the opportunity to offer unique gastronomic experiences. Traditional art, crafts and folklore can also be revived to further enhance visitor experience and community benefits.

As the attractions in all the 11 gewogs of Chhukha Dzongkhag may contain some similarities, identifying a unique selling proposition (USP) for each of the gewogs to create a niche so that visitors would be stimulated to spend more time to explore and experience each gewog becomes a priority. If the all the gewogs invested in similar products, visitors would not show any interest in venturing out beyond the most accessible gewogs. Thus, a key question in product development must be approached from the perspective of 'why my gewog'. What is the unique product/activity that my gewog has that would interest and attract visitors? Figure 14 presents general guidelines regarding the possible USP of each of the gewogs.

Some of the key agencies supporting the development of tourism products are the TCB, APIC, HAB, and ABTO. The Dzongkhag and gewog authorities need to engage with these key tourism agencies.

Eventually the development of the products and services must adhere to the overall principle of sustainable tourism that adopts a path of low carbon tourism.

## **STRATEGIC COMPONENT II: PROMOTIONS AND MARKETING**

A promotion and marketing strategy needs to be designed to inform the visitors about the tourism product offered and to highlight its unique and attractive attributes in order to stimulate and motivate the interest of the potential visitor. Unlike other rural businesses where the product has to be marketed outside the village, tourism offers an ideal opportunity where the market can be brought to the product. The market, in the case

Figure 14: **USPs for tourism attractions of the 11 gewogs of Chhukha**



of tourism, is the tourists and they come to the village, in the process offering several economic and entrepreneurial prospects, either directly or indirectly, to the villagers. Therefore, promotions and marketing are vital for tourism development.

The overall positive image of the country has positioned Bhutan as one of the top travel destinations in the world. Branding is important for promotions and Bhutan has woven its brand around the concept of GNH and other unique attributes making it attractive and inspiring for visitors.

While the visitors are attracted to Bhutan, Chhukha Dzongkhag is faced with the challenge of attracting visitors to Chhukha instead of other places in Bhutan. Why Chhukha? Thus, a brand needs to be developed to enable Chhukha to differentiate itself from the other dzongkhags of Bhutan. A captivating slogan/tagline needs to be developed to boost the brand. Being located in the west of the country where arrivals are the highest and supported by ease of accessibility, Chhukha has a big advantage, enabling it to benefit from all segments of the market, i.e., regional, international, domestic and expatriate.

Considering the nature of tourism operations in Bhutan where all tours are operated through local tour operators, it is also vital to recognize their key role in tourism development. The tourism study for Chhukha Dzongkhag has actively involved members from the TCB and the Association of Bhutanese Tour Operators from the inception stage. The Dzongkhag must continue working through them to support promotions and marketing. Familiarization tours is one effective way of getting tour operators and other relevant people on the site to explore the product and establishing networks and partnerships between the rural communities and the tourism agencies. In this age of digital technology, using e-marketing for tourism promotion should also be considered. Creating appropriate web links, social media posts, blogs etc., would also be useful. Development of brochures and distributing them at strategic locations and events too would help boost promotions. Considering that there are four categories of markets in Bhutan, i.e., international, regional, expatriate and domestic, the marketing strategy for tourism should be developed accordingly.

### **STRATEGIC COMPONENT III: MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY**

Tourism sustainability is reliant on good planning and management. As such, it is critical to have the necessary mechanisms and systems in place to ensure proper management. Enhancing transparency, effective coordination, and collective ownership and responsibility are therefore essential. Some of the ways to achieve these are:

**Formation of a tourism management committee:** A management committee needs to be instituted in the Dzongkhag with representation from the relevant stakeholders. The committee should have clear roles and responsibilities and show accountability for tourism development in the Dzongkhag. The tourism management committee can be part of an existing committee in the Dzongkhag if a similar committee already exists. Likewise, a Gewog tourism committee too needs to be established. As shown in the Figure 15, the tourism management structure will consist of three levels – National, Dzongkhag and Gewog. A clear line of communication and coordination must be established between the three levels.

**Creating platforms for coordination:** The driving force in sustainable tourism is partnerships between all relevant stakeholders. Recognizing the importance of coordination, it is vital to create platforms for opportunities to strengthen partnerships. Periodic meetings, workshops, etc., should be planned by the Dzongkhag with good representation from the relevant stakeholders.

Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation is an essential part of planning and management for, without it, there is no way of knowing the progress made toward objectives and their impacts which is fundamental for achieving sustainability. As such, an effective monitoring system needs to be developed and implemented. Monitoring refers to the process to regularly observe and check the progress of something over a period of time using indicators. Monitoring should not be perceived as the

Figure 15: **Tourism management structure**



\* These include relevant government/private agencies, local NGOs, international NGOs, donors, etc.

responsibility of the national agencies but should be regarded as falling within the purview of the Dzongkhag and local authorities. A systematic monitoring process needs to be established to which the relevant agencies will be required to report and be accountable. Monitoring can be included among the roles and responsibilities of the Dzongkhag and gewog tourism management committees while periodic evaluation can be conducted by an external agency.

A good management system should ultimately contribute toward sustainability at the economic, ecological, cultural, and local levels (see Figure 16). While there are many guidelines developed, the Plan presents below a summary adopted from Bob McKercher<sup>13</sup>.

Figure 16: **Attributes of tourism sustainability – harmony of ecology, culture, economy and local community**



<sup>13</sup> Bob McKercher, 2003 (Nov 5-9). Seminar presentation on sustainable tourism development, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

**Economic sustainability** – development that is profitable in both the immediate and long term

- Forming partnerships throughout the entire supply chain from micro-sized local businesses to multinational organizations;
- Using internationally approved and reviewed guidelines for training and certification;
- Promoting ethical and environmentally conscious behavior among clients;
- Diversifying the products by developing a wide range of tourist activities;
- Contributing some of the income generated toward assistance in training, ethical marketing and product development; and
- Providing financial incentives for businesses to adopt sustainability principles.

**Ecological sustainability** – development that is compatible with the maintenance of essential ecological processes, biological diversity and biological resources

- Establishing codes of practice for tourism at all levels;
- Establishing guidelines for tourism operations, impact assessment and monitoring of cumulative impacts;
- Formulating national, regional and local tourism policies and development strategies that are consistent with the overall objectives of sustainable development;
- Instituting baseline environmental impact assessment studies;
- Ensuring that the design, planning, development and operation of facilities incorporate sustainability principles;
- Ensuring that tourism in protected areas, such as national parks, is incorporated into and subject to sound management plans;
- Monitoring and conducting research on the actual impacts of tourism;
- Identifying unacceptable behavior among tourists; and
- Promoting responsible tourism behavior.

**Cultural sustainability** – development that increases people’s control over their lives and is compatible with the culture and values of those affected and strengthens community identity.

- Initiating tourism with the help of broad-based community input;
- Establishing education and training programs to improve and manage heritage and natural resources;
- Conserving cultural diversity;
- Respecting the land and property rights of traditional inhabitants;
- Guaranteeing the protection of nature, local and indigenous cultures and, especially, traditional knowledge;
- Working actively with indigenous leaders and minority groups to ensure that indigenous cultures and communities are depicted accurately and with respect;
- Strengthening, nurturing and encouraging the community’s abilities to maintain and use traditional skills;
- Educating tourists about desirable and acceptable behavior; and
- Educating the tourism industry about desirable and acceptable behavior.

**Local sustainability** – development that is designed to benefit local communities and retain income in those communities

- Ensuring that the community maintains control over tourism development;
- Providing quality employment to community residents through tourism;
- Encouraging businesses to minimize negative effects on local communities and contribute positively to them;
- Ensuring an equitable distribution of financial benefits throughout the entire supply chain;
- Providing financial incentives for local businesses to enter tourism; and
- Improving local human resource capacity.

### 3.4 Activities and Budget

#### STRATEGIC COMPONENT I: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

##### Product 1: Development of trekking trails

Trekking offers a great opportunity for visitors to explore the natural and cultural wonders of a place while, at the same time, naturally extending the duration of the visitor stay and, thereby, increasing potential benefits for host communities. The plan proposes seven trekking routes spread over seven of the 11 gewogs in the Dzongkhag. The diversity and historical significance of these routes have the potential to make these trails an attractive choice for visitors. As these trails are presently used by the locals, they are in relatively good condition. In addition to these seven trails, other short, day-hike trails will also be identified in the vicinity of the villages. Funding support and private sector involvement to provide services and maintenance will further enhance the visitor experience and community benefits.

Trek name and route	No of days	Primary beneficiary gewog	Time frame*			Estimated budget (Nu.m)
			Short-term (2021)	Mid-term (2022-2023)	Long-term (2024-2025)	
Feasibility study of the trail from Chapchha to Bjagchhog through Gewa Ringa Ney and Tari Zomsa ending at Menchu at Bjagchhogg village. This can be also linked to the trail from Dagala to Chapchcha.	1	Bjagchhog	√			0.20
Feasibility study for development of the ancient route from Tsimalakha and Bjagchhog village	1	Bjagchhog		√		0.10
Feasibility study of the trail from Ketokha via Geduphu to Baeyulkuenzang ending at Jigmechu (forest proposal with high conservation value)	3	Bongo		√		0.20

Trek name and route	No of days	Primary beneficiary gewog	Time frame*			Estimated budget (Nu.m)
			Short-term (2021)	Mid-term (2022 -2023)	Long-term (2024-2025)	
Development of Phaktshoding lake hiking and cycling trail	1	Bongo	✓			5.00
Development of the Dagala to Chapchha trek offering encounters with nomads and mountain vistas	2	Chapchha		✓		3.00
Feasibility study of heritage trail from Jabana (Paro) to Phuentshogling	3	Doongna Maedtabkha Loggchina		✓		0.20
Feasibility study of the Shawgayla trek	2	Geling	✓			0.20
Feasibility study of the ancient route from Toktogom via Getala to Daga	3	Getana		✓		0.20
Feasibility study of Gata to Jigmechu trek	2	Getana		✓		0.20
Identification and feasibility study of day-hiking trails		All gewogs		✓		0.60
<b>Sub-total</b>						<b>9.90</b>

\*In the time frame, short-term refers to the first year (2021), mid-term refers to the second and third years (2022 – 2023), and long-term refers to the fourth and last years (2024 – 2025).

## Product 2: Development of nature-based recreational activities

The abundance of forest cover and rapid variation in elevation has contributed to the rich biodiversity in Chhukha offering immense opportunities for nature-based recreational activities. Although there is significant potential for developing nature-based activities in Bhutan, it has not been fully tapped yet. Some areas that offer nature-based activities are challenging due to distance. Chhukha, on the contrary, is perfectly placed to offer visitors the convenience of easy access to enjoyment of nature and its ecological diversity. These nature-based recreational activities can be harnessed to enhance visitor experience, provide benefits to local communities, and contribute to the conservation of nature.

Activity	Primary beneficiary gewog	Time frame			Estimated budget (Nu.m)
		Short-term 2021	Mid-term 2022-23	Long-term 2024-25	
Feasibility consultations for developing hydro power tourism	Bjagchhog, Geling		✓		0.10
Feasibility study and development of rafting from Gengu/Yagang to Jigmechu	Bongo		✓		5.00
Feasibility study/development of bird and wildlife watching from Jigmechu to Zamsa	Chapchha		✓		1.00
Development of cycling along the old national highway from Watsa to Chhukha	Chapchha		✓		0.5
Feasibility study of Orchid Park (Gedu) development	Bongo			✓	0.10
Development of captive fishery on stretches of river and fish farm at Sarphu	Darla				0.50
Planning and development of organic farming at Chanachen	Geling		✓		1.00
Development of mushroom cultivation as visitor attraction	Bjagchhog	✓			3.00
Feasibility study of birdwatching along Shawgayla trail	Geling	✓			0.50
Feasibility study/development of bird watching from Gata to Pangserla and Dorona in Dagana	Getana		✓		0.10
Development and promotion of rafting from Lingden to Phuentshogling	Phuentshogling		✓		5.00
Feasibility study/development of captive fishing on river stretches along Amochu.	Phuentshogling		✓		0.50
Development and promotion of Burkhay recreation activities.	Samphelling		✓		1.00
Development and promotion of Singye recreation activities.	Samphelling		✓		1.00
<b>Sub-total</b>					<b>18.80</b>

### Product 3: Development and enhancement of culture-based activities

The integration of the northern and southern people within one Dzongkhag makes Chhukha one of the most culturally diverse in Bhutan. One of the major attractions for visitors to Bhutan is the unique vibrant culture. Chhukha, as a multi-cultural Dzongkhag, has the potential to offer diverse cultural experiences to visitors and thereby cater to the different tastes and requirements of visitors. Traditional folklore, arts and crafts, agricultural practices, gastronomy and ancient festivals are among those that can be revived and developed through tourism.

Activity	Primary beneficiary gewog	Time frame			Estimated budget (Nu.m)
		Short-term 2021	Mid-term 2022-23	Long-term 2024-25	
Development of hot stone bath at Tadolum in Bjagchhog village and village home stay	Bjagchhog	√			1.00
Development of Meritsemoney	Bongo	√			1.00
Development of Jigmechune y	Bongo	√			1.00
Development and promotion of Dokhachu Goenpa	Chapchha		√		0.50
Development and promotion of Tumdrak ney	Darla			√	0.50
Feasibility study on cattle herders' life experiences	Geling	√			0.50
Development of Menchu and Khechu	Maedtabkha		√		1.00
Development of Mahakal Dham	Phuentshogling		√		2.00
<b>Sub-total</b>					<b>7.50</b>

### Product 4: Development of facilities and amenities

While nature- and culture-based activities will be identified and developed, they need to be supported with the necessary facilities and amenities for enjoyment. These service provisions will offer opportunities for enhancing the economic benefits to local communities even as they enrich visitor experience.

Activity	Primary beneficiary gewog	Time frame			Estimated budget (Nu.m)
		Short-term 2021	Mid-term 2022-23	Long-term 2024-25	
Establishment of visitor information center	Bongo/ Chapchha			√	5.0
Development of village home stays (all gewogs have been allocated 1.0m each)	All 11 Gewogs		√		11.00
Development of signages along the Thimphu- Phuentshogling Highway			√		1.50
Development of resting spots at viewpoints along the highway			√		2.00
Waste management activities along the highway (including establishment of management systems)			√		1.00
<b>Sub-total</b>					<b>20.50</b>

## Strategic component II: Promotions and marketing

All investments in developing the tourism products are eventually reliant on effective promotion and marketing. Thus, appropriate means of promotion need to be identified and implemented.

Activity	Beneficiary gewogs	Time frame			Estimated budget (Nu.m)
		Short-term 2021	Mid-term 2022-23	Long-term 2024-25	
Development and promotion of a brand identity for Chhukha		√			0.10
Familiarization tours	Doongna, Chapchha, Maedtabkha, Bongo, Bjabchhog	√	√		1.50
Development of websites/ social media posts/sites	All gewogs	√			0.50
Promotion of mountain biking from Ganglakha to Doongna and Loggchina to Phuentshogling	Doongna, Loggchina Phuentshogling		√		0.30
Promotion of agro-tourism and honey production	Loggchina		√		0.50

Activity	Beneficiary gewogs	Time frame			Estimated budget (Nu.m)
		Short-term 2021	Mid-term 2022-23	Long-term 2024-25	
Promotion of recreational activities at Burkhay and Singye (budgeted under nature-based activity development)	Samphelling				
Promotion of Bjagchhogg lhakhang	Bjagchhogg		✓		0.10
Promotion of Chhukha tshechu			✓		0.10
Promotion of Geling Goenpa	Geling			✓	0.10
Development of promotional audio-visuals	All gewogs		✓	✓	1.50
Exhibitions and events			✓	✓	1.00
Visitor information centers	All gewogs		✓	✓	2.00
<b>Sub-total</b>					<b>7.70</b>

### Strategic Component III: Management and sustainability

The long-term sustainability of tourism development in Chhukha will depend on good management protocols. Hence, partnerships and stakeholder involvement are critical. Management mechanisms that encourage collective effort need to be instituted and promoted.

Activity	Beneficiary gewogs	Time frame			Estimated budget (Nu.m)
		Short-term 2021	Mid-term 2022-23	Long-term 2024-25	
Development of tourism management plans and guidelines for the gewogs including site/visitor management plans	All gewogs	✓	✓	✓	1.00
Monitoring and evaluation of tourism development in the gewogs	All gewogs	✓	✓	✓	1.0
Establishment and strengthening of institutional collaboration		✓	✓		0.50
<b>Sub-total</b>					<b>2.50</b>

## Enabling activities to support the three strategic components

There are a few activities that are common to all three components. These activities are important as they will facilitate and support the components to achieve the desired results. These include capacity building, enabling policy interventions, fostering effective partnerships, and securing financial stability.

Activity	Beneficiary gewogs	Time frame			Estimated budget (Nu.m)
		Short-term 2021	Mid-term 2022-23	Long-term 2024-25	
Capacity building in local guiding, interpretation, cooking, business planning and management, and awareness and understanding on overall tourism development and promotion	All gewogs	✓	✓		2.00
Review of policy and regulations to make them conducive for tourism development		✓			0.20
Meetings, forums, networking, exchange visits and other means to enhance partnerships, coordination, and fund raising		✓	✓	✓	2.00
<b>Sub-total</b>					<b>4.20</b>

Overall fund requirement = Nu. 66.10m (approx. USD 0.92m)

Component	Budget sub-total
Development of trekking trails	9.90
Development of nature-based recreational activities	18.80
Development and enhancement of culture-based activities	7.50
Development of facilities and amenities	15.50
Promotions and marketing	7.70
Management and sustainability	2.50
Enabling activities to support the three strategic components	4.20
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>71.60</b>



## Part IV:

# CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, tourism has the potential to offer immense benefits and can be a positive force for development. However, it is a double edged sword and can have negative impacts if not handled carefully. One of the biggest challenges facing the world today is how to combat climate change which negatively affects the tourism sector even as tourism is one of the contributory causes to global warming. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, they are likely to rebound once tourism and travel resume. The Action Plan that has been prepared during an unprecedented and prolonged lull in global tourism has given the opportunity for those preparing it to learn from past experiences and to acknowledge that resilience in tourism will depend on the sector's ability to embrace a sustainable and low carbon pathway. Its implementation for a 5-year period, from 2021 to 2025, is critical as it will lay the foundations for tourism development in future years. It is hoped that Chhukha Dzongkhag will obtain the much-needed support to optimize the opportunities for strengthening and enhancing sustainable tourism development. This Action Plan lays out the road map for Chhukha to embark on its journey of sustainable tourism based on promoting tourism that is economically, ecologically, culturally, and locally sustainable. It is hoped that the outcome of the implementation of the Action Plan will not only contribute to the country's overarching developmental vision of GNH but also further enhance the image of Brand Bhutan as a carbon negative country.

The successful implementation of the Action Plan would obviously depend on the collective effort of all the relevant stakeholders. However, the interest and enthusiasm of stakeholders during the extensive consultations for plan preparation and stakeholder consensus on the way forward show promise and give hope for its success.

## Appendix I: Chronology of consultations conducted for plan preparation

Date	Name	Agency
12 -14 March, 2019 Field visit to Jigmechu and Baeyulkuenzang	Ms. Kezang Dema Mr. Sangay Thinley Dr. Karma Tshering Mr. Sonam Wangyel Mr. Rinchen Gyeltshen Ms. Yeshey Choden Village meeting conducted with several participants	NCD, Department of Forests EDO, Chhukha Dzongkhag Consultant Freelance guide Village elder Tsgohpa, Baeyulkuenzang
11 September 2019 Consultation workshop on feasibility study framework for Bjimichu ecotourism	Dasho Minjur Dorji Dasho Tashi Gyeltshen Mr. Chorten Dorji Mr. Phuntsho Gyeltshen Mr. Tek Bdr. Khatiwara Ms. Khachi Wangmo Mr. Tsheten Dorji Mr. Sangay Thinley Dr. Karma Tshering Mr. Yeshey Wangchuk Mr. Sonam Dorji Mr. Lhendup Tharchen Mr. Pema Samdrup Mr. Keiji Kira Ms. Kezang Deki Mr. Tshering Wangchuk	Dzongdag, Chhukha Dungpa, Lhamoy Zingkhag ED, HAB Sr. RO, TCB Program Director, ABTO Project Officer, RSPN Program Officer, RSPN EDO, Chhukha Consultant Sr. Tourism Officer, TCB ED, ABTO DCFO, NCD Tourism Assistant, TCB TCB Planning Officer, TCB Asst. Tourism Officer, TCB
20 September 2019 Community consultation on Bjimichu ecotourism in Bjimichu	Dr. Kinley Tshering Mr. Tsheten Mr. Tek Bdr. Khatiwara Mr. Sangay Thinley Mr. Dorji Wangdi Mr. Rinzin Jamtsho Ms. Yeshey Choden Mr. Rinchen Gyaltshen Mr. Choki Mr. Phub Tshering Drukpa	ED, RSPN Program Officer, RSPN Program Officer, ABTO EDO, Chhukha Engineer, IPDD, TCB Chief, IPDD, TCB Tshogpa, Baeyulkuenzang Village elder, Baeyulkuenzang Village elder, Baeyulkuenzang Tshogpa, Sarphu
31 October, 2019 Consultation on draft feasibility report of Bjimichu ecotourism project	Dasho Sherub Dorji Mr. Sonam Dorji Mr. Rinzin Jamtsho Mr. Tsheten Dorji Mr. Wangdi Gyelpo Mr. Tek Bdr. Khatiwara Mr. Sangay Thinley Ms. Yeshey Choden Mr. Phub Tshering Drukpa Mr. Jigme Mr. Dorji Ms. Kezang Deki Dr. Karma Tshering	Sr. Dzongrab, Chhukha ED, ABTO Chief, IPDD, TCB Chief Program Officer, RSPN Planning Officer, Chhukha Program Director, ABTO EDO, Chhukha Tshogpa, Baeyulkuenzang Tshogpa, Sarphu Youth, Bjimichu Village elder, Baeyulkuenzang Planning Officer, TCB Consultant

Date	Name	Agency
10 September, 2020 (online meeting)	Dr. Tashi Dorji Dr. Anu Lama Mr. Sangay Dr. Karma Tshering	ICIMOD ICIMOD EDO, Chhukha Consultant
12 September, 2020 (online meeting)	Dasho Sherub Dorji Mr. Sangay Thinley Dr. Karma Tshering	Dzongrab, Chhukha EDO, Chhukha Consultant
16 September, 2020 (online meeting)	Dasho Sherub Dorji Dasho Karma Rinchen Mr. Rinzin Gyamtsho Mr. Pema Loday Mr. Parladh Mahat Mr. Kinley Tshering Mr. Tshewang Dhendup Mr. Phub Thinley Mr. Sangay Thinley Dr. Karma Tshering	Dzongrab, Chhukha Dungpa, Phuentshogling Chief, TCB GAO, Bjagchhog gewog GAO, Maedtabkha gewog GAO, Gatena gewog GAO, Geling gewog Deputy Chief, Land Section EDO, Chhukha Consultant
Field visit 07 October, 2020 (Gedu)	Mr. Sonam Dorji Mr. Rinzin Gyamtsho Mr. Pema Wangda Mr. Rinzi Dorji Mr. Wangdi Gyelpo Mr. Sangay Thinley Dr. Karma Tshering	Executive Director, ABTO Chief, TCB CFO, Gedu Forest Division SFO, Gedu Forest Division Planning Officer, Chukkha EDO, Chhukha Consultant
Field visit 09 October, 2020 (Loggchina gewog)	Mr. Indralal Galay Mr. Bir Bahadur Limbu Mr. Sonam Gyamtsho Mr. Ambar Doch rai Mr. Phip Rai Mr. Kinzang Wangchuk Mr. Dorji Mr. Bir Bahadur Mr. Wangdi Gyelpo Mr. Sangay Thinley Mr. Sonam Dorji Mr. Rinzin Gyamtsho Dr. Karma Tshering	Gup, Loggchina gewog Mangmi GAO Tshokpa Tshokpa AEO Gaydrung Youth entrepreneur Planning, Chhukha EDO, Chhukha ED, ABTO Chief, TCB Consultant

Date	Name	Agency
Field visit 10 October, 2020 (Doongna and Maedtabkha gewog)	Mr. Pasang Mr. Suk Bir Rai Mr. Yeshi Dorji Mr. Lhakpa Wangchuk Mr. Pasang Tshering Mr. Lhakpa Dorji Mr. Dawa Penjor Mr. Nima Gyeltshen Mr. Ugyen Dorji Ms. Kanjur Lhamo Ms. Yeshi Wangmo Mr. Tashi Choki Mr. Namgay Mr. Bikash rai Mr. Parladh Mahat Ms. Sherab Lhomo Mr. Pasang Mr. Sangay Thinley Mr. Sonam Dorji Mr. Rinzin Gyamtsho Dr. Karma Tshering	Thizin/Gup, Doongna gewog Captive fishery coordinator Tshokpa GAO Gup, Maedtabkha gewog Mangmi Offtg. principal Tshokpa Tshokpa Tshokpa Tshokpa Tshokpa Chipoen LEO GAO Caretaker Ex-Gup EDO, Chhukha ED, ABTO Chief, TCB Consultant
23 October, 2020 Meeting in Chapchha with youth entrepreneurs undergoing training of trainers entrepreneurship course conducted by Department of Labour	Mr. Chencho Gyeltshen Ms. Choki Wangmo Ms. Gyden Zangmo Mr. Jangchuk Dorji Mr. Kemey Dorji Ms. Kesang Wangmo Mr. Kinley Tshering Mr. Lhakpa Wangchuk Mr. Namgay Thinley Mr. Parladh Mahat Mr. Pema Loday Mr. Pempa Mr. Phurba Wangchuk Ms. Sangay Dema Mr. Sangay Phuntsho Mr. Sunil Ghalley Ms. Tshering Cheozom Ms. Tshering Pem Mr. Tshewang Dendup Mr. Sangay Thinley Mr. Sonam Dorji Mr. Rinzin Gyamtsho Dr. Karma Tshering	Youth from Chapchha Youth (overseas returnee) Youth (overseas returnee) Mushroom farmer, Bjangchhog Tourist guide, Chapchha Housewife, Darla GAO, Getana GAO, Doongna Tourist guide, Chapchha GAO, Maedtabkha GAO, Bjangchhog Youth, Bongo Labor agent, Bongo Youth, Chapchha Livestock extension, Darla Youth, Darla Program Officer, MoLHR GAO, Bongo GAO, Geling EDO, Chhukha ED, ABTO Chief, TCB Consultant

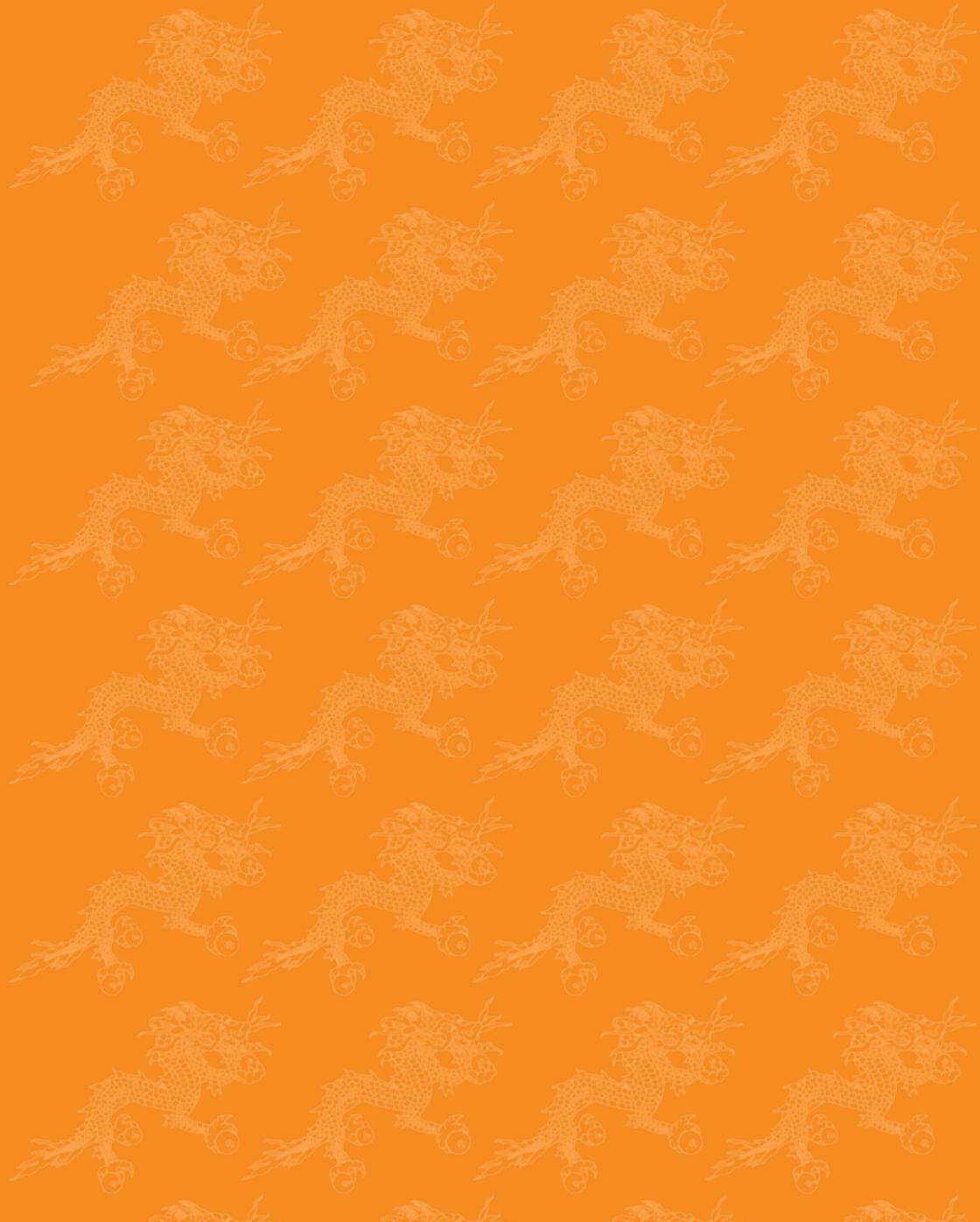
Date	Name	Agency
4 – 6 November, 2020 Trek to explore the Dagala Chapchha route	Mr. Tobgay Mr. Lhabchu Dr. Karma Tshering Mr. Sangay Thinley Mr. Wangdi Gyelpo Mr. Tshering Norbu Mr. Dawa Tshering Mr. Tshering Dhendup Ms. Choki Ap Bhoedo Mr. Purna Bdr. Ghalley	Gup, Chapchha DE, Chhukha Consultant EDO, Chhukha Planning Officer, Chhukha Beautification Officer, Chhukha Land Surveyor, Chhukha Accountant, Chhukha Gewog clerk, Chapchha Local guide, Chapchha Health assistant, Chapchha
19 Jan, 2021 Meeting with Bjagchhog and Geling gewog officials at Bjagchhog Gewog Center	Dasho Minjur Dorji Mr. Wangdi Gyelpo Mr. Ugyen Chada Mr. Sangay Thinley Mr. Pema Loday Ms. Sangay Pelden Mr. Phuntsho Tashi Mr. Penjor Dorji Mr. Tshekhü Dorji Ms. Sangay Zangmo Mr. Dawa Penjor Mr. Phub Dorji Mr. Tshewang Dendup Ms. Tshering Pem Mr. Tshering Namgay Dr. Karma Tshering	Dzongdag, Chhukha Planning Officer, Chhukha Culture Officer, Chhukha EDO, Chhukha GAO, Bjagchhog Engineer, Bjagchhog Principal, Tsimakha Gup, Bjagchhog Tshogpa, Tsimakha Tshogpa, Mebisa Tshogpa, Bjagchhog Gup, Geling GAO, Geling Agriculture Extension, Bjagchhog Livestock Extension, Bjagchhog, Consultant
22 Jan, 2021 Meeting with Darla and Bongo gewog officials at Darla Gewog Center	Dasho Minjur Dorji Mr. Wangdi Gyelpo Mr. Ugyen Chada Mr. Sangay Thinley Mr. Pema Wangda Mr. Chagay Dukpa Mr. Rinzin Dorji Mr. Tshering Nidup Ms. Sonam Dema Mr. Rinchen Mr. Rinchen Mr. Mil Kumar Mongar Ms. Damcho Lhamo Mr. Sangay Phuntsho Mr. Garjaman Rai Mr. Kesarnath Dr. Karma Tshering	Dzongdag, Chhukha Planning Officer, Chhukha Culture Officer, Chhukha EDO, Chhukha Chief Forestry Officer, Gedu Sr. Ranger, Bongo Sr. Forestry Officer, Gedu Thrinzin of DYT and Bongo Gup Mangmi, Bongo Chairman, Phaktshoding CF Village elder, Meritsemo Gup, Darla GAO, Darla Livestock Extension Agent, Darla Livestock Extension Agent, Darla Tshogpa Consultant

Date	Name	Agency
29 Jan, 2021 Meeting with Phuentshogling, Thromde, and Samphelling gewog officials	Dasho Uttar Kumar Rai Mr. Wangdi Gyelpo Mr. Sangay Thinley Mr. Tenzin Mr. Rinzin Jamtsho Dr. Karma Tshering Mr. Ram Kumar Rai	Thrompon, Phuentshogling Planning Officer, Chhukha EDO, Chhukha GAO, Phuentshogling TCB Consultant Mangmi, Samphelling Consultant
02 February, 2021 Meeting with Getana officials	Dasho Minjur Dorji Mr. Kinley Mr. Yonten Tshering Mr. Sonam Jamtsho Mr. Tshethrum Dendup Mr. Dorji Mr. Sonam Dawa Mr. Kinley Tshering Mr. Sangay Thinley Dr. Karma Tshering	Dzongdag, Chhukha Gup, Getana Agriculture Extension Agent Livestock Extension Agent Mangmi, Getana Tshogpa, Cheyul Gyadrung, Getana GAO, Getana EDO, Chhukha Consultant
05 March, 2021 National Stakeholder Consultation	Dasho Tshewang Lhamo Mr. Dorji Dhradhul Dasho Sherub Dorji Ms. Kencho Wangmo Mr. Rinzin Jamtsho Ms. Tshering Denkar Mr. Garab Dorji Ms. Tenzing Dema Mr. Ryo Namiki Mr. Sonam Dorji Mr. Jigme Tshering Mr. Hishey Tshering Ms. Tshering Zam Mr. Younten Phuntsho Mr. Pema Wangda Mr. Damcho Rinzin Ms. Khachi Wangmo Mr. Tashi Phuntsho Dr. Pema Wangda Ms. Choki Wangmo Mr. Tshewang Nidup Ms. Sangeeta Rana  <b>Online (ICIMOD team)</b> Dr. Pema Gyamtsho Dr. Nakul Chettri Dr. Anu Kumari Lama Dr. Tashi Dorji	MP, Bongo – Chapchaa DG, TCB Senior Dzongrab, Chhukha Snow White Trek and Tours Chief, TCB Denkars Getaway Chair, GAB GNHC JICA ED, ABTO Regional Director, HRAB Bhutan Birding Heritage Travels NCD, DoFPs Program Coordinator, WWF Chief Forest Officer, Gedu Division Chief, Marketing and Promotions, TCB Program Officer, RSPN Journalist, Kuensel (Dzongkha) ED, Bhutan For Life Journalist, Kuensel (English) Founding member, BSTS ED, HRAB  Director General Regional Program Manager Tourism Specialist Program Coordinator, KLCDI









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