

Peer-Partnership: Political Empowerment of Women (Bhutan-India)



About the Peer Learning

The peer engagement between the Bhutan Network for Empowering Women (BNEW) and The Hunger Project (THP), India was seeded in 2014, with BNEW's participation in a LOGIN-facilitated travel workshop on collectivisation of local governments in India.

BNEW has been leading the process of building leadership capacities of women in Bhutan, encouraging their participation in electoral processes and politics. THP India works with local civil society organisations and has reached out to more than 100,000 Elected Women Representatives (EWRs) in local governance.

Evolving Partnership

Since 2015, THP and BNEW have been in a peer learning partnership, whereby THP's EWR leadership and capacity development programme has been adapted by BNEW to its own context.

This partnership has evolved up to 2017, aided by means of:

- Exposure visit by BNEW and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) Bhutan to gain insights on THP work in India (2015)
- Scoping visit by THP India to Bhutan towards context analysis and strategic adaptation of THP's Strengthening Women's Empowerment through the Electoral Process (SWEET) campaign (2015)
- Launch of pre-election initiatives by BNEW in collaboration with THP in the run-up to Bhutan's second local government elections (LGE) in 2016:
 - Training of Trainers for SWEET (2), including gender training of Government Administrative Authorities and Dzongkhag Tshogdu Secretaries
 - Delivery of Potential Leadership Workshops (20) through cascade model
 - Adaption of THP's Media Preparedness module to the local context as a series of Regional Media Preparedness Workshops
- Post-election experience sharing meeting between BNEW and THP in India (2016)

LGE 2016 Results: BNEW mobilised more than 4000 women to participate in the second LGE in 2016. Linked with the activities under the peer learning engagement, BNEW reported:

- Training of 1474 potential women candidates representing 20 dzongkhags prior to 2016 LGE
- Report of overall increase in the percentage of women contesting and elected across various posts from 2011 to 2016:
 - Increase in women's representation in local governance from 6.9% (2011) to 11.5% (2016) (from 98 to 171 EWRs)
 - Number of women elected into highest level of local governance doubled – 2 Chairs and 24 Deputy Chairs in the second LGE compared to 1 Chair and 12 Deputy Chairs elected in the first LGE

Following from BNEW's experience during the 2016 LGE, it was agreed to devise a long-term strategy drawing upon the comprehensive five-year SWEET cycle deployed by THP in India in a manner that is responsive to the Bhutan context. This strategy is being rolled out on a yearly basis with support from LOGIN.

Key Results in 2017

- 161 EWRs trained through 4 Women's Leadership Workshops (WLWs)
- 9 enumerators trained on baseline survey tool
- Baseline survey conducted covering all EWRs
- 50 journalists (F 29, M 21) engaged through a Workshop on Gender Sensitive Reporting
- Leveraging of strategic partnerships within Bhutan for sustained engagement and impact for women's political empowerment

Peer Learning Outcomes

- Shaping of a positive environment for strengthening women's empowerment through the electoral process
- Enhanced visibility of BNEW's efforts towards enabling political participation by women and capacitating EWRs to be effective leaders
- Recognition of role of BNEW by key stakeholders such as Election Commission of Bhutan, National Commission of Women and Children and Department of Local Governance
- Media organisations such as Bhutan Media Foundation and Journalist Association of Bhutan successfully mobilised as partners of BNEW and gender sensitive reporting of elections and women candidates ensured
- A clear strategy for the way forward for BNEW, a nascent institution

Feedback from Participants of Three WLWs (N=121)

