



FINAL INDEPENDENT PROJECT EVALUATION:

Enhance Government and Civil Society Responses to Counter Trafficking in Persons in Bhutan (BHUZ13) February 2019

Country: Bhutan

Duration: 05/12/2013 to 30/09/2018

Budget: US\$ 750,000

Donors: Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons (J/TIP) of the State Department of the United States of America (SDUS)

Implementing agencies: The UNODC Regional Office for South Asia, Programme Office Bhutan (POBTN)

Associated agencies: Department of Law and Order (DLO), National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC)

Evaluation team: Dr. Gana Pati Ojha (lead evaluator) and Mr. Chhimi Dorji

FULL REPORT:

<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/evaluation/reports.html>

staff, and donor. Methods used to collect the primary data were focus group discussions (FGD), individual interview and survey.

MAIN FINDINGS

The project was facing **several challenges** that had an impact on project implementation. TIP was a completely new topic in Bhutan, not being acknowledged as an issue and priority. In addition, the centralised approval process also posed challenges in timely execution of the project. The shifting of the government's lead agency and election in the country in 2018 also affected timely implementation of activities.

The overarching conclusion is however that the project **BHUZ13 has considerably enhanced the responses of the government and civil societies to counter TIP in Bhutan**. The government now acknowledges that TIP is an issue to be addressed immediately while it is still at its early stage. The government, with technical assistance of UNODC, has drafted the SOP and reviewed related laws and policies which are the basis for creating an enabling environment for institutional arrangements. There has been increased understanding about the issue among the duty-bearers as evidenced by the change in their behaviour while conducting investigation and prosecution. General public, including some vulnerable population, is now more aware about TIP issues as a result of participation in project activities.

The project was **designed** on the basis of findings of a situation analysis and recommendations of a TIP workshop.

The project was **highly relevant** as it aligned with Bhutan's constitution, laws, policies and strategies; UNODC's programme for countering transnational organized crime and illicit trafficking; UNODC ROSA's Regional Programme 2013-2017; and commitment of donor (J/TIP) to support government and civil societies around the world to combat trafficking.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The project BHUZ13 was designed to address the emerging concerns of human trafficking in Bhutan. It was initially planned for three years from 2014 to 2016 and extended two times to September 2018.

The overall **objective** of BHUZ13 was to strengthen government and civil society initiatives to counter trafficking in persons (TIP) in Bhutan. The BHUZ13 attempted to meet this objective through its four outcomes. These are: (1) Bhutan authorities take measures to improve criminal justice system responses to trafficking in persons (2) Strengthened cross border and inter-agency collaboration and partnership in countering TIP (3) Increased awareness by stakeholders on preventing TIP and (4) Protection mechanisms for trafficked victims strengthened.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation used a mixed method, gender-responsive and participatory approach. Data collection took place through (i) an in-depth desk review and (ii) field-based data collection with visits (July 19 to August 4, 2018) to Thimphu, Phuentsholing, and Gelephu. Primary data was collected from 77 persons (40 female and 37 male) representing participants of awareness camps, government of Bhutan, NGOs, UNODC project

The project was **partially efficient and effective**. Though activity implementation speeded up in the later part of the project, it had produced only two out of five outputs and one out of four outcomes by the time of the evaluation as of June 2018. Taking long time to understand the project by national agencies, change in the project team and change in the lead government agency, election in the country in 2018 adversely affected timely implementation of project interventions. However, the project products contributed to curbing TIP, to some extent, through increased knowledge of both duty-bearers and right-holders. It was further informed that the project performed well between July – September 2018.

The project established **strong partnerships** with government agencies such as NCWC and later DLO. Strong partnerships were also observed with Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women (RENEW), an NGO specialized in protection of victims of domestic violence. The project also partnered with Royal Bhutan Police (RBP) in conducting training and awareness programmes. Issue-based partnerships with UN agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs) were established.

The project has **not yet generated quantifiable changes** that have long-term implications, as the project activities were still ongoing when the evaluation was conducted. However, **some of the changes** that have occurred at individual and institutional levels are **likely to contribute to the long-term changes**, including contribution to the attainment of SDGs 5, 8 and 16.

Though there was some capacity developed among both duty-bearers and right-holders, their **capacity was not adequate to sustain and replicate the project interventions independently** for all aspects. There was improved legal and policy framework in place but it was not sufficient to continue and replicate project initiatives.

Human rights and gender issues were integrated into the project design and implementation. The issues were well reflected in the training programmes, Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials, and awareness camps. By the time of the evaluation, while project implementation was still ongoing **involvement of women was still low (27%)** compared to men (73%) in awareness/sensitisation camps. This was also impacted due to the already skewed gender balance among the stakeholders targeted by the project e.g., taxi drivers (who are male).

The project **targeted several vulnerable groups** such as potential jobseekers, third gender and dancing girls. But some other geographical areas and institutions were not included.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Create a mechanism for regular monitoring, supervision, and oversight of shelter home** (Project management (PM), POBTN)
- **Involve more women than men in awareness raising/sensitisation camps** in all future projects related to TIP. (PM, POBTN).
- **Include missing relevant institutions and other vulnerable geographical areas** in the activities of future projects (PM, POBTN)
- **Develop a strategy for efficient management, especially in delegating authority of decision-making to POBTN** (UNODC ROSA)
- **Strengthen the involvement of all relevant stakeholders in the actual design of any future project** (PM, POBTN)
- Prepare a list of TIP activities needed to include in the 12th Five Year Plan and **form a group of influential persons for lobbying** (PM, POBTN)
- **Develop awareness programme materials** on local Televisions and Radio in future projects (PM, POBTN)
- **Strengthen partnership** with key stakeholders to contribute to SDGs implementation (UNODC ROSA)
- Include **advanced training activities** on countering TIP in future projects (PM, POBTN)
- **Continue lobbying for the amendment of section 154** of the penal code (PM, POBTN)

LESSONS LEARNED AND GOOD PRACTICE

- **Unless specifically targeted, participation of women in development endeavour is low.**
- **More robust design of the project is necessary to leave no one behind.** Otherwise, some important stakeholders will be left out.
- If data are not properly disaggregated and managed by the project, its **contribution to vulnerable population** does not come into the picture.
- A **substantial amount of time and resources** are necessary to introduce an innovative new project/programme.

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