



COUNTRY PROFILE

BHUTAN

Bhutan National Context for SCP and Connection to the Global Agenda

The Kingdom of Bhutan is a small, landlocked country in the Himalayas, known for its commitment to sustainable development. Bhutan has been guided by the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH), which seeks to integrate socio-economic development goals with environmental protection and cultural preservation as well as good governance. This approach seeks to foster prosperity while putting individual happiness of its 700,000 people in focus, measured in nine domains supported by 33 indicators.

With a forest cover of more than 80%, more than half of which in protected areas, Bhutan is considered one of the 10 biodiversity hotspots globally. Relying largely on hydropower, Bhutan is also the only carbon-negative country in the world.

A lower-middle income country, Bhutan has reduced its extreme poverty rate by two-thirds in the last decade, to 12 %. This fast-paced development is linked to growing energy consumption and economic activity including in the construction and tourism sectors, as well as mining and manufacturing. Growing affluence and urbanisation has led to increased traffic, and growing amounts of sewage and waste.

Important SCP-relevant national legislation include the National Environment Protection Act (2007), the Biodiversity Act of Bhutan (2003), the Environmental Assessment Act (2000) and the Forest and Nature Conservation Act (1995). Legal instruments govern the water and waste sectors. Bhutan is one of few countries in the world that have included environmental conservation in their Constitution, being implemented inter alia by strict conservation rules and large protected areas.

Bhutan is a signatory to multilateral environmental agreement including the Paris agreement on climate change, the international Plant Protection Convention in 1994, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora in 2002, the Vienna Convention for the Protection of Ozone Layer and the Convention's supplementary agreement, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer in 2004, and the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal in

2002. Bhutan also ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The existing legal and policy framework provides space for implementing Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) in Bhutan.

The Government of Bhutan presented its first Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the 2018 High-level Political Forum in New York, confirming its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG 12 was one of the goals covered in the VNR, where energy consumption and energy efficiency were highlighted as central concerns.

Bhutan's efforts to integrate economic growth, gross national happiness and its commitment to the Paris Agreement are aligned closely with the SDG process through its Vision 2020 Strategy, 'The Middle Path' National Environment Strategy, the National Sustainable Development Strategy and the Economic Development Policy. The Bhutan Vision 2020 Strategy in particular makes clear its aim to achieve a low carbon economy, which will deliver SCP-related transformative actions.

Bhutan's second Voluntary National Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda (2021), states that a culture of SCP across government and whole of society needs to be created and scaled up. It also mentions the importance of the strengthening of institutional and technical capacities to adapt SCP policies to the national context.

Under SWITCH-Asia's Regional Policy Support Component led by UN Environment (UNEP), a policy support agreement was developed in 2014 for technical cooperation with Bhutan's Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC) in areas of mainstreaming SCP policies in national governance, ensuring SCP in national tourism; support the development of green office guidelines and more. The partnership was the first for policy support in Bhutan under SWITCH-Asia and continued until 2016. Additionally, three grants were implemented between 2012 and 2017, focusing on Green Public Procurement (GPP), sustainable tourism and efficient industrial development. Two grant projects were initiated in 2020, focusing on the tourism sector.

CHALLENGES

- Changing consumption patterns have increased and diversified waste generation, putting pressure on infrastructure, facilities and services.
- Rising energy consumption, both among households and industry, where energy efficiency can be strengthened.
- Increased pressure on transport system, affecting agriculture, tourism and other sectors.
- Surveillance and monitoring challenges make ensuring compliance with existing laws difficult.
- Inadequate research and development capacity; lack of specific initiatives to promote sustainable production in industries, construction, and agriculture; and a lack of policy and legal framework technical capacities.

PRIORITIES

In addition to responding to the challenges, there are key sectors and activities that will promote overall effectiveness of SCP efforts and the long-term success of the SDG implementation including:

- Creating an enabling environment to strengthen SCP policies via capacity building and awareness raising.
- Focus on sectors with high impacts and visibility for government priorities, e.g., waste management, Green Public Procurement, and Energy Efficiency.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Integration of SCP policies and activities with Bhutan's Gross National Happiness approach to development.
- Link SCP objectives with resource efficiency targets and national commitments, develop sector-specific Action Plans accordingly.
- Build capacity of decision-makers for integrating SCP into existing endeavours, especially resource efficiency and circularity.
- Enhance regional networks and partnerships for exchanges of information, technology transfer and experience sharing on resource efficiency and other SCP policies.
- Build on the work of the Regional Policy Advocacy Component and the 10YFP/One Planet Network.

GRANT PROJECTS IN BHUTAN



Ongoing



Ongoing



Completed



Completed

SUSTOUR BHUTAN

Replicating EU tourism industry SCP best practices into a Bhutanese sustainable tourism model

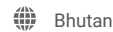
Theme: Tourism



SHINE

Sustainable Hospitality Industry Inclusive of Native Entrepreneurs

Theme: Tourism



SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN BHUTAN

An integrated approach to production, consumption and livelihood development

Theme: Tourism



SEID

Sustainable and Efficient Industrial Development in Bhutan and Nepal

Theme: Agri-food



Completed

GPP BHUTAN

Scaling-up public demand for sustainable products in Bhutan

Theme: Multi-industry

