

**STATUS OF WOMEN IN BHUTAN: A SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE**

**By**

**RINZIN LHAMO**

**THESIS**

Submitted to  
KDI School of Public Policy and Management  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

**MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY**

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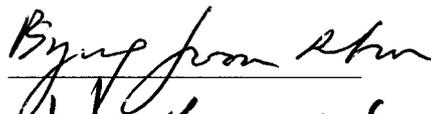
**MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY**

Committee in charge:

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## **ABSTRACT**

**By**

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United Nations goal's since its inception has been to achieve gender equality and is also supported by the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). However, in most parts of the world it still remains a challenge and especially women in South Asia remain powerless, voiceless and without rights. The patriarchal and hierarchal systems have further widened the gender gaps between men and women, thus limiting women's opportunity to resources in social, economic and politics. Therefore, it is no exception to Bhutan of the challenges associated to achieve gender equality and discrimination that are being experienced by many other countries around the world. Bhutan to succeed in its endeavor to improve the status of women will need a greater and stronger commitment from all relevant actors and stakeholders.

This study assessed the current size of gender gaps by measuring to what extent women has achieved equality with men in the two critical areas of educational attainment and political empowerment. It also explains the cause of gender gaps in Bhutan.

The study adopted the theoretical background by taking into perspective that enhancement and progress of women's social, economic and political status is essential by understanding the definition of gender, gender equality, gender mainstreaming and the efforts taken by the international bodies to strengthen the status of women. The framework of Gender Status Index that has been developed by African Center for Gender and Social Development, Economic Commission for Africa, United Nations was partially used.

The main causes for gender gaps in Bhutan were low literacy rates of women, gender stereotypes and prejudices, poverty, social norms and geographical location of our country.

Therefore, there is need to recruit more female teachers to improve the quality of education and make the curricula and textbooks more gender sensitive, include boarding facilities to improve the safety of girls in schools, make schools closer to girl's homes, improve the sanitation facilities and recreational activities. Women should be empowered through non formal education, gender mainstreaming in the government organization and reserve quota or take affirmative actions for participation in politics. Awareness should be created among parents and teachers on the rights and benefits of gender equality and also efforts should be made to raise the economic status of women.

However, further research is recommended to include other critical areas of economic participation, economic opportunity and health & well-being to be able to calculate the Gender Status Index of Bhutan.

**Dedicated to my husband and daughters**

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## TERMS AND ACRONYMS

### Terms:

1. **National Assembly** : Parliament of Bhutan
2. **Geog**: Block, smallest geographic unit of administration
3. **Dzongkhag**: Bhutan has 20 districts headed by a Dzongda (Chief Administrator)

### Acronyms:

1. **GNH**: Gross National Happiness
1. **UN** : United Nations
2. **MDG**: Millennium Development Goal
3. **CEDAW**: Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women
4. **DAW**: Division for the Advancement of Women
5. **NCWC**: National Commission for Women and Children
6. **RGoB**: Royal Government of Bhutan
7. **NGO**: Non- Government Organization
8. **UNDP**: United Nations Development Programme
9. **ECOSOC**:UN Economic and Social Council
10. **CSW**: Commission on the Status of Women
11. **CRC**: Convention on the Rights of the Child
12. **GER**: Gross Enrollment Rate
13. **NER**: Net Enrollment Rate
14. **RCSC**: Royal Civil Service Commission
15. **NSB**: The National Statistical Bureau
16. **UNICEF**: United Nations Children’s Fund
17. **WFP**: World Food Programme
18. **UNIFEM**: United Nations Development Fund for Women
19. **GPI**: Gender Parity Index

## **CHAPTER 1           INTRODUCTION**

The Kingdom of Bhutan is a small developing country in the Himalayas situated between two giant countries, India in the south and China in the north. The population of Bhutan is 634,982 (2005) and has a total area of 38,394 sq. km. Bhutan initiated its first development plans in 1961 with the introduction of the first five year plan<sup>1</sup>. Bhutan was isolated from other parts of the world, had no roads, no infrastructure, no transport, no electricity, no telephone and no postal services and was totally dependent on agriculture. Thus, the hard and harsh lives of Bhutanese have been described in “Vision 2020: A vision for Peace, Prosperity and Happiness”. Health facilities was limited and Bhutan had only 11 primary schools in the early 1960’s.

Since then, Bhutan has witnessed unprecedented rapid socio- economic development with the successful implementation and achievement of its five year plans over the last four decades. Bhutan’s per capita Gross Domestic Product was one of the lowest in the world in 1961 with US\$ 51 but in 2003 it rose to US\$ 834 which is now one of the highest in South Asia. The life expectancy rose to 66.1 years in 2000 and the national literacy rate also increased to 59.5 per cent in 2005.

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<sup>1</sup> Development planning is done for a period of five years

His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuk, the fourth King of Bhutan devolved his executive powers to the council of ministers who were elected by the members of parliament in the National Assembly in 1998. Bhutan held its first parliamentary elections in March 2008 and became a democratic constitutional monarchy.

The development philosophy of Bhutan is based on the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH) which was developed by His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuk, the fourth King of Bhutan in the late 1980's. According to this concept Gross Domestic Product is not the only indicator or measurement of economic development. The concept describes the development philosophy as a continuous process towards balancing the material and the spiritual & emotional well being of the people. The concept of Gross National Happiness accordingly rejects the perception that there is a direct and clear relationship between material prosperity and happiness (Planning Commission, 1999). If this statement was true, it would mean that the world's wealthiest and developed countries with the highest gross domestic product would be the happiest, but is not the case. The objectives or the pillars of Gross National Happiness are explained in "Vision 2020: A vision for Peace, Prosperity and Happiness". The objectives are human development, preservation of culture and heritage, balanced and equitable development, good governance and environmental conservation.

## **1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Everywhere around the world, women are fighting for equal rights, opportunities and access to resources, employment, social justice, primary health, education, decision making power and participation in governance. Women still continue to suffer various forms of discriminations, deprivations, humiliation, abuses and violence across different communities, regions and countries.

The United Nations (UN) Declaration on Equality between men and women was adopted in 1945 with the goal to guarantee equal treatment of men and women according to the international principles. During the UN Millennium summit held in September 2000, the Millennium Declaration was adopted by 189 countries and signed by 147 heads of states and government. One of the goals of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) has been to promote gender equality and empower women drawn from the Millennium Declaration. Therefore, there is a pressing need to empower and progress the lives of women to promote gender equality.

Boutros Bourtos Ghali, UN Secretary General says,

“Without progress in the situation of women, there can be no true social development. Human rights are not worthy of any name if they exclude the female half of humanity. The struggle for women’s equality is the part of the struggle for a better world for all human beings and all societies”.

This statement reaffirms the commitment of the UN and calls for a stronger commitment from all to make the lives of women better and worthy.

The UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979. According to the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, CEDAW is often known as the Bill of Right of Women and clearly outlines what comprise of discrimination against women and draws up agenda for national action to stop such discrimination. The rights of women are generally not widely accepted as the rights of children in many countries because people still do not believe in women's rights. CEDAW is known to have the maximum number of reservations of any kind of UN treaties underscoring worldwide resistance to women's rights (UNICEF, 2006).

The Royal Government of Bhutan has committed and accorded top priority to improve the status of women by integrating the issues of women into the 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan<sup>2</sup> in an attempt to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, Bhutan has also signed the CEDAW on July 17, 1980 and ratified it on August 31, 1981 without any reservations and has already presented its combined initial through sixth periodic report to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in January 2003 (NCWC, 2006). Bhutan has accepted all the terms and condition laid down in the convention. It

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<sup>2</sup> The 10<sup>th</sup> FYP period was from 2002-2007

frames laws and policies according to the provisions of the convention and has already adopted various mechanisms with an attempt to narrow the existing gender gaps.

This study will focus on important components of women's empowerment, opportunity and access to resources in Bhutan, namely educational attainment and political empowerment under the two pillars of social power and political power respectively.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The Royal Government of Bhutan has taken various steps and measures to eliminate more serious and indirect form of discrimination at home and at work. The issues on gender equality have been given top priority in the preparation of our five year plans and also in the decentralization process of the local government. However, according to CEDAW Report of Bhutan (combined Initial 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Periodic Reports), lower levels of achievements are seen in Bhutanese girls and women because of differences in equal access to education, enterprise development and governance despite equal opportunities, entitlements and legal status for women and men. Gender gaps are quite visible in several areas and especially in rural areas where women are at more disadvantaged position according to some studies.

There has been considerable progress in the education sector especially in the enrollment of girls in the primary and secondary school. However, at present the literacy rate of women stands at 48.7 per cent which is much lower compared to literacy rate of man at 69.1 per cent.

Women's participation in the workforce is also not very significant. The majority of the women in Bhutan are still involved in agriculture as Bhutan is still an agrarian society. The total civil service strength was 19,516 as of June 30, 2008 and women represent only 29.53 per cent of the total civil servants. In the private sector, works of the women was limited to mostly low skilled and low level paid jobs. Therefore, women are underrepresented in the national government although women represent almost half of the total population. Likewise, women represent only 13.89 per cent in the parliament (upper house and lower house) while men represent 86.11 per cent in 2008. The following table shows the gender gaps in various areas between men and women in 2005 and 2008.

**Table 1.1** Gender gaps (in per cent) in various areas

Sl. No	Areas	2005		2008	
		Female(in per cent)	Male(in per cent)	Female (in per cent)	Male (in per cent)
1	Population	47.5	52.5	47.7	52.3
2	National Assembly (upper house & lower house)	7.55	92.45	13.89	86.11
3	Civil Service	27.51	72.49	29.53	70.47
4	Literacy Rate	48.7	69.1	n/a	n/a
5	Unemployment rate	3.3	2.9	n/a	n/a
6	Unemployment rate (Urban)	7.6	3.6	n/a	n/a
7	Unemployment rate( Rural)	2.1	2.6	n/a	n/a
8	Primary enrollment	48.72	51.28	49.51	50.49
9	Lower and Middle Secondary enrollment	48.99	51.01	50.18	49.82
10	Higher Secondary enrollment	40.16	59.84	44.84	55.16
11	Tertiary enrollment	n/a	n/a	33.03	66.97
12	Teachers	n/a	n/a	39.35	60.65

Source: Statistical Yearbook of Bhutan 2007, National Statistical Bureau, General Statistics 2007 &2008, MOE, Thimphu: Bhutan, RCSC, Thimphu: Bhutan, National Population and Housing Census of Bhutan 2005 \* Institutes under Royal University of Bhutan

The table 1.1 depicts wide gender differences in various areas which indicate that some forms of gender biases are still present.

### 1.3 PURPOSE/OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to describe the status of women in the two critical areas of educational attainment and political empowerment under two pillars, social and political

blocks in Bhutan by reviewing the literatures of researches done in the past. The theoretical background will cover the international efforts for women's rights and empowerment. The theoretical background will also focus and emphasize the concepts of gender, gender equality and gender mainstreaming to understand the importance of raising the status of women. This study will assess the current size of gender gaps in Bhutan by measuring to what extent women have achieved equality in two critical areas of education attainment and political empowerment through the partial framework of Gender Status Index developed by African center for Gender and Social Development, Economic Commission for Africa, United Nations. It will identify the causes of gender gaps which are the key challenges of achieving gender equality. This study will give recommendations to narrow the gender gaps and to enhance and guarantee women's equal access and opportunity to education and participation in public and politics.

#### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study intends to provide some useful insights into the current gender gaps and emerging gender issues of women in Bhutan in order to assist politicians and the decision makers in framing effective plans and policies. This study has also stated the causes of gender gaps in Bhutan and also given the recommendations which the policy makers and others can incorporate in their policies.

By identifying and quantifying the current size of gender gaps, the study intend to provide the decision makers with tools to offer direction and focus for their work to improve the social and political life of women.

The National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) can use this study while coordinating and monitoring the activities of women. This study will also be helpful to the donors to find out the best way to effectively formulate and implement programs to benefit the Bhutanese women to the fullest. This study also intends to help the Non Government Organization (NGO's) while framing their plans and policies that promote gender equality.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study will answer the following questions:

- What are the current size of gender gaps in the two critical areas of educational attainment and political empowerment?
- What are the causes of the gender gaps?
- How can the barriers and challenges be addressed?

## **1.6 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY**

This study covers two very important critical areas under the two pillars of social and political block, namely education attainment and political empowerment respectively. This study used different indicators under these two critical areas to assess the current size of gender gaps. The secondary data was analyzed over a certain period of time to show the

trends whether it was improving or not.

However, this study was limited to review of literatures and published secondary data. No surveys or interviews were undertaken because of limited time and resources. This study could not include other critical areas such as economic participation, economic opportunity and health & well-being due to unavailability of data and also with an intention to narrow down the study.

## **CHAPTER 2                    METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

This chapter will describe the research methodology adopted by the researcher. Both qualitative and quantitative method of research was adopted. The approach adopted was analysis of the secondary data published by the National Statistical Bureau (NSB), Ministry of Education, Gross National Happiness Commission Secretariat, National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC), National Census Commission, Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC) and the National Assembly to effectively study the current size of gender gaps. To understand and analyze the current size of gender gaps the researcher partially adopted the framework of Gender Status Index that has been developed by African Center for Gender and Social Development, Economic Commission for Africa, United Nations. The Gender Status Index is a quantitative method to measure gender equality.

Past researches and conceptual literatures was selected on gender studies carried out by the Royal Government of Bhutan through the help of international organization like United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and World Food Programme (WFP) country office to give a strong theoretical background of the study. Furthermore, it is also with an expectation to find out the causes of gender gaps to help policy makers and donors in successful decision making and implementation of the programs to promote gender equality.

To understand the position and status of women around the world and their progress, studies on similar subjects conducted by United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), UNDP, UNICEF, World Economic Forum and World Bank was referred.

## **CHAPTER 3**

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The literature review will consist of theoretical background which will include theories on gender, equality and women's right to improve the status of women all over the world based on policies, laws and legislations adopted by the international bodies such as the United Nations. The first part of the literature review will summarize the Gender Pilot study conducted jointly by Planning Commission and Central Statistical Organization of Bhutan in 2001 and the 7<sup>th</sup> CEDAW Report prepared by the National Commission for Women and Children in 2006. The main purpose of this part is to totally understand the research carried out in the past and to give a greater perception and understanding of the present study. The second part will present some theoretical thoughts on the development of women to fully understand their problems, needs and barriers, contribution and their impact to the society.

### **3.2 Theoretical background**

The study takes the perspectives that enhancement and progress of women's social, economic and political status is imperative and is a basic human right. It is known that many international organizations such as United Nations and others have been working hand in hand in an attempt to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. Although progress has been made to improve the status of women around the world, still the differences between men and women remain to a greater degree. Many treaties and

conventions have been ratified and accepted by many countries to prevent gender inequality and discrimination of women in the social, economic and political areas.

### **3.2.1 Definition of Gender**

Gender is defined as “socially constructed roles of men and women and is not the same as biological roles/characteristics of men and women”, in the Guidelines for a Gender Analysis: Human Rights with a Gender Perspective of CEDAW. Biological roles are fixed whereas gender roles or socially constructed roles can differ with social, economic and technology change. Gender does not only mean women but refers to both men and women and their relations. Gender is determined by their roles, responsibilities, task, decision making and functions of both men and women in both public and private life. UNDP (2007) states that gender forms a part of the broader socio-cultural context and other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis includes race, poverty level, ethnic groups and age etc.

### **3.2.2 Gender equality**

Gender equality is defined as “the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunity of being a man or a woman”. Equality does not mean that men and women will become same but the rights of men and women, their responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are being born male or female (UNDP, 2007). Equal consideration should be given to both men and women in planning and decision making as the roles and responsibilities of men and women are different. Both men and women need to play an important role by

engaging themselves and men need to play an important part to enhance gender equality. It would be difficult to achieve gender equality if men do not engage and involve themselves and willing to change their attitude and behaviors towards women, for example in relation to reproductive health and education. Gender equality is a matter of human right and critical for sustainable socio-economic development. Gender equality is linked to effective and sustainable socio-economic development. Women are key contributors in the areas of development and ignoring them would have immense negative impacts on the achievement of the developmental goals.

### **3.2.3 Gender mainstreaming**

Gender equality is the goal for improving the status of women, but gender mainstreaming is the approach to achieve it. Gender mainstreaming is defined by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), “as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels”.

In order to benefit equally, gender mainstreaming is a plan to make concerns and experiences of both women and men an important part of the plan, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal areas (Sarkar, 2006).

### **3.2.4 International Efforts for women's right and empowerment**

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the preamble to the United Nations charter which reaffirms, "faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women". The International Bill of Human Right of 1948, emphasis and stress the human rights of women. According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 2, it lays down the basic principle of equality and non discrimination and prohibits "distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status".

The Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, explains that the rights of the declaration are applicable to all people without any distinction.

The United Nations established the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) on June 21 1946, as a sub commission of the Commission on Human Rights to ensure and promote women's equality and rights. CSW's mandate was to recommend and report to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for promoting women's rights in the field of political, economic, civil, social and education. The commission focused on promoting the equality and rights of women by setting standards and responsible for formulating the international conventions that was aimed to create global awareness of women issues and rights.

The Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the General Assembly in 1967 which was prepared by the Commission on the Status of Women to consolidate the standards of women's rights as considerable discrimination still existed against women.

Finally in 1979, the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination of Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the UN General Assembly to provide a legal binding convention to define women's rights. CEDAW defines discrimination against women as "any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field". The convention ensures the equality of women through equal access and opportunity to resources such as health, education, employment, right to vote and participate in politics and sets up agenda for national action so that measures will be taken to end all types of discrimination.

During the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference of Women, the Beijing Declaration reconfirmed its commitments to:

- The equal rights and dignity of women and men and other purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against

Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), as well as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Declaration on the Right to Development;

- Guarantee the full implementation of the human rights of women and of the girl child as an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of all human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- Develop consensus and progress made at previous United Nations conferences and summits - women in Nairobi in 1985, children in New York in 1990, environment and development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, human rights in Vienna in 1993, population and development in Cairo in 1994 and social development in Copenhagen in 1995 with the objective of achieving equality, development and peace.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995 which is the agenda for empowerment of women supports the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. (World Bank, Gender and Development Group 2003).

The Millennium Development Goals contains eight goals to be achieved by 2015. Among them Goal 3 is to promote gender equality and empower women which addresses gender equality. According to World Bank, Gender and Development (2003), the Millennium Development goals require to move forward the progress on some of the 12 critical areas identified by the Beijing Platform for Action during the Fourth World Conference on Women

in 1995.

These international and regional conventions provide a general theoretical perspective and background to ensure gender equality and empower women to progress their status in social, economic and political representation.

## **Part 1**

### **3.3 Criteria for selection of sources**

The synthesis of the studies is aimed to identify and analyze critically the reports on gender studies, the existence of gender gaps in education attainment and political empowerment, the causes of gender gaps and the different types of mechanisms adopted. The report of the studies was obtained from their respective organizations. This study was carried out in order to find out the existing needs and constraints of women in the development process. The reviews that are included in the literature review are only the ones the researcher has reviewed and analyzed. The criteria for selection include the following:

- 1 A both qualitative and quantitative research was conducted for the studies reviewed.
- 2 The Gender Pilot Study 2001 was chosen as it is the first gender study ever conducted by the Government of Bhutan to serve as a national baseline study for further research. It was used to frame plans and policies for the five year plans, CEDAW report and UN agencies. The 7<sup>th</sup> Periodic CEDAW Report 2006 consists

of detail assessment of Bhutan's performance and the report was prepared for submission to CEDAW by the National Commission for Women and Children.

- 3 The Gender Pilot study has adopted consultative process with key stakeholders like ministries at the central government, autonomous agencies and multilateral organizations, focus group discussion and questionnaires. The study involved both rural and urban population in six *Dzongkhags*. The methodology adopted was stratified circular sampling for selection of the samples. Similarly the 7<sup>th</sup> CEDAW Periodic Report also adopted consultation with stakeholders from NGO's state organizations, donors, women's organization and individuals across different sectors of the economy. The report utilized the published secondary data from National Statistical Bureau, Ministry of Education and the Population and Housing Census of Bhutan 2005.

### **3.4 Synthesis of the research**

Studies have shown that in Bhutan gender gaps existed particularly in education, literacy, employment and decision making even though it is said that there is no open gender discrimination in the social, economic, political and legal context (Planning Commission, 2001). According to them, it is viewed as much of a social and cultural differences rather than discrimination. Generally women in Bhutan do not face any direct forms of discrimination compared to women in neighboring countries like India, Bangladesh, Nepal etc and around

the world. Women do enjoy equal status and opportunities in school, at home and in the workplace. This has been supported by the 7<sup>th</sup> CEDAW Periodic Report, which points out that the people of Bhutan are equal before the law and entitled to equal protection without any forms of discrimination.

The ownership pattern of property inheritance in rural and urban areas differed with an ownership pattern of 60:40 female/male ratios in rural areas and 36:55 female/male ratios in urban areas (Planning Commission 2001). The planning Commission's stance is valid as the research methods used were reliable. Hence, we can conclude that women have some favorable position when it follows a matrilineal system of property inheritance in the rural areas. Although the matrilineal system do not exists in all part of Bhutan, it does enhance women's position and rights in the society as they are looked upon as the main head or figure in the family or household. Ownership of property would not only ensure and enhance their rights but also enhance their decision making power in the household. A powerful and influential woman would certainly have positive impacts not only in the household but to the society as well. The 7<sup>th</sup> CEDAW Report also supports that traditional customs were in favor of women in terms of property inheritance and matrilineal system followed in western and central Bhutan.

The literacy rate in terms of ability to read and write of the respondents in the urban areas was 68 per cent compared to 25 per cent in rural areas, while literacy rate of women among

the respondents was 52 per cent in urban areas and 18 per cent in rural areas (Planning Commission, 2001). Although, the present statistics show that literacy rate for both men and women have been increasing, still the education level of women especially in rural area is significantly lower than men. The 7<sup>th</sup> Periodic CEDAW report (2006) states that the gross enrollment rate for primary education (GER) had reached 96 per cent and the net enrollment rate for primary education (NER) has increased from 70.2 per cent (67.1 per cent girls and 73.4 per cent boys) to 79 per cent (79 per cent girls and 80 per cent boys) becoming par with the regional NER for South Asia. Bhutan has been successful in achieving universal access to primary education for all with steady growth of enrollment in the primary and also at the secondary level. However, the report claims that the enrollment in tertiary education remains a challenge. A healthy, educated and empowered woman could have positive impacts on the nutrition, health and education of their children. According to their report, the reasons for having less enrollment of girls at the secondary level was that secondary level schools not located within walking distances, no female caretakers at boarding schools, traditional beliefs that only boys need education, teenage pregnancy and early marriages .

Gender inequality is seen more visible in rural women in almost all parts of the world. This has been proven by the Gender Pilot Study (2001), where the report claims that women were involved or engaged in primary reproductive task which comprised of two thirds of women in both rural and urban areas, while women in rural areas in addition to their productive daily

chores were involved in other multiple responsibilities, tasks and economic activities. It is also true for most women in rural or urban areas as unpaid work in and for the family or household chores take up the maximum of their working time and energy. This topic could definitely serve as an area for future research.

The women's participation in governance was low because it demanded more time for women apart from household chores and the mobility constraint they face to participate in the *geog*<sup>3</sup> and *Dzongkhag*<sup>4</sup> levels (Planning Commission, 2001). Women rarely participated in decision making at the local government and also there were fewer female representation at the national level. This has been proven by the recent first parliamentary election in March 2008, in which out of 47 elected members in the lower house, only 4 of them was women and similarly out of 20 elected members in the upper house, only 4 of them was women. However, according to the 7<sup>th</sup> Periodic CEDAW report (2006), there have been positive trends in the participation of women in public life and decision making. The gender pilot study (2001) claims that both men and women voted equally for the election of *gups*<sup>5</sup> and participated in village and *geog* level discussions and meetings, however their interaction at the *Dzongkhag* level was limited. The 7<sup>th</sup> Periodic CEDAW report (2006) also supports that the Royal Government of Bhutan had been instrumental in guaranteeing equal rights between men's

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<sup>3</sup> Geog (block) : smallest geographic unit of administration

<sup>4</sup> Dzongkhag: Bhutan has 20 districts headed by a Dzongda (Chief Administrator)

<sup>5</sup> Gups: Geog (block) head, elected representative for 3 years

and women's participation in formulation of policies, holding public offices, performing public functions at all levels of government. Women were more active in decision making at the private and micro level compared to men who were dominant in decision making at the public domain (Planning Commission, 2001). The study highlighted that changing from agrarian based economy to more economic activities further resulted into loss of decision making roles of women.

The life expectancy of women at birth being 66.2 years compared to a man at 66 years was a striking feature among other countries (National Commission for Women and Children, 2006). It is evident that health statuses of women have improved over the years. It is supported by the fact that general fertility has been reduced to 86.4 from 142.7 in 2000 and the crude birth and death rate decreased from 34 and 8.8 per 1000 population to 20 and 7 per thousand respectively. While deliveries attended by trained health professional increased to 55 per cent. The infant mortality ratio and under-five mortality rate decreased to 40.1 and 60.6 per thousand live births respectively in 2005.

Gender Pilot study (2001) states that gender difference and relations are influenced by socio-economic differences and balancing the modern and traditional value poses a great challenge. Still social perception and gender stereotypes exist in the minds of people making it more difficult to change.

## **Part II**

### **3.5 Theoretical thoughts**

Through the review of the researches it is known that women in Bhutan do face some forms of discrimination directly or indirectly. Even in reality, despite having favorable conditions women have been susceptible to inequalities at home or in public. That is why it has become imperative on the part of the government and other stakeholders to involve in the process of narrowing the gender differences in the field of social, economic and political arenas. The need to fully understand their needs and constraints and their impact to the society is very important to raise their status in the society. Women in most part of Bhutan held property rights, which could be one of the grounds for discouraging girls to enroll in primary schools.

This further widened the gender gap as women have more responsibilities at home than going to school, which eventually led to having lesser number of educated women in public service and politics. The children's participation in primary education remains very low in South Asia (UNICEF, 2007). According to the State of World's Children 2007, Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka are on the track in achieving the goal of gender parity in primary education, however in 2001, Afghanistan, Nepal and Pakistan had the widest gender gaps. In low income countries girls are at the risk of dropping out of schools, in several cases getting

pregnant due to lack of reproductive health services even if they attend schools at the same rate with the boys (World Bank, Gender Development Group 2003).

According to them a recent study on the cost of missing the MDG on Gender equity by World Bank in 2002, estimated that a country failing to meet the gender educational target would likely suffer a deficit in per capita income of 0.1 to 0.3 per cent points. The World Economic Forum, ECOSOC statistic shows that girls outnumber the boys in tertiary level in very few countries in the Middle East and former Soviet Bloc countries but gender gaps trends in education seem to emerge early in most countries and grow more severe with each level of education. Also in Bhutan, gender gaps appear more severe with higher levels of education especially at the tertiary level as evidenced in the findings. According to the report on Human Development in South Asia 2000: The Gender Question by Mahbub Ul Haq's, South Asia (1997) has the largest gap in male and female literacy gap with 64.1 per cent and 37.2 per cent respectively and South Asian women comprise 44 per cent of the world's illiterate women.

According to the World Bank, Gender Development Group (2003), evidences around the world have shown that elimination of gender disparities in education is one of the most effective development plans of a country as it could increase the economic productivity, reduce maternal & infant mortality and improve fertility rate & the educational prospects for

the future generation. Dr Kim Yanghee (2007) rightly points out that studies have shown that when women are given more access to education, market which comprise of land, labor & credit, new technology and larger control over household resources it often transformed into greater welfare for themselves and for the family.

McDougall (2000) in his paper Gender Gap in Literacy in Uttar Pradesh: Questions for Decentralized Educational Planning cites (King and Hill 1993) that in the context of female education in India, researchers have recently developed empirical evidences proving how education can promote capabilities, like freedom to participate in political and economic processes, use new technologies, protect oneself against exploitation (legal, economic, sexual), exercise personal mobility, attain higher social status and increase child and maternal well being. This further reiterates the need to attain equality in female literacy rate. According to him female literacy can have a much more powerful effect than income in boosting social indicators (McDougall, 2000).

### **3.6 Conclusion**

However, the gender pilot study does not provide a clear picture of the country as a whole as it covered only six *Dzongkhags* out of 20 *Dzongkhags*. A total of 1135 respondents were covered with 640 women and 495 male. The study was done in 2001 so some of the issues may not be relevant in today's context. Some issues stated are more general views based on

people's attitude and assumptions which were limited to only few people such as road workers who were the focus group for the urban centers. This does not capture the views and opinion of the men and women in the rest of the urban population. However, the previous study provides a good basis for the present study.

## **CHAPTER 4            FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

This chapter will explain the findings of the study according to the framework of the gender gaps with two pillars the social power block and political power block. The results will be presented in two parts. The first part will contain the results of the social power block using different indicators. The second part will contain the results of the political block.

### **4.1 Pillar I : Social Power Block**

The social power block will consists of one component, educational attainment which is further divided into sub-components. The sub-components under education attainment are enrollment and literacy rate. Each sub-component comprises of indicators which will measure the gender gaps in their respective field.

#### **Component: Educational Attainment**

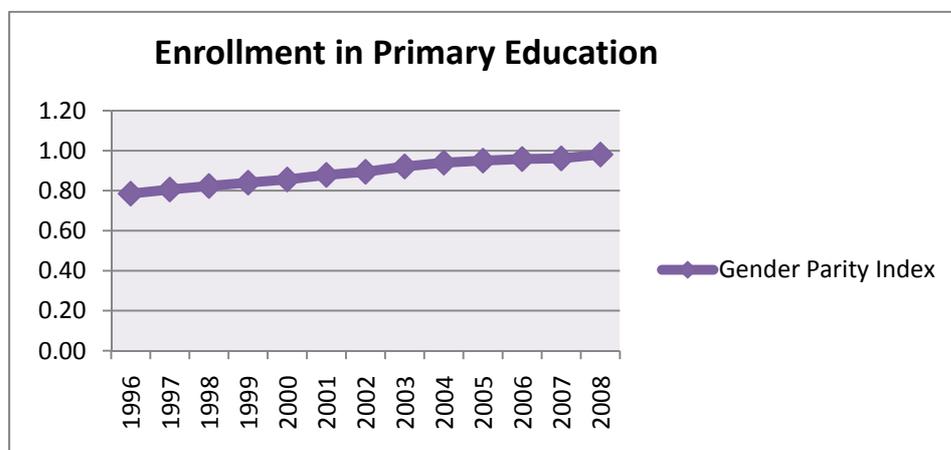
Education in Bhutan has been given one of the highest priorities in the development plans. As a policy of the Royal Government of Bhutan, education is free to all children up to class ten. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan (2008), Article 9-16: Principles of State Policy states, “The State shall provide free education to all children of school going age up to tenth standard and ensure that technical and professional education is made generally available and that higher education is equally accessible to all on the basis of merit”. Since the introduction of modern education in the late 1950’s, Bhutan has been able to scale up both its primary and secondary education. Education is being seen as an important key to enhance the status of

women in Bhutan, their competence and participation in the socio-economic development and political life of the country (RGoB, 2002).

### Sub-component: Enrollment

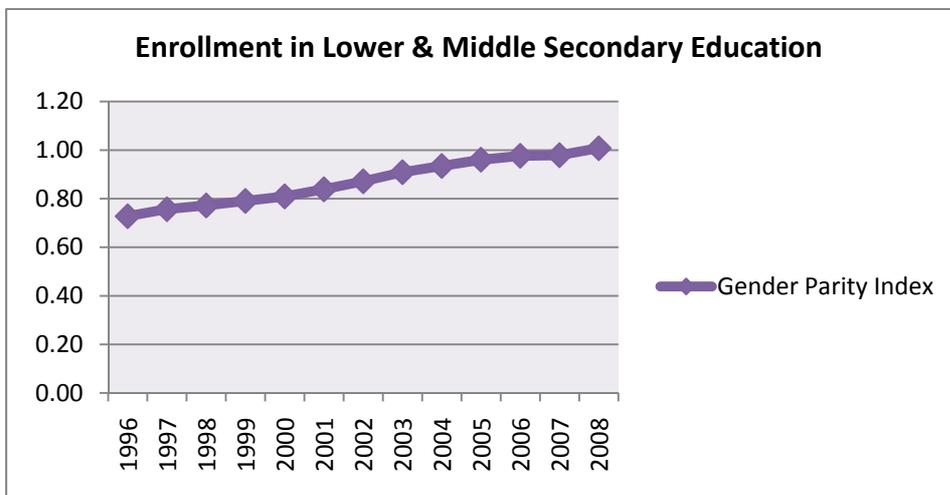
Under enrollment the study will look into three important indicators primary enrollment, secondary enrollment and tertiary enrollment to find out the gender gaps with Gender Parity Index (GPI). GPI is the ratio of the number of females enrolled at primary, secondary and tertiary education to the number of males in each level and is being used by the United Nations to calculate Millennium Development Goals indicators. According to them GPI of 1 indicates parity between female and male, and if the ratio is between 0 to 1, it means that there is a disparity in favor of males and if the index is greater than 1, it means that there is a disparity in favor of females.

**Figure 1.1: Enrollment in Primary Education**



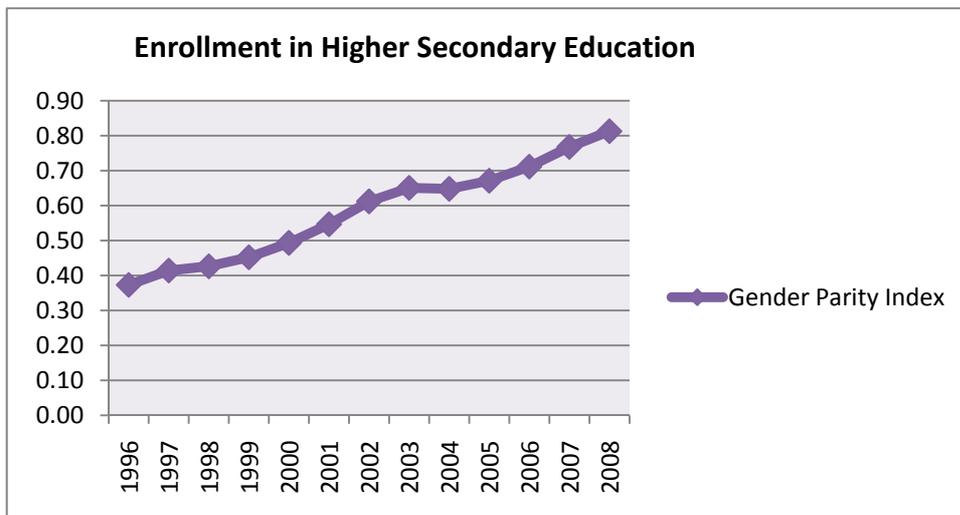
Source: General Statistic, MoE 2008

**Figure 1.2 Enrollment in Lower and Middle Secondary Education**



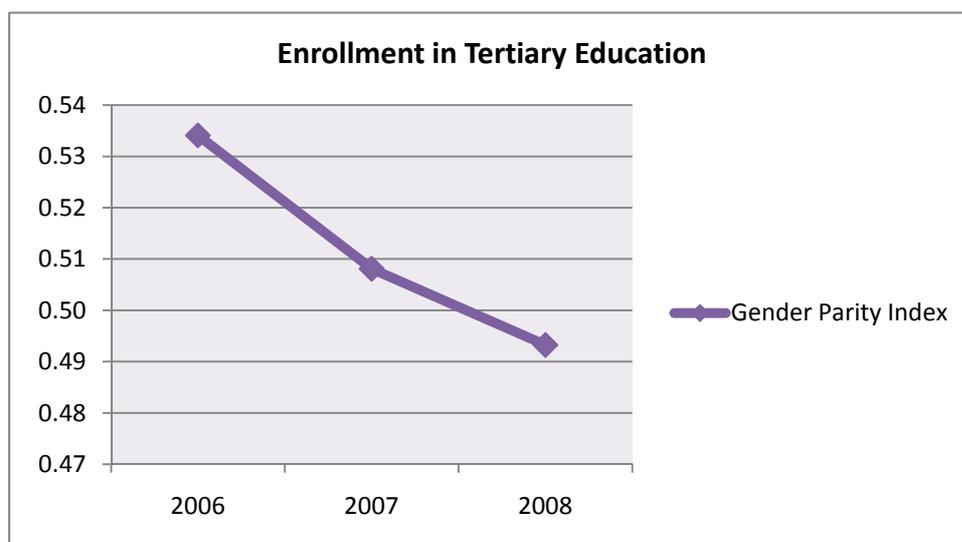
Source: General Statistic, MoE 2008

**Figure 1.3 Enrollment in Higher Secondary Education**



Source: General Statistic, MoE 2008

**Figure 1.4: Enrollment in Tertiary Education**



Source: General Statistic, MoE 2008

The trend of enrollment in primary education from 1996 to 2008 shows that gender gaps do exist but is gradually narrowing as the Gender Parity Index is nearing 1. This indicates that Bhutan will achieve Goal 2 of the Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education way before 2015.

The enrollment in lower and middle secondary education has already attained gender parity with Gender Parity Index of 1.01 in 2008, which is a notable achievement on the part of the Ministry of Education. Four countries in Europe including Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden have also achieved gender equality in secondary school enrollment according to the report of Gender and Development Group, World Bank. While in the developing countries, it is estimated an average of only 43 per cent of girls of appropriate age attend secondary school

(UNICEF 2006). According to the UNICEF report secondary education has many benefits for both women and children such as it delays the age at which young women give birth, enhances freedom of movement and maternal health and also increases the bargaining power of women in their household.

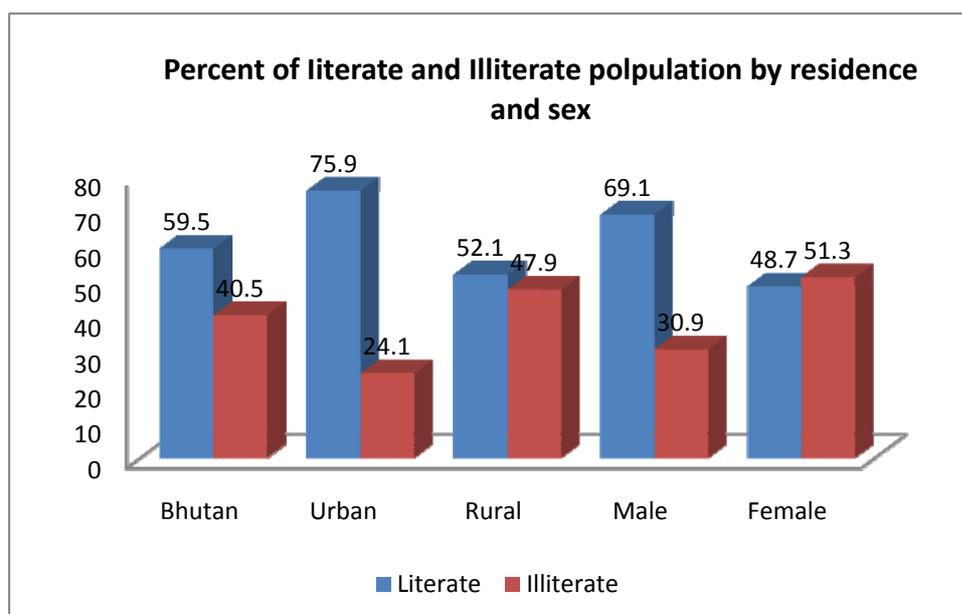
The enrollment in higher secondary education also shows that gender gaps do exist. The Gender Parity Index has reached 0.81 in 2008 which shows that the status is improving gradually. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education is the target stated under goal 3, promote gender equality and empower women of the Millennium Development Goal. Bhutan is likely to achieve its goal of eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education way before 2015 by looking at the current status. However, enrollment in tertiary education shows wide gender gap as the Gender Parity Index has been very low and also the trend is decreasing from 2006 to 2008. In 2008 the Gender Parity Index stood at 0.49.

### **Sub Component: Literacy rate**

The national literacy rate of women stands at 48.7 per cent according to the Population and Housing Census of Bhutan, 2005. There is much to praise in our Government's efforts to increase the female literacy rate which was very low in the 1960's. The Government's concerted efforts in increasing the number of schools offering primary education speeded up

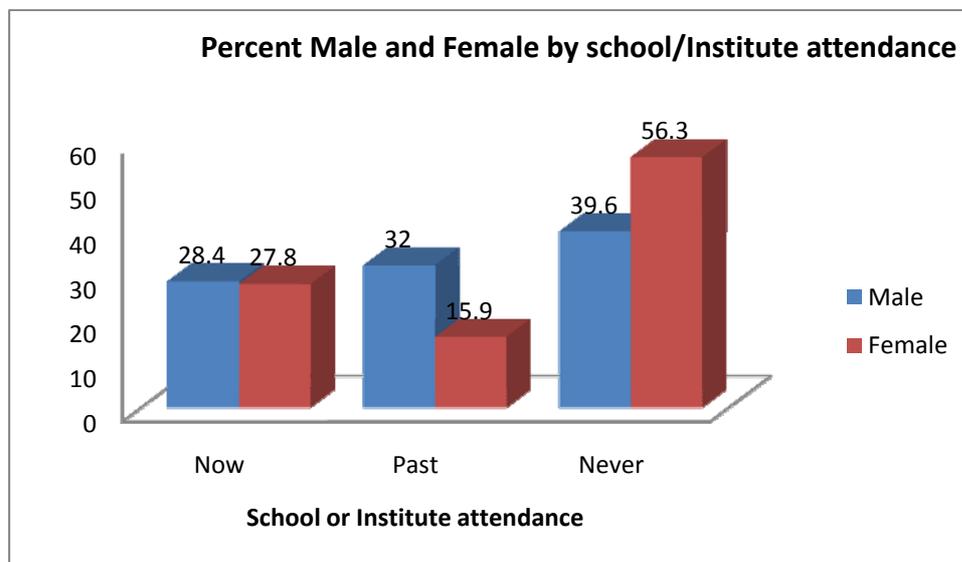
the primary enrollment and catered to the scattered population. Many community schools was build with the community participation, and government appointed teachers, supplied free textbooks and stationeries, brought the children closer to their homes, thereby encouraging girls to attend schools. Although the literacy gap between men and women are narrowing, differences still exist. This part of the sub-component looked into the changes of female literacy rate and the gender gap in Bhutan in all 20 *Dzongkhags*. By looking into the *Dzongkhag* level, the study tends to look into the trends that are invisible at the State level. It was based on the female and male literacy rates as reported in the Population and Housing Census of Bhutan in 2005. It analyzed the total female literacy rate in each *Dzongkhag* comprising of both rural and urban areas.

**Figure 1.5: Percent of literate and illiterate population by residences and sex**



Source: Population and Housing Census of Bhutan, 2005

**Figure 1.6: Percent male and female by school/institute attendance**



Source: Population and Housing Census of Bhutan, 2005

Figure 1.5 shows that gender gaps exist in literacy rate with men's literacy rate at 69.1 per cent compared to women's literacy rate of 48.7 per cent. Although differences exist in the literacy rates, the school or institute attendance shows that at present both male and female attendance are nearing equality compared to the past.

#### **4.2 Pillar II : Political Block**

Bhutan has moved smoothly through the process of decentralization which was introduced in 1981. The Local Governance Act was enacted called *Dzongkhag Yargye Tshogchung* and *Geog Yargye Tshochung Chathrims* 2002 which provided power to local elected bodies. The political, administrative, functional and fiscal powers were slowly devolved from the centre

to the district and block levels, giving opportunities to a wider section of people to involve in political and decision making.

Decentralized governance provided opportunities to women to participate in the decision making process even though they lacked community support, self confidence, traditional and societal values. According to the Bhutan Decentralization Support Programme- Mid- term Evaluation Report (2006), decentralization provide opportunities and expand space for greater gender and social equity as women along with the weaker sections of the society get the chance to experience politics, overcome fears, negotiate, take responsibility to influence development so that the needs and concerns can be addressed and incorporated into mainstream development. Underrepresentation of women in politics and decision making would certainly lead to a male dominated development agenda which would further widen the gap between men and women.

Despite Bhutan having favorable gender relations, women living in rural areas have not been able to make headway into the local governance structure. Participation of women in politics and decision making is still very low in Bhutan. Few women have been elected in the local government as *gups*<sup>6</sup>, *maangmis*<sup>7</sup> and *tshogpas*<sup>8</sup>. Dr Kim Yanghee (2007) gives many reasons

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<sup>6</sup> Gups: Geog (block) head, elected representative for 3 years

<sup>7</sup> Maangmis: Geog (block) elder, also functions as Deputy Gup

<sup>8</sup> Tshogpas: Representative of a village or several villages on the Geog Yargye Tshogchung

for low participation of women in politics and decision making which includes the gendered custom of male dominance in political arena, women’s responsibility for household works and child care, lack of adequate financial resources, prevailing climate of political violence and lack of efforts from political parties to women members for election to assemblies. Some of these reasons are also very much true in case of Bhutan.

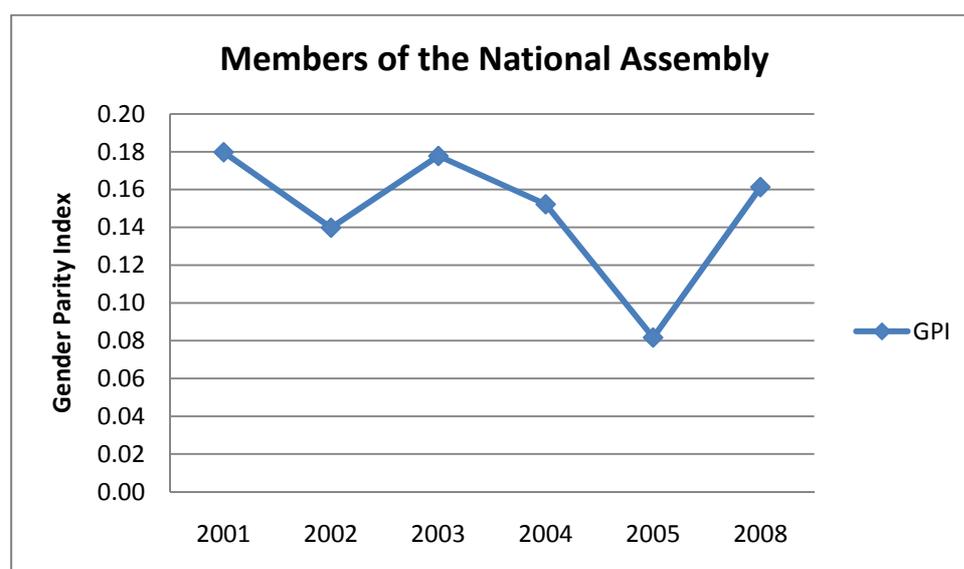
**Table 1.2: Members of the National Assembly**

Year	Female	Male	GPI
2001	16	89	0.18
2002	13	93	0.14
2003	16	90	0.18
2004	14	92	0.15
2005	8	98	0.08
2008*	10	62	0.16

Source: National Assembly Secretariat & 7<sup>th</sup> CEDAW Periodic Report

\*First democratically elected government

**Figure 1.7: Trend of Gender Parity Index of members of the National Assembly**



It is evident from table 1.2 that women are underrepresented in politics. The Gender Parity Index is very low at 0.16 which means that there is wide disparity in favor of men as the ratio is less than 1. Therefore, women in Bhutan represents only around 13 percent in the parliament. Since we have very low level of participation at the local governance it makes even harder for women to participate in the national elections. Women representatives at the local governance and at the national level are very important as women themselves would best understand the needs and constraints of women far better than men.

The Ten Year (2006-2016) Platform for Action of Asia Pacific Women in Politics and Decision- Making (2006) states that many countries in Asia and Pacific have low representation of men to women in national and local assembly despite women representing half of the voting population. According to the UNICEF Report (2006) on the State of World's Children 2007, Women and Children, the Double Dividends of Gender and Equality, women represented just under 17 per cent of parliamentarians in the world (drawn from inter-parliamentary Union database on "Women in National Parliaments). The report states that 10 countries have no women parliamentarian while 40 other countries have less than 10 per cent women legislators. Nordic countries was doing better with around 40% of women representing in the parliament while the Arab states was ranked the lowest with a regional average of less than 8 per cent. It was also evidenced that the majority of countries with most women in the parliament used political quotas such as constitutional quotas, election law

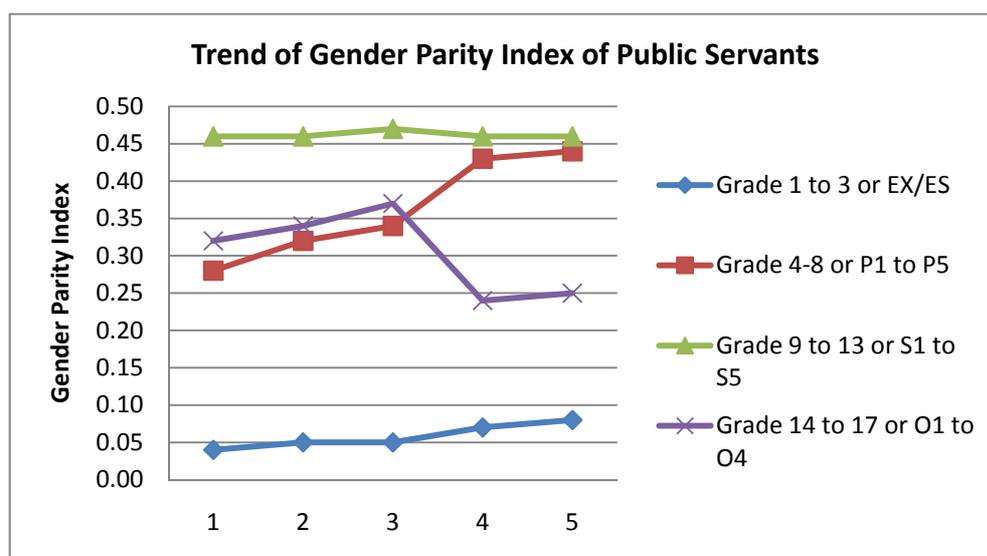
quotas and political party quotas for electoral candidates (UNICEF, 2006). According to UNICEF, overall of the 20 countries in the world which has majority of women in the parliament, 17 countries or 85 per cent of them use some form of quota system.

**Table 1.3: Total Public Servants from 2004 to 2008 at different grades and positions**

Grade	2004			2005			2006		
	Male	Female	GPI	Male	Female	GPI	Male	Female	GPI
1 to 3	103	4	0.04	107	5	0.05	113	6	0.05
4 to 8	3695	1052	0.28	4115	1318	0.32	4654	1603	0.34
9 to 13	4919	2248	0.46	5035	2303	0.46	5673	2665	0.47
14 to 17	2758	870	0.32	2743	928	0.34	2652	983	0.37
<b>Total</b>	<b>11475</b>	<b>4174</b>		<b>12000</b>	<b>4554</b>		<b>13092</b>	<b>5257</b>	
Position*	2007			2008					
	Male	Female	GPI	Male	Female	GPI			
EX/ES	218	16	0.07	225	17	0.08			
P1 to P5	6257	2682	0.43	6716	2924	0.44			
S1 to S5	5267	2431	0.46	5231	2430	0.46			
O1 to O4	1566	370	0.24	1581	392	0.25			
<b>Total</b>	<b>13308</b>	<b>5499</b>		<b>13753</b>	<b>5763</b>				

Source: Royal Civil Service Commission, \*Position according to the Position Classification System introduced in 2006

**Figure 1.8 Trend of Gender Parity Index of Public Servants**



Similarly, women representing the government are low compared to men at all grades or positions. As the level gets higher women representation becomes even lower. More women tend to be concentrated at the supervisory level (S1 to S5 or 9 to 13). There are very few women at the executive level (EX/ES or 1 to 3), with only 4 women in 2004 and 17 women in 2008. Women representing the professional level seem to be in a better position compared to other grades or positions as GPI increased from 0.28 in 2004 to 0.44 in 2008. However, at present women represent 41.90 % of the total civil servants which is a big achievement on the part of the government's policy to raise their status.

The World Economic Forum's report (2005) on Women's Empowerment: Measuring the Global Gap assessed the current size of the gender gaps by measuring the extent to which women in 58 countries have achieved equality with men in five critical areas: economic participation, economic opportunity, political empowerment, educational attainment and health and well being. According to them no country has yet eliminated gender gaps, however Nordic countries have made considerable progress with Sweden standing out as the first. According to them, seven European nations hold places among the top 15. Countries like India were ranked 53, Korea 54 and Pakistan 56, occupying the lowest ranks. The ranking of the countries are given in **appendix A**.

## CHAPTER 5 CAUSES OF GENDER GAPS IN BHUTAN

### 5.1 Low literacy rates of women

A low educational qualification and literacy rate was due to considerable lower enrollment rates for females in the past. Low levels of literacy rates have greatly hampered women's participation in development and all spheres of life which further widened the gender gaps. Literacy rate of women in Bhutan stands at 48.7 percent against 69.1 per cent for man in 2005. The literacy rate for women in South Asia is as low as 46 per cent compared to 72 percent of their male counterparts. Lack of education further resulted into Bhutanese women not being able to gain access to employment and participation in public and politics.

A causal analysis for girl's lower literacy rates in Bhutan points out that low girl's enrollment and higher dropout rate at puberty was the immediate cause of lower literacy rate of girls (Black & Stalker, 2006). According to their report the underlying causes was no compulsory education, pregnancy risk, lack of access and preference for boys as future bread earners. The root causes pointed out was poor facilities in school (food, libraries etc.), long distance travel to school, poverty, punitive regimes in schools, inferiority complex, traditional beliefs that girls should take care of household chores and inadequate boarding facilities.

According to the World Economic Forum, women without education cannot get a well paid job, formal sector jobs, participate and represent in the government and garner political support and states that educational attainment is the fundamental prerequisite for empowerment of women in all spheres of life.

## **5.2 Gender Stereotypes and prejudice**

Gender stereotypes being based on widely held beliefs can have important implication as it guides the individuals and can seriously affect their well being. Women in Bhutan tend to believe that they are less capable than men not only because of lack of physical strength but also being sexually vulnerable. Women always feel inferior to men and think that men would do better than them in education and public life and make better decisions. These attitudes and beliefs always prevented girls from attending school, further widening the gap between men and women. Buddhist belief that women taking nine generations of reincarnation to be reborn as men can be interpreted as men being superior to women. Women are treated as a homemaker, thus preventing them from attending school, participation in public and social life. Black & Stalker (2006) states that many parents in Bhutan still believe that boys should get preferences as they have better earning capacity than girls who would in any case be looked after by their husbands. The workload for

men and women are defined and even if women are more capable of doing the work they are paid less.

### **5.3 Poverty**

Poverty is also one factor that has prohibited women from equal access to education, health and politics. Bhutan is highly agrarian country and most of our people are subsistence farmers. According to Black & Stalker (2006) the 2004 Poverty Analysis Report stated an income poverty line of Ngultrum<sup>9</sup> 740 per capita per month and 32 per cent of the population lived in income poverty, of which 97 per cent was from the rural areas. However Bhutan is showing steady increase in the Human Development Index, which is a composite measure of income, life expectancy and educational attainment. The Human Development Index for Bhutan was 0.619 which ranked the country at 132<sup>nd</sup> out of 182 countries in 2009 (Human Development Report 2009).

According to Bhutan Living Standard Survey, parents were not willing to send their children to school because they could not afford and was needed at home to work (Black & Stalker, 2006). Poverty was cited as the most significant cause by the parents for not sending children to school. Although Education is free in Bhutan, it does cost some money in form of school fees, uniforms and other contributions. The study also confirmed

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<sup>9</sup> currency of Bhutan

that the reasons why parents was not willing to send their children to school was poverty and also to help them in farming and household works. According to the them, it cited that a survey done by Centre for Bhutan Studies on children also stated the major reasons for not attending school was the cost of school expenses (34 per cent) and was needed at home to work (31 per cent), while other reasons comprised of parents not thinking education as worthwhile, children refusing to go to school, health problems, and schools being located far away.

#### **5.4 Social norms**

In most western and eastern part of Bhutan, women enjoy the matrilineal system of family inheritance, thus limiting women's accessibility to economic, social and political opportunities. Black & Stalker (2006) stated that 60 per cent of the rural women hold land registration titles. Women tend to become homemakers and care for their children and work in the farm as the head of the household. Parents preferred their daughters looking after them during old age and so it was usually the son who was sent to school. Early marriages have also contributed to increase in gender gaps as girls drop out from school at a very early age, thus resulting into lower enrollment of girls at the tertiary level. Therefore, double burden of women in family issues and economic responsibility is

further construed as one of the main reasons for women lagging behind in education, access to health facilities, employment, participation in decision making and governance.

### **5.5 Geographic location**

The greatest development challenges Bhutan faces today is the rugged and the mountainous terrain, where the land rises from 200 metres above sea level in the south to 7500 metres in the northern peaks of the Himalayas. The population is scattered along these rugged terrain and communication links are limited. This has greatly impeded the development plans making it more difficult to construct schools and basic health units nearer to the communities. It affects the accessibility to services especially for women and children as the community schools are several days journey from the road head. This has discouraged many parents from sending their daughters to schools for fear of their well being as they need to walk for many hours.

## **CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

Gender disparity is a worldwide phenomenon and is even more acute in developing countries such as ours. This study assessed the current size of gender gaps in the critical areas of educational attainment and political empowerment and identified the causes of gender gaps.

Although some studies have been done on gender and situation of women in Bhutan, no study has assessed the gender gaps in terms of gender parity index. Therefore, the study adopted partially the framework of Gender Status Index that has been developed by African Center for Gender and Social Development, Economic Commission for Africa, United Nations.

This chapter will provide supporting evidences for the results and towards the end, present the recommendations for the policy makers.

### **6.2 Thesis Statement**

Gender gaps do exist in enrollment in primary, higher secondary and tertiary education, local government elections, in public offices and in the parliament despite our government's strong commitment towards attaining gender equality through an enabling environment. The main causes of gender gaps were low literacy rates of women, gender stereotypes and prejudices, poverty, social norms and geographical location of our country.

### **6.3 Supporting Evidence**

This shows that women are still deprived in many areas like education, health, employment and representation in politics and decision making as evident from the results of the findings on education, public servants and politics. Although the gender gaps seems to be slowly narrowing, the results of the finding shows that women are less educated, economically and politically less active in decision making compared to the men. Thus, despite significant progress made in gender equality over the years, gender discrimination still remains persistent in many dimensions of the life of women in Bhutan. This means that we need to seriously consider the needs and constraints of these women to enable them to achieve and attain equality. The causes of gender gaps need to be adequately addressed. The government should ensure that all stakeholders prioritize their resources towards achieving gender equality in their respective areas.

### **6.4 Recommendations**

Given the importance of achieving gender equality and empowerment of women, it is very important for the Government to further prioritize its commitment to fulfillment of the CEDAW and the Millennium Development Goals. In line with the government's main objective to reduce the gender gaps in education & health and economic & politics, this study

provides some recommendations that could be useful for the policy makers in narrowing the gender gaps in Bhutan.

#### **6.4.1 Improving the quality of education**

The quality of education should be improved by recruiting more female teachers and making the curricula and textbooks more gender sensitive to encourage more enrollments of girls.

The safety of girls should be improved in schools by including boarding facilities, making schools closer to girl's homes, providing good sanitation facilities and recreational activities which could contribute in making conditions favorable for girls to attend school. The government should improve teacher's remunerations, provide incentives and training opportunities.

#### **6.4.2 Empowerment of women through non formal education**

Particularly adult women who never got the opportunity to attend school, young girls in rural areas who have dropped out from schools and those who are very poor should be given access to non-formal education to improve their livelihood and enable them to make decisions at homes and the community level. Non Formal Education will further improve the decision making capacity of women by creating more opportunity to participate in the local elections, reduce maternal and infant mortality rate, contribute to higher family income level and improve nutrition and general health . Women will gain more self confidence which will help them overcome the prejudices and stereotypes that they face in the society. Educated

women will encourage the education of their children and especially their daughters.

### **6.4.3 Gender mainstreaming in the government departments**

UNDP has been the key partner of the government to promote gender equality and empower women through various projects and also enhanced the capacity in gender mainstreaming.

Bhutan should further work towards mainstreaming gender into the plans, policies, programs and legislations to ensure women a supportive and enabling environment for their participation at all levels of government.

### **6.4.4 Generate gender disaggregated data**

It is very important to have gender disaggregated data on women's social, economic and political activities to ensure that we can reflect their contribution, their needs and constraints and to monitor implementation of programs. Generation of gender disaggregated data will help the policy makers in the government by making way for interventions at the right time.

### **6.4.5 Reserved quotas for women in political participation**

Quota systems and affirmative actions should be developed to raise the participation of women in the local and national government elections. The Indian experience of reserving seats for women in local municipality bodies illustrated how women's participation could change politics (UN, DAW, Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2008). According to the report, women as heads of panchayats were more sensitive to the needs of women and more supportive for the implementation of programmes that benefited women. Article 4 of

the CEDAW states, “State parties are allowed to adopt temporary special measures aimed at accelerating de facto equality between men and women, such as affirmative action, for as long as inequalities exist”. Equality of women can never be achieved without equal representation in the government consisting of the executive, legislative and judiciary.

#### **6.4.6 Creating public awareness**

We should stimulate public awareness of the women’s right to education, health and participation in public and politics and the benefits that bring to the quality of decision making affecting their lives. Awareness should be created especially among parents and teachers to encourage equal access to opportunities. Political awareness should be promoted to encourage and help women know their rights. The Government, parliament, political parties, non-governmental organizations, international organizations and media should play an important role in the process.

#### **6.4.7 Raising Economic Status (Labor Workforce Participation)**

Economic empowerment constitutes one very important component in its efforts towards achieving overall empowerment of women. Women should be given greater access to economic opportunities and meaningful employment as studies show that earned income improves their position in the household and gives them greater control over their income. Some powerful tools such as equal pay for equal work and providing independent access to credit facilities could help in recognizing gender equality.

## **APPENDIX**

## Appendix A

### The Gender Gap Rankings

Country	Overall rank	Overall Score*	Economic participation	Economic Opportunity	Political empowerment	Educational attainment	Health and well-being
Sweden	1	5.53	5	12	8	1	1
Norway	2	5.39	13	2	3	6	9
Iceland	3	5.32	17	7	2	7	6
Denmark	4	5.27	6	1	20	5	2
Finland	5	5.19	12	17	4	10	4
New Zealand	6	4.89	16	47	1	11	26
Canada	7	4.87	7	27	11	12	14
United Kingdom	8	4.75	21	41	5	4	28
Germany	9	4.61	20	28	6	34	10
Australia	10	4.61	15	25	22	17	18
Latvia	11	4.6	4	6	10	24	48
Lithuania	12	4.58	10	11	13	19	44
France	13	4.49	31	9	14	31	17
Netherlands	14	4.48	32	16	7	42	8
Estonia	15	4.47	8	5	30	18	46
Ireland	16	4.4	37	51	12	9	12
United States	17	4.4	19	46	19	8	42
Costo Rica	18	4.36	49	30	9	14	30
Poland	19	4.36	25	19	18	20	38
Belgium	20	4.3	35	37	25	15	16
Slovak Republic	21	4.28	14	33	29	23	35
Slovenia	22	4.25	26	15	39	22	19
Portugal	23	4.21	27	18	31	36	20
Hungary	24	4.19	30	3	28	39	40
Czech Republic	25	4.19	24	4	43	25	23
Luxembourg	26	4.15	48	8	33	21	25
Spain	27	4.13	45	34	27	35	5
Austria	28	4.13	42	22	21	38	13
Bulgaria	29	4.06	11	14	23	50	55
Colombia	30	4.06	41	38	15	13	52
Russian Federation	31	4.03	3	10	47	29	57
Uruguay	32	4.01	36	26	36	2	56
China	33	4.01	9	23	40	46	36
Switzerland	34	3.97	43	42	17	49	7
Argentina	35	3.97	55	29	26	3	54

South Africa	36	3.95	39	56	16	30	21
Israel	37	3.94	28	40	32	28	39
Japan	38	3.75	33	52	54	26	3
Bangladesh	39	3.74	18	53	42	37	37
Malaysia	40	3.7	40	36	51	32	15
Romania	41	3.7	23	31	35	51	47
Zimbabwe	42	3.66	2	57	34	52	41
Malta	43	3.65	56	43	45	16	24
Thailand	44	3.61	1	39	49	54	32
Italy	45	3.5	51	49	48	41	11
Indonesia	46	3.5	29	24	46	53	29
Peru	47	3.47	50	44	38	47	31
Chile	48	3.46	52	20	44	40	45
Venezuela	49	3.42	38	13	52	33	58
Greece	50	3.41	44	48	50	45	22
Brazil	51	3.29	46	21	57	27	53
Mexico	52	3.28	47	45	41	44	51
India	53	3.27	54	35	24	57	34
Korea	54	3.18	34	55	56	48	27
Jordan	55	2.96	58	32	58	43	43
Pakistan	56	2.9	53	54	37	58	33
Turkey	57	2.67	22	58	53	55	50
Egypt	58	2.38	57	50	55	56	49

\* All scores are reported on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 representing maximum gender equality

**Source:** World Economic Forum, Women's empowerment: Measuring the Global Gender Gap

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