

INVESTING IN
A LEGACY FOR NATURE

Towards a sustainable future

Roadmap 2040



Bhutan Trust Fund for
Environmental Conservation

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Taktsang monastery, Paro; Rufous-necked hornbill
Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation (BTF)

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Jigme Singye Wangchuck National Park
Photo: Nature Conservation Division, Department of Forests and Park Services (DoFPS)



**Our environment
is a gift from our
ancestors and a
responsibility
for future
generations.**

His Majesty The Druk Gyalpo
Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck



Message from the Chairperson

Established in 1991, the Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation (BTF) has been a global pioneer in environmental conservation by supporting innovative projects for sustainable development across the country, particularly in the communities. Since its inception, BTF has consistently endeavoured to harness innovation, establish partnerships, and enhance financing for much needed projects in fulfilling its core mandate of promoting social welfare through environmental conservation. The Trust Fund has so far disbursed USD 35 million in grants to 277 projects. These initiatives not only reflect Bhutan's commitment to conservation, which is a core tenet of Gross National Happiness, are also a powerful demonstration of self-reliance.

BTF was granted the Royal Charter in 1996 by His Majesty the 'the Great Fourth'. Inspired by this prescient vision, the Royal Charter 2021 was granted by His Majesty the King on 8th September 2021 with an enhanced mandate for *"keeping present needs and ensure relevance and role of BTF to meet future challenges"*. Accordingly, in addition to biodiversity preservation and environment protection, the Royal Charter bestows on BTF expanded objectives that include climate action and enabling human-wildlife coexistence.

At a time of emerging environmental challenges exacerbated by climate change, BTF is excited to launch its 'Roadmap 2040' with the ambition of harnessing opportunities to serve the Royal Vision of His Majesty the King for sustainable development in the pursuit of Gross National Happiness (GNH). Guided by the compass of our Royal Charter, BTF commits itself to closely collaborating with all its partners on a path set by the Roadmap 2040 to advance environmental conservation for social welfare of the country.

Dasho Kesang Wangdi

Deputy Minister



Message from the Managing Director

Since its inception in 1991, the Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation has provided over USD 35 million in grants for environmental conservation in Bhutan. Over the years, the Trust Fund has played a vital role in supporting the development of the revised Protected Areas network in Bhutan, which presently comprises over 52% of the country's land area, among the largest for any country.

Our funding has largely contributed to overall environmental programmes in Bhutan, upskilling of individuals, strengthening existing and building new institutions, carrying out research to support environmental conservation, and supporting local communities. Disciplined investment management and timely decisions have guided the growth of the endowment, which increased from USD 21.3 million in 1992-98 to over USD 80 million today. While we are able to provide grants annually through returns on our investments, we are also reaching out to external partners and establishing strategic partnerships to support environmental and conservation works in the country.

As the only accredited national agency in Bhutan to the Adaptation Fund and Green Climate Fund, BTF works closely with relevant sectors to tap significant funding opportunities.

The country and its citizens are blessed with strong political will and the support of our Kings, with the revised Royal Charter of 2021 giving it further impetus.

Today, the Trust has a highly motivated and qualified team that can address complex challenges and lead it to greater heights. We are pleased to share our 'Roadmap 2040', which sets out our commitment and ambition for this and the coming decade. It charts a course towards achieving the overarching vision of BTF and ensuring a sustainable future for nature and our planet.

I humbly invite you to join us on our journey to 2040 and collectively invest in our legacy for nature.

Dr. Karma Tshering

Bhutan

Nature's paradise

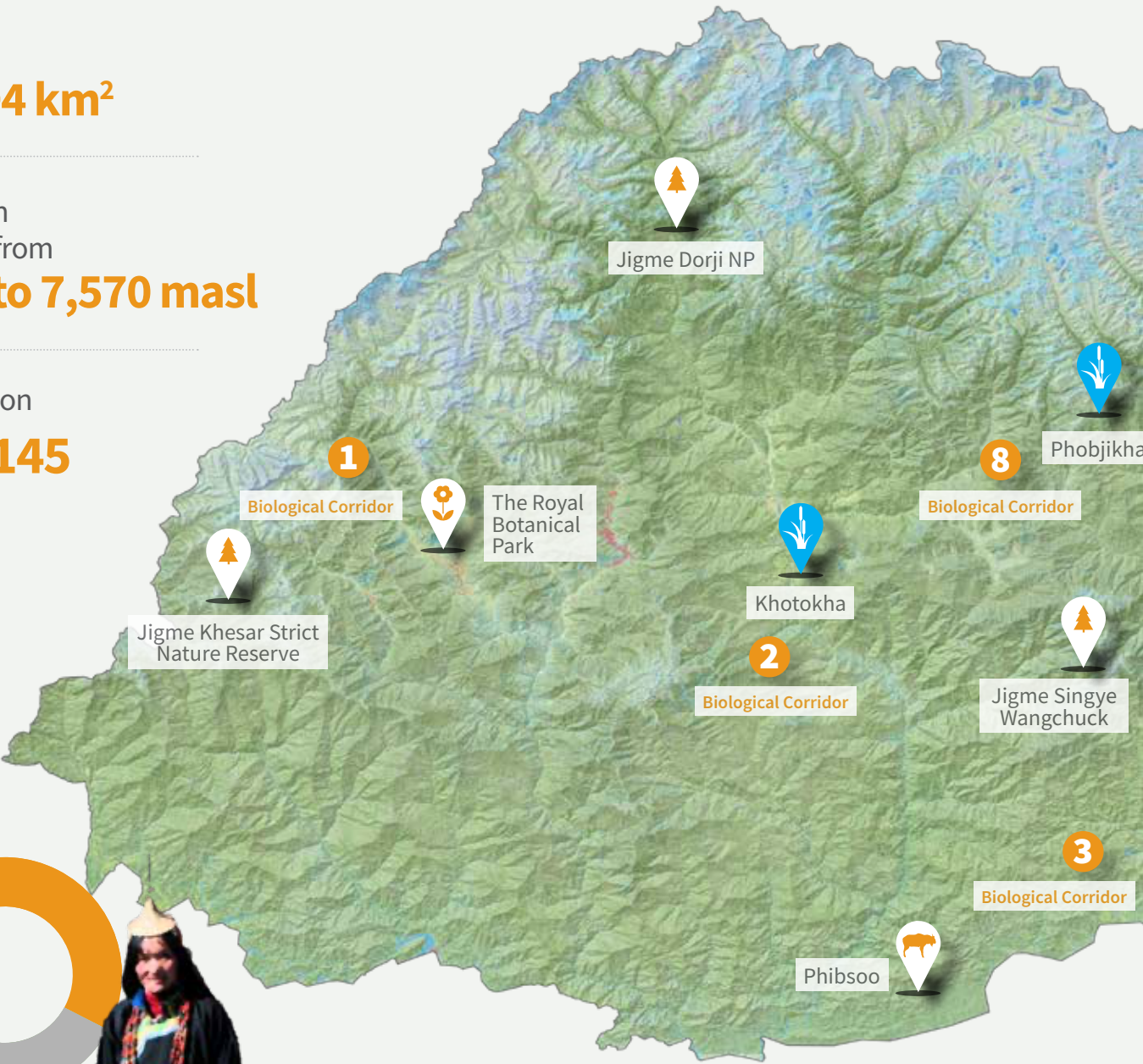
Area
38,394 km²

Elevation
ranging from
97m to 7,570 masl

Population
727,145
(2018)

Female
48%

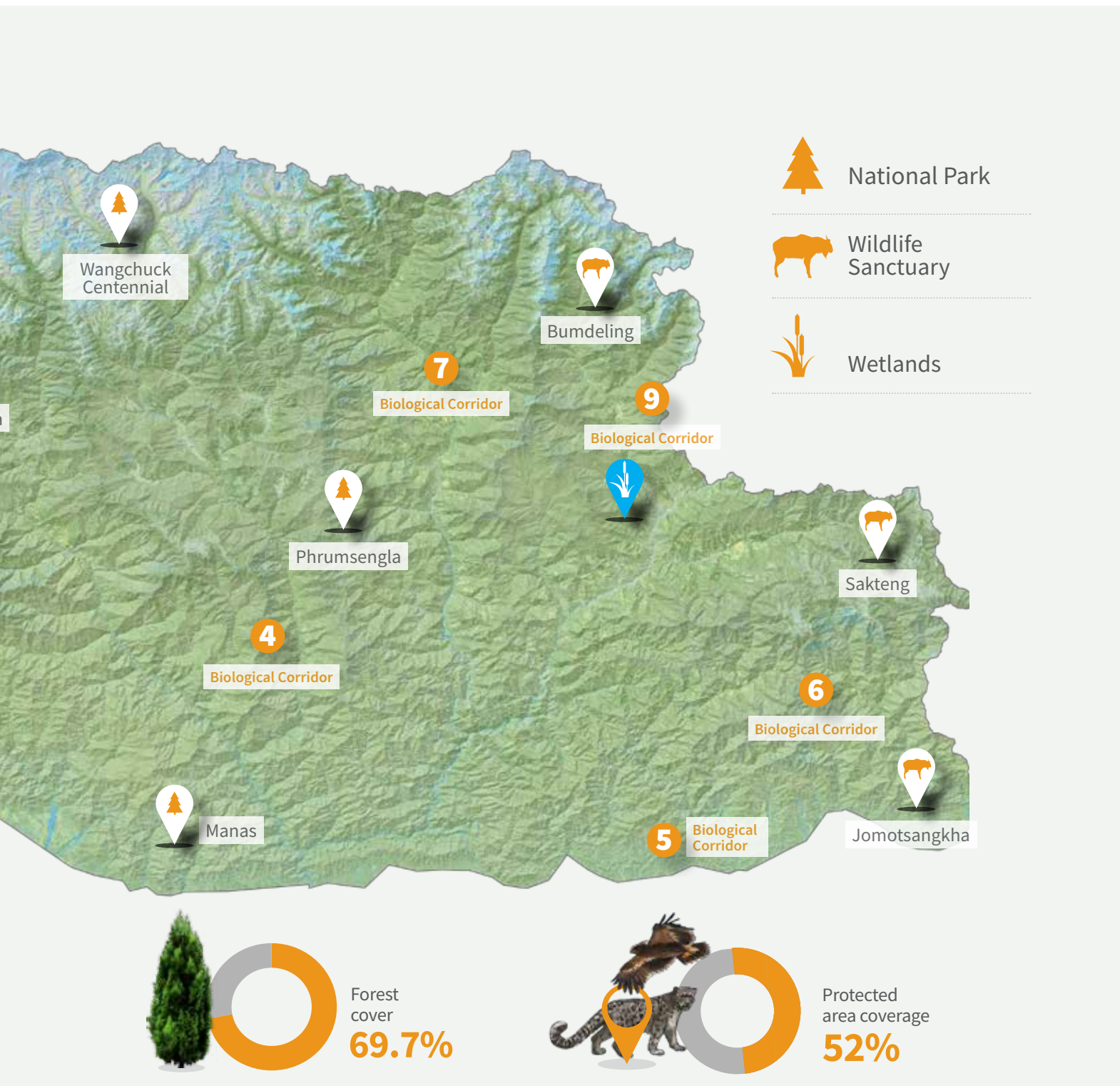
Male
52%



Faunal
diversity
4,606
*and counting



Floral
diversity
5,692
*and counting





Golden langurs
Photo: Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation (BTF)



SECTION I

Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation

The world's first environmental trust fund

The Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation (BTF) was established in 1991 under the visionary guidance of our Fourth Druk Gyalpo, His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck. It is the world's first environmental trust fund, initially started with a seed grant of USD 1 million in 1992. By 1998, it had grown to an endowment of USD 21.3 million, and by 2024, it had a portfolio of USD 80 million.

The BTF Royal Charter was granted in 1996 by His Majesty the Fourth King and a revised version was granted in 2021 by His Majesty the Fifth King.

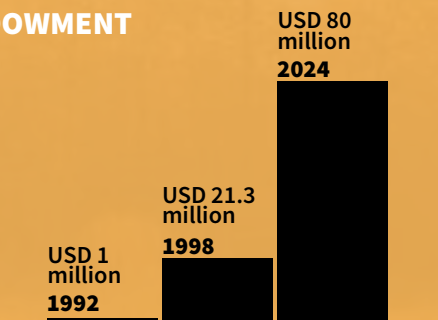
The BTF is governed by a high-level Board of Trustees, while the day-to-day business is conducted through the Secretariat headed by the Managing Director. The Board provides strategic guidance in accordance with the 2021 Royal Charter and provides public accountability on the performance and operations of the BTF. The Board also determines the scope of responsibilities of the Secretariat.

In its 30+ years history, BTF has made significant impacts in conserving Bhutan's environment and natural resources, especially pertaining to the establishment and management of protected areas and biological corridors, species conservation, ecosystem management planning, and capacity building.

BTF key achievements

Funds and investments

ENDOWMENT



GRANTS

277
projects

20
dzongkhags

USD 5.5 million

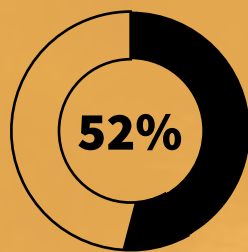
to the Bhutan for Life Initiative with a commitment of USD 0.392 million annually from 2019 through 2032

BIODIVERSITY AND ENVIRONMENT

Protected area management support

- 5** national parks
- 4** wildlife sanctuaries
- 1** strict nature reserve
- 1** botanical park
- 9** biological corridors

19,967
sq. km.



Total area

POLICIES



Nature Conservation Act and Policy



First National Snow Leopard Survey Management Plan



Elephant Conservation Action Plan 2018 -2028



White-Bellied Heron Conservation Strategy



Biological Corridor Management Plan



Tiger Action Plan 2018 -2023

SCIENCE



National forest inventory



Fish diversity



Takin status and threats



SMART patrolling

INSTITUTION BUILDING

Royal Society for Protection of Nature (1987)

Human-wildlife Conflict Endowment Fund

Changjiji Waste Academy (2021)

500 KW Dechencholing solar farm

ACCREDITATION



National Implementation Entity (NIE) 2018

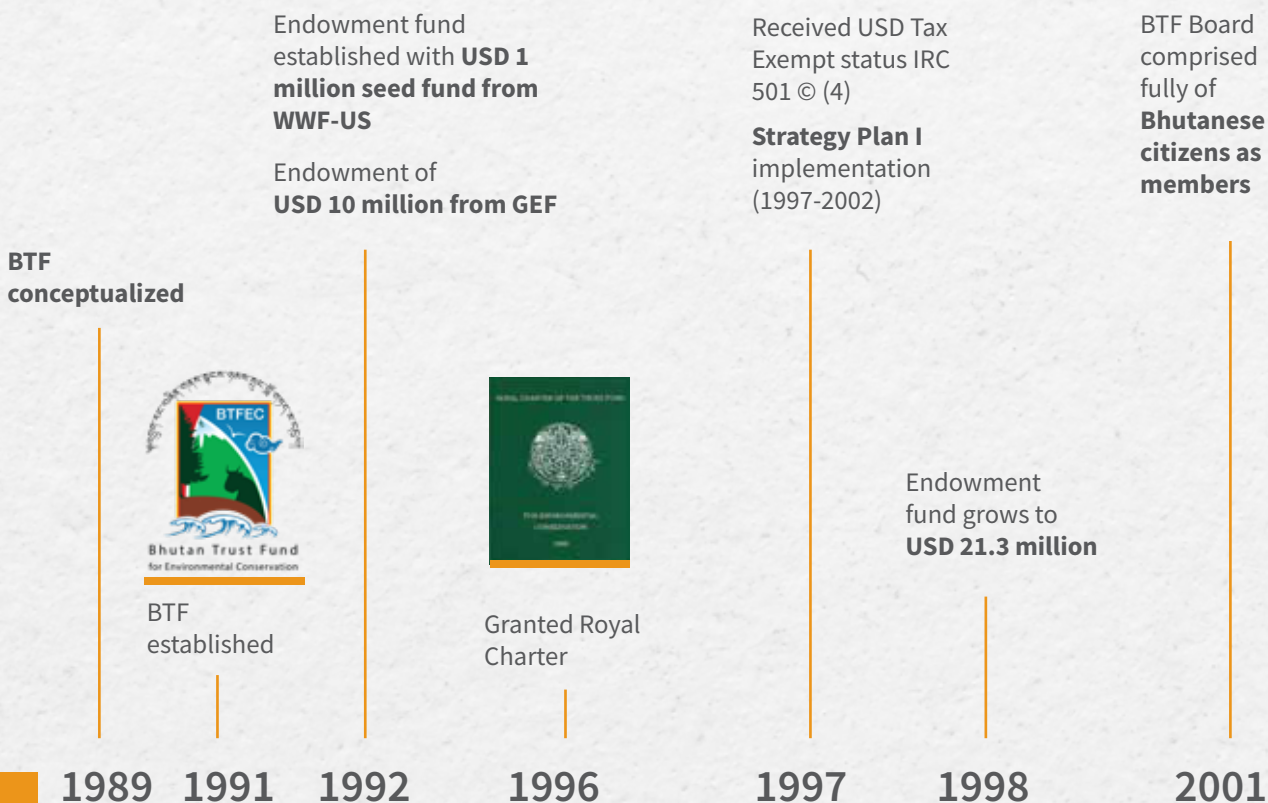


Direct Access Entity (DAE) 2020

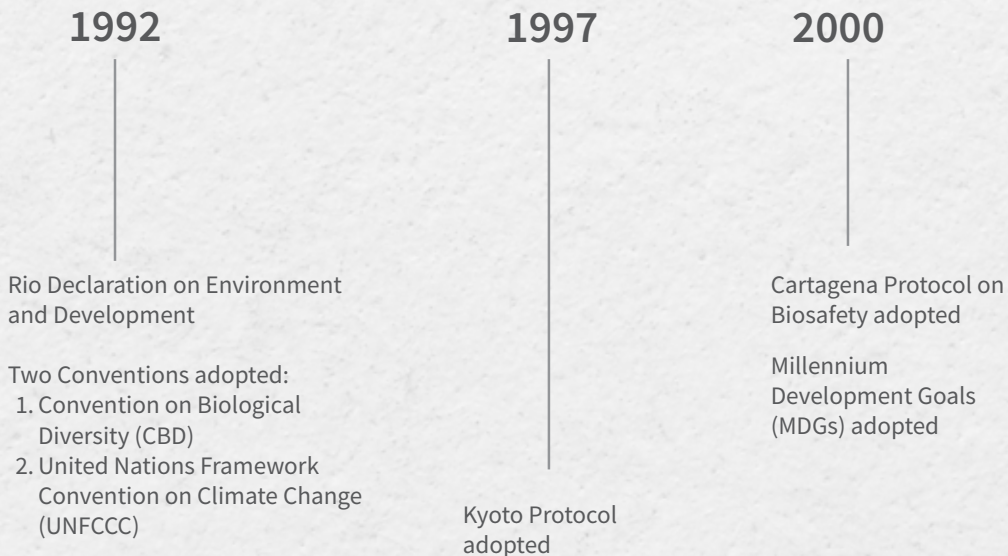
SDGs



Evolutionary milestones



Global events





His Majesty the 5th King graced BTF as Chairperson (2004-2008)



Strategy Plan III implementation (2015-2020)

Accredited to **GCF** as Direct Access Entity (DAE)



Inaugural of new **Secretariat building** by HRH Prince Jigme Dorji Wangchuck

Strategy Plan II implementation (2010-2015)

BTF by-laws adopted

Accredited to **Adaptation Fund** as its 28th National Implementing Entity (NIE)

Amended **Royal Charter**

2004

2010

2014

2015

2018

2020

2021

2024

2010

Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 adopted. Plan included 20 Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) adopted

2015

Sustainable Development Goals adopted

Paris Agreement adopted

2022

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted



Buli Village, Zhemgang
Photo: Nature Conservation Division, DoFPS

SECTION II

Our journey to 2040

Ensuring a sustainable future for nature

2.1 The need for a long-term roadmap

Bhutan is a natural repository of diverse flora and fauna that range from species inhabiting lowland tropical ecosystems to high-altitude alpine habitats. Situated within the Himalaya hotspot, it is home to 27 mammal and 20 avifauna species that are globally threatened, and at least 105 species of endemic plants.

Bhutan's remarkable legacy of effective biodiversity conservation is underpinned by the nation's robust policy frameworks and their meticulous implementation. Enshrined in its constitution is the steadfast commitment to maintain a minimum of 60 percent forest cover in perpetuity, safeguarding biodiversity and ecosystem services for generations to come.

However, Bhutan confronts a nexus of environmental challenges with local, national, and global origins. Despite its status as one of only a few carbon-negative countries in the world, Bhutan remains susceptible to the impacts of global climate and environmental change, including climate-induced disasters that threaten both its biodiversity and the well-being of its people.

The year 2023 marked a significant milestone in Bhutan's development trajectory, as it officially graduated from the United Nations' roster of least developed countries (LDCs). Yet, the pathway towards economic progress carries major implications for ecosystems and biodiversity resulting in issues such as habitat degradation, mismanagement of waste, human-wildlife conflicts, air pollution, and migration of rural youth to urban centres.

Purpose of Roadmap 2040

The Bhutan Trust Fund Roadmap 2040 charts a course towards achieving the overarching vision of the Trust. This Roadmap acknowledges current environmental challenges, anticipates future demands on the nation's natural resources, and recognizes that environmental challenges will continue to evolve over time.

It also acknowledges that investments in biodiversity entail extended timelines to yield sustainable results. This will only be possible through strategic partnerships with people and organizations who share a common vision and long-term commitment to conserve nature and the environment.

2.2 Why the Bhutan Trust Fund

Established upon the principles of environmental stewardship and sustainable development, BTF is of both national and global significance. BTF has collaborated with the Royal Government of Bhutan, the private sector, civil society, research organizations, and local communities to safeguard the country's biodiversity and secure the wellbeing of its current and future generations. Moreover, BTF's mission transcends borders by resonating with the collective aspirations of the global community.

BTF is a prominent leader in biodiversity conservation due to our:

Proven track record of investing in nature

Our 30+ years of investments in securing Bhutan's biodiversity and promoting community-led conservation efforts have benefited over half a million people in the country. Since 1993, we have played a significant role in establishing and sustainably financing Bhutan's protected area system, which now covers more than half of the country's area. We are also committed to financing the Bhutan for Life initiative from 2019 to 2032 so that our country's protected areas and biological corridors are sustainably financed into the future.

Global relevance

Bhutan is a microcosm of the environmental challenges facing our planet. By addressing these challenges, our initiatives have global implications by providing invaluable insights and solutions applicable to diverse ecosystems worldwide.

Commitment to sustainability

With a commitment to equity and inclusivity by engaging local communities, fostering knowledge exchange, and promoting sustainable livelihoods, we ensure that our conservation efforts are responsive and yield sustainable outcomes.

Therefore, given our strengths, we are both relevant and capable of forging a dynamic pathway towards achieving our vision of a sustainable future for nature and people.





Black-necked cranes in Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary
Photo: Yeshey Dorji



Red panda
Photo: Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation (BTF)

SECTION III

Priority thematic areas

Conserving nature for future generations

3.1 Vision & Mission

We will build on our country's rich legacy of safeguarding the natural environment to deliver on our vision and mission.

Vision

Social wellbeing in Bhutan is secured through environmental conservation

Mission

Leverage, upscale, and accelerate innovative financing that advances the conservation of biodiversity, resilience to climate change, and coexistence of humans and wildlife, while addressing the adverse impacts of development on the environment

Our core values

Building on our country's Buddhist philosophy of living in harmony with nature, we will adhere to the following core values while delivering on our mission.



Stewardship

We uphold and advocate environmentally friendly and sustainable practices to safeguard a habitable nation for future generations



Collaboration

We build inclusive team dynamics that nurture cooperation, engagement, and respect, both within and beyond our organization



Transparency

Given our mandate to disburse funds, we prioritize transparency by maintaining honesty, impartiality, trustworthiness, and accountability in all procedures



Adaptability

We embrace change and remain adaptable to the emerging issues and challenges faced by the environmental and development sectors in Bhutan



Innovation

We champion creativity and forward-thinking approaches by continually seeking innovative solutions and by empowering youth to shape the future





Neutrality

We will remain politically impartial in our work and grant making. As individuals, we will continually seek to reflect on and address our own implicit biases

3.2 Thematic areas

To achieve our vision, we will work on delivering impacts in four priority thematic areas as guided by the Royal Charter 2021.

<div><div>Thematic Area 1</div><div>Conserving biological diversity</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>Rationale</div><div>Bhutan’s rich biodiversity and natural environment are the foundations of our spiritual and cultural heritage, as well as the source of livelihoods for all citizens. It provides essential ecosystem services in the form of food and fodder, medicine, and housing materials. Furthermore, it is the basis of the hydropower and tourism sectors, which contribute up to 40 and 10 percent, respectively, of the national GDP.</div><div>The key drivers of biodiversity loss in Bhutan include habitat loss and degradation, unsustainable resource extraction, the spread of alien invasive species, and climate change. These factors reinforce one another to exacerbate the loss of biodiversity. Climate change poses a particular threat to Bhutan, given that more than two-thirds of its landscape is mountainous, hosting unique alpine ecosystems with species adapted to cold and harsh conditions.</div></div> <div><div>Outcome</div><div>Bhutan’s rich biodiversity is safeguarded through the sustainable management of key species and their habitats.</div></div> <div><div>Investments</div><div>BTF will invest in the conservation of threatened species and genetic diversity, management of areas of high biodiversity, restoration of degraded areas, sustainable utilization of natural resources, management and control of alien invasive species, and conservation of native agrobiodiversity.</div></div> <div><div>National targets</div><div>Five Year Plans; National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan; NBC Vision 2030</div></div> <div><div>Global targets</div><div>Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework; SDG 15</div></div>
<div><div>Thematic Area 2</div><div>Enabling human-wildlife coexistence</div><div></div></div>	<div><div>Rationale</div><div>The Bhutanese people have coexisted with wildlife for millennia, guided by their profound belief in Buddhist philosophy that advocates living in harmony with nature, fostering a high level of tolerance towards wildlife. However, escalating cases of human-wildlife conflict, leading to loss and injury to human life, crop and livestock depredation, and damage to physical assets, have heightened tensions between humans and wildlife. In many cases, these conflicts have tragically resulted in retaliatory killing of wildlife.</div><div>Wildlife damage to crops accounts for up to 18 percent of total household income, and an average of two months per year is spent on guarding crops from wildlife incursions. Crop and property damage from wildlife has led to the abandonment of nearly 40 percent of farmlands, while 14 percent of the farming population has transitioned from farm-based livelihoods to off-farm employment, including migration.</div></div> <div><div>Outcome</div><div>Human-wildlife coexistence is enabled by securing the well-being of both people and wildlife</div></div> <div><div>Investments</div><div>BTF will invest in projects that apply a holistic approach to addressing conflict that encompasses diverse sectors including natural resources, livelihoods and economy, agriculture, education, technology, research, and health.</div></div> <div><div>National targets</div><div>National Biodiversity Strategy & Action Plan; Human-Wildlife Conflict Management Strategy; Species Conservation Plans</div></div> <div><div>Global targets:</div><div>Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (Target 4); SDGs 2, 15</div></div>

**Thematic
Area 3**
**Mitigating
and
adapting
to climate
change**



Rationale

Despite being a carbon negative country, Bhutan is not immune to the impacts of global climate change. Climate change is already affecting key sectors such as water, agriculture, forests, biodiversity, energy, and human health. We are witnessing the drying of water sources, melting of glaciers, and increased incidences of climate-induced hazards such as flash floods, landslides, pest and disease outbreaks, and forest fires. The increasing risks of climate-induced forest fires threaten both biodiversity and Bhutan's capacity as a carbon sink.

Over a thirty-year period (1976–2005), Bhutan's annual average temperature increased by 0.8 degrees Celsius, with winters warming by 1.3 degrees. Average annual rainfall has decreased overall, although there is high seasonal variability. Future climate projections indicate that by the end of the century, temperatures will increase by about 0.8 to 2.8 degrees (RCP 4.5) and even up to 3.2 degrees (RCP 8.5).

Outcome

Remain a carbon-neutral nation while strengthening climate resilience of citizens and ecosystems

Investments

BTF will invest in climate mitigation, adaptation, loss and damage, and climate finance. BTF will contribute to the Bhutan Climate Fund which has a requirement of USD 50 million. There is also scope for BTF to be engaged in carbon finance.

National targets

National Adaptation Plan; Nationally Determined Contribution

Global targets

Paris Agreement; SDG 13

**Thematic
Area 4**
**Addressing
adverse
impacts of
development
on the
environment**



Rationale

Bhutan's socio-economic development has followed a middle path that is grounded in its commitment to Gross National Happiness (GNH), which prioritizes holistic well-being over purely economic indicators. This principle takes into account Bhutan's unique cultural heritage, pristine natural environment, and the happiness and well-being of its citizens.

Development has, however, led to an increase in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and atmospheric pollution, as well as land conversion and waste production. Although Bhutan's forests presently sequester more GHGs than the total national emissions, projections to 2050 under current rates of development and climate change scenarios suggest that by 2047/48, GHG emissions will surpass the carbon sequestration potential, jeopardizing Bhutan's carbon-neutrality pledge.

Outcome

Green and climate-resilient development contributes to sustainable socio-economic outcomes for the nation

Investments

BTF will invest in projects that support transformations in the renewable energy, construction, and waste management sectors. Research and capacity building in these sectors will be key to support piloting, innovating, and scaling of processes.

National targets

Five Year Plans; NBSAP; Long-Term Low Greenhouse Gas Emission and Climate Resilient Development Strategy (LTS); National Adaptation Plan

Global targets:

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework; Paris Agreement; SDGs 7, 11, 13



Grandala
Photo: Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation (BTF)

SECTION IV

Securing financial sustainability

Mobilising funds for a sustainable future

Our portfolio in 2024 comprises an endowment fund of USD 80 million and a sinking fund of USD 10 million with a disbursement capacity of 5 percent, i.e., USD 2 million per year. Inspired by the vision of our Fourth Druk Gyalpo, His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, our ambition is to expand our endowment to USD 200 million and our sinking funds to USD 50 million by 2040. This will enable us to disburse up to USD 10 million per year.

To realize this, we will adopt the following strategies:

i. Diversify funding sources

In addition to our conventional funding sources, we will explore opportunities to diversify our funding sources. These can include corporate partners, impact investors, management fees of multilateral and bilateral projects (i.e. our sinking funds), and innovative investments. By doing this, we will reduce our reliance on any single funding stream and consequently increase our financial sustainability.

ii. Implement Program Related Investments

Program related investment (PRI) is a flexible financing tool, guided by the Royal Charter 2021, which delivers social or environmental outcomes with recoverable investment from BTF at below market interest or no interest. Bhutan's first solar farm was established through a BTF PRI.

iii. Increase donor engagement

We will cultivate and strengthen relationships with existing and potential donors through strategic communications and engagement opportunities to attract more investments, and we will report transparently on the impact of their contributions.

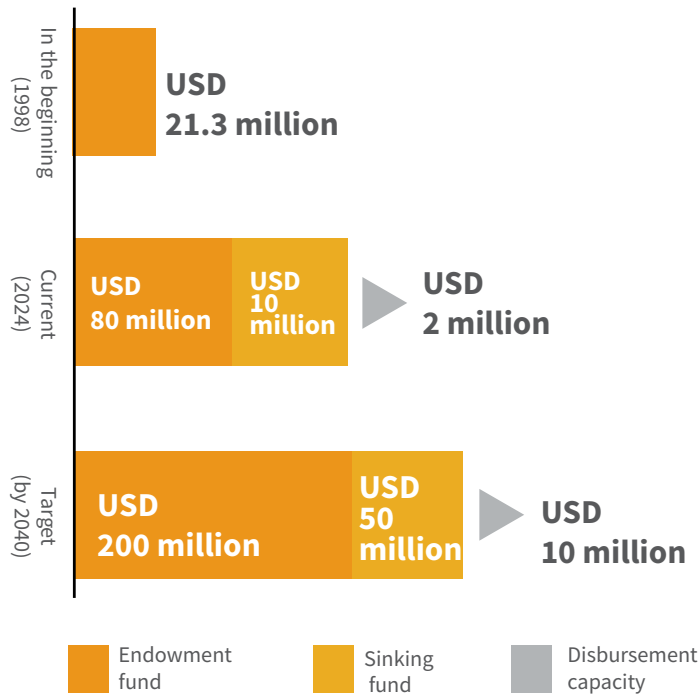
iv. Proactively write grants

Focusing on areas aligned with our priority thematic areas, we will launch a proactive and strategic grant-writing campaign to secure additional funding from national and international donors, foundations, and multilateral agencies.

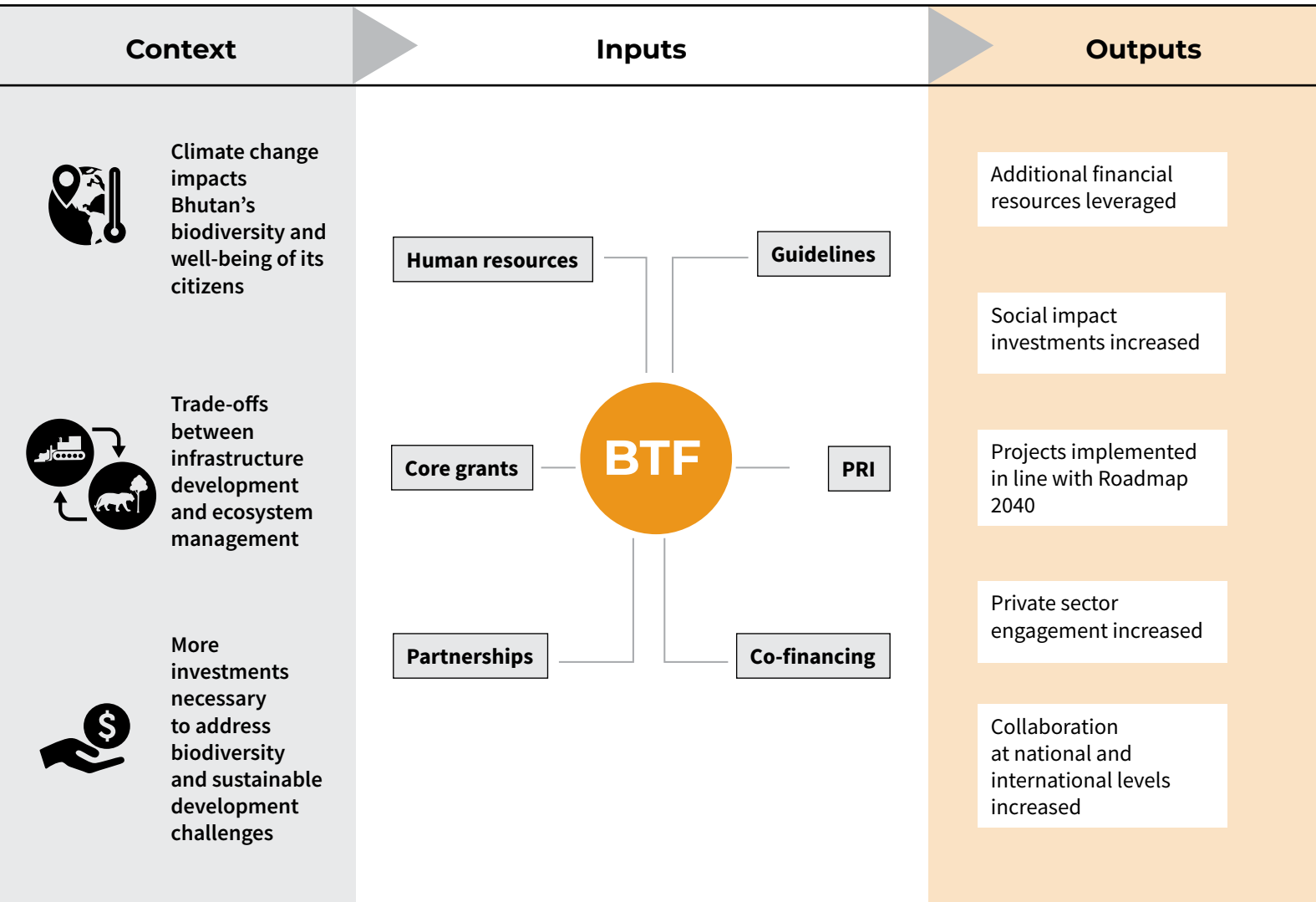
v. Invest in fundraising capacity

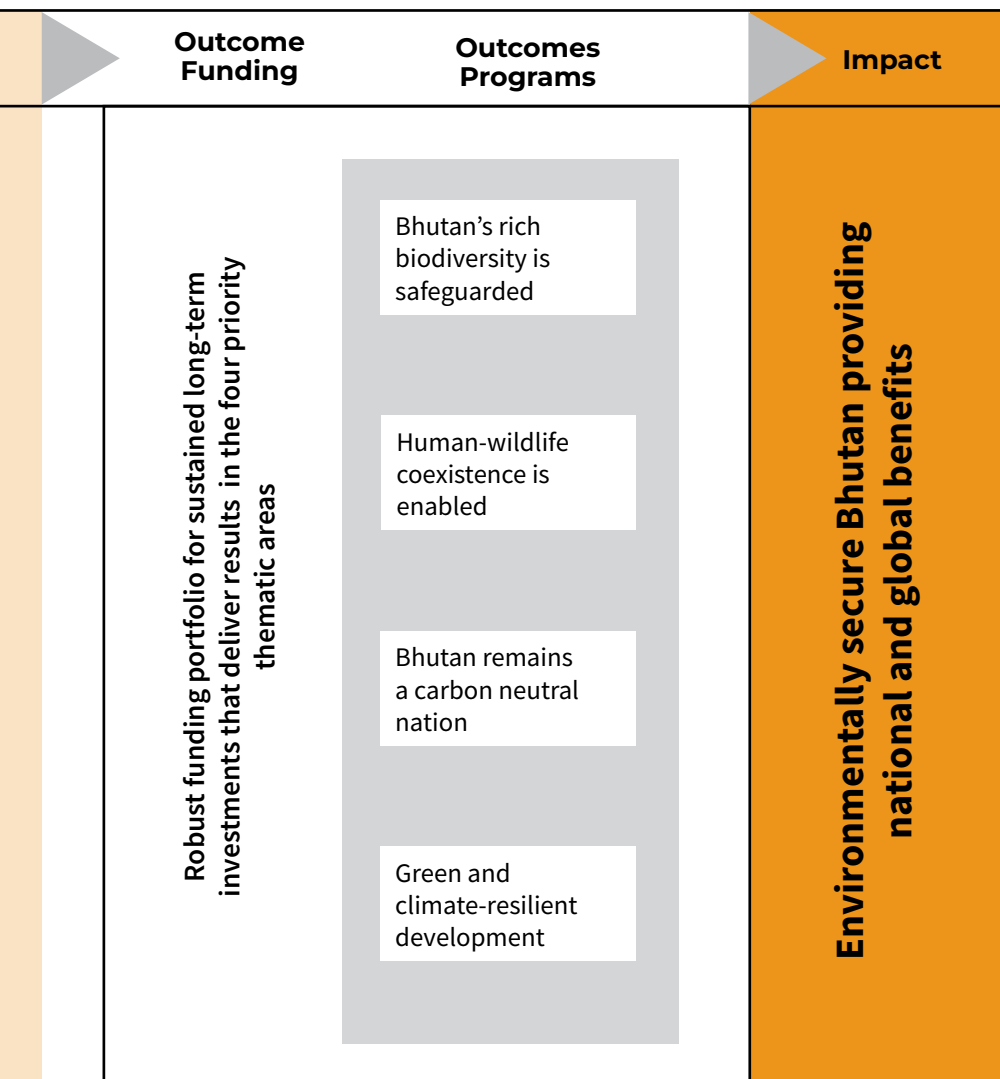
We will invest in building and strengthening our internal capacity for fundraising by training staff, recruiting specialized talent, and adopting best practices in donor relationship management and grant writing.

BTF funds portfolio



Our theory of change





To address the growing challenges arising from climate change and development, Bhutan needs significant financial inputs from all sectors, including government, private, and civil society. BTF plays a crucial role in addressing these environmental challenges by financing relevant projects through its core grants, PRI, and co-financing mechanisms. Our grantees will receive technical support in the form of guidelines and capacity building initiatives. We will also prioritize building strong partnerships at both national and international levels.

These inputs will lead to additional financial resources for our endowment and sinking funds, and the potential to increase our investments at both national and international levels. We will also have more engagement with the private sector, and our collaboration with a diverse range of partners at the national and international levels will significantly increase.

By 2040, we aim to have a robust funding portfolio of USD 250 million, which will allow for sustained long-term investments in our four priority thematic areas, resulting in the safeguarding of our rich biodiversity, coexistence between humans and wildlife, maintaining our carbon-neutral status while adapting to climate change, and achieving green and climate-resilient development. Together, these will contribute to ensuring that social wellbeing in Bhutan is secured through environmental conservation.



Satyr tragopan and a local hermit co-existing in Bhutan.
Photo: Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation (BTF)

SECTION V

Realizing our vision

Working collaboratively towards a sustainable future

Realizing our long-term vision requires that we have key institutional systems in place. Hence, we will build on the following aspects to enable us to efficiently mobilise our resources and investments.

5.1 Governance

Guided by the Royal Charter 2021, our robust governance structure currently enables us to deliver the highest level of operational efficiency. We also have in place internal policies and norms to ensure that we remain at par with international standards of compliance – on conflict management and dispute resolution, environmental and social management, fraud and corruption, risk management, and whistle blowing, among others. We will foster a culture of continuous improvement by encouraging innovation, learning, and adaptation to evolving governance best practices and organizational needs.

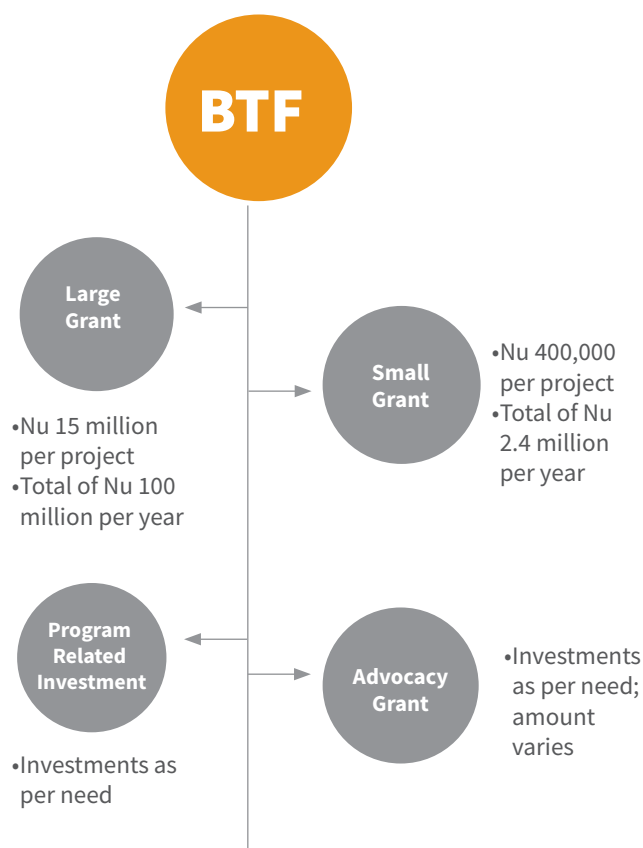
5.2 Partnerships and networking

We recognize the importance of strategic partnering and effective networking with both government and non-government organisations, and that leveraging existing platforms and building trust are key elements in this endeavour. Our partnerships will be both externally directed, for instance with funding organisations and international environmental organizations, as well as internally directed with our national and local policy actors and community organisations. Recognizing the substantial contribution of the private sector to environmental conservation and socio-economic development, we will develop strategies to collaborate with them effectively.

5.3 Funds disbursement

We disburse grants through three windows: 1) large grants, 2) small grants, and 3) program related investments (PRI). While the first two grants are capped at 15 million Bhutanese Ngultrum (approximately USD 180,000) and 400,000 Ngultrum (USD 4800), respectively, per project, the PRI varies based on individual cases. There is also an opportunity to provide advocacy grants as needed.

Grant disbursement is done in a competitive manner. Proposals are requested on topics prioritized by the periodic strategic plans. These proposals then go through an initial screening process, followed by a rigorous review and evaluation by an independent panel of external reviewers. The shortlisted proposals are further reviewed by the Management Board, which approves the final selection.



5.4 Monitoring, evaluation, and learning

BTF has a robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system that assesses and reviews our projects. We are committed to further improving this system, particularly through the development of a set of standard indicators that all projects will contribute to. This will help us collectively measure progress across a diverse range of grantees over time.

Learning is an important process that allows the continuous improvement of a project. As part of our commitment to transparency and accountability, we will actively share lessons learned, evidence, and best practices. Moreover, we will encourage our grantees to do the same and share their insights and experiences using a variety of platforms.

5.5 Gender equality and social inclusion

We recognize that gender equality and social inclusion are important considerations while designing and implementing projects. Vulnerability to environmental disasters is further exacerbated by factors including gender, age, poverty, and disability, among others. BTF has a comprehensive gender equity strategy framework which ensures that we integrate gender equality and equity perspectives, both within the workplace and throughout our projects.

5.6 Communications and outreach

Effective communication ensures that we are better engaged with our stakeholders, including partners, government agencies, local communities, and donors. By fostering trust and transparency, it encourages continued collaboration and support. Through our outreach efforts, and working closely with our grantees, we will raise awareness about environmental issues and inspire action towards conservation and sustainable practices. Recognizing the diversity of communication tools available, we are committed to tailoring our products to meet the specific needs and priorities of each stakeholder group.

5.7 Capacity building

We prioritize capacity building for our staff, governing board members, and stakeholders through opportunities for training, exchange and exposure, mentorship, and temporary placements in relevant organizations, among others. We will especially invest in processes to build the capacity of potential grantees representing diverse sectors to enable them to access our grants and to implement projects that deliver results towards our outcomes. By ensuring that we have the highest levels of skills and the capacity both in-house and at the national level, we can effectively deliver this Roadmap 2040.

Join us on our journey to deliver on our mission

Every Bhutanese is a trustee of the Kingdom's natural resources and environment for the benefit of the present and future generations and it is the fundamental duty of every citizen to contribute to the protection of the natural environment, conservation of the rich biodiversity of Bhutan and prevention of all forms of ecological degradation including noise, visual and physical pollution through the adoption and support of environment friendly practices and policies.

- Article 5, The Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan (2008)

We invite and encourage you to join us on our mission. Together, we can make significant strides towards ensuring that social wellbeing in Bhutan is secured through environmental conservation.

Bumdeling Wildlife Sanctuary
Photo: Nature Conservation Division, DoFPS



Bhutan Trust Fund
for Environmental Conservation