

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

(2014 -2018)

National Assembly of Bhutan
Parliament of Bhutan



Developed with
support from
UNDP Bhutan



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Foreword



Since its introduction in 2008, democracy in Bhutan has been progressing and deepening. It exudes great hope and potential to mature to meet the aspirations of the people. Democracy and its principles are the bedrock of Bhutan's bright and promising future. The culmination to the polity and its evolution represent the ideals and vision of the extraordinary leadership Bhutan enjoyed for generations.

As an important parliamentary institution, the National Assembly is an embodiment of Bhutan's democratic future. It commits to strengthening democratic culture and values that befit and encompass our nation's development philosophy of Gross National Happiness. To guide and support the efforts of the National Assembly to fulfill its mandates in serving the people of Bhutan, it developed its five-year Strategic Development Plan (2014-2018). It is expected to steer it to the shore of success: carrying out its constitutional mandates effectively. The plan also is a testimony to the Assembly's commitment to honoring and anchoring the will of the people.

The strategic plan contains four strategic objectives. They are strengthening the institutional capacity of the National Assembly Secretariat, improving the legislative capacity and processes of the National Assembly, enhancing the oversight capacity, and strengthening the House's representational and outreach capacity.

Being a young parliament, Bhutan’s legislature has often been saddled with challenges to carry out its mandates for want of resources - both in terms of human and financials. The strategic plan outlines strategic objectives and strategic activities that will help the Assembly in meeting those challenges to achieve its vision “*To achieve the Kingdom of Bhutan’s overarching goal of Gross National Happiness enshrined in the Constitution through an inclusive and a vibrant democracy*”.

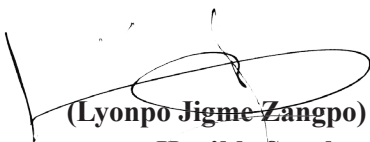
As a blue print, the strategic plan illustrates its mission and core values that will guide the National Assembly’s expending of resources and fundamental values to abide by. The plan is intended to be dynamic that is able to accommodate priorities that arise because of changing needs of the House. It provides the strategic direction the Assembly is committed to move in to be responsive to the needs of the people and the country.

In the face of modernizing global parliamentary traditions and best practices amid fast changing political demands of the people, it is no longer an option for Bhutan’s legislature to brush aside the need to become contemporary. Therefore, the strategic plan highlights the need to be abreast of international parliamentary developments through collaboration with foreign legislatures and at the same time remain relevant to the country’s culture-embedded parliamentary traditions.

On behalf of the National Assembly, I call on to various stakeholders to lend your helping hand in implementing this strategic plan.

The National Assembly is grateful to UNDP Bhutan for their technical and financial support in developing this plan. The National Assembly Secretariat and MPs who had been part of framing the document deserve sincere acknowledgments.

I am confident that the strategic plan will go a long way in helping the National Assembly achieve its vision and fulfill the aspirations of the people.


(Lyonpo Jigme Zangpo)
Hon’ble Speaker
National Assembly of Bhutan

Preface



I am happy to put on record that the National Assembly has developed this Strategic Development Plan. This Plan is a culmination of a number of consultations and discourses held with various stakeholders both at individual as well as in groups comprising the Honorable Speaker, the Honorable Members of the National Assembly and with the staff of the Secretariat. Several rounds of discussions and workshops with the above stakeholders also went into refining this document.

This strategic plan will serve as a guiding document and a road map for the period 2014 – 2018 that the National Assembly will hope to travel in the immediate future. It will also ensure that the National Assembly Secretariat is able to render quality and efficient services to the Honorable members in order that they fulfill their constitutional duties. However, there are also projections that go beyond the next five years such as seeking autonomy of the National Assembly pertaining to the human resource development of its secretariat staff that would lead to more proactive organization capable of addressing the demands of modern parliamentary functions.

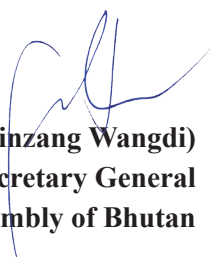
Within this outlook, the strategic objectives and activities look at ways to strengthen the capacity of the National Assembly and its members in fulfilling their sacred responsibilities - the primary being legislative, oversight and representation. The plan is hoped to lead to a sustainable growth and an effective National Assembly

and its Secretariat through a systematic planning process. It provides a venue to introspect and capitalize on the strengths while addressing the weaknesses of the institute, in terms of resources and infrastructure in order to achieve excellence in our individual functions as well as an institute.

Given that Bhutan's democratically elected Parliament is young, the strategic plan aims to develop a body of knowledge on the core functions of Parliament. The literature on the legislative processes, oversight and representation will go a long way in supporting the Honorable Members of the National Assembly to perform their responsibilities. Trainings, workshops and collaboration with international parliamentary institutions will enhance the capacity of members and secretariat staff through exposure to global parliamentary best practices and traditions.

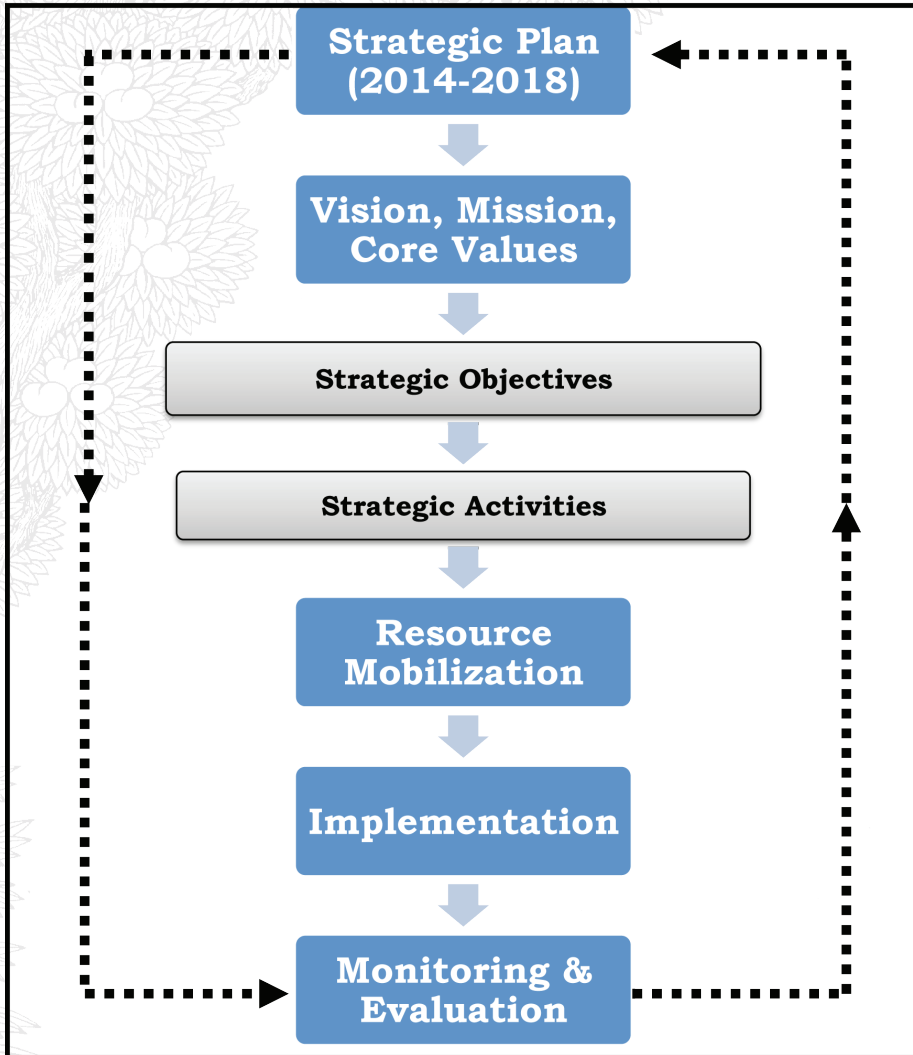
The National Assembly Secretariat as the agency responsible is committed to implement the strategic plan and make it a success. The success of the implementation of this document would eventually result in the achievement of the National Assembly's vision and mission that ultimately stand to fulfill the aspirations of the people. However, we are also aware that the National Assembly will need a lot of support from both government and potential international collaborators to help us in implementing this strategic plan and make it become a reality.

Lastly, I would like to thank UNDP Bhutan for their support in developing this strategic plan and fielding a national consultant to do so. I am also confident that they will continue to support the planned activities in this plan.



(Kinzang Wangdi)
Secretary General
National Assembly of Bhutan

Graphical Overview of the Strategic Development Plan

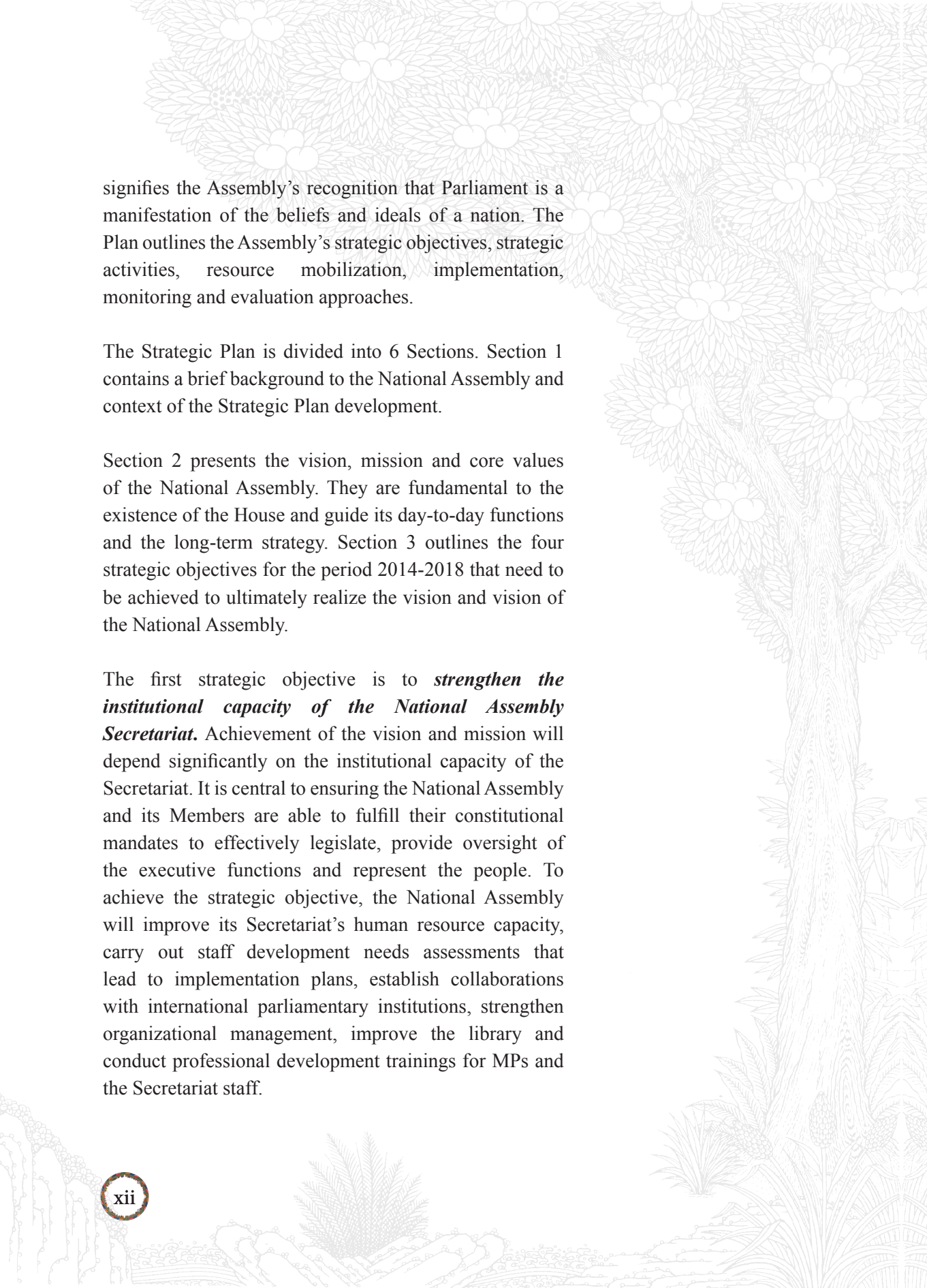


Executive Summary



>> *The National Assembly Hall*

The vision of the National Assembly of Bhutan is “*To achieve the Kingdom of Bhutan’s overarching goal of Gross National Happiness enshrined in the Constitution through an inclusive and a vibrant democracy*”. And the House’s mission is “*To effectively carry out legislative, scrutiny, oversight and representational functions to fulfill the aspirations of the Bhutanese people*”. To achieve the vision and mission, the National Assembly developed its Strategic Development Plan (2014-2018). As a legislative body, the Strategic Plan is an expression of the National Assembly’s commitment to meet the expectations and aspirations of the people of Bhutan. The commitment

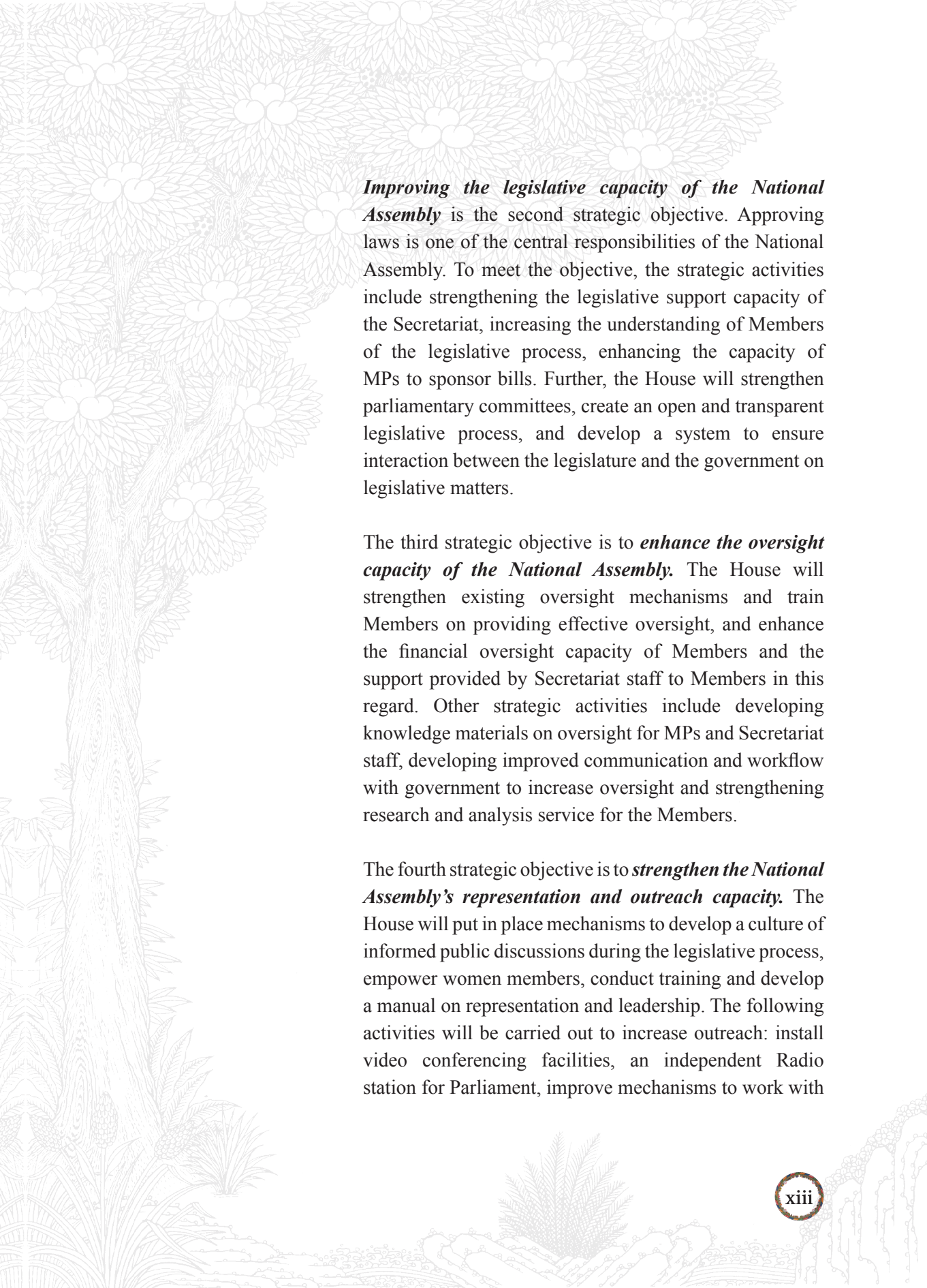


signifies the Assembly's recognition that Parliament is a manifestation of the beliefs and ideals of a nation. The Plan outlines the Assembly's strategic objectives, strategic activities, resource mobilization, implementation, monitoring and evaluation approaches.

The Strategic Plan is divided into 6 Sections. Section 1 contains a brief background to the National Assembly and context of the Strategic Plan development.

Section 2 presents the vision, mission and core values of the National Assembly. They are fundamental to the existence of the House and guide its day-to-day functions and the long-term strategy. Section 3 outlines the four strategic objectives for the period 2014-2018 that need to be achieved to ultimately realize the vision and vision of the National Assembly.

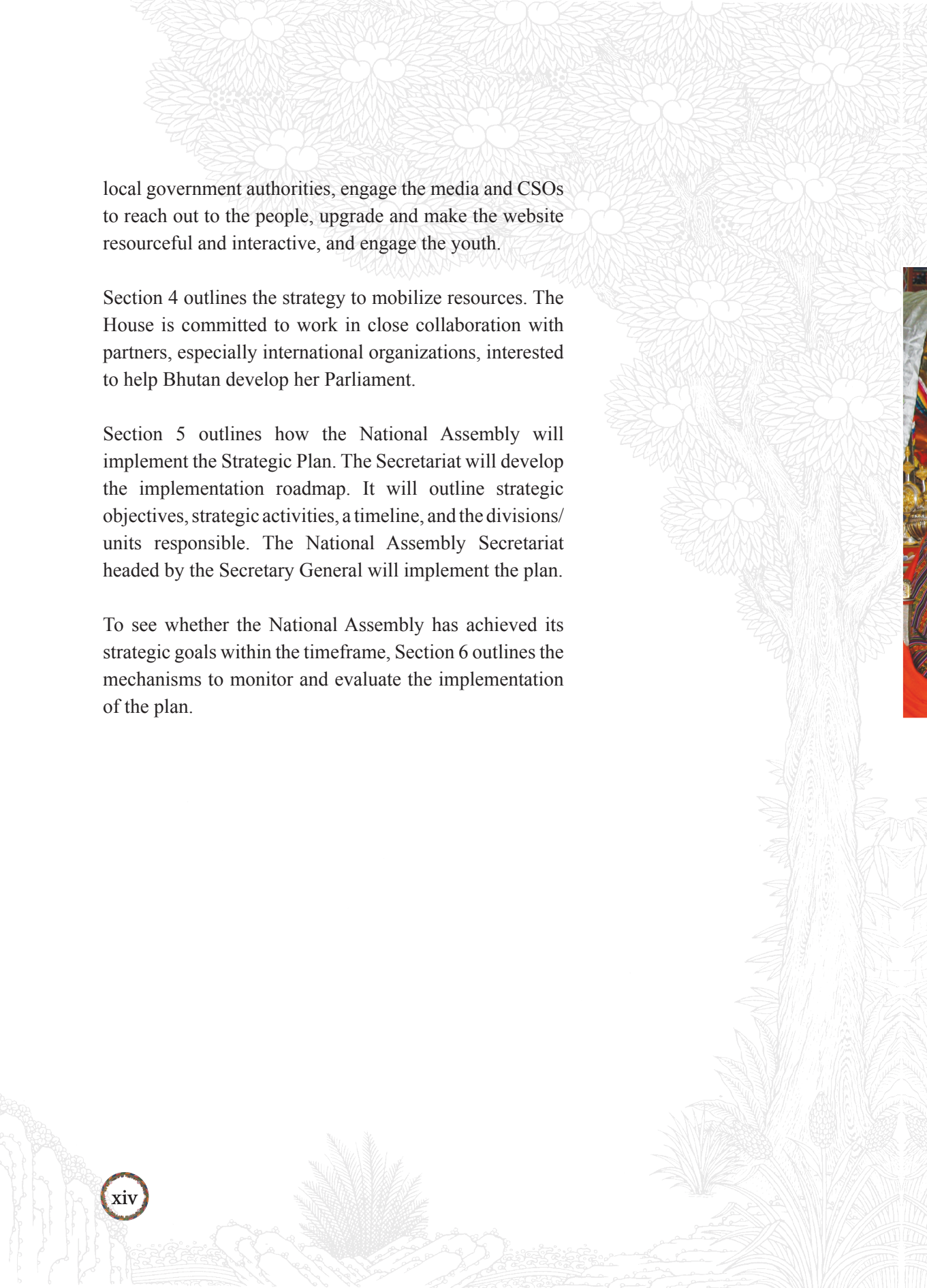
The first strategic objective is to ***strengthen the institutional capacity of the National Assembly Secretariat***. Achievement of the vision and mission will depend significantly on the institutional capacity of the Secretariat. It is central to ensuring the National Assembly and its Members are able to fulfill their constitutional mandates to effectively legislate, provide oversight of the executive functions and represent the people. To achieve the strategic objective, the National Assembly will improve its Secretariat's human resource capacity, carry out staff development needs assessments that lead to implementation plans, establish collaborations with international parliamentary institutions, strengthen organizational management, improve the library and conduct professional development trainings for MPs and the Secretariat staff.



Improving the legislative capacity of the National Assembly is the second strategic objective. Approving laws is one of the central responsibilities of the National Assembly. To meet the objective, the strategic activities include strengthening the legislative support capacity of the Secretariat, increasing the understanding of Members of the legislative process, enhancing the capacity of MPs to sponsor bills. Further, the House will strengthen parliamentary committees, create an open and transparent legislative process, and develop a system to ensure interaction between the legislature and the government on legislative matters.

The third strategic objective is to ***enhance the oversight capacity of the National Assembly***. The House will strengthen existing oversight mechanisms and train Members on providing effective oversight, and enhance the financial oversight capacity of Members and the support provided by Secretariat staff to Members in this regard. Other strategic activities include developing knowledge materials on oversight for MPs and Secretariat staff, developing improved communication and workflow with government to increase oversight and strengthening research and analysis service for the Members.

The fourth strategic objective is to ***strengthen the National Assembly's representation and outreach capacity***. The House will put in place mechanisms to develop a culture of informed public discussions during the legislative process, empower women members, conduct training and develop a manual on representation and leadership. The following activities will be carried out to increase outreach: install video conferencing facilities, an independent Radio station for Parliament, improve mechanisms to work with



local government authorities, engage the media and CSOs to reach out to the people, upgrade and make the website resourceful and interactive, and engage the youth.

Section 4 outlines the strategy to mobilize resources. The House is committed to work in close collaboration with partners, especially international organizations, interested to help Bhutan develop her Parliament.

Section 5 outlines how the National Assembly will implement the Strategic Plan. The Secretariat will develop the implementation roadmap. It will outline strategic objectives, strategic activities, a timeline, and the divisions/units responsible. The National Assembly Secretariat headed by the Secretary General will implement the plan.

To see whether the National Assembly has achieved its strategic goals within the timeframe, Section 6 outlines the mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the plan.

Background



>> His Majesty The King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck signing the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, 18 July 2008

Bhutan is a Democratic Constitutional Monarchy. The country transitioned to a parliamentary democracy exactly after 100 years of progressive monarchical rule. His Majesty the Fourth King introduced the new polity despite people being against it. For the first time in 2008, the nation went to the polls using universal suffrage to elect representatives to the Parliament. Article 10 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan states: “There shall be a Parliament for Bhutan in which all legislative powers under the Constitution are vested and which shall consist of the Druk Gyalpo [King of Bhutan], the National Council and the National Assembly.” The Parliament is bicameral and has 72 members.

The National Council has 25 members. People in 20 Dzongkhags (districts) elect one member each and His Majesty the King appoints five eminent persons. The Constitution specifies the National Council is an apolitical (non-partisan) Chamber. Apart from its legislative role, the National Council is the House of review. The National Assembly has 47 members. People elect them directly from 47 constituencies in the country. They belong to two different political parties that form the ruling party and opposition.

The Constitution has the provision that states: “The National Assembly shall have a maximum of fifty-five members, elected from each Dzongkhag in proportion to its population, provided that no Dzongkhag shall have less than two members or more than seven members...”

Under the current organizational and governance structure, the Speaker provides leadership to the National Assembly. The Secretary General heads the Secretariat. There are 10 Parliamentary Standing Committees. The Secretariat has four divisions: Secretariat Services Division, Information & Communications Division, Legislative & Procedural Division, and Research & Hansard Division.

The National Assembly Members have three primary roles to play: legislative, oversight and representational. The National Assembly Act of the Kingdom of Bhutan of 2008 stipulates that:

1. In order to support the activities and to manage the administrative affairs of the National Assembly, the Secretariat of the National Assembly shall be established in the National Assembly.
2. The Secretariat shall assist the National Assembly in the fulfillment of its duties.
3. The Secretariat shall be an independent and non-partisan institution headed by the Secretary General.

The Strategic Plan will guide the National Assembly to focus its efforts that will enable it to fulfill its mandates more effectively. Therefore, the Plan will go a long way in articulating the vision and mission of the House.



Vision, Mission & Values

Vision

To achieve the Kingdom of Bhutan's overarching goal of Gross National Happiness enshrined in the Constitution through an inclusive and a vibrant democracy

Mission

To effectively carry out legislative, scrutiny, oversight and representational functions to fulfill the aspirations of the Bhutanese people

Core Values

- 1. Professional values & Integrity:** *We the Members and Secretariat staff of the National Assembly will maintain and promote the highest level of professional values and integrity in our endeavor to promote the National Assembly as an epitome of democratic institution and to serve the people.*
- 2. Accountability & Result-oriented:** *We will be judicious in using resources and perform our duties to achieve commendable results.*



3. **Ethical values:** *Integrity, honesty, empathy, transparency, impartiality, probity, and neutrality will be the hallmark of our profession and responsibility.*
4. **Democratic values:** *The National Assembly will champion promoting and deepening democracy by serving the people of Bhutan and abide by the Constitution of the Kingdom both in letter and spirit.*
5. **Consensus building:** *The National Assembly will work toward promoting national unity through consensus building in our unique democracy.*



Strategic Objective 1

Strengthening the institutional capacity of the National Assembly Secretariat

As recognized by the Constitution and the National Assembly Act (2008) of the Kingdom of Bhutan, the National Assembly Secretariat is critical to ensuring effective functions of the Assembly. How effectively the Assembly Members play their legislative, oversight and representational roles depends on the level and quality of services the Assembly Secretariat is able to offer. The quality of Parliament will determine the future of Bhutan's democracy where the National Assembly is one of the most important political and institutional stakeholders. Further, the institutional capacity of the Assembly's Secretariat is important to implement this Strategic Development Plan.

Given the role and significance of the National Assembly, the foremost strategic objective is to strengthen the institutional capacity of its Secretariat. In the 2014-2018 period, the improvement and development of services for the Members will be a priority.

Strategic activities



>> *Orientation for the newly elected National Assembly members, 2013*

1.1. Improving the human resource capacity

The Secretariat is deprived of adequate human resource to provide effective services to the Members. Since the Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC) allocates human resource, the parliamentary secretariat is treated like any other government agencies. The requirement of specialized knowledge and skills befitting parliamentary needs is not considered. Currently, the Secretariat does not have even a single staff trained in parliamentary affairs. There are more support staff than professional staff. The existing human resource is not enough both in number and quality to render effective and professional services to the Members. The need of the hour is a human resource mapping for the Secretariat to ensure the growth of the National Assembly.



1.2. Staff development needs assessment and execution plan

The National Assembly attaches the highest importance to a planned and systematic staff development for the development of the House. Therefore, the Secretariat will carry out a thorough staff development needs assessment. Since the Secretariat is under the purview of the RCSC concerning the human resource allocation, it will negotiate and let the commission know about the specific needs of a parliamentary institution. These activities will form the strategic steps for the overall strategic human resource planning.

1.3. Strengthening the management of the Secretariat

To offer quality services to the Members, an efficient and effective administrative management system is important. The Secretariat will improve the management system with clear job descriptions of all the employees and proper performance monitoring and evaluation system in place. The management will ensure a conducive work environment for employees to excel in their responsibilities.

1.4. Enhancing collaborations with international parliamentary institutions

Bhutan joined the club of democratic nations as recently as 2008 following its first parliamentary elections. Modern parliamentary democracy continues to develop. Therefore, to keep abreast of international parliamentary best practices, collaboration with similar institutions abroad is crucial. To expose the Members of the National Assembly and its Secretariat staff to modern parliamentary traditions, institutional collaborations both



at the regional and international levels will be established. The collaborations will undertake parliamentary exchange visits, share knowledge and experiences.

1.5. Working toward making the Secretariat independent

According to the National Assembly Act of Bhutan (2008), the Secretariat is to assist the National Assembly in fulfillment of its duties and it is to be an independent and non-partisan institution. However, under the current context and institutional structure, the Secretariat does not have both human resource and financial independence – the most important and fundamental components of institutional independence and autonomy. The RCSC



>> National Assembly Speaker Jigme Zangpo at the 7th Conference of the Association of SAARC Speakers & Parliamentarians, 21-23 December 2013, the Maldives

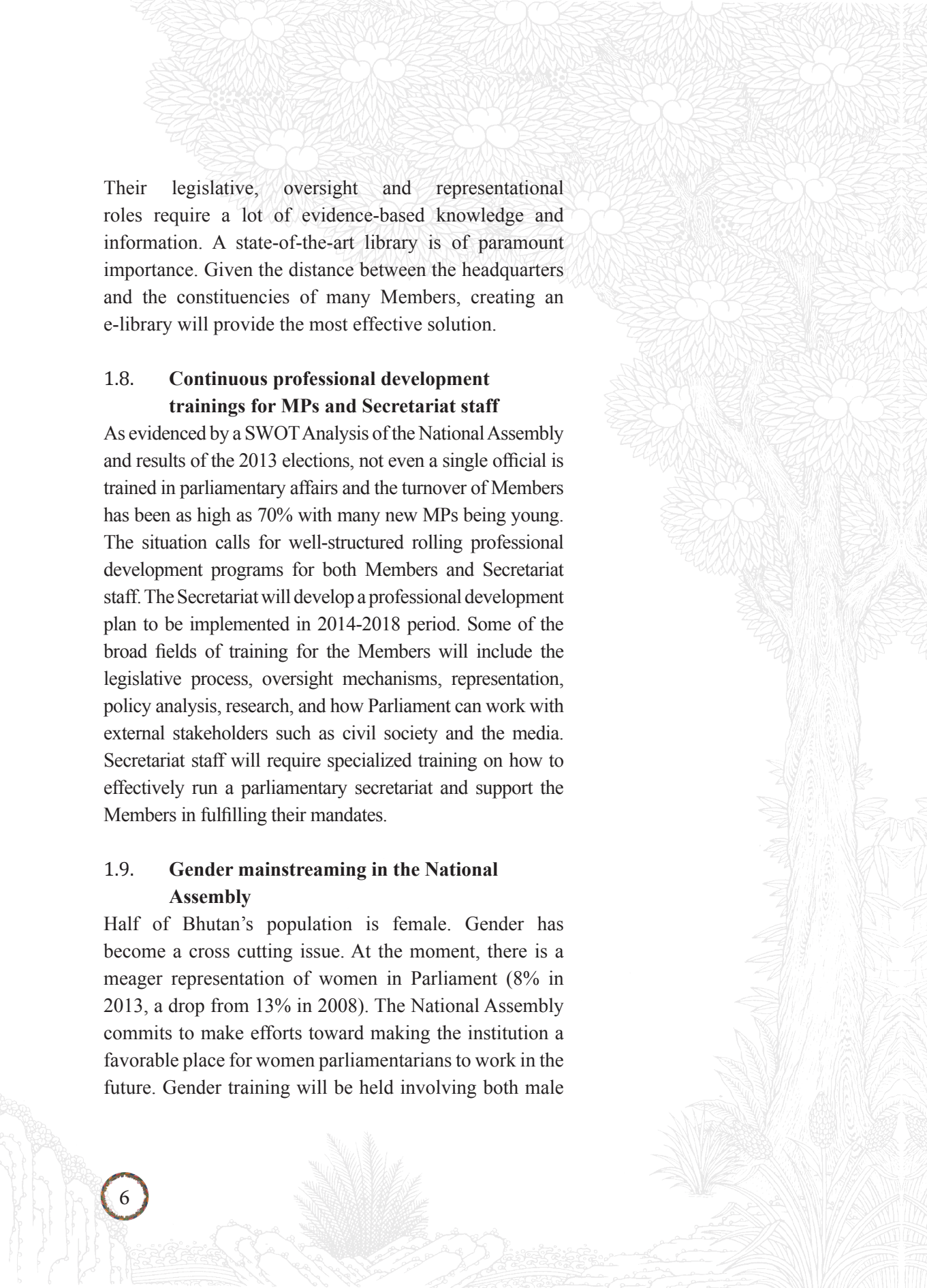
undertakes the human resource allocation, while the Finance Ministry allocates the budget for the Secretariat. In the long run, to achieve the vision and mission of the House, its Secretariat must be independent. During the current Strategic Plan period, the National Assembly will discuss with the authorities concerned to ensure the independence and autonomy of the Secretariat.

1.6. Providing a conducive work environment and adequate facilities

The National Assembly is aware and recognizes the importance of providing a conducive work environment and adequate facilities for the Members to carry out their mandates. Today, there is a physical distance between the Secretariat and the Members. The Secretariat is housed in the Parliament building, while the offices of the Members are located in a private building. The offices are small and two Members share one room. Because of the distance, regular interaction between the Secretariat and the Members is hampered. The Secretariat is committed to resolving this problem as soon as possible. It will shift MPs offices to the main Parliament building. Apart from the Ministers, the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, and the Opposition Leader, the other Members do not have dedicated personal secretaries. The Secretariat is aware that the Members need a personal secretary to carry out their responsibilities. Therefore, the Secretariat will discuss with the RCSC about this requirement.

1.7. Strengthening the library

To remain abreast of the fast changing global parliamentary practices and to keep the National Assembly relevant and responsive to the needs of the people and their aspirations, knowledge and information are critical for the Members.



Their legislative, oversight and representational roles require a lot of evidence-based knowledge and information. A state-of-the-art library is of paramount importance. Given the distance between the headquarters and the constituencies of many Members, creating an e-library will provide the most effective solution.

1.8. Continuous professional development trainings for MPs and Secretariat staff

As evidenced by a SWOT Analysis of the National Assembly and results of the 2013 elections, not even a single official is trained in parliamentary affairs and the turnover of Members has been as high as 70% with many new MPs being young. The situation calls for well-structured rolling professional development programs for both Members and Secretariat staff. The Secretariat will develop a professional development plan to be implemented in 2014-2018 period. Some of the broad fields of training for the Members will include the legislative process, oversight mechanisms, representation, policy analysis, research, and how Parliament can work with external stakeholders such as civil society and the media. Secretariat staff will require specialized training on how to effectively run a parliamentary secretariat and support the Members in fulfilling their mandates.

1.9. Gender mainstreaming in the National Assembly

Half of Bhutan's population is female. Gender has become a cross cutting issue. At the moment, there is a meager representation of women in Parliament (8% in 2013, a drop from 13% in 2008). The National Assembly commits to make efforts toward making the institution a favorable place for women parliamentarians to work in the future. Gender training will be held involving both male



>> *Lyonpo Dorji Choden, the first woman minister, at National Assembly session*

and female Members and the Secretariat staff. Strategies will be developed on mainstreaming gender during the legislative process and when undertaking oversight.

1.10. Parliamentary Training Center

To achieve the strategic vision of the National Assembly, its Members and Secretariat need to be competent and efficient in delivering services to the people. To upgrade skills and knowledge of the Members and staff, there has to be a platform offering opportunities for learning and training. Therefore, during this Strategic Plan period the National Assembly in collaboration with the National Council will study the possibility to establish an in-house parliamentary training center. The center will train the Members on how to perform their legislative, oversight, and representational roles effectively. The Secretariat staff will be trained and educated on how to run a parliamentary secretariat and support parliamentarians to fulfill their responsibilities as people's representatives. The training center will assimilate international parliamentary best practices and establish collaborations with similar institutions in the region and beyond.

Strategic Objective 2

Improving the legislative capacity and processes of the National Assembly



>> *Opposition Leader Pema Gyamtsho (PhD) at National Assembly Session*

Law making is one of the core functions of the National Assembly. The institution is vested with the constitutional power to initiate, amend, reject and approve the laws of the country. Therefore, the legislative mandate is central to the existence of the National Assembly. The Assembly will enhance its legislative capacity. To do this, the strategic activities include providing and facilitating training for parliamentarians in drafting legislation, research, policy analysis, reviewing the draft laws and amending the existing ones. For the Secretariat staff, the capacity of research and information support service provision to the Members will be a priority.



Strategic activities

2.1. Revisit the Rules of Procedure

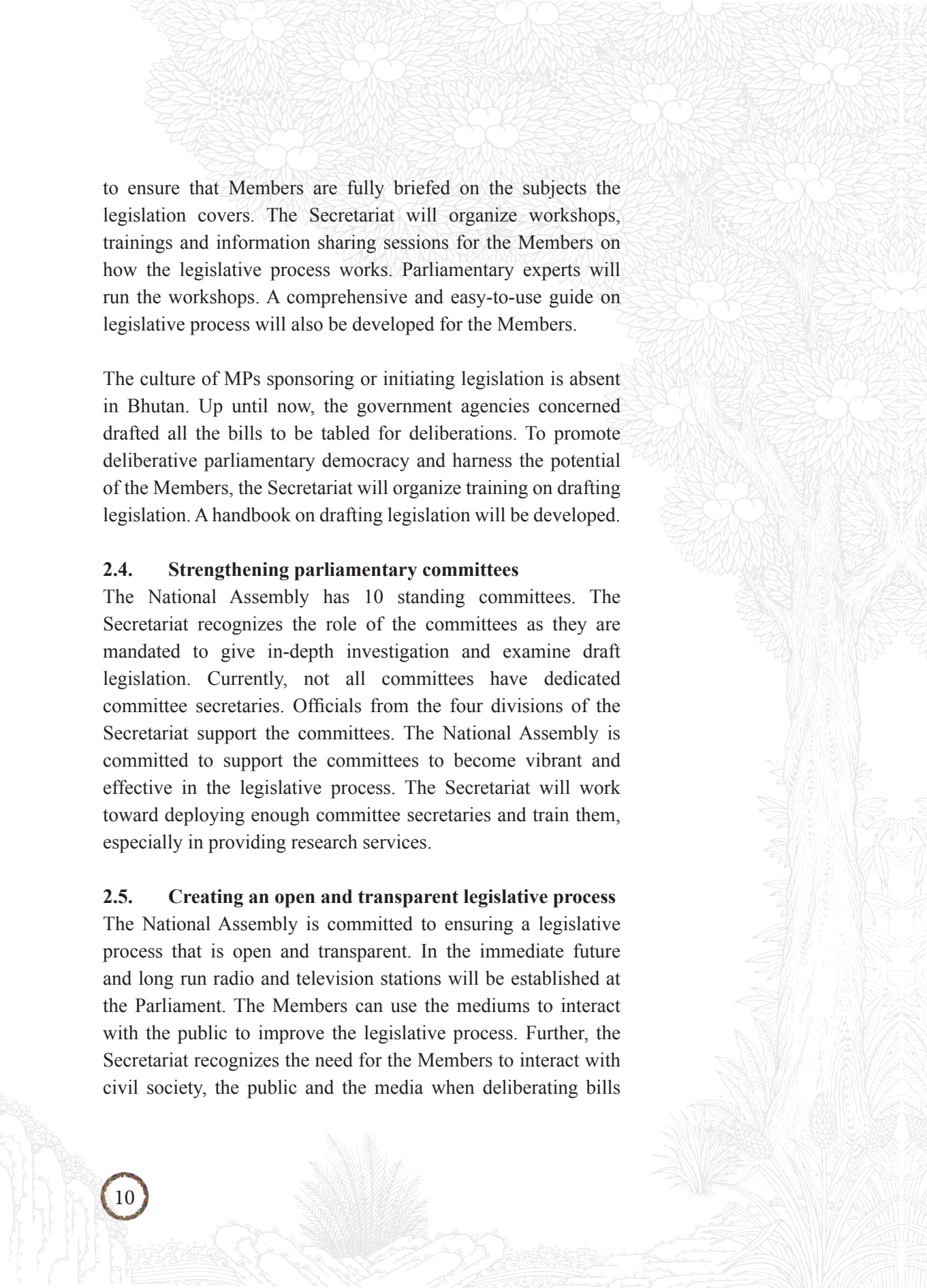
The ambiguous understanding and interpretation of the existing Rules of Procedure pose difficulties in passing bills. The National Assembly is committed to creating an environment that will stimulate the Members to participate in the legislative process making it deliberative, inclusive and participatory. The Assembly will propose to review and improve the existing Rules of Procedure to make the legislative process efficient and effective.

2.2. Strengthening legislative support capacity of the Secretariat

Currently, the Research and Hansard Division does not have the capacity to carry out its responsibilities effectively. Its role is largely confined to documentation and translation of parliamentary proceedings and resolutions. It is hugely understaffed both in terms of quality and quantity of human resource. Therefore, the manpower of the Research and Hansard Division will be increased. The requirement will be tabled and negotiated with the RCSC when it does the organizational development exercise for the Secretariat. The Secretariat will improve the capacity of both existing and new recruits through relevant trainings, internships and exchange visits to parliamentary institutions that operate under similar political and parliamentary institutional settings.

2.3. Educating Members on the legislative process

The current legislative process in a modern parliamentary system is new to the majority of Members. They require support during the legislative process - in the run-up to and during parliamentary sessions. The Secretariat commits to provide evidence-based research findings and information



to ensure that Members are fully briefed on the subjects the legislation covers. The Secretariat will organize workshops, trainings and information sharing sessions for the Members on how the legislative process works. Parliamentary experts will run the workshops. A comprehensive and easy-to-use guide on legislative process will also be developed for the Members.

The culture of MPs sponsoring or initiating legislation is absent in Bhutan. Up until now, the government agencies concerned drafted all the bills to be tabled for deliberations. To promote deliberative parliamentary democracy and harness the potential of the Members, the Secretariat will organize training on drafting legislation. A handbook on drafting legislation will be developed.

2.4. Strengthening parliamentary committees

The National Assembly has 10 standing committees. The Secretariat recognizes the role of the committees as they are mandated to give in-depth investigation and examine draft legislation. Currently, not all committees have dedicated committee secretaries. Officials from the four divisions of the Secretariat support the committees. The National Assembly is committed to support the committees to become vibrant and effective in the legislative process. The Secretariat will work toward deploying enough committee secretaries and train them, especially in providing research services.

2.5. Creating an open and transparent legislative process

The National Assembly is committed to ensuring a legislative process that is open and transparent. In the immediate future and long run radio and television stations will be established at the Parliament. The Members can use the mediums to interact with the public to improve the legislative process. Further, the Secretariat recognizes the need for the Members to interact with civil society, the public and the media when deliberating bills



>> *National Assembly Speaker
presiding over a session*

for opinions and feedback. The Secretariat will develop a system that will enable interaction between the people and the Members during the process of deliberation of bills.

2.6. Developing a system to ensure interactions between the legislature and government on legislative matters

Bhutan's democratic Parliament is only six-years-old. The current Parliament is the second one. So far, the government drafted all the legislation tabled for deliberations in the Parliament. To improve on the conduct of one of the core functions of the National Assembly – scrutinizing the legislation – the Secretariat is committed to establishing a procedural mechanism that will enhance and professionalize the interactions between the government and the National Assembly during the legislative process. To ensure quality legislation, the Secretariat will mobilize funds and train civil servants involved in drafting bills. Periodic conferences and seminars will also be organized to facilitate interactions and the sharing of information among the Members and government officials tasked with drafting bills.

Strategic Objective 3

Enhancing the oversight capacity of the National Assembly



Constitutionally, the legislature of Bhutan is the highest decision-making body. The executive branch is accountable to the Parliament. The National Assembly being one of the two houses of the Parliament has the oversight function as one of its primary mandates apart



>> Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay presenting State of the Nation Report to Parliament

from legislative and representational. At the moment, the Parliament has a Public Accounts Committee (PAC) that is largely responsible for ensuring effective financial oversight. The National Assembly's current oversight role is largely confined to overseeing the government's public expenditures and effective oversight in other areas needs to be strengthened. Article 10 (2) of the Constitution states: "Parliament shall ensure that the Government safeguards the interests of the nation and fulfills the aspirations of the people through public review of policies and issues, Bills and other legislations, and scrutiny of State functions". The Secretariat is committed to support the House and its Members by putting proper mechanisms in place to expand the oversight function to include oversight of the impact, effectiveness of implementation of policies and legislation.

Strategic activities

3.1. Strengthening the existing oversight mechanisms and training Members on oversight functions

Currently, the Parliament holds the government to account through written and oral questions when the Parliament is in session. The Members question ministers on issues they collect from the people during their constituency visits. The Secretariat will organize rolling training programs for the Members on how to effectively use the oversight function. Also, the Secretariat will develop a guidebook for the Members on how to oversee the government.

3.2. Strengthening parliamentary standing committees to play an effective oversight role

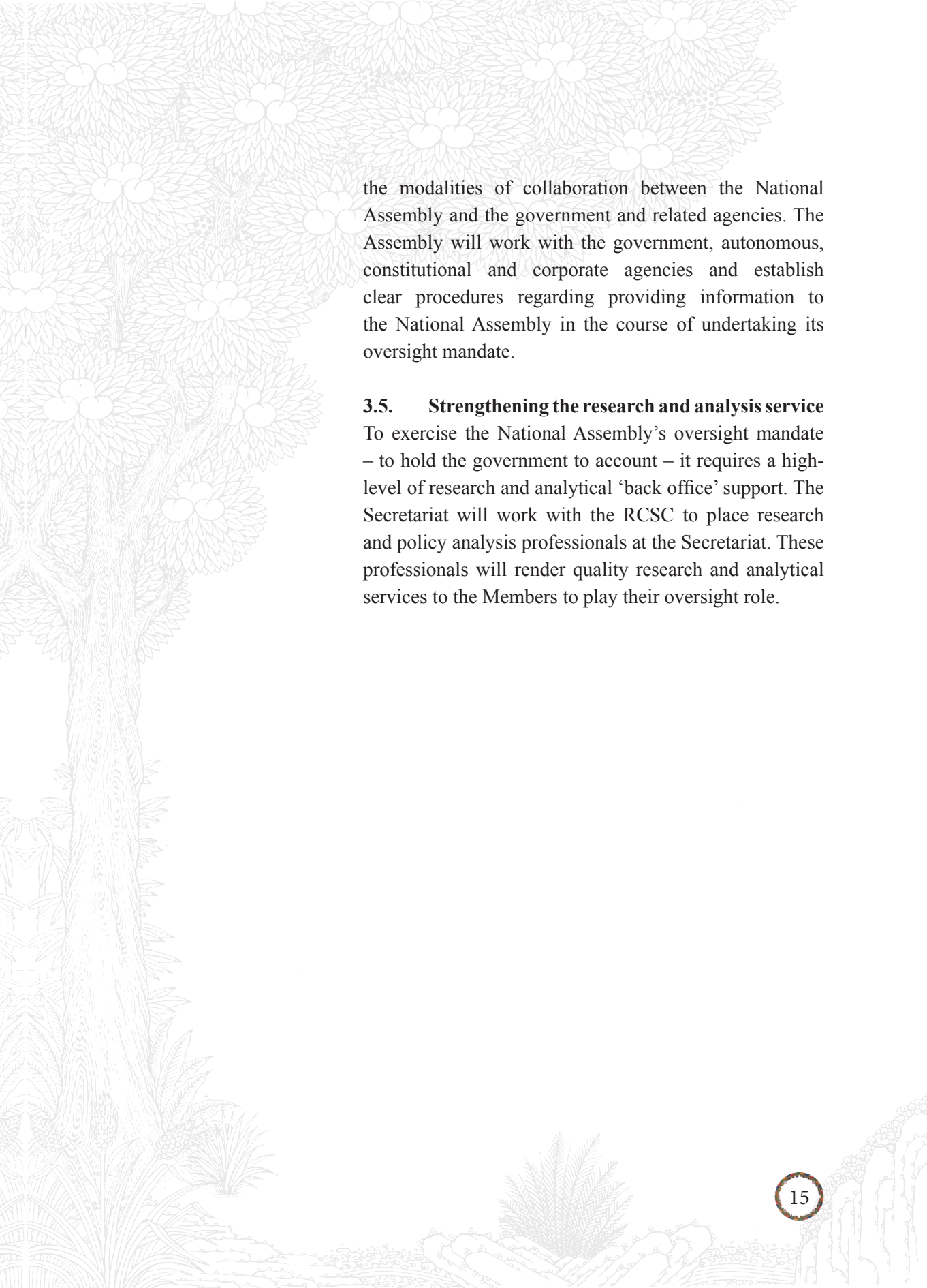
The National Assembly is fully aware that oversight through committees could be one of the most effective mechanisms available for Members. During this Strategic Plan period, the House will accord high importance to training Committee Chairs and Members on conducting oversight including developing their annual work plans. The Secretariat is committed to providing support services to the committees to carry out their oversight responsibility. Committee secretaries will be deployed to National Assembly standing committees. They will also be trained and educated on the oversight role of Parliamentarians.

3.3. Enhancing the financial oversight capacity of Members and the Secretariat staff

One of the most important oversight functions of the National Assembly is to oversee the executive's financial expenditure. Both Members and staff need to be capacitated in this field. In fields such as finances, members rely heavily on expert advice from Parliament staff. It is crucial the staff understand and are efficient in rendering oversight support services to the Members. The Secretariat will conduct trainings for both staff and Members on the government budget, budget cycle, budget policies, financial management, understanding audit reports, oversight and analysis.

3.4. Collaboration with government on the oversight function

The Assembly recognizes the importance of its collaboration with the government to ensure it is able to carry out its oversight functions over the executive. The Assembly will review the existing mechanisms that outline



the modalities of collaboration between the National Assembly and the government and related agencies. The Assembly will work with the government, autonomous, constitutional and corporate agencies and establish clear procedures regarding providing information to the National Assembly in the course of undertaking its oversight mandate.

3.5. Strengthening the research and analysis service

To exercise the National Assembly's oversight mandate – to hold the government to account – it requires a high-level of research and analytical 'back office' support. The Secretariat will work with the RCSC to place research and policy analysis professionals at the Secretariat. These professionals will render quality research and analytical services to the Members to play their oversight role.

Strategic Objective 4

Strengthening the National Assembly's Representation and Outreach capacity



Apart from legislative and oversight roles, the National Assembly is mandated to represent the people. Parliamentarians are bestowed with the will of the people expressed through casting their adult suffrage during the elections. It is the responsibility of parliamentarians to ensure a fair, effective and inclusive representation of the



>> *National Assembly Speaker
talking to university
graduates, 2013*

people. Currently, though there are many opportunities, interaction between parliamentarians and constituents, the media and civil society organizations is limited. As a consequence, there are limited informed public discussions on laws under consideration and on the broader work of Parliament. The National Assembly recognizes its educational and informational roles within the existing governance structures of the country. The Secretariat acknowledges the responsibility of the National Assembly to serve as a link between the people and the government. The Members ought to communicate with the electorate to inform them about the activities they carry out and that of the government functionaries. The concerns of the people need to reach to the government and legislature to be reflected in the national legislation and policies. Therefore, the Secretariat is committed to facilitate and support the House and its Members in their efforts to take Bhutan's Parliament to the people.

Strategic activities

4.1. Creating a culture of informed public discussions during the legislative process

It is the responsibility of parliamentarians to represent all of their constituents including those living in far and scattered villages. It is a challenge for the Members to be aware of the views of their constituents during the legislative and decision-making processes. The National Assembly

is committed to improving the existing mechanisms and establishing new appropriate channels for Members and the electorate to interact during the legislative process. The channels will include both physical and virtual. The establishment of the video conferencing facility (Virtual Zomdu) will be one of the priorities during this Strategic Plan period to connect parliamentarians and the people on legislative matters, especially when the Parliament is in session and the Members are not able to be in their constituencies. The facilities will help parliamentarians meet and discuss issues of importance in “real time”. The facilities will also serve as a medium through which representatives could seek views and opinions from the people on diverse issues. It is important to note that the Virtual Zomdu facility will not substitute the regular visits (twice in a year) that the Members make, but will be in addition and provide impetus to ongoing interaction between Members and the public.

4.2. Empowering women National Assembly Members

There are only four female parliamentarians in the National Assembly. Even combining the two chambers, there are only six female MPs in the current Parliament, a drop from eight in the previous one. The National Assembly recognizes that the legitimacy of the institution is tied to ensuring that its members are broadly representative of the people. To achieve this aim, the National Assembly will create awareness among the people on the importance of women leadership and plan a rolling program on representation and leadership specifically for the women Members.

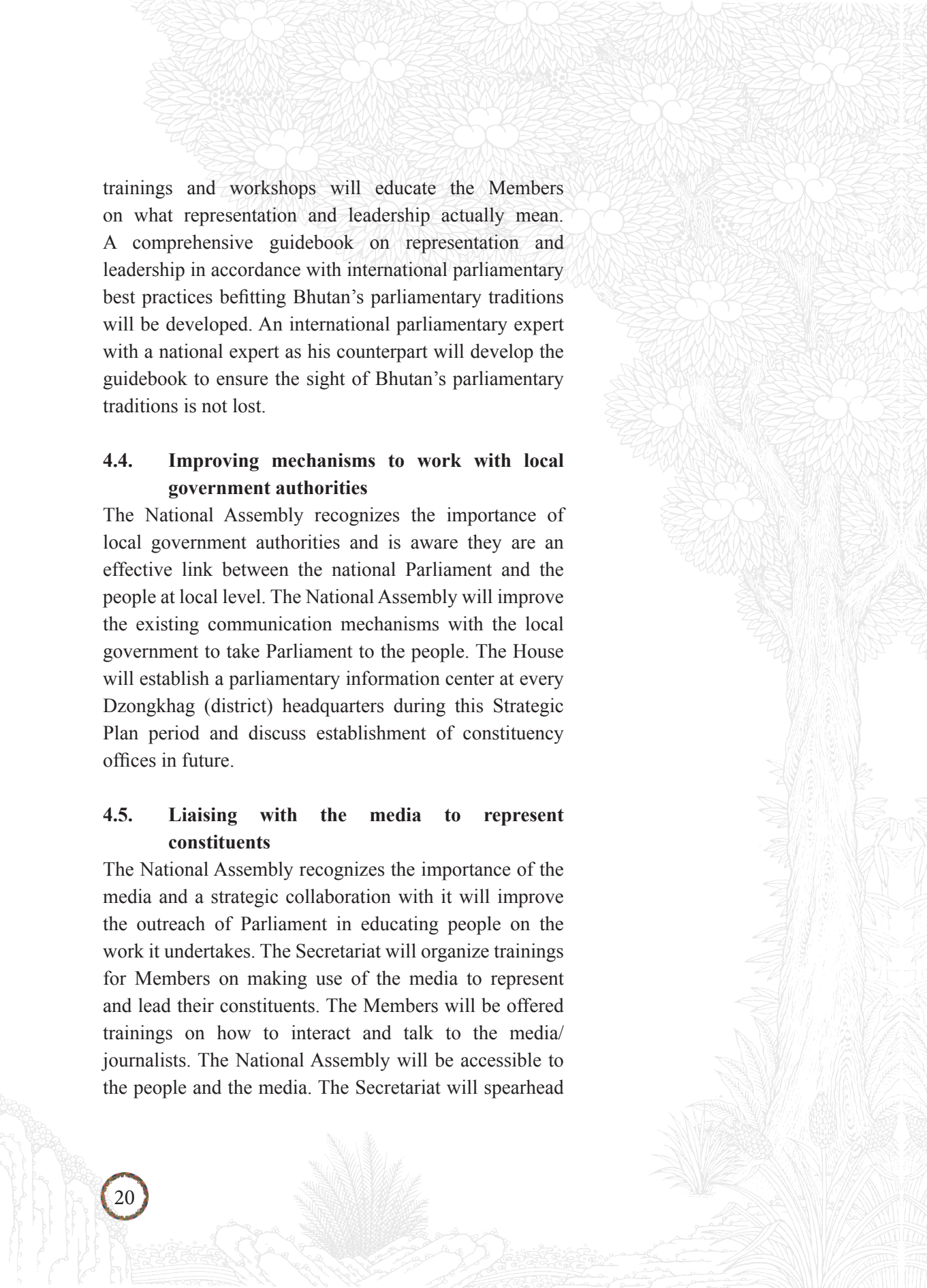




>> *Newly elected female MP taking Oath of Office, 2013*

4.3. Training on representation and leadership

To ensure parliamentarians are effective in providing leadership and articulating the views of their constituents, the National Assembly recognizes the need to train the Members on representation and leadership. Throughout the Strategic Plan period (2014-2018), there will be periodic trainings for the Members to acquire knowledge and hone their skills in representation and leadership. The



trainings and workshops will educate the Members on what representation and leadership actually mean. A comprehensive guidebook on representation and leadership in accordance with international parliamentary best practices befitting Bhutan's parliamentary traditions will be developed. An international parliamentary expert with a national expert as his counterpart will develop the guidebook to ensure the sight of Bhutan's parliamentary traditions is not lost.

4.4. Improving mechanisms to work with local government authorities

The National Assembly recognizes the importance of local government authorities and is aware they are an effective link between the national Parliament and the people at local level. The National Assembly will improve the existing communication mechanisms with the local government to take Parliament to the people. The House will establish a parliamentary information center at every Dzongkhag (district) headquarters during this Strategic Plan period and discuss establishment of constituency offices in future.

4.5. Liaising with the media to represent constituents

The National Assembly recognizes the importance of the media and a strategic collaboration with it will improve the outreach of Parliament in educating people on the work it undertakes. The Secretariat will organize trainings for Members on making use of the media to represent and lead their constituents. The Members will be offered trainings on how to interact and talk to the media/journalists. The National Assembly will be accessible to the people and the media. The Secretariat will spearhead



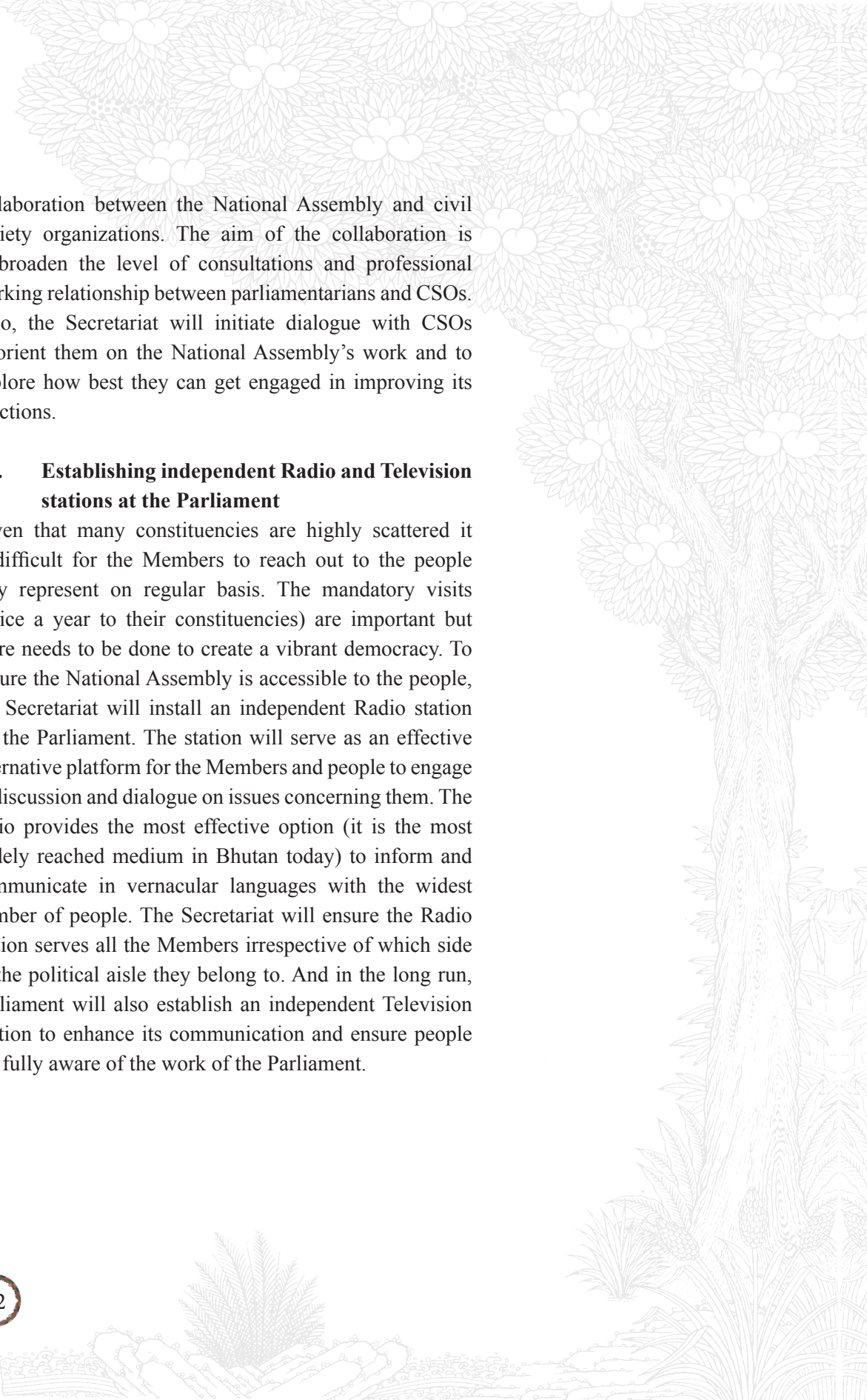
>> *Bhutanese Journalists
in action*

to train journalists in reporting parliamentary affairs. This will help the National Assembly become relevant, accessible and transparent to the people.

The Secretariat will strengthen its Information and Communications Division to be able to collaborate with the media in disseminating parliamentary information. It will make concerted efforts to brief and educate the media on the work of the National Assembly and its governance structures.

4.6. Collaborating and engaging with civil society organizations

The interaction and collaboration between the Parliament and civil society organizations in Bhutan is absent. The National Assembly of Bhutan acknowledges that civil society organizations are effective channels and space for parliamentarians to communicate and interact with the people. Therefore, the Secretariat will develop a strategy detailing the procedures and mechanisms for



collaboration between the National Assembly and civil society organizations. The aim of the collaboration is to broaden the level of consultations and professional working relationship between parliamentarians and CSOs. Also, the Secretariat will initiate dialogue with CSOs to orient them on the National Assembly's work and to explore how best they can get engaged in improving its functions.

4.7. Establishing independent Radio and Television stations at the Parliament

Given that many constituencies are highly scattered it is difficult for the Members to reach out to the people they represent on regular basis. The mandatory visits (twice a year to their constituencies) are important but more needs to be done to create a vibrant democracy. To ensure the National Assembly is accessible to the people, the Secretariat will install an independent Radio station for the Parliament. The station will serve as an effective alternative platform for the Members and people to engage in discussion and dialogue on issues concerning them. The radio provides the most effective option (it is the most widely reached medium in Bhutan today) to inform and communicate in vernacular languages with the widest number of people. The Secretariat will ensure the Radio station serves all the Members irrespective of which side of the political aisle they belong to. And in the long run, Parliament will also establish an independent Television Station to enhance its communication and ensure people are fully aware of the work of the Parliament.

4.8. Upgrading and making the website resourceful and interactive

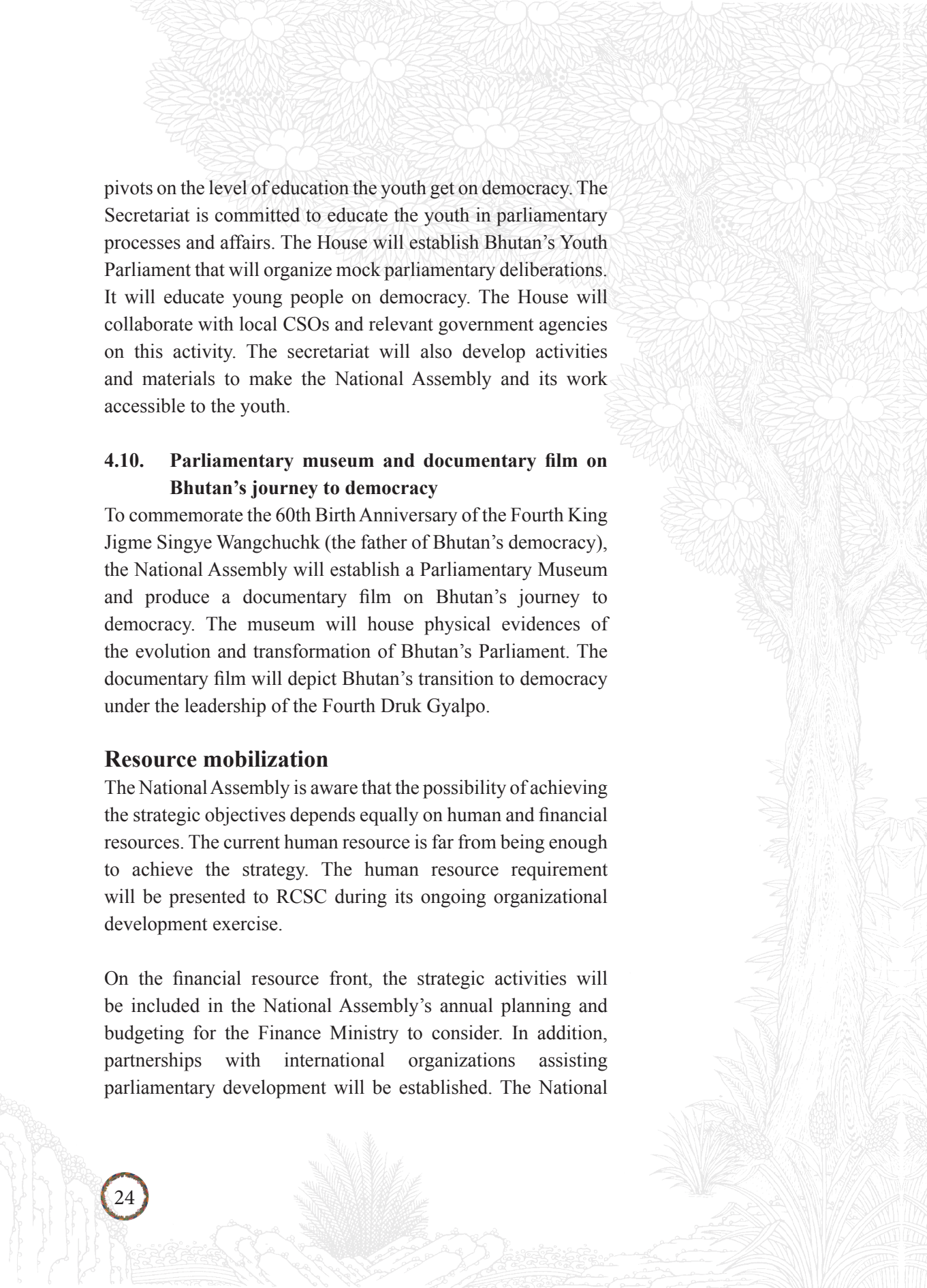
The National Assembly will upgrade its website to make it resourceful and interactive. While upgrading the website, international best practice in parliamentary communication will be taken into account. The website will provide platforms for the people and their representatives to engage in virtual interactions to discuss issues and concerns. The upgraded website will go a long way in making the work of the National Assembly transparent and accessible. It will contain information on legislation, budgets, plenary deliberations, committee proceedings and other relevant information on the ongoing work of the House. For the Members, the website will provide the latest information and knowledge on parliamentary affairs. The Secretariat will train its ICT staff to ensure the website remains updated and dynamic.

4.9. Youth education and engagement

Given a huge youth population in the country, the National Assembly of Bhutan accords the youth great importance. The House is aware the future of Bhutan's democracy



*>> Electoral advocacy for youth,
2008*



pivots on the level of education the youth get on democracy. The Secretariat is committed to educate the youth in parliamentary processes and affairs. The House will establish Bhutan's Youth Parliament that will organize mock parliamentary deliberations. It will educate young people on democracy. The House will collaborate with local CSOs and relevant government agencies on this activity. The secretariat will also develop activities and materials to make the National Assembly and its work accessible to the youth.

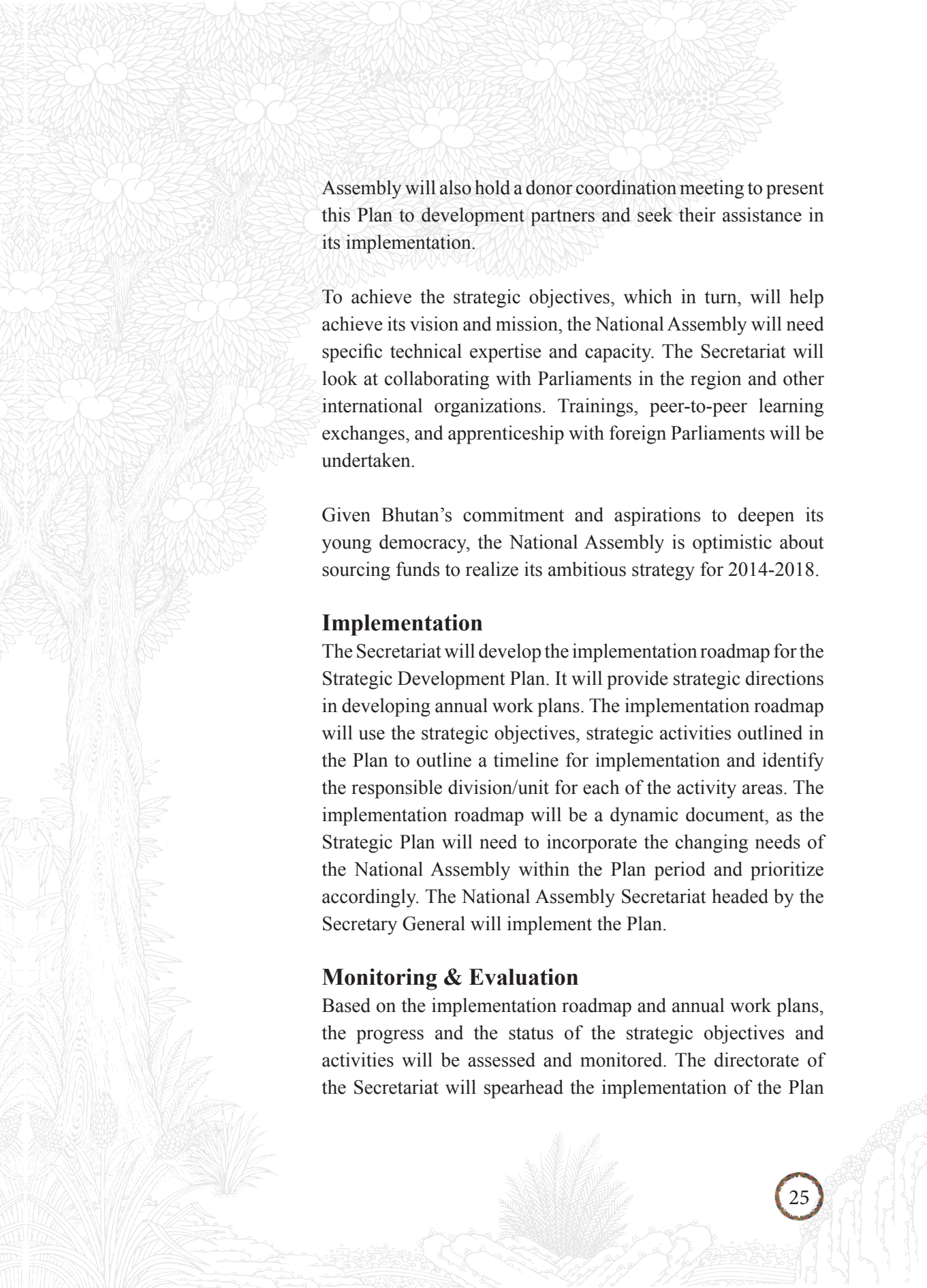
4.10. Parliamentary museum and documentary film on Bhutan's journey to democracy

To commemorate the 60th Birth Anniversary of the Fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck (the father of Bhutan's democracy), the National Assembly will establish a Parliamentary Museum and produce a documentary film on Bhutan's journey to democracy. The museum will house physical evidences of the evolution and transformation of Bhutan's Parliament. The documentary film will depict Bhutan's transition to democracy under the leadership of the Fourth Druk Gyalpo.

Resource mobilization

The National Assembly is aware that the possibility of achieving the strategic objectives depends equally on human and financial resources. The current human resource is far from being enough to achieve the strategy. The human resource requirement will be presented to RCSC during its ongoing organizational development exercise.

On the financial resource front, the strategic activities will be included in the National Assembly's annual planning and budgeting for the Finance Ministry to consider. In addition, partnerships with international organizations assisting parliamentary development will be established. The National



Assembly will also hold a donor coordination meeting to present this Plan to development partners and seek their assistance in its implementation.

To achieve the strategic objectives, which in turn, will help achieve its vision and mission, the National Assembly will need specific technical expertise and capacity. The Secretariat will look at collaborating with Parliaments in the region and other international organizations. Trainings, peer-to-peer learning exchanges, and apprenticeship with foreign Parliaments will be undertaken.

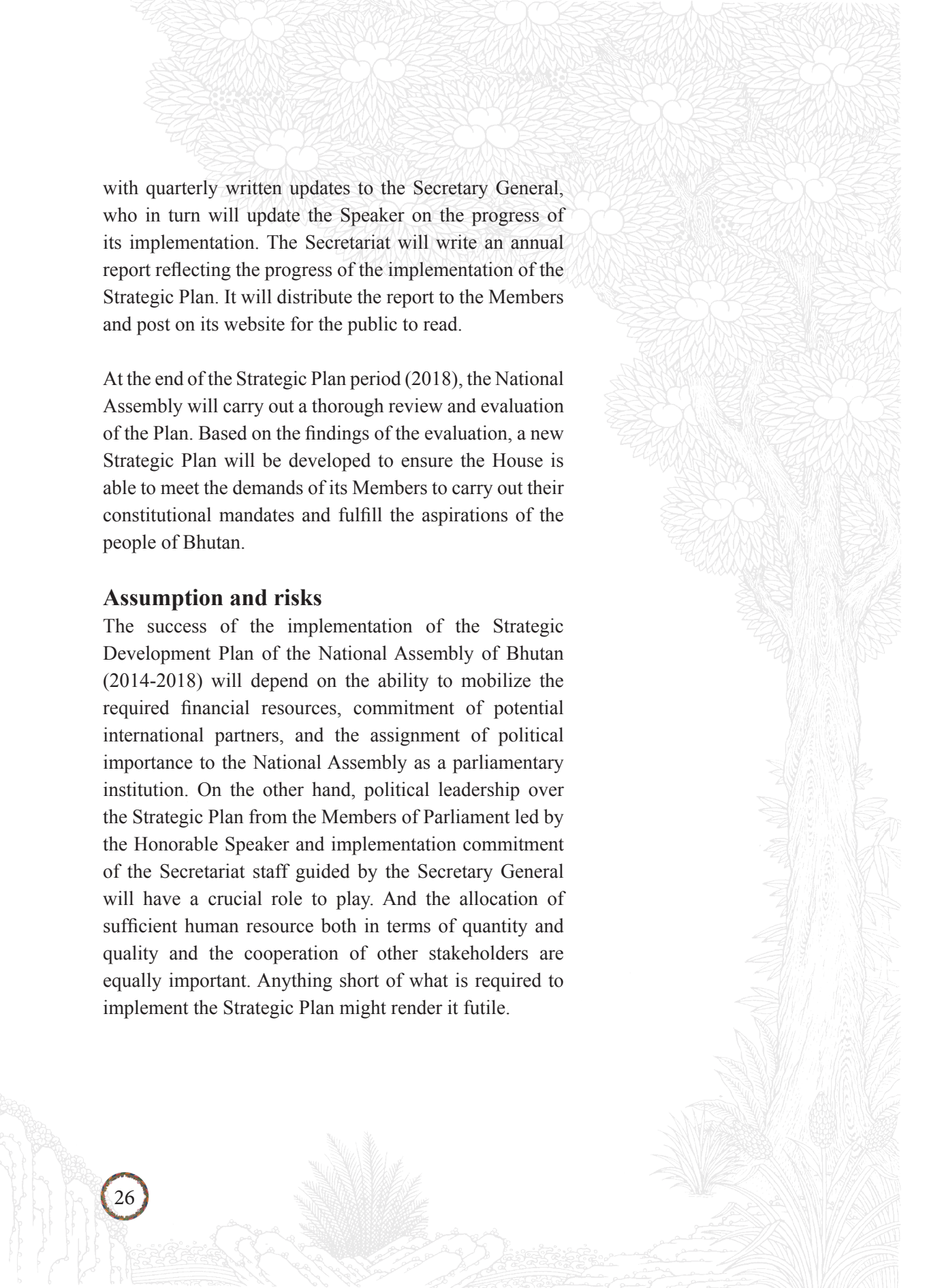
Given Bhutan's commitment and aspirations to deepen its young democracy, the National Assembly is optimistic about sourcing funds to realize its ambitious strategy for 2014-2018.

Implementation

The Secretariat will develop the implementation roadmap for the Strategic Development Plan. It will provide strategic directions in developing annual work plans. The implementation roadmap will use the strategic objectives, strategic activities outlined in the Plan to outline a timeline for implementation and identify the responsible division/unit for each of the activity areas. The implementation roadmap will be a dynamic document, as the Strategic Plan will need to incorporate the changing needs of the National Assembly within the Plan period and prioritize accordingly. The National Assembly Secretariat headed by the Secretary General will implement the Plan.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Based on the implementation roadmap and annual work plans, the progress and the status of the strategic objectives and activities will be assessed and monitored. The directorate of the Secretariat will spearhead the implementation of the Plan



with quarterly written updates to the Secretary General, who in turn will update the Speaker on the progress of its implementation. The Secretariat will write an annual report reflecting the progress of the implementation of the Strategic Plan. It will distribute the report to the Members and post on its website for the public to read.

At the end of the Strategic Plan period (2018), the National Assembly will carry out a thorough review and evaluation of the Plan. Based on the findings of the evaluation, a new Strategic Plan will be developed to ensure the House is able to meet the demands of its Members to carry out their constitutional mandates and fulfill the aspirations of the people of Bhutan.

Assumption and risks

The success of the implementation of the Strategic Development Plan of the National Assembly of Bhutan (2014-2018) will depend on the ability to mobilize the required financial resources, commitment of potential international partners, and the assignment of political importance to the National Assembly as a parliamentary institution. On the other hand, political leadership over the Strategic Plan from the Members of Parliament led by the Honorable Speaker and implementation commitment of the Secretariat staff guided by the Secretary General will have a crucial role to play. And the allocation of sufficient human resource both in terms of quantity and quality and the cooperation of other stakeholders are equally important. Anything short of what is required to implement the Strategic Plan might render it futile.

Annex 1: Implementation Roadmap

Implementation Roadmap for the Strategic Development Plan of NA of Bhutan (2014-2018)

Activity	Inputs	Responsible Division/ Unit	Timeframe			
			2014	2015	2016	2017
Strategic Objective 1: Strengthen the institutional capacity of the National Assembly Secretariat						
1.1 Improving the human resource capacity	i. Human resource requirement projection for the Secretariat.	Secretariat Services Division/ HR Unit	-	X	-	-
1.2 Staff development needs assessment & execution plan	i. Staff development needs assessment and execution plan.	Secretariat Services Division/HR Unit	-	X	-	-
	ii. Execute the staff development needs assessment plan.	Secretariat Services Division/HR Unit	-	X	X	X
	iii. Dialogue with RCSC on human resource requirement.	Secretariat	-	X	X	-
1.3 Strengthening the management of the Secretariat	i. Assess how to improve the management system.	Secretariat Services Division	-	X	-	-
	ii. Revisit/update the job descriptions of the Secretariat staff.	Secretariat Services Division/HR Unit	-	X	-	-
	iii. Proper performance and monitoring system in place.	Secretariat Services Division	-	X	-	-
1.4. Enhancing collaborations with international parliamentary institutions	i. Parliamentary collaborations established.	Secretariat	-	X	X	X
1.5. Delinking the NA Secretariat from RCSC	i. Initiate legislation to make the NA Secretariat independent of RCSC.	House Committee & Secretariat	-	X	-	-

1.6. Providing a conducive work environment & adequate facilities	i. Initiate to relocate MPs' office to Gyalyong Tshokhang (Parliament Building).		-	-	-	X	X	-	-	X
	ii. Allocate dedicated personal secretaries for MPs.		-	-	-	X	X	-	-	-
1.7. Strengthening the secretariat library	i. Improve the existing library.		-	-	-	X	X	-	-	-
	ii. E-library in place.		-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-
1.8. Continuous professional development trainings for MPs & Secretariat staff	i. Professional development plan in place.		-	X	-	-	-	-	-	-
	ii. Various professional development programs/exchanges for the members conducted.		-	X	-	X	X	X	X	X
1.9. Gender mainstreaming in the National Assembly	i. Trainings on women leadership for female/male parliamentarians conducted.		-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-
	ii. Trainings on gender mainstreaming in parliamentary development conducted.		-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-
1.10. Parliamentary Training Center	i. Establishment of Parliamentary Training Center discussed.		-	X	-	X	X	-	-	-
	ii. Establishment of Parliamentary Training Center planned.		-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-
	iii. Collaboration with national academic institutions and training curricula developed.		-	-	-	-	-	X	-	X

Strategic Objective 2: Improving the legislative capacity and processes of the National Assembly						
2.1. Revisit the Rules of Procedure	i. Review the existing Rules of procedure.	Secretariat/House Committee	-	X	-	-
2.2. Strengthening legislative support capacity of the Secretariat	i. Manpower requirement filled.	Secretariat Services Division/HR Unit	-	X	X	X
	ii. Trainings to enhance legislative support capacity of Secretariat staff conducted.	Legislative and Procedural Division	-	-	X	X
2.3. Educating members on legislative processes	i. Workshops and trainings for members on legislative processes conducted.	Legislative and Procedural Division	-	X	X	X
	ii. Easy-to-use guide on legislative process published & distributed among Members.	Legislative and Procedural Division	-	X	X	-
	iii. Trainings for Members on how to draft legislation.	Legislative and Procedural Division	-	-	X	-
	iv. Handbook on how to draft legislation prepared and distributed among the Members.	Legislative and Procedural Division	-	-	X	-
2.4. Strengthening parliamentary committees	i. Provide enough manpower to support the committees.	Secretariat Services Division	-	X	X	X
	ii. Train committee secretaries in legislative research and support provision.	Research and Hansard Division & HR Unit	-	X	X	X

2.5: Creating an open and transparent legislative process	i. Establish Radio station at the Parliament.	Secretariat	-	X	X	-	-
	ii. Discussion to establish Television Station for the Parliament.	Secretariat	-	-	X	X	X
	iii. System to facilitate interactions between the legislature, media and civil society during the legislative process developed.	Legislative and Procedural Division & House Committee	-	-	X	X	X
2.6: Developing a system to ensure interaction between the legislature and government on legislative matters	i. Procedural mechanisms to facilitate interactions between the legislature and government on legislative process developed.	Legislative and Procedural Division & Legislative Committee	-	X	X	-	-
	ii. Periodic workshops and seminars to facilitate interactions between the Members and civil servants responsible for drafting bills.	Legislative and Procedural Division & Legislative Committee	-	X	X	X	X
Strategic Objective 3: Enhance oversight capacity of the National Assembly							
3.1. Strengthening the existing oversight mechanisms and training Members on oversight functions	i. Rolling programs and trainings for members to conduct oversight functions.	Legislative and Procedural Division/HR Unit	-	X	X	X	X
	ii. Review the existing oversight mechanisms.	Legislative and Procedural Division	-	X	-	-	-
	iii. A guidebook for Members on conducting oversight functions.	Legislative and Procedural Division	-	-	X	-	-

3.2: Strengthening parliamentary standing committees for oversight role	i. Dedicated committee secretaries deployed.	Secretariat Services Division	-	X	X	X	X
	ii. Committee secretaries trained to provide oversight support services to the members.	Legislative and Procedural Division	-	X	X	X	X
3.3: Enhancing financial oversight capacity of Members and the Secretariat staff	i. Trainings and workshops on the government budget, budget cycle, budget policies and financial management for the members.	Secretariat Services Division/ HR Unit	-	-	X	X	X
	ii. Trainings and workshops on understanding audit reports, oversight and analysis for members.	Secretariat Services Division	-	-	X	X	X
	iii. Improve the existing oversight tools and committee inquiry mechanisms.	Legislative and Procedural Division	-	-	X	X	X
	iv. Collect enough materials on oversight functions of Parliament for study and reference.	Information and Communications Division	-	X	X	X	X
	v. Strengthen Public Accounts Committee by providing research support and trainings to the staff.	Research and Hansard Division & PAC	-	X	X	X	X
3.4: Collaboration with government on oversight function	i. Review the existing mechanisms of collaboration between the House and government on oversight functions	Legislative and Procedural Division	-	X	X	-	-
	ii. Establish clear procedures on government agencies providing information to the House for oversight purpose.	Legislative Committee	-	-	X	X	X

3.5: Strengthening research & analysis service	i. Research and analysis professionals recruited to provide effective support services to the members to conduct their oversight functions.	Secretariat/Research and Hansard Division	-	X	X	X	X
Strategic Objective 4: Strengthen the capacity of the National Assembly to play an effective representational role							
4.1: Creating a culture of informed public discussions in legislative process	i. Using video conferencing facility (virtual zomdu) to represent constituents in the legislative process and to take parliament to the people	Information and Communications Division	-	X	X	X	X
4.2: Empowering women National Assembly Members	i. Create awareness among the people on the importance of woman leadership	Information and Communications & Division Women, Children and Committee	-	X	X	X	X
4.3: Training on representation & leadership role	ii. Leadership and representation trainings for women MPs.	Information and Communications Division & Women, Children and Committee	-	X	-	X	-
4.3: Training on representation & leadership role	i. Trainings and workshops for the members on representation and leadership.	Services Division/HR Unit	-	X	X	X	X
4.4: Improving mechanisms to work with local government authorities	iii. Manual on representation and leadership developed.	Secretariat & House Committee	-	-	X	-	-
4.4: Improving mechanisms to work with local government authorities	i. Improve the mechanisms to work with local government authorities on parliamentary affairs.	Secretariat & House Committee	-	X	X	-	-
4.4: Improving mechanisms to work with local government authorities	ii. Establish parliamentary information centers at Dzongkhag headquarters and plan for constituency office.	Secretariat Services Division & House Committee	-	-	X	X	X

4.5: Liaising with the media to represent constituents	i. Conduct trainings for the members to use the media to represent the people. Trainings on how to talk to journalists.	Information and Communications Division	-	X	X	-	-
	ii. Train local journalists on parliamentary reporting. Establish working relationship with journalists reporting parliamentary affairs.	Information and Communications Division	-	-	X	-	-
4.6: Collaborating and engaging with civil society organizations	i. Work with CSOs to enable members to carry out their representational role	Information and Communications Division	-	X	X	X	-
4.7: Establishing an independent Radio and Television stations for the Parliament	i. Complete groundwork to set up radio station.	Information and Communications Division	-	X	-	-	-
	ii. Operate Parliament radio station	Information and Communications Division	-	X	-	-	-
	iii. Work to set up an independent TV station at the Parliament started	Information and Communications Division & Secretariat Services Division	X	X	X	X	X
	iv. Television station up and running.	Information and Communications Division & Secretariat Services Division	-	-	-	-	X
4.8: Upgrading and making the website resourceful and interactive	i. The existing website upgraded.	Information and Communications Division	X	-	-	-	-

4.9: Youth education and engagement	i. Educational program for youth on parliamentary affairs developed in collaboration with relevant government and non-government agencies.	Information and Communications Division	-	-	X	X	X
	ii. Youth Parliament initiated to educate the youth on democracy	Secretariat	-	-	X	X	X
4.10: Establishing Parliamentary Museum and creating awareness on democracy through documentary film.	i. Establish Parliamentary Museum.	Secretariat	X	X	X	X	X
	ii. Documentary film on Bhutan's journey to democracy.	Information and Communications Division	-	X	-	-	-

