



PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 2026



ROYAL SOCIETY FOR PROTECTION OF NATURE

*Inspiring personal responsibility for
environmental conservation since 1987*

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PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN 2026

01 ACRONYMS

BES:	Bhutan Ecological Society
BNC:	Black-necked Crane
BNCEC:	Black-necked Crane Education Centre
BPC:	Bhutan Power Cooperation Limited
CAF:	Central Asian Flyway
CARA:	Climate Action for Resilient Asia
CLC:	Community Learning Centre
CSOs:	Civil Society Organization
CWP:	Country Work Program
DECC:	Department of Environment and Climate Change
DGPC:	Druk Green Power Cooperation Limited
DoA:	Department of Agriculture
DoFPS:	Department of Forest and Park Services
DoT:	Department of Tourism
EbA:	Ecosystem-based Adaptation
EEs:	Executive Entities
ESRAM:	Ecosystem and Socio-economic Resilience Analysis and Mapping
GCF:	Green Climate Fund
GESI:	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
HI-REAP:	Himalayan Resilience Enabling Action Programme
ICIMOD:	International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development
IUCN:	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IWMI:	Integrated Watershed Management Intervention
KNCF:	Keidanren Nature Conservation Fund
KoEF:	Cooperation Development Research
LCSG:	Local Conservation Support Group
LGs:	Local Government
MoF:	Ministry of Finance
NAP:	National Adaptation Plan
NbS:	Nature-based Solution
NDA:	National Designated Authority
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organization
NLC:	National Land Commission
AOG:	Office of Attorney General
RGoB:	Royal Government of Bhutan
RSPN:	Royal Society for Protection of Nature
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals
WBH:	White-bellied Heron
WBHCC:	White-bellied Heron Conservation Centre
YDF:	Youth Development Fund

02 BACKGROUND

Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) has been implementing numerous projects in the field of Species and Habitat Conservation, Wetlands and Freshwater Conservation, Environmental Education, Sustainable Livelihoods, Waste and Pollution, eventually gearing towards climate change adaptation and building societal and community resilience, while also complementing the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) in meeting its vision and objectives.

Increasingly, as RSPN ventures into implementing many programs, it is important for RSPN to inform and foster partnerships with implementing partners, stakeholders, and the targeted beneficiaries on the overall project goals and intended outputs and outcomes.

This report will help to achieve the following objectives:

- Show RSPN's contribution to nation building.
- Inform our implementing partners of the various projects and activities.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of the implementing partners.
- Garner support and cooperation from implementing partners for the effective implementation of the project activities.
- Synergize efforts towards enhancing the conservation of biodiversity ecosystems and building community resilience to the impacts of climate change.
- Strengthen partnership and collaboration with RGoB, stakeholders, and other development partners.

03 WHO IS RSPN?

RSPN was established in 1987 under the royal command of His Majesty the Fourth King of Bhutan as a citizen-based Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) devoted to the conservation of the Kingdom's environment. RSPN is a partner to the Royal Government of Bhutan that focuses on community engagement through livelihood projects and programs to ultimately build community ownership in conservation and Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience.

His Majesty the King granted patronage to RSPN from 1999 to 2012. Her Majesty the Queen of Bhutan is the Royal Patron. RSPN is managed by a Board of Directors consisting of seven members, and the Executive Director is the head of the organization and manages the day-to-day affairs.



VISION

To be the leader in conservation ensuring future generations of Bhutan live in an 'Environmentally Sustainable Society'.



MISSION

To inspire personal responsibility and active involvement of people of Bhutan in the conservation of the Kingdom's environment through, education, community engagement and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

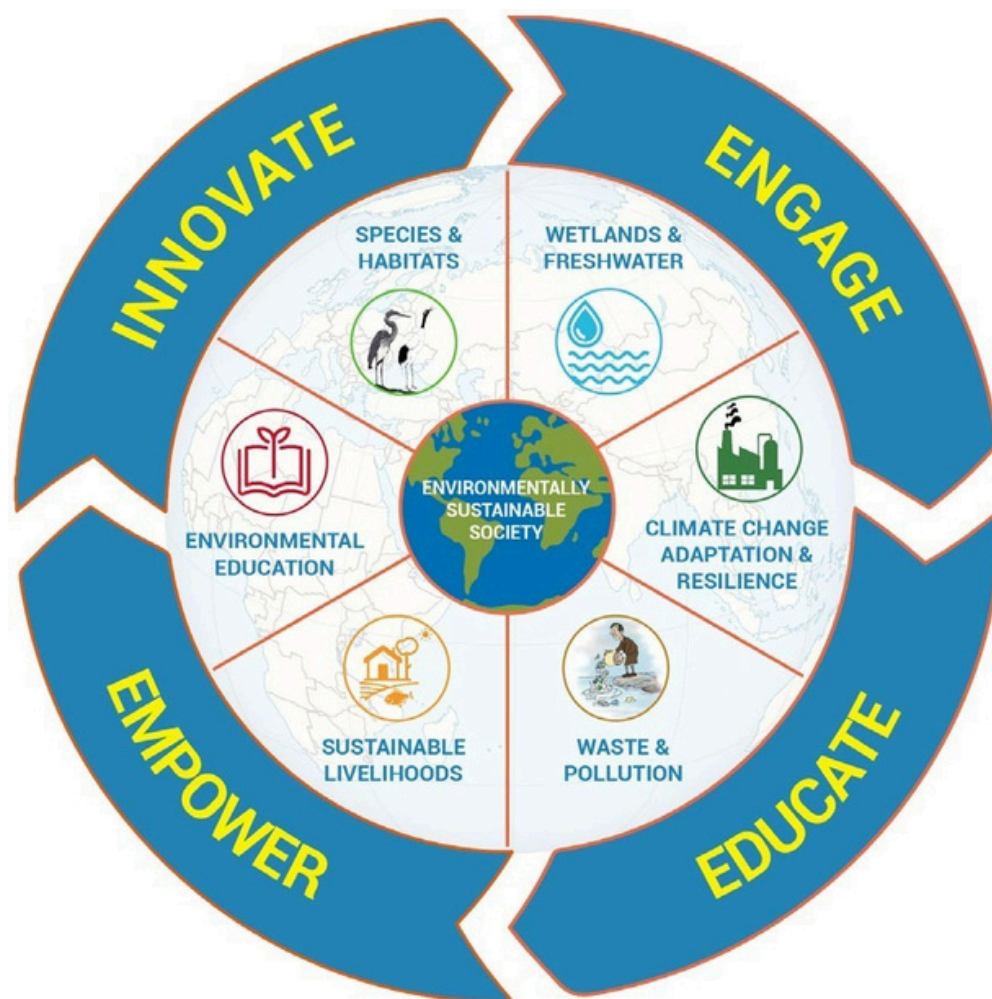


CORE VALUES

- Promote innovative technologies and methods.
- Be proactive towards environmental issues.
- RSPN's Conservation Mandala.
- Be accountable and transparent.
- Be efficient and effective in delivering programs and services.

04 RSPN'S CONSERVATION MANDALA

The mandala represents our systemic approach and efforts, geared to implement sustainable solutions to emerging environmental challenges through innovation, citizen engagement, education, and empowerment. The six thematic areas are initiated based on national and international priorities that are aligned to address the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Using this approach, it affirms our belief and commitment to addressing the global issues that are interdependent and connected in nature.



RSPN's Conservation Mandala

05 OVERALL PROJECT PROFILE

SL NO	PROJECT TITLE	DONOR	PROJECT PERIOD	TOTAL APPROVED GRANT (USD)	TOTAL APPROVED GRANT (NU)
1	Developing Ecosystem-based Solutions for Managing Biodiversity Landscapes in Bhutan	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV), Germany	01.07.2021-30.06.2026	4,606,894.00	392,415,230.92
2	Enhancing Biodiversity Protection and Building Capacity for Cooperative Research in Bhutan to Address Sustainable Development Goal 15	Cooperation Development Research (KoEF)	01.06.2024 -31.05. 2027	51,335.80	4,372,783.44
3	Sacred Flyways: Securing Site Networks for the Black-necked Crane as a Flagship Species for High Altitude Wetland Biodiversity Conservation in the Central Asian Flyway	Fondation Hans Wilsdorf through International Crane Foundation	01.09.2024 -31.08. 2027	288,376.00	24,563,867.68
4	Conservation of Critically Endangered White-bellied Heron bird using integrated conservation approach	Ocean Park Conservation Foundation Hong Kong and Synchronicity Earth	01.09.2025-31.12.2030	205,045.00	17,465,733.1
5	Strengthening Capacities and Enhancing Climate Data and Services in Bhutan to Scale-up Climate Financing from Multiple Sources	GCF Readiness, South Korea	01.04.2024-31.05.2026	991,452.00	84,451,881.36
6	Strengthening Capacity to Enhance Knowledge and Skills in Conservation	Foundation Hans Wilsdorf, Switzerland	01.01.2024-31.12.2026	450,000.00	38,331,000.00
7	Otter Distribution studies in Bhutan	Himalayan otter Network	01.06.2025-31.12.2026	12,000.00	1,022,160.00
8	Innovating Sustainable Community Drinking Water Supply and Distribution System in Gonpawoong Village in Dechheling Gewog (Eastern Bhutan) and Dakphel Village in Trong Gewog (Central Bhutan)	Christopher Hunt (Jebba)	01.01.2025-30.06.2026	30,000.00	2,555,400.00
9	Assessing and mapping new potential habitat of White-bellied Heron in the Jomori river basin in eastern Bhutan	Global Wildlife Fund Limited	01.01.2024-31.12. 2026	21,248.85	1,809,977.04
10	Integrated Watershed management at Dopshari Gewog	Ozen Sanctum Retreat Center	01.07.2025 - 31.07. 2027	58,053.53	4,944,999.69
11	Resource Gaps Identified for the Conservation Program of White-Bellied Heron in Bhutan	Fondation Hoffman	01.01.2025-31.12.2026	312,500.00	26,618,750.00
12	Piloting and testing of GESI-Responsive Climate Resilient Solution as Nature Based Solution, Himalayan Resilience Action Program (HI-REAP)	ICIMOD	01.07.2025 - 31.12.2026	80,000.00	6,814,400.00
13	Securing habitat for Black-necked cranes in Phobjikha and Khetakha valleys	Birdlife International	01.08.2025-31.07.2026	14,008.37	1,193,232.96
14	Saving White-bellied Heron through mitigating the risks of collision with Power lines.	Sophie Denforth Conservation	01.01.2025-30.06.2026	939.52	80,028.31
15	Urgent conservation strategy to save critically endangered species WBH	Birdlife International	1.11.2025-30.09.2026	25,647.1	2,184,619.98
16	In-situ and ex-situ WBH Conservation project.	RSPN Endowment Fund	Untill 2035	150,000.00	12,777,000.00
GRAND TOTAL				7,297,500.17	621,601,064.59

Exchange rate: USD 1= Nu 85.18/-

06 PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR 2026

SI No	Project	Total Approved Grant for 2026 (USD)	Total Approved Grant for 2026 (Nu)
1	Developing Ecosystem-based Solutions for Managing Biodiversity Landscapes in Bhutan	285,171.75	24,290,929.66
2	Enhancing Biodiversity Protection and Building Capacity for Cooperative Research in Bhutan to Address Sustainable Development Goal 15	28,315.00	2,409,606.50
3	Sacred Flyways: Securing Site Networks for the Black-necked Crane as a Flagship Species for High Altitude Wetland Biodiversity Conservation in the Central Asian Flyway	87,927.00	7,482,587.70
4	Conservation of Critically Endangered White-bellied Heron bird using integrated conservation approach	62,029.48	5,283,670.00
5	Strengthening Capacities and Enhancing Climate Data and Services in Bhutan to Scale-up Climate Financing from Multiple Sources	86,452.00	7,357,065.20
6	Strengthening Capacity to Enhance Knowledge and Skills in Conservation	150,000.00	12,765,000.00
7	Otter Distribution studies in Bhutan	6,838.68	582,518.52
8	Innovating Sustainable Community Drinking Water Supply and Distribution System in Gonpawoong Village in Dechheling Gewog (Eastern Bhutan) and Dakphel Village in Trong Gewog (Central Bhutan)	15,309.29	1,302,820.58
9	Assessing and mapping new potential habitat of White-bellied Heron in the Jomori river basin in eastern Bhutan	2,276.25	193,708.88
10	Integrated Watershed management at Dopshari Gewog	29,596.53	2,521,032.42
11	Resource Gaps Identified for the Conservation Program of White-Bellied Heron in Bhutan	100,043.00	8,513,659.30
12	Piloting and testing of GESI-Responsive Climate Resilient Solution as Nature Based Solution, Himalayan Resilience Action Program (HI-REAP)	48,100.00	4,093,310.00
13	Securing habitat for Black-necked cranes in Phobjikha and Khetakha valleys	11,669.71	994,025.90
14	Saving White-bellied Heron through mitigating the risks of collision with Power lines.	356.68	30,353.47
15	Urgent conservation strategy to save critically endangered species WBH	25,647.1	2,182,568.21
16	In-situ and ex-situ WBH Conservation project.	150,000.00	12,777,000.00
	GRAND TOTAL	1,089,732.47	92,823,412.01

Exchange rate: USD 1= Nu 85.18/-

Project Title	i. Developing Ecosystem-based solutions for Managing Biodiversity Landscapes in Bhutan
Project Period	July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2026
Approved Grant	USD 4,606,894.00
Donor	Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV), Germany

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The White-Bellied Heron (WBH), historically known from the Eastern Himalayan foothills, is no more reported from many of its home range. This state of affairs is attributed to the shrinking habitats of WBH, owing to increasing anthropogenic pressures in the face of changing climate. Currently, only about 60 individual birds are reported worldwide with the highest from Bhutan (*Recorded 26 birds in 2017*). The ecology, biology and population dynamics of this bird is little known. Despite conservation efforts, there is a growing concern over the shrinking population of WBH in Bhutan. The riparian ecosystem and WBH habitats are transforming at an alarming pace with the increasing number of developmental activities and the fast-growing infrastructure development. Loss of feeding and nesting habitat due to land use change, disruption of flyways and increased disturbances are potentially the dominant factors driving the WBH population decline.

The project aims to restore damaged WBH feeding and roosting sites in collaboration with hydropower projects and communities to reduce negative impacts brought about by developmental activities. The project also aims to provide alternative economic and employment opportunities and to garner support for WBH conservation activities through community incentive-based and participatory approach to project planning and implementation.

PROJECT GOAL:

Develop ecosystem-based solutions for managing biodiversity landscapes, with a special objective to establish approaches and tools for protecting and managing WBH habitats.

PROJECT OUTCOME:

Effective adaptive ecosystem solutions for WBH conservation in Bhutan (and other Himalayan countries) created through habitat restoration and livelihood enhancement.

PROJECT OUTPUTS:

- Ecosystem-based biodiversity survey and community engagement strategies for WBH conservation based on ESRAM approaches, designed and applied.
- Degraded and new potential WBH habitats rehabilitated and created (feeding, roosting, and nesting).
- Capacity of all stakeholders on planning and implementation of the ESRAM study, ecosystem-based adaptation, and livelihood options strengthened.
- Ecosystem-based adaptation livelihood options in the WBH habitat areas, applied and established.
- Knowledge base on ecosystem-based biodiversity conservation, WBH habitat and population, and climate adaptation established and disseminated.

Project Implementation Plan for the calendar year 2026

Sl. No	Activities	Budget (Nu)	Start Date	End Date	Lead	Implementing Partner
1	White-bellied Heron International Conference	5,534,010.00	March	March	RSPN	DoFPS/CSOs/I NGOs
2	Result sharing meeting	933,300.00	Jan	June	RSPN	DoPFS/LCSG
3	Climate Smart Agriculture-Agro ecological farming	2,867,328.24	Jan	June	RSPN	DoFPS/LGs/Communities
4	Supply of seeds and seedlings - Climate Smart Agriculture (Horticulture, vegetable, agriculture and high value forest tree seedlings)	2,425,189.74	May	May	RSPN	DoA/LGs/Communities
5	LCSG Payment	800,000.00	Jan	June	RSPN	DoFPS
GRAND TOTAL		12,559,827.98				

Project Title	ii. Enhancing Biodiversity Protection and Building Capacity for Cooperative Research in Bhutan to Address Sustainable Development Goal 15
Project Period	January 01 2024 - May 31 2027
Approved Grant	USD 51,335.80
Donor	Cooperation Development Research (KoEF)

PROJECT SUMMARY

This project aims to investigate the complex relationship between forest management, avian biodiversity, and ecosystem health in Bhutan, with a particular focus on the habitat of the critically endangered White-bellied Heron. The initiative aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 15, aiming to ‘protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, combat desertification, and halt land degradation and biodiversity loss’.

Capacity building constitutes a significant component of the project, with dedicated work packages aimed at enhancing the skills of Bhutanese researchers in ecological monitoring and conservation strategies. This workshop is an integral initiative of the EPiC Consortium aimed at addressing the critical need for enhanced land use and land cover (LULC) mapping in Bhutan, particularly focusing on the watersheds primarily for the White-bellied Herons, but also to other forest birds with relevance to EPiC. Despite the existence of a national LULC map, a refined version tailored to specific conservation goals is needed. The project is supported by the programme "Cooperation Development Research" (KoEF) from the OeAD Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation.

PROJECT GOAL:

Deliver comprehensive data on Bhutan's forest cover and avian biodiversity and health, build local research capacity, and contribute meaningful insights toward the conservation of the White-bellied Heron's forest habitats.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- Build the research capacity of Bhutanese researchers
- Conduct White-bellied Heron habitat modeling.

PROJECT OUTCOME:

Enhanced conservation of White-bellied Herons.

PROJECT OUTPUTS:

- Capacity of researcher enhanced.
- The habitat changes of White-bellied Heron are known

Project Implementation Plan for the calendar year 2026						
Sl. No	Activities	Budget(Nu)	Start Date	End Date	Lead	Implementing Partner
1	Capacity development (Exchange Visit)	2,409,606.50	Jan	June	RSPN	DoFPS/Austria
	GRAND TOTAL	2,409,606.50				

Project Title	iii. Sacred Flyways: Securing Site Networks for the Black-necked Crane as a Flagship Species for High Altitude Wetland Biodiversity Conservation in the Central Asian Flyway
Project Period	September 01 2024 - August 31 2027
Approved Grant	USD 288,376.00
Donor	Fondation Hans Wilsdorf through International Crane Foundation

PROJECT SUMMARY

This project adopts the Black-necked Crane (*Grus nigricollis*) as a flagship species for the conservation of a network of high-altitude wetlands and the biodiversity they support along its migration routes in Central Asia. This striking bird has long been of great cultural importance; even as a sacred bird, it is uniquely suited to bring people together for conservation through its great charisma and transboundary migrations across spectacular mountain landscapes in China, Bhutan, India, and Nepal. The developing Central Asian Flyway (CAF) initiative, supported by the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), provides a framework under which coordinated international species conservation action for the BNC would provide a model for other migratory bird species.

The Black-necked Crane (BNC) is a globally Near-threatened Species on account of its small population size that is subject to a range of threats, which are sufficient to cause future declines. With rapid economic development occurring across its range, the impact of existing threats is likely to intensify. As modernization sweeps across the Tibetan Plateau, vast solar installations now cover former wheat fields where cranes once foraged in winter. Collision with increasing spans of power lines claims crane lives at an alarming rate. In a national quest to reduce carbon footprints, monotypic forests planted above the tree line transform grasslands, wetlands, and cropland into areas of little use to indigenous biota. On the summer breeding areas, the changing livestock grazing practice from traditional nomads, plus overgrazing, deteriorates the health of the grassland ecosystem. Uncontrolled ecotourism and free-ranging dogs often result in unwanted disturbance to cranes and habitat loss through associated structures.

The proposed project aims to establish mechanisms for conservation of the migration routes linking Tibetan breeding and stopover sites in China with wintering areas for the BNCs in Bhutan; and the Indian breeding area in Ladakh with stopover and wintering areas in Tibet. It will seek to reduce the key threats impacting the population and preserve critical habitats along their migration routes. A land use plan will be developed for Phobjikha Conservation Area; livelihood support will be provided to communities through restoration of abandoned paddy fields used by BNC in Bomdeling; and the BNC education centre at Phobjikha will be enhanced to deliver environmental education.

PROJECT GOAL:

The overall goal of the project is to secure the flyway site network for the Black-necked Crane in the Central Asian Flyway, contributing to a stable trend in its population during the project cycle and an increasing trend in the long term, and benefits to High Altitude Wetland biodiversity conservation. In Bhutan, the goals are:

- To develop a land use plan for the Phobjikha Conservation Area.
- Livelihood support will be provided to communities through the restoration of abandoned paddy fields used by the BNC in Bomdeling.
- The BNC education center at Phobjikha will be enhanced to deliver environmental education.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

This project adopts the Black-necked Crane *Grus nigricollis* as a flagship species for the conservation of a network of high-altitude wetlands and the biodiversity they support along its migration routes in Central Asia. The project is therefore intended to provide direct benefits towards the conservation of high-altitude wetlands, the ecosystem services they provide and the wide range of montane biodiversity that they support.

PROJECT OUTCOME/OUTPUT:

- Ecologically and economically viable land use plan developed for Phobjikha Conservation Area where BNC, other wildlife and their habitats are secured against various threats.
- Sustainable crane-friendly livelihood support provided to communities, to increase foraging grounds of BNC in Bomdeling through restoration of abandoned paddy fields.
- Enhanced capacity and sustainability of the BNC education centre at Phobjikha to deliver the environment education.

Project Implementation Plan for the calendar year 2026						
Sl. No	Activities	Budget (Nu)	Start Date	End Date	Lead	Implementing Partner
1	Restoration of degraded habitat in Bomdeling	714,840.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	DoFPS
2	Land use planning carried out in Phobjikha	1,276,500.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	DoFPS
3	BNC festival organized in Bomdeling	85,100.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	DoFPS
	GRAND TOTAL	2,076,440.00				

Project Title	iv. Conservation of Critically Endangered White-bellied Heron bird using integrated conservation approach
Project Period	September 01 2025 - December 31 2030
Approved Grant	USD 205,945.00
Donor	Ocean Park Conservation Foundation Hong Kong and Synchronicity Earth

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The White-bellied Heron (*Ardea insignis*) is a critically endangered species at risk of becoming extinct without conservation measures. The global population has fewer than sixty individuals. It is declared extinct from Nepal and Bangladesh and remains only in Bhutan, Northeast India and Myanmar. Bhutan holds 45-50% of the global population. However, the habitats are severely degraded by large hydropower plant constructions, forest fires, river pollution, illegal fishing activity and climate change. Even though, Royal Society for Protection Nature initiated several conservation activities, there is no significant improvement in the population and remains several knowledge gaps. This project will focus on identifying critical habitats impacted by the threats and innovating mechanisms through scientific methods to degraded habitats, abating pollution and using community engagement as means to reduce the threats. To recover the low population, a science-based species recovery plan, including captive breeding program enhancement, genetic assessment, movement ecology and monitor of post-released herons that was previously unexplored for the species will be carried out. This integrated approach will address crucial needs for the Heron conservation.

PROJECT GOAL:

Securing White-bellied Heron population in Bhutan.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- Identify key threats in critical habitats and conduct in depth threat analysis that impacts White-bellied Heron.
- Implement restoration measures and pollution control to improve the habitats.
- Develop and promote alternative livelihood options that reduce community reliance on activities impacting the White-bellied Heron.
- Enhance a science-based species recovery plan to improve White-bellied Heron population.
- Conduct education programs and enhance knowledge management to strengthen conservation of White-bellied Heron.

PROJECT OUTCOME/OUTPUT:

- Identified threats and their impacts, and mapped critical habitats that enable targeted conservation interventions through an ecosystem-based approach.
- Degraded riparian habitats are restored, enhancing habitat quality for the White-bellied Heron.
- Reduction in habitat degradation caused by illegal activities and unsustainable practices with the provision of alternative livelihoods to the local communities.
- Increased breeding success through improved nesting conditions, captive breeding, movement ecology, and successful reintroduction of herons into the wild.
- Strengthened knowledge generation and dissemination on the White-bellied Heron that fosters cooperation and support for conservation.

Project implementation plan for the calendar year 2026

Sl. No	Activities	Budget(Nu)	Start Date	End Date	Lead	Implementing Partner
1	Activity 1: Conduct field surveys and habitat inventories for threat identification.	698,482.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	DoFPS
2	Activity 2: Use satellite imagery and remote sensing tools to map critical and potential habitats of White-bellied Heron.	500,000.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	NLC
3	Activity 1: Design restoration plans and strategies for riparian vegetation along identified critical habitats.	10,000.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	DoFPS/Community Forest Groups
4	Activity 2: Restore 10 Hectares (pilot study) of degraded habitats with community involvement.	1,757,148.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	DoFPS/Community Forest Groups
5	Activity 3: Analyze habitat data (spatial and ecological parameters) and ground truthing to identify areas most at risk due to degradation.	500,000.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	
6	Activity 4: Produce habitat suitability model report	200,000.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	
7	Operation Cost	1,618,040.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	
GRAND TOTAL		5,283,670.00				

Project Title	v. Strengthening Capacities and Enhancing Climate Data and Services in Bhutan to Scale-up Climate Financing from Multiple Sources
Project Period	January 04 2024 – May 31 2026
Approved Grant	USD 991,452.00
Donor	South Korea

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Bhutan faces significant challenges in maintaining carbon neutrality and addressing climate vulnerabilities across critical sectors. The GCF Country Work Program (CWP) has identified capacity gaps, including a need for more reliable baseline data and technical expertise on climate change. These gaps hinder Bhutan's ability to pursue sustainable development with low carbon emissions and climate resilience. To achieve these goals, cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder efforts are necessary to identify baseline conditions and projected impacts of climate change.

The Readiness project aims to enhance access to climate finance by strengthening the technical and institutional capacity of various stakeholders such as the National Designated Authority (NDA), Ministry of Finance (MoF); RSPN, which secured an NDA endorsement for the DAE application, and potential Executing Entities (EEs), including the Bhutan Ecological Society (BES), Tarayana Foundation, and the Youth Development Fund (YDF). The proposed readiness project will contribute towards meeting the GCF Readiness Objectives One (Capacity Building), Two (Strategic Frameworks), and Five (Knowledge Sharing and Learning).

PROJECT GOAL:

To increase Bhutan's access to climate finance by improving the availability and access to robust and credible climate information and data through stakeholder coordination and technical capacity building to meet its NDC and NAP commitments and needs.

PROJECT OUTCOME/OUTPUT:

- Country NDAs or focal points and the network/systems that enable them to fulfill their roles, responsibilities, and policy requirements are operational and effective.
- Direct access applicants and accredited entities (DAEs) have established capacity to meet and maintain the GCF's accreditation standards, and accredited DAEs have the capacity to develop a pipeline of projects and effectively implement GCF-funded activities.
- Relevant country stakeholders (which may include executing entities, Civil Society Organizations, and the private sector) have established adequate capacity, systems, and networks to support the planning, programming, and implementation of GCF-funded activities.
- GCF recipient countries have developed or enhanced strategic frameworks to address policy gaps, improve sectoral expertise, and enhance enabling environments for GCF programming in low-emission investment.

Project implementation plan for the calendar year 2026						
Sl. No	Activities	Budget(Nu)	Start Date	End Date	Lead	Implementing Partner
1	NDA or FP staff trained in areas relevant to the GCF objectives of the GCF and oversight of GCF activities NDA operational manual developed and validated.	2,926,787.50	Jan	Dec	RSPN	MoF
2	Direct Access Applicants supported with training, capacity development, or improved systems to close gaps	1,328,719.33	Jan	Dec	RSPN	-
3	Studies, modelling efforts and other research conducted/developed	8,687,333.33	Dec	Jan	RSPN	CSOs/OAG/D ECC
GRAND TOTAL		12,942,840.16				

Project Title	vi. Strengthening Capacity to Enhance Knowledge and Skills in Conservation
Project Period	January 01 2024 - December 31 2026
Approved Grant	USD 450,000.00
Donor	Foundation Hans Wilsdorf, Switzerland

PROJECT SUMMARY:

RSPN is dedicated to conserving biodiversity, promoting sustainable development, and fostering environmental stewardship across Bhutan. In line with our mission, RSPN has developed a comprehensive strategy for advancing the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the country. The importance of capacity building in environmental conservation cannot be overstated. RSPN has been working on numerous projects related to biodiversity conservation, sustainable livelihoods, climate change adaptation, and community-based natural resource management. However, the rapidly evolving challenges in these areas require continuous skill development to ensure effective implementation.

Despite RSPN's commitment and progress in protecting Bhutan's natural resources, the need for enhanced technical and managerial capacity among our staff is evident. Our staff members are pivotal in carrying out on-the-ground conservation work, engaging with local communities, and driving policy advocacy efforts. However, they currently face challenges related to the implementation of RSPN's strategic goals, particularly in areas such as project management, monitoring and evaluation, and cross-sectoral collaboration. This project seeks to address these challenges through a targeted capacity development program, which will empower RSPN staff with the necessary skills and tools to better execute our mission and address the evolving environmental challenges in Bhutan.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- **Strengthen Staff Knowledge and Skills:** To build technical and managerial expertise among RSPN staff to enhance their capacity to effectively implement RSPN's strategies and thematic areas.
- **Improve Project Management Competencies:** To provide staff with advanced knowledge in project planning, execution, monitoring, and evaluation, ensuring projects meet their objectives and contribute to RSPN's long-term vision.
- **Foster Collaboration and Cross-Sectoral Partnerships:** To enhance staff's ability to work effectively with other organizations, government bodies, and local communities for integrated conservation efforts.
- **Ensure Sustainability and Impact:** To ensure that the capacity building translates into long-term positive impacts for the organization, its partners, and the communities that benefit from RSPN's work.

Project Implementation Plan for the calendar year 2026

Sl. No	Activities	Budget(Nu)	Start Date	End Date	Lead	Implementing Partner
1	Capacity Development of RSPN Staff in the Implementation of Strategic and Thematic Areas	12,450,000.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	-
GRAND TOTAL		12,450,000.00				

Project Title	vii. Otter Distribution studies in Bhutan
Project Period	June 2025 – 31st December 2026
Approved Grant	USD 12,000.00
Donor	Himalayan otter Network

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Otter populations are declining steeply across Asia and the Himalayan region (de Silva, 2007), subject to intensifying pressures of expanding human populations, fragmentation of habitat, declining water quality, loss of an adequate prey base, construction of hydroelectric power generation facilities, and intensifying pressure from the pet trade (OSG, 2016). The otter presence in Bhutan has been reported in several freshwater rivers of Bhutan (Wangchuk et al., 2004; Ruiz-Olmo et al., 2008). However, only limited studies on otter distribution in Bhutan are available, and to date, no comprehensive survey has been conducted. de Silva (2011) notes the dearth of information on otters from Bhutan, including the lack of an account of habitat preferences and threats. There is a need to address the information gap on occupancy, distribution, and conservation threats to otter species throughout the country and to promote a greater appreciation of the species among the public, especially among the human communities that share a habitat with otter populations.

PROJECT GOAL/OBJECTIVE:

- To identify, assess, and map the key favorable habitats and threats to the otter population through field surveys of priority rivers.
- To advocate for and create awareness among the local communities about conserving the otters in Bhutan.

OUTCOME:

- The capacity of Bhutanese otter researchers has been enhanced.
- A survey was conducted in priority rivers to understand the distribution and occupancy of three otter species.
- A perception study on otters and their conservation significance was conducted and documented.
- Knowledge about the otter population, habitat, and community perception has been established and advocated.

Project Implementation Plan for the calendar year 2026						
Sl.No	Activities	Budget(Nu)	Start Date	End Date	Lead	Implementing Partner
1	To identify, assess, and map the key favorable habitats and threats to otter population through field surveys of priority rivers.	400,000.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	DoFPS
2	To advocate and create awareness among the local communities in conserving the otters in Bhutan.	182,518.53	Jan	Dec	RSPN	DoFPS
GRAND TOTAL		582,518.53				

Project Title	viii. Innovating Sustainable Community Drinking Water Supply and Distribution System in Gonpawoong Village, Dechheling Gewog
Project Period	January 01 2025 - June 30 2026
Approved Grant	USD 30,000.00
Donor	Christopher Hunt (Jebba)

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Dechheling Gewog in Pema Gatsel Dzongkhag, home to over 602 households across six chiwogs, faces persistent drinking water shortages due to its challenging topography, high climate variability, and limited access to reliable water sources, particularly for communities located on upper ridges. While the gewog receives high annual rainfall, water availability for human consumption remains severely constrained, and households in Upper Gonpawoong village continue to spend substantial time fetching water from distant downhill springs. To address this long-standing challenge, the community, in collaboration with the Gewog Administration, will establish a hybrid water supply system that combines pumped spring water during the dry season with household-level rooftop rainwater harvesting during the monsoon, supported by centralized storage and distribution. This integrated approach will enhance year-round water security, reduce energy costs, improve household resilience, and ensure sustainable access to safe drinking water for some of the most vulnerable communities in the Gewog.

PROJECT GOAL/OBJECTIVE:

Innovating Sustainable Community Drinking Water Supply and Distribution System in Gonpawoong Village, Dechheling Gewog.

OUTCOME:

Access to adequate, safe, and reliable drinking water supply to Gonpawoong communities throughout the year.

Project Implementation Plan for the calendar year 2026						
Sl.No	Activities	Budget(Nu)	Start Date	End Date	Lead	Implementing Partner
1	Procurement of items and materials	1,304,450.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	Pemagatshel Dzongkhag & Dechenling Gewog
2	Establishment of electric pump and water storage tank;	600,000.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	Pemagatshel Dzongkhag & Dechenling Gewog
3	Strengthen Water Users' Association (WUA) in the Gewog through training and awareness campaign	99,000.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	Pemagatshel Dzongkhag & Dechenling Gewog
4	Construction of roof top rainwater harvesting facilities	58,800.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	Pemagatshel Dzongkhag & Dechenling Gewog
GRAND TOTAL		2,062,250.00				

Project Title	ix. Assessing and mapping new potential habitat of White-bellied Heron in the Jomori river basin in eastern Bhutan
Project Period	January 01 2024 - December 31 2026
Approved Grant	USD 21,248.85
Donor	Global Wildlife Fund

PROJECT SUMMARY:

This project aims to safeguard the critically endangered bird, the White-bellied Heron. The proposed project location is at the Jomori river basin in the remotest and easternmost part of Bhutan under the Samdrup Jongkhar district. The district shares a boundary with the Arunachal Pradesh state of India. The Jomori river flows in this river basin, and it is one of the few major rivers in Bhutan that is a potential habitat for the White-bellied Heron. One fourth of the proposed area for this project falls within the Jomotshangkha Wildlife Sanctuary. The Jomori river flows through the Jomotshangkha town and converges right after the town with the river from Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh at the border of India and Bhutan.

PROJECT OUTCOME:

Protect habitats of White-bellied Heron.

PROJECT OUTPUTS:

- Survey conducted to explore the habitat suitability for White-bellied Heron.
- Threat assessment carried out.
- Communities advocated and educated for the conservation of White-bellied Heron

Project Implementation Plan for the calendar year 2026						
Sl.No	Activities	Budget(Nu)	Start Date	End Date	Lead	Implementing Partner
1	Conduct Habitat inventory in Jomori (Second round)	577,173.57	Jan	Dec	RSPN	DoFPS & LGs
2	Data analysis and Report writing	200,000.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	DoFPS & LGs
GRAND TOTAL		777,173.57				

Project Title	x. Integrated Watershed management at Dopshari Gewog
Project Period	July 01 2025 - July 31 2027
Approved Grant	USD 58,053.53
Donor	Ozen Sanctum Retreat Center

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Access to reliable water remains a major challenge in Bhutan due to its rugged terrain and the limited application of modern water management technologies. As a result, communities, particularly the 69% of the population living in rural areas frequently face water shortages affecting drinking, sanitation, and livelihoods. Growing demand, degrading watersheds, and the accelerating impacts of climate change are placing increasing stress on the country's freshwater systems. One critical example is the Rinchulum Watershed in Dopshari Gewog under Paro Dzongkhag, where expanding human activities such as logging, road construction, infrastructure development, and forest encroachment are rapidly degrading the watershed. These pressures threaten the long-term sustainability of local water sources, significantly reducing water availability for both domestic use and irrigation, and undermining community resilience. The project aims to mitigate against each of the degrading influences and enhance watershed conditions to the natural state possible.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The project aims to ensure sustainable management and protection of Rinchulum Watershed to provide a consistent flow of water for drinking, irrigation, and the environment through an integrated watershed management intervention (IWMI) approach.

PROJECT OUTCOME:

Sustainable Management of Rinchulum Watershed in Dopshari Gewog under Paro Dzongkhag

Project Implementation Plan for the calendar year 2026						
Sl. No	Activities	Budget(Nu)	Start Date	End Date	Lead	Implementing Partner
1	Forest function mapping/identifying recharge areas, buffer and multiple use zone.	200,000.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	Paro Dzongkhag/Dopshari Gewog
2	Plantation in degraded areas with springshed management approach.	1,400,000.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	Paro Dzongkhag/Dopshari Gewog
3	Procure and install of met stations.	500,000.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	Paro Dzongkhag/Dopshari Gewog
4	Local Government (LG) and Community Capacity Development	350,000.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	Paro Dzongkhag/Dopshari Gewog
GRAND TOTAL		2,450,000.00				

Project Title	xi. Resource Gaps Identified for the Conservation Program of White-Bellied Heron in Bhutan
Project Period	January 01 2025 - December 31 2026
Approved Grant	USD 312,500.00
Donor	Hoffman Foundation

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The White-bellied Heron (WBH) bird is in a critical state with a dwindling population and at risk of becoming extinct at any time soon. The distribution range of the species has also been shrinking, and now their occurrence is limited to only three range countries in the eastern Himalayas: Bhutan, northeast India, and Myanmar. Conservation measures have become crucial in saving the species.

The Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) has been tremendously putting effort into saving the species through various programs initiated in Bhutan for the last twenty years. Apart from robust conservation efforts in the wild to save the species, RSPN has also established a captive breeding center for the species in 2021. Today, the White-bellied Heron Conservation Centre (WBHCC) is in operation, with three founder populations of herons being raised. The center is located in the southwest of the country, spread over 18 acres of land on a plateau at the confluence of two rivers, and was constructed with the funding support of the Royal Government of Bhutan and philanthropic donors. The facilities at the Center include a laboratory where incubation, rearing, and major breeding work are conducted; six large aviaries for rearing the breeding and non-breeding population; fishponds where fish are reared to feed herons; a rescue and rehabilitation unit where quarantine, medication, and rehabilitation of sick, diseased, or injured birds are done; an office and education unit for our staff to work and facilities for visitors and educational programs; a staff quarter for staff; and a small guest house for scientists and researchers to stay for a short time. Currently, we have five staff members at the WBHCC.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- Enhance knowledge on WBH ecology and conservation through research, assessment, and knowledge sharing across the WBH range countries.
- Assess and document WBH and its habitat conservation status and environment-human interactions within the landscape of forest, wetland, and agricultural ecosystems.
- Establish forest, water, and land conservation interventions, climate-smart strategies, and livelihood diversification for climate adaptation.
- Develop a knowledge base and establish project (activity) -policy interface platforms on WBH conservation, community, and ecosystem-based conservation.
- Strengthen national, regional, and international collaboration and networking in WBH conservation.

Project Implementation Plan for the calendar year 2026						
Sl. No	Activities	Budget(Nu)	Start Date	End Date	Lead	Implementing Partner
1	Inventory of habitat suitability for post release of captive breed heron	1,277,700.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	DoFPS
2	Annual Population Survey and Monitoring of White-bellied Heron	1,277,700.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	DoFPS and LCSGs
GRAND TOTAL		2,555,400.00				

Project Title	xii. Piloting and testing of GESI-Responsive Climate Resilient Solution as Nature Based Solution, Himalayan Resilience Action Program (HI-REAP)
Project Period	July 01 2025 - December 31 2026
Approved Grant	USD 80,000.00
Donor	ICIMOD

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The HI-REAP, implemented by ICIMOD under the UK FCDO's Climate Action for Resilient Asia (CARA) initiative, supports countries across the Hindu Kush Himalaya in building greener, more inclusive, and climate-resilient economies. Through strong partnerships with governments, communities, and regional institutions, HI-REAP scales Nature-based Solutions (NbS) that protect ecosystems while strengthening livelihoods. Its work spans watershed management, agro-ecological and landscape restoration, disaster risk reduction, bioprospecting, and climate-resilient agriculture, enabling communities to adapt to climate change while unlocking sustainable economic opportunities. Anchored in ICIMOD's strategic focus on Resilient Economies and Landscapes, HI-REAP delivers solutions that are environmentally sound, economically viable, and socially equitable. As part of HI-REAP, RSPN is implementing a project on piloting and testing GESI-Responsive Climate Resilient Solutions as NbS to enhance the adoption of GESI-responsive, agroecology-based NbS locally and at scale at sub-national levels.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- To provide effective technical support to build the capacities of relevant key stakeholders (farmers, government, university) in GESI-responsive NbS, specifically on agroecological practices to facilitate the scaling process.
- To test and pilot GESI-responsive nature-based agriculture solutions by establishing climate-resilient demonstration plots and a Community Learning Centre (CLC) at the field level.
- To establish effective partnerships for co-creating and strengthening the knowledge base/portal on sustainable, resilient, and inclusive agriculture solutions for knowledge exchange and cross-learning, including resource mobilization to scale the integrated NbS package in Bhutan.

OUTCOME:

Increased adoption of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)-responsive, agroecology-based NbS locally and at sub-national levels.

Project Implementation Plan for the calendar year 2026						
Sl.No	Activities	Budget(Nu)	Start Date	End Date	Lead	Implementing Partner
1	Agriculture inputs and material for established CLCs	443,398.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	Gewog/Dzongkhag/ Research Center
2	Farmer level Orientation on CRA as Nbs technologies at each CLC	94,569.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	Gewog/Research Center/ ICIMOD
3	Develop and distribute at least 4 knowledge products	257,790.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	Gewog/Dzongkhag/ Research Center/ ICIMOD
4	Co-develop training package	171,860.00	Jan	Dec	RSPN	Gewog/Dzongkhag, Research Center/ ICIMOD
5	Collaborate with Universities and Research Institution	515,580.00				Gewog/Dzongkhag/ University/Research Center
GRAND TOTAL		1,483,197.00				

Project Title	xiii. Securing habitats for Black-necked Cranes in Gangtey-Phobjikha (Phobjika and Khatekha Valleys IBA)
Project Period	August 01 2025 - July 31 2026
Approved Grant	USD 14,008.37
Donor	Birdlife International

PROJECT SUMMARY:

This proposed project will be implemented in Gangtey-Phobjikha Valley under Wangdue Phodrang District. The Gangtey-Phobjikha and Khotokha Valley IBA is identified as a priority IBA for the Central Asian Flyway. The valley holds immense ecological and cultural importance at the national and international levels, and the natural wetland in the valley has been designated as a Ramsar Site, one of only three in the country. The valley's wetlands and surrounding landscapes provide essential ecosystem services, including water regulation and biodiversity support. The valley is also the largest wintering ground for the globally threatened Black-necked Cranes (*Grus nigricollis*) in Bhutan. Black-necked Cranes, one of the two flagship species of RSPN, not only connect four Himalayan nations along the Central Asian Flyway but are also an integral part of the local culture. The arrival of the cranes is celebrated in the valley through festivals. RSPN has been working to conserve this species in the valley since 1987.

Phobjikha is a model for community-based conservation, where sustainable livelihoods and environmental stewardship go hand in hand. Its integration into national conservation policies highlights its role in Bhutan's broader environmental strategy. The valley also contributes to eco-tourism and environmental education, further reinforcing its importance in Bhutan's natural heritage.

Despite its designation as a Ramsar site and ongoing conservation initiatives, the valley faces increasing environmental threats due to socio-economic development and climate change. Agricultural intensification, particularly commercial potato farming, has led to extensive agrochemical use, contributing to eutrophication of wetlands. Encroachment for settlement expansion and land-use changes further threaten the fragile ecosystem. Immediate intervention is required to mitigate these threats and ensure the long-term sustainability of Gangtey-Phobjikha Valley as a crucial site for biodiversity conservation.

PROJECT GOAL:

The project will build the capacity of stakeholders in mitigating threats to the wetland, increase awareness among the local communities, and carry out market analyses to assess the viability of less-intensive (organic) potato farming.

PROJECT OUTPUT:

- To build the capacity of local communities and relevant stakeholders in mitigating threats to the wetland.
- To raise the profile of wetland and Black-necked Crane conservation through awareness-raising activities for the public and the scientific community.
- Viability study of the transition to a healthier mode of potato production.

Project Implementation Plan for the calendar year 2026						
Sl. No	Activities	Budget(Nu)	Start Date	End Date	Lead	Implementing Partner
1	Conduct stakeholder consultation with local communities and government agencies on the conservation of the Phobjikha wetland	346,000.00	Jan	July	RSPN	DoFPS & LGs
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness on the importance of wetlands among local communities in Phobjikha. • Install signboards in strategic locations, displaying the importance of managing wetlands and BNC. • Organize at least two knowledge sharing forums on the importance of wetland management. 	587,500.00	Feb	July	RSPN	DoFPS & LGs
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissemination of findings of market analysis among key stakeholders. • Quarterly Progress update to BirdLife Asia • Final technical and financial report to BirdLife 	261,000.00	March	Dec	RSPN	DoFPS & LGs
GRAND TOTAL		1,194,500.00				

Project Title	xiv. Saving White-bellied Heron through mitigating the risks of collision with Power lines
Project Period	January 01 2025 - June 30 2026
Approved Grant	USD 939.52
Donor	Sophie Denforth Conservation

PROJECT SUMMARY:

For over a decade, the RSPN has been actively involved in monitoring and conserving the White-bellied Heron, with efforts focusing on understanding the species' ecology, monitoring known habitat, conducting annual population counts of the species, monitoring nesting sites, and initiating localized conservation initiatives. Through these efforts, RSPN has understood the heron's habitat preference, feeding guild, and nesting sites. The areas where the heron occurs were also identified as Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas and Key Biodiversity Areas in collaboration with the Department of Forest and Park Services of Bhutan.

With the recommendation from the White-bellied Heron Expert Working Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and one of the resolutions from the International Conference on White-bellied Heron held in Bhutan in 2015, RSPN has initiated the establishment of a captive breeding center to breed the heron. Today, the center has the basic infrastructure to support captive breeding, and currently, five herons are being raised. In addition, RSPN has focused on raising awareness within local communities, educating them about the ecological significance of the White-bellied Heron, and encouraging sustainable practices that reduce human impacts on the heron's environment. Furthermore, RSPN has collaborated with the government, local conservation groups, and international organizations to develop and implement a Conservation Action Plan to conserve the heron's remaining population.

PROJECT GOAL:

The project will install flight diverters in all the wires that pass over White-bellied Heron's critical habitats and nesting sites. This will significantly reduce juvenile mortality (hypothesis) and help increase the population.

PROJECT OUTPUT:

By installing flight diverters and studying their impact, this project will contribute to achieving one of the actions of the White-bellied Heron Action Plan (2022-2031) in mitigating threats.

Project Implementation Plan for the calendar year 2026						
Sl. No	Activities	Budget(Nu)	Start Date	End Date	Lead	Implementing Partner
1	Installing flight diverters	30,353.47	Jan	June	RSPN	DoE, BPC & DGPC
GRAND TOTAL		30,353.47				

Project Title	xv. Urgent Conservation Strategy to Save Critically Endangered Species WBH: Harmonizing Captive Breeding and Habitat Protection
Project Period	November 01 2025 - September 30 2026
Approved Grant	USD 25,647.1
Donor	Birdlife International

PROJECT SUMMARY:

The White-bellied Heron (*Ardea insignis*) is one of the rarest birds in the world. Although the species was historically present throughout South Asia, it is now restricted only to Bhutan, northeast India, and northern Myanmar. Currently, Bhutan is home to more than 50% of the world's population, with the latest count reporting the presence of 25 birds in the country.

The WBH is a symbolic bird species for the people of Bhutan and a classic “umbrella species” that requires a vast, well-preserved habitat for its survival. The nest of this bird is another rarity, with only 3-4 nests located in Bhutan. Their low genetic diversity and a few breeding pairs in a restricted geographical area are major concerns. Habitat degradation, both natural and anthropogenic pressures, has further contributed to the decline in the population.

The Royal Society for Protection of Nature (RSPN) has been engaged in WBH conservation through both in-situ (since 2003) and ex-situ (since 2021) conservation following a nature-based solution. The urgent issue at present is creating a captive breeding population to be released into the wild. Efforts are being made to incubate and raise WBH artificially, and so far, five individuals are being raised at the WBH conservation center located in Tsirang, Bhutan.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- To support ex-situ conservation of White-bellied Heron through enhanced amenities.
- To raise awareness among the local communities on the conservation of WBH.
- Infrastructure development of homestay accommodation and ecotourism education programs.

Project Implementation Plan for the calendar year 2026						
Sl. No	Activities	Budget(Nu)	Start Date	End Date	Lead	Implementing Partner
1	Procurement of one X-ray machine, necessary equipment for captive	1,202,000.00	Jan	September	RSPN	-
2	Education and awareness program on WBH conservation	255,000.00	Jan	September	RSPN	-
3	Infrastructure development for homestay accommodation and ecotourism education programs	850,000.00	Jan	September	RSPN	DoT
GRAND TOTAL		2,307,000.00				

An aerial photograph of a mountainous region in Bhutan. The landscape is dominated by terraced rice fields, which appear as a series of golden-yellow steps cascading down the slopes. These fields are separated by narrow, green paths and are surrounded by dense, lush green forests. Several small, traditional houses with corrugated metal roofs are scattered throughout the scene, some nestled within the forest and others near the terraces. The overall scene captures the harmonious blend of human agriculture and natural beauty in a high-altitude environment.

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