

# **Information and Knowledge Sharing on Institutional Policies Developed through Green Climate Fund**



**May 5-7 (2026)**

## **1. WORKSHOP OVERVIEW**

The Royal Society for Protection of Nature conducted a three-day sensitization workshop from 5–7 May 2026 at Royal Thimphu College. The workshop aimed to familiarize participants with RSPN’s updated 2025 institutional policy framework, developed to align with the accreditation and implementation requirements of the Adaptation Fund.

The session served as a platform to strengthen institutional understanding and coordination among implementing partners regarding environmental and social safeguards, gender responsiveness, financial integrity, and accountability mechanisms required under climate finance programming.

### **1.1 Stakeholder Participation**

The workshop brought together representatives from government agencies, civil society organizations, and academic institutions to promote a harmonized and collaborative approach toward climate resilience and institutional accountability. Participating organizations included:

- Department of Micro-fiscal and Development Finance (DMDF), Ministry of Finance
- Tarayana Foundation
- Bhutan Youth Development Fund
- Selwa
- Royal Thimphu College
- Royal Society for Protection of Nature

### **1.2 Objectives**

The primary objective of the workshop was to ensure that all implementing partners and stakeholders clearly understand and comply with institutional requirements related to:

- Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS)
- Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)
- Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT)
- Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRM)

## **2. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS FRAMEWORK (ESSF) 2025**

The Environmental and Social Safeguards Framework (ESSF) 2025 represents a cornerstone of RSPN’s commitment to the principle of “Do No Harm.” The framework is aligned with the Environmental and Social Policy (2016) of the Adaptation Fund.

### **2.1 Risk Categorization**

RSPN has adopted a three-tier risk classification system to assess and screen all proposed projects:

- **Category A:** Projects with potentially significant adverse environmental or social impacts that are diverse, irreversible, or unprecedented (e.g., major infrastructure projects).
- **Category B:** Projects with limited adverse impacts that are site-specific, manageable, and reversible.
- **Category C:** Projects expected to have minimal or no adverse environmental or social impacts.

## **2.2 Core Principles for Implementation**

Participants were sensitized on the following key implementation principles:

- **Human Rights:** Ensuring protection against discrimination, forced labor, and other forms of rights violations.
- **Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC):** Mandatory for interventions affecting local communities, including their lands, livelihoods, and cultural practices.
- **Mitigation Hierarchy:** Applying a systematic approach to avoid, minimize, mitigate, and compensate for environmental and social risks.
- **Public Disclosure:** Ensuring transparency through disclosure of ESS-related assessments and reports on the RSPN website.

## **3. GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION (GESI)**

Aligned with the Gender Policy (2021) of the Adaptation Fund, RSPN's Gender Policy 2025 mandates the integration of gender considerations throughout the project cycle.

### **3.1 Mandatory Gender Action Plans (GAP)**

All projects are required to develop and implement Gender Action Plans (GAPs) supported by dedicated budget allocations. Key requirements include:

- Collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data;
- Equitable participation of women and marginalized groups in decision-making processes; and
- Conducting gender impact assessments from project design through evaluation.

### **3.2 Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEAH)**

RSPN maintains a zero-tolerance approach toward Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEAH). Participants from Tarayana Foundation, YDF, and Selwa were oriented on the application of a survivor-centered approach, ensuring confidentiality, protection, and access to psychosocial and legal support services for affected individuals.

## **4. FINANCIAL INTEGRITY: AML/CFT POLICY 2025**

To safeguard climate finance resources from misuse, RSPN’s Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Financing of Terrorism (AML/CFT) Policy 2025 aligns with the requirements of both the Adaptation Fund and the Green Climate Fund.

#### **4.1 Risk-Based Approach (RBA)**

RSPN applies a Risk-Based Approach (RBA) to all financial transactions and partnerships, including Customer and Partner Due Diligence (CDD) processes for grantees and vendors.

The following measures were highlighted:

- **Identification and Verification:** Submission of official registration certificates and tax clearance documents by partners.
- **Screening Procedures:** Verification against United Nations sanctions lists and domestic watchlists.
- **Politically Exposed Persons (PEPs):** Application of Enhanced Due Diligence (EDD) measures for individuals holding prominent public positions.

#### **4.2 Red Flag Indicators**

Participants were trained to identify suspicious financial activities and “red flags,” including unusual requests for secrecy and complex fund transfers lacking clear justification. Any suspicious activity is required to be reported to the AML Compliance Officer (AMLCO) within 24–48 hours.

### **5. ACCOUNTABILITY AND GRIEVANCE REDRESS MECHANISM (GRM)**

The Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) 2025 establishes a formal process for stakeholders to raise concerns regarding project impacts, misconduct, or institutional non-compliance.

#### **5.1 Two-Tiered Grievance Redress Process**

##### **Tier 1: Management-Level Resolution**

Complaints are initially reviewed by Department Heads and the Management Team, with the aim of resolving issues within 10–15 business days.

##### **Tier 2: Board-Level Resolution**

Complex or unresolved grievances are escalated to the RSPN Board, which provides a final decision within 30 business days.

#### **5.2 Whistleblower Protection**

RSPN guarantees protection against retaliation for whistleblowers reporting fraud, corruption, or SEAH-related incidents in good faith. Anonymous reporting channels include:

- Online reporting portal
- Email: [complaints@rspnbhutan.org](mailto:complaints@rspnbhutan.org)
- Physical suggestion boxes

## **6. EXECUTION AND MONITORING FRAMEWORK**

The workshop concluded with a review of the Program Operations Manual (POM) and the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework to ensure compliance with “Quality-at-Entry” standards.

### **6.1 Project Quality Assurance**

Participants were informed that all project concepts must demonstrate alignment with:

- Bhutan’s Five-Year Plans;
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and
- RSPN’s six thematic conservation areas.

The monitoring and accountability mechanisms include:

- **Quarterly monitoring** for output-level indicators;
- **Semi-annual monitoring** for outcome-level indicators; and
- **Annual financial audits** conducted by the Royal Audit Authority to ensure financial transparency and integrity.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

The sensitization workshop successfully strengthened stakeholder understanding of institutional safeguard systems aligned with international climate finance standards. Through participation from the Ministry of Finance and leading civil society organizations such as Tarayana Foundation and Bhutan Youth Development Fund, the workshop reinforced a unified commitment toward transparency, accountability, gender responsiveness, and environmental integrity.

By operationalizing these updated 2025 institutional frameworks, Royal Society for Protection of Nature reaffirms its readiness and institutional capacity to responsibly manage resources from the Adaptation Fund and other international climate financing mechanisms.

## **PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE SENSITIZATION SESSION**

