

How to mainstream gender into national waste management policy

Case study from Bhutan

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Gender division of labour based on gender stereotypes is often observed in the waste sector in Bhutan. Men are often preferred for physically demanding jobs such as drivers of waste collection vehicles or jobs with higher payment such as scrape dealers, while women are more commonly employed as waste pickers and cleaners and are also the main handlers of household waste, cleaning and sorting waste. Civil society organisations are actively engaged with empowering women's role in waste management by providing training for skills such as weaving and creating bags and accessories from waste materials. Although the National Waste Management Strategy 2019 does not have specific gender related actions, the strategy recognizes the gender division of labour in waste management and stresses the need for doing gender analysis of waste management and for incorporating gender perspective from the planning through implementation (Section 3.2.2).

Under this new Strategy, the National Environment Commission (NEC) is responsible for monitoring the overall progress and as follows in particular with regards to gender:

- Integrate gender issues across all waste management actions;
- Conduct a situational analysis of gender issues related to waste management to inform the integration process;
- Collaborate with the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) to support gender integration efforts; and
- Conduct various capacity building and advocacy programmes for the women with regards to waste recycling in collaboration with civil society organisations.

Challenges still remain in mainstreaming gender further into waste management, such as policy barriers (need for alignment of policies across ministries that may hinder waste management efforts); institutional barriers (need for enhanced coordination with central and local agencies with clarified responsibilities); financial barriers (need for increased government subsidies or private sector investment); information barriers (need for improved data collection and dissemination); and public barriers (need for engaging communities in decision-making processes, addressing concerns and fostering a sense of ownership).

Addressing these challenges requires collaboration with various stakeholders, such as civil society organizations, communities, private sector and the public sector, as well as monitoring.

(Edited by Junko Fujioka, Gender Focal Point, UNEP-IETC)

For more details, please watch the recording of UNEP-IETC's webinar, '[Gender and Waste: How to mainstream gender into national waste management policy](#)', organized on 28 November 2023.