CONCEPT NOTE ON HELP DESK

BACKGROUND

The philosophy of Gross National Happiness recognizes economic development as essential for the reduction of poverty and overall wellbeing of the country. But while pursing economic development, environment has always been one of the integral parts of RGoB development strategy, and one of the four pillars of Gross National Happiness.

> ***The Royal Government shall: … secure ecologically balanced sustainable development while promoting justifiable economic and social development … . [****Article 5, Constitution of the RGOB]*

> ***Environment is a cross-cutting issue that is intimately intertwined with poverty reduction. Therefore, all sectors, agencies, dzongkhags and gewogs should mainstream environmental issues in all their policies, plans, programmes and projects and build adequate mitigation measures to minimize any adverse impact on the environment.*** *[GNH Commission Guideline]*

With rapid economic growth, along with population growth and urbanization, our environment is increasingly subject to pressure from increased demand for natural resources for development activities, and environmental impacts associated with this development.

There is existing high level support and commitment with good polices and laws for ecological sustainable development. The whole of Government response to these pressures falls into two quite distinct categories: **environmental safeguarding** and **environmental mainstreaming**.

Environmental safeguarding is the requirement that, during the implementation of development activities, environmental impacts of these activities are assessed, minimized or, preferably, eliminated. Environmental safeguarding is a necessary, but not sufficient, approach, to achieve the constitutional requirement of securing ecologically balanced sustainable development.

Quite apart from **environmental safeguarding**, the achievement of ecologically balanced sustainable development requires that **environment must be mainstreamed** into the policy, plans and programmes of all sectors. The environment is the ultimate resource on which all sectoral development depends. Mainstreaming is the task of integrating environment into the **formulation** of sectoral policies and plans and focuses in particular on the opportunities within these for moving towards sustainable development. The concept of the Help Desk is to provide government-wide support to assist, and build the capacity of sectors, to facilitate mainstreaming of environment into policies, strategies and plans.

There are currently two capacity-building projects assisting RGoB in mainstreaming - one is the Joint Support Program (JSP) funded by DANIDA UNDP/UNEP PEI , that is focused on integrating

Environment, Climate Change, and Poverty (ECP) concerns into development policies and plans. The other is the Griffith University/AusAID Mainstreaming program, which has a focus on consolidating the skills and processes of central government in mainstreaming environment into all policy and plan making.

OBJECTIVES:

GNHC and NEC propose this key strategic intervention of a HELP DESK within the RGoB (as a whole-of-government action) to strengthen environmental management at all levels of the government through establishment of virtual network of competent and dedicated professionals to help mainstream Environment, Climate Change, and Poverty (ECP) concerns into all development policies and plans.

The following are the specific objectives of the proposed HELP DESK

- Assist sectors/agencies to mainstream environmental concerns into proposed policies, plans and programme;
- Serve as a technical/core working group to assist sectors on environment mainstreaming related issues/concerns.
- Strengthen systemic capacity to mainstream ECP within the Government through skill development of the core group as ToT. The members are in-turn required to train more staff within and outside of their agencies to expand the scope of environment mainstreaming.
- Serve as a pool of resource for advice, training and guidance to sectors and agencies in achieving the ECP mainstreaming efforts.
- Serve as technical body to monitor impact of ECP mainstreaming in implementation of development plans and programmes; and
- Recommend sectors/agencies on any changes in approach for mainstreaming ECP concerns.

The Help Desk will initially focus on the policy and planning processes of the sectors at the central level. It will use the draft Policy Protocol as one of the entry points for ECP mainstreaming into sectors, which will then have to be followed by closed engagement during the formulation stages of the policies/plans. The core team will then help capacity building for central sectors and Local Government level.

DEVELOPMENT & OPERATIONS:

The following are the proposed development and operations of the HELP DESK.

The HELP DESK will be a virtual set up and not a separate entity within GNHC/NECS. It will be a network of officers across the various agencies who can advise, assist, review, comment, and train, in any sector/agency of the RGoB with respect to environmental mainstreaming. Its membership will be defined through an initial capacity-building of selected groups by

participating in environment mainstreaming training program. However, for long-term sustainability and effectiveness of the HELP DESK, it should be recognized by the organization (GNHC/NEC) and a selected member should take a lead role in coordinating meetings, maintaining membership record, collaborating/coordinating trainings for sectors etc.

The proposed HELP DESK will initially have members from NECS, GNHC and DLG with one or two from other sectors (as agreed during the 5th PMG meeting of the JSP). The members of the Help Desk will require intense capacity building. Some of the core members have received training in the first Griffith University/AusAID capacity building program. Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia has indicated that the Help-Desk concept is an excellent initiative to provide a clear target, and the sustainability of the agreed mainstreaming capacity-building program that it will conduct (with GNHC and NEC as counterparts) throughout 2011 and early 2012. Where appropriate, and agreed by the JSP PMG, the funding for the capacity-building initiative of Griffith/AusAID can be supplemented from the current JSP.

ADDENDUM: Criteria Developed in Consultation between GNHC/NEC/Griffith University for Participation in the Griiffith/AusAID Capacity Building

The criteria for selection of the Core Team for environmental mainstreaming capacity building in 2011/2012 has been developed as follows. Based on these, the characteristics, roles and responsibilities of the nominated officers will be discussed and agreed.

(i) Committed to environment/poverty mainstreaming
(ii) Available throughout 2011 and 2012 to assist mainstreaming in any Ministry
(iii) Able to be "on-call" when a major policy/plan is to be discussed
(iv) Able to work outside own field
(v) Have the capabilities (following their own training) to be a potential Trainer of Trainees (ToT) of other officers (and perhaps in association with tertiary institutions, in Bhutan)
(vi) Have the personal characteristics to be able to facilitate mainstreaming in complex meeting contexts
(vii) Hold sufficient seniority as to be experienced with the **policy and planning activities** of Ministries
(viii) Hold at least a bachelors degree
(ix) Agree, and be available, to participate with Professor Brown from Griffith University in one-on-one training in their work place, and in Group Sessions (often as live exercises with other Ministries) at various times throughout 2011 and early 2012.