



**Promoting the presence and leadership of women within public institutions  
at the national and local levels  
in Asia and the Pacific**

Regional Workshop

22- 25 April 2024  
Bangkok, Thailand

**Aide Memoire**

A. Introduction

1. A Regional Workshop is being organized under the project [“Building capacities for promoting the presence and leadership of women within public institutions at national and local levels”](#). The project, funded by the Government of Italy, aims to support the implementation of national action plans to enhance the presence and leadership of women in public institutions in Mauritius and Senegal, Bhutan, and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic (Lao PDR). The event is implemented by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), Division for Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
2. The project aims to support Sustainable Development Goal 5, which emphasizes the significance of women's participation, along with equal opportunities for leadership across political, economic, and public spheres. Additionally, the project aligns with the implementation of SDG 16, focusing on creating just peaceful, and inclusive societies. The project's rationale lies in the belief that the increased presence and leadership of women in both national and subnational public administration not only advance gender equality but are also essential for fostering responsive and accountable governance. Greater representation and leadership of women in public institutions promotes equal participation in shaping public policies and unlocking society’s full potential. A gender-balanced public administration brings diverse perspectives to policy development and implementation and promotes gender-responsive measures. In turn, this facilitates the implementation of policies addressing gender disparities and promoting women’s rights.
3. Since the inception of the project in 2022, key activities have included the completion of a global review of laws, policies and good practices and the development of self-paced capacity-building modules to advance gender equality in the public sector. At the country level, the project has supported national reviews in each of the four project countries of existing measures for promoting the presence and leadership of women in public administration at the national and local levels. Project reviews in Bhutan and Lao PDR, the two project countries in the Asia-Pacific region,

highlighted persistent gaps in female representation in the civil service, especially in decision-making roles. They also identified gaps in the availability of sex-disaggregated data to monitor the recruitment and promotion of civil servants, along with challenges in legal provisions and their implementation. Existing human resource rules lack provisions for supporting women's access to higher positions, which highlights the need for gender-responsive standards and guidelines.

4. In 2023, the project organized capacity development workshops in Bhutan, Lao PDR and Senegal. The workshops paved the way for the development of national gender action plans specifically tailored for public administration and aligned with national gender equality strategies. Subsequently, project countries started drafting action plans to promote gender equality within their respective public administration at both national and local levels. These plans aim to facilitate the career progression of women into leadership positions by addressing the challenges identified in the national reviews. It is expected that the draft action plans will be finalized by March 2024 and shared with the regional workshop participants before the meeting.
5. The project also supports collaborative efforts across countries in the Asia-Pacific region. Government representatives from Cambodia, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, as the project partnering countries in the region, will be invited to peer review the action plans drafted by Bhutan and Lao PDR. The regional workshop also aims to facilitate knowledge transfer and cross-fertilization among countries in the region.
6. Given that in top-tier leadership positions, women constitute just 20 percent of public administrators across 12 countries with available data, as indicated by UNDP statistics,<sup>1</sup> this regional workshop also seeks to foster knowledge exchange and collaboration among countries within the region.

## B. Objectives

7. The objectives of the regional workshop are to:
  - Review draft action plans developed by Bhutan and Lao PDR with a regional perspective and explore strategies, including policy changes, institutional reforms, and individual actions, to promote gender equality at all levels of public administration.
  - Facilitate the exchange of experiences and enhance participants' capacity to apply gender-responsive strategies, measures, and actions to increase the presence and leadership of women in public administration.
  - Raise partnering countries' awareness of action planning to address the challenges faced by women at the national and subnational levels of public administration.

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<sup>1</sup> Where Are the Women? Gender Equality in Public Administration in Asia-Pacific (2023), <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-03/UNDP-UPitt-2022-Gender-Equality-in-Public-Administration-Asia-Pacific-EN1.pdf>

### C. Thematic Focus and Structure

8. The exchange of knowledge among countries and the peer review of the project countries' action plans will take into account contextual elements, including social and cultural norms that shape workplace environments, especially at the subnational level of government. Discussions will primarily center on the following themes within public administration across various administrative levels:
  - *Institutional and policy frameworks and accountability mechanisms* to enhance gender equality, including organizational structures and processes that promote a gender-responsive and accountable environment.
  - *Human resource policies and practices* to ensure inclusivity and equal opportunities for all, including recruitment, retention, promotion, and professional development practices that foster gender balance, particularly at the leadership levels.
  - *Evidence and data-based analysis* to monitor progress towards gender parity and the impact of measures aiming to improve gender equality especially in leadership positions.
9. The workshop will feature plenary sessions and working group discussions. Plenary discussions will follow countries' presentations. Participants will also engage in group work to review how the action plans of Bhutan and Lao PDR address the above topics and suggest recommendations to strengthen the plans as part of the collaborative process.

### D. Participants

10. The workshop aims to engage senior and mid-level government officials from Bhutan and Lao PDR, the project countries. National consultants from Bhutan and Lao PDR will facilitate group work and provide support to their respective national officials throughout the workshop.

Attendance at the workshop will be per invitation only. Invitations for both in-person and remote participation will be extended to officials from the partnering countries, as well as the Philippines and Thailand. Selected representatives of civil society and experts, along with delegates from UN ESCAP, RCOs, UN Women, and UNDP Country Offices, will also be invited to participate in the event.

### E. Outcomes and Outputs

11. The workshop is expected to have the following outcomes:
  - *Inputs for refining draft action plans.* Action plans developed by project countries will undergo a process of refinement based on experiences in the region, enhancing their effectiveness and relevance in promoting gender equality at all levels of public administration.
  - *Better understanding of strategies for implementation.* Participants will explore various strategies, including policy changes, institutional reforms, and individual actions aimed at fostering gender equality in public administration. This exploration will contribute to a comprehensive understanding of potential measures for implementation.
  - *Exchange of experiences and capacity enhancement.* The workshop will facilitate meaningful exchange of experiences among country officials and other stakeholders, fostering a collaborative environment. Participants will enhance their capacity to apply gender-responsive strategies, measures, and actions, specifically focusing on increasing the presence and leadership of women in public administration.
  - *Awareness-raising on action planning.* Partnering countries will gain heightened awareness of effective action planning to address the challenges faced by women at both national and

subnational levels of public administration. This increased awareness will contribute to more informed and targeted initiatives.

- *Regional collaboration.* The workshop will promote a regional perspective, encouraging collaboration and shared insights among participating countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

12. The expected outputs include:

- Workshop report summarizing deliberations, conclusions, and recommendations. The draft report will be circulated for comment among the project countries before being finalized.
- Reviewed action plans that prioritize gender equality and promote women's career progression toward leadership positions in public administration in Bhutan and Lao PDR.

#### F. Venue and Dates

13. The workshop is scheduled to take place from 22 to 25 April 2024 at the [venue TBD] in partnership with the UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau] in Bangkok, Thailand.

14. The workshop will be held in English with interpretation provided in Lao.

For further information, please contact:

UN DESA  
Ms. Valentina Resta  
Senior Governance and Public Administration Officer  
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs  
Email: [restav@un.org](mailto:restav@un.org)

UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau, Bangkok Regional Hub  
Ms. Tshering Choden  
Regional Gender Specialist  
[tshering.choden@undp.org](mailto:tshering.choden@undp.org)