

SOWING THE SEEDS

**BHUTAN FF WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' FOOTBALL
STRATEGY 2023 - 2026**





SAFF Women's Championship 2022, Kathmandu, Nepal. Second group stage match against Sri Lanka.

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FOREWORD

A message from the Women's Football Executive Head.

Having a dream without a plan is to tie your hopes to the night, having a plan without people to see it through is just scribbling on paper. 2023 welcomes a beginning of planned action.

The Bhutan Football Federations' goal has always been to enable every Bhutanese to participate in football, develop the game professionally and progressively, and help all stakeholders reach their full potential. We now have a specific and outlined plan for women's football to make this vision a reality. With the help of FIFA, the support of our President, and a dedicated team, we have created a strategic plan for the steps we need to take women's football in Bhutan to the next level. We have assessed our current state and level of participation, strengths and weaknesses, and identified opportunities and pathways to move forward. In doing so we have identified 4 key areas in which we believe will help in the growth and development of women's football in Bhutan.

We recognise that the successful future of football cannot be realised without engaging children and the youth. And so we plan on developing grassroots and youth programs by creating an environment in which girls and young women can engage in football through their childhood and adolescence. To have continuity and further encourage women to continue engaging in football we plan to optimise domestic competitions. Our plan is also to enhance elite football in women's football

so that there is a career path for the women that choose to pursue football professionally, as well as capacity building to support all stakeholders in our plan to develop women's football. We believe sustainability is a key pillar in how we plan on developing these goals so that our trajectory in growth is consistent and upward.

With this strategy, our BFF team, and the support of FIFA, I am confident that the growth and level of women's football in Bhutan will be exponential.



Ms Zimbiri, Executive Head of Women's Football.

INTRODUCTION



Not long ago, girls and women playing football may have been an uncommon sight in Bhutan. The few you saw would most likely be playing all the other sports such as basketball, athletics, etc. In the recent years, however, the number of girls playing football increased exponentially, with some even dedicating themselves completely to football.

The increase in participation can be credited to the continued support from FIFA, AFC and SAFF, along with the Federation's effort to promote the development of the women's game. Moreover, the growing interest and growth of women's football globally is an added inspiration for the small Himalayan Kingdom to continue investing in the women's game.

We have one of the best numbers in grassroots, regionally, a reflection of the support from parents, guardians and their recognition of football as a tool to keep and help grow their daughters and sisters. For a society deeply rooted in collectivist and

familial values, support and encouragement from families and communities go a long way. To this extent, families have also played a tremendous role in helping grow the women's game.

Though our grassroots numbers have grown, the number and quality in the other parts of the women's football ecosystem have stagnated. Our performances internationally have been short of praise and admiration in recent years. Nevertheless, the passion for the women's game remains to be extinguished. The passion, the global growth and the opportunities that have yet to be exploited is the key reason to build a comprehensive strategic plan to get Bhutan Women's football to the next level.

Bhutan FF's Women's and Girls' Football Strategy will lay the foundation and the pathway to bring quality, revitalise and light a spark to the potential within us to bring better results, enhance the existing forces, UpSkill, Educate and Empower everyone in the women's game.

CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

Women's football in Bhutan is still in its nascent state but, still has some remarkable achievements. We have close to ten thousand girls involved in our grassroots programmes which is a good indicator of the direction women's football is headed in the country. Furthermore, starting in 2022, the Senior Women's Team received a monthly salary on par with the men's and scholarships to pursue tertiary education. We also saw the youngest of the Senior team sign a professional contract with the Al-Ittihad Ladies in Saudi Arabia for one season.

The first-ever women's league was played in 2016 at a centralised venue, and fast-forward to 2022, there were 9 clubs* with matches played at 5 different venues on a double leg format. The season also saw an increase of about 230% in the League Prize, mainly from the support from FIFA's League Development Programme under the Women's Development Programme and the Federation's overall strategy to help promote women's football in the country. Furthermore, FIFA's Club Licensing programme assisted the Club Licensing division in developing a National Club licensing framework reflective of the reality of our women's club to help bring structure to these clubs. Despite this recent development and achievements, women's football still faces grave challenges, and our results in the international area have not made any significant strides.

Most of the senior team are high school and college students and hence must face the challenges of balancing football and academics. Though they receive a monthly salary, it is not sufficient to lead a life solely on remuneration from the national team. Moreover, most help their families with their earnings.

The increase in the number of clubs in the National Women's League reflects the growing participation and interests of our girls. However, it has also compromised the quality of the League. Most girls have never had formal training and participate merely out of interest or because of their friends.

This gap has presented the need to invest and develop quality at the grassroots level. The clubs, on the other hand, are managed by passionate individuals with no returns. Thus, the sustainability of clubs is a grave challenge for club owners. Most clubs often dissolve after a year, which then poses another challenge of sustaining players.

**One is the Girls Academy Team, so technically, only 8 clubs.*



SAFF U17 Women's Championship 2022. Dhaka, Bangladesh.

VISION, MISSION AND ACTION

VISION

Enhance and raise the quality of Women's and Girls' Football by enabling all stakeholders to reach their maximum potential.

MISSION

Champion Women's football to **upskill**, **educate** and **empower** lives through building **sustainable foundations**, **developmental programs**, and **competitions**.

ACTION

UpSkill

Facilitating the continuous learning and growth of everyone involved in Women's Football.

Educate

Developing the skills, knowledge and mental capacity to build good character.

Empower

Using the skills and knowledge to raise voice, bring positive change and take action.

KEY AREAS

The mission of the 2023 - 2026 Strategy Plan recognises key actions of upskilling, educating and empowering to apply in three key categories to achieve the vision of this strategic cycle.



Sustainable Foundations

Building a strong base of players, principles and culture in women's football will promote the overall growth of the game.

Developmental Programs

Providing the platform, avenue and opportunities to UpSkill, learn, empower and grow as a person.

Competitions

Ensuring better performances, improvement, higher standards of achievement and a platform to showcase one's skills and talents.



Mini-dragons league, 2022

PILLARS AND TACTICS

The strategic priorities for the 2023 - 2026 are defined as;

- 1. DEVELOP GRASSROOTS AND YOUTH PATHWAY**
- 2. OPTIMISE COMPETITIONS**
- 3. CAPACITY BUILDING**
- 4. ENHANCE ELITE FOOTBALL**







DEVELOP GRASSROOTS AND YOUTH PATHWAY

Our biggest asset is the numbers in our grassroots. If we invest and ensure quality at this level, it might help us perform better in the international arena. Likewise, we also need to ensure that these players have a pathway as they get older. But our priority remains in providing quality and increasing the numbers at our grassroots level, thus sowing the seeds for the future. Bhutan FF will look at ways to strengthen the existing relationship with our clubs, the Ministry of Education, various other stakeholders and the parents, a key stakeholder, in achieving our goals of developing grassroots and youth pathway.



MEASURES OF SUCCESS

BY 2026 WE EXPECT:

- 20% increase in grassroots players
- Expand the mini-dragons league to 4 districts
- Extend the mini-dragons league to 4 months
- Every Women's Club in the NWL to have two Youth clubs
- Incorporate and implement the Football for Schools Programme
- Expand U14 Regional School Football Training Centres to 8 districts
- Initiate U16 Regional School Football Training Centres in 4 districts
- Produce a suggestive guideline for running a grassroots festival

TACTICS

A. Strengthen relationships with stakeholders

Frequent collaboration with key stakeholders such as parents, teachers, coaches, Department of Youth and Sports (MoE) to ensure the sustainability of our programmes and ensure smooth transaction of knowledge and experience.

B. Organisation of festivals

Capitalising on FIFA, the AFC support in organising and running festivals. MA must ensure that these festivals are fun and the main objective is to promote the game and encourage young girls to take up the sport.

C. Implementing Football for Schools

Use FIFA's Football for Schools programme to strengthen relationships with schools, MoE and incorporate football in the School Sports Program.

D. Revamping the mini-dragon leagues

Starting mini-dragons leagues at schools in the rural regions and breaking down the season in periods instead of consecutive months.

E. Mandates and monitoring

Club licensing system to mandate the formation of youth teams with support from the Federation in the initial years. Proper monitoring of Elite Training Centres with respect to the quality of training, frequency and the coaches.



Paro Women's FC, Kelme National Women's League, 2022



RTC FC and Transport United Ladies, Kelme National Women's League, 2022.



OPTIMISE COMPETITIONS

Our domestic competitions are one of the few ways to sustain the girls, showcase their skills, and talents, and enable them to grow. The platform is not just reflective of players but for our referees, coaches and clubs to grow too. Most importantly, it is a way to strengthen our national teams by ensuring that our girls are engaged, and maintain game fitness and is also an avenue to select players. However, to get the best results we must ensure we provide the best competition format reflective of the reality of our clubs, quality and numbers. We will always look for ways to better the opportunities for our girls and provide the tools and platform to grow. For competitions to happen, we have to ensure the sustainability of the clubs, catch girls from all nooks and crannies and engage other stakeholders beyond private clubs.



MEASURES OF SUCCESS

BY 2026 WE WANT TO SEE;

- 13 clubs in the National Women's League
- 45% increase in the number of matches from the 2022 season
- Introduction of a Championship Cup for Senior players (>17 yrs)
- Initiate High School Championship
- Initiate U14 and U16 competitions across the country
- Expand the U13 school competition to 60 schools

TACTICS

A. Modernise existing system

Continue digitalising and maintaining of records digitally and collaborate closely with the various departments within the Federation to track and monitor player whereabouts and progress via one system.

B. Defining regulations and Transparency

Ensure that the competition regulations are fair for all participating teams or clubs and are reflective of the reality of the current context.

Moreover, ensure that there is transparency in the selection of the Woman of the Match in the National Women's league.

C. Communications

Develop a communications strategy plan for the NWL and the competition calendar is expressed concisely.

D. Effective allocation of resources

Communicate and collaborate with the technical department to ensure the best playing format, field size and playing time depending on age and the number of participants. Furthermore, use competitions to scout for players to feed into the Girls Academy and the Regional Football Training Centres.



SAFF U17 Women's Championship, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2022.



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Football

Women's Football Strategy Workshop, 2023



CAPACITY BUILDING

To sow the seeds the right way and to reach our vision of enhancing and raising the quality of women's football, we must look to develop the skills, abilities, and resources of our existing human resources, of those who will become and are already part of the Bhutan football ecosystem. Capacity building is also a tool for retaining our girls in football and providing them with an alternate path to playing. The pillar allows the Federation to focus on football as a tool for positive change to look beyond the field and equip our girls and women to feel empowered to navigate the world around them.



MEASURES OF SUCCESS

BY 2026 WE EXPECT:

- 5 clubs in the National Women's League to have a Written Strategy
- 2 Pro License Coaches
- 3 Female Coach Instructors
- Minimal of 3 workshops a year targeted toward our girls and women involved in the sport
- Implementation of female specific coaching course at least once a year
- 80% of Senior National Players to have a minimum of of AFC-BFF C coaching license
- Develop a communications and marketing plan for Women's Football

TACTICS

A. Foster connection

Create a social media platform for coaches, and or players to share experiences, ideas, and knowledge which will further enable their growth and provide the support they deserve.

B. Utilising FIFA and AFC Support

Capitalise on the programmes and support FIFA and AFC provide to assist in meeting the metrics under the pillar of capacity building.

C. Offer specialised courses

Identify the areas of growth and opportunities to provide specialised courses in addition to offering refresher courses to our existing human resources.

D. Taking football beyond the field

Emphasis on courses and capacity building beyond the field in the likes of developing communication skills, administrative and managerial skills.



SAFF U17 Women's Championship, Dhaka, Bangladesh



SAFF Women's Championship, 2022. Kathmandu, Nepal.



ENHANCE ELITE FOOTBALL

As much as football is fun and beautiful, it is also result oriented. Skills and talents do not have much value if not showcased or implemented in competitions. Growth and development should ultimately mean good results. Much of the future of women's football is dependent on the performance of our Elite teams and, as such, enhancing elite football is a key pillar for this strategic cycle. Thus, sowing the seeds in elite football now will hopefully take us a step closer to getting better results beyond this strategic cycle.



MEASURES OF SUCCESS

BY 2026 WE EXPECT TO:

- Develop a coaching philosophy
- Develop a National Team Strategy Plan
- Improve FIFA ranking by 5 positions
- Win SAFF Championship in any age category
- Introduce career counselling and programs at the Girls Academy
- Develop and implement a system of monitoring and assessment of players and coaches at the Academy

TACTICS

A. Play International matches

Ensure the Elite teams are playing a sufficient amount of friendly matches to gain exposure and build confidence.

B. Develop and incorporate Elite Coaching courses

Introduce Elite Youth Coaching courses and invest in the education of our local coaches to enhance their skills and capabilities. Moreover, offer in-house development courses to the Elite Coaches

C. Building a well-structured player pathway

Ensure the continuity of players through the formation of a well-defined player pathway, particularly for players graduating from the Academy.

D. Create a systematic and conducive environment

Ensure the proper monitoring of Coaches and Players at the Academy with the production of a coaches and players handbook.

Renovate the Academy to offer the best learning environment and beneficial to their overall well-being.





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