



## **Full Project Report 2000 BT0864 Linking Protected Areas**

### **Project Summary**

Bhutan's existing protected areas system is a highly comprehensive conservation strategy in that it includes representational examples of the full range of the major ecosystems found in the country. Encompassing more than one-fourth of the nation's total geographical area, the system consists of four national parks, four wildlife sanctuaries and one strict nature reserve. These protected areas are geographically very well located to protect a contiguous altitudinal spectrum of ecosystems as well as to capture west-to-east species variations across the country.

### **Project Background:**

With 26 percent of the country's area declared as protected areas and 72 percent under forest vegetation, Bhutan today presents a unique and advantageous scenario for biodiversity conservation with an ecosystems approach. Furthermore, the national tiger conservation strategy which was based on a series of countrywide tiger status surveys carried out over two years, reinforces the significance of linking protected areas to maintain a contiguous tiger ecosystem.

### **Project Objectives:**

The aim of the project is to assess the feasibility of, and identify workable mechanisms, for linking protected areas for ecosystems conservation within the existing and foreseen biophysical and socio-economic contexts of these areas. Specifically, the objectives of the are to:

- Assess the feasibility of linking protected areas through an examination of the land use types in the link areas based on map studies, literature research and exploratory field studies;
- Identify workable mechanisms, including proposed designation(s), for linking the protected areas that would most appropriately address nature conservation objectives without displacing land use systems and practices that are critical for the subsistence and economic development of the local communities;
- Develop a comprehensive proposal for legalization of the link areas into appropriate forms of protected area designation with supportive regulatory measures and monitoring guidelines.



**Evaluation Criteria:**

***Activities:***

- Hire conservation planner to study possibilities of linking protected areas in Bhutan
- Conduct month long field verification survey
- Analysis data and provide recommendations for linking protected areas.
- Conduct workshop to present findings to policy makers
- Notify links and declaration as Gift to the Earth

***Outputs:***

- Links identified between protected areas in Bhutan and legal status accorded to link areas
- Bhutan declares Link areas as a gift to the earth

***Indicators:***

- Link recommendation report
- Notification letter
- Gift declaration statement