



Dark to Dawn

Celebrating Triumphs



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RENEW

Founded by Her Majesty the Queen Mother Sangay Choden Wangchuck, in 2004, RENEW (Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the empowerment of women and children in Bhutan and promoting Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), with specific attention to the survivors of domestic violence (DV) and Sexual & Gender Based Violence (SGBV).

Vision

A Just, Equitable, Inclusive and Happy society.

“We believe that every individual has the right to a safe, healthy, happy equitable, just and fulfilling life”.

Acknowledgement

This book depicts the strength of individuals who have faced the challenges of domestic violence, gender-based violence, and other adversities. It is with profound gratitude that we extend our heartfelt appreciation to those whose stories grace these pages.

Firstly, we are deeply honored by the Royal Patronage of Her Majesty Gyalum Sangay Choden Wangchuck, whose unwavering support for survivors of domestic violence and gender-based violence underscores the importance of collective action in building a society free from violence and oppression.

To the courageous women, men, and children who have bared their souls and shared their journeys of triumph over trauma, your unwavering bravery inspires us all. Your voices illuminate the path to healing and empowerment, rendering hope for others navigating similar struggles.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the organizations, and support networks that tirelessly work to provide refuge, guidance, and resources to survivors. Your dedication to fostering safe spaces and promoting recovery is invaluable beyond measure.

To the advocates, counselors, and professionals who lend their expertise and compassion to uplift survivors, your tireless efforts support transformative change and sow seeds of empowerment.

To our readers, your commitment to bearing witness to these stories of transformation is a vital step toward fostering empathy, understanding, and solidarity in our communities.

Finally, we express our heartfelt appreciation to our families, friends, and colleagues whose unwavering support and encouragement have been the bedrock of this endeavor. Your belief in the power of storytelling to effect positive change has fueled our collective efforts and illuminated the path forward.

Together, may we continue to amplify the voices of survivors, dismantle systems of oppression, and cultivate a world where every individual can thrive in safety, dignity, and equality.

To protect the identities and privacy of most of the characters within these pages, pseudonyms have been used, allowing their essence to shine while safeguarding their anonymity.

With profound gratitude,
RENEW

Disclaimer

The stories presented in this book are real-life accounts of individuals who have benefited from the programs and initiatives of RENEW (Respect, Educate, Nurture, and Empower Women). While every effort has been made to accurately portray these success stories, it's important to note that individual experiences may vary.

The purpose of this book is to inspire and uplift readers by showcasing the resilience, determination, and achievements of those who have overcome challenges with the support of RENEW. These stories are shared with the consent of the individuals involved, and names may have been changed to protect their privacy.

It is recommended that readers exercise discretion and sensitivity while engaging with the content of this book, keeping in mind the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the individuals whose stories are shared herein. Additionally, the views expressed by contributors are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of RENEW or its affiliates.

By reading this book, you acknowledge and accept that the experiences recounted are subjective and may not reflect universal truths. Furthermore, the information provided is intended for educational and inspirational purposes only, and should not be construed as professional advice or guidance.

We hope that the stories contained within these pages serve as a source of encouragement, empowerment, and solidarity for all those who seek to create positive change in their own lives and communities.

Stitching Dreams: The Resilience of Sangay Wangmo



Sangay Wangmo, a 37-year-old from Zhemgang is an entrepreneur who currently operates her own tailoring shop named Gyedoe Kuenjung at Babesa in Thimphu. As a single mother raising two children, she is independent, self sufficient and content with her life.

However, her journey to this point was not devoid of challenges. In 2019, she struggled from domestic turmoil at home which prompt her to seek help from RENEW. She received tailoring training and began to work from her home. She also used to work in Youth Development Fund (YDF), stitching and embroidery works. Upon finalizing her divorce, Sangay made personal commitment to effect positive change in her life.

Recognizing the limitations of relying solely on her modest income, she resolved to establish her own tailoring venture. This decision was driven by her aspiration to provide her children with the quality of life she envisioned for them. Currently, she is earning from her tailoring business which has been going very well. In addition, she provides training to interested individuals and earns additional income. Sangay has emerged as a thriving entrepreneur, leveraging her acquired skills and paying them forward to others in the community.

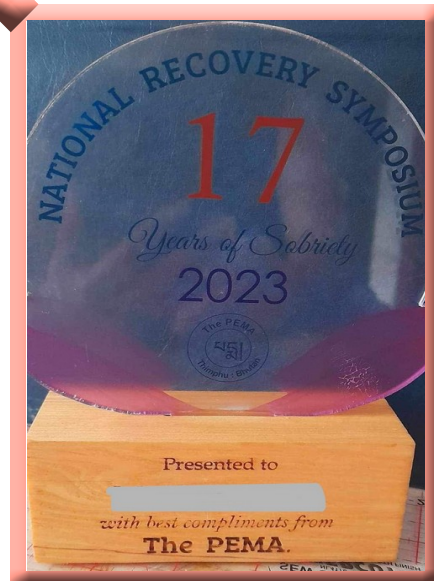
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This decision was driven by her aspiration to provide her children with the quality of life she envisioned for them.”

Dema's Road to Sobriety

Dema, 59 years old is full of energy as she reflects on her journey through youthful days and the myriad experiences she has had. Although she graduated up to class 12, her brightness, talkativeness and skills of public relations set her apart. She worked in many reputable positions. It appeared as though fate conspired her to harness her skills in productive endeavors as she found herself repeatedly shortlisted and selected for jobs. Yet, one may question, why the frequent job changes? The answer lies in her struggle with alcohol addiction. For Dema, she worked so she was able to afford alcohol. She doesn't remember how and when it actually started as there were no triggering struggles. Like every other people, she went out on social gatherings, she drank, she went out again and found herself entrenched in a cycle which she could not escape. "Addiction was like a progressive disease" she claimed.

She remembered one time when she was admitted in a Psychiatric ward where she met a fellow alcohol addict, her roommate who fervently craved alcohol and cigarettes. She asked her to go buy alcohol and cigarettes. Meanwhile, Dema who also craved agreed. The girl had a bunch of money stashed under her pillow all crumbled up. Dema was very happy and tucked it in her pocket. She remembered buying lots of alcohol and drinking with her mate. Both of them were found holding a whisky bottle and drunk the next day. All of them got into trouble but back then she felt the trouble was trivial. Few years later, the news of her roommate's demise due to relapse cast a sobering shadow over Dema's reminiscences.

Dema says, there were many that would advice her to not drink but back then these guidance felt empty. She simply nodded and said 'yaya' only to get rid of their back. Next time she saw them, she would avoid as she found little value in prolonging their encounter. Had they offered a drink with their advises, she muses, perhaps she would have welcomed their company. She got laid from jobs one after another and no longer had the money to buy alcohol.



Her husband left her along with her four sons and she only had her mother by her side. She says, she does not have ill feelings towards her husband as it must have been very difficult to deal with her then. Even her mum struggled caring for her, reaching her to the hospital frequently when she got alcohol fits.

Dema says she is very grateful for one Dasho who found her lying outside and directed her towards Tarayana. She was happy only because she could earn to buy alcohol once again. From Tarayana office, she was referred to RENEW. She was asked what she could do and she said she would weave. She was given Nu.5000 as capital but that was squandered on alcohol. Nonetheless, she was satisfied. RENEW extended an invitation for Dema to journey to Sikkim and meet Rinpochoe. Despite her struggles with alcoholism, she harbored a deep longing for blessings and spiritual guidance. So she went with her mother. She

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The taste of the last alcohol she consumed, a beer named ‘Hit’, still lingers vividly in her memory.”

drank along the journey and didn’t cross her mind that it would be her last. The taste of the last alcohol she consumed, a beer named ‘Hit’, still lingers vividly in her memory. By the time she realized it, she was dropped at a rehabilitation center. Even then, she asked if she could have an alcohol. The coordinator was very hospitable, citing a customary gesture to pour the drink directly into her mouth. She woke up the next

day remembering, it was the medication that she drank. Then her 6 months rehabilitation journey commenced.

She worked in RENEW, engaging in embroidery works. Later, she transitioned to selling her products from home. Her perseverance culminated in a prestigious award for 17 years of sobriety, a testament of her achievement acknowledged during the National Recovery Symposium in 2023 by The Pema. Yet, sometimes when she is alone at home, her mind tricks her to have a sip of ‘ara’ and that no one would have to know. She starts to debate herself. That night she tucked herself under the blanket and cried. What would have happened if she drank? 17 years of being sober, challenging herself, making her mother proud and sustaining herself, all of that would have been for nothing. So she stands, proud of her for where she is today!

Breaking Chains: Kinley's Journey to Freedom

Kinley a 39-year-old woman was married for 19 years as the third wife to a 60-year-old man. She got married at the age of 20 due to poverty in her remote village in Bumthang. Throughout her married life, she resided in her husband's ancestral home where she was treated poorly unlike the first and second wives who were sisters and got along well. Kinley often felt that she was taken in as the third wife because they wanted someone to work as a servant. She had to do everything according to the wishes and orders of her husband and his other wives. Despite having two children, she faced dominance from her husband and his wives, limiting her freedom to eat, buy, or wear anything of her choice. Sometimes, she was scolded and even beaten by her husband and his wives, more often by the wives. Her husband's subsequent harassment forced her to seek refuge in her village. By then her two children reached high school and started studying in a boarding facility. There was no peace even at her village as her husband started verbally harassing all her family members and sometimes abused physically which made life more difficult. That's when a neighbor advised her to approach RENEW Center for support.

The first time, she came to meet RENEW service providers, she literally peed in her clothes because of her fear of talking to people and mental trauma. She was scared, helpless, vulnerable and traumatized. She was immediately provided psychosocial support and facilitated a clinical counseling. She sought support to RENEW Center in facilitating putting up her case to Royal court of Justice pleading for divorce. Every other day, she had to travel from her village (which was quite far) to Chamkhar to attend to court hearings. With the frequent travel, lengthy legal proceedings, toxic atmosphere at home, emotional struggle and financial constraint, often made her lose hope which made her more vulnerable. She had to apply for loans mortgaging her parent's land to move forward with the legal battle. Her husband's visit to her parents place didn't stop and he still kept harassing her. The children who were studying in boarding were warned by her husband and forbidden to meet her. She almost gave up and agreed to settle back to her old life.

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After a long 19 years of emotional, economic and physical violence and one year of legal struggle, she is freed from her abused marital life.”

RENEW center in Bumthang continuously supported in facilitating legal aid, counseling, moral and psychosocial support to her from the initial legal battle. RENEW Center with the support from RBP women and child unit and School authorities facilitated her meetings with her children which helped her to stay strong with her decision. Slowly over time she had gained confidence

and determination to be independent and stuck to her decision to leave her hard life and husband. Finally in October, the court gave the verdict of their divorce. After a long 19 years of emotional, economic and physical violence and one year of legal struggle, she is freed from her abused marital life. She has now started working as a domestic helper at a restaurant and she earns around Nu.12000 monthly. Her two teenage children are inspired by their mother's strength and perseverance. They now look up to her as a strong mother and more so a strong woman.

For someone who used to dread each day and was deprived of having a voice, this is a milestone of her life. She says she finally feels like she is breathing and has a life. The change and transformation of Kinley, from when she first approached RENEW to the final verdict of her divorce, has been nothing short of an inspiration. Empowerment has a lot of different aspects and layers, the least one can do is stand with someone while they build their faith in themselves. The best empowerment is self-confidence and self-reliance. All women are resilient and strong but not all women live good lives. A small push from RENEW Center has helped her to turn her life around and break a chain of trauma.

Tragedy of the unexpected

Yangsel, a mother of two children lived a lonely life. She endured a strained relationship with her husband, enduring economic and emotional abuse. Eventually, she made the difficult decision to separate from him and forge her own path. Her daughter used to study at one of the schools nearby. Like the usual days she waited for her daughter to return from school. When there was no sign of her return, she went to school to look for her, only to find out she had already left. She started to get worried and immediately went to search for her daughter with her friends. She shouted in the streets calling out her name in hope she would return. Finally one of her friend found her daughter's dead body. Her daughter was brutally raped and murdered. Overwhelmed by shock and grief, she collapsed on the spot. When she woke up, she could only question, why her daughter? That question echoed relentlessly in her heart and cried. They called the ambulance and the case was reported to the police. Plunged into a deep depression, she battled recurring thoughts of suicide. Instead of support, she faced blame from those around her. Eventually, her deteriorating mental health necessitated hospitalization, leading to a referral to the RENEW head office.



*Her daughter was
brutally raped and
murdered.”*

Under the care of RENEW she received counseling, livelihood skill training and essential medical support. With her engagement in the skill-building programs marked a turning point in her recovery journey. She had constant mood swings and was on a heavy medication for her depression but with frequent counseling sessions and with change in her environment she showed significant improvements in her mental and emotional well-being. While memories of her daughter remained haunting, she learned to navigate her emotions.

With time, she waged her internal battles. Her training for the tailoring program completed and found herself empowered with newfound confidence. She expressed a belief in her ability to navigate life independently. She is now focused on providing care and support to her surviving child and making best use of the time together. She now understands, she cannot undo the past and can only look forward to being independent in order to support her family. Currently she works as a tailor, embodying resilience and independence. Her journey serves as a testament to the transformative power of resilience and determination. She is living proof that change is possible when we confront with hardships.

Weaving Independence

There's a saying, "We don't want a patriarchal society, we don't need a matriarchal society, we just need a human society." However, its heart wrenching to come across cases where one gender dominates the other and one significant loses the human right to lead a happy life. Such is the story of one of the clients.

With worries and some confusions, Pema entered the counselling room. She was into 7-years of marriage and devastated with her husband's extra-marital affairs. Not just once but her husband was caught having affairs with several women. She was suffering from some critical health issues due to which she could not conceive. On top, she didn't have any emotional as well as financial support from her husband. To her it was a turmoil, she was exhausted of all the drama in her life. However, she still wanted to work on their relationship considering her husband is also willing. For that she wanted the RENEW counsellor to call her husband to office and talk about it. So, this very expectation of her was met immediately. However, the husband didn't want to work on their relationship and wanted to file for the divorce. Further, since, she was dependent on him, it was hard for her to get divorce. The couple did not have marriage certificate, so, they were recommended to make marriage certificate and proceed for divorce.

“*she was exhausted of all the drama in her life.*”

While the couple proceeded for the divorce, the wife was in contact with counselor and she was provided with all supports. During the initial counselling sessions, the client was worried about how she would be independent. Further, it was not easy for her to proceed with divorce. Pema was emotionally down and often showed her blandishment over it. Nevertheless, the client continued to receive counselling sessions with unconditional positive regard and congruence. Those aspects

were drawn from Carl Rogers Person Centered Therapy, where I let her to navigate the ship and I was just there as a guide. Besides that Pema mentioned on several instances that she felt heard and accepted in counselling sessions.

As the sessions with her went on, it was found out that she had a keen interest in weaving and had already received training from Tarayana. Gradually, she started to work on herself instead of focusing on her past problems. She had that confidence to groom her weaving interest. This very concept of leaving past behind and focusing on future goals is mentioned in Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT). Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg in their SFB therapy have stated that the clients need to identify resources available within them and those resources are to be utilized to meet their future goals.

The couple got divorced officially. Well! People often look down to women after divorce, however, she came bold and strong leading an independent life. She started weaving and selling her products. Today, he gets orders from Royal family. Pema feels empowered and secured, leading a happy independent life.

Sonam's Journey to Freedom and Empowerment

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion or any other status. All the individuals have human rights and no one has the power to take over their rights. In our society there is disequilibrium of power between men and women. Women are considered as the weaker sex who has lost their power of speech and rights to lead their life freely. Men being the superior gender, they are given the rights to live their life just the way they want to. In most cases, men have the upper hands to control the live of women and captive their freedom. This is a story of Sonam who has been enduring all the hardship and torture until now, for the happiness of her family.

35 years old Sonam was married for the past 3 years and it's her second marriage. She has two children, each from her respective marriages. Her youngest, an 8-month-old daughter, was born prematurely and suffers from heart complications. She works as a sweeper in a hospital to provide for her family. Regrettably, her husband fails to fulfill his roles as a father and a spouse. He abuses her physically and mentally displaying dominance and control. Sonam bears the weight of her family's upkeep with her husband being alcoholic and lacking stable employment. Nonetheless, she strives for the happiness of her family.

Sonam has been through a lot in her life however she remains resilient and hopeful for a better future. In counselling sessions, she expressed her desire for a divorce but hesitant due to her husband's history of blackmail and intimidation. She seeks support and guidance provided by RENEW, yearning for a safe space to express herself and receive encouragement. As Carl Roger rightly mentioned in his 'Person Centered Therapy,' that human beings have an innate tendency to develop towards their full potential.

However, their potential can be distorted by certain life experiences. Through this approach we could facilitate the personal growth and relationships of her by allowing her to explore and utilize her own strengths and personal identity. As a therapist, it was really important to make her understand the pros and cons of her decision. It was important for her to take the decision with calm mind.

As they proceeded with the session, they talked about how sure she is about her decision and what her plans are hence forth. The couple didn't have Marriage Certificate (MC) so, she was recommended to go to the court to make MC and then precede divorce. The client was nervous and fearful of husband's dominance in the court. Hence, she was provided with all the required information and assured fair and justice in the court. Everyone is equal before the law! As she frequently mentioned about wanting to process divorce at RENEW.

As she proceeded with her divorce, counsellor was in contact with her, following her case and providing moral and emotional support. She needed someone to be by her support and counsellor never let her feel alone.

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There are thousands of women who become prey to their intimate partner but there are countable women who come forward and fight for their freedom/rights.”

Ultimately, Sonam achieves the liberation she sought through divorce. As Madeleine Albright famously remarked, “A woman with a voice is by definition, strong women.” Sonam's courage and determination exemplify this sentiment, as she emerges victorious in her quest for independence.

There are thousands of women who become prey to their intimate partner but there are countable women who come forward and fight for their freedom/rights. Now free to chart her own path, she finds solace in the company of her children, whom she considers her greatest source of joy. With aspirations of independence and self sufficiency, Sonam embraces the future with optimism and resilience.

Threads of Resilience

Zangden's journey has been defined by challenges since childhood. At just 2 years old, her parent's divorce introduced her to a world of adversity, compounded by mistreatment from her stepfather. Raised mostly by her father's family, she married young and assumed the role of a homemaker while her husband pursued his studies. She became a mother of two children and lived with her in-laws. Despite the stability of her husband's employment, their hopes were shattered by his untimely demise in a car accident, leaving Zangden to navigate the complexities of single motherhood with a son in sixth grade and a daughter in ninth. Dependent on her husband until then, Zangden felt adrift, grappling with depression for a year.

“*Zangden believes it's easier for children to face such trauma either when they're too young to comprehend or old enough to process it fully, minimizing the transitional difficulties.*”

In 2014, a glimmer of hope emerged as a friend introduced her to RENEW, offering hope for independence. Through RENEW, she received training in Assam loom weaving. Despite numerous training opportunities, Zangden faced emotional battles and initially hesitated to share her struggles, feeling isolated in her suffering. She sought psychiatric treatment for her depression. In addition, her youngest son who at 11 years old, underwent a profound personality shift, struggling with his own battles of adaptation and depression. He changed many schools and his eating habits deteriorated over time. Reflecting on their experiences, Zangden believes it's easier for children to face such trauma either when they're too young to comprehend or old enough to process it fully, minimizing the transitional difficulties.

Over five years, Zangden gradually found stability. RENEW provided her with various trainings, including artificial flower making,

and she eventually became a trainer for other beneficiaries. Encouraged by RENEW's support, her daughter received full scholarship for her degree. Moreover, she also participated during skills training to equip herself in various skills in order to compete in this competitive world. Soon after the completion of her degree, she participated in Loden Foundation to apply for a loan as an entrepreneur. Her daughter received the loan and now sells artificial flowers online.

In addition, her son also received partial scholarship to study degree from RENEW. However, he had emotional struggle and had difficult time to adapt, so he could not complete his degree. Nevertheless, he now plans to resume his studies with a more settled and matured mind.

Despite the challenges, Zangden is proud of their progress. As a single mother, she remains dedicated to providing the best for her children and herself. She currently works in Youth Development Fund (YDF) showroom. Finally settled, she embraces her newfound independence and empowerment, living her dream.



Waste to Wonder

Loday Wangmo, a 24-year-old entrepreneur, was raised by a single mother, Zangden, whose unwavering support and love shaped her journey. After completing her Bachelor's Degree, Loday discovered her passion for recycling during school holidays spent at the RENEW center. It was there that she honed her skills in creating artwork from waste materials, driven by a deep-seated love for sustainability.



In 2020, her proposal to the Loden-UNDP Covid 19 Response Fund II got through and received a grant for her start-up business which came as a blessing in disguise. Loday founded Zangden flowers in 2021, a home-based business dedicated to crafting exquisite decor pieces from recycled materials. Her creation, ranging from artificial flowers and bouquets to baskets and vases, filled niche in the market for Eco-conscious decorations in homes, offices and various establishments. Her products, sourced from waste and tailor shops, carried a sustainable twist that resonated with environmentally conscious consumers.

The journey to entrepreneurship was not without its challenges. Attracting customers, fulfilling orders promptly and managing logistics was difficult. Yet, Loday's determination and willingness to adapt motivated her forward. She embraced risks, continually seeking new ideas and avenues for improvement.



For Loday, quality entrepreneurship meant embracing change and prioritizing customer satisfaction. She understood the importance of evolving with the times, recognizing that success lay in meeting the needs of consumers. Through social media outreach and leveraging partnerships with local businesses, she expanded her reach in the market. Customers especially sought unique gifts for their loved ones during the peak season such as on Valentine's Day, New Year and birthdays.

As Loday breathed new life into waste materials, she found herself transformed by the experience. Her perspective shifted, seeing value where others saw only trash. Recycling and upcycling became more than just business practices; they

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seeing value where others
saw only trash.”*

became a calling to protect the health and well-being of the planet. It was her commitment to environmental protection and her mother's enduring influence.

Quality for a successful entrepreneur is openness in adopting change. "I should not be headstrong and stubborn when it comes to choosing other options. Change is the only thing that is constant in business, no one can make profits on old-age methods. Letting the consumers be influenced with satisfaction is a success," Loday said.

To Being Independent

Kencho Zangmo's journey is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit. Despite facing challenges of divorce, she refused to let adversity define her. Instead, she embarked on a quest for independence and self-sustainability.

Her path led her to RENEW, where she discovered a newfound passion for Assam loom weaving. Through dedication and handwork, she not only mastered the craft but also became a trainer, empowering others with the skills she acquired. With unwavering

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Entrepreneurship is more than just a means of livelihood for her but it is a journey of self-discovery and empowerment.”

determination, Kencho continued to seize opportunity to start her own weaving house in partnership with a trusted friend. In just six months, she has transformed her vision into reality,

employing two individuals and laying the foundation for future growth.

Entrepreneurship is more than just a means of livelihood for her but it is a journey of self-discovery and empowerment. With each thread she weaves, she stitches together a tapestry of resilience and hope, striving towards greater milestones and greater future. As she looks ahead, Kencho's story serves as an inspiration to all who dare to dream, reminding us that with perseverance and determination, even the most challenging circumstances can be overcome.



A Ray of Light in the Darkness

TLT, 27 years old is a survivor of sexual harassment. During her preschool years, she discovered that she and her younger sister were adopted. Their adoptive mother had passed away when they were little, leaving only faint memories. They were raised solely by their adoptive father and was very strict. He would impose curfews and had tight restrictions, leaving no room for freedom. It may seem that he was worried and cared out of love but the love for TLT was tainted. “I was treated more like a wife than a daughter”, she said. When she was around 7 years old, she was abused emotionally, physically and sexually. If she did not allow him to have sex, she would often be left outside even on a cold windy days. Feeling suffocated within the confines of her home and his frequent abuse, she grappled with frustration, even attempting suicide several times in a desperate bid to escape her torment. Life felt like dwelling in a birdcage, only glimpsing the sunlight beyond yet trapped by invisible barriers. Her father’s threat remained like a shadow, following wherever she would go. He made her believe people would only ridicule her. These hardships persisted until she was at the age of 14 in grade 4.

Gradually, the school counselor doubted her situation and approached her. Initially, she could not open up as she feared her father’s words. However, as the counsellor continued to approach her lending her help, she finally shared about her situation and then was referred to RENEW in 2011. At the age of 14, she along with her younger sister who was around 6 years old, in grade 1 was brought to Gawaling Happy Home (shelter), RENEW. For 13 years she and her sister had been under the care of RENEW. Throughout this time, they continued their education with the organization’s support,





participating in various training programs during school breaks, including baking and tailoring. Alongside their academic pursuits, she underwent counseling sessions to address the trauma she had endured. Moreover, she actively engaged in numerous sensitization programs focused on recognizing different forms of abuse, understanding the concepts of good touch and bad touch, and learning about hygiene maintenance. These initiatives aimed to empower her and equip her with the knowledge and skills necessary for a brighter future.

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*I was treated more
like a wife than a
daughter.”*

She reflects, “If RENEW hadn’t intervened back then, my life may have taken a completely different path. I may have succumbed to suicide, continued enduring the control and harassment of my adopted father, or even ended up in the dangerous world of sex work.” Her journey was fraught with darkness until

the age of 14, and RENEW’s intervention illuminated her path like a candle in a dark room. Completing her education up to grade 12, she now stands independently employed in a shop, a testament to her resilience. Her younger sister is currently studying in class 12 and she hopes to support her and be the parents that they never had.

Dechenmo Blossoms

Dechenmo who was a housewife had no rights over the income of her husband. She was constantly belittled for not having education and would have to report her expenses if he gave her money. He would often physically abuse her and since she was dependent on her husband both emotionally and physically, she could only give in to her husband's rage. She didn't have any savings as she had no source of income. In 2013, Dechenmo divorced with her husband and struggled alone with her 3 children. She strives her best to survive, she went out into the woods to search for ferns to sell in the market. She did every petty jobs to sustain themselves. She struggled a lot for there were no one to help her and she was uneducated. In 2016, she received training from RENEW on floriculture along with sensitization on women empowerment. She slowly started to set up a small nursery and sell in the market. In 2022, she received further training on floriculture. From then she started to expand her greenhouse and it has been growing successfully.

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She was constantly belittled for not having education and would have to report her expenses if he gave her money.””



She says, she could have given up, engrossed herself in alcohol from the sadness of her life after divorce but she stuck to her will and moved on in order to sustain for herself and for her 3 children.

Vision for Sustainable Agriculture

Jas Bdr. Chettri's passion for agriculture and farming blossomed from his childhood. Despite completing his studies up to class 8, his strong communication skills and proactive nature have opened doors of opportunity for him. It has been two years now working as a Community Resource Person in his block, channeling his enthusiasm into community development.

His vision led him to establish the Dophulakha Organic Vegetables group in his block three years ago, aiming to promote organic farming and reduce dependency on imported products. When he learned about an oyster mushroom training programme supported by RENEW, he eagerly participated and encouraged fellow community members to join. The training sparked a surge of interest, expanding the group to 30 members. The advantage of cultivating oyster mushroom is that they are able to sell in the market within 14-20 days after growing which provide a steady course of income for the group. It has been around 6 months that the group started oyster mushroom cultivation and it is already attention from neighboring blocks for similar training sessions.

Jas Bdr. dreams of further expanding mushroom cultivation, envisioning comprehensive training programmes and the promotion of organic farming practices. He aims to diminish the need for imports by tapping into the potential of the local market, thereby boosting economic growth and fostering healthier, organic diets within the community.



He aims to diminish the need for imports by tapping into the potential of the local market.”

RENEW's support laid the foundation for Jas Bdr's initiative and with unwavering dedication, he and his group have achieved a sustainable income. His future plans include venturing into local pickle production and cultivating ground potatoes, solidifying his commitment to community-driven, sustainable agriculture.



Nunnery to Tailoring



Kezang, a 30-year-old woman from Bemji, Trongsa Dzongkhag, completed her sixth grade and then enrolled to the nunnery at Kuengarabten Anim Dratshang. Later she transferred to Tang Sheydra to pursue further education. During her studies, she faced health issues, prompting her to travel to Thimphu for a checkup and could not return to Dratshang. She spent a month with her brother and sister-in-law, who encouraged her to participate in a tailoring training programme.

Kezang said that the social entrepreneurship and skill development programs had an important influence in her life. She believes that without the training, she would have struggled due to lack of education. As a nun, she found it challenging to secure employment in the modern world. However, she expresses gratitude for the knowledge she gained from the tailoring course which has opened up new opportunities for her.

Currently, Kezang works at a tailoring shop alongside her cousin sister. She acknowledges that she is still honing her skills and relies on her sister's guidance. Despite working together for a month, their earnings have been modest. Nevertheless, they plan to discuss payment arrangements in the coming months. Kezang is committed to continuing her journey in tailoring and aims to eventually manage her own business.

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As a nun, she found it challenging to secure employment in the modern world.”

From Adversity to Prosperity

Pema Chozom, a 39-year-old woman is married with three children and she resides in Kharsa, Bumthang. Her journey is one of remarkable success and unwavering determination. Before attending the skills training in tailoring, Pema was a housewife relying solely on her husband to support the family. Their meager income barely covered their monthly rent, leaving little for other expenses which forced them to wait anxiously for the next paycheck.

Despite these challenges, Pema refused to succumb to despair and actively sought opportunities to improve her circumstances. Learning about the training by RENEW through a friend's We Chat moments, Pema seized the chance to acquire a new skill. Through diligence and dedication, she mastered her craft and eventually established her own tailoring business. Though modest at first, Pema's

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she mastered her craft and eventually established her own tailoring business.”

talent and commitment soon attracted a growing demand for her services. Today, Pema's business is thriving. She no longer has to be reliant on her husband's earnings. Instead, she can now contribute to the family's financial needs on a daily basis, affording them a more comfortable lifestyle and the ability to indulge in occasional luxuries. Pema's newfound financial independence has not

only alleviated the family's financial burdens but has also instilled within her a renewed sense of self-assurance and empowerment.

Despite her impressive achievements, Pema is eager to continue growing her business and expanding her skills. With her determination and hard work, there is no doubt that Pema will continue to achieve great things in the future. Pema's story is an inspiration to all those who face adversity and hardship. It shows that with the right opportunities and a determined spirit, anyone can overcome their circumstances and achieve success.



Pema's Journey to Tailoring Success

Pema, 29-year-old woman from Mongar currently lives with her aunt in Lobesa, Punakha. Her journey began when a friend of her mother introduced her to a skills training programme in tailoring. With no prior experience in the craft, Pema decided to embrace the opportunity, driven by her desire to learn new skills and enhance her livelihood.



Before the training, Pema's activities were limited to baby sitting due to her lack of skills and knowledge in other areas. Throughout the training, she learned the fundamentals of tailoring, from how to thread a needle to cutting and stitching fabrics. Her dedication and commitment to the training were evident as she would attend every session with enthusiasm and a thirst for knowledge. Pema's hard work and determination paid off, and she soon became proficient in tailoring.

Upon completing the training, Pema discovered that she had acquired a valuable set of skills that could generate income. With her newfound knowledge of tailoring, she embarked on establishing her own tailoring business, crafting beautiful clothes and accessories for her customers. Pema's hard work and perseverance enabled her to attain financial independence, capable of supporting herself and her family. The training not only equipped her with practical skills but also instilled a sense of empowerment, enabling her to enhance her livelihood.



Her journey stands as a beacon of inspiration for others facing similar challenges. With hard work, determination, and the right training and education, anyone can achieve their goals and create a better life for themselves and their loved ones.

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*She embarked on
establishing her own
tailoring business.”*

As of now, Pema’s focus remains on her tailoring work at home, dedicating herself to the craft as much as possible. Her journey illustrates the transformative power of seizing opportunities and harnessing one’s potential to achieve personal and professional fulfillment.

Sewing Paths of Empowerment

Ani Sangay, aged 41, resides in Umling Gewog, Sarpang. As a single mother to her son, she has navigated life's challenges since her divorce 18 years ago. Prior to undergoing training, Ani Sangay lived with her parents in the village, engaging in agricultural work to sustain herself. Subsequently, she moved in with her sister and took up weaving kiras, though she primarily crafted them for personal use, never venturing into sales.

The training helped her in many areas, opening avenues she had never considered. It dawned on her that she could generate her own income to support her family, a realization that sparked hope and determination. Before the training, she possessed no knowledge of tailoring. Yet through the programme, she acquired invaluable skills, mastering the art of fitting and sewing garments tailored to her preferences. She no longer has to depend on shops and is able to save money.

“
She currently imparts her knowledge and skills in tailoring to young girls and women in her village.”

Through her commitment to sharing her knowledge, Ani Sangay embodies resilience and empowerment, proving that with determination and opportunity, one can overcome adversity and inspire positive change in others' lives.



Driven by her newfound expertise and empowered by her independence, Ani Sangay has taken on a new role in her community. She currently imparts her knowledge and skills in tailoring to young girls and women in her village, paving the way for others to discover their potential and forge their paths to self-sufficiency.

Overcoming Financial Strain Through Tailoring



Choden, from Zhemgang has been residing in Namseling, Thimphu, for many years now. She lives with her husband and daughter, facing constant financial challenges due to their unemployment. Additionally, she shoulders the responsibility of caring for her sister's children, compounding their financial strain.

In 2014, Choden enrolled in a skills training programme at RENEW to learn basic tailoring, specializing in stitching wonju, tego and kira. Despite her efforts, she encountered difficulties in receiving payments from her clients, many of whom resided in rural villages with limited financial resources. In 2022, Choden seized an opportunity to join a Social Enterprise as a member which provided her numerous skills opportunities. Since completing the programme, her life has been significant improvement.

Currently, Choden runs a tailoring business, struggling to turn a profit as her expenses often surpass her earnings. Yet, she is pleased with the fact that a rise in income has allowed her to gradually pay off her debts. She is grateful to RENEW for providing her an opportunity to participate in skills training. She envisions establishing her own small tailoring shop in the future. Her aspiration is to ensure that the knowledge she has acquired does

not go to waste. Despite the challenges she has encountered, she remains steadfast in her pursuit of financial stability and independence, determined to build a better future for herself and her family.

“
Choden seized an opportunity to join a Social Enterprise as a member which provided her numerous skills opportunities.”

Sibling's Adversity

Karma has two children, eldest son (15 years old) and youngest daughter (12 years old). Like every other siblings they were close and often spent time together. One day, she found discharge on her daughter's clothes and traces of sexual activities. It was found later that it was her own brother who had physical intimacy with her. Her son thought it was normal since he would watch contents of siblings in pornography sites. He was heavily influenced and was exposed to highly sensitive and negative contents. When she found at a crossroads, overwhelmed and unsure of what steps to take next, and the world seemed on the brink of collapse. She reached out to RENEW for support, not knowing that this decision would change the course of her child's journey. After getting connected to the RENEW, all necessary procedures were followed for an incest case.

“*He was heavily influenced and was exposed to highly sensitive and negative contents.*”

The daughter was then pulled from her house and placed in Gawaling Happy Home and continued her education from there. She underwent counselling sessions and was empowered on information related to abuses, good touch and bad touch and so on. Currently, she is reintegrated to her aunt's place and continuing her education from there. She got hope and inspiration to push forward and move ahead of the situation. "I owe RENEW more than my own parents, for it has helped me tremendously in guiding my children towards a brighter future". Without the intervention of RENEW, she feels she might have made mistakes that could have ruined her children's lives. It has been very beneficial for people like her, if such organization have not offered a helping hand.

Unveiling the Shadows

Rewa's life was a silent battlefield, a constant struggle against the cruel chains of domestic abuse that bound her spirit for far too long. As a devoted housewife, she dedicated herself to her husband and taking care of household chores, all at the price of physical and emotional abuse. She was depended financially and emotionally on her husband who took advantage of her situation.

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At the tender age of 8 months, my daughter witnessed the onset of physical violence in my life—a cycle I endured for nearly 21 years.”

Trapped in the web of dependency, she endured the relentless storm of her husband's drunken tirades, his words and actions cutting deep into her fragile soul. It was her routine to face insults, physical abuse and not have any rights over income of her husband. “At the tender age of 8 months, my daughter witnessed the onset of physical violence in my life—a cycle I endured for nearly 21 years”, she shared in despair. She felt saddened of her daughter's innocence tarnished by the ugliness of domestic strife. She was placed in boarding facility in school hoping to shield her form the shadows that threatened to engulf their lives, determined to carve out a path to a brighter tomorrow.

With the unwavering support of RENEW, Rewa embarked on a journey of self-discovery, a quest for independence and empowerment long denied to her. Through tailoring training, she found her voice, her hands weaving threads of resilience and free from financial dependence. Currently, she is working from home, crafting not only beautiful garments but also a future brimming with promise and possibility. With every sale, every stitch, she paves the way for her daughter to walk a path untainted by the shadows of violence, a path illuminated by the light of hope.

“Let us strive for a future free from the chains of violence, a future where every child can dare to dream, and every women can find refuge in the sanctuary of her own power” she voices as a testament to the strength of her spirit.

Transformative Power of Education

Sangay Pelden's journey is a testament to the transformative power of education. Parents divorced at a very young age prevented her from continuing her education. As a child, Sangay watched helplessly as her parents embarked their journey separately leaving her no family to call her own. So at a very young age, she got married and sought solace in the arms of marriage, clinging to the hope of finding stability and belonging. Nevertheless, she made sure to grab every opportunities to enrich her mind and expand her horizons. Engaging in programmes conducted by RENEW on Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), she found her voice and addressed many of her queries. With each lessons learned, she reclaimed a piece of herself, empowered to navigate the complexities of womanhood with confidence and grace.

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*At a very young age,
she got married and sought
solace in the arms of
marriage, clinging to the
hope of finding stability and
belonging.”*

It was the tailoring training provided by RENEW that she discovered her true calling. She honed her skills, her dreams of financial independence taking flight on the wings of determination and resilience. Sangay envisions a future bright with possibility. With plans to open her own tailoring shop, she hopes to contribute to the household and support her husband. For Sangay, the journey towards education is very important as it creates opportunities to being self reliant. She would like to provide every opportunity for her children so that they are empowered and are able to exercise their own rights.

Divorce- Is it My Fault?

Tshering Lham's life, once adorned with the warmth of her husband and happiness of the attachment she has had with her friends, took an unforeseen turn when her husband's infidelity stained their relation. He divorced her to live a life that he chose and left her to face heartache and abandonment alone.

Post-divorce, facing financial instability and mental distress, she grappled with societal judgments and felt the weight of dependence shattering. Navigating through divorce wasn't just about financial challenges; it was about overcoming the harsh gaze of society, unfairly labeling her as the culprit. The ordeal intensified

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They feared that being a divorcee, she would steal their husbands and cast a shadow on their happy family.”

as my ex-husband's friends exploited her vulnerability, and the community's judgment cast her as a characterless figure. Strangely, her husband's extramarital affairs went unnoticed. Friends distanced themselves, fearing insecurity, perpetuating harmful stereotypes. They feared that being a divorcee, she would steal their husbands and cast

a shadow on their happy family. Divorced women often face insecurity and vulnerability, becoming targets for gender-based violence.

Despite this, she found strength in setting her worth and growing resilient. She participated in RENEW's tailoring training and empowered herself to be self sufficient and independent. Her journey serves as a reminder that labels do not define one's worth, and that true strength lies in the unwavering belief in oneself and being self reliant. Currently she is doing home based business, fighting all the negativity of the society and being financially and emotionally independent.

Investment in Skills Development

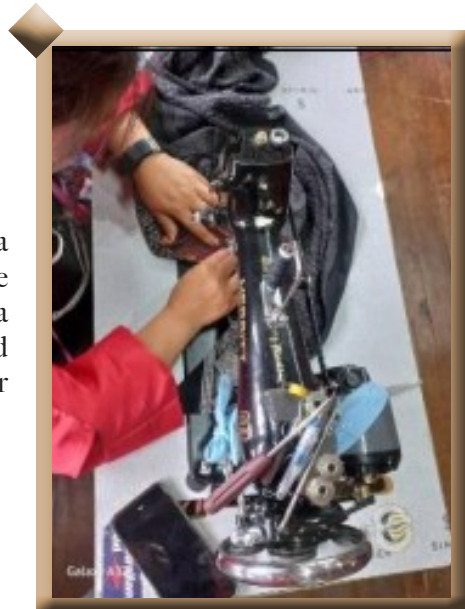
Pem shared that learning tailoring privately can be expensive given the duration and resources required for comprehensive training. Since her husband is the sole bread earner in the family, earning minimal wage, investing in such training seemed like a distant dream. Fortunately,

RENEW's skills training initiative proved to be a lifeline for women like her. Following six months of tailoring training, she began earning income and managing her own expenses. Encouraged by her

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*Pem
formally launched a
joint venture with one
of her friend following
the completion of their
tailoring training.”*

newfound skills, she established a small business after completing the training. Pem formally launched a joint venture with one of her friend following the completion of their tailoring training.



Inauguration; One of a Kind

In the scenic town of Tsirang, Bhutan, a beam of hope emerged to transform lives and uplift the community. The RENEW Community Centre, founded with a vision to empower and support individuals, has become a symbol of positive change and resilience. The Centre was first inaugurated on 13th of August 2023, by Her Majesty the Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck. It was initiated and financed by the Dzongkhag administration. The centre works collaboratively with administrative bodies, schools, the gewog heads and the community people which became a catalyst for a transformative change in the region.

The centre has actively engaged in delivering comprehensive sexuality education, prevention of violence and abuse, sexual and reproductive health and rights programs. In 2023, there were 34 programs conducted in total, out of which the very first program was Waste Management Training which aimed to instill the importance of waste management and empowered individuals in the community to enhance their skills. This program garnered a good success and also collected some monetary amount by selling the creative crafts made only from waste materials. Similarly, the center offered inclusive tailoring trainings and orientation for 4 months which was funded by UNICEF with the objective to provide vocational skills to foster empowerment and livelihood. This program





held a great importance in recognizing the importance of skill development in enhancing employ ability and promoting independence of individuals.

Education became another cornerstone of RENEW's community centers' success. The center initiated educational programs for children and adults alike, focusing on literacy and recreational activities designed to bring about positive change, provide support. Programmes such as financial literacy trainings and recreational activities were held with students of some schools. Specifically, children with disabilities, their parents and teachers were also engaged in a session to create a safe space and provide psycho social support through recreational activities. Addressing important days in collaboration with sector heads and the community members such as international women's day, menstrual hygiene day, international day of girl child and international day for the elimination of

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The once struggling town has now become a thriving community with empowered individuals, sustainable practices, and a sense of unity and purpose.”

violence against women also had an important impact on the community stakeholders in empowering women and changing individuals' perspectives by breaking down cultural and social stereotypes relating to gender equality and women empowerment which are some key issues existent in the Bhutanese society.

Women empowerment became a central theme of centers' mission. The center worked tirelessly to raise awareness and sensitize on gender equality, providing a platform for women to voice their concerns and aspirations. One of the core programs in the Tsirang RENEW center is service delivery through case management relating to gender-based violence and domestic violence. Through this service it has proven to build a bridge between the vulnerable individuals and various help rendering agencies, sectors and organizations such as Tsirang District Court, Tsirang police station and Damphu hospital.

The success of RENEW Community Centre in Tsirang is not just measured in economic terms but in the transformed lives of the people it serves. The once struggling town has now become a thriving community with empowered individuals, sustainable practices, and a sense of unity and purpose. RENEW's journey stands as a testament to the power of community-driven initiatives and the profound impact they can have on shaping a brighter and more resilient future.

Acceptance into the family

The journey of a young couple, referred to the RENEW Community Service Center, Bumthang by the Royal Bhutan Police shows the importance of intervention and support. Married for just a year and expecting their first child, the wife found herself grappling with overwhelming stress and turmoil within her home environment. She struggled not being liked by her in-laws. Husband on the other hand also faced emotional distress as he sunk into distress of not being liked by his in-laws. He would come home drunk and break things out of frustration. In depth of her despair, she tragically attempted to harm herself depicting a desperate cry for help.

The case management service along with the counseling service was provided to support the couple. Through a combination of therapeutic interventions and clinical counseling, the survivor received the care and attention necessary to address her mental health needs, while the family was engaged to foster a supportive environment conducive to her well-being and the health of her unborn child.

With dedicated guidance and compassionate care, the couple navigated through the darkest hour, emerging on the other side with newfound strength and resilience. Today, the survivor stands not only as a mother to a beautiful baby boy but also as a beacon of hope and triumph over adversity. In the warm embrace of a loving family and a supportive community, she finds solace and joy, her journey a testament to the transformative power of love, compassion and the unwavering commitment to healing and renewal.

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In depth of her despair, she tragically attempted to harm herself depicting a desperate cry for help.”



The poison to possessiveness

The RENEW Community Service Center served as the safe space for a survivor who bravely stepped forward to report a harrowing case of extreme physical abuse at the hands of her husband. Enduring a brutal assault where she was struck repeatedly with a firewood while returning home, the survivor bore the scars of her husband's possessiveness and violence. She was determined to break free from the cycle of abuse and courageously

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Enduring a brutal assault where she was struck repeatedly with a firewood while returning home, the survivor bore the scars of her husband's possessiveness and violence.”

sought refuge and refused to tolerate further mistreatment. RENEW swiftly acted to the situation and facilitated an immediate referral to the hospital to address the survivor's severe injuries. The case was then promptly reported to the Royal Bhutan Police for a comprehensive framework of support and intervention.

Through a collaborative approach, case management and legal aid services were provided and ensured that the survivor's rights were upheld and her voice heard in the corridors of justice. With unwavering determination, the case was diligently pursued in court, culminating in a resolution that granted the survivor the freedom she so rightfully deserved.

Currently, the survivor has emerged from the shadows of her past, empowered to chart a new course for herself and her children. She divorced her husband and found solace and strength in the embrace of her family and the unwavering support of RENEW. She reflects on her journey and offers heartfelt gratitude to RENEW for extending a lifeline during her darkest hour, providing the guidance and assistance she needed to reclaim her dignity and rebuild her life. In the warmth of her newfound freedom, she embodies the resilience of the human spirit, a testament to the transformative power of compassion, advocacy, and unwavering support.

From Slavery to Empowerment

The child faced a multitude of challenges in her early life. Abandoned by her mother, she was left in the care of her abusive grandmother, who treated her as a servant instead of providing the love and support she needed. The weight of the household chores burdened the child, leaving her with insufficient time for resting and studying. Sleep-deprived and deprived of educational opportunities, her potential was hindered by the oppressive environment she was trapped in. Even her aunt, who attended the same school, mistreated her, exacerbating her feelings of helplessness.

The abuse that she endured was nothing short of torturous, with her grandmother subjecting her to physical punishments, including pinching, scratching, and even using a walking stick as a weapon. Trapped in a cycle of fear, she had lost hope for a better life. However, destiny intervened when her situation came to the attention of the school counselor. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, the school counselor reached out to the RENEW Community Service Center seeking intervention to rescue the child from her living hell.



Sleep-deprived and deprived of educational opportunities, her potential was hindered by the oppressive environment she was trapped in.”

The case manager went to visit the child accompanied by Thromde legal officer and a CBSS volunteer. Upon reaching the school, it was found that she had not attended school and was left back at home. Thus, she was brought back to the school.

After reaching the school, a meeting was held with the collective efforts of Gelephu Thromde Legal Officer, the school principal, the officiating Gewog Thrizin, a CBSS volunteer and class teacher. The aim was to protect and provide the child with the safe and nurturing environment she deserved.



The compassionate principal agreed to secure boarding facilities for her, ensuring she would have a safe haven to call her own. Her paternal uncle, willingly stepped up as her guardian, taking on the responsibility of accompanying her to and from school, as well as looking after her welfare during vacations. But the support did not end there. Understanding the importance of official documentation, her paternal uncle also committed to overseeing the resolution of her census-related issues, thus ensuring her rights were protected.

The meeting left no doubt that everyone involved shared a profound sense of responsibility for her well-being. The legal officer emphasized the collective duty to safeguard and empower the young girl, underscoring the significance of making a positive difference in her life. With the boarding arrangement set in motion, her enrollment as a boarder was expedited, guaranteeing her immediate access to education and a supportive community. The outpouring of care and attention from her new guardian and the school gave her a renewed sense of hope and purpose.

Now, she is no longer shackled by the chains of abuse and injustice. Regular follow-ups with her school caregiver and counselor have revealed a young girl who is thriving in her new environment. No longer missing classes or struggling to stay awake, her educational journey has been reignited, enabling her to fully engage in school activities and embrace her true potential.

The transformation of her life from one filled with despair and torment to one brimming with hope and possibility serves as a testament to the power of compassion, united efforts, and unwavering dedication. With supportive individuals and institutions rallying behind her, the child is now on the path to success, poised to achieve greatness and create a future filled with happiness and fulfillment.

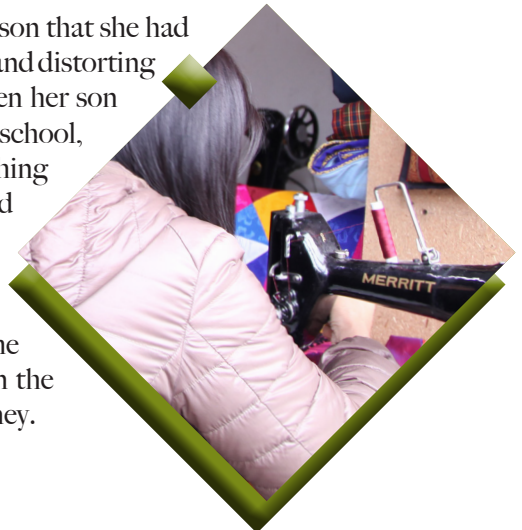
Mother and Son

Karma, now 32 years old, is employed as a tailor with a group known as Deden Zhitsho. She leads an independent life, having achieved self-sufficiency after enduring significant challenges. At just 15, Karma entered into marriage and resided with her in-laws. By 17, she became a mother to a son. However, her husband, also young, battled alcohol and drug addiction, leading to turmoil within the household. Despite her efforts, she faced mistreatment from her in-laws and her husband, who aligned with his family's interests, leaving Karma feeling more like a servant than a respected daughter-in-law. She had to stay at home and take care of the household chores while the family went out on recreation. She felt unfair yet she didn't have a stand she could take.

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Karma's in-laws denied her custody, seeking to remove her from their lives entirely.”

Even her own family refrained from intervening in her marital issues. Regardless of the situation, Karma worked as a weaving trainer at RENEW and received other trainings such as on tailoring and insights into abuse and rights through counseling sessions. Empowered by this knowledge, she made the brave decision to divorce, recognizing the toxicity of her situation, marked by physical and emotional abuse. Following her divorce, when her son was around three years old, Karma's in-laws denied her custody, seeking to remove her from their lives entirely. This heartbreaking situation left her feeling powerless and vulnerable. She only had a minimum wage and no savings. Nevertheless, Karma was determined to find stability and later fight for custody of her son.

Tragically, her in-laws falsely informed her son that she had passed away, denying her any contact with him and distorting his perception of her existence. However, when her son reached around six years old and attended school, he learned of his mother's survival. In a touching turn of events, Karma's mother-in-law reached out, informing her that her son desired to live with his mother. Finally reunited, Karma is now living her long-awaited dream, equipped with a stable job for financial security and the presence of her beloved son. As a tailor within the group, she finds contentment in her life's journey.





Crafting Dreams

Kinley Dema, an aspiring entrepreneur, has embarked on a remarkable journey of resilience and creativity, fueled by her passion for crafting and her unwavering commitment to caring for her family. Her story is one of determination and resourcefulness, exemplifying the transformative power of skill development and entrepreneurship.

Kinley's journey took a significant turn when her father fell ill, requiring constant care and attention. Despite holding a job at a private company, she made the difficult decision to resign in order to prioritize her father's well-being. However, Kinley's entrepreneurial spirit remained undeterred, as she harbored dreams of establishing her own business. Driven by her ambition and guided by her desire to balance caregiving responsibilities with her professional aspirations, Kinley seized the opportunity to participate in tailoring and recycling training organized by RENEW. This training equipped her with the skills and knowledge needed to transform her passion for crafting into a viable business venture.

She started to operate from home while also caring for her father. She created unique and innovative products through recycling materials from vases and home decor items to stylish bags, her creations bore the mark of her creativity and craftsmanship. Despite the challenges she faced, including the demands of caregiving and the struggle of starting a business from scratch, Kinley remained firm in her pursuit of success.

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She established her page, “kdck_handmade_production,” to showcase her products and connect with potential customers.”

She used the power of social media to leverage platforms like Instagram, where she established her page, "kdck_handmade_production," to showcase her products and connect with potential customers. Through captivating imagery and engaging content, she captured the attention of a growing audience,

garnering recognition for her distinctive creations. Furthermore, Kinley seized opportunities to showcase her products through Women Enterprise and CSI market, leveraging these platforms as invaluable opportunities to expand her customer base and promote her brand. Through strategic marketing and networking efforts, she steadily carved a niche for herself in the competitive marketplace, earning a reputation for quality craftsmanship and innovative design.

There are still challenges such as not having enough sales and not being able to buy materials for next crafts. However, she believes over few years, her business will be well settled and growing in the market. As Kinley continues to navigate the dynamic landscape of entrepreneurship, her story stands as a shining example of resilience, creativity, and the limitless potential of the human spirit to triumph over adversity. With each handmade creation, she not only crafts beautiful artifacts but also weaves together the threads of hope, resilience, and determination that define her remarkable journey.





A Couple's Strife

The relationship had taken a tumultuous turn, marked by an incident of violence and disappointment. This incident wasn't the first violence that had entered their relationship, and she had reached her breaking point. She was determined to end her marriage and find a way out of this cycle of pain and suffering. With a heavy heart, she decided to seek legal assistance from RENEW to file for divorce. There she met the case manager who advised them to embark on the legal proceedings. The case manager also carried out case management services conducting several sessions. Soon after, both the clients reflected on their relationship and the love that had once bound them together.

It became increasingly apparent that they still had strong feelings for one another, but their inability to communicate and resolve the issues had caused a deep rift. They came into realization that they shouldn't allow their marriage to crumble under the weight of past mistakes but to use this as an opportunity for change. The case manager had provided them with the tools to communicate more effectively and express their feelings and concerns without resorting to violence. "We learned to listen to each other and acknowledge our shortcomings. We discovered that the trials we faced had not only made us stronger but had also deepened our bond", she acknowledged.



It became increasingly apparent that they still had strong feelings for one another, but their inability to communicate and resolve the issues had caused a deep rift."

Their relationship became a testament to the power of redemption, reconciliation, and the resilience of love. Today, they are living peacefully, not as a couple scarred by their past, but as a couple who emerged from the depths of despair to find a brighter future. "May our story serves as an inspiration to others who may be facing similar challenges – a reminder that love, when nurtured and cherished, can overcome even the darkest of storms" he assured.

A mother's contentment

A 54 year old Ms. Wangmo from Shalispang, Khamnang in Trashiyangtse is a widow survived with six children. Out of her 6 children, two of them have physical disability, a 36 year old son and her 25 years old daughter who is a nun in Mongar. As the sole caregiver for her son, she sought avenues to enrich his life beyond the confines of their home.

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A 54 year
old Ms. Wangmo
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children.”

Unexpectedly, she learned about the RENEW community service center through a member of the PHENSEM group. Recognizing the potential of the livelihood skills training offered by RENEW and FIDA International, she eagerly enrolled her son in the handicrafts program. This decision arise from her desire to see him engaged in meaningful activities, as he often found himself isolated at home. Initially apprehensive about his ability to adapt to the new environment and new people, she was overjoyed to witness

his growing interest and interaction during the training. Seeing him making new friendships filled her with happiness and joy.

Moreover, the training provided an unexpected opportunity for Ms. Wangmo, as a care giver, allowing her to connect with other parents in similar circumstances. Prior to this, she had been unaware of RENEW's inclusive initiatives for people with disabilities. Grateful for the support and opportunities afforded to her son and herself, she expressed heartfelt appreciation to the center for their inclusive programs.

In nurturing her son's growth and fostering connections within the community, Ms. Wangmo embodies resilience and compassion. Her story underscores the transformative impact of community support and inclusive initiatives in empowering individuals and families facing adversity.





Beyond Limits: Rani's Journey

Ms. Rani, a 31-year-old is from Denchukha, Samtse. She is the middle child among the eight siblings. A BBA graduate from India, Rani had successfully passed the RCSC Preliminary Examination (PE) but her life took a significant turn after a tragic accident, leaving her physically challenged and struggling with speech impairment. Despite these obstacles, she found solace in the companionship of her younger sister in Jaigoan, India, until she moved back to Bhutan amidst the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

“*Rani had successfully passed the RCSC Preliminary Examination (PE) but her life took a significant turn after a tragic accident, leaving her physically challenged and struggling with speech impairment.*”

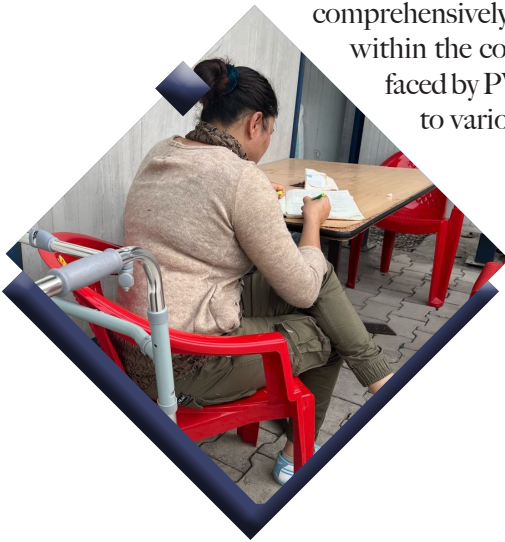
Upon learning about the opportunity for housing support through the Kidu program, Rani applied and was granted a Kidu house in Toorsa while her sister relocated to Pekershing. Adjusting to life alone with disabilities proved daunting at the first, as she grappled with the daily tasks of cooking and household chores, often relying for assistance. The RENEW community center in Phuntsholing was connected with her through an acquaintance with a concern for her safety as she has disability and was vulnerable to violence. Due to her disabilities, she was skeptical to join the handicraft training program conducted by RENEW and FIDA International, but later she found reassurance in the center's provision of transportation services, which eased her decision to join.

Discovering that RENEW not only addresses issues of domestic violence and gender-based violence but also offers inclusive services for individuals with disabilities, Rani felt a renewed sense of purpose. The supportive environment provided by center allowed her to break free from the confines of her room, shedding the discomfort of public scrutiny as she connected with fellow individuals facing similar challenges. Grateful for the opportunities afforded to her by RENEW, Rani now stands as

a testament to the power of resilience and determination. With newfound confidence, she boldly asserts that disability does not define one's limitations when provided with platforms like RENEW, where discrimination is nonexistent, and inclusivity thrives.

Her journey serves as a beacon of hope for others facing similar obstacles, illustrating that with unwavering willpower, even the most daunting challenges can be overcome.

The center conducted the livelihood skills training for the people with disabilities (PWD) as a part of inclusivity initiatives. This training not only allowed them to extend the services more comprehensively but also serves to raise awareness within the community about the vulnerabilities faced by PWDs, including their susceptibility to various forms of violence.





A Child's Resilience

Passang found herself in profoundly helpless situation, enduring severe physical abuse at the hands of her own mother. She accepted her mother's mistreatment and believed it was normal to face such adversities. Passang never knew laws were there to protect her from such mistreatment and resorted to alcohol to cope the pain she had to endure frequently.

Regrettably, her family circumstances forced her to discontinue her education after completing the 8th grade. Regardless, she had the

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Passang never knew laws were there to protect her from such mistreatment and resorted to alcohol to cope the pain she had to endure frequently.”

opportunity to resume her studies with support from RENEW. She was enrolled in a boarding school to avoid any turmoils at home. She also received counseling and therapy sessions with the help of school counselor who is a volunteer of RENEW. “I want to study hard and live up to my expectation and fulfill my dreams” she claimed.

Despite the changes in her life, she is still hesitant to reunite with her mother, and hopes to distance herself from her mother while she processes her thoughts and grows up to be a self reliant adult.

Breaking the Chains: Abuse to Renewed Love

Thirty-year old Zam was at the point of giving up on her marriage, trapped in an abusive relationship. Their relationship hadn't always been this way. Zam vividly remembers the early days when her husband was charming, attentive, and everything she had ever wanted in a partner. But over time, his behavior had changed. Small criticisms turned into harsh insults, loving gestures became rare, and his temper flared at the slightest provocation.

One night her husband had returned home from work in a foul mood, blaming Zam for trivial things like dinner being late and the house not being clean enough. His words had cut deep, slicing through her confidence like a knife. When she tried to defend herself, he had erupted into a rage, hurling objects across the room and grabbing her roughly by the arm. Zam knew she couldn't go on like this. She couldn't continue living in fear, tiptoeing around her husband's unpredictable temper. She had tried to leave before, but her husband always managed to convince her to stay, promising to change or threatening to harm himself if she left him. But something inside her had shifted. She couldn't bear the thought of spending another day trapped in this cycle of abuse.

Zam decided to seek help from RENEW, an organization she had heard about from her friends. Through the RENEW's Volunteer network (CBSS) Zam received counseling sessions whereby she could finally let out all the emotions she had kept inside for so long. Through RENEW's referral networks, Zam received legal support. Zam never wanted to divorce her husband instead she always wanted her marriage to work and her husband to stop being abusive.

After several couple sessions at RENEW, Zam's husband started to recognize and acknowledge that his behavior has been abusive and accepted responsibility for his actions. He understood the impact it had on her wife and the fear that circled around their relation which he never wanted. He was willing to actively work on himself, seek support when needed, and prioritize the safety and well-being of his partner. Changing abusive behavior is a challenging and ongoing process that requires dedication and perseverance. Zam's husband faced many setbacks along the way, but with determination and support, he broke the cycle of abuse and built healthier, more respectful relationships. Zam is happy with her marriage now and she is glad her marriage is back to the initial stage where love, support and guidance were there for one another.

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She couldn't continue living in fear, tiptoeing around her husband's unpredictable temper.”

Migmar's Memory Redemption

In January 2023, Migmar found herself adrift in a state of confusion and couldn't even identify herself. She arrived at Gawaling Happy Home, RENEW after being referred from the Police station. Her tongue tied by amnesia, she could offer nothing but hollow laughter and vacant stares during the initial sessions. It was very difficult to trace her origins or contacts, as her memory was lost. Fortunately, a clinical counselor at the psychiatric clinic advised to seek specialized help.



It was very difficult to trace her origins or contacts, as her memory was lost.”

Rushing her to the hospital, the doctors diagnosed her with schizophrenia, igniting the beacon of treatment. With each dose of medication, she emerged from the shadows of her condition, reclaiming morsels of her identity: her name, her age, her place of residence. With the assistance of the Royal Bhutan Police and the caring staff at Gawaling Happy Home, they managed to reunite her with her mother.

However, the road to recovery twisted and turned. After six months of progress, her behavior regressed, prompting a consultation with her doctors. Adjustments were made to her medication regimen, aimed at tethering her emotions to steadier ground. Meanwhile she was also provided livelihood training programs by RENEW such as knitting, recycling, weaving—each skill a lifeline to a future she's determined to shape.

Migmar dreams of returning home once she is stable, eager to share her newfound talents with her mother. Reflecting on her journey, she expresses her appreciation for the kindness that enveloped her at Gawaling Happy Home. Without it, she fears she might have lost into the streets. She shares, "Perhaps the changes within me took time, but the reward of emerging as a resilient and self-assured woman is immeasurable."

A Hope for Better

Dechen's initial journey was filled with numerous challenges as she was raised in an environment devoid of support and awareness. At a very young age, her parents got divorced and she lived with her mother and her step father. She felt lonely not only because she didn't have a family to call her own but because her step father would often take advantage of her. She endured the trauma of sexual harassment by her stepfather. There was no one, not even her mother that she could share as she felt embarrassed to even mention to anyone. So she fled from the abusive environment and met her husband.

At the time, it felt like she found a place to call home at the warmth of her husband's care and never knew life had more turmoils to offer. She found out later that her husband would drink often and abuse substances. By then, she had already conceived a daughter. He would physically and emotionally abuse her. Facing instability in her living situation and fearing potential abuse from her stepfather if she returned to her mother's home, she found

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*Often finding herself
 in trouble, she spent time
 in detention until the police
 informed her about the support
 services offered by RENEW,*”

herself wandering aimlessly. Often finding herself in trouble, she spent time in detention until the police informed her about the support services offered by RENEW, a revelation that brought her immense relief as she had been unaware of such assistance.

Through RENEW, she received counseling, especially important as she had divorced her husband. Encouraged to enroll in Zorig Chosum to learn crafts, she found purpose in engaging herself with the program. Subsequently, she joined Bhutan Elite Security services, where she worked for three years. Despite remarrying, she faced the tragic loss of her second husband, prompting her return to her village with her two daughters, where she now works in farming.

Reflecting on her journey, she feels empowered by the diverse experiences she has encountered. As she tends to her fields, she dedicates herself to providing her daughters with as much support as possible, drawing from the lessons learned amidst life's challenges.

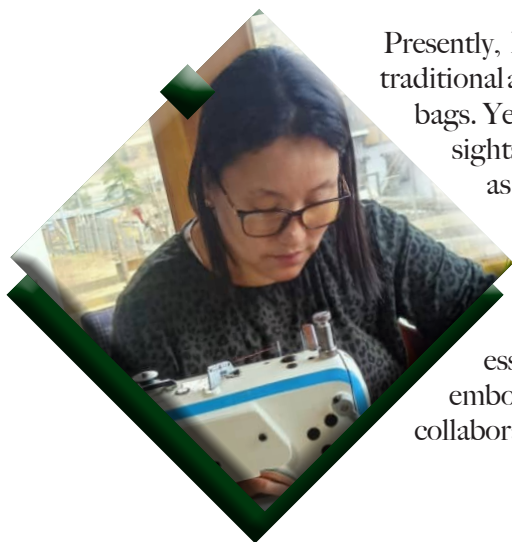
Rinzin Dema; The Power of Women's Influence

Rinzin Dema once led a simple life with her husband and children in Trongsa. Her husband, a former monk, and she, engaged in farming within their village. In 2015, she learned of a tailoring training offered by RENEW. Intrigued by the prospect of acquiring new skills and contributing more to her family's welfare, she eagerly enrolled in the program. Diligently, she practiced her craft at home, refining her techniques and nurturing her passion for tailoring. By 2018, she obtained her license and boldly ventured into entrepreneurship, launching a small-scale tailoring business.

As life unfolded, Rinzin Dema's journey took her to Bumthang, her husband's hometown, where she seamlessly transitioned her business operations there. It wasn't long before her husband, inspired by her dedication and skill, expressed interest in joining her endeavors. Together, they harmonized their efforts, working side by side from their home.

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Rinzin Dema is an independent women who not only pushed her self to be self reliant but also encouraged her husband and trained him in tailoring.”



Presently, Rinzin Dema boasts expertise in stitching traditional attire like the gho and kira, alongside crafting bags. Yet, her aspirations soar higher as she sets her sights on mastering the art of Western clothing as well. Rinzin Dema is an independent women who not only pushed her self to be self reliant but also encouraged her husband and trained him in tailoring. In their united pursuit, they redefine the essence of partnership and entrepreneurship, embodying the spirit of empowerment and collaboration.

Perseverance Beyond Sound: The Inspiring Journey of Dechen Pelden

Dechen Pelden, a single mother from Khaling, Trashigang, faced numerous challenges from an early age due to her partial hearing impairment. Despite the hurdles she encountered, she remained determined to carve out a better life for herself and her child.

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Socializing was always difficult for Dechen due to her hearing impairment, and finding a stable source of income seemed like an impossible task.”

potential, RENEW, in collaboration with the FIDA livelihood project, provided her with tailor training.

Socializing was always difficult for Dechen due to her hearing impairment, and finding a stable source of income seemed like an impossible task. However, fate intervened when her brother introduced her to RENEW, an organization dedicated to empowering women in Bhutan. Recognizing Dechen's

For two years, Dechen honed her skills at RENEW, gaining confidence and expertise in the art of tailoring. When her contract ended, Dechen's friend extended a helping hand, securing her a job at Tenzin Sculpture as a professional tailor. Now employed at Tenzin Sculpture, Dechen has found a newfound sense of purpose and stability. She takes pride in her work, specializing in stitching Khuthang (Buddhist tapestries) and religious drum covers. Her dedication and proficiency have earned her the admiration of her colleagues and clients alike.

Despite the challenges posed by her hearing impairment, Dechen has defied the odds, proving that disability is not a barrier to success. Her journey proves the power of perseverance and the transformative impact of support and opportunity. Today, Dechen stands, embodying the resilience of the human spirit. As she continues to thrive in her career, Dechen remains grateful for the opportunities that have come her way. With unwavering determination and a steadfast resolve, she has not only achieved financial independence but has also set an example for others facing similar obstacles. In Dechen's story, we find a powerful reminder that disability doesn't stop us from being independent and self-reliant in the society.



Transformative Journey of a New Father; Yogesh

In the heart of a small village, where the hustle and bustle often drown out the stories of everyday heroes, one father's extraordinary journey of care for his child's development shines through as a symbol of hope and inspiration. Yogesh is a new father to a 3-month-old daughter, residing in a small village on the outskirts of Chamkhar Town. He is working as a health assistant (HA) and conducts the Child for Care Development (C₄CD) program supported by RENEW for the mothers in the community.

He stated "When I conduct this program with the parent it is an experience for me to learn as a new parent myself. I can see the transition of my baby's behavior and one of the most significant turning points in their journey was when she responded to the playing games with her". Yogesh stated that he is not able to meet his wife and his daughter often due to his work and their place is almost two and a half hours away from his work place. He stated that he does not get enough time to play with his daughter due to his prime engagement. Whenever he gets time, he makes sure he spends it with his daughter and tries to practice her gross and fine motor skills. He tries to hold her head and gives her a small object to let her hold. "I have learned so much from this program starting from how to feed the baby and what to include in her diet when she is ready to eat. I also make sure my wife knows why my baby is crying and let her communicate with the child whenever she is into feeding her."

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I have learned so much from this program starting from how to feed the baby and what to include in her diet when she is ready to eat.”

He also shared his involvement as a facilitator in the C₄CD initiative, noting a noticeable shift in parental communication patterns with their children. Yogesh observed, "Thanks to this program, I've noticed parents becoming more patient and engaging in extensive communication with their children." He recounted a similar instance involving a single mother in the community who declined to participate in the program, instead focusing on alcohol consumption and neglecting her nine-month-old child. The child's developmental milestones, including hand-eye coordination, motor skills, and responsiveness, lag behind those of other infants of the same age.

Yogesh emphasized the significant benefits of C₄CD in fostering stronger parent-child connections and contributing to child development. He urged all parents to participate in the program, stressing their crucial role in their children's development.

The Shadow of Online Dating

In a remote village of Bhutan, there lived a girl named Zangmo. Her mother passed away due to alcohol and after that her father continued to have affairs with numerous women in and around their neighborhood, which always led to disharmony at home. Her world was painted with hues of sorrow and discontent, marked by the absence of her mother. As Zangmo matured, the weight of her reality became unbearable. In the midst of her despair, a glimmer of hope flickered in the digital realm – a friend she had found on Facebook and sought company. When she was in grade 7, she ran away from school and returned to Paro with the help of her Facebook friend, who facilitated her ride in a taxi. Through his guidance, Zangmo embarked on a journey of liberation, her heart fluttering with anticipation at the

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In the midst of her despair, a glimmer of hope flickered in the digital realm – a friend she had found on Facebook and sought company.”

prospect of escape. Yet, beneath the layers of freedom lay the treacherous currents of deception. Seduced by the allure of attention and companionship, Zangmo found herself entangled in a web of false promises and fleeting affection. Two of them engaged in an intimate physical relationship in a hotel he had arranged for her.

Since Zangmo was minor, only 15 years old at the time, the boy was charged for a rape. The case was forwarded by Royal Bhutan Police to RENEW in hope for better stability for Zangmo. She is currently placed in Gawaling Happy Home and continuing her studies. She received counselling and attended information sessions for better awareness about the realities of the world.

Bhutanese Migration to Australia

In the serene valleys of Bhutan, where tradition and modernity intersect, many stories unfold amidst the search of a New American Dream. Faced with the harsh reality of limited opportunities and financial strain, many Bhutanese families make the difficult decision to seek stability and prosperity abroad. Among them is Karma Dema, a wife and mother whose husband ventures to Australia with promises of remittances to support their family back home. However, as time unfolds, Karma's hopes are shattered as her husband succumbs to an affair with his De Facto and the ventures of new life, leaving behind his vows and responsibilities. Stranded in Bhutan, Karma navigates the turbulent waters of single parenthood, grappling with the harsh truths of abandonment and broken promises.

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Karma's hopes are shattered as her husband succumbs to an affair with his De Facto and the ventures of new life, leaving behind his vows and responsibilities.”

Meanwhile, in another block, another chapter unfolds as a mother, enticed by the promise of a better future, plans to leave her child behind to travel to Australia under the guise of a De Facto relationship. Yet, when her dreams are shattered by the stark reality of visa rejections, she finds herself embroiled in a bitter custody battle with the child's father. The intricacies of love, loss, and betrayal weave a complex tapestry, as families are torn by the pursuit of elusive dreams.

Amidst the turmoil, organizations like RENEW serve as a place of hope, offering support and solace to those left behind in the wake of migration. Through the tireless efforts, Karma Dema finds a glimmer of hope as she seeks assistance in tracking down her estranged husband and securing financial support for her children. Yet, for many others, the road ahead remains fraught with uncertainty and despair, as they grapple with the harsh realities of fractured families and shattered dreams.

In the end, the story of Bhutanese migration to Australia serves as a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made in pursuit of a better life, and the enduring resilience of the human spirit in the face of adversity. It is a harsh reality, a tale of love and loss, hope and despair, echoing across distant shores and resonating with the universal truths of the human experience.

Fragile Bonds

The couple found themselves in a distressing situation as they encountered the aftermath of their separation. With a one-year-old child caught in the middle, the mother retained custody while they resided in Punakha, staying with her sister. However, a concerned neighbor reported, alleging mistreatment of the child by the mother, prompting authorities to intervene. It was then referred to RENEW.

It was found that the mother was struggling with mental health issues, necessitating psychiatric intervention. RENEW swiftly arranged for her admission to psychiatric therapy at the hospital, recognizing the urgency of her situation. In the meantime, both mother and child found refuge at Gawaling Happy Home, where they were provided with essential shelter and care. Amidst the turmoil, the mother asserted that the father had not contributed child support. However, inquiries revealed that the father had indeed been fulfilling his obligations in this regard.

As the complexities of the situation unraveled, a parent session facilitated dialogue between the estranged couple. Recognizing the mother's fragile state of health, the father proposed assuming temporary custody of the child, ensuring the child's well-being until the mother's recovery.

Presently, the child resides with the father, receiving nurturing care, while the mother continues her journey toward healing under the care of RENEW. Regular counseling sessions and ongoing psychiatric therapy at the hospital form part of her restorative process, offering hope for eventual reunification with her beloved child. Through collaborative efforts and unwavering support, the family endeavors to navigate the challenges and embrace a future marked by healing and reconciliation.

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A concerned neighbor reported, alleging mistreatment of the child by the mother,”

Finding Home: Lhaden's Journey

Lhaden reflects on Joseph Campbell's assertion that "The privilege of a lifetime is being who you are." It took Lhaden considerable time to come to terms with her identity and current circumstances, which diverged significantly from her initial expectations. Initially perceiving life as colorful, Lhaden soon discovered its darker, scarier aspects, which left her feeling worthless.

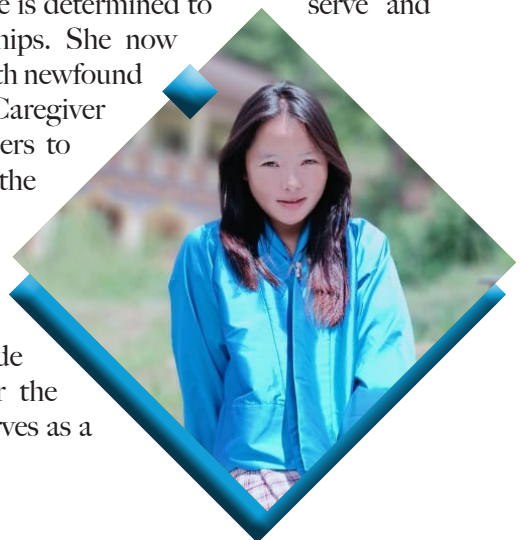
Once a lost child, Lhaden acknowledges that without the nurturing and protection provided by RENEW, her existence might have been uncertain. At 28 years old, Lhaden identifies as a beneficiary of RENEW, having spent the formative years since age 13 under its care. Within RENEW's shelter, Lhaden found solace and acceptance, experiencing firsthand the organization's commitment to loving the unloved. She is a survivor of Sexual Based Violence. Having been raised in this center, Lhaden reflects on a remarkably fruitful life. The center has afforded Lhaden a second chance, providing not only companionship but also education and employment, fostering independence and gratitude. Lhaden acknowledges the struggles faced as valuable lessons that have contributed to personal growth and resilience.

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At 28 years old, Lhaden identifies as a beneficiary of RENEW, having spent the formative years since age 13 under its care.”

Lhaden is committed to supporting others facing similar challenges. No longer considering themselves a victim, she is determined to serve and assist children navigating comparable hardships. She now stands confidently on her own feet, enriched with newfound wisdom in decision-making. She works as a Caregiver at Gawaling Happy Home, encouraging others to persist in pursuing their dreams, emphasizing the transformative power of determination.

She expresses her gratefulness for health, love, and care, and guiding her in overcoming personal obstacles. Lhaden expresses gratitude to the RENEW team and Her Majesty for the existence of such a nurturing center, which serves as a home to all who seek refuge and support.





Embracing Hope: Nedup's Journey

Nedup was born to loving father who was a solitary figure, a man who knew weaknesses and strengths of her daughter. The absence of a mother figure remained a distant concern, as her father's presence sufficed for the both. She did not ask who her mother was and her whereabouts as she was content with her life. As time elapsed, she matured and was enrolled in a school. She still remembers her father's words, "You must go to school to make new friends, learn A, B, C.....and 1....2.....3....". From then, school became one of her favorite places to visit and enjoyed learning.

Nevertheless, shouldering the responsibilities of parenthood alone weighed heavily upon her father. In pursuit of familial harmony and mutual benefit, he embarked on a second marriage, initiating a new chapter in their life. With the arrival of the stepmother, everything started to change gradually. The father was preoccupied with his professional obligations and entrusted her care to the stepmother. She faced physical and emotional abuse in the hands of her step mother but could not say a word to her father as he no longer was a father she had once known.

The arrival of her step-sibling further complicated her life as she had to endure more physical and emotional abuse. A school that once was her favorite turned into a battleground as she became victim to bullying by her school mates. She was ridiculed of her appearance and for not having a mother. Amidst the tumult, she built in all the courage to confide to her father, hoping to seek refuge in the embrace of her grandparents and a change of educational environment. However, her pleas fell on deaf ears, and she found herself relocated with her aunt and uncle, embarking upon a new

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Nedup was branded as the harbinger of misfortune by her families and mistreated her.”

chapter of her life. The year that she stayed with them was one of her worst memories of her life. In the absence of her aunt, uncle abused her sexually and physically. Unable to bear the pain, she ran to her grandparent's place.

During her adolescence when she was in grade 4, tragedy struck

again with the sudden demise of her father in a car. Nedup was branded as the harbinger of misfortune by her families and mistreated her. Even her grandparents loathed her for the death of their loving son. She was made to work in the restaurants till late and had little time for her school work. So she had to manage waking up early morning. She doesn't remember getting a good sleep and gradually she became physically weak. Nevertheless, she was determined to stand on her own feet and not succumb to the abuse and neglect.

A glimmer of hope dawned when one lady approached her to be part of a documentary film. She agreed without knowing what it was and played her part. As time went by, she started to become more aggressive as there was no one to listen to her pain nor she was able to open up. She even bunked classes and took no interest in school. One night, she was severely abused and injured her leg. She had a best friend who helped her hide in her house for more than 3 days. Her parents got in touch with the lady who approached her for documentary film. Soon after, she was referred to National Commission of Women and Children (NCWC). She was accompanied by her teacher and began her life in the capital. She was provided a safe space at Gawaling Happy Home, RENEW.

Nedup's arrival at Gawailing Happy Home (GHH) marked the inception of a new chapter. She found solace, companionship, and the unwavering support of a newfound family. She continued her education and spent her summer and winter holidays at GHH with other mates. It gave her hope for a better life and did exceptionally well in academics securing His Majesty's Certificate for two consecutive years and taking in leadership roles. She completed her Bachelors Degree and now she is currently working as a contract teacher.

It has been around 12 years that she was under the care of RENEW and finally independent, she stands proud for what she has achieved over the years. This marks the strong resilience and determination that she has within.

Tailoring Instructor- Rinzin Selekha

In the valleys of Chukha, Rinzin Selekha's story unfolded like a tapestry of determination. She was married at a young age and journeyed with shared laughter and love. Blessed with two children, she embraced motherhood with devotion. Yet, as the years passed by, Rinzin's life grew burdened with marital discord and mistreatment. She found herself entangled in a web of oppression, her voice stifled by the weight of silence as she was uneducated. With

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She found herself entangled in a web of oppression, her voice stifled by the weight of silence as she was uneducated.”

nowhere to turn, Rinzin sought refuge in the corridors of justice. It was within the precincts of the local police station that she was aware about the services provided by RENEW, an organization dedicated to empowering women in distress.

Rinzin summoned all the courage and broke free from the shackles of oppression after divorcing her husband. She was provided with skills training in tailoring at RENEW in order to be independent and care for her children. As the days melded into weeks and the weeks into months, Rinzin's skills blossomed and became a Tailoring Instructor at Gawaling. Her children are also under the care of RENEW at GHH continuing their studies. With education as their compass and determination as their guide, they chart a course towards a future imbued with promise and possibility.

Despite being a single mother of two children, she works diligently to provide for them.



A Son's Duty

In 2014, when Rinzin was just eight years old, his parents parted ways, leaving his mother to shoulder the burden of raising three children alone. His father, absent and indifferent, provided no financial support, leaving Rinzin's mother to work as a gardener to provide for the family.

As the second eldest among his siblings, Rinzin understood the importance of stepping up when life's storms raged fiercest. His elder sister used to manage the family's finances with grace and determination. But tragedy struck when she passed away, leaving Rinzin to bear the weight of her absence and the responsibility she had shouldered.

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*But tragedy struck
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shouldered.”*

When he was fourteen years old, in the tumult of the 2020 pandemic, Rinzin faced his greatest trial yet. With his family struggling to make ends meet, he sought solace in hard work and determination. For two weeks, he labored tirelessly under the scorching sun, cleaning drains along the roadside under the employ of a contractor.

Days turned into weeks, and Rinzin's hands grew calloused, his spirit unwavering despite the hardships he faced. But fate, dealt him a cruel blow when the contractor met with an accident, leaving Rinzin's wages hanging in limbo. Rinzin turned to RENEW for support. It was agreed that the contractor's wife would settle the payment owed to him. Yet, the road to justice was fraught with obstacles, as the contractor's wife, burdened by medical expenses and the ravages of the pandemic, struggled to fulfill her promises.

Days turned into weeks, and weeks into months, as Rinzin's patience waned and his resolve faltered. With frequent follow-ups and unwavering determination, justice prevailed. He received his full payment and managed well for his school expenses. This lifted burden from his mother who worked tirelessly to provide for her children.

Domestic violence is **no longer** gender-biased

A man phones Respect, Educate, Nurture, and Empower Women (RENEW) and inquires, “Does RENEW support men as well? And if it does, please talk to my wife to stop emotionally harassing me,” he requested.

There had been a significant number of men who were victims of gender-based violence (GBV) coming forward to seek help from RENEW. Last year, out of the 788 cases of GBV, 69 were male. In 2022 and 2021, it was 70 and 61 males respectively who sought help from RENEW. According to records with RENEW, 58 men were emotionally abused, six were economically abused, and five were physically abused, last year. Those who sought help from RENEW received counselling, livelihood training, legal and medical aid, shelter services, and psycho-social support, among other services.

The Executive Director of RENEW, Tshering Dolkar, said that GBV affected all and since it was mostly women who were affected, it so happens that the services were more aligned towards women. “Men usually don’t come forward, but when they do, we provide the same services to them as we provide to females.” Most men phoned RENEW for help, while some walked into RENEW offices. A 27-year-old man said men usually don’t come forward because males

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Men usually don’t come forward, but when they do, we provide the same services to them as we provide to females.”

tend to have higher resilience to violence, especially when it comes to intimate partner relationships; men tend to tolerate more if they have a toxic wife. “I am married, and because I am not doing well economically, I do get emotionally abused sometimes by my wife.” He said that he understood his wife’s nagging and concerns, but if things got out of control, he would surely

seek help from his family and service providers. “I love my wife, and I am trying my best to provide her with whatever I can.”

Tshering Dolkar said that according to RENEW’s records, men were more emotionally abused by their intimate partners, and when a husband couldn’t

provide for their partner, they were economically abused as well. “We encourage men to come forward, and they could choose a male or female service provider from us they want to talk with.”

A bus driver said that he divorced his wife because he couldn’t tolerate emotional abuse anymore. “Whenever I am done with work, I would worry about going back home to an alcoholic wife,” he said. “On my way back home, what she would do to me bothered me so much in my head that I would never be at peace.” The bus driver said he tolerated his wife because they had children. Despite enduring the abuse for the sake of their children, he eventually left his wife, admitting to resorting to violence in an attempt to stop her drinking. He said that he did not talk with anybody about what was happening at his home since he feared that society would gossip about his family. “It is not easy for men to go seek help.”

Passang Deki, the Case Manager at RENEW Tsirang Community Service Centre, said that in intimate partner violence, in most cases, the perpetrator and victim were both husband and wife. “Lack of communication, understanding, and family interference accelerates domestic violence in relationships,” she said. There have been cases with RENEW where, during case assessment, it was found out that men were the victims even when women registered cases against them. “There is a misconception that RENEW only supports women, which is not true, and our services are the same for all genders,” Tshering Dolkar said. “We provide service to families which include wife, husband, and children.” RENEW also received a phone call from a man fearing that his wife would report him to RENEW and that he would be taken to jail. Tshering Dolkar said that we are service providers and not legal entities, and men fear that we will support women in court. “We treat all genders equally, and I encourage both men, women, LGBTIQ+ and children to come forward to seek help.”

Tshering Dolkar emphasized that GBV was one of the opponents that act as a challenge in development, and productive citizens, have to be free of all their issues. “How can a person be productive if they are facing GBV, which is why I encourage everyone to come forward to seek our services.”

[Source: Yangyel Lhaden, Kuensel, February 1, 2024, Pg. 1-2]

RENEW brings services closer to homes

Tsirang—Respect, Educate, Nurture, and Empower Women (RENEW) community service centre, situated in the heart of Damphu town, next to the hospital, serves as a secure refuge for victims of gender-based violence (GBV).

The center's infrastructure comprises a single-story building with a spacious compound. Upon entering, visitors are greeted by a child-friendly environment in the first room, equipped with study tables and toys. Parents, especially those in intimate partner relationships, often bring their children along, providing them a space to engage with toys while accessing the services. Originally established in a space provided by the Tsirang hospital in 2022, the structure for the centre was completed last year, funded through the Tsirang Dzongkhag's budget allocation. UNICEF supports the center's operations.

Since its inception in 2022, the centre has reported 112 cases of GBV, including 17 involving children. In 2022, out of 58 violence cases, 11 concerned children—four sexual abuse, one physical abuse, eight emotional violence, and one economic violence. The previous year saw 54 cases, with six involving children—four sexual abuse, one each of physical and emotional violence. Tsirang's community service centre is one of 10 centres established by RENEW. The first three centres, including Tsirang, Paro, and Bumthang, were set up in 2022 based on the highest number of reported cases in these Dzongkhags.

RENEW's Executive Director, Tshering Dolkar, said that the primary objective of establishing community service centres in districts was to ensure everyone has access to RENEW's services. She emphasised that these centres provide a safe haven, assuring victims that their issues will remain confidential, and their privacy protected. The centres offer emotional support, information on available services, and empower clients to become productive and emotionally resilient. Additionally, the centres provide emergency and protection services, livelihood training, advocacy, and sensitization programmes. Successful operation relies on collaboration between local government, Dzongkhag, and relevant stakeholders.

Tshering Dolkar stressed the importance of local ownership, citing examples where community service centres operate from un-utilised gewog houses or

vacant spaces, with support from hospitals, courts, and police. She expressed the need for Dzongkhags to take ownership, implement training and advocacy programs, ensuring that resources reach the most unreached members of the community.

Establishing community service centres is part of a broader effort to collaborate closely with local governments and districts, recognizing that gender based violence is a cross-cutting issue requiring the involvement of authorities for effective resolution. “We aim to establish one community service centre in every Dzongkhag in the country,” Tshering Dolkar said.

“*Establishing community service centres is part of a broader effort to collaborate closely with local governments and districts, recognizing that gender based violence is a cross-cutting issue requiring the involvement of authorities for effective resolution.*”

[Source: Yangyel Lhaden, Kuensel, January 29, 2024, Pg. 3]





Gawailing Happy Home: Nurturing dreams amidst challenges

Wangsisina, Gawailing Happy Home, Thimphu, February 14: — It is a chaotic morning scene. Children are packing and preparing to go to school after spending the winter break at the happy home. In the midst of piles of clothes, older children assist younger ones with packing, while others don their school uniforms and load luggage onto vehicles. Packed lunches are prepared for the journey back to the hostel. For 27 children—26 girls and one boy—Gawailing Happy Home is more than just a shelter; it’s a sanctuary. Established by Respect, Educate, Nurture, and Empower Women (RENEW), the home provides a haven of physical and psychological safety for individuals and families.



*Gawailing Happy Home
is more than just a shelter;
it’s a sanctuary.”*

“The only boy here is like the heart of our family,” shares one of the girls, affectionately referring to the 13-year-old boy who dreams of becoming a prime minister. “He’s already campaigning, and we’re all behind him,” she adds. To him, the other children are not just peers; they are family, both younger and older siblings.

Some children arrived at Gawailing as young as nine years old. Over time, they have formed deep bonds of friendship and family with their peers. When new children join the home, older ones ensure they feel welcomed and included.

A 17-year-old girl recalls her initial fears and struggles when she arrived at Gawailing in 2020. “But older children reached out to me, and I began to feel like this was my home,” she shares. She loves to speak in front of crowds; whenever there is a show at home, she is always ready to become the master of ceremonies. Today, she is excited to go back to school to achieve her dream of becoming a great speaker. “I dream of speaking in front of billions of people as a great psychologist, and I want to inspire people and help them,” she says. “I want my voice to be heard by everyone so that they can come out of their comfort zone and do something

productive.” She started to nurture the dream after coming to Gawailing because of the resources here. “There is skilling, a lot of books, and computer facilities I did not expect,” the 17-year-old says. “I got curious and excited seeing the facilities, and when curiosity and excitement match, a child starts to dream.”

Another 17-year-old aspires to be a doctor, inspired by the joy she felt seeing doctors while growing up. Despite facing obstacles, she remains determined to pursue her education and dreams. “I may be a bit older than the typical student in seventh grade, but regardless of my age, I intend to keep studying until I am satisfied,” she says. “Life brings obstacles and complications, but what I’ve learned is that you have to make peace with your past and focus on the life ahead of you. That’s why I’m determined to study hard, as there are many things I still want to achieve.”

An 18-year-old girl had to drop out of school last year. This year, she is excited to have the opportunity to study again. “It has been about five months here, and I am grateful for the chance to study,” she says. “I dream of becoming a better human and pursuing a job that will benefit the nation in the future.” A 14-year-old girl in eighth grade is a topper in school. She wants to become a teacher and her favourite subject is English. She loves reading books by Roald Dahl. *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is her favourite book. “We are grateful to our Godmother, Her Majesty the Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck, the RENEW staff, and the Gawailing family for shaping us into who we are today and for providing us with opportunities and support,” she says.

As the children depart, some are leaving behind “thank you” letters for the center’s manager, Sonam Dolma, expressing their gratitude for the care they received. Sonam says: “One of the thank-you letters is from a child who can be challenging, yet in her letter, she expresses sincere apologies. It’s truly rewarding to work with children, especially when they recognise their mistakes and strive to improve.”



► Girls preparing packed lunch to go back to school

[Source: Yangyel Lhaden,
Kuensel, February 17, 2024,
Pg. 13]

Testimonials



RENEW placed a special emphasis encouraging women to participate in the felting training that they were providing so me and my friends took up this wonderful opportunity. I am now working for the Sheep breeding center in Bumthang as a shepherd and this has made a great positive impact in my life.

Lhachoe Dema (felting)

Phuntsho Dema, considers the opportunity given by RENEW as her ultimate blessing and conveys her gratitude by saying she now feels complete by being able to stand on her own feet and fend for her children.

Phuntsho Dema (Tailoring)



“Dear Women,

Through RENEW, I’ve witnessed the struggles of women submerged in the mire of violence and assaults. I want every woman to recognize that your aspirations shape the transition from fetus to child and child to man. You are a vibrant thread in life’s tapestry, adding grace, fortitude, and strength. Embrace the power in your heart, the beauty of your uniqueness, and the force of your voice. You are agents of transformation, keepers of hope, and embodiment of bravery. Stand tall, share your truth, let your light shine. Find opportunities in obstacles, see seeds of progress in setbacks. Remember your infinite potential and incalculable worth. The world is enriched by your presence, and the future is influenced by your efforts. Take bold steps, embrace the adventure with courage; you are the architects of a brighter future. You are more than just women, and you’re not alone on this journey. On this International Women’s Day, I pledge to protect our women and girls, dedicating my best to build a violence-free community.”

“I pledge on this day that if i come across women facing any forms of violence, i would stand and report against it” -Sonam Lhamo(27)

“ I have never seen nor heard or experience any forms of violence in my family but i have heard about women who went through violence in the community, on this day I pledge to stand with them and be a support to them” - Kezang Wangmo

“I pledge to share about RENEW & its services.” - Yeshi Tshomo

“Before i joined tailoring at Paro through RENEW i was helpless about those women and girls who went through Violence but through the advocacy now i know an individual can make a difference, i pledge to be voice for women and girls in my community and in my neighborhood “ - Kaka

Kunzang Chopel (Case manager, Paro)

A Father's Hope

“RENEW case manager has helped my children to be relocated in a boarding school and change of environment has helped my children in their emotional well being. There were times when I used to be worried of my children as they were always missing. They would get lost for couple of days and would be reluctant to go to school. Through the intervention, I was so happy to see that the Case Manager treated my children as her own and made sure to provide the best services for them. I as a father I see a hope for my girls and see glories future. I am thankful to RENEW Community service center Paro, as in the middle of the year I was able to relocate their school and let them continue their education without dropping. I almost lost hope in seeing what my children were doing and going through. I recently met them and found that they were happy in their new school and wishes to continue studying in same school. I will continue to seek guidance for my children.”

CBSS Commitment

“I have been working as the School Guidance Counselor at Shaba Higher Secondary School in Paro for the past 11 years. Additionally, I have been an active member of the CBSS (Community-Based Support System) since 2016. I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the RENEW Service Center in Paro for their continuous collaboration, support, and assistance that is readily available to us. Working as a counselor, my role involves attending to the diverse needs of clients from various backgrounds, where practical assistance is often required. In this regard, the Renew Community Service Centre, Paro has been a true blessing. Through our partnership with the center, our plans and programs aimed at promoting the well-being of adolescents have significantly improved. The center has been instrumental in organizing advocacy programs on various topics such as EVAC (Ending Violence Against Children), CSE (Comprehensive Sexuality Education), GBV (Gender Based Violence) and other youth-related issues. These programs not only benefit the students but also extend to the school staff and the parents. Moreover, the Renew Community Service Centre has played a crucial role in celebrating international days dedicated to children and women. Their support has amplified the significance and impact of these events. The students and staff of Shaba Higher Secondary School have had the privilege of participating in a plethora of activities, ranging from international day celebrations to attending the Youth Conclave and even taking part in the mini carnival at the Dzongkhag level alongside students from other schools. Having the Renew Community Service Centre as a resource has been immensely beneficial to me as a counselor. The center's support and collaboration have greatly enhanced the counseling services we provide. They offer timely and effective intervention programs, ensuring that assistance is provided when needed most. All this is possible due to dynamic staff working at the center, who is ever willing to render services. The impact is felt not just by one, but community as a whole has benefitted immensely”.

