



YOUR **TRAUMA** DOESN'T DEFINE YOU,

YOU LIVE EACH DAY TO CREATE A **BETTER LIFE** FOR YOURSELF.

WHEN I SEE YOU, I SEE A
STRONG WOMAN



DARK TO DAWN SERIES 2



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Concept and content: RENEW



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”.



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. To protect the identities by privacy of most characters nether pages have, pseudonym have been used, allowing their essence to shine while safeguarding their anonymity.

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.



PREFACE

Yangchen's world fell apart when her husband, once loving, turned distant and cruel. Isolated and struggling to protect her daughter, she endured emotional abuse and financial neglect. When she could no longer bear it alone, she turned to RENEW. With their support, she secured her rights, gained custody of her child, and found the strength to start afresh.

Bhutan's journey toward social empowerment and gender equality has been significantly shaped by the resilience of individuals and the collective efforts of organizations dedicated to making a difference. Across the 20 Dzongkhags, countless success stories highlight the strength and determination of individuals who have overcome adversity to rebuild their lives.

At the heart of this transformation is RENEW (Respect, Educate, Nurture, and Empower Women), an organization committed to uplifting survivors of domestic violence, abuse, and social stigma. Through counseling, legal aid, livelihood skills training, and community outreach programs, RENEW has played a pivotal role in restoring hope and dignity to those in need. RENEW has not only transformed lives but also strengthened families and communities across Bhutan.

These stories from RENEW community service centers are more than just accounts of struggle and success, they are testaments to the strength of the human spirit and the power of support in times of need. Behind each journey of healing and transformation is the unwavering support of RENEW, standing beside individuals as they reclaim their lives with courage and dignity.

RENEW's work is not just about offering help; it is about restoring hope, rebuilding confidence, and reminding people that they are not alone. As we celebrate these stories, we are also reminded that change happens when communities come together with compassion and action. We extend heartfelt appreciation to our national and international development partners for your unweaving support, guidance and inspiration. Your commitment has played a vital role in ensuring that our services reach the most marginalized and hard-to reach population. With continued support, RENEW will keep empowering individuals, and strengthening families.



From Neglect to Hope: Rebuilding Lives Through Education and Support

Karma,14, and her older Sister Dorji,16, were once bright students with promising futures. However, their dreams were shattered by neglect and instability at home. Their stepfather’s worsening alcohol addiction turned their household into a place of fear and chaos. His frequent outbursts and threats, combined with their mother’s emotional distance and inability to provide for their basic needs, left them feeling abandoned and unsafe.

With no financial support and a home environment filled with uncertainty, the sisters made the heartbreaking decision to drop out of school. To survive, they took up jobs in local shops, earning just enough to cover their daily expenses. But their struggles didn’t end there. Eventually, they were forced out of their home by their own mother and stepfather, leaving them with nowhere to go. Using their limited income, they managed to rent a small room.

Everything changed when one of Karma’s former teachers noticed their prolonged absence and reported their situation to the police, who then involved the Community Service Center (CSC). Recognizing the urgency of their case, the CSC quickly stepped in. The sisters were placed in a boarding school, providing them with a safe and stable environment where they could focus on their education without the burden of survival.



“But life became even more difficult. With their education cut short and no clear path forward their hope for a better future began to fade.”



Now back in school, Karma and Dorji are slowly rebuilding their lives. They receive regular counseling from the school's counselor, helping them heal from the emotional trauma they endured. The CSC continues to support them by working on mending their relationship with their mother, fostering open communication and trust.

Despite everything they've been through, the sisters have shown incredible resilience. Karma, once one of the brightest students in her class, is excelling academically once again. She has rediscovered her love for learning and is determined to achieve her dreams. Both sisters have also joined a Summer Engagement Program, designed to equip them with life skills and resilience to face future challenges. Grateful for the support they've received, Karma expressed their appreciation

"We are thankful to the Community Service Center for giving us a second chance to continue our education without your help, we wouldn't have made it this far."

Over time, their relationship with their mother has also improved. With guidance from the CSC, trust is being rebuilt. The girls shared that, despite the hardships, their mother took extra care of them while they worked temporary jobs to support themselves. Now, they plan to use their earnings for school shopping, looking forward to a future that once seemed out of reach.

Their journey is a testament to the power of education, community support, and resilience. What was once a story of neglect has now become one of hope and second chances.

A Journey from Hopelessness to Independence

I remember the first time I walked into the RENEW Community Service Center," Karma Deki recalled, her voice trembling with emotion. "I was lost, broken, and completely hopeless. I had no determination, no inspiration just my 3 month old son in my arms, and no idea what to do next."

The memories of those dark days still haunted her. "The father of my child didn't hesitate to block my number. I tried calling him from someone else's phone, but every time, he lashed out at me, saying the most hurtful things."

To make matters worse, Karma had no support from her own family. "They believed it was my fault," she admitted.

Hoping for solace, Karma sought refuge with her aunt. But that, too, was short lived. "I thought I had found a safe haven, but one night, I was thrown out of her house at midnight," she said, her voice breaking with the weight of that painful memory.

Just when it felt like there was no way forward, a compassionate neighbor stepped in and reported her case to the RENEW Community Service Center. That simple act of kindness became the turning point in her life

The center became more than just a shelter; it became my comfort zone," Karma shared. "I had no one else to talk to, nowhere else to go. But at the center, I found a place of solace for both me and my son." With time, Karma began to rebuild her strength. The psychosocial support she received played a crucial role in her healing.



"I had been a nun when I first met him on social media. Over time, we grew close, and I became pregnant. I couldn't bring myself to have an abortion because of my religious beliefs. But after that, I was completely lost, I didn't know what to do or where to turn."



"I am not just determined to fight for justice but also to reclaim my life,"

With RENEW's unwavering support, she achieved milestones she once thought was impossible. She secured a legal divorce and, perhaps most significantly, overcame her biggest fear registering her son's census. "When that was finally completed, I felt so relieved," she said, a genuine smile crossing her face.

But the most beautiful moment of Karma's journey was her reconciliation with her parents. "More than anything else, my parents have forgiven me. They see my worth now, and they've accepted me back into their lives," she said, her eyes brimming with tears of joy.

"This wouldn't have been possible without the relentless efforts of my case manager. She never gave up. she kept mediating, kept consoling, until my parents and I could find our way back to each other. Thanks to her, my family is whole again."

Today, Karma stands tall as an independent woman. She has found a job, supports herself and her son, and carries herself with a newfound sense of confidence. "I am forever thankful to RENEW for what I am today, for what I have become," she said, her voice filled with gratitude. "I couldn't ask for more."

Her journey is a testament to resilience, the power of community, and the hope that can be found even in the darkest moments.

A JOURNEY OF HEALING AND HOPE: HOW DETERMINATION AND SUPPORT TRANSFORMED A FAMILY

In a quiet part of the community, a 25-year-old woman, whom we'll call Dema, embarked on a path to reclaim happiness for herself and her family. Life had not been easy for Dema, as she navigated the complexities of her second marriage. With one son from her first marriage and a 3-month-old baby from her current relationship, Dema faced a future clouded with financial woes, emotional challenges, and the demands of motherhood.

When Dema reached out for support from RENEW, she was in the midst of immense turmoil. Her husband had accumulated significant loans totaling several lakhs, creating tension and anxiety within their home. Although their shop generated a steady income, his irresponsible spending habits only added to their financial burden. Worse still, the influence of his friends encouraged unnecessary expenditures, heightening Dema's frustration and stress.

Parenting responsibilities rested solely on Dema, adding to her exhaustion. Her husband's dependency on alcohol was also a serious concern, resulting in episodes of temporary blindness and raising alarm for the future stability of their family.

This situation was further complicated by the fact that both partners sometimes used alcohol as a way to communicate, which, rather than alleviating their issues, deepened them.

Amid these hardships, Dema found herself reacting out of anger, resorting to physical discipline with her older child a behavior that required immediate attention for the well-being of their family.





Despite these struggles, Dema held onto hope. She was determined to find a way forward. With guidance and support from RENEW, she and her husband started making meaningful changes. They received assistance to obtain a legal marriage certificate and took steps to register their baby's name in the census. Conversations about their financial situation began to shift, with both partners acknowledging their responsibilities and working together to pay down their debts.

Their approach to communication improved.

“They began to understand each other's perspectives and learned how to express themselves without alcohol as a crutch.”

Their renewed commitment was evident to those around them. Dema and her husband, once embroiled in conflict, were now seen laughing and holding hands at their shop, a heartening sight for all who witnessed their journey.

As time passed, Dema and her husband grew stronger as a couple. They learned to respect each other and found new ways to navigate their financial difficulties. Their children, especially the baby, thrived in an environment that was becoming more loving and secure. The family's bond deepened as they tackled each challenge hand in hand.

Observations during visits to their shop confirmed what was becoming clear: they were genuinely rebuilding their life together. The couple's hard work and willingness to change had paid off, creating a home filled with hope, laughter, and resilience.

Dema's story is a testament to the power of determination, love, and the support of community resources. The couple's journey wasn't easy, but their choice to face their struggles together allowed them to rebuild their marriage and provide a stable environment for their children. Seeing them now sharing smiles and holding hands stands as a reminder that with the right help and the willingness to change, even the most challenging situations can lead to brighter tomorrows.

A STORY OF RESILIENCE AND SUPPORT: HOW RENEW TRANSFORMED A FAMILY'S JOURNEY



In the heart of a village, a courageous woman found hope amid hardship. Living with a physical disability and facing significant life challenges, her path was marked by trials that she tackled with immense strength.

“Her story is one of perseverance, love, and the transformative support she received from RENEW, Ability Bhutan Society, and the Legal Aid Center.”

This woman's life took an unexpected turn when she endured a traumatic experience of sexual abuse that left her shaken and unsure of where to turn.

Out of that dark time, a bright light emerged as her daughter was born on September 4, 2015. From the moment her child came into the world, she dedicated herself to being a nurturing mother, despite limited resources and support.

Living under difficult circumstances, the woman was encouraged by RENEW and Ability Bhutan Society (ABS) to join a weaving training program. This opportunity offered not just skills and potential financial stability, but also the chance to connect with others and find a supportive community. The training center became a place where she felt understood and empowered, surrounded by people who believed in her potential.

Her daughter, a bright and kind-hearted young girl who attended school (Class 3), accompanied her mother to the training. Observers at the center noted the child's intelligence and positive spirit, despite the challenges they faced.



Recognizing the need for legal guidance, RENEW sought help from the Legal Aid Center to ensure the mother and daughter received consistent support and justice. This partnership provided valuable legal insight and strengthened her case. Conversations revealed that while the child's father had once contributed financially, he had stopped, leaving the mother to manage on her own. RENEW and ABS, with assistance from the Legal Aid Center, supported her in advocating for her daughter's rights and exploring avenues for consistent support.

These collective efforts began to show results. The child's father started to provide some financial assistance, and over time, this evolved into more regular contributions. He even sent a contribution to mark the child's birthday, showing the beginnings of a better relationship with his daughter.

The weaving training concluded with a special event where the mother, along with other participants, celebrated their achievements. Certificates were awarded, and the women gathered for a farewell lunch that signified not just the end of the training but the start of new opportunities. The mother's growth in confidence and skills marked a positive turning point in her life.

The woman's father expressed his heartfelt gratitude for the support RENEW provided. RENEW's commitment in collaboration with the Legal Aid Center and ABS had turned what once seemed like an impossible situation into one filled with hope and renewed strength. With continued guidance, the mother and daughter now face the future with optimism, strengthened by the lessons learned and the community that stood by them.

This story is a testament to the power of community support, legal advocacy, and the resilience of those determined to create a better life. RENEW's intervention, supported by the Legal Aid Center, helped transform their lives, ensuring they were not alone on their journey and empowering them to look ahead with confidence.



Zam's Story: A Journey of Healing and Reconciliation

Zam, a 32 year old mother of two, had been happily married for 15 years. Her children, currently living with her maternal aunt and uncle were a source of joy and love in her life. For many years, Zam's life with her husband seemed stable, but as time passed, cracks began to appear in their relationship.

The trouble started when her husband began to doubt her loyalty. He suspected that she was having an affair outside of their marriage, fueled by his own insecurities, Zam, who enjoyed staying busy with various social activities, particularly using apps like TikTok and going live to entertain her followers, found herself at odds with her husband's increasing disapproval. He didn't understand her desire to connect with others through social media, and this strained their communication further.

The tension escalated one evening when her husband came home intoxicated and, in a fit of anger, physically hit her. The following day, Zam reported the incident to the police, and her husband was detained for 24 hours.

Through counseling and mediation, they discovered that the root cause of their problems was a lack of communication. The emotional distance between them had been growing for years, fueled by misunderstandings, unspoken frustrations, and mistrust. Both of them realized that they had been making assumptions about each other rather than openly discussing their concerns and feelings.

Zam initially considering divorce, found new hope after reflecting on the mistakes they had both made. In a powerful moment of mutual understanding, both she and her husband apologized to each other.

“With the guidance of RENEW CSC and the support of their local government they made a legal agreement to work through their issues and rebuild their marriage.”

Today, Zam and her husband are living a much more peaceful life. Their relationship has transformed, built on newfound communication and respect. Sherab continues to stay connected with her social activities, but now, her husband understands and supports her choices. The couple is committed to ensuring that their children, despite living away from them, grow up in a stable and loving environment.

Zam's story is one of resilience, self-reflection, and growth. It highlights the power of communication and forgiveness in overcoming difficult challenges. With the right support and willingness to change, Zam and her husband have found a path toward a better future together.



Transforming Lives: Tempa's Transformation

A collaborative effort involving Ability Bhutan Society (ABS), RENEW, and a physiotherapist from the Hospital brought hope and transformation to the home of Tempa (Name changed), 8 years old boy in a village. This story is a testament to the power of compassion and teamwork in addressing challenges and creating sustainable solutions for vulnerable families.

The steep and uneven terrain made it difficult for Tempa to move around, access basic facilities, or enjoy fresh air safely. With only one daily wage earner, the family struggled to meet their basic needs. The household of six included Tempa, his younger sibling, their mother who faced mental health challenges, their father, a cousin, and an uncle.

“Tempa’s living conditions were distressing, with inadequate hygiene, poor nutrition, and a lack of a supportive and stimulating environment.”

He was often confined to a dark, poorly ventilated room. The family’s financial hardships, coupled with societal stigma and lack of acceptance of Tempa’s condition, created a challenging environment for growth and development.

This situation called for an urgent intervention to improve the family's living conditions, ensure proper care and nutrition for Tempa, and provide support for the family's economic and emotional well-being.



Upon observing condition Tempa, we decided to engage with his parents to raise awareness about the services offered by RENEW and ABS.

We emphasized the importance of maintaining hygiene and the health of their child. With their consent, we planned to create a more accommodating environment by cleaning, fencing, and constructing a parallel ramp. Utilizing locally available materials, we aimed to renovate their surroundings, making the space conducive for his mobility.

On May 12, we visited the family at home, accompanied by the local governor of Tshogpa. Upon arrival, Tshogpa and his father sourced and brought bamboo from the forest. We used bamboo to build a fence around the house, ensuring his safety and making the area around the house accessible and level.



Bamboo sourced from nearby forests was used to construct a fence around the house, ensuring a safer environment for him. The team leveled the area and laid stones with a plain cement concrete (PCC) finish, creating a stable surface. A bamboo ramp was built, enabling Tempa to practice walking. Additionally, ABS and the physiotherapist provided a wheelchair, significantly improving his mobility and access to basic facilities.

The Ability Bhutan Society donated two sacks of cement, while materials such as sand and aggregate were already available, thanks to Gewog contributions. The RENEW team also provided clothing and bedding essentials for the family. The collaborative effort extended beyond physical improvements. Under the guidance of Tshogpa and the Gewog administration, RENEW and ABS committed to closely monitoring the family's progress. Regular follow-ups ensure that Tempa receives the care he needs while mitigating the risk of potential abuse.

This remarkable transformation would not have been possible without the unwavering dedication of the local community and key contributors. Special thanks go to the Tshogpa, Physiotherapist, ABS team member, and the Dzongkhag Coordinators for their invaluable support.

The story of Tempa and his family is an inspiring example of how collective action and compassion can overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges. Through their resilience and the unwavering commitment of the community, the family now has a safer, more supportive environment. This success story underscores the transformative power of collaboration in building brighter futures for those in need.



From Struggles to Strength

Usha a 40-year-old mother of two faced her share of struggles in life, but her resilience and determination to make a better life for herself and her children have defined her journey. Her first marriage was a painful chapter, and after the birth of her first child, she had no intention of marrying again. She was focused on raising her child, independent and self-reliant. However, life took an unexpected turn when she met her second husband, and they eventually married.

Initially, everything seemed perfect. But as the years passed, her husband's behavior changed. He began drinking heavily, and with it came emotional abuse that eroded the peace in their home. Though he never resorted to physical violence, the constant emotional turmoil took a toll on Usha and her children. Adding to the strain, Usha's relationship with her parents deteriorated. Although they lived nearby, her husband's abusive behavior created a rift. They no longer communicated, and she felt increasingly isolated. She faced daily challenges in maintaining a sense of stability for herself and her children in a chaotic environment.

Yet, even in her darkest times, Usha found a glimmer of hope. A neighbor told her about the RENEW Community Service Center, which offers support to people facing abuse. At first, she wasn't sure if it was the right step, but she reached out by phone. After a few days, she found the courage to visit the center in person.

At the center, Usha learned something that would change her perspective: what she had been experiencing wasn't just marital issues, it was emotional abuse. For the first time, she felt heard. She realized that she had been suffering silently, without knowing that what she was going through was not her fault. The staff at the center helped her understand the situation and offered a plan of action.



Usha decided to take the next step and requested for a couple counselling. As desired, the couple came together to have open communication which helped them understand what emotional abuse is like and the national laws regarding such behavior.



“The meeting made a profound impact. Slowly but surely, Usha began to notice changes in her husband. His drinking habits decreased significantly, and he started helping more around the house, something that had not been the case before.”

Over time, the family dynamic shifted. Though the road ahead was not easy, Usha now felt a sense of relief. She could see a path forward, one where her emotional well-being was no longer compromised. Her husband's improvement and the support from the RENEW Community Service Center gave her a renewed sense of hope.

Today, she is stronger, more confident woman. The journey to healing and peace is ongoing, but she is no longer alone in her struggle. Through her courage to seek help and the support she received, Usha regained her sense of agency, proving that no matter how difficult the circumstances, there is always a possibility for change.



TRANSFORMING HARDSHIP INTO HOPE

Phuntsho (50) and her eldest daughter Yoetsho (26), sought assistance from the RENEW Community Service Center (CSC). Phuntsho faced ongoing emotional abuse from her husband, while Yoetsho struggled after her recent divorce. Both were identified as vulnerable to emotional and economic hardships, living under dire circumstances. Ability Bhutan Society referred the case to RENEW CSC.

A joint home assessment by RENEW CSC and ABS revealed the severity of the family's living conditions. Their two-room house with a temporary kitchen outside, was in a precarious state, posing risks of collapse during heavy rain. The house lacked electricity and safe drinking water. They walked 10-15 minutes to fetch water from a spring, which got contaminated during heavy rainfall.

“The family relied on daily wages of Nu. 300, which was insufficient to meet their basic needs.”

Food provisions were nearly depleted, and the family lacked proper bedding and essential household items. A recent hailstorm had devastated their cash crops, adding to their challenges.

Recognizing the urgency, a Police Officer, the SEN Coordinator, RENEW CSC, ABS, and private donors came together to meet their basic needs such as food, clothing, mattresses, blankets, and pillows.

A technician supported by RBP restored electricity, significantly improving their living conditions. The team cleaned and organized the house to ensure comfort for the children. The renovations included- replacing the aging roof with new CGI sheets, expanding the balcony and constructing a new kitchen. installing a comprehensive electrical wiring system.



Additional efforts included laying new flooring, organizing the kitchen, and arranging household items. Access to safe drinking water was provided with assistance from the chiwog tshogpa and community volunteers. An earthling system was installed ensuring safe and durable electricity connections.

Yoetsho was supported with employment at a restaurant, providing her with a stable source of income and renewed hope for her family's future.

This story is a testament to the power of collaboration, compassion, and community spirit. Through the tireless efforts of individuals and organizations, a family on the brink of despair found safety, stability, and hope. Their journey from hardship to resilience serves as an inspiration to all, showcasing the profound impact of collective action in transforming lives.

LHEMO'S STORY: A JOURNEY OF SURVIVAL, HOPE, AND JUSTICE.

Lhemo, a six year old girl, is a survivor of child molestation and sexual assault by her 70 year old grandfather. Her family faced immense challenges her mother, who is visually impaired, manages household chores and gardening, while her father works as a daily laborer. Her half brother, an out of school youth, takes on part-time work to contribute to the family's financial needs. Despite their efforts, the family struggled to afford educational expenses for their children. Lhemo's life took a tragic turn when she became a victim of sexual abuse by her grandfather.

“Lhemo's life took a tragic turn when she became a victim of sexual abuse by her grandfather.”



The trauma left her physically and emotionally scarred. The case was initially reported to the Royal Bhutan Police (RBP) for investigation. However, due to a lack of sufficient evidence, no legal action was taken at the time. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, the RBP later decided to reopen the case and seek additional evidence to pursue justice for Lhemo.

To strengthen the case, authorities recommended that Lhemo undergo a psychiatric assessment in Thimphu. However, due to financial constraints, her parents were unable to take her for the necessary evaluation. At the time, Lhemo was enrolled in a boarding school, studying in Class PP. Concerns arose regarding her safety during school vacations, as she was forced to return home to the same environment where the abuse had occurred, with her grandfather still residing in the household. This posed an ongoing threat to her well-being and necessitated urgent intervention.



A team was dispatched to assess her living conditions. Upon arrival, it became evident that her home environment posed significant risks to her health, safety, and emotional stability. Despite her mother's presence, her visual impairment limited her ability to provide the necessary round the clock care and protection for Lhemo. The family's poor living conditions further compounded the risks, highlighting the urgent need for immediate action.

To ensure her safety, child protection services facilitated her removal from the dangerous environment and arranged for her placement in a shelter home. Here, she received medical attention, psychological support, and a secure environment where she could begin healing from the trauma she had endured.

Her case underscores the critical importance of timely intervention, compassionate care, and persistent advocacy for justice. While her journey towards recovery is ongoing, the collective efforts of the community, child protection services, and law enforcement offer hope for a brighter future one where she can grow up free from fear and harm.

Her story serves as a stark reminder of the vulnerability of children in unsafe environments and the urgent need for stronger measures to protect them. With continued support, she could rebuild her life and looked forward to a future filled with healing, security, and opportunities for growth.

THE JOURNEY OF RESILIENCE: SORIBA'S INSPIRING STORY

Soriba, 42 years old found herself in a deeply challenging phase of her life after settling in with her husband Penjor and their two children.

A homemaker and devoted mother, Soriba faced emotional abuse and abandonment, which left her feeling voiceless and hopeless.

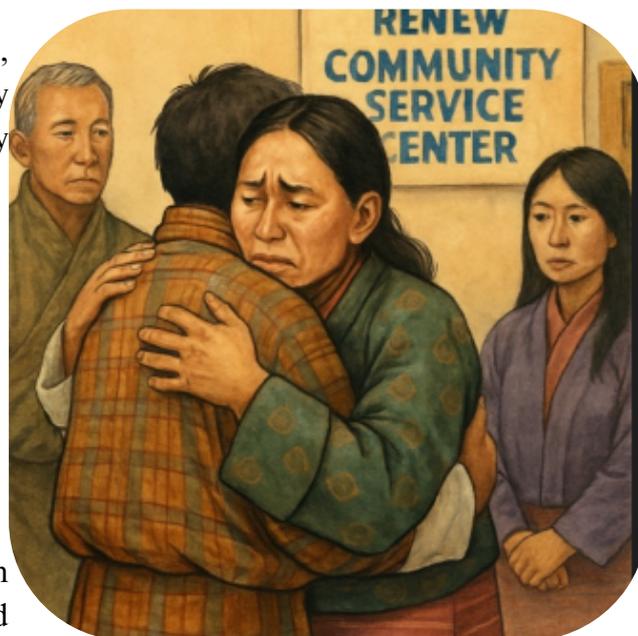
When her husband disappeared without explanation, leaving her to care for their children and his elderly mother, she turned to the RENEW Community Service Center for help.

She was referred by a Tshogpa, Soriba accompanied by ABS arrived at the CSC, overwhelmed and unable to articulate her fears.

Her nervous demeanor revealed the heavy burden she carried. She explained that Penjor had been missing for few months and had not provided any financial support to the family.

She feared reporting the case to the Royal Bhutan Police (RBP), but with the encouragement and support of the case manager, she found the courage to file a missing person report.

The RBP successfully located Penjor a few weeks later, leading to an emotional reunion. During this encounter, Soriba broke her silence, sharing the pain she had endured. She revealed that Penjor had been emotionally abusing her for over several years and had been unfaithful, engaging in an affair. Though he admitted to his infidelity and expressed a desire to reconcile, the cycle of emotional violence persisted.





“Soriba’s resilience was tested again when Penjor threatened to take his own life if she stopped him from seeing his girlfriend.”

One night, he informed her of his intention to commit suicide and disappeared. Alarmed, Soriba reached out to the case manager, who, along with the RBP, Gewog Gup, and local villagers, launched a search operation through the night. Thankfully, Penjor was found unharmed.

This turning point marked the beginning of a transformation in Soriba’s life. With continuous intervention, including counseling sessions, case management, and guidance from the Gewog, Gup and Tshogpa, the two committed to working on their relationship. Soriba, once too afraid to speak, found her voice and courageously fought for her rights. She stood up against emotional abuse and advocated for a healthier family environment.

Today, they have rebuilt their lives. Penjor has secured a small contract job, while Soriba contributes to the household income through part-time work. Regular follow-ups by the case manager confirmed that the couple now lives free from violence. Their relationship has grown stronger, and they are focused on providing a stable and loving home for their children. Soriba’s journey from fear and vulnerability to empowerment and resilience is a source of inspiration. Her story reminds us of the importance of seeking help, the power of community support, and the strength that lies within each individual to overcome adversity and reclaim their life.

BREAKING THE SILENCE: CHODEN'S JOURNEY TO FREEDOM FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Choden, a 26-year-old, arrived at our center visibly distressed and tense. Initially unresponsive, she gradually opened up during our session, revealing her marital struggles. She felt suffocated by her husband's controlling behavior, which included demanding explanations for her every movement, even simple outings like visiting the hospital, taking a taxi to town, or dropping their son off at school. She described instances of her husband's violent behavior, including throwing things at home and directing his anger towards their 6-year-old son. She also expressed that her husband also accused her of infidelity and restricted her freedom.

Due to her husband's continuous violent behavior, she returned to her parents' home. Despite her husband's violence, Choden attempted to reconcile and gave him a second chance, but the cycle of violence persisted.

She described feeling emotionally weak and distressed, even contemplating suicide, but her love for her son kept her going.

Choden expressed her desire to file for divorce and seek custody of her child due to the abusive situation.

“It was hard for Choden to voice her needs and fight for justice. Though she wanted to leave the abusive marriage, she lacked the confidence to face the legal procedures of court and was unable to confront her husband.”





When Choden first came to the RENEW office, she was very distressed, avoiding eye contact and hardly speaking. The continuous violence she experienced in her 8-year marriage left her in fear, frequently crying and afraid to make any decisions.

However, as she continued to seek services at RENEW, Choden's behavior slowly changed. She showed improvement in gaining confidence. Counseling services and case management sessions helped her build the strength to voice her struggles in court. Finally, she felt a sense of freedom. Currently, she is staying with her parents, helping them at home, and employed in one of the restaurants leading an independent life.

Choden said "I am extremely grateful to RENEW for the help and support you have rendered. Because of RENEW's services, I could finally speak out about my abusive environment and 8 years of abusive marriage. I finally feel like a free bird released from a cage. I also want other women facing hardships to come forward and seek support from RENEW. You will live a better life and should not endure violence. Instead, come forward, break the silence, and fight for your rights."



PATH TO EMPOWERMENT AND INDEPENDENCE

Wangchuk, a resilient 34-year-old woman moved with her husband to a place far away from her parents. Wangchuk is a mother to four children: three boys and one daughter who lives with a disability. Her case was referred to the center by the gewog, but due to long distance, she was unable to visit on the day of the incident. She however later came, hoping for a positive change in her relationship. Initially, she spoke about her husband shouldering all the responsibilities as a father and husband, but over time, she noticed significant changes in his behavior. These changes caused her to feel frustrated and anxious about their relationship.

At first, she was certain she wanted a divorce due to her husband's extramarital affairs. However, after a few sessions, she began to rethink her decision. She consulted with her eldest son and, after considering the well-being of her children, she decided to try for reconciliation. Her husband initially denied having an affair, but after a heartfelt conversation, he apologized and asked for forgiveness. Wangchuk, hopeful for change, decided to give him another chance. But after two days, she contacted the center again, expressing her disappointment. She revealed that her husband had not changed and was continuing his affair. She felt manipulated, as both her husband and his affair partner were taking advantage of her.

“She realized that staying in a toxic relationship was no longer an option, and she chose to pursue an amicable divorce for the sake of her children and her own well-being.”

She also noted that their problems intensified after the birth of their youngest child, who has a disability. The family relied solely on cardamom farming, and when her husband took out a loan to drive a taxi for extra income, their financial situation worsened drastically. Despite these efforts, her husband's behavior remained unchanged, and she now sought an amicable divorce.

When she first came to the center, she was unaware of the issues of abuse and was deeply stressed, despite her extroverted nature. Accepting her husband's infidelity was incredibly difficult for her. However, as she learned more about the situation and reflected on how her husband neglected the children, she made the difficult decision to stand up for her rights.



Her case was referred to the district court, where she sought greater justice. The couple is no longer living together. She managed all the household and generating income through cardamom farming. She was able to save a significant amount and was fully committed to caring for her disabled child.

Throughout this difficult journey, she expressed deep gratitude to the RENEW organization for their support and guidance. The organization empowered her to find the strength to make tough decisions and move forward from one of the most challenging situations of her life. Her story is a powerful example of resilience, hope, and the importance of standing up for oneself in the face of adversity. Through her courage and determination, she is now charting a brighter path for herself and her children.



A JOURNEY FROM STRUGGLE TO STRENGTH: DORJI'S STORY

For over a decade, Dorji endured an abusive and distressing environment, where her husband's struggles with alcoholism and persistent verbal abuse left her feeling isolated, hopeless, and trapped. The emotional toll of her circumstances was overwhelming, and at times, she felt so disheartened that she contemplated ending her life. However, her commitment to her daughter and granddaughter gave her the strength to persevere despite the immense hardships she faced daily.

Dorji's husband neither contributed financially nor participated in household responsibilities. Instead, he demanded money for alcohol, adding to the family's burdens. She suffered in silence, unaware that the treatment she endured constituted abuse.

When Dorji finally gathered the courage to share her story to a case manager from RENEW. Through patient guidance and compassionate intervention, the case manager helped her understand that her experiences were indeed forms of abuse and that she had the right to seek a better life.

“She accepted her situation as an unfortunate reality, not realizing that there were avenues available to seek support and change.”

Despite the hardships she faced, Dorji remained hopeful that her husband could change and was firm in her decision not to pursue a divorce.

Dorji asked for help to talk to her husband which was not easy. Initially, he resisted acknowledging his actions, but over time, he became more receptive to learning about the support services offered by RENEW.

Through a series of counseling sessions, Dorji and her husband worked on improving their communication and rebuilding their strained relationship. The sessions provided a structured space for addressing grievances, fostering understanding, and negotiating viable solutions. Alongside counseling, the case manager offered continuous support, ensuring that both she and her husband had access to the resources they needed to work towards meaningful change.



Gradually, her husband began to comprehend the gravity of his actions and the toll they had taken on his family. With guidance and encouragement, he took concrete steps toward reform. He started working diligently, marking a significant shift in his role within the household. His newfound sense of responsibility contributed to a more stable and supportive family environment.

Today, Dorji and her husband are making remarkable progress in strengthening their relationship and creating a more positive home environment. Their journey underscores the transformative power of support, resilience, and the willingness to seek change. What once seemed like an insurmountable situation has evolved into a story of hope and perseverance. Dorji's experience highlights the importance of intervention, awareness, and the courage to take the first step toward a better future.

A CHILD'S PATH TO SAFETY

A 7 year old girl, living with her father and step-mother, was silently enduring abuse from her step-grandfather.

The abuse came to light when her school's well-being focal noticed signs of distress and took immediate action, reporting the case to a CBSS volunteer who then reported to RENEW community Service Center.

The girl too young to fully comprehend the situation, bravely indicated that her step-grandfather had harmed her. Her family's landlord had already intervened a month earlier after hearing the child crying one night. Discovering the abuse, she chased the perpetrator out of the house and took the girl in providing her with a safe space.

With the help of Police, the case was swiftly investigated, and the perpetrator confessed to the crime. The young girl is now in a safe and supportive environment, thanks to the quick actions of her school, and the necessary intervention of the members of the community. This story is a testament to the power of community vigilance and compassion, ensuring the child's safety and future well-being.





ZAMBA'S SUPPORT FROM HER DAUGHTER..

Zamba reached out to Community Service Center after enduring years of emotional, psychological, and physical abuse from her husband. Recognizing the urgency of her situation, the center immediately ensured her safety and provided support.

Initial efforts focused on engaging her husband and establishing conditions for reconciliation, emphasizing improved communication and an end to all forms of abuse.

However, follow-up revealed that the abuse persisted, with verbal threats escalating.

Zamba's 17-year-old daughter courageously sought additional help, fearing for her mother's safety. She also convinced her mother to make her decision for herself. Zamba then made a courageous decision to separate.

Since the separation, Zam has experienced remarkable personal growth and transformation. Her renewed confidence and sense of freedom are evident, as she radiates positivism and strength. This journey underscores her resilience and courage to look forward to a better future.



UGYEN'S JOURNEY TOWARDS REBUILDING HER LIFE

Ugyen is a 40 year old woman with two children reached out to community service center seeking support to trace her husband who disappeared without her knowledge.

“Although he kept in touch with their children, he was completely disconnected from her.”

She had a small pan shop to support herself and her children, as her husband, a driver constantly on the move, did not provide any financial assistance.

At one point, she learned that her husband was involved with another woman who claimed to be his wife. Shockingly, he had even introduced this woman as his spouse when they visited their village together.

Seeking support, she approached the RENEW center. She sought help to have a couple counselling but there was no cooperation from her husband.

After six months of waiting with no progress, Ugyen with the support from center approached police for their assistance. It was only after this intervention that he finally came to the center. The couple took few counselling sessions and both decided to file divorce in court. During the proceedings, he admitted to being in a new relationship and living with another woman.

Ugyen's primary wish was to gain clarity about her husband's intentions, as she had been left in a state of uncertainty about whether he intended to return to her. She also wanted to ensure her children's future was stable and free of confusion. With all legal proceedings now completed, she has returned to her village to start a new life.



USHA'S TRIUMPH

Usha a 38-year-old woman sought assistance at the center regarding her husband's extra marital affair. Further the husband does not show any cooperation whatever they do and neglected her. He frequently arrived home late from work without providing any explanation for his whereabouts. Her husband worked as a driver in a private company and often spent his free time with friends playing khuru. He often passes derogatory comments towards her.

The couple were married for nearly nine years and has three children. With the center's support and guidance, she was able to divorce him, as his behavior remained unchanged even after giving him the time to change. Determined to stand on her own feet, she resolved to support and care for her three children, striving to be a strong and independent mother.

“She enrolled in the livelihood skills training program organized by the center, motivated by her goal to achieve financial independence.”

With a keen interest she participated in handicrafts skills training program and basic skills tailoring course organized by the Center. This was the first time she ever had the opportunity to participate in a skills program, and she is deeply grateful to RENEW for this chance.



MONICA'S VICTORY IN RECLAIMING HER LIFE.

Monica, a 27-year-old woman sought support from the center regarding her husband's extramarital affair, which had been ongoing for a month. Married for 12 years, the couple has two young daughters aged 10 and 5. The woman chose not to share their marital issues with her own family, preferring to address them privately with her husband. They live in a joint family setting in her husband's village, where her father-in-law as the head of the family held a dominant and outspoken role.

The husband admitted to his mistake and promised not to repeat it. In the past also, she had faced similar issues driving her to suicidal thoughts. At that time, she chose to turn a blind eye to her husband's behavior, hoping he would not repeat it. However, when he repeated the same mistake, she was deeply disheartened and heartbroken.

***“Unable to confront anyone
about the situation,
she felt helpless.”***

As a daughter-in-law in a culturally strict joint family, she found it difficult to speak up or share her struggles with her in-laws. She somehow heard about the RENEW center and after gathering immense courage, she decided to come forward to seek support. The center arranged couple counseling and that significantly strengthened their relationship. The couple began communicating more openly both in personal matters and family decisions.

Karma's Endless Resilience

When I first reached out to RENEW, I felt utterly defeated. As a mother of two children from my previous marriage and a one year old daughter with my current husband, I was caught in a web of marital and financial distress. Over time, his behavior changed drastically. He became idle, drank excessively, and accused me of things I hadn't done. The financial burden on me kept growing as he refused to contribute to household expenses, leaving me to manage rent, bills, and groceries using the child allowance I received.

My emotional distress peaked when he abruptly left, claiming he was going to withdraw funds from a fixed deposit account. Days turned into weeks, and he never returned. To make matters worse, his brother came to our home and took away items my husband had purchased on credit, making it clear that my husband wasn't coming back.

At that point, I knew I needed help, so I turned to RENEW. They listened to my story with compassion and helped me find a way forward. They recognized that I needed a legal support and referred my case to Bhutan National Legal Institute (BNLI). With RENEW's guidance, I was able to navigate the legal process, a daunting task given my limited finances and lack of knowledge about the law.

“BNLI stepped in to provide the legal services I desperately needed.”



DARK TO DAWN SERIES 2



They helped me present my case effectively. With RENEW by my side, I felt empowered to take control of my life.

Today, as I reflect on this journey, I feel a renewed sense of hope and strength. It wasn't an easy road, but my determination to create a better future for my children and myself kept me going. I'm deeply grateful to RENEW for their unwavering support for ensuring justice was served. My story is proof that no matter how challenging the circumstances, with the right support, it's possible to overcome adversity. To anyone facing similar struggles, I want you to know that help is available, and justice and renewal are within reach.

I reached a breaking point when the arguments escalated, and he began to distance himself emotionally. He eventually left our shared home, taking our assets with him, despite being advised to stay until the situation was legally resolved. I was devastated, but I knew I needed help. That's when I turned to RENEW.

From the moment I sought assistance, RENEW became my pillar of support. The Case Manager assigned to my case was empathetic, professional, and patient. They listened to my story without judgment and helped me understand my options.

Together, we assessed the situation and decided that legal intervention was necessary. The journey through the legal system was daunting. When the case reached court, there were moments of uncertainty and fear. Even the case manager was called to provide clarity on the matter. Thankfully, their comprehensive report and consistent advocacy ensured that the process went smoothly.

To anyone going through a similar struggle, I want to say this: Don't be afraid to seek help. Organizations like RENEW are there to support you, and with their help, you can overcome even the most challenging situations.



“I am proof that there is light at the end of the tunnel”

“My journey wasn't easy, but it was worth it and I am proof that there is light at the end of the tunnel.”

Their unwavering support made me feel like I wasn't fighting this battle alone. After months of legal proceedings, the court granted the divorce. For the first time in years, I felt a sense of freedom and relief. It wasn't just about ending the relationship—it was about reclaiming my life and my peace of mind.

Today, I am doing well and I owe much of my recovery to RENEW. Their counselling sessions helped me heal emotionally, and their guidance gave me the strength to rebuild my life. I've learned to value myself and prioritize my happiness.

Against All Odds: A Single Mother's Fight for Her Children's Future.

Pelden's journey highlights the resilience and determination of a single mother facing immense hardship. Abandoned by her husband and with no family support, she struggled to provide for her two sons, facing poverty and the constant worry of her youngest son's schizophrenia. The family's financial woes deepened when her elder son lost his job, leaving them destitute. Despite these challenges, the mother persevered, seeking justice and a better future for her children.



Their persistence combined with the strategic support provided paid off...

The path to securing her sons' inheritance was fraught with obstacles. Years of legal delays, financial constraints, and the logistical hurdles of traveling to a distant court threatened to derail her efforts.

However, through the unwavering support of the Legal Aid Center and the guidance of the Gender & Child Focal Person (GCFP), and with the crucial assistance of RENEW Community Service Center in mapping out these stakeholders and connecting to key players, the mother navigated these challenges.

This proactive approach streamlined the process and ensured that the mother received the comprehensive assistance she needed. Her story serves as a testament to the power of collaboration and the importance of access to legal aid. Through the combined efforts of the Legal Aid Center, the GCFP, RENEW, and the unwavering determination of the mother, a brighter future is emerging for this family.

The initial court proceedings yielded disappointing results, with the sons initially awarded only a small portion of their father's inheritance. However, the GCFP intervened, advocating for a more equitable outcome. Their persistence combined with the strategic support provided by RENEW, paid off, securing a more reasonable amount of paddy land for the sons.

Overcoming Cultural Challenges: A Journey to Healing and Acceptance

This is about a 16-year-old child who survived rape and gave birth prematurely in March. Upon discharge from the hospital, the child was found living in poor conditions outside the house in a hut with her newborn baby, lacking proper hygiene, sanitation, and shelter.

Therefore, the child and newborn were brought to happy home for their safety. A community conference was also held in the presence of the legal officer (child protection officer), the local authority, and the community members to address the situation in case the DNA test yielded negative result. There was resistance from the community to accept the child mother and the infant in the community insisting adherence to traditions and cultural norms. This was harsh reality which hopefully will be abolished.

“The parents explained that a cultural practice in their community required the mother and newborn to remain outside until a cleansing ritual was conducted in the presence of the newborn's father.”



After five months under care, the DNA test confirmed the father's identity. With the support of the Royal Bhutan Police (RBP), the perpetrator was released to attend the cleansing ritual then only child mother and her infant was permitted to enter their home. The harmful social norms are hearse

Today, the child and her baby are under good care of her family receiving the necessary care and support they deserve.



Overcoming Trauma: A Child's Journey to Healing

This case chronicles the journey of a 14-year-old child who suffered the trauma of sexual abuse. Referred by the RBP, the child came from a dysfunctional family, lacking the support and stability crucial for healing.

Initially, the child exhibited withdrawal and emotional distress. Recognizing the need for a safe and nurturing environment, our center conducted a family mapping exercise and identified her aunt as a potential caregiver. Relocating the child with her aunt proved to be a pivotal step in her recovery.

However, unexpected challenges arose when the administration where the aunt worked intervened, forcing the child back to her abusive father's home.

“This setback threatened to derail the child's healing process, as the father's new wife was an alcoholic, creating an unsafe environment.”

Undeterred, a case manager in collaboration with the GCFP and a CBSS volunteer (Community Based Support System) somehow brought back the child to her aunt. The child continued to receive counselling and remained under strict monitoring to ensure she is safe and happy. Gradually, she started to open up about her trauma, expressing her emotions and rebuilding her trust.

Today, this young survivor stands as a testament to the power of resilience and the importance of a supportive network. Through consistent support, collaborative efforts, and unwavering belief in her healing journey, this child is doing well.



A couple's Journey to Reconciliation and Healing

This is a story of a couple who faced repeated challenges in their relationship but ultimately found their way back to each other through patience, mutual understanding, and a desire to rebuild trust.

It began with a series of incidents that threatened the stability of their marriage. The couple married for a few years with a 4 month old child, experienced constant conflict largely fueled by the husband's drinking habits. Arguments would often spiral into abuse, leaving the wife feeling unsafe. During one such altercation, after the husband returned from a picnic, tensions escalated when the husband questioned the wife about the child's care, leading to physical violence. The wife, accompanied by her mother and child, sought refuge at her mother's house multiple times in the past due to similar patterns of behavior.

The wife came to the center with her mother and child, sharing her story of repeated abuse. She mentioned that her husband was controlling, not allowing her to make decisions independently, and often badmouthed her family. Despite these challenges, she acknowledged that her husband treated her well when sober.

“The couple had tried to resolve the situation earlier by drafting an agreement for the husband to stop drinking, but he had repeatedly broke his promises.”

Both partners shared their perspectives during the CBI (Consensus Building Initiative) sessions. The husband admitted to drinking but down played the issue, blaming the mother for influencing the wife to pursue a divorce. He expressed a deep desire to save his marriage and agreed to quit alcohol.

After several discussions in the center, the couple reached a tentative agreement. The wife decided to stay with her mother for a month to monitor whether the husband would indeed quit drinking. During this period, the husband could meet his child daily, but his sister would facilitate the visits to avoid further conflicts.



There was a glimmer of hope. According to the wife's mother, the husband had stopped drinking and was treating her well, and they were building a positive relationship. However, just two months later, the situation worsened again. The husband resumed drinking and began abusing both his wife and her mother. He started visiting her mother's house late at night, causing scenes that frightened the family. The wife once again moved out, this time staying with a relative.

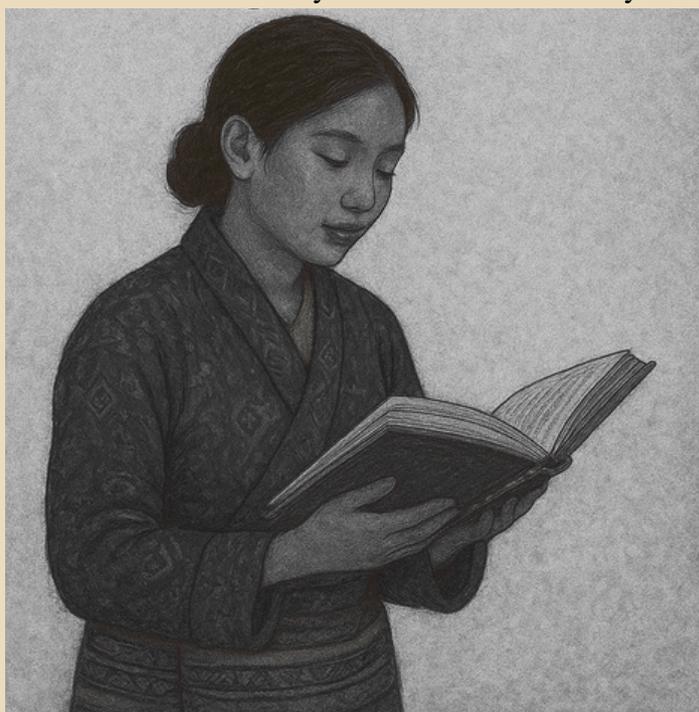
Despite attempts to communicate and resolve the issues, the couple's conflict continued to escalate. The wife decided to proceed with a divorce, citing fear for her safety and a desire for peace.

However, the couple had reconciled. The husband had made significant efforts to change, and the family found a way to rebuild trust and heal from their previous conflicts.

This story serves as a testament that though there were moments of deep struggle, both the husband and wife demonstrated that with time, commitment, and external support, reconciliation is possible. While the road to recovery was not easy, their determination to overcome challenges allowed them to rebuild their marriage and create a more harmonious home for themselves and their child.

Restoring Hope: Empowering a Young Girl Through Education

This case chronicles the journey of a 13-year-old girl whose life was significantly impacted by her mother's ill treatment. Forced to withdraw from school to support her family, the child faced a bleak future. Referred to RENEW Community Service Center by concerned community members.



“The child was found to be living with her grandparents and struggling to cope with the challenges of poverty.”

Recognizing the critical need for education, RENEW CSC took immediate action. We facilitated the child's re-enrollment in a school after a two-year absence, addressing the immediate hurdle to her education.

However, ensuring her continued education required more than just enrollment. The family faced significant financial constraints, making it difficult to provide the child with the necessary school supplies.

To overcome this obstacle, RENEW CSC forged a partnership with a local community charity group and availed RENEW scholarship. This collaboration proved instrumental in providing the child with essential school supplies, including uniforms, shoes, stationary and hostel essentials.

Despite the challenges of re-entering the education system after a prolonged absence, the child has demonstrated remarkable resilience and a strong desire to learn. She is showing significant progress in her academics. This success story exemplifies the transformative power of vital role of community support in empowering vulnerable children.

Solemnizing a Second Chance: Sonam's Journey to Reconciliation



Sonam, a 32 year old woman, lived what seemed to be an idyllic life.

For 17 years, she and her husband worked side by side raising their children and supporting one another through life's inevitable ups and downs.

Their marriage was built on mutual respect and love, and Sonam often felt grateful for the simple but fulfilling life they shared.

But this harmony was not to last. Over time, Sonam noticed subtle but troubling changes in her husband's behavior. He began coming home late or, worse, not coming home at all. His demeanor turned cold, and the once-loving words they exchanged gave way to silence or curt replies. Even her calls and texts went unanswered. The husband who had once been her partner and confidant now felt like a stranger.

Sleepless nights became her new reality, as her mind spiraled into endless questions. Had she done something wrong? Was she failing as a wife? The emotional weight grew heavier until one day, Sonam's worst fear was confirmed. Her husband was involved in an extramarital affair. The discovery shattered her, leaving her heartbroken and adrift.

Unsure where to turn, Sonam remembered hearing about the RENEW Center through its Microfinance initiative. She had learned that RENEW provided support for individuals facing personal crises.

“Though nervous and hesitant, Sonam decided to seek help, hoping to salvage her marriage for the sake of her children and the life they had built together.”

At RENEW, Sonam received the compassionate support she so desperately needed. The center provided her with case management and legal aid creating a safe space where she and her husband could express their feelings. Her husband, too, acknowledged his mistakes. Overwhelmed by guilt, he admitted to his poor choices and expressed a sincere desire to make amends. Deep down, both still cared deeply for one another and wished to rebuild their relationship.

Through counseling sessions and guided interventions, the couple embarked on a path of reconciliation. With time, patience, and mutual effort, they began to heal. Her husband ended his affair and committed to being a better partner and father. He started coming home on time, engaging in meaningful conversations with Sonam, and even assisted with household chores. Slowly but surely, their marriage regained its former strength and harmony.

Today, Sonam and her husband are once again partners in every sense of the word. They work together to provide a stable and loving home for their children.

Sonam describes her life now as one filled with hope and gratitude.

“I am extremely grateful to RENEW for the help and support you have given me. Because of you, my marriage is now back to normal,” she says with a heartfelt smile. “I also want to encourage other women facing hardships to come forward and seek support from RENEW. You, too, can live a better life.”



Sonam’s story is a testament to the power of forgiveness, resilience, and the impact of timely intervention. It reminds us all that even in the darkest of times, there is always a chance for a new beginning.



From Heartache to Hope: A Village Mother's Journey of Resilience and Renewal

In the heart of a village, where rolling fields stretch under vast open skies and life moves with the rhythm of the seasons, a young mother's journey stands as a testament to resilience, love, and the unbreakable strength of the human spirit.

Not long ago, her world felt like it was crumbling. She had faced abandonment, financial struggles, and the slow, painful disintegration of a marriage that had once been her foundation. There were days when the weight of it all felt unbearable, when uncertainty loomed over her like a dark cloud. But today, as she cradles her newborn in her arms, she feels something she feared she had lost hope. This child is not just a new life but a symbol of her own fresh start.

Her story began nearly four years ago. She and her husband had built a simple but content life together, working tirelessly on their small farm. Their days were filled with hard work, tending to crops, caring for livestock and in the quiet of the evenings, they found joy in watching their little son grow, dreaming about the future they would build as a family. But life often takes unexpected turns.

“When she became pregnant with their second child, what should have been a time of happiness instead marked the beginning of her deepest struggles.”

Pregnancy made it harder for her to keep up with the physically demanding farm work. She tired more easily, her body no longer able to push through exhaustion as it once did. She thought her husband would understand, that he would see it as a temporary challenge. Instead, he saw it as a burden.



The shift was subtle at first, long silences, frustration that turned into distance. Then came the breaking point. During the annual Lochhoe festival, her husband's behavior changed. After the celebrations, he left for Thimphu, saying he would be staying with his aunt for a few days. But days turned into weeks, and she was left alone pregnant, exhausted, and struggling to care for their young son.

When he finally returned, something in him had changed. The warmth in his eyes was gone, replaced by indifference. The man who had once been her partner, her companion in life's joys and hardships, had become a stranger. He no longer seemed interested in their life together. Her pleas for understanding, for reassurance, were met with silence. The distance between them grew until it became unconquerable.

She carried on as best as she could, managing the farm, the household, and their child alone. But the emotional weight was heavier than anything she had ever lifted. Feeling isolated, she sought help from a community center, where she found comfort in the words of counselors who listened without judgment. They helped her navigate the storm of emotions that threatened to consume her. Slowly, she found the strength to accept what was happening, her marriage was slipping away, and she could not hold onto something that was already gone.

Eventually, she and her husband made the painful decision to separate. The life they had once built together had unraveled, and though the thought of facing the future alone was terrifying, she knew she had no choice but to move forward for herself and for her children.

Then, her world changed once again. She gave birth to a beautiful, healthy baby. As she held her newborn in her arms for the first time, something inside her shifted. The pain, the fear, the uncertainty, it all faded, replaced by a love so powerful that it anchored her in a way nothing else could. This child was not just a new life but a promise of a new beginning.



She knows the road ahead will not be easy. As a single mother, she carries the weight of responsibility alone. But she is not without support. In her community, where neighbors look out for one another, she has found kindness and reassurance. People stepped forward, offering help, encouragement, and a reminder that she is not alone.

Her story is not unique many women in rural communities face similar struggles. But what sets her apart is her resilience. She has endured heartbreak, financial strain, and the loneliness of abandonment, yet she refuses to let these hardships define her. She is not just surviving she is rebuilding, determined to create a future where love and stability are at the heart of her children's lives.

In her darkest moments, she feared she would never find happiness again. But as she looks into the eyes of her newborn and holds her older child close, she knows one thing for certain: she is stronger than she ever imagined. The road ahead may be uncertain, but she will walk it with unwavering determination, knowing that love will guide her forward.

“I am extremely grateful to the RENEW center for their undying support provided to me when I was going through a tough situation. I really appreciate RENEW community service center for being there for me like a family when I thought that my life was falling apart. The way the center checked on me time to time and checked on my well being never made me feel that I am alone. The center went way beyond to connect me with the other support group for my economic sustainability thus I am forever grateful to the center.”



Breaking the chains – Yangchen’s Journey to Finding Happiness After Divorce

Sochen’s journey is one of immense strength and courage, reminding us how crucial support is in overcoming life’s toughest challenges. She grew up in a peaceful valley, where she lived a simple yet joyful life, helping her parents with household chores and fieldwork. As a young woman, she married the love of her life and welcomed a beautiful daughter, believing that her world was complete.

But that happiness began to unravel when her husband’s job took him to another dzongkhag. What started as a distance between them soon turned into a painful emotional separation. Her husband became cold and distant, ignoring both her and their daughter. When he did reach out, his words were harsh and filled with accusations, calling her cruel names and even accusing her of infidelity.

Despite her best efforts to fix their relationship for the sake of their daughter, her husband’s behavior only worsened. He stopped providing any financial support and showed no interest in their lives.

After enduring so much, Sochen finally realized that she couldn’t carry this burden alone anymore. She reached out to RENEW for help. With their guidance, Sochen was able to legally separate from her husband without going to court. They helped her secure custody of her daughter and ensured she received the financial support she needed.

But RENEW’s help didn’t stop at legal advice. They offered her the emotional support she desperately needed during such a difficult time. Their encouragement and understanding gave her the strength to rebuild her life.



Now, looking back on her journey, she feels immense gratitude. “RENEW helped me through the darkest moments of my life,” she says. “They didn’t just guide me legally; they empowered me as a woman and a mother. I’ll always be thankful to them for being my light in the midst of all the darkness.”

Sochen’s story is a powerful reminder that no matter how hard life gets, there is always hope for a new beginning. With the right support, women like her can overcome even the toughest challenges, reclaim their lives, and build better futures for themselves and their children.



A Couple's Journey of Healing: Rebuilding Trust

When the wife first reached out to RENEW, she was trapped in a painful cycle of emotional distress. She and her husband both middle aged elderly individuals had built a life together with their children. But what began as an innocent misunderstanding an unnoticed figure in a video from her spiritual journey in Bhutan had spiraled into a storm of jealousy, control, and emotional turmoil.

Her husband, overcome by insecurity, misinterpreted the presence of a stranger in the video. This single misunderstanding ignited a series of possessive behaviors, leading to months of verbal abuse, control over her phone, and a moment of unchecked rage that shattered her device symbolizing the broken trust and peace in their marriage.

Feeling isolated and emotionally drained, the wife refused to remain silent. She sought help, determined to reclaim her sense of self. Through intervention and support, it became clear that the husband's actions were rooted in his own deep seated fears and trust issues. The wife longed for emotional safety and autonomy, yet these clashed with her husband's controlling tendencies, trapping them in a toxic cycle.

Recognizing the need for change the couple took a courageous step formalizing an agreement at the Gewog Office to prevent domestic violence and respect each other's autonomy. It was a milestone, a conscious effort to rebuild their relationship on a foundation of trust and respect.

But healing is rarely a straight path. Another misunderstanding soon arose, once again centering around the wife's phone. The fragile trust they had begun to rebuild wavered. She suspected him of monitoring her, while he felt unfairly accused. Old wounds resurfaced, and tension escalated. Yet, rather than surrendering to despair, they pressed forward, proving that growth is an ongoing journey.

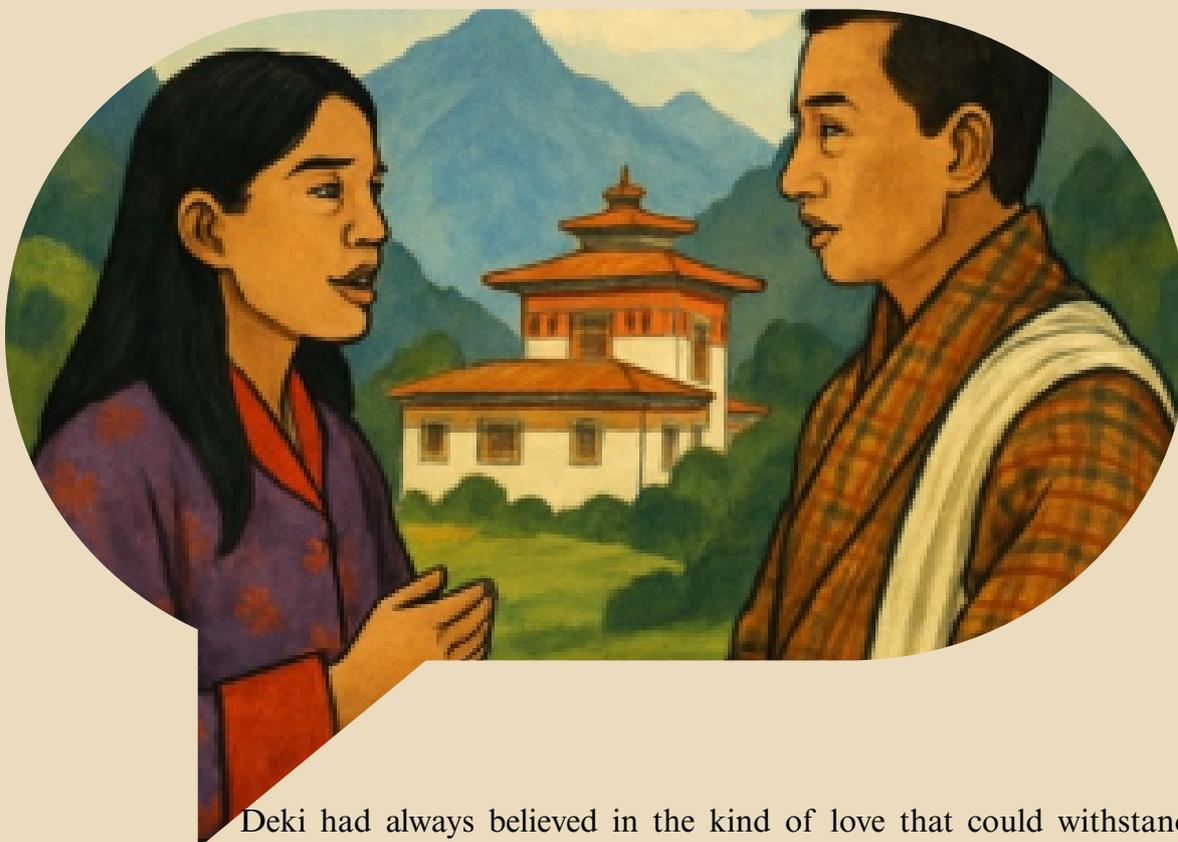
This story is one of resilience, patience, and transformation. The wife once silenced by fear, found her voice. She stood up for her dignity, advocated for her well being, and refused to let the past dictate her future. The husband though resistant at first began to recognize the importance of respect and emotional safety.



“Their journey is far from over, but their story stands as proof that even the most strained relationships can evolve.”

With effort, understanding and a commitment to change, healing is possible not as a return to what once was, but as the foundation for something stronger, built on mutual respect and trust.

Deki's Journey: From Pain to Empowerment and Redemption.



Deki had always believed in the kind of love that could withstand tempests and weather life's harshest storms. When she married at the age of 28, she envisioned a future filled with laughter, shared dreams, and an unbreakable bond of trust.

However, as the years passed, her illusion of love began to crumble. By the time she turned 36, she found herself ensnared in a vicious cycle of emotional and physical abuse.

The man who once enveloped her in warmth had transformed into someone who used his strength to control, belittle, and break her spirit. It hadn't always been this way. He had once been kind hearted, ambitious, and full of dreams for a bright future. Yet, the relentless pressures of life, financial turmoil, unhealed childhood traumas, and the weight of societal expectations began to erode him. Frustration brewed within, leading to violent eruptions directed at Deki.



At first, she rationalized his behavior. “He’s just stressed. He loves me. He will change.” But love should never come at the cost of suffering. One fateful night, during a particularly intense argument that escalated into another act of brutality, something within her shifted. Gathering the remnants of her strength, she made the bold decision to seek refuge at Gawaling Happy Home

For the first time in years, she felt safe, surrounded by warmth and understanding. Through counseling and therapy, she began to dismantle the damaging belief that endurance equated to love.

“She found her voice, one that had been silenced for far too long.”

Determined to regain her independence, she embraced vocational training, vowing never to be financially dependent on anyone again. Meanwhile, her husband was left to confront the consequences of his actions. Initially consumed by anger at her, at himself, at the world he was forced to face the harsh truth: he had become the very person he had vowed never to be. The realization was suffocating.

Desperate for redemption, he enrolled in a rehabilitation program focusing on anger management, emotional intelligence, and the role of masculinity in relationships. Through therapy, he unearthed the trauma that had shaped him, slowly recognizing that violence was never a form of love.

Nearly a year after their separation, Deki and her husband crossed paths again not as the broken couple they once were, but as two individuals who had chosen healing over destruction. Deki, now empowered and independent had no intention of revisiting the past. Her husband, humbled and remorseful, made no attempt to sway her. Instead, he simply asked for the chance to prove that he had changed.

Reintegration was not easy. It was a slow, deliberate process, supported by professionals dedicated to ensuring Deki’s safety and autonomy. This time, they worked together to build a foundation based on honesty, respect, and consent. Her husband learned to communicate without anger, while Deki discovered that love could exist in a space free from fear

Their past will always be a part of their story, but it no longer defines them. Their journey is a testament to the power of healing, redemption, and the resilience of the human heart. Their love did not end in pain it transformed into something stronger, built on respect, equality, and a shared commitment to a better future. Their story stands as a beacon of hope, proving that with courage, accountability, and genuine change, even the deepest wounds can heal, and love can be reborn not as a shadow of the past, but as a guiding light for the future.

Finding Strength in the Face of Betrayal: Sonam's Journey to Healing

Sonam walked through the streets with her baby strapped to her back, her eyes heavy with tears. She had never felt so lost and alone. The life she had built with love and dedication was crumbling around her, and the betrayal she had suffered cut deep. But in the midst of her despair, she remembered hearing about RENEW, an organization that helped women in distress. Clinging to that small glimmer of hope, she decided to seek help.

Sonam had married young after she was deeply in love with the man who had once been her whole world. Together, they built a life from nothing, turning struggles into success.

Their hard work paid off, and people admired what they had accomplished. But as time passed, Sonam's health began to decline, making her more dependent on her husband. He cared for her and she believed.

After the birth of their third child, Sonam went to stay with her parents for a while. When she returned, she discovered a devastating truth that her husband had an extramarital with someone she knew. Heartbroken but still holding onto hope, she listened as he begged for forgiveness. He said that the woman was pregnant with his child. Wanting to keep her family together, Sonam forgave him and the woman was allowed to stay in their home.





Months later, after the baby was born, Sonam was told she could even adopt the child as her own. But then, the ultimate betrayal surfaced she learned that there had never been a pregnancy at all. It had all been a lie. The pain was unbearable.

Seeking strength, Sonam attended several counseling sessions in RENEW. She confronted her husband asking him to choose between her and his mistress. But he refused insisting he couldn't leave either of them. It was in that moment that Sonam made her choice she would no longer live in the shadow of his betrayal.

With newfound determination, she decided to leave the marriage. She realized that she was capable of standing on her own, that she could raise her children and build a future without him. She would no longer be bound to a love that brought her pain.

“Sonam walked away with her head held high, not as a victim but as a woman who had reclaimed her strength. She chose herself, her dignity, and her freedom.”

She discovered the power of letting go, knowing that happiness was something she could find within herself.



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