



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WOMEN AND
CHILDREN**

Royal Government of Bhutan

Making a difference



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NCWC AT A GLANCE

We are a 17-year-old government organisation with 34 member staff geared towards a vision to create:
A happy nation where children, women and men live in harmony with equality and respect in all spheres of life

Our mission is to:

To protect and promote the rights of women through gender-responsive interventions.
To protect and promote rights of children through child-responsive interventions.

We work with the objectives:

To review, reform, initiate and support policies, plans, projects and activities from a gender equality perspective.
To review, reform, initiate and support policies, plans, projects and activities from children sensitive perspective

WECARE to serve our women and children's Wellbeing with Empathy, Commitment, Adaptability, Respect and Equality with a motto, Making Difference.

Our Governance Body: The Commission

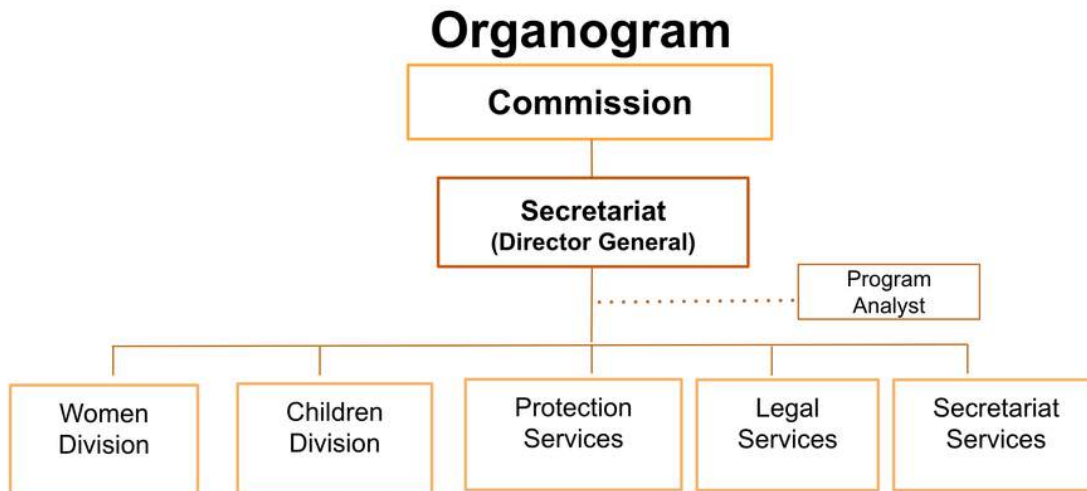
Chair Person: Hon'ble Lyonpo Tandi Dorji, Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Vice Chair Person: Hon'ble Lyonpo Dasho Dechen Wangmo, Minister, Ministry of Health

Members:

- Dasho Karma Tshering, Secretary, Ministry of Education
- Dasho Dr. Pandup Tshering, Secretary, Ministry of Health
- Dasho Karma Tsering Namgyel, Secretary, Dratshang Lhentshog
- Dasho Palden Wangmo, Drangpon, Family and Child Bench
- Aum Chime P Wangdi, Secretary General, Tarayana
- Aum Deki Choden, Principal, ELC High School
- Lt. Col. Karma Rigzin, SP, Women and Child Protection Division, RBP Thimphu
- Ms. Choing Dolma, Program Officer, Office of the Gyalpoi Zimpon
- Dasho Karma Drukpa, Member Secretary/Director General, NCWC

OUR STRUCTURE



Commission members (11 members): Cabinet Ministers (Chair & Vice Chair), Secretaries (MoH, , MoE, Dzatshang Lhentshog) Royal Court of Justice, RBP, Representative from Office of Gyalpoi Zimpon, Private and Civil Society Organisation, & National Commission for Women and Children

INTRODUCTION

This report is an annual publication of the NCWC. Its main objective is to document and present our work on promotion and protection of women and children's rights to our key partners within the government sector, in civil society, market and international development partners. For 2021, we present a six months report from July-December 2021 for the Fiscal year 2021-2022. In this report we showcase some of our core programmes in our service to women and children, whose vulnerable position in the Bhutanese society is magnified by relentless COVID 19 pandemic.

Some of the key features were Case Management training for Protection Officers, Gender Based Violence-Gakid Lamtoen Pilot Project's adolescent and care giver's facilitators' training, launch of report on impact of COVID 19 on women and children and a study on Gender Mainstreaming Reference Group in climate sector's training. Further, development of Children in Difficult Circumstances' Standard Operating Procedure and Training of Trainers to the child protection agencies in state, civil society in collaboration with international organizations were core highlights focused to address children's issues.

In addition, 73 cases on Gender Based Violence and Children in Difficult Circumstances were successfully addressed within the period of six months (July-December) of the Fiscal Year 2021-2022. During the same time frame, four domestic post adoption monitoring and evaluation were successfully conducted and received four post adoption monitoring and evaluation reports for inter-country adoption. About five domestic adoption were successfully processed and the Post Alternative Care Monitoring and Evaluation were carried out in November and December 21. These services directly strengthened our objective to care for and protect women and children.

Drawing from our Annual Performance Agreement (APA) for Fiscal Year 2021-2022's Objectives, each of the core activities will be presented under broad themes as headings.

PROTECTION AND LEGAL SERVICES

The Protection and Legal Services are the vanguard services of the NCWC to build a happy, harmonious and gender equal society. We serve men, women, other gender and children who need our Protection and Legal Services through walk in, toll free, mobile app, home visits and individualized service seeker case management approaches 24 hours and seven days a week as frontline services. These services were extended during national lock downs as vulnerable women and children needed our support. Thus, we attempt to protect and promote rights of women and children throughout the year.

In the second half of 2021, within six months, period, the NCWC has received 172 cases related to Gender Based Violence, Children in Difficult Circumstances, Children in Conflict with Law and Women in Difficult Circumstances. Of 172 cases received, 147 cases have been successfully resolved. There are 25 ongoing cases in the process of being solved. Further, four post adoption monitoring and evaluation were successfully conducted for domestic adoption and received four post adoption monitoring and evaluation reports for Inter-country adoption. About five domestic adoptions were successfully processed. Further, to strengthen legal and policy environment for women and children's participation in all spheres of development, the NCWC reviewed the Royal Bhutan Police (Amendment) Bill, 2021, the Civil Society Organisation (Amendment) Bill 2021 and submitted the legal aspect related to women and children's issues to the Socio-Cultural Affairs Committee and Human Rights and Foreign Relations Committee of the National Assembly respectively.

The NCWC initiated review of the Marriage Act of Bhutan, 1980 and its amendments. This is in the process of being finalised. In addition, the NCWC reviewed United Nations Convention Against Trans-organisational Crime (UNTOC) and Trafficking in Person (TIP) Protocol. Also, the NCWC participated in the consultation meeting with Department of Law and Order, Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs.

The legal services reviewed and submitted reports on legal issues which have bearing on women and children to our stakeholders. National Prevention and Response Strategy on Trafficking In Persons was reviewed and Legal aid Guidelines for vulnerable women and children was formulated and completed.

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WOMEN AND CHILDREN PROGRAMMES

Women and Children Programmes are the Centre of the NCWC's vision, mission and objectives to address strategic long term and immediate short- term goals to serve men, women, other gender, and children's issues. Therefore, the programmes range from awareness and advocacy, capacity building to research and partnership building and collaboration with our key national state, market and civil society organisations and international development partners. For 2021, the highlights of our programmes are presented below:

CAPACITY BUILDING

Training of facilitators of the Gakey Lamtoen: Bhutan Gender-Based Violence Prevention Project



The NCWC and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) conducted two rounds of five-day training for the facilitators of the Gakey Lamtoen: Bhutan Gender-Based Violence Prevention Project caregiver and adolescent groups from 27-31 October 2021 and 10-14 November 2021. The training is part of the preparation for Gakey Lamtoen's roll-out to three schools and communities in 2022 upon the success of the pilot project, despite being disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The training was attended by teachers and counselors from Babesa Higher Secondary School, Khasadrapchu Middle Secondary School and Shaba Higher Secondary School. Dzongkhag and Thromde Education Officers from Thimphu and Paro also participated in the training. Gakey Lamtoen is a unique GBV prevention initiative targeting adolescents and caregivers through a two-pronged approach. It aims to address the root causal factors that lead to violence against women and children (VAWC).

Training on Basic Understanding on Gender to selected Climate Sectors

A 4 days training was conducted from 13th to 16th September 2021 to key stakeholders from climate sectors. The training aims to equip officials from climate sectors on mainstreaming gender into respective programs, plans and policies. The program was conducted as part of implementation of recommendations from the in-depth gender assessment was conducted in three selected Nationally Determined Contributions sectors: agriculture, waste and energy. The training was attended by agriculture, environment, livestock officials and gender focal points from central dzongkhags.

Training on Early Identification and Safe Referral (EISR) to the Scouts Focal and Media Person

The National Commission for Women and Children, with support from Save the Children Bhutan Country Office, conducted two days training on Early Identification and Safe Referral (EISR) to the scout (and media) focal persons from different Dzongkhags and also to the officials from Scouts and Culture Education Division under Department of Youth and Scouts, Ministry of Education from September 6-7, 2021 in Paro. The training was aimed to equip the participants on the child protection system in Bhutan and how to respond and safely refer to service providers on child protection issues.

Similarly, with the support from UNICEF, the NCWC conducted 4 days EISR training into 2 batches to the Labour and Immigration officials from October 11-14, 2021 in Paro. The training intends to roll out the handbook on Early Identification and Safe Referral (EISR) to strengthen the Child Protection System through safe, appropriate and proper identification and referral of children who need care and protection. The Labour and Immigration officials play an important role in combating child labour, trafficking in person and other related protection issues, it is important to build their capacity to ensure that child survivors are appropriately identified and safe referral pathways are carried out as a frontliners.

Revision and Development of Standard Operating Procedures for Children in Difficult Circumstances and Training of Trainers (ToT) on Child Protection Case Management.

The Children Division, NCWC with support from UNICEF and Save the Children, revised and developed the Standard Operating Procedure(SOP) for Children in Difficult Circumstances (CIDC) and also organised and conducted three-day ToT on Child Protection Case Management SOP from December 27-29, 2021 at Punakha. Key agencies like dZhung Dratsang, Bhutan Nuns' Foundation, Nazhoen Lamtoen, RENEW, Save the Children, UNICEF, Gender and Child Focal Persons from Wangdue and Punakha Dzongkhags, and a few children protection related officers from the NCWC attended the training. The main objective was to train a critical number of potential Child Protection professionals who can train professionals in their home agencies.



Three-day Training on CEDAW

The National Commission for Women and Children in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with support from the United National Office of the High Commission on Human Rights conducted three- day virtual training on CEDAW including the reporting procedure for NCWC and its partners (government and non-government partners) from 27-28 September 2021. The main objective was to prepare the NCWC and the core partners on Treaty Body Reporting to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Preparation of 10th CEDAW Periodic Report

The National Commission for Women and Children is in the process of preparing the responses to the Advanced List of Issues Prior to Report (LOIPR) on behalf of the Royal Government of Bhutan. A consultative workshop with all relevant government and non-government agencies to review the draft responses was carried out from 3rd to 5th January 2022. Bhutan is due to submit its responses to the advanced list of issues in March 2022.

RESEARCH

Launch of study on Impact of COVID19 on Women and Children

The NCWC in collaboration with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has conducted a study on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on women and children in the country. Her Majesty, the Queen Mother Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck, Champion of women's empowerment and Bhutan's Good will Ambassador to the United Nations Population Fund launched the study report on International Day of Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November 2021.



During the launch the invited relevant key stakeholders from the government agencies, CSOs, academia and development partners were present at the Paro College of Education.

ADVOCACY

Advocacy on Sexual Harassment at Teckpark and CDCL



The NCWC conducted Sensitization on Sexual Harassment at workplace to over 90 staff of Teckpark, at their office on 22 October 2021 and to over 50 staff of Construction Development Cooperation Limited (CDCL) at their office on 21 October 2021. The objective of the meeting was to create awareness on existing legislations such as the Penal Code and Constitution of Bhutan, Labour and Employment Act and Domestic Prevention Act of Bhutan.



Three -day workshop on Sensitive reporting on gender and children concerns to media houses



The NCWC conducted a three-day workshop on sensitive reporting on gender and children concerns to media houses from 26th to 28th July 2021. Gender and Child related issues are emerging with the incessant change in social structures and exposures to modernisation. As such, media serves as a powerful tool to communicate and shape community values and responses to gender/women and child concerns. The workshop was conducted with the following objectives:

1. Orient Media personnel on gender and children situation in the country
2. Create awareness on media guidelines on gender and children sensitive reporting
3. Discuss issues and recommendations on gender and children reporting
4. Foster collaboration and cooperation between media houses and the NCWC media
5. Create awareness on gender and climate change to enhance understanding on gender climate linkages.

The workshop was attended by reporters and editors from 19 mainstream media houses including bloggers, vloggers, radio, BBS, newspapers and media associations. The program aims to enhance the code of ethics of media houses to promote gender equality and children wellbeing.

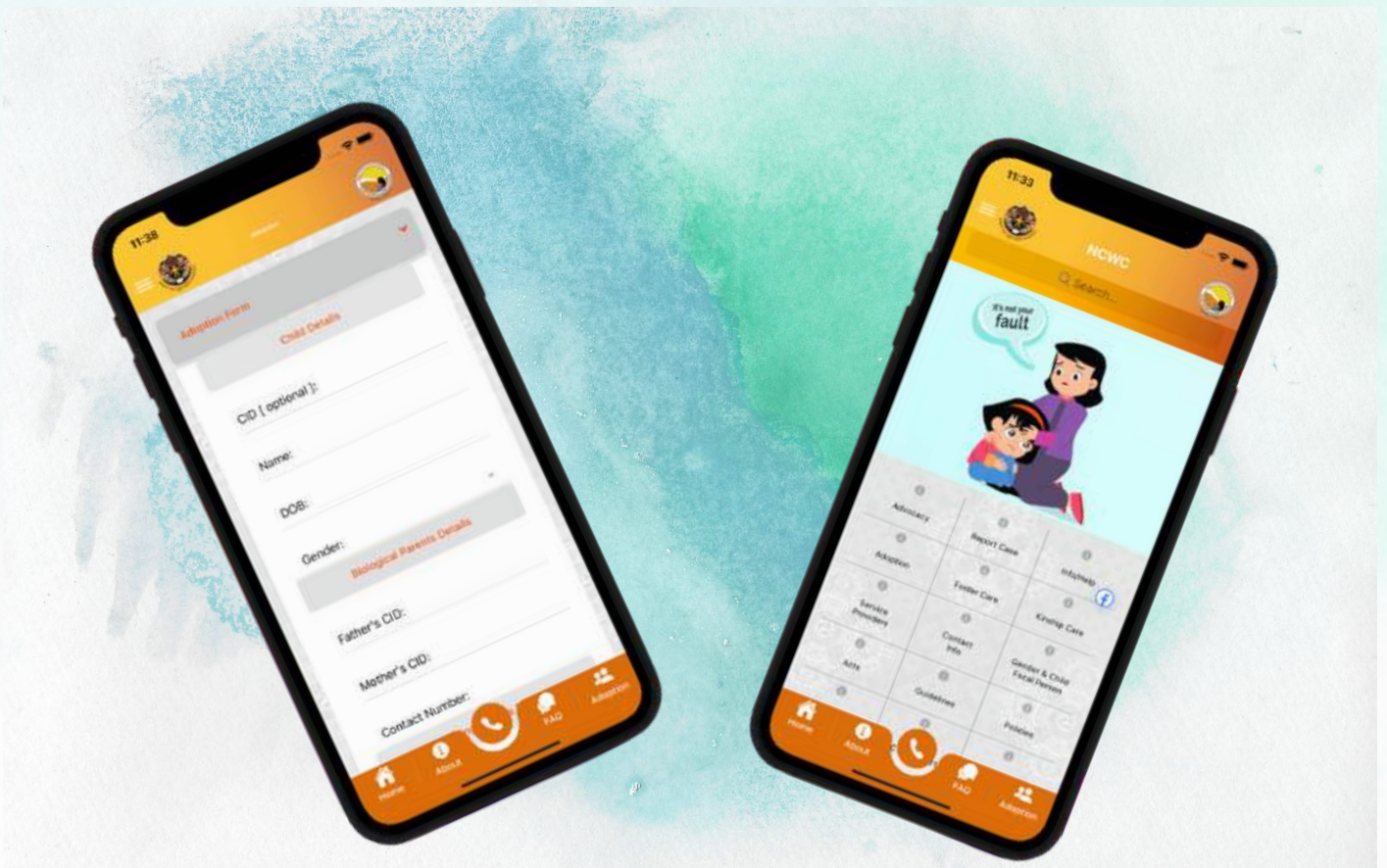
Hon'ble Chairperson of the commission, Lynopo Dr. Tandi Dorji graced the closing of the workshop with a rigorous discussion on issues and recommendations with media houses on gender and children sensitive reporting.

Launch of NCWC Mobile Application

As NCWC is mandated for women's empowerment and child protection, the Mobile Application is developed with the objective to increase efficiency of service provision for women and children in need of care and protection by providing more communication channels to seek services. Further, it allows citizens to apply for Child Adoption and Alternative care.



Also, the app also has features where anyone can report incidents of violation of rights of women and children and apply for alternative care for children including adoption. The users can directly access the woman and child helpline 1098 through the app. In addition, it enables the general public to access the information related to women and children such as advocacy materials, publications, legislations and related information.



PARTNERSHIP

Coordination and Partnership Building with key stakeholders

- The NCWC conducted an annual Gender and Children Focal Persons (GCFP) meeting with our key partners from the government, civil society, corporate and private organisations. The meeting deliberated on important issues concerning women, children and gender and formulated a clear Action Plan to address present and future challenges.
- The NCWC signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Bhutan Network of Women's Empowerment in decision making and with Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI).

PILOT PROJECT

Gakey Lamtoen: Bhutan Gender-Based Violence Prevention Project

Gender-based violence is a serious violation of human rights, which has grave implications on public health, lives and development. Ending violence against women and children is an international commitment. Bhutan has also been making inroads in addressing this pervasive violation of rights. The initiation and implementation of the Gakey Lamtoen: Bhutan Gender Based Violence Prevention Pilot Project clearly indicates its timeliness and relevance for Bhutan, given its primary prevention approach. Unlike other interventions, this project supports envisioning a collective future where hope is based on communities own lived and gendered experience. It supports communities to bring about social norms change within, by identifying and building on community strengths, critically examining harmful behavior, and supporting positive change. This social norm change is inclusive and builds on community strength as opposed to using negative messaging and instilling fear. One critical feature of the project is the engagement of volunteer community members as the facilitators of the journey of transformative changes. Through the structured and regular dialogues, the project aimed to influence ideas, attitudes, decision-making skills, behaviors and practices so that safe, equitable and violence-free families and communities become a reality.

Despite the unforeseen interruption by the COVID-19 crisis which resulted in shortening the project implementation, the Gakey Lamtoen Project succeeded in planting seeds of transformative changes amongst the minds and behaviors of the participants and facilitators of this dialogue-based primary prevention initiative. Some positive changes were evident in the outcome of the social innovation camp organized after the completion of the first segment of the three-segment programme.

Furthermore, post-project consultations, qualitative and quantitative studies also revealed the extent of the influence the Gakey Lamtoen Project had on attitudes and perception around gender inequality, gender stereotypes, violence, and discriminatory social norms on its participants, facilitators and project staff. There is no silver bullet to ensuring social norms change. It requires sustained holistic, integrated and multi-sectoral approaches to address this complex problem. The Pilot has already shown that holistic and multi-sectoral partnership can work, with various stakeholders on the Steering Committee and Working Group like the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Gross National Happiness Commission, Royal Bhutan Police, Thimphu Municipality, and CSOs like RENEW and Nazhoen Lamtoen. From the experience of implementing the Gakey Lamtoen Pilot Project, it has been acknowledged and agreed by all stakeholders involved that this dialogue-based and learning-focused participatory primary prevention model should be replicated in other parts of the country.

The 5th Project Steering Committee Meeting held on 14 October 2021 affirmed this and approved the roll out of the Gakey Lamtoen intervention to three more schools and communities in 2022 to gather more evidence for GBV prevention.

STRENGTHENING CHILD PROTECTION AND RESPONSE SERVICES FOR MOST DEPRIVED CHILDREN IN BHUTAN

Orientation on the Internal Child Safeguarding and Protection Framework

The National Commission for Women and Children with an intent to prevent and protect the children during their involvement with an organisation/agencies, developed an Internal Child Safeguarding and Protection Framework. The framework ensures all the child protection mechanisms are in place and that the best interest of the child is a paramount consideration in all actions affecting children.

Since the majority of the children spend most of their time in schools, the likelihood of children being abused is very high. Therefore, the need to orient teachers and the principals on the Internal Child Safeguarding and Protection Framework is very important. Keeping this in mind, a total of 186 scouts secretaries and teachers and 59 principals from twenty dzongkhags were oriented on the Internal Child Safeguarding and Protection Framework.

Similarly, to protect and prevent child abuse in the dratshangs and the nunneries, an orientation program to the focal from dratshangs were also conducted.



Emergency and Post Care

The National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) as the nodal agency for the protection and promotion of rights of women and children has been mandated to receive cases pertaining to violation of the rights of women and children. The agency upon receiving the case often has to provide emergency support such as food, clothing and shelter for the children. In the process of the case management, the agency has to assess the situation of the children, identify the protection needs, develop the action for the provision of service and facilitate service in collaboration with the stakeholder till the closure of the case. With support from Save the Children, the NCWC has been able to facilitate the following supports to Children in Difficult Circumstances:

Procured emergency kits such as rations and other basic needs to support the Children in Difficult Circumstances (CIDC) during the emergencies.

1. Facilitated the baking training (skilling program) for two female Children in Difficult Circumstances from 1st January, 2021 till 31 January, 2021.
2. Supported the rehabilitation fee for a Male CIDC who is dependent on substances at Chithen Phendey Association for five month.
3. Supported the school expenses such as stationeries and shoes for 18 children (12 female and 6 Male) who are currently under the care of NCWC.



OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

Outstanding Integrity

The Anti- Corruption Commission (ACC)'s NCWC integrity score assessment report, 2021 stands in an outstanding category for autonomous agencies score implying that our public service delivery to protect and promote women and children was effective and efficient. The ACC report stated that the NCWC's service delivery processes, standards, protocols and documents are clearly stated and the information on services were easily available to our service users. Further, the NCWC's toll free help line to protect women and children in need, Central Management Information System to maintain centralized data system on women and children and address integrated solution on data collection and a Gender Focal Persons system at national sector level and in Local Government to cater to plans and progress on gender-mainstreaming activities are lauded (ACC 2021: 4). This shows that the NCWC is a clean organization in terms of transparency and accountability

CHALLENGES

The NCWC is a small organisation with a big vision and mandate to address men, women, other gender and children's well-being. Although, we are over decade old since our establishment, we still continue to face financial limitations and human resource shortage in the process of delivering quality services. Further, we have inadequate office space and infrastructure facilities in terms of enough number of office staff rooms, clients counselling service and waiting space.

CONCLUSION

In this report we highlight some of our core services and programmes in our aspiration to better serve men, women, other gender and children, whose vulnerable position in the Bhutanese society is magnified by relentless COVID 19 pandemic.

We focused on review of legislations under amendments and formulating critical legal instrument like Legal Aid Guideline to vulnerable women and children, an assurance of a continuous frontline protection support, capacity building of human resource for the NCWC professionals and our key partner organizations, research on emerging and important issues on women and children, advocacy on gender equality, sexual harassment and child protection and being a fair, transparent and accountable organization.

Some of the key features were Case Management training for Protection Officers, Gender Based Violence prevention-Gakid Lamtoen Pilot Project per se and the project's adolescent and care giver's facilitators' training, the launch of report on the impact of COVID 19 on women and children and Gender Mainstreaming Reference Group in climate sector's training and Child Protection's Case Management Standard Operating Procedure development and Training of Trainers to the primary child protection partners.

However, we are challenged with financial and human resource limitations in attaining our vision. We need dedicated financial support and adequate human resources to translate our objectives into reality. Nonetheless, we are optimistic that the Royal Government and our key national and international partners will support us in our continued endeavour to protect and promote the rights of women and children and help build a happy and a harmonious Bhutanese society.

OUR PARTNERS





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