

ANNUAL REPORT
2020

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DISABLED PEOPLE'S ORGANIZATION OF BHUTAN



Nothing about us without us

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Patron-His Royal Highness Prince Namgyel Wangchuck



CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AUTHORITY

Certificate of Registration

This is to certify that **The Disabled People's Organization of Bhutan** is hereby registered as a **Public Benefit Organization** under the Civil Society Organizations Act of Bhutan, 2007 with effect from **26th November 2010** corresponding to the **20th day of the 10th Bhutanese month of the Iron Male Tiger Year.**

The Organizations is hereby allotted Registration number: **CSOA/PBO-09**

The Organizations seeks to fulfill the objectives as defined in its Articles of Association and Memorandum of Association and shall operate in **the whole of Bhutan.**

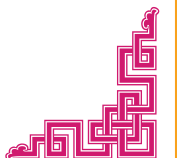
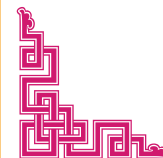
The aforementioned organization is subject to the provisions of the Civil Society Organizations Act of Bhutan 2007 and other laws in force in the country.

Validity of this certificate is subject to annual renewal. Please see overleaf for registration status.

Seal



CHAIRPERSON
Civil Society Organizations Authority
THIMPHU; BHUTAN



VISION

“An inclusive society that recognizes, respects and promotes the rights and needs of persons with disabilities in Bhutan.”

MISSION

To promote physical, psychological and socio-economic well being of persons with disabilities through a right-based approach.

Introduction

According to the Population Housing and Census of Bhutan, 2017, about 2.1 % of the country's population (8111 females and 7456 males), regardless of age and gender, have some form of disability. Among the 2.1% people with disabilities, 10.9% fall under mild disabilities, 2.2% moderate and 1% under severe disabilities. It is likewise higher among the older people of 75 years or more. The World Report 2011 published by WHO states that about 15% of the world population has some form of disability.

In Bhutan, disability is widely regarded as a result of past karmic consequences. The persons with disability are hardly included in social activities and also have higher risks of getting marginalized. Often, they are addressed with discriminatory remarks and insulting labels. It is very important to eliminate such biased beliefs and stigma; instead, create a conducive society for persons with disabilities. We have to ensure the fundamental rights such as education, health services, and social care for all persons with disabilities as constitutional right besides securing economic rights, political rights and social rights to all PWDs. GNH development philosophy ought to include all PWDs in the national development process to make it truly inclusive. It is not only the right thing to do, but PWDs can also actively contribute to the country's socio-economic development.

Worldwide, organizations of PWDs complement government efforts to reach the unreached. In Bhutan, too, several organizations of PWDs have emerged in the last decade that has advocated for the inclusion of PWDs in all spheres of life. DPAB is one of the first registered CSOs to enhance the rights of persons with disabilities in Bhutan. Since its establishment in 2010, it has evolved as a strong organization to advocate for, provide support and engage PWDs in policy formulation and decision-making. It has also fostered a partnership with other organizations working for persons with disabilities, thereby evolving to function as a full-fledged DPO.

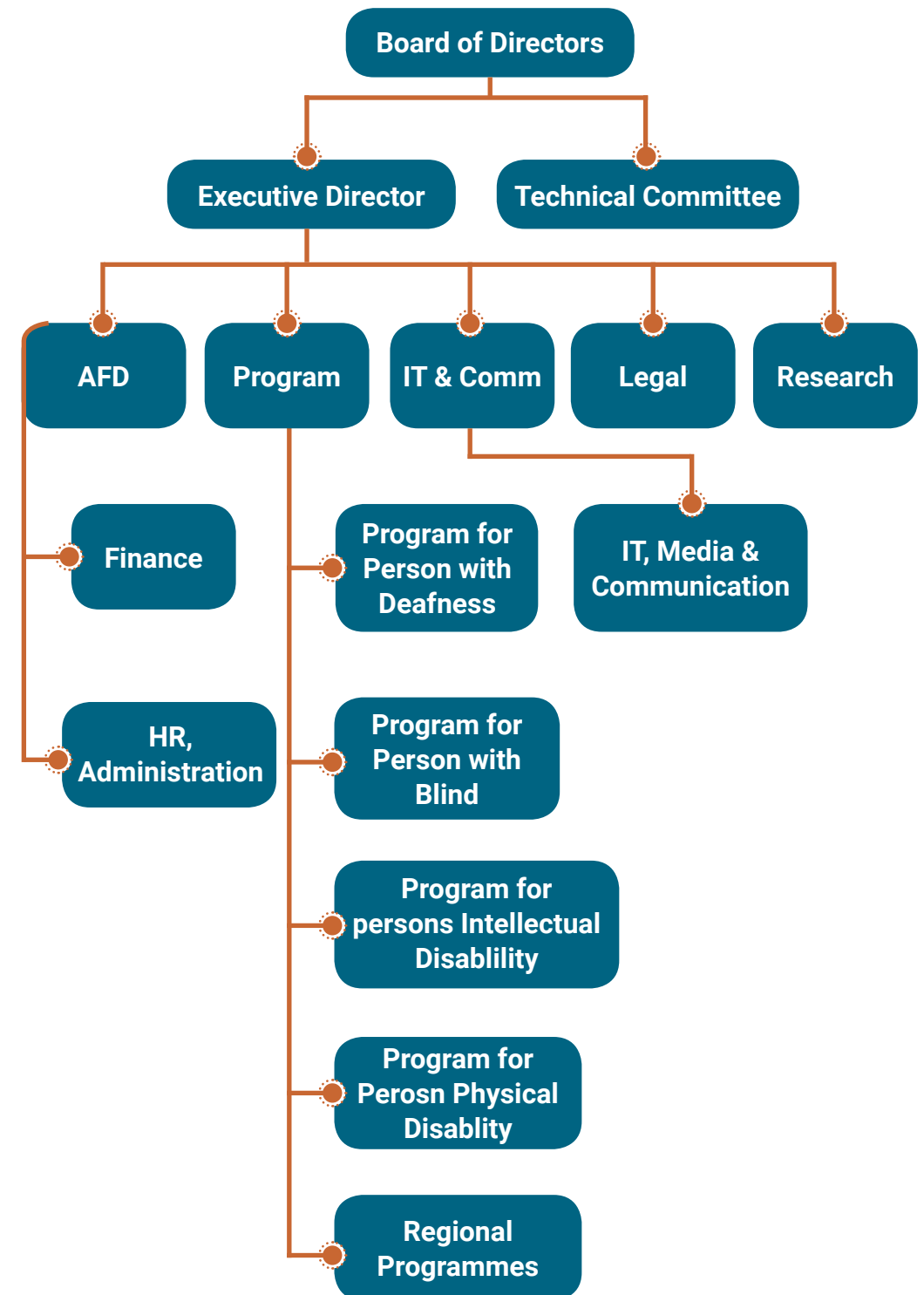
This report presents various activities carried out by the organizations in a year to benefit persons with disabilities at large. With the impending threat of the pandemic, DPAB has crucially moved ahead with various ways to reach out to the beneficiaries.

Objectives

1. Function as a platform to represent all persons with disabilities in policy formulation, legislation and programmes that impact the lives of persons with disabilities.
2. Serve as an umbrella organization for affiliation of other organizations/groups of PWDs.
3. Raise awareness and advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities in Bhutan.
4. Create opportunities for PWDs to realize the potentials and abilities to lead a meaningful life.
5. Enhance the capacity of persons with disabilities through life-long learning.
6. Improve the quality of life and living conditions of persons with disabilities.
7. Empower persons with disabilities through employment, effective participation and decision-making.
8. Facilitate communication, coordination and collaboration with relevant organizations within and outside the country

Organization Structure

The Board of Directors governs DPAB, the management team and technical committee members. The Board is the overarching body for approving and monitoring plans, programmes and activities. The Board provides oversight function in the day-to-day functioning of the organization. In addition, the Board plays an advisory role for and management team and technical members of the organization. The Board members support the management team to mobilize resources from internal and external partners.



3rd Feb 2020: Consultative Meeting

“Nothing about Disability without disability in the society.”



Coordinated by Organizations for Persons with Disabilities, the members of the disability fraternity had a consultative meeting with the Research and Evaluation Division, Gross National Happiness Commission, to identify a few public places in Thimphu to make them accessible for all persons with disabilities and senior citizens. The meeting was conducted successfully at Norkhil Boutique Hotel & SPA, Thimphu, with financial support from UNDP and the technical backstopping from GNHC.



29th Feb 2020: Disability Equality Training (DET) Workshop to Taxi Operators

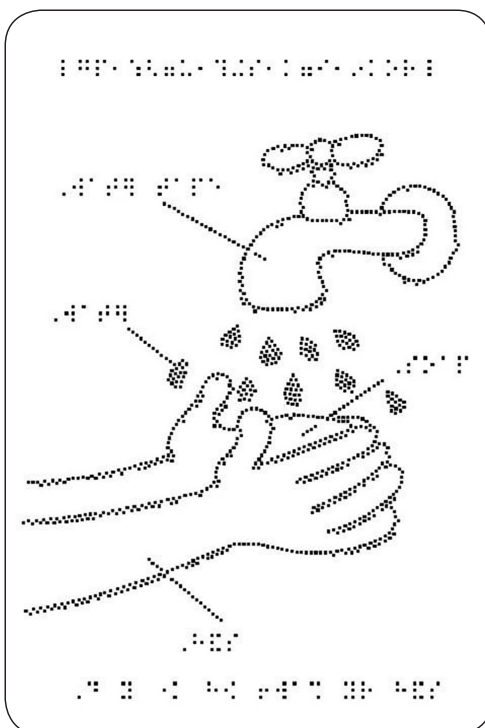
Disability Equality Training is an approach adopted by Disabled People’s Organization to create awareness and impact. Led by persons with disabilities themselves, DET Workshop was organized for the members of the Bhutan Taxi Association at Lungten Zampa MSS, Thimphu. Besides orienting on the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, taxi operators were skilled in handling persons with disabilities during emergencies and other time.



6th March 2020: DPAB Office closes to start Work from Home

With the government stressing physical distancing, the Disabled Persons’ Association of Bhutan closed its office to work from home. The office remained closed for more than a year due to the pandemic. However, the association has arranged that all the necessary day to day office related activities and works were constantly carried out from their home.

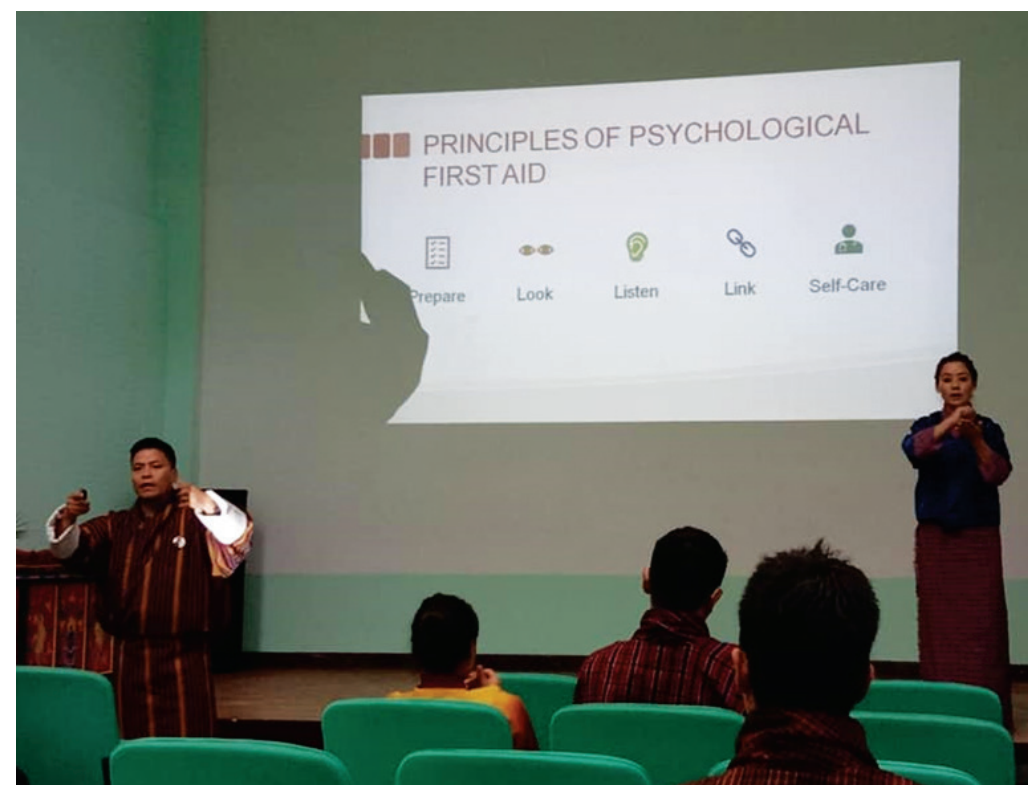
2nd April 2020: Information Support through Tactile



Persons with disabilities were among the most vulnerable sections in the community whose lives were directly impacted due to COVID-19. Moreover, there were some barriers to access to information on COVID-19 for Persons with disabilities. Therefore, DPAB supported the tactile posters that contained steps to washing hands to protect individual persons with visual impairments against COVID - 19. Hereafter, the Braille Production Unit under DPAB will produce necessary tactile posters for visually impaired people in Bhutan.

4th May 2020: Psychological First Aid

In collaboration with the Mental health Team from the Ministry of Health, DPAB organized a half-day training session on Psychological First Aid to the disability community in Thimphu.



The Psychological First Aid (PFA) training was organized with the view of helping people with different needs to cope with the emotional impact of COVID-19. The participants were trained on preparing frontline service providers with vital skills like what to look for, what to listen and how to link services during any disastrous situation in the community. During the meeting, the participants have also raised their voice on the importance of making inclusive Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to increase the efficiency of services in the time of crisis for all. Normisjon Project, Norway, funded the training.

22nd to 24th June 2020: Enhancing Inclusiveness of Persons with Disabilities and Tackling Gender-Based Violence.

A three-day Disability Equality Training (DET) workshop was conducted to the Frontline Personnel from Chukha and Samtse Dzongkhags. The training was organized with the idea of 'Leaving No One Behind' during the pandemic. The sessions were all facilitated by persons with disabilities themselves at Phuentsholing. The objective of the many engaging sessions was to equip



the Frontline Personnel with the required skills to provide appropriate services to Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) during emergencies. In continuation of the DET Workshop, Gender-Based Violence sessions were held to capacitate the Frontliners on GBV SoP, which was launched by NCWC earlier this year on the International Women's Day 8th March 2020. The training equipped the Frontliners with knowledge and skills on:

- GBV, its causes, risk factors and types
- Survivor Centred Approach and Guiding Principles
- The roles of the frontline Personnel for responding to GBV survivors
- Informed consent and mandatory reporting

The training was organized collaboratively by three Organizations for Persons with Disabilities with financial support from UNDP and GNHC.



27th to 29th June 2020: Disability Equality Training Workshop to Frontline Personnel of Paro Dzongkhag



Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) are among the vulnerable population groups at disproportionate risk during public health emergencies. To ensure the COVID-19 response is inclusive and considers the needs of PWDs, Organization for Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) again organized a DET workshop for the Frontline workers of Paro dzongkhag. This was organized with the aim to equip them with the knowledge and skills required to provide appropriate services to PWDs during rapidly evolving and uncertain times like COVID 19 pandemic.



2nd to 4th July 2020: Disability Equality Training Workshop to Parliamentarians and Frontline Personnel of Thimphu

Thimphu has the highest number of persons with disabilities. Since the pandemic has hit society hard, persons with disabilities were impacted the worst of all. However, there are not many professionals who could handle persons with disabilities professionally. Thus, Organizations for Persons with Disabilities, with financial support from UNDP, organized a three-day DET workshop to Parliamentarians and the Frontline Personnel at Taj Tashi. The workshop was facilitated by persons with disabilities themselves to equip Parliamentarians and the Frontline Personnel with skills to provide appropriate services during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Participants were trained on using appropriate terms and terminologies while addressing the individual persons who have some form of disabilities in their lives.

Terminologies such as Persons with Disabilities, persons with deafness, persons with blindness, persons with intellectual disabilities, persons who use a wheelchair, persons with physical disabilities were shared with the participants. Further, participants were also trained on handling and providing appropriate services to persons with intellectual disabilities during quarantine.

[International Days]

21st to 27th September 2020: International Week of the Deaf



Reaffirming
Deaf People's
Human Rights

The International Week of the Deaf is celebrated worldwide every year. It falls in the third week of September. The theme for 2020 was "Reaffirming Deaf People's Human Rights". The International Week of the Deaf was observed at Wangsel Institute, Paro. The Deaf adults in the school encouraged the staff to strengthen the skill of Bhutanese Sign Language to reach out to the Bhutanese Deaf. The Deaf students also talked about the positive impact of teachers having good Bhutanese Sign Language skills. A simple activity of "Finger Spelling" was conducted whereby both hearing teachers and the students participated in marking the day. DPAB provided financial support to observe the International Deaf Week at Wangsel.



15th October 2020: White Cane Safety Day

15th October of every year is observed as the White Cane Safety Day throughout the world. White Cane Safety Day reminds the world of the importance of the White Cane as a tool for independent living for persons with blindness in society. On 15th October 2020, DPAB organized a Talk Show on BBS to create awareness about the White Cane. The Talk Show highlighted the importance of the right of persons with blindness to travel independently and safely in a universally accessible environment.

20th to 21st October 2020: DET workshop to Development Partners and Policymakers

People with disabilities have everyday needs – for health and well-being, economic and social security, to learn and develop skills, and to live in their communities. These needs should be met in mainstream programmes and services through policy interventions. Mainstreaming not only fulfils the human rights of persons with disabilities, but it is also more effective.





Thus, Organizations for Persons with Disabilities organized a two-day DET Workshop to the Planning Officers from ten ministries and some staff of the Gross National Happiness Commission and the Development Partners at Hotel Norkhil Boutique. The workshop was to sensitize policymakers about the grey areas that the policymakers need to address for persons with disabilities at large. The workshop was financially supported by GNHC and the Save the Children International-Bhutan Country Office.

25th & 26th November 2020: DET Workshop to Educators

DPAB, in collaboration with the Research & Evaluation Division, GNHC, and ECCD & SEN Division, Ministry of Education, organized the Disability Equality Training (DET) Workshop on 25th & 26th November 2020 at Hotel Norkhill Boutique, Thimphu. The participants were teachers of Thimphu Thromde and Haa Dzongkhag. The workshop was organized for teachers as they play many important roles in the classroom. Within the classroom environment, teachers come across pupils who cannot work with other pupils or fail to change behaviour. Thus, the DET workshop was organized to expose teachers to different disabilities and provide the right support and orientation on employing educational assessment to disability needs. GNHC financially supported the workshop.



3rd December 2020: International Day of Persons with Disabilities

Coordinated by the Ministry of Health, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities was observed in a virtual mode. All the organizations for persons



with disabilities joined the Ministry of Health to observe the day at BBS Studio. Persons with disabilities put up many engaging cultural programs to entertain the country on their day. The activities broadcast live by the television showed how to come together to build back better towards a disability-inclusive & sustainable post-COVID-19 world.



9th December 2020: DET workshop to GNHC Staff

GNHC Secretariat is the lead agency responsible for coordinating plans, programs and policies related to disability. In view of its importance, OPDs were invited to facilitate the DET workshop to all the secretariat staff, including the Hon'ble Secretary. Persons with disabilities facilitated the workshop through their lived experiences. The facilitators shared their lived experiences, challenges and issues they are confronted in their daily lives. They also shared ways to provide the right support services to persons with disabilities in society. The workshop also discussed the way forward on how to make inclusive plans and policies in the country so that no one is left behind.



National Lockdowns: Innovative ways of reaching out to beneficiaries

Lockdowns limit the opportunities for persons with disabilities to avail services; it also poses daunting challenges to service providers in reaching out to the beneficiaries. True to it, the two national lockdowns in the country posed a great challenge for both persons with disabilities and service providers.

Since persons with different disabilities required different ways of engaging and reaching out, organizations for persons with disabilities, thus with financial supports from UNDP, carried out awareness talks on the danger of pandemic through documentary videos. The videos were shared on social media and BBS Television to create awareness about the threat of COVID-19 and seek support from society for persons with disabilities during such a pandemic.

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One of the first videos shared through social media and mainstream media was the 'challenges and issues faced by persons with blindness during COVID 19 pandemic'. Persons with blindness, while going out, requires feeling the objects with their hands, which in a way posed a danger to their lives. The documentary videos showed how to provide support to persons with blindness by the society and at the same time how to avoid mishaps of being victim to COVID-19.

The second video was on the 'challenges and issues faced by persons with deafness during COVID 19 pandemic'. During the pandemic, access to the right information at the right time was an issue for the Deaf. Since the mainstream media lacked sign language, Deaf people were not provided with the right information about the danger of COVID-19 and its impact on society. This poses a threat to achieving 'leaving no one behind', but many deaf people were not aware of the impact of the pandemic. The video was shared to educate the Deaf community about COVID-19 hazards on human health and avoid being infected by the virus.

The third video was on the 'challenges and issues faced by persons with physical disabilities during COVID 19 pandemic'. With frequent medical interventions required, persons with physical disabilities were at greater risk of getting infected by the virus. The documentary video was shared and broadcast to educate people with physical disabilities about the risk COVID-19 posed for all and the need to stay home. The video also depicted some ways of helping persons with physical disabilities during a pandemic by society.

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