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DPOB BACKGROUND



Figure 1 Royal Patronage of DPOB: His Royal Highness Prince Namgyal Wangchuk – the XXVIth Paro Penlop

The Disabled People’s Organization of Bhutan (DPOB), formerly known as the Disabled Persons’ Association of Bhutan (DPAB), was established by a group of individuals with disabilities to amplify their collective voice. With the Royal Patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Namgyal Wangchuk, the XXVIth Paro Penlop, DPOB was officially registered with the Civil Society Organizations Authority (CSOA) on November 26, 2010.

As the only Disabled People’s Organization in Bhutan, DPOB is unique in having individuals with disabilities actively serving on its Board of Directors, Technical Committees, and Management Team.

DPOB recognizes the significant role that persons with disabilities play in the nation’s social development. The organization is dedicated to empowering them to become their own strongest advocates. DPOB serves as a vital platform, ensuring that the voices of all persons with disabilities are represented in policy formulation, legislation, programs, and decision-making processes that impact their lives in Bhutan. Moreover, DPOB provides essential technical expertise through Disability Equality Training (DET) to service providers and the general public. The organization also offers independent living skills training to individuals with disabilities, adopting a rights-based approach to support their lives.

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 wellbeing of persons with disabilities through a right based approach

OBJECTIVES:

1. Representation and Empowerment of persons with disabilities:

Our primary role is to ensure that the perspectives, needs, and voices of persons with disabilities are heard and considered in the design, implementation, and evaluation of relevant projects.

2. Policy Advocacy:

We engage with policymakers and other stakeholders to influence legislation and ensure that disability issues are integrated into broader development frameworks.

3. Capacity Building:

We work to enhance the capacity of persons with disabilities, equipping them with the skills and knowledge needed to actively participate in and contribute to various projects. This involves providing training, education, and resources to empower individuals to advocate for their rights.

4. Accessibility and Universal Design:

We advocate for the incorporation of universal design principles and accessibility features. This includes physical accessibility, accessible information and communication, and ensuring that technologies and infrastructure are inclusive and cater to the diverse needs of persons with disabilities.

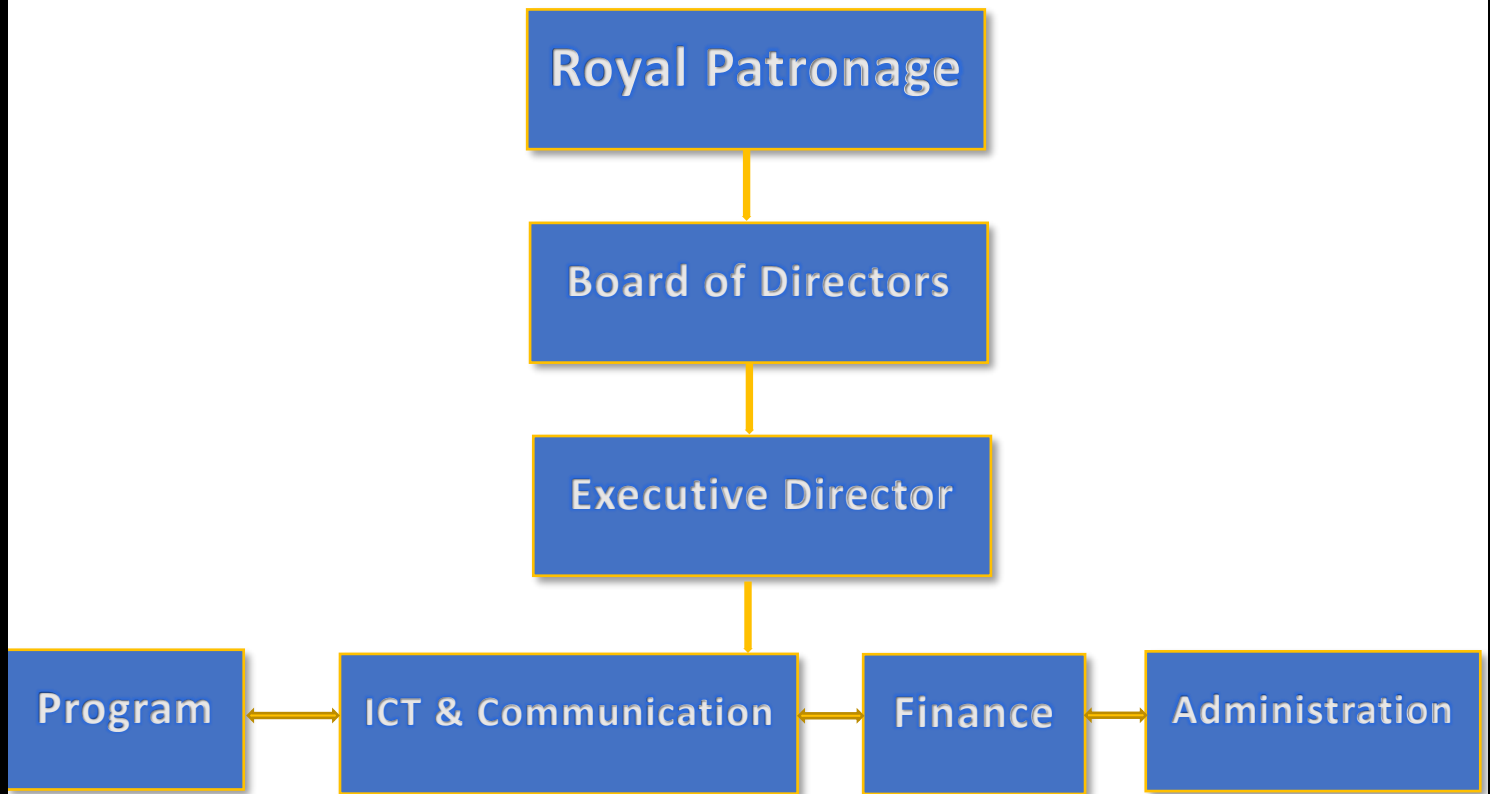
5. Awareness and Sensitization:

We work to raise awareness about disability issues within the broader community and through DET. This involves challenging stereotypes, reducing stigma, and promoting a more inclusive understanding of

6. Networking and Collaboration:

1. We often collaborate with other organizations, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and international bodies, to amplify their advocacy efforts. Building strong networks helps share best practices, resources, and information related to disability inclusion.

ORGANOGRAM



1. Representation and Empowerment:

I: Policy Advocacy:



Figure 2 Dr. Sanga Dorji sharing concerns on the reservation of UNCRPD.

In 2023, DPOB engaged with policymakers and other stakeholders to influence legislation and ensure that disability issues are integrated into broader development frameworks. I: Submission of Recommendation on the Proposed Reservation of UNCRPD

The Executive Directors of Organizations for Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), acting as representatives of the collective voices of persons with disabilities (PwDs), have presented a Recommendation addressing the proposed reservations in the National Interest Analysis for Ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of

Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) delivered during 9th Session of 3rd Parliament of Bhutan. These reservations specifically concern Articles 18, 23, 27, and 29 of the UNCRPD and have received seconding from the National Assembly. The intent behind these recommendations was to



Figure 3 Group photo of persons with disabilities & other stakeholders during two-day consultation meeting on proposed reservation of United Nation Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), Paro.

offer insights and rationale concerning the potential implications of the proposed reservations, based on consultations with persons with disabilities and other stakeholders advocating for their rights and inclusion. The purpose of this Recommendation was to articulate the concerns and insights of persons with disabilities regarding the proposed reservations in the National Interest Analysis for Ratification of the UNCRPD. The Recommendation seeks to provide relevant rationale on key points concerning Articles 18, 23, 27, and 29 of the UNCRPD, to advocate for the full implementation of the Convention without reservations.



Figure 4 Participants expressing significant concerns regarding the proposed reservations of UNCRPD,

Persons with disabilities who were presented during the two days consultant workshop at Paro expressed significant concerns regarding the proposed reservations, particularly those pertaining to Articles 18, 23, 27, and 29 of the UNCRPD. They emphasized the importance of upholding the principles and provisions of the Convention without any reservations. In conclusion, the Recommendation presented by OPDs underscores the critical importance of addressing the concerns raised by persons with disabilities regarding the proposed

reservations in the National Interest Analysis for Ratification of the UNCRPD. It advocates for a thorough reconsideration of these reservations to ensure the full implementation of the Convention without compromise. By prioritizing the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities, we can strive towards a more equitable and inclusive society for all



Figure 5 Group photo with the district and local leaders of Central Region (Trongsa, Bumthang, Zhemgang & Sarpang,

II: Orientation on National Policy for Persons with Disabilities



Figure 6 Group photo with the district and local leaders of Eastern Region (Trashigang, Mongar, Tashi Yangtse, Lhuentse, Samdrup Jongkhar & Pema Gatsel)

The national policy for persons with disabilities serves as a crucial framework delineating the rights and requirements of individuals with disabilities across key domains such as education, employment, healthcare, and accessibility. Anchored in the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), this policy underscores the imperative for nations to ensure the full societal integration of persons with disabilities. In a concerted effort to effectively implement this national policy, the Disabled People’s Organization of Bhutan (DPOB), with generous support from UNICEF, has conducted a successful orientation program aimed at district sector heads in ten Dzongkhags, spanning the Eastern and Central regions. This orientation, coupled with a Disability Equality Training (DET)



Figure 7 Glimpse of Dasho Dzongdas and City Mayor during orientation on national policy for persons with disabilities in Bumthang.



Figure 8 Participants attending practical session on how to support persons with physical disabilities who uses wheel chair.

program, equipped officials—comprising Dasho Dzungda, education officers, health officers, chief engineers, human resource officers, and local government leaders—with comprehensive insights into the policy and its pivotal provisions. Facilitated by experts in disability rights and individuals with lived experiences, the program encompassed both theoretical discourse and hands-on sessions. Participants were apprised of the legal and policy landscape governing disability rights within the nation, alongside elucidating the pivotal role district officials play in safeguarding the rights of individuals with disabilities.



Figure 9 Participants experiencing of eating meals through blind folded.

Through immersive simulation exercises, officials gained firsthand exposure to the needs and obstacles faced by persons with disabilities, fostering a deeper understanding and empathy. Additionally, attendees were briefed on exemplary approaches to delivering services and fostering the inclusive participation of individuals with disabilities within society. A pivotal outcome of this initiative was the development of an action plan tailored to the unique needs and contexts of various districts and regions. This action plan delineates specific objectives, accompanied by targeted timelines, aimed at realizing the overarching goals of the policy within each district. Crafted in alignment

with strategies to surmount implementation challenges and enhance the societal engagement of persons with disabilities, this action plan represents a tangible roadmap for effectuating positive change. DPOB extends its sincere appreciation to all sector heads for their unwavering dedication and commitment to advancing the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities in Bhutan. By fostering a collaborative ethos grounded in diversity, equality, and empowerment, we collectively

endeavor to cultivate a society where every individual thrives, irrespective of ability. Together, let us forge ahead in building a more inclusive and equitable future for all.

2. Capacity Building:



Figure 10 Participant learning Tailoring

I: Critical Skills Training for Persons with Disabilities

The second batch of 30 persons with disabilities has commenced their four-month training program, with 15 participants enrolled in each stream: ICT and Tailoring started from 15th February, 2023. The training was being conducted at Athang Training Academy and Institute of Advanced Tailoring and Fashion Design respectively. The primary objective of the training was to provide youth with disabilities with market-relevant skills in tailoring and ICT, fostering their independence, confidence, and

ability to contribute meaningfully to society. By acquiring these critical skills, participants are better positioned to pursue gainful employment opportunities and become self-reliant individuals. The training program was organized by the Disabled People's Organization of Bhutan (DPOB) in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Skills Development.

Registered training institutes, namely the Institute of Advanced Tailoring and Fashion Design and Athang Training Academy, are actively involved in delivering the training curriculum. The training program was provided by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Bhutan Resident Mission under the ADB STEP-UP Project. This funding ensures the successful implementation of the training initiative, covering various aspects such as hostel accommodation,



Figure 11 Participants learning ICT

transportation, training materials, and stipends for participants. The Critical Skills Training program represents a concerted effort to address the socio-economic challenges faced by persons with disabilities in Bhutan. By equipping participants with market-relevant skills in tailoring and ICT, the program aims to break barriers to employment and promote inclusivity in the workforce. The collaboration between government agencies, DPOB, training institutes, and international

partners underscored the importance of collective action in advancing the rights and opportunities of persons with disabilities. Moving forward, continued support and investment in skill development initiatives for PWDs will be essential to foster an inclusive society where every individual has the opportunity to realize their full potential.

II: Appointment of Acting Executive Director:



Figure 12 Glimpse of New Acting Executive Director with the Board of Directors during the appointment ceremony of Executive Director of DPOB

On 22nd April, the board of directors, management team and members of the organization appointed Mr. Kinley Wangchuk, as the Acting Executive Director of DPOB. The appointment was convened following the departure of Mr. Soanm Gyamtsho, the former Executive Director, who commenced long-term medical treatment from April 22, 2023. The appointment of Mr. Kinley Wangchuk as the Acting Executive Director was met with unanimous support and confidence from all stakeholders present at the ceremony. The collective commitment to working collaboratively under his leadership was reiterated to ensure the continued success and sustainability of DPOB's initiatives. The appointment ceremony for the Acting Executive Director of DPOB symbolized a pivotal moment in the organization's journey, marked by continuity, resilience, and collective determination. The event served as a testament to the unwavering commitment of all stakeholders towards advancing the rights and empowerment of persons with disabilities in Bhutan.

III: landscaping the Construction of DPOB Center



Figure 13 Management team with the Dantak Officials at DPOB Centre site for evaluating the landscaping of DPOB Centre.

The Officials from the Dantak Office visited to the DPO Center at Yoezerkha, under Wang gewog under Thimphu Dzongkhag. The primary purpose of the visit was to assess the progress of the DPO Center site and evaluate the landscaping initiatives undertaken by the Disabled People's Organization of Bhutan (DPOB). The officials conducted a thorough inspection of the DPO Center site to evaluate the landscaping efforts and ensure compliance with the project requirements.



Figure 14 Glimpses of successful completion of landscaping DPOB Centre

The landscaping for the DPO Center site was evaluated based on factors such as aesthetics, functionality, and environmental sustainability. The officials provided feedback on the landscaping design and suggested improvements for enhancing the overall appeal of the site. The DPOB expressed sincere gratitude to the Dantak Office for its assistance in supporting the organization with landscaping for the development of the DPO Center. The expertise and willingness of the Dantak Office team were instrumental in the success of the landscaping project.

IV: Internship Program for Social Worker of Samtse Collage of Education



Figure 15 Executive Director awarding certificate of appreciation to the intern.

Internships play a crucial role in providing hands-on experience and fostering professional development. The interns' engagement with our organization has not only provided them with practical learning opportunities but has also enabled them to contribute meaningfully to our cause. The DPO family extends heartfelt gratitude to the interns for their dedication and commitment throughout their internship program. Their contributions have been instrumental in advancing our mission and initiatives aimed at promoting the rights and

inclusion of Persons With Disabilities.

The interns have demonstrated exceptional levels of compassion and empathy towards individuals with disabilities. Their genuine concern for the well-being of our community members has been evident in their interactions and activities. Throughout their internship, the interns have displayed a strong willingness to learn and grow. They have actively sought opportunities to expand their knowledge and skills, contributing to their personal and professional development.



Figure 16 Executive Director awarding certificate of appreciation to the intern.

3. Accessibility and Universal Design:



Figure 17 Disability Inclusive calendar 2023

I: Accessible Calendar for Persons With Disabilities

Disabled People's Organization of Bhutan (DPOB) with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Produced the first-ever Disability Inclusive Calendar in Bhutan, which aims to address the needs of the persons with blindness and low vision community by providing accessible information in Braille and large print format. Those persons with disabilities, often face barriers to accessing essential information and services due to a lack of accessibility features. The Disability Inclusive

Calendar initiative seeks to bridge this gap by providing accessible information on important events and dates for daily life.

The Disability Inclusive Calendar is designed with Braille and large print text features to ensure easy access to information for individuals with blindness and low vision. This feature enhances their ability to independently access and manage their schedules. The calendar represents a significant step towards creating an inclusive society that values the needs of all its citizens, including persons with disabilities. By providing accessible information, the calendar aims to promote the empowerment and inclusion of people with disabilities in Bhutan.



Figure 18 Disability Inclusive calendar 2023

On behalf of persons with disabilities in Bhutan, DPOB extends gratitude and appreciation to UNFPA for their support in producing the Disability Inclusive Calendar. UNFPA's assistance has been instrumental in realizing this important initiative, which holds the potential to positively impact the lives of individuals with blindness and low vision. DPOB looks forward to further collaboration with stakeholders to advance accessibility and inclusion initiatives for persons with disabilities in Bhutan.

II: DPO Received Accessible Chessboard for Persons with Disabilities



Figure 19 DPOB Received 28 Chess Boards from Bhutan Foundation.

The Bhutan Foundation generously provided financial support to procure 28 accessible chessboards from Chess House, USA. These specially designed chessboards are equipped with features to accommodate individuals with disabilities, ensuring equal access and participation in the game. The primary objective of the donation is to promote sports participation among individuals with disabilities and provide them with opportunities for recreational and competitive engagement.

Accessible chessboards enable individuals with

disabilities to participate fully in chess activities, fostering inclusion and empowerment within the community. Madam Jane, representing the Bhutan Foundation, officially handed over the



Figure 20 Accessible Chess Board for persons with disabilities

accessible chessboards to the DPO management. The handover ceremony took place on March 31, marking the beginning of a new chapter in promoting sports inclusivity for individuals with disabilities in Bhutan. The DPO management plans to organize a short chess training course to familiarize individuals with disabilities with the game and its rules. Additionally, arrangements are underway to host a chess competition tailored specifically for people with disabilities. These initiatives aim to enhance skills, foster camaraderie, and promote the benefits of sports participation among individuals with disabilities. The Disabled People's Organization extends heartfelt gratitude to the Bhutan Foundation for their generous support in procuring accessible

chessboards. The donation represents a significant step towards promoting sports inclusivity and empowerment for individuals with disabilities in Bhutan.

4. Awareness and Sensitization:

I: Disability Equality Training to Training Institutes:

DPOB conducts systematic advocacy to improve outcomes for all persons with disabilities in Bhutan by attempting to influence longer-term change to ensure that their rights are respected. To defend these rights and interests, we influence and change systems such as law, rules, and



Figure 21 DET to the Training institutes & Management and Facility Members of UN Agencies in Bhutan respectively



Figure 22 DET to the teachers of various Collages and health workers in Bhutan.

practices, as well as community attitudes. Raising awareness of issues affecting persons with disabilities and their families is an important component of our work. We make sure that individuals with disabilities are at the center of all discussions and decisions, because they are the greatest persons to advise on matters that affect them. We carry out the advocacy and awareness campaigns through Disability Equality Training, an approach that involves persons



Figure 23 DET to Public show organizer/participants & the monastic institutes in Bhutan

with disabilities as the main source of information through their lived experiences. In 2023, the Organization could successfully conduct DET to the university's collages, training institutes, monastic institutes, facility members of UN agencies in Bhutan and health workers.

5. Procurement of Assistive Device and Resource Development"



Figure 24 Persons with Blindness received white cane from DPOB

The project titled "Procurement of Assistive Device and Resource Development," undertaken by Disabled People's Organization of Bhutan with the generous support of Sykepleiernes Misjonsring. The project, executed during the agreement period from June-December 2023, aimed to empower persons with disabilities (PWDs) by providing

assistive devices, fostering independence, and advancing knowledge and skills for equal rights and responsibilities.

The primary goal was to empower individual PWDs by supplying them with assistive devices, enabling them to lead independent lives and actively participate in society. Funding support was allocated for the resource development of the organization, ensuring improved services and better support for PWDs. The project was executed with precision and dedication, ensuring the achievement of its goals. The following key activities were undertaken:

Assistive Device Procurement: A comprehensive procurement plan was implemented to acquire and distribute assistive devices to individual PWDs. The process prioritized the specific needs and requirements of each beneficiary. **Resource Development:** The allocated funds were strategically utilized to enhance the organization's resources, thus, ensuring better services and support for PWDs.



Figure 25 Air Mattress & White Cane



Figure 26 Elbow Crutches and Four Legs



Figure 27 Wheel Chair distributed and used as a resource material during DET.



Figure 28 Portable Toilets and Blindfolds.

The provision of assistive devices has significantly empowered more than hundred individual PWDs, enabling them to navigate daily life with greater independence. Capacity-building initiatives have equipped individual beneficiaries and their caregivers with the necessary knowledge and skills, fostering a sense of equality in rights and responsibilities. The resource development activities have elevated the organization's capacity to deliver better services, ensuring sustained support for PWDs.

6: Networking and Collaboration:



Figure 29 Group photo of OPDs leaders during Coordination meeting of OPDs in Bhutan

I: Coordination Meeting Among Organizations for Persons with Disabilities in Bhutan: OPDs

The coordination meeting among six Organizations Working for Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in Bhutan. The meeting was convened to foster collaboration and discuss strategies for enhancing the well-being of persons with disabilities in the country. Disabled People's Organization of

Bhutan (DPOB) chaired the meeting, which brought together representatives from each of the participating organizations. The primary objective of the coordination meeting was to strengthen collaboration among OPDs in Bhutan. The meeting aimed to identify areas of common interest and explore opportunities for joint initiatives to support persons with disabilities. All six organizations present at the meeting are legally registered under the Civil Society Organizations Authority.



Figure 30 Management team with Normisjon Officials during Project Monitoring Visit.

This ensures that they operate within the legal framework and adhere to regulatory requirements. Representatives from each organization shared insights on their current initiatives, projects, and areas of expertise. Discussions were held to identify potential areas for collaboration, such as advocacy efforts, capacity-building programs, and resource sharing. The meeting also explored opportunities for collective resource mobilization to support initiatives aimed at improving the lives of persons with disabilities. Strategies for securing funding, leveraging partnerships, and accessing grants were discussed.



Figure 31 Glimpses with the officials from ADB Bhutan Resident Mission and the H.E. Mr. Hans Jacob Frydenlund, the Norwegian Ambassador based in India, visited to DPOB

Figure 30 DPOB Team with Officials from JICA Bhutan



Figure 32 Glimpses with JICA Bhutan, Lopen Maymay Einar Kippenes & Anne Råmunddal Kippenes and the Special Education Need Teachers undergoing two years master's program at Paro respectively.



7. Celebration of Significant Days for persons with disabilities:



Figure 33 Group photo of persons with blindness celebrating international white cane safety day 2023

I: International White Cane Safety Day:

White Cane Safety Day is an annual event that aims to increase public awareness of the significance of the white cane as a symbol of mobility and independence for those who are blind or visually impaired. Additionally, this day serves as a reminder of the importance of pedestrian safety and the rights of those who are visually impaired. More than hundred persons with blindness in Thimphu gathered to celebrate the day at clock tower, Thimphu. Some persons with blindness have not only shared their challenges and difficulties while walking around town areas independently but also shared some facilities and services that were made accessible and user friendly for persons with disabilities.

II: International Day of Persons with Disabilities:



Figure 34 Executive Director of DPOB with Sign Language Interpreter during the Event of IDPD

The International Day for Persons with Disabilities is celebrated globally on 3 December every year to promote the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities at every level of society and raise awareness of their situation. This year DPOB launched a Tiktok challenge, “Dra-Nyam: Equity and Accessibility for all” to create awareness on equity, accessibility and inclusion of Person with Disabilities in all the aspects of life. DPOB awarded excited prizes of Nu 15,000/-, 10,000/-, 5,000/- to the top three.

8. Direct Intervention Services to Persons with Disabilities

I. Education scholarship to children with disabilities:

The Disabled People's Organization of Bhutan (DPOB) is committed to empowering individuals with disabilities by providing access to essential services and opportunities. In line with our mission, we have awarded education scholarships to seven students with disabilities from economically disadvantaged families. These scholarships aim to alleviate financial burdens and ensure that these students can pursue their education without hindrance. The scholarships were awarded to seven students with disabilities who were from families that are unable to afford basic necessities for schooling. Each student received Nu. 10,000 to cover various essential expenses that are critical for the students' education like purchasing of school uniforms, notebooks, pens, pencils, and other educational materials and to cover transportation fares to and from school. The education scholarships provided by the Disabled People's Organization of Bhutan have been instrumental in supporting the educational journeys of seven deserving students with disabilities. By addressing the financial barriers faced by these students, we have enabled them to focus on their studies and aspire towards a brighter future. The positive outcomes observed underscore the importance of continued support for such initiatives to foster an inclusive and equitable education system in Bhutan.

II: Provided Medical Support to persons with disabilities:

In 2023, the Disabled Persons' Organization of Bhutan (DPOB) provided financial support for medical treatment to individuals with disabilities. This support primarily focused on facilitating their access to necessary medical treatment both within Bhutan and internationally. Additionally, DPOB assisted a few individuals in acquiring eyeglasses to enhance their ability to perform daily tasks and duties.