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**DISABLED PERSONS' ASSOCIATION OF BHUTAN**



**ANNUAL REPORT  
2017**

**Disabled Persons' Association of Bhutan (DPAB)**

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# INTRODUCTION

In Bhutan, there is a lack of public awareness on the rights and needs of persons with disabilities. Further, it is escalated by inaccessible infrastructure and facilities. This highlights the need to work closely with the government to support and empower people living with disabilities so that they can be integrated into the social mainstream to live a fully independent, productive and meaningful life. Although no extensive studies have been conducted to determine the types and prevalence of disability issues in Bhutan, the National Population and Housing Census conducted by National Statistical Bureau (NSB) has estimated that at least 21,894 Bhutanese (over 3.4 per cent of the country's total population) are living with various types of disabilities as of 2005 and over the years, this number would have certainly increased. The 2-stage disability study on children aged 2-9 carried out in 2010-2011 by Ministry of Education in collaboration with Ministry of Health, National Statistical Bureau and UNICEF also indicated that about 21.3 percent of children in Bhutan are living with some kind of disability. This tells that for a small country with a small population like Bhutan, we have a significant number of people with disabilities in the country. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that at least 10 percent of the population in developing countries comprises of persons with disabilities. This is an alarming trend that requires greater attention.

To make the matter worse, the traditional family support systems and community bondages are fast breaking down due to various socio-economic factors such as rapid modernization, rural-urban migration and dysfunctional marriages. As a result, people with disabilities are confronted with more serious challenges especially in rural communities. Many disabled children still do not have access to formal education either due to financial constraints or because of the lack of psychosocial support. These issues are further heightened by the country's rugged topography that makes it more difficult and expensive to develop accessible public infrastructure for people with disabilities. As a result, most of the public facilities and services are still not accessible for persons with disabilities in the country and this has been one of the greatest challenges for the disabled segment of the society. Considering all these issues and challenges, it was deemed necessary to have an association for the disabled to supplement the efforts of the Royal Government of Bhutan to educate the public on the rights and needs of persons with disabilities and to create an inclusive society for all where everybody enjoys equal rights and dignity regardless of his or her disability status.

Deeply inspired by this noble idea, a group of visually impaired persons came together in early 2010 to work towards establishing an association for the disabled in Bhutan. Several meetings were convened during the year to discuss, design and develop the entire organizational structure as per the Civil Society Organization ACT 2007. With support from friends and well-wishers, the documents for the registration of the Association was successfully completed and submitted to the Civil Society Organization Authority (CSOA) in September 2010 for endorsement. The registration was finally approved on 26th November 2010 and the Disabled Persons' Association of Bhutan (DPAB) was formally born as one of the first public-benefit Disabled Persons' Organizations in Bhutan under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Namgyal Wangchuck.

## VISION

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

## MISSION

To promote physical, psychological and socio-economic well being of persons with disabilities through inclusion and empowerment.

## OBJECTIVES

- To raise awareness and advocate on the rights of persons with disabilities;
- To promote inclusion and effective participation of persons with disabilities in the community;
- To enhance the livelihood and independence of persons with disabilities in the society;
- To facilitate the empowerment and involvement of persons with disabilities in socio-political decision making and
- To explore and strengthen the communication, coordination and collaboration with relevant organizations within and outside the country.

The Association is governed by Board of Trustees, whose members are elected from among members of the Association for a fixed term of office. An Executive Committee oversees the day-to-day functions of the Association. An Advisory Board provides technical and managerial support to the Executive Committee. The functioning of the Association is guided by its charter and the Articles of Association, as per the requirement of the Civil Society Organization Act 2007. Financial transactions and performance of the Association are subject to external auditing and scrutiny by the board and donors. Since the certificate of registration was officially handed over to the Association on 20th December 2010, the members have worked hard to lay a strong foundation for the Association. Despite consistent financial and human resource constraints, the Association has come a long way in addressing some of the needs of persons with disabilities in whatever small way possible. This report contains some of the key achievements of the Association from January 2015 to December 2016.



## CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS AUTHORITY

### **CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION**

This is to certify that **The Disabled Persons' Association of Bhutan**, located at Thimphu, Post Box 1531, Thimphu is hereby registered as a **Public Benefit Organization** under the Civil Society Organizations Act of Bhutan, 2007 with effect from **26<sup>th</sup> November, 2010** corresponding to the **20<sup>th</sup> day of the 10<sup>th</sup> Bhutanese month of the Iron Male Tiger Year**.

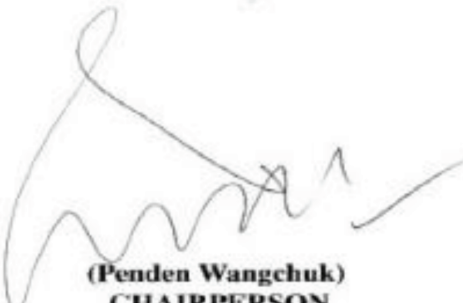
The firm is hereby allotted Registration number: **CSOA/PBO-09**

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

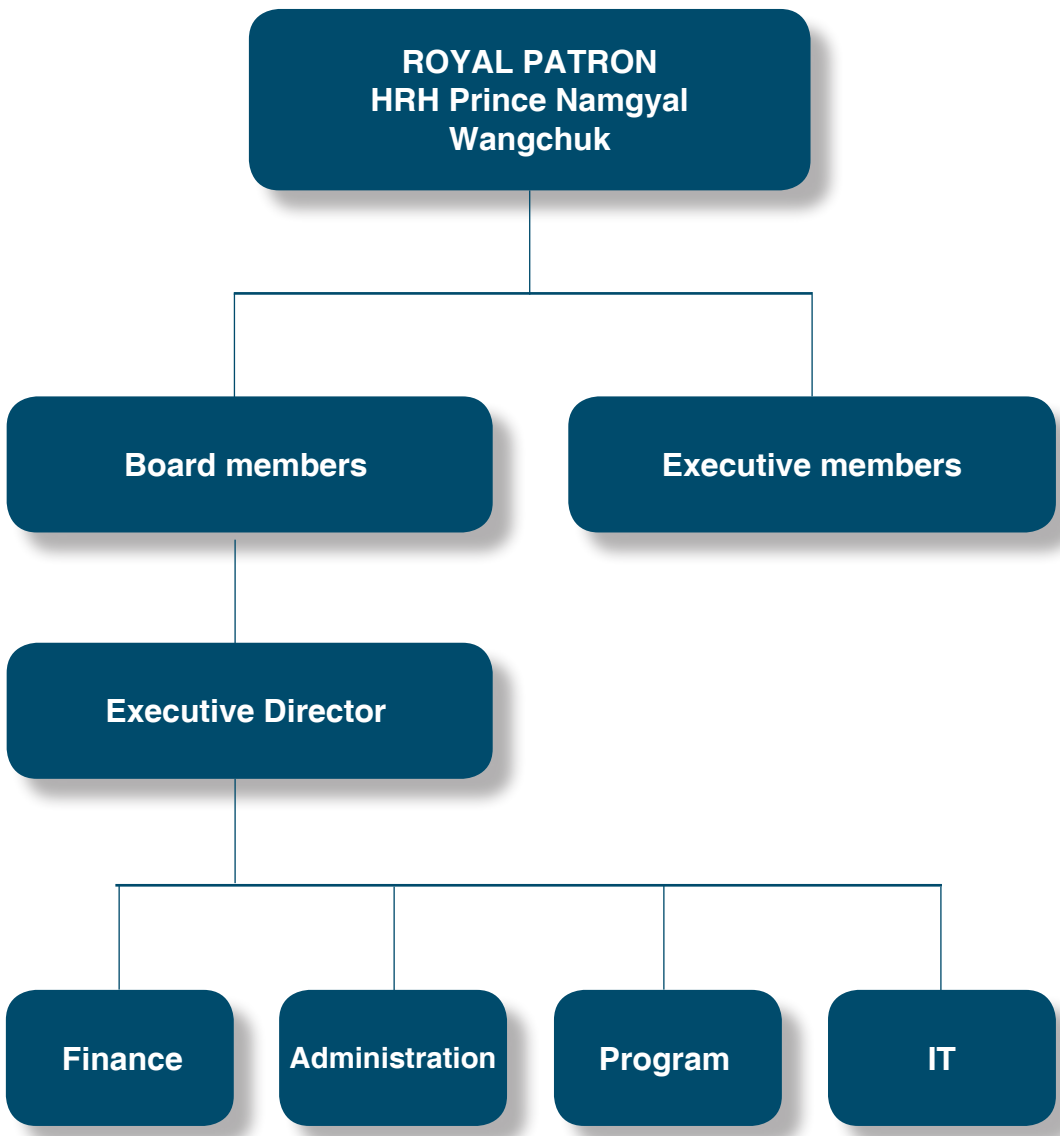
The aforementioned organization is subject to the provisions of the Civil Society Organizations Act of Bhutan, 2007 and other laws in force in the country.

Seal



  
(Penden Wangchuk)  
**CHAIRPERSON**  
Civil Society Organizations Authority  
**THIMPHU ; BHUTAN**







# 1. TRAINING & SEMINAR

## Community Initiatives in Inclusion Training



DPAB sent two women, who are working in the field of disability to participate in Community Initiatives in Inclusion (CII) training course at Adapt (Able Disabled All People Together) in Mumbai, India on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2017. This training aims to train participants in management skills to design and administrate community disability services within an inclusive framework, and to impart these skills to others.

## Sign Language summer class:



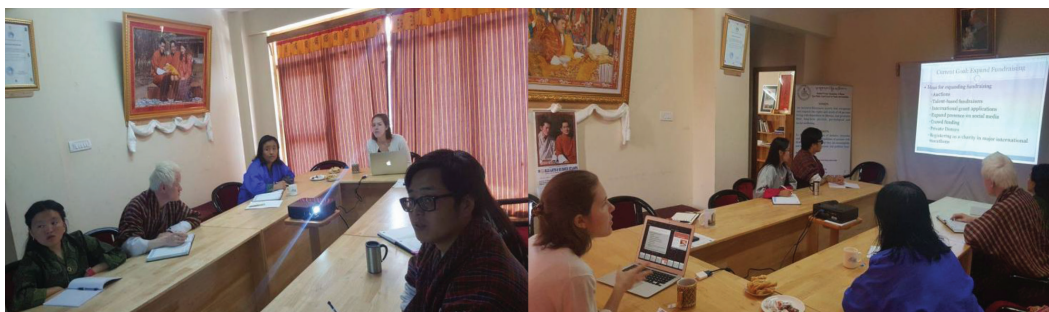
DPAB in collaboration with Wangsel Institute (School for the Deaf) conducted sign language summer class from 4<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> July 2017. Ability Bhutan Society, DPAB and families /parents/siblings of Deaf participated in the summer class. The Sign Language class included English alphabet, numbers, figure spelling, conversations, activities, food and a range of animals. After attending this class, most of the participants could communicate using signs with Deaf people without the help of interpreter.

### Sign Language winter class:



DPAB in collaboration with Wangsel Institute (School for the Deaf) conducted sign language winter class in the month of December 2017. The participants were from Ability Bhutan Society, Draktsho, Bussi-en group, DPAB and parents/siblings of persons with hearing impairment. A total of 40 participants took part in winter class. Aim of this class was to provide basic knowledge of communicating with the deaf community.

### Training on Fund raising:



Ms. Sarah from USA, who is volunteer to DPAB trained DPAB staff on Fund raising and strategic plan. The training was for 2 days.

## 2. EDUCATION SUPPORT



One of the objectives of the Association is to help persons with disabilities by enhancing their education and capabilities so that they can lead an independent life. Since most of the persons with disabilities come from an economically disadvantaged family background, it is felt that without appropriate support, they can be at the risk of either leaving their schools or not even going to school. So, as part of the Association's efforts to realize this objective, the provision of educational support to economically disadvantaged children with disabilities was initiated in March 2012. DPAB today has 40 children for pre-primary to university levels, studying in various school in the country.

# 3. INDEPENDENT LIVING SKILLS TRAINING:

## SPA Training:



DPAB supported 9 youth with disabilities to undergo high quality healing therapy and massage training at Norbu Healing Arts Centre (from March - June 2017). It was part of the Association's initiatives to create employment opportunities for persons with disabilities by equipping them with relevant skills. These trainees are working as SPA therapist in various hotels.

## Music group



Three members of DPAB who were trained in traditional music got recruited as Music Instructor In 3 Government Schools in Wangdue, Chukka and Samdrupjongkhar. They were placed by MOLHR (Ministry Of Labour And Human Resource) in September 2017.

# 4. COLLABORATIONS

## With Election Commission of Bhutan



DPAB, ABS and Draktsho had a meeting with the officials of Election Commission of Bhutan. The group discussed about the disabled friendly election, voting rights of persons with disabilities and accessibility of polling booth in the voting areas in Bhutan.

## With Loden Foundation



DPAB in collaboration with Loden Foundation organized a meeting on READ TO LIGHT BHUTAN(RTLB) at DPAB Office. RTLB is an application which will allow anyone to create audio books for persons with visual impairment or for people who

face reading difficulties by developing a tele-voice response system and a mobile application to voice record hundreds of books and provide easy access to it.

### **With task force members of UNCRPD and DPOs**



DPAB organized a half day talk on the concept of National Disability Policy and UNCRPD. The talk was given by Professor Nagase from Ritsumeikan University Kyoto, Japan to high-level task force members and officials of DPOs DPAB office.

### **With ABS, Bussi-En, MoE, MoH, JDWNRH,**



Representatives from Ability Bhutan Society(ABS), Ministry of Education(MoE), Ministry of Health(MoH), Jigme Dorji Wangchuk National Referral Hospital(JDWNRH) and Disabled Persons' Association of Bhutan (DPAB) discussed to work collaboratively for 3<sup>rd</sup> December, International Day of Persons living with disabilities in Bhutan. The discussion resulted into the first wheelchair marathon in Thimphu.

## 5. ASSISTIVE DEVICES DISTRIBUTION



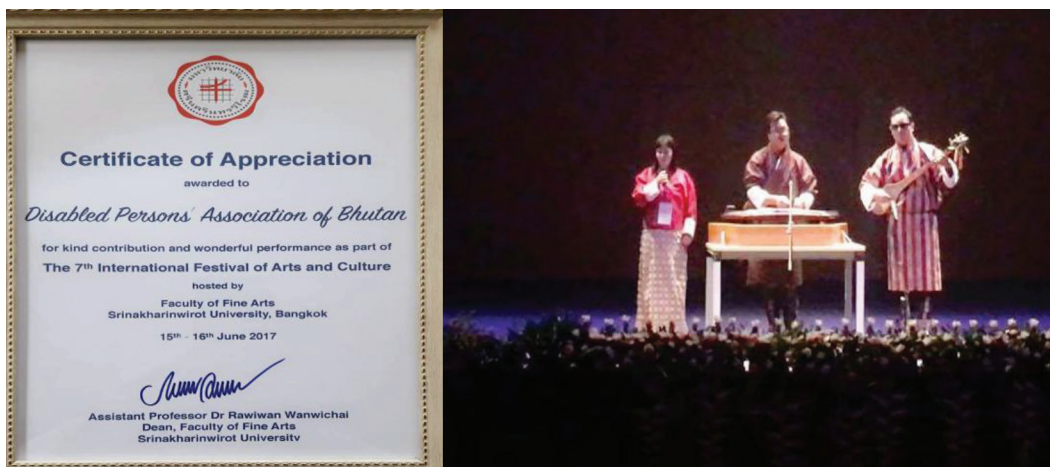
DPAB received donation of assistive devices from Physio Net, London in March 2017. These assistive devices were distributed to Draktsho Vocational Training Centre for Special Children and Youth, Jigme Dorji Wangchuk National Referral Hospital and to the individuals with disabilities in the country as per their needs.



The sanitary pads which were received along with the assistive devices from Physio Net were distributed to visually impaired trainees of Norbu Healing Centre in Thimphu.

# 6. CULTURAL EXCHANGE OPPORTUNITIES

## The 7<sup>th</sup> International Festival of Arts and Culture



Five members from DPAB successfully participated in “The 7<sup>th</sup> International Festival of Arts and Culture” at Faculty of Fine Arts Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017. DPAB was also conferred with Certificate of Appreciation for contributing to the festival, where members from 11 countries took part. This was a great opportunity and experience for the DPAB team to take part in the international festival.

## 1<sup>st</sup> Asian Chess Championship for Persons with Disabilities



DPAB in collaboration with Bhutan Foundation sent two persons who are low vision to represent in the 1<sup>st</sup> Asian Chess Championship tournament for Persons with Disabilities which was held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2017 in Kyrgyzstan. There were around 13 countries and 160 participants who took part in the 1<sup>st</sup> Asian Chess Championship tournament.



## SAMBHAV, New Delhi

This year DPAB sent 5 persons with disabilities to participate in the international cultural exchange program , SAMBHAV.

DPAB was invited to take part in the international cultural exchange program for persons with disabilities called SAMBHAV in New Delhi, India organized by the Association for Learning Performing Arts and Normative Action (ALPANA). A memorandum of Understanding was signed between ALPANA and DPAB on 13th November 2011 to promote cooperation and collaboration in various fields of mutual interests between the two organizations. As per the MoU, DPAB committed to take part in SAMBHAV event annually from 2012 to empower artists with disabilities of Bhutan by giving them the opportunity to showcase their talents during the event.

Since then, DPAB has been taking part in the event every year with financial support from India-Bhutan Foundation (IBF) which has committed to support DPAB's participation.



# 7. AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY

## Disability & Inclusion awareness program:



Disabled Persons' Association of Bhutan conducted Disability and Inclusion awareness program in Wangdue Phodrang District in the month of May 2017. There are 15 village blocks and under that, 85 village block leaders and village health workers were present.

This target group was chosen for this awareness program as they play a very important role in the community, creating connections between individuals and the health care system. They are the decision makers and planners for their respective villages in making a better community. The awareness program included model such as Disability, Accessibility, Inclusion, Importance of Inclusive education and about the Rights of PWDs. There was a positive reaction from the participants towards supporting disability issues in the country.

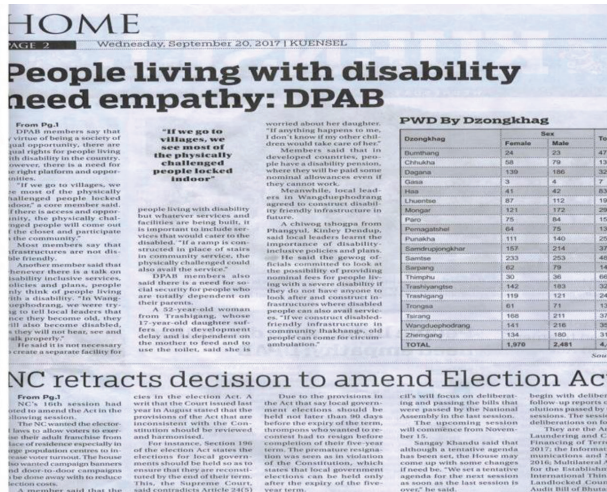


## Trip to Buddha Point



On the 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2017, DPAB organized a trip for people living with disabilities and their caregivers to Kuensel Phodrang (Buddha Point) coinciding with the Celebration of International White Cane Day to receive blessing from His Holiness the 70<sup>th</sup> Jekhenpo Treku Jigme Choda.

## Publication in Kuensel



On 20<sup>th</sup> of September 2017, National newspaper 'Kuensel' covered an article on DPAB's and the challenges faced by people living with disabilities in the country. The article has contributed toward creating awareness among the general public on disabilities issues.

# ADVERTISEMENT

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Saturday, December 02, 2017 | KUENSEL

## 3RD DEC 2017: INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



### DISABLED PERSONS' ASSOCIATION OF BHUTAN

Every 3rd of December is observed as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) around the world. The observance of the Day aims to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. It also seeks to increase awareness of gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life. Each year the day focuses on a different issue with different theme. The theme for this year's International Day is:

**"Transformation towards sustainable and resilient society for all".**

Every year, Disabled Persons' Association of Bhutan (DPAB) collaborates with relevant agencies to observe the day in different places to create more awareness on disability rights and issues within the nation. This year, DPAB in collaboration with Ministry of Health, JDWNRH (Physio Department), Bussi-En and Ability Bhutan Society will be observing the International Day of Persons with disabilities in Thimphu.

NOTICE  
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DPAB published article about 3<sup>rd</sup> December which is the International day of Persons with Disability. The article was published to create awareness about the day to the public.

## International Day of Persons' with Disabilities: 2017



DPAB successfully observed the International Day of Persons with Disabilities in collaboration with Ministry of Health, Jigme Dorji Wangchuk National Referral Hospital, Ability Bhutan Society and Bussien office Bhutan. The observation of Day was to promote an understanding of disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights, and well-being of persons with disabilities. It seeks to increase

awareness of gains to be derived from the integration of persons with disabilities in every aspect of political, social, economic and cultural life.



*Fig: wheelchair race for people with physically challenged*



*Fig:PWDs With Health Minister*



*Fig:DPAB Executive Director thanking the donors for the support*



*DPAB's donors with health minister on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2017*



