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Message from the Chair

It is my pleasure to bring forth the report on the achievements of the National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) in the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2013–2018).

We are very fortunate to be blessed by the Triple Gem and guided by the farsighted and benevolent monarchs of our kingdom. As we near the third parliamentary elections and draw towards the end of the Eleventh Five Year Plan, it is with a sense of pride and accomplishment that the NCWC presents this review.

The NCWC's work is largely guided by the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan 2008, and related Acts such as the Childcare and Protection Act 2011, the Child Adoption Act 2012 and the Domestic Violence Prevention Act 2013 and the respective Rules and Regulations that were adopted in 2015. At the international and regional levels, the country is committed to conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its two Optional Protocols and the two SAARC Conventions on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution and the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia.

As the nodal agency in the government for promoting and protecting the rights of women and children, the NCWC is strengthening the policy framework through the formulation of the Draft National Gender Equality Policy and the Concept Note for a National Child Policy. Numerous Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Guidelines have been developed to ensure the proper implementation of the Acts for which the NCWC is the Competent Authority. Strong steps have been taken towards establishing an effective and sustainable protection system for women and children in difficult circumstance and children in conflict with the law. The establishment of the Central Management Information System (CMIS) and the Woman and Child Helpline (1098) services are interventions that would further enhance the provision of well coordinated and timely services by all service providers.

Protection and care services will be taken a step forward through the establishment of the National Women and Child Welfare Committee and Women and Child Committees in all Dzongkhags and Thromdes, and the appointment of Protection Officers who will play an integral role in addressing the protection issues of women and children in difficult circumstances.

The substantive achievements of the NCWC in the Eleventh Five Year Plan would not have been possible without the support and valuable contributions from the Hon'ble Commission Members, the Gender Expert Group, the Gender and Child Focal Points, our development partners, key stakeholder partners and the members of the various Task Forces that were formed for conducting studies and important interventions.

I congratulate the NCWC Secretariat for their achievements during the plan period.



(Dorji Choden)
CHAIRPERSON

Foreword

The National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) has the honour of presenting its Eleventh Five Year Plan Report covering the period from July 2013 to June 2018.

The Eleventh Five Year Plan has been significant for the NCWC as it was during this period that moves towards strengthening the legal and policy framework were made through the submission of Concept Notes for the NCWC Act and the National Child Protection and Wellbeing Policy; and the draft National Gender Equality Policy were developed. Furthermore, the country presented the 8th to 9th Combined CEDAW Periodic Report to the UN CEDAW Committee on 27th October 2016; and the 3rd to 5th Combined CRC Report and the Initial Reports on the two Optional Protocols to the CRC to the UN CRC Expert Committee on 17th to 18th May 2017.

In the Eleventh Five Year Plan, the NCWC spearheaded and contributed to two specific National Key Result Areas (NKRAs): NKRA 13 – “Gender Friendly Environment for Women’s Participation” and NKRA 16 - Needs of Vulnerable Groups Addressed. However, as gender equality and child wellbeing and protection are cross cutting issues, interventions were also mainstreamed under other NKRAs.

In terms of addressing the needs of vulnerable groups and in light of the emerging protection issues related to women and children, the NCWC is strengthening the mechanisms for prevention, protection, response and reintegration of women and children in need of care and support in collaboration with key stakeholder partners. Several national level researches were commissioned for the first time, especially on violence against children and women, in order to generate the much needed data and evidence-based interventions.

In order to increase women’s representation in governance, leadership and politics, two national conferences were organized and the National Plan of Action on Promoting Gender Equality in Elected Office (NPAPGEEEO) was developed. A Gender Appraisal of the 11th FYP mid-term review was carried out focusing on the three pilot sectors (MoAF, MoH, MoE) for Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting (GRPB). Further, the NCWC Organizational Development Exercise (ODE) was conducted with the objective of putting in place an effective and sustainable national machinery for promoting and protecting the rights of women and children.

Our sincere gratitude to the Hon’ble Chair and members of the National Commission for Women and Children and all the relevant stakeholders for the commitment and support rendered to the NCWC Secretariat.



(Kunzang Lhamu)
Director

National Commission for Women and Children

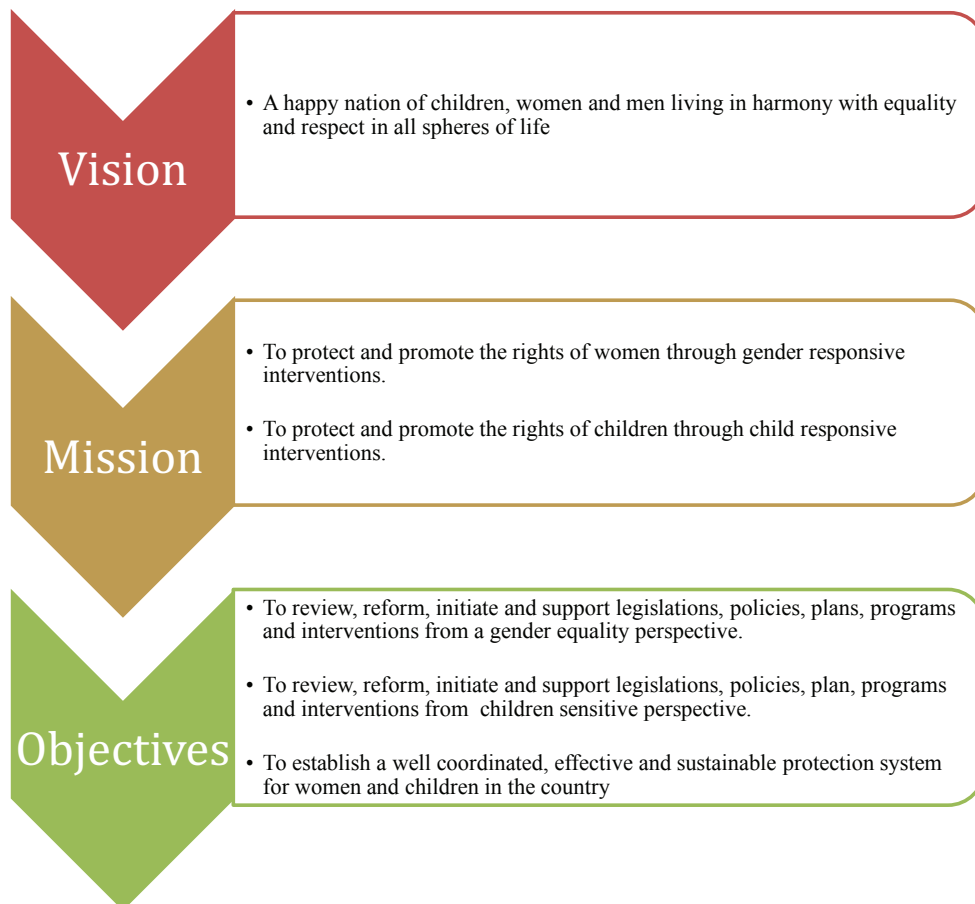
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Acronym

ADB :	Asian Development Bank
APA :	Annual Performance Agreement
BAOWE :	Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs
BNEW :	Bhutan Network for Empowering Women
C4D:	Communication for Development
CAA:	Child Adoption Act
CCPA:	Child Care and Protection Act
CCPO:	Child Care and Protection Office
CEDAW:	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CFPs:	Child Focal Persons
CMIS:	Central Management Information System
CRC:	The Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSOs:	Civil Society Organizations
DGPC:	Druk Green Power Corporation
DVPA:	Domestic Violence Prevention Act
D/TWCC:	Dzongkhag/Thromde Women and Child Committees
ECB:	Election Commission of Bhutan
FYP:	Five Year Plan
GEDSS:	Gender Equality Diagnostic of Selected Sectors
GEG:	Gender Expert Group
GEMS:	Gender Equality Monitoring System
GFPs:	Gender Focal Persons
GNHC:	Gross National Happiness Commission
GRPB :	Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting
MoAF :	Ministry of Agriculture and Forests
MoH:	Ministry of Health
MoHCA:	Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs
MoWHS:	Ministry of Works and Human Settlements
MoEA:	Ministry of Economic Affairs
MoIC:	Ministry of Information and Communications
NCWC:	National Commission for Women and Children
NGEP :	National Gender Equality Policy
NKRA :	National Key Result Area
NPAPGEE0 :	National Plan of Action to Promote Gender Equality in Elected Offices
OAG:	Office of the Attorney General
ODE:	Organizational Development Exercise
OSCC:	One Stop Crisis Centre
RBP:	Royal Bhutan Police
RICBL:	Royal Insurance Corporation of Bhutan Ltd
RGoB :	Royal Government of Bhutan
SKRAs:	Sector Key Result Areas
SOPs:	Standard Operating Procedure
TVET :	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
WCPU/D:	Women and Child Protection Unit/Desk
WCWC:	Women and Child Welfare Committee

1. Vision, Mission, Objectives and Functions of the NCWC



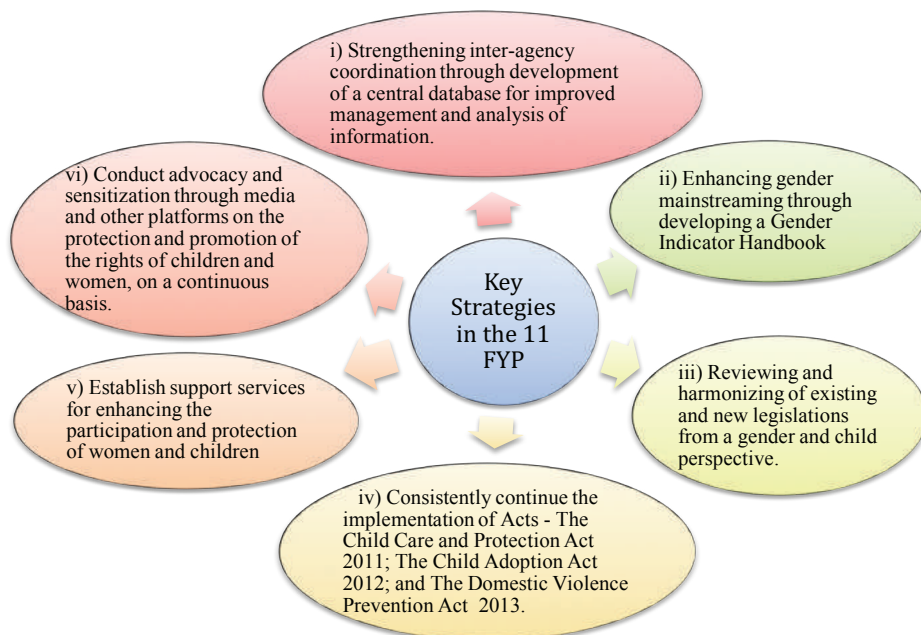
2. Achievements in the 11th Five Year Plan

The National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) in keeping with the Constitutional provisions is mandated to promote and protect the rights of women and children in Bhutan. In the Eleventh Five Year Plan (2013–2018) with the Government’s commitment towards the national goal of “**Self reliance and inclusive green socio-economic development**”, the NCWC strengthened its efforts in institutionalizing an effective and sustainable protection system and promoting the rights of women and children.

The NCWC’s mandate to promote and protect the rights of women has direct alignment with the National Key Result Area (NKRA) of Good Governance “Creating a gender friendly environment for women’s participation and leadership.” Similarly, ensuring the enhancement of children’s right to protection is a key strategy under the NKRA, “Needs of Vulnerable Groups Addressed”.

2.1 National Key Result Area (NKRA) 13: Gender Friendly Environment for Women’s Participation

Key strategies that were adopted in the 11 FYP:



Key Performance Indicator 1: *Draft legislation to ensure quota for women in elected offices including the parliament and local government bodies – the target is to draft legislation and present it to the Parliament*

The National Plan of Action to Promote Gender Equality in Elected Office (NPAPGEEEO) was developed by the NCWC after many rounds of consultations with all the stakeholders. The Commission of the NCWC and the Cabinet reviewed the NPAPGEEEO and underlined the importance of putting in place interventions to ensure a consistent and adequate number of women to participate in the elections. Such interventions include creating awareness and providing the necessary support to create a level playing field by addressing gender differences. Support systems and services also comprise of childcare crèches and provisions in elected offices, workshops and media programs portraying women leaders as role models, identifying and training aspiring and potential women candidates, and orientation and capacity building programs for elected women.

The measures proposed are long term and therefore, the reservation of seats or quota legislation is not included in the action plan. The affirmative actions for creating a demand for women’s participation (at the nomination level) in the Local Government, National Council and National Assembly elections will be reviewed by the NCWC in consultation with all the stakeholders. In addition, the Bhutan Network for Empowering Women (BNEW), a Civil Society Organization, has undertaken numerous activities towards increasing the capacities of aspiring women politicians both at the national and local government levels.

Key Performance Indicator 2: *Ratio of female to male in tertiary education increased – the target is to increase the ratio of females to males in tertiary education from 71 percent to at least 90 percent by 2017-18.*



The Tertiary Gender Parity Index (within and outside Bhutan) was 0.81 in 2017 according to the Annual Education Statistics 2017. Various interventions have been carried out and the number of females enrolled and graduating from the vocational

training institutes has increased. Nevertheless, recognizing the need to encourage more participation of females, the TVET Blueprint 2016-2026 has been developed and has specific strategies to create a gender friendly environment. Under one of its major strategies, it targets conducting a baseline study, appointing gender focal points and implementation of the strategies.

Key Performance Indicator 3: *Female youth unemployment reduced – the target is to ensure full female youth employment of 97.5 percent or reduce female unemployment from 7.2 percent to less than 2.5 percent.*

The Female Youth Unemployment Rate was 11.0 percent as per the Labour Force Survey Report 2016. Various initiatives have been introduced to address the issue. For instance, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF) continues its thrust to enhance income opportunities for the population involved in agricultural activities. Through its vegetable value chain programme in the east, farmers' groups and cooperatives are supported to produce and market vegetables to schools and local markets. As per the statistics, about 70% of the beneficiaries under this program are women hence creating income opportunities for women and reducing the economic burden on female-headed households.

Similarly, Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs (BAOWE), a Civil Society Organization initiated "BAOWE Bazar" in the most frequented area of Phuentsholing Bus Terminal, creating livelihood opportunities for over 20 single parents residing in Phuentsholing. "BAOWE Bazar" program has provided these women with infrastructure and necessary equipment. They have also initiated a program, "Touching Lives through English" which provided English courses for over 110 women in Thimphu, with little or no education. This program intends to improve their Basic English skills and communication skills, which help in educating women and reducing gender disparities due to poverty.

The NCWC in collaboration with relevant CSOs (BAOWE and Tarayana Foundation) and an International NGO (READ Bhutan) established 20 Self Help Groups with 214 female members in cardamom cultivation, diary production, rice and vegetable cultivation, animal feed production, plantation and processing of medicinal and aromatic plants, weaving and cotton growing, bamboo product making and recycled waste management. Numerous capacity building workshops and Training of Trainers (ToT) on upgraded production technologies and market accessibility have been undertaken.

Key Performance Indicator 4: *Agencies with gender sensitive policies/gender mainstreaming strategies increased – the target is to ensure that at least 20 percent of the agencies implement gender sensitive policies and adopt gender-mainstreaming strategies.*

Some of the activities carried out by the NCWC to effectively mainstream gender:

i. The National Gender Equality Policy (NGEP)

The Draft NGEP has been developed through many rounds of consultations with relevant stakeholders and after incorporation of the comments from the High Level Stakeholder Consultations held in May 2018 and the Gender and Child Focal Points Annual Meeting. It was presented to the 14th Commission meeting of the NCWC and was approved. The NGEP has also been shared on social media and the NCWC website for wider circulation and comments. Furthermore, it will be submitted to the GNHC and the Cabinet for approval.

The purpose of the NGEP is to provide an effective framework within which policies, programmes and practices ensure equal rights, opportunities and benefits for women and men



Validation Workshop on Draft Gender Equality Policy

in the family, community, workplace and in society at large. The NGEP will serve as a guiding framework, which reaffirms the commitment of the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) to ensure mainstreaming of gender equality in legislations, policies, plans and programmes.

The key objectives are to:

- Provide a coherent strategic framework of the government's priority towards gender equality;
- Strengthen accountability and operational strategies to address priority gender issues.
- Facilitate deeper collaboration across sectors and stakeholders towards a common vision of gender equality in Bhutan.

ii. Institutional Strengthening and Gender and Child Mainstreaming Strategies:

- ❖ **The Gender Expert Group (GEG):** The Gender Expert Group was established in 2016 with the objective of developing a pool of gender experts in the country to work closely with the NCWC Secretariat. The GEG is comprised of individuals who have contributed substantially to the mainstreaming of gender issues in legislations, policies, plans, programs and interventions, and has demonstrated initiative and drive of gender champions on addressing gender issues. The GEG supports the NCWC Secretariat in providing technical inputs to all government sectors, Local Governments, CSOs, private and corporate sectors, and other stakeholders for institutionalizing gender mainstreaming. Further, the GEG provides support to the NCWC in the review and formulation of important legislations, policies, plans and interventions; conduct of related research and assessments; building capacities of officials on gender mainstreaming; rolling out of initiatives such as the Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting (GRPB) and putting in place an effective and sustainable protection system for women through development of frameworks and guidelines.
- ❖ **Gender and Child Focal Points (GFPs & CFPs):**



The Gender and Child Focal Points were instituted in all government ministries and agencies, constitutional bodies, Dzongkhags, institutions, civil society organizations and the corporate/private sector. They function as the vehicles through which the RGoB responds to its commitments under the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan, and other

national, regional and international conventions by mainstreaming gender and children issues in the legislations, policies, plans and programs of the country.

The GFPs and CFPs are responsible for mainstreaming gender equality and child protection and wellbeing issues in their respective organizations. They are linked functionally with the NCWC and support all initiatives related to the promotion and protection of the rights of women and children. Currently, there are 28 GFPs, 18 CFPs and 20 Gender and Child Focal Points (GCFPs) in the Dzongkhags. Recently, the Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC) streamlined the roles of focal points for different agencies in the Dzongkhags, and appointed Dzongkhag Legal Officers as the Gender and Child Focal Points (GCFPs).

- ❖ **Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting (GRPB):** A GRPB Strategy was developed along with a training manual targeted at planning and budget officials. Three pilot sectors were selected for GRPB (MoH, MoE and MoAF) and assessments were carried out in these three sectors to identify gender issues in their sector. The GRPB is spearheaded by the Department of National Budget, Ministry of Finance and technical backstopping is being provided by the NCWC. The main objective is to institutionalize GRPB as a tool for gender mainstreaming and to ensure that the commitment of the Government towards addressing gender equality issues are translated into actions through the sector plans and budgets.
- ❖ **Development of Internal Framework to address Gender Issues at the Workplace:** To mainstream gender into sectoral plans and programs, the NCWC initiated development of Internal Framework to address Gender Issues at Workplace in 2016. Recognizing the importance of having such a framework at the workplace, the development of the Internal Framework was included as a mandatory indicator for all the ministries and autonomous



APA signing with the Prime Minister of Bhutan

agencies in the 2016-17 Annual Performance Agreement (APA). It was also included as a mandatory indicator for the Dzongkhags in the 2017-18 APA.

The Internal Framework comprises of:



During the plan period, nine central agencies (GNHC, ECB, NEC, MoAF, MoEA, MoFA, MoHCA, MoH, MoIC) and 20 Dzongkhags have developed the Internal Framework to Address Gender Issues at the Workplace. The remaining agencies are in different stages of developing and operationalizing the Framework.

- ❖ **Establishment of Childcare Crèches at the workplace:** Under the directives of the Cabinet, the NCWC spearheaded the establishment of childcare crèches at the workplace in order to create an enabling environment for working parents and ensure proper care and development of children. A Crèche Needs Assessment was conducted in 15 Government Agencies in 2017 to understand the existing situation and demand for childcare services at the workplace. Based on the needs assessment, crèches were established in a number of government agencies. Further, discussions are currently underway to establish crèche services for Drayang employees, vendors at the Centenary Farmers' Market, and the Dzongkhags.



Inauguration of crèche at the MoWHS

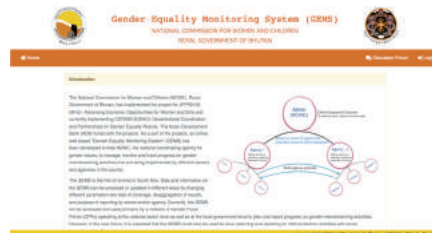
The Guidelines for Crèches Center in Bhutan was developed in consultation with relevant agencies like MoE, MoH and MoLHR. The Guidelines include physical, operational and managerial considerations.

Considering its importance, a mandatory indicator was included in the APA 2016-17 for all the ministries and agencies. During the plan period, 11 agencies (MoEA, ECB, OAG, MoWHS, MoIC, MoH, DGPC, RICBL, MoHCA, Cabinet office, and IT Park) established crèche centers.

- ❖ **Parental Support:** Several parental benefits were reviewed and revised in the civil service aimed at providing an enabling and nurturing environment for parents and children in the country. Maternity leave was increased from 3 to 6 months and Paternity Leave from 5 to 10 days for the civil servants with effect from 1st March 2016. However, it is equally important for the parents outside the civil service to be provided with similar benefits for the welfare of their families. Efforts are underway in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Human Resources for institutionalizing parental support namely: 3 months or more of maternity leave, flexi time and crèche establishment at the workplace, in the corporate and private sectors. So far, 9 corporations/state owned enterprises and private

firms have implemented 6 months' maternity leave and other parental support initiatives and 155 have implemented 3 months' maternity leave.

- ❖ **Interim Action Plans for Gender Equality and Child Protection and Wellbeing:** The Interim Action Plans were developed based on reports and studies, review of past action plans and the Concluding Observations of the 3rd to 5th CRC Periodic Reports and the 8th to 9th Combined CEDAW Report to provide guidance to NCWC in the short to medium term. The plans were also discussed and agreed by stakeholders and was approved by NCWC Commission during the 12th Commission Meeting held on 3rd January 2018.
- ❖ **Guidelines for Women and Child Friendly Hospitals:** The guidelines was developed and shared with the Ministry of Health as per the directives of the 6th NCWC Commission Meeting. The purpose of the Guidelines is to strengthen mother and child friendly considerations and facilities in all hospitals in the country that would bring multiple positive impacts in promoting the health of mothers and children in the country.
- ❖ **The Gender Indicator Handbook:** The handbook was developed to strengthen generation and use of sex-disaggregated data by all government and non-government agencies. Several rounds of consultation with key stakeholders were held and Statistical Officers from ministries and agencies were also trained on the handbook.
- ❖ **The Gender Equality Monitoring System (GEMS):** The system was established in 2016 to facilitate the collection of information pertaining to gender equality initiatives by Gender Focal Persons. The information will be used to design programs by NCWC and also help for reporting requirements at the national, regional and international levels.
- ❖ **The National Plan of Action on Child Wellbeing and Protection:** The action plan was developed to review and update the existing National Plan of Action for Child Protection (NPACP) 2012. In addition to the legal framework, the plan outlines the interventions in establishing an effective and sustainable child wellbeing and protection system in the country.
- ❖ **Organizational Development Exercise (ODE):** The ODE for NCWC was conducted to assess the current strategy, structure, systems, skills, staff, shared values and style of the organization towards streamlining and improving coordination and professionalization of services. The ODE outlines clear structure and functions to ensure the delivery of specialized, effective and sustainable services as required by the three Acts (CCPA 2011, CAA 2012 and DVPA 2013) and fulfillment of its mandate as the government machinery for the promotion and protection of the rights for women and children.



2.2 National Key Result Area (NKRA) 16: Needs of Vulnerable Groups Addressed

Key Performance Indicator 1: *No. of specific targeted interventions for vulnerable groups*

The following are some achievements in the promotion and protection of the rights and wellbeing of children and women:

i. Legal/Policy Framework



❖ **Rules and Regulations**

The Rules and Regulations for the Child Care and Protection Act of Bhutan 2011; Child Adoption Act of Bhutan 2012 and Domestic Violence Prevention Act of Bhutan 2013 were developed in consultation with all stakeholders and adopted by the Commission in January 2015.

❖ **Periodic Reports to the UN Committee on CRC and CEDAW**

The NCWC submitted the 3rd to 5th Periodic Report of the Kingdom of Bhutan to the UN CRC Committee and the Combined 8-9th Periodic Report to the UN CEDAW Committee in 2014. The Initial Reports of the Optional Protocols to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography were also submitted during the same year.

The CRC Periodic Report was presented to the UN CRC Committee on 17-18 May 2017 and the CEDAW Periodic Report was presented to the UN CEDAW Committee on 27 October 2016.

The NCWC submitted the recommendations to the Cabinet for directives on the legal and policy related concerns and issues raised by the UN Expert Committees. The legal and policy issues were also submitted to the Hon'ble Speaker of the National Assembly and the Hon'ble Chairperson of the National Council.

❖ **Harmonization of Acts**

In September 2015, the NCWC submitted comments to the Chair of the Women, Children and Youth Committee of the National Assembly on the Marriage Act (Amendment) of Bhutan 2009 and the contradicting provisions of the Child Care and Protection Act 2011, Penal Code (Amendment) of Bhutan 2011 and the Marriage Act (Amendment) of Bhutan 2009.

❖ **Concept Note and development of NCWC Bill**

Women and children are one of the most vulnerable groups and require specific interventions. With the increasing complexities of protection issues women and children are faced with, preventive and response programs need to be stepped up through the adoption of a more sustainable approach. The establishment of a women and child protection system drives the need for the delivery of professionalized preventive and protective services responding to the needs of women and children. Therefore, the possible bifurcation of the implementing and monitoring roles of the National Commission for Women and Children Secretariat (NCWCS) is vital, whereby the government social welfare organization would take the lead in implementing service delivery programs including social protection and management of individual cases of women and children in need of care and protection, leaving the NCWCS to fulfill its monitoring, regulatory and advocacy mandates. The other alternative would be the overall strengthening of the roles and mandates of the NCWC.

Given that women and children are more vulnerable to being exploited, it is imperative that a robust accountability mechanism be instituted as part of the protection system. While CSOs can supplement the work of the government, independent case management cannot be carried out by CSOs. The lead must be taken by a government social service organization, with CSOs supplementing to provide services and expertise where it is lacking in the government.

NCWC is seen as the de facto custodian of the two Conventions (CEDAW and CRC). Therefore, objectively, the Commission has a huge responsibility encompassing various sectors and the need to collaborate and coordinate with numerous stakeholders while

delivering its mandate. Given the situation, having a legal basis on its establishment and also on its roles will strengthen and leverage the NCWC in fulfilling its huge mandate.

NCWC significantly depends on the network of Gender Focal Persons (GFP) and Child Focal Persons (CFP). In view of the importance of such networks, it is only appropriate that such mechanisms are institutionalized. Therefore, having such networks and their roles mentioned in an Act will not only provide NCWC with stronger basis to use them, but it will also smoothen their functioning and improve the coordination mechanism with the respective agencies.

In view of constraints in human resources and budget, having a law establishing NCWC and having options specified in the law will enhance NCWC's reach and impact. Furthermore, given the emerging and changing nature of women and children issues, it calls for flexibility in mobilization of financial and human resources.

NCWC is seen to be the umbrella agency for all issues relating to women and children and as evident there are many NGOs/CSOs that are well positioned both from a legal and organizational perspective. Therefore, it is imperative for an organization like the NCWC to establish itself better in order to fulfill and justify its mandates. Towards this, a concept note and draft NCWC bill was developed.

❖ **Concept Note for National Child Policy**

The concept note has been developed and submitted to the GNHC in 2017. The National Child Policy will establish a coherent strategic policy framework (that is non-existent presently) for the promotion of child wellbeing and protection in the country. At the operational and programmatic level, the National Child Policy will provide specific policy directives and guidance to address issues concerning respective sectoral plans, programs and activities. In addition, the policy will promote greater coordination, accountability and ownership.

ii. Implementation of the 3 Acts (CCPA 2011, CAA 2012 and DVPA 2013)

In order to ensure effective implementation of the 3 Acts and its Rules and Regulations, the following were conducted to institutionalize a well coordinated and effective protection system for women and children:

- ❖ **Development of Guidelines and SOPs:** During the plan period, various guidelines and SOPs were developed as follows:

YEAR	PUBLICATION TITLE	PURPOSE
2016	Guidelines for Management of Shelter Homes	To provide standard procedures for accreditation and management of shelter homes
2016	Code of Ethics for Protection Officers and Social Workers	To establish ethical values and moral principles for those working in this profession
2016	Media Guideline for Sensitive Reporting of Cases related to Women and Children	To set minimum parameters of responsibility for all forms of media in relation to reporting/broadcasting/publication on and for women and children
2016	Legal and Policy Review Report on Response to Trafficking in Persons	To review the existing legal provisions and identify gaps in the relevant legal and policy framework with respect to trafficking in persons and harmonize the same in line with international standards and provisions
2016	Training Manual on Human Trafficking for Law Enforcement Officials and Prosecutors	To help prevent and identify, investigate and prosecute cases of trafficking, and enhance referrals for appropriate treatment and reintegration of trafficking victims.
2017	Guidelines for Accreditation of Service Providers	To standardize and ensure quality services for women and children in difficult circumstances
2017	Child Adoption Guidelines	To provide further clarity on the procedure and mechanism for child adoptions and monitoring the wellbeing of the child
2017	Standard Operating Procedures on Case Management for Women and Children in Difficult Circumstances	To streamline and institutionalize an effective protection mechanism.
2017	Draft Standard Operating Procedures for Investigating Trafficking in Persons Cases	To specify clear roles of agencies in preventing and responding to trafficking in persons

Most of the Guidelines and SOPs mentioned above have been translated into Dzongkha.

❖ **Establishing an Effective and Sustainable Protection System as per the 3 Acts:**

- ✓ **Women and Child Protection Units (WCPU)** - As part of efforts to provide better services for women and children and children in conflict with the law, the Royal Bhutan Police (RBP) established Women and Child Protection Division at the head office. In addition to the WCPUs established at Thimphu and Phuentsholing in the 10th FYP, nine WCPU/Ds were established in the 11th FYP as a collaborative effort between the RBP and the NCWC.
- ✓ **Child Care and Protection Office (CCPO) for Monastic Institutions** - A Child Care and Protection Office was established in Thimphu to create a child friendly environment within monastic institutions and to build the capacity of monastic officials on child rights and protection issues. The CCPO also houses a shelter for the nuns and monks.
- ✓ **One Stop Crisis Centre (OSCC)** - An OSCC was established at the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital to provide specialized services for victims of violence and abuse in 2010. Capacity building on Gender Based Violence and legal provisions were conducted for Health Workers and equipment were provided in 2014.
- ✓ **Family and Child Bench** – The Bench was established at Thimphu Dzongkhag Court in 2017. The family and child bench has been established in line with recommendations of the Committee on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and also as mandated by Section 38 of the Child Care and Protection Act of Bhutan. It provides a child friendly court environment, required care and protection to children who are either victims or come in conflict with law and help resolve the family and child related cases in a speedy manner.
- ✓ **The Central Management Information System (CMIS)** – The system was launched in 2017 as a central repository of disaggregated data and online case management system for women and children in difficult circumstances and children in conflict with the law. The CMIS will also lead to effective, well coordinated and timely case management with stakeholders working together as a team.

Launching of Central Management Information System



- ✓ **The Woman and Child Helpline (1098)** – The helpline for women and children in difficult circumstances and children in conflict with the law was established and pilot-launched in July 2018. The helpline will be officially launched on 11 October 2018 coinciding with the International Day of the Girl Child (IDGC). The helpline will provide 24/7 services of immediate response, counselling and referrals to ensure access to protection, response and reintegration services that are effective, appropriate, sustainable and timely.

Launching of Woman and Child Helpline (1098)



- ✓ **Women and Child Welfare Committees** - The establishment of Women and Child Welfare Committee (WCWC) at the national level and Dzongkhag/Thromde Women and Child Committees (D/TWCC) at the local government level including the appointment of Protection Officers in all Dzongkhag and Thromdes as mandated by the CCPA 2011, CAA 2012 and DVPA 2013 was approved by the 162nd Lhengye Zhungtshog (Cabinet) held on 19 June 2018. The mandate of the WCWC is to function as a technical body to the NCWC on protection issues related to women and children while that of the D/TWCC is to ensure the proper facilitation and coordination of cases related to women and children in difficult circumstances and Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) at the local government level. The appointment of Protection Officers and Probation Officers is currently under discussion with the Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC).

iii. Services for Women and Children in Difficult Circumstances

The NCWC receives and addresses cases relating to violation of the rights of women and children which include cases related to violence against women, women and children in difficult circumstances, children in conflict with the law and provision of counseling, legal advice and assistance. In the 11 FYP period 383 cases were received out of which 378 (99%) were successfully resolved.

iv. Adoption, Foster Care and Kinship Care Services

As mandated by the CAA 2012 and CCPA 2011, the NCWC provides adoption services both domestic and inter-country, and foster and kinship care services. In the 11 FYP period, 62 domestic adoption applications were received and processed. Out of 6 inter-country adoption applications, 2 were processed, 2 rejected and 2 are pending. Of the 11 Foster and Kinship Care applications received, 8 applications were processed and 3 are under process.

3. Researches/Studies/Assessments

i. Years: 2017 and 2018

- ❖ **Needs Assessment of Childcare Crèches at the Workplace** – With increasing number of women in the full-time workforce/employment, families are challenged with negotiating work and childcare responsibilities. The NCWC, with the support of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), conducted a needs assessment of childcare crèches facilities at workplace in government agencies in Thimphu. The study provided an understanding of the existing childcare facilities and services available to the working parents. The study finding reveals a strong need for crèches facilities with trained staff, proper sanitation facilities and government subsidization for the services in the government agencies. It also identified feasible cluster of government agencies that can share crèche facilities.
- ❖ **Study on Marriage and Cohabitation Practices in Bhutan** - This was conducted to understand the marriage and cohabitation practice in Bhutan with deeper analysis on trends and changing patterns, effects and consequences of different types of marriage practices, perceptions and attitudes towards marriage/cohabitation at young age and to understand the issues and challenges arising from the marriage and cohabitation practices.
- ❖ **Communication for Development on Child Protection Strategy** - The Communication for Development (C4D) strategy will enable communities and families to prevent and protect all children from neglect, abuse, exploitation and harmful practices; and to ensure the well-being of all children. This will be achieved by engaging, informing and motivating families, children, and influential change agents in the community to create an enabling environment for the happiness and wellbeing of all children.

This strategy will address the current social norms that do not ensure respect for and realization of the rights of all children, adolescents/youth and women; inadequate knowledge and awareness, particularly at family level, on good development practices and their benefits; and the gap of quality services.

- ❖ **Communication and Media Strategy on raising awareness and advocacy for Gender Equality** – The NCWC developed a communication and media strategy to effectively disseminate the concepts and issues related to women and children. The strategy mainly aims towards advocating for changing of belief system and social behaviors thereby reducing the incidences of overgeneralization and negative conotation based on gender stereotypes. It is also developed to address gender equality concerns through increased gender sensitivity in planning and budgeting, and in delivery of services. The strategy provides a roadmap for the Secretariat to design, implement, and monitor a series of interconnected interventions aimed at increasing knowledge base and awareness of the various sections of the society on gender concepts and practices integrating equalities in every aspect and in all spheres of life.

- ❖ **Violence Against Women and Girls Study** - The main objective of the study is to understand the prevalence and incidence of different forms of violence against women and girls, assess the extent to which intimate and non-intimate partner violence is associated with a range of health and other outcomes, identify factors that protect or put women at risk of partner violence, document and compare the strategies and services that women use to deal in partner violence. The draft report has been shared with relevant stakeholders for comments and feedbacks.

- ❖ **Situation Analysis of the Employees of Drayang** - Though the national legislations provides protection to all sections of people including the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, there exist gaps and challenges at the implementing process. The situational analysis of the employees of Drayang study was conducted to generate baseline data and information of the Drayang employees in Thimphu, Paro and Phuentsholing. It identifies the risks, challenges and different forms of harassment and violence that the female employees encounter in the Drayang. The findings of the study will guide policy and program reforms to ensure protection and promotion of their rights .

- ❖ **Thematic analysis for child protection** - The study was conducted to provide an overview of the major thematic aspects on child protection and well-being and the key challenges that the children face vis-à-vis their right to protection. It uncovers key themes in child protection for which policy attention and programme interventions are required to engender greater equity and improved wellbeing and protection of children in schools.

- ❖ **Monetary valuation of unpaid care work** - The study on “Monetary Valuation of Unpaid Care Work in Bhutan” supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is to identify and measure the social and economic value of unpaid household and care work in a form that allows comparison with other economic indicators. The study findings contribute to the overall gender mainstreaming policy and strategies, understanding the patterns of household expenditure and income, and various household activities which goes unacknowledged and unaccounted for.

ii. Years: 2014, 2015 and 2016

- ❖ **Study on Violence Against Children 2016** – As a follow up to the National Plan of Action on Child Protection 2012, the NCWC in collaboration with UNICEF conducted a three phased VAC study. Phase I (2013) identified priority data gaps through a literature review and secondary data analysis. Phase II (2014) was a qualitative research identifying the drivers of violence and knowledge, attitudes and practices related to VAC. Phase III (2016) was a quantitative research to understand the types and magnitude of violence against children in the country. The findings and recommendations of this study provides key inputs to the National Child Policy and the National Plan of Action on Child Wellbeing and Protection (NPACWP).
- ❖ **Gender Appraisal of the Mid Term Review of the 11 FYP** – a summary report of the extent of gender mainstreaming and gender responsive budgeting initiatives under the 3 pilot sectors: MoAF, MoH and MoE was conducted as part of the 11 FYP Mid Term Review in 2016. The findings of the gender appraisal informed the next steps for the Gender Responsive Planning and Budget initiative of the Government.
- ❖ **A Desk Review of Women’s Participation in Civil Service and Private Sector in Bhutan 2014** – It was conducted to identify factors that constrain or favor women’s participation and recommend establishment of an enabling environment for their full participation.
- ❖ **Bhutan Gender Equality Diagnostic of Selected Sector (GEDSS) 2014** - The study was conducted in collaboration with ADB and UN Agencies in Bhutan. It covered 8 sectors: Agriculture and Rural Livelihoods; Education; Energy; Environment; Private Sector; Transport; Roads and Services; Urban Development; and Work and Employment. The GEDSS provides sector wise information and analysis from a gender lens. The findings and recommendations were considered while developing the Interim Action Plan for Gender Equality (IAPGE).

iii. Year: 2013

- ❖ **Gender and Employment Challenges in *Bhutan*** - The study was carried out as per the directives of the Cabinet to identify the causes of lower labour force participation and higher unemployment rates of women and to explore interventions in collaboration with MoLHR.
- ❖ **Bhutan Gender Policy Note** – The note was prepared in collaboration with the World Bank and provides recommendations on economic empowerment of both women and men.
- ❖ **Study on Situation of Violence Against Women in Bhutan** - The nationally representative study on Violence against Women was conducted to generate baseline information on and collect reliable data on the prevalence and various forms of violence against women/gender-based violence in the country. The study findings have identified the extent of different types of violence and also information on the health needs of the victims. Other socio-economic variables such as education, economic status and location of the respondents were used to correlate with different forms of violence experienced by women and girls in the country. Besides, the study helped in identifying individual and community strengths and resources that exist to prevent and respond to VAW/GBV; including intervention strategies for prevention, treatment and coping methods used by women.

4. Awareness and Capacity Building

i. Capacity Building

During the 11 FYP, the NCWC provided various trainings to the Gender and Child Focal Person (GFPs & CFPs) from government agencies, Local Government, Private and CSOs to increase awareness on gender and child protection issues and related laws and legislations. Sensitizations and training on addressing gender based violence, violence against children, trafficking in persons and others related to rights of women and children were conducted on a continuous basis for the Gender and Child Focal Persons, the Gender Expert Group and key stakeholders like the Royal Bhutan Police, Department of Immigration, Department of Civil Registration and Census, Department of Labour, Department of Law and Order, Office of the Attorney General, Bhutan National Legal Institute, Department of Revenue and Customs, Dratshang Lhentshog and Civil Society Organizations (RENEW, Bhutan Nun's Foundation, Youth Development Fund, Tarayana Foundation, Nazhoen Lamtoen).

ii. Awareness and Sensitization

As a key strategy for empowering and promoting the rights of women and children the NCWC conducted awareness programmes at all levels from policy makers to communities. In 2017, under the overall stewardship of Her Majesty Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck and coordinated by the MoH, the NCWC participated in the High Level Advocacy Tour conducted in all the 20 Dzongkhags. Listed below are some of the awareness and training programmes implemented by the NCWC in the 11 FYP:



Sensitization for Local Government



Sensitization for Hon'ble National Council members

- ❖ Hon'ble Chairperson of the Commission, Lyonpo Dorji Choden lead awareness programs in six higher and middle secondary schools of Thimphu and Phuentsholing.
- ❖ High Level Sensitization for Members of the Parliament, August 2017.
- ❖ Celebration of International Days and awareness created in Schools/Institutes under Chhukha, Paro, Samtse, Trashigang, Wangduephodrang and Punakha.
- ❖ Training of law enforcement officials on preventing and responding to Trafficking in Persons.
- ❖ Training of Trainers on Trafficking in Persons conducted for officials from RBP,OAG,DoI, MoLHR, DLO and NCWC.
- ❖ Training of Trainers on Child Rights.
- ❖ Awareness programme on Gender equality, child protection and laws on women and children for the employees of industrial companies at Pasakha.
- ❖ National Children's Consultation on Eliminating Harmful Practices and stepping up Protection of Children with Disabilities.
- ❖ Two Conferences on Women in Governance, Leadership and Politics in 2014 and 2017.
- ❖ Awareness programs for Dzongkhag Sector Heads and Gewog leaders on gender equality and women's empowerment.
- ❖ Sensitization Workshop on Gender Responsive Classrooms for Principals and Teachers in collaboration with MoE.
- ❖ Training Programme for private sector on gender analysis.
- ❖ Skills Development Programme for Young People in collaboration with MoLHR.
- ❖ Multi-stakeholder forums on the role and contribution of women in economic development
- ❖ Regional Workshop held in Thimphu in 2016 on the SDG 8.7 Alliance to "eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and to end child labour in all its forms."
- ❖ Sensitization on the SOP on Case Management for women and children in difficult circumstances to relevant stakeholders.
- ❖ Training on "Institutionalization of Gender Mainstreaming in policies, plans and programmes" and Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting (GRP) conducted for GFPs and GEG members.
- ❖ Biannual meetings for Gender and Child Protection Focal Persons.
- ❖ Awareness Program on Gender equality, Child Protection, three acts and its rules and regulations in Punakha, Wangdue Phodrang, Phuntsholing, Samtse, Mongar, Trashigang, Samdrup Jongkhar, Lhuntse.

- ❖ Awareness Program on Gender equality, Child Protection, three acts and its rules and regulations in Yangchenphu Higher Secondary School, Mothithang Higher Secondary School, Kelki Higher Secondary School, Phuntsholing Higher Secondary School, Reldi Higher Secondary School, Chumithang Middle Secondary School.



The International Day of the Girl Child, Sherubtse,2017



The International Day of the Girl Child, 2018

5. Coordination Mechanism

i. Coordination Meetings/Memorandum of Understanding

The NCWC conducted a series of coordination meetings with its partner agencies (government and non-government) dealing with issues related to women and children in its efforts towards mainstreaming gender equality and child related issues into policies, plans and programmes and building a sustainable and comprehensive protection system for women and children in the country. The main objectives of the coordination meetings were to discuss coordination issues between the NCWC and agency concerned and explore areas of collaboration. It was also being conducted to create awareness on the roles and responsibilities of NCWC and issues related to gender and child protection in the country. Memorandums of Understanding have been signed with the Royal Bhutan Police; Bhutan Network for Empowering Women (BNEW); and the Dzongkha Development Commission (DDC).

In 2016, the NCWC conducted coordination meetings with seven government ministries and agencies: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA); Ministry of Finance (MoF); Ministry of Health (MoH); Ministry of Information and Communication (MoIC); Ministry of Education (MoE); Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC); and National Statistics Bureau (NSB).



MoU Signing with DDC



MoU Signing with RBP

ii. Partner Organizations

❖ National Partners

Given the crosscutting nature of gender and child related issues, the NCWC works in close collaboration with all ten line ministries of the Royal Government of Bhutan; the Parliament of Bhutan; the Gross National Happiness Commission (GNHC); National Environment Commission (NEC); Office of the Attorney General (OAG); Royal Civil Service Commission (RCSC); Election Commission of Bhutan (ECB); the Royal Court of Justice (RCJ); Royal Bhutan Police (RBP); Dzongkha Development Commission; Dratshang Lhentshog; Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital (JDWRH); Bhutan InfoComm and Media Authority (BICMA); Bhutan Narcotics Control Authority (BNCA); Bhutan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI); Druk Holding and Investments (DHI) and the local Governments. In addition, the Commission is supported by a network of Gender Focal Points (GFPs) and Child Focal Points (CFPs) for mainstreaming gender equality and child wellbeing and protection issues in sectoral policies, plans and programmes. The role that the GFPs and CFPs play is significant in the advancement of the rights of women and children, as such, the need to strengthen this role within the organizations and local governments is vital.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) that the NCWC partners with include Tarayana Foundation; Bhutan Association of Women Entrepreneurs (BAOWE); Respect Educate Nurture Empower Women (RENEW); Bhutan Network for Empowering Women (BNEW); Nazhoen Lamtoen; Bhutan Youth Development Fund (YDF); Chithuen Phendey; Loden Foundation; Lhaksam; Draktsho; Ability Bhutan Society (ABS); and Bhutan Nun Foundation (BNF).

❖ International and Regional Partners

The NCWC collaborates closely with international partners working in the area of women and children towards achieving gender equality goals and establishing a safe, protective and nurturing environment for the children of Bhutan. The UN agencies have remained an important partner with UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UNODC contributing towards researches on Violence Against Children, Violence Against Women and girls, assessments and capacity building and fulfilling NCWC's mandates. Another close partner is Save the Children International (SCI) which has contributed substantially towards strengthening the protection system for Women and Children in Difficult Circumstances (W&CIDC) and Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) through setting up of the Central Management Information System (CMIS) and the Toll Free Helpline (TFH). The Asian Development Bank is also an important partner and has supported the NCWC towards the economic empowerment of women through decentralized partnerships with INGOs like READ Bhutan and national CSOs.

The South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC) is an apex body under SAARC. The NCWC as the lead government agency for SAIEVAC's national mechanism in Bhutan, spearheaded a Project on child protection with the SAARC Development Fund (SDF) in the period under review.



6. Challenges and the Way Forward

i. Challenges

The NCWC has been progressively mainstreaming and addressing gender equality and child protection and wellbeing issues. Besides formulation of legislations and policies from a gender responsive and child sensitive perspective, coordinating, monitoring and reporting on women and children issues at national, regional and international levels, the Commission also provides a platform for receiving and investigating complaints on the violation of the rights of women and children. Identified as the Competent Authority for the three Acts pertaining to the protection of the rights of women and children, the implementation of the Acts has received priority in the 11th Five Year Plan period.

However, despite concerted efforts by the Commission, the absence of a strong legal and policy framework which comprehensively covers the mandate of the NCWC, has led to the lack of coordination amongst the key organizations working on gender and children's issues. Further, given the crosscutting nature of gender and child protection issues, and the need for cooperation and ownership from all the agencies, the biggest challenge has been the absence of adequate understanding and awareness on the issues related to gender and child protection. This often resulted in limited ownership and support from the agencies.

The robust and dynamic nature of gender and child protection issues requires adequate technical capacity to integrate and implement gender and child protection related interventions in the concerned sectors. The limited capacities on such issues in the sectors results into development of neutral policies, plans and programs and secondly leads to limited implementation of such policies, plans and programmes that are sensitive to these issues.

The CCPA and DVPA require the establishment of various institutional mechanisms including establishment of shelter services, Women and Child Welfare Committees and appointment of Child Welfare/Protection and Probation Officers. However, the absence of these institutional mechanisms hampers the provision of services to Women and Children in Difficult Circumstances and Children in Conflict with the Law.

The NCWC is the competent authority for the implementation of the three acts, and also is mandated to coordinate, monitor and report on the progress on gender equality and child rights issues to national, regional and international platforms. As such, with donor assistance declining, allocation of government budget is necessary for critical areas such as setting up/sustaining a comprehensive protection system for women and children in difficult circumstances and reporting on the status of commitments made by the government.

ii. The Way Forward

The following are recommendations for actions to be taken in order to address the challenges faced by the Commission:

- ❖ **Establish a strong and effective legal and policy framework:** Establish a strong and effective legal, policy and coordination mechanism including implementation of the NCWC ODE to strengthen the mandate and service delivery of the NCWC
- ❖ **Strengthened advocacy and awareness on issues related to gender equality and child protection:** Institutional strengthening, enhanced communication and awareness and knowledge management on gender equality and children related policies, legislations, strategies and issues.
- ❖ **Institutionalize capacities of the sectors to implement gender and child protection related interventions:** Institutionalize the roles of the GEG, GFPs and CFPs and build capacities to mainstream gender and child responsive interventions in policies, plans, programs and budgets.
- ❖ **Strengthen implementation of the three Acts (CCPA 2011, CAA 2012 and DVPA 2013) and the respective Rules and Regulations:** Implement the CCPA and DVPA in particular, the establishment of the institutional mechanisms like shelter services, committees and appointment of trained child welfare and protection officers and putting in place the needed services for women and children in difficult circumstances and children in conflict with the law.
- ❖ **Prioritize resources (technical and financial) for gender equality and child protection and wellbeing:** Prioritize resource allocation through gender and child responsive planning and budgeting to ensure an effective and sustainable protection system for women and children that is based on highly professional and quality services.

7. Conclusion

The National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC) since its establishment in 2004 has made substantial achievements in advancing the rights of women and children in Bhutan. This is visible from the legal framework for the protection of the rights of women and children and the incorporation of gender equality and child wellbeing and protection issues into sectoral policies, plans and programmes.

The Commission was established as the national machinery in the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) for leading and addressing the rights of women and children and started off with the mandate for policy formulation, coordination and monitoring on issues related to women and children. The adoption of the Childcare and Protection Act in 2011, the Child Adoption Act in 2012 and the Domestic Violence Prevention Act in 2013, proved pivotal in the strengthening of the protection system for women and children. With the NCWC appointed as the Competent Authority for the three Acts, it's mandate took on that of an implementing body.

Moving forward into the 12th Five Year Plan, the Commission's priority would be strengthening the legal and policy framework for the promotion and protection of the rights of women and children; building a sustainable and effective protection system through the implementation of the existing Acts; and institutionalizing a well coordinated gender responsive and child sensitive perspective in policies, plans and programmes. With the approval and implementation of the Organizational Development Exercise (ODE) and the allocation of adequate resources, it is envisaged that NCWC as a strong and credible organization would spearhead and lead interventions towards the achievement of gender equality and a safe and nurturing environment for children in Bhutan.



NCWC family bid farewell to the Hon'ble Chairperson and Commission Member