

# BIENNIAL REPORT 2022-2023



***“SEE THE PERSON NOT THE DISABILITY”***

Editorial:


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 *“It is of great importance that appropriate services and support remain constant and inclusive, ensuring that Person with Disabilities face no barrier to their welfare, self-sufficiency and livelihood.”*

---

Her Majesty Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck  
The Royal Parton of ABS

13th April, 2013.

Dear Ability Bhutan Society family,

Congratulations on the wonderful 'Light it up blue' event held at the Clock Tower Square on the World Autism Day on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2013.

I saw the program on the news, and also heard that the event was a great success in creating awareness about autism, and drew a considerable crowd.

His Majesty and I are very happy with the mood and commitment of our members and volunteers at the ABS and hope that together, as a family; we may reach out to many more in our communities in creating awareness and bettering the lives of those in need of our help.

I look forward to seeing everyone again soon.

Affectionately,

Jetsun Pema Wangchuck

ABS offers its tribute to His Majesty the Druk Gyalpo for recognition of ABS for upholding the sacred Bhutanese values of compassion and empathy towards the Persons with Disabilities in Bhutan.



This award was granted on the 17th of December 2016, during the 109th National Day of Bhutan celebrated at Trongsa. It was a great honour for the ABS family to receive the award in Thimphu on 22nd December 2016 with Zhudrel Phuensum Tshogpai Tendrel.

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## Message from the Chairperson, Board of Trustees

To,

1. Her Majesty the Gyaltsuen  
Queen of Bhutan and the Royal Patron of ABS
- 2 Hon'ble Members, ABS Board of Trustees,
3. ABS Members, Donors, Stakeholders & Well Wishers
4. Staff, Parents and Caregivers of the Children with Disabilities



It is my honor to present the Biennial Report of ABS for the year 2022 and 2023 to the governing body of the ABS for ratification. On behalf of the ABS Board of Trustees, I would like to offer our heartfelt gratitude to Their Majesties for their blessings, and the Royal Government of Bhutan for the continued support towards achieving the plans, programs and activities of the ABS successfully during the last two years. Inspired by the vision of His Majesty the King of a '*Just and Compassionate Society*,' ABS was founded in recognition that children with disabilities and their parents/caregivers have special needs. The Board of Trustees would like to pledge our dedication and commitment to serve the society to the best of our abilities, aimed towards creating a supportive and inclusive environment for the beneficiaries of ABS. Children with disabilities and their parents constitute the vulnerable group in our society and they are in need of more support than others. According to the National Population & Housing Census (NPHC) 2017, it is estimated that about 2.1% of our population are the persons living with some form of disabilities. In numerical terms, this is about 20,000, with visible disabilities, as many individuals with intellectual disabilities and mental health issues had been unaccounted during the last population head counts in 2017. Today, at the ABS center alone, out of the 63 children availing early intervention services, more than 1/3 are *children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), neurodevelopmental disorders and behavioral issues*, which is a matter of great concern for our society.

Towards improving our service delivery and also for the benefit of other organizations working in the field of disabilities, ABS, in collaboration with UNICEF, launched a *Handbook on Early Childhood Intervention (ECI), a Bhutan centric package*, in 2022, the first of its kind in Bhutan. Following this, a much-needed *Guidebook on Parental Self Care* has been developed and it is ready for launching towards early January 2024 and make a new beginning on the note of happy new year. It is my hope that this simplified guidebook will be helpful to the parents, caregivers and families to take better care of their own health and wellbeing, which is equally important as to provide the parental love & care to the children in their good care.

Today, some of the challenges ABS continue to face, include a reliable source of funding, shortage of staff, especially trained & qualified social workers, besides the lack of disability subject experts in the country to provide the necessary guidance and support to the social workers, parents and caregivers on regular basis as demanded by their jobs. Further, they are consistently faced with difficulties in handling children with multiple disabilities and behavioral issues, while providing interventions, both at the center and at home. They are also unable to devote enough time in caregiving, particularly those with disabilities, as they have to work for

their livelihoods, and the lack of dedicated public transport for the disabled community is an additional burden for them at large.

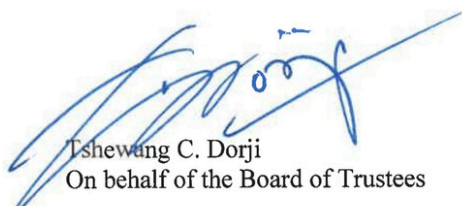
Bhutan has come a long way in addressing issues related to disabilities. The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) was adopted in 2019, aimed at empowering the persons with disabilities to live in an inclusive society. For us to move forward & address the emerging issues, it is important that the relevant government agencies, such as MoESD, MoH, MoInfrastructure, our development partners and CSOs work together to realize the objectives & purpose of this policy, which otherwise will remain in-significant & only on the paper. Therefore, it is imperative for the Government to prioritize the issues and challenges faced by the persons with disabilities and accordingly provide the necessary support, particularly the budget dedicated for this purpose to the relevant agencies, responsible for implementing the national policy for PWDs and the UN Convention of the PWDs ratified by the parliament recently. Of the many activities planned over the years, building of a model resource center in Thimphu is yet to be ascertained. As a long-term visions of ABS, I am hopeful that ABS management will continue to pursue it until it is materialized as envisioned by Their Majesties and the mission left incomplete by the founding ABS Board of Trustees & Co-Founders.

I take this opportunity to thank the Royal Government of Bhutan, and our reliable development partners, such as UNICEF, BMZ/DAHWH Germany, Save the Children, Bhutan Foundation, Helvetas, Bhutan Switzerland Society (BSS), ADB, Australian Catholic University(ACU), UK based Invest in Child, among others, as well as individual donors and supporters for being a part of our long journey towards improving the lives of the persons with disabilities, not only in the urban city like Thimphu, but in the entire country. We have come a long way working together and made a difference in their living thus far, and we look forward to your continued support towards creating an inclusive environment for our children and the vulnerable segments of our society.

The Board would also like to thank the dedicated members of the society, stakeholders and ABS staff for their support and cooperation rendered in meeting the aspirations of Her Majesty the Royal Patron in fulfilling the expectations of parents/caregivers and families of the children with special needs for now and in future.

I wish everyone a happy new year, and on this note let us rededicate our commitments to serve Their Majesties and the Society with our gratitude and renewed zeal.

Losar Tashi Delek.



Tshewang C. Dorji  
On behalf of the Board of Trustees



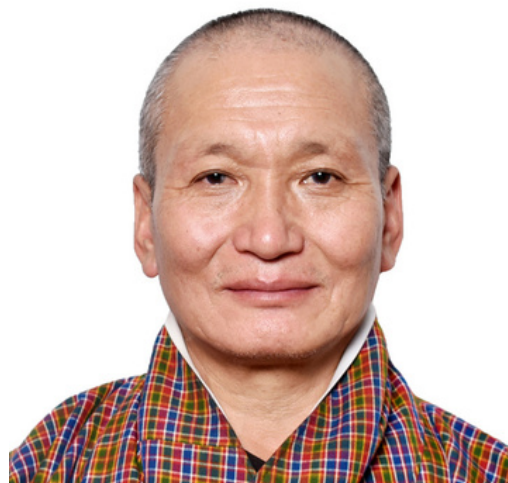
## Words from the Heart of Executive Director

*Greetings from Ability Bhutan Society (ABS)!*

To all our beloved children with special needs, their parents/caregivers and family members, including donors, supporters, advocates, well-wishers and stakeholders.

At the outset, I take this rare opportunity to greet each and every one of you, especially the readers & those embracing the works and achievements of ABS, as reflected in this Biennial Report for the years 2022 and 2023. The credit for where we stand today goes to all of you and of course to my dear colleagues of ABS, both at the center and those in the fields, directly serving the Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), primarily focused on health & wellbeing of the children with special needs. We place greater emphasis on providing direct early childhood interventions (ECI), and build on the individual child's abilities & talents with our vision "To See the Person, Not the Disability", which has been unarguably, our long-term vision, medium-term mission and the everyday mandate, justifying our existence as the only ECI center for the Children with Disabilities (CWDs) in the country, known as Ability Bhutan Society, ABS in 3 simple letters.

Through a journey of more than one decade as of December 2023, 350+ children have availed our services both at the center and home-based, of which 63 enrolled & sought interventions during the year 2023 alone. From among 350+ children, more than 100 have transited into the mainstream learning centers and vocational institutes as of March 2023. Over the years, our experience indicates that the societal understanding of disability is very narrow and limited to only those with some form of physical disabilities, such as limping, seeing, hearing and speech impairments. In the process, individuals with intellectual disabilities, mostly children have been unaccounted in the nation-wide surveys. Further, it is high time that we should be concerned about the mental health issues of those parents & caregivers living with both physical and intellectual disabilities, particularly in our rural settings.



With such limitations, our community in general has reluctance to accept & include them within the society at large and recognize their special needs for the overall growth & development. Access to the basic public facilities are still difficult and equal opportunities to participate and learn are very limited. ABS understand that each & every parent wishes to see their children grow to the fullest extent & become somebody in their lifetime. Accordingly, we are nurturing children to achieve certain degree of independence to enable them to live with some dignity within the society, and be happy with what they have achieved. For this reason, ABS adopted its mission of recognizing the ability & potential of the children through one-2-one interventions, rather than looking at their disabilities & being judgmental. To this extent, our message to the parents, caregivers and the family at large is that the so-called acceptance, recognition and inclusion must begin at home with full support and commitments from all members of the household. To others, it is to remind that just as everything else in life, our health and abilities are also subject to change and deterioration. Therefore, disability, in one form or the other, will slip into our lives at some stage, as we enter the era of Octo or Nonagenarians, and one day, for even simplest of act like sitting and standing, we will need some assistance. It's only a matter of time.

As we bid-farewell to the year 2023, we at ABS has been encouraged to work harder and give our best with declaration of ABS as 1 of the only 2 top-ranked CSOs in Bhutan, in terms of performance and public service deliveries by the Civil Society Organization Authority (CSOA) of Bhutan.

The authority conducted the performance assessment of the CSOs for the first time in the country, based on Bhutan CSO Accountability Standards (BCAS) 2023. This is quite an achievement for the society in its decade long journey as a Public Benefit Organization (PBO), servicing the differently abled children and special needs of their families & caregivers. It is indeed an indication that all of us together have done our part towards realizing the national vision of building an inclusive society, as Helen Keller, a deafblind American author/freedom fighter, the first PWD in the world to earn the bachelor's degree had said "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much". So much has been done, but we simply cannot sit and rejoice over our past glory. Sitting & wishing will not take us anywhere.

We have more to integrate, invest and innovate for a shared prosperity. We must scale up our advocacy programs on understanding disabilities to protect their rights, combat stigmatization, isolation, discrimination, and the feelings of exclusion even within their own family and the society at large. We can collectively safeguard and empower both children and their families with a greater sense of belonging within their community, so that Bhutan remains a place where people, regardless of their abilities and economic status can live with dignity, purpose and play a role in nation building. While, we commemorate our success thus far, we need to prioritize the needs of this vulnerable group and demonstrate our commitments towards prevention of the causes of both prevailing & emerging disabilities among children in our society as a way forward.

From the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank one and all for being a part our journey in taking care of both children & the caregivers. In particular, I extend my salute to our dedicated team of social workers, parents/caregivers, interns and volunteers for their commitments in serving the society with compassion, patience, and resilience that lifted the standing of ABS today, to No 1, out of 52 registered CSOs in the country, in-terms public service delivery.

On this note, and perhaps with greater hope, I sincerely encourage all of you to continue working together with the same spirit of volunteerism, towards improving the health and wellbeing of both children and their families living in the land of compassion and GNH, under our benevolent monarchs of the past, present and future.

On behalf of the ABS family, I would like to thank you all once again and pleased to join you in welcoming the year 2024 with greater hopes and aspirations to do better, not only in terms of performance & delivery, but also in raising funds for sustainability of our services, and up-hold the noble cause of ABS.

Happy New Year and Losar Trashis Delek!



Kunzang N. Tshering  
For and on behalf of ABS Management

## ABOUT ABS

Ability Bhutan Society (ABS) is a public benefit organization founded on the recognition that people with moderate to severe disabilities, primarily children and their families have special needs. It was registered with the Civil Society Organization Authority of Bhutan (CSOA) under registration no: CSOA/PBO-15 on 10 th November 2011. The concept of ABS was inspired by the vision of His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, The King of Bhutan, “of a compassionate and just society”. It was inaugurated by Her Majesty Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck, The Royal Patron of ABS, on 6th April 2012 as a project under Kidu Foundation, a novel initiative of Their Majesties as an endowment for the Royal Projects. The greatest strength of ABS today is the Royal Patronage of Her Majesty, the Queen of Bhutan, who takes a deep and active interest towards the cause of ABS and social service ventures, focused on the health & wellbeing of the children with disabilities (CWDs), inclusive of their parents & caregivers in the land of compassion and GNH.

## VISION

See the Person, Not the Disability through investment in children’s abilities for an inclusive future, and a shared prosperity.



## MISSION

Translate the Vision into Actions, and envision transformative solutions, aimed at meeting the needs of ABS beneficiaries, primarily the Children with Disabilities (CWDs), towards an inclusive growth & development, through targeted interventions, continued education, training, advocacy and awareness campaigns. ABS will integrate to grow, and innovate prosper.

# ABS GOVERNANCE

## The Royal Patron

Her Majesty The Gyalsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck,  
The Queen of Bhutan.

### BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Parent of a children with disability  
Parent's Representative to Board

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**Chajay Rinzin**

Social Worker

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Social Worker

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**Chimi Yeshi Lhaden**

Social Worker

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Assistant District Coordinator, Tsirang

**Phuntsho Dorji**

Assistant District Coordinator, Samtse

**Sanjana Gurung**

Assistant District Coordinator, Zhemgang

# STATISTIC OF CHILDREN ENROLLED AT ABILITY BHUTAN SOCIETY

Type of Disabilities	2022	2023
Autism Spectrum Disorder	11	19
Attention Deficit Hyper Activity Disorder	1	4
Down Syndrome	4	4
Cerebral Palsy	4	6
Rett Syndrome	1	1
Deaf	1	1
Dany Walker Syndrome	2	2
Developmental Delay	3	5
Speech Delay	8	9
Meningoencephalitis	2	1
Hydrocephalus with Spinal Bifida	0	1
Osteogenesis Imperfecta	0	1
Others	4	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>57</b>

Note: Children's medical condition/disability are diagnosed by the qualified doctors from the hospitals.

# MILESTONES

## Year-Over-Year



ABS was declared by the Civil Society Organization Authority (CSOA) of Bhutan as one of the top-ranked CSOs in the country in terms of performance and service delivery, based on Bhutan CSO Accountability Standard (BCAS) 2023.

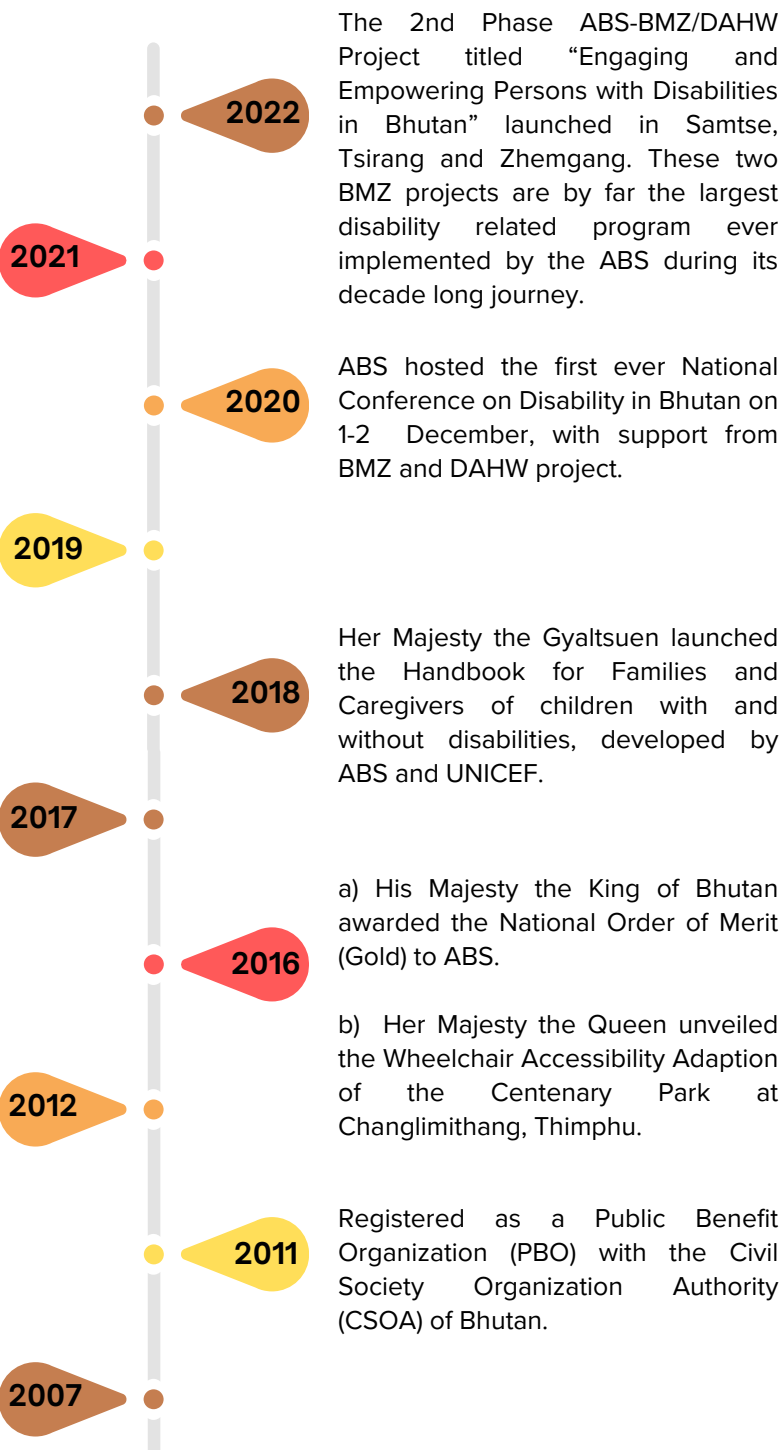
During the National Disability Seminar co-organized by ABS, Bhutan Foundation and Perkins International, a Handbook on Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) which was developed with support from UNICEF was launched.

The Project on “Social Inclusive Development for Persons with Disabilities in Bhutan” launched in Chukha, Dagana, Punakha, Sarpang & Trashigang in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and German Leprosy and Relief Association (DAHW/GLRA).

ABS co-hosted the International Conference on Autism and Neuro-Developmental Disorder on 19-21 April. Her Majesty the Gyaltshuen, Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh and His Excellency Dasho Tshering Tobgay, Prime Minister of Bhutan, graced the occasion.

Her Majesty Gyaltshuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck, as the Royal Patron of ABS, formally inaugurated the Center.

A group of working parents of Children with Disabilities came together to organize themselves towards improving wellbeing of their children through collective efforts.



The 2nd Phase ABS-BMZ/DAHW Project titled “Engaging and Empowering Persons with Disabilities in Bhutan” launched in Samtse, Tsirang and Zhemgang. These two BMZ projects are by far the largest disability related program ever implemented by the ABS during its decade long journey.

ABS hosted the first ever National Conference on Disability in Bhutan on 1-2 December, with support from BMZ and DAHW project.

Her Majesty the Gyaltshuen launched the Handbook for Families and Caregivers of children with and without disabilities, developed by ABS and UNICEF.

a) His Majesty the King of Bhutan awarded the National Order of Merit (Gold) to ABS.

b) Her Majesty the Queen unveiled the Wheelchair Accessibility Adaption of the Centenary Park at Changlimithang, Thimphu.

Registered as a Public Benefit Organization (PBO) with the Civil Society Organization Authority (CSOA) of Bhutan.

# PROGRAM I: EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES

Children with disabilities and their family members come to the center to avail the early intervention services on a regular basis. Goals are set according to the needs and capacity of a child and reviewed every six months accordingly. There are three separate classes that cater to the needs of a child, such as life skill development/ socialization, school readiness, and one-to-one intervention for children with severe disabilities. To support the children at home, parents/caregivers are equally guided.



## OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

**360+**

Children with Disabilities (CWDs) availed early intervention services 2012

**114+**

Children with disabilities have transited to ECCD centers, schools and vocational institutes since 2012

**98 Children**

(70 MALE AND 28 FEMALE)

Received early intervention services in 2022/2023

**15**

Children transited to School in 2022/2023



**Program Highlights:**

- Since September 2022, with the introduction of the Music Therapy session at ABS center on every Wednesday has brought significant improvements in children's speech and language development and enhanced focus, attention, and concentration towards the overall learning. The sessions have not only contributed to their literacy and numeracy skill developments, but also in building their confidence, self-esteem and socialization. It has helped to calm the children's behaviours and emotions. Ms. Anne Kippens, a physiotherapist by profession, initiated this program with support of the Progresso Foundation based in Norway. Ms. Anne belonged to the Kippens family in Norway, who founded Zangley Muneslling School for the Blind in Khaling, under Trashigang District.
- Ms Namgay Om, Social Worker led a team of Parents/Caregivers and a Medical Doctor to attend the Asia Pacific Down Syndrome Federation AGM in Chennai, India, from 2 to 4 December 2022.
- Beginning 2023, on every Friday, the Social Workers receive a professional development course in the field of disability and early intervention from Australian Catholic University (ACU). Session on Teleclinic with ACU also helps the Social Workers and parents to connect with professionals from outside Bhutan to exchange the international best practices.
- Mrs. Moira, a private Occupational Therapist and long-term supporter of ABS from Australia imparts free online courses for Social Workers based on needs.
- Fours Social Workers of ABS have been certified by the Australian Catholic University in practicing therapy for children with disabilities.

- A family support program is held on the last Friday(s) of every month, aimed at creating awareness on disabilities for the parents & caregivers, and as a part of their up-skilling program.
- An annual Summer Program is being organized for Children with Disabilities and their families, which includes outreach activities, community engagement and excursions.
- Organized a fundraising concert on 28th October 2023 at YDF hall with support from ABS volunteers and supporters. The event being for a social cause, it was performed pro-bono by Thimphu based renowned local artists to raise endowment fund through sale of tickets for the concert.

***In addition to the above, this is a parent's say on Early Interventions:***



*“Early intervention matters, and the earlier we detect difficulties our child might be facing, the faster we can assist to remediate them. My son was brought for Early Intervention at Ability Bhutan Society and I can see significant improvement in my child. My son can stand, walk and move properly compared to before, and I recommend other families avail services related to early intervention. As a parent of a child with Down syndrome or any other disabilities, seeking early intervention services is the best investment you can make towards making your child independent in the future.”*

***- Singay, Father of a Child with Down Syndrome***

**A parent's say on the annual Summer Program:**

Dear Ability Bhutan Society (ABS) Management Team,

*"I hope this small note of gratitude finds you all in healthy evening. I am writing to express our deepest gratitude for the remarkable initiative taken by Ability Bhutan Society in organizing a memorable day for our kids at the Scout Center in Paro. The joy and excitement on the faces of our children were palpable as they participated in the investiture ceremony for Chechey Scouts. The dedication and effort put into orchestrating this event did not go unnoticed. Your team's commitment to providing enriching experiences for young minds is truly commendable. The day was more than just a fun outing; it was a day of inspiration and learning for our kids. The investiture ceremony not only marked a significant step in their journey as Scouts, but also left an indelible mark on their hearts. The positive impact of your efforts will undoubtedly be felt for years to come. Our gratitude extends to the entire ABS team for their dedication, passion, and hard work in making this event possible. It is through your unwavering commitment that you are able to create such meaningful moments for the community. We are honored to have been a part of this wonderful day and are deeply appreciative of the warmth and hospitality extended to us. Additionally, we would like to extend a special thanks to the individuals who were involved in the cooking process as early as dawn broke. Your selfless dedication to preparing delicious meals for our children not only nourished their bodies, but also added to the warmth and joy of the day. We are truly grateful for the effort you put in to ensure everyone had a delightful culinary experience. It is through the collective efforts of the ABS team, sponsors, and volunteers that this event became a resounding success. Your commitment to making a positive impact on our community is a shining example of the difference that can be made when individuals come together with a common goal. Once again, thank you for your outstanding initiative, and please convey our gratitude to all the sponsors and volunteers who played a crucial role in making this day extraordinary. With heartfelt appreciation,*

**- Thinley Yoesel Tshewang, Parent**

## PROGRAM AREA II: PROMOTING EARLY INTERVENTION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES (CWDs) THROUGH INCLUSIVE ECCD.



Research has shown that participation of Children with Disabilities in a regular early childhood setting with appropriate supports, accommodation, and modifications not only results in improved outcomes for those CWDs, but also benefits their peers without disabilities. For children with delays, difficulties, or disabilities, access to ECCD centers is even more significant, supporting positive outcomes for both the child and the family and preparing them for inclusive future. However, access to inclusive ECCD is a significant challenge for those children due to limited knowledge and skills on the disabilities. To improve access to inclusive ECCD, ABS carried out training on early childhood intervention (ECI) for children with special needs and inclusive ECCD. The training emphasized familiarizing the ECCD, and understanding disabilities, identifying and supporting children's learning at the ECDD, and strategies to modify materials, environments, and tasks to support them.



### Program Highlights:

- With support from UNICEF, **51 ECCD Facilitators** from Lhuentse and Trashiyangtse trained in the Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program from 21st to 28th December 2022.
- **46 ECCD Facilitators** from Mongar trained on ECI program through support from Bhutan Foundation from 3rd to 5th August 2022. ABS signed MoUs with Yadi and Phendey ECCD centers in Mongar to provide access and enroll the Children with Disabilities annual.
- In collaboration with Bhutan Foundation, Perkins International, Ministry of Education and Skills Developments (MoESD), and UNICEF, two series of orientation workshops on inclusive ECCD were conducted to **36 ECCD Facilitators from 20 districts** Thimphu in February and June 2023.
- With the support from the Switzerland Society for Bhutan (SSB), **29 ECCD Facilitators** from the Pemagatshel trained on ECI program at Nanglam from 25th to 27th June 2023.



*“The training on early childhood intervention have enhanced my competences in creating inclusive ECCD and supporting the learning of children with disabilities. With the training, I am confident to accept children with disabilities in my centre”*

**-Samten Norbu, Magar ECCD Centre, Lhuentse**

## PROGRAM AREA III: ADVOCACY AND OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Disability advocacy and outreach programs are important to create awareness of disability and address the negative attitudes and stereotypes related to disability. Besides, disability awareness also creates opportunities to highlight systemic shortfalls and challenges faced by the Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) and advocate to improve services and quality of life of PWDs and their families.

ABS observes the following international disability days as an outreach program to create awareness:

- World Down Syndrome Day on 21st March
- World Autism Awareness Day on 2nd April
- World Cerebral Palsy Day on 6th October
- International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3rd December



### Program Highlights:

- **5000+ people** have attended various disability awareness days held in Thimphu, Samtse, Tsirang, and Zhemgang
- In collaboration with the Bhutan Foundation, ABS convened the National Disability Conference on 2-3 December 2022 with over **80 participants** from all relevant agencies, donors, and stakeholders, including parents/caregivers of Children with Disabilities. Disability experts from Perkins International, USA, Australia, and India shared the best practices in early intervention, parent involvement, inclusive education, and accessibility.

- In collaboration with Paro College of Education, ABS initiated the off-hour intervention for **3 children with severe disabilities**. This program provided tailored interventions for out-of-school children with disabilities, focusing on their specific needs and fostering a supportive environment within their homes. During implementations, the focus was on individualized support, family involvement, accessibility, comfort, exposure, developmental progress and inclusion.
- With the support of UNICEF country office, ABS conducted the following workshops and trainings for the families/caregivers of children with disabilities:
  - a) An advocacy and awareness program at Goen Damji with participants from 5 chiwogs of Khamaed Gewog and 5 chiwogs of Laya Gewog under Gasa district;
  - b) At Naro and Lingzhi for 5 chiwogs of Naro Gewog and 5 chiwogs of Lingzhi Gewog under Thimphu district. It was also attended by parents of children without disabilities and other relevant stakeholders, like SEN teachers, ECCD facilitators, public health workers & community leaders. The workshops created general awareness on disability, importance of early identification & intervention and ending violence against children, particularly children with disabilities. Support groups for families and caregivers of children with disabilities were also formed in each Gewog. The program reach-out to **119 participants** living in the northern highlands of Laya and Lingzhi, including Yak herders.
  - c) The capacity-building workshops for the Self-Help Groups (SHG) were held in 4 Districts of Chhukha, Dagana, Punakha, and Sarpang. The participants were also sensitized on Ending Violence Against Children (EVAC) as the children with disabilities are highly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. The participants were briefed on types of violence, its consequences, referral mechanism, and on the child protection and rights. The workshop aimed to empower SHG members to support the persons with disabilities and generate income to enhance their livelihoods. A total of **86 participants** took part in the said programs.

**A participant of the EVAC program has been quoted as saying that:**



*“Parents and family members of children with disabilities usually think their children are good for nothing and neglect them. However, through this (EVAC) campaign, I learnt that all children have equal rights, irrespective of disabilities, and it’s our responsibility to support and protect them from domestic violence.”*

**- Jamai, father of a 14-year-old daughter with learning disabilities**



- In collaboration with Project Dantak, ABS observed World Autism Awareness Day on 2 April 2023 at Simtokha in Thimphu aimed to increase understanding of Autism, enhance the quality of life for those who have it, and promote early detection and assistance. During the observance of the day, Project Dantak also conducted a Dental Camp for children and their families. Similarly, the Dental Camp for ABS beneficiaries in Tsirang was conducted on 19-20 September 2023 by Project Dantak.

### 2023: A Year of Closer Collaboration Among OPDS



- On 3rd December 2023, ABS observed the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) in Thimphu in collaboration with Save The Children, DPOB, Phensem Parents Support Group, Bhutan Stoke Foundation, Royal Society for Senior Citizens, and Changangangkha Middle Secondary School. The IDPD theme underscores the collective commitment to inclusivity, emphasizing the need for joint efforts to address the emerging issues and challenges faced by PWDs, their families, and society at large. The joint collaboration aimed in creating an inclusive environment for PWDs, fostering their participation in public spaces and contributing towards the process of nation-building.



## PROGRAM IV: ENGAGING AND EMPOWERING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, A COLLABORATION AMONG ABS, BMZ (Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany) AND DAHW ASIA.

The project supports people with disabilities in three districts (Samtse, Tsirang, and Zhemgang) in striving for empowerment and engagement within their communities by promoting early diagnosis of disabilities and providing interventions, capacity building of people with disabilities, their parents/caregivers, communities, and stakeholders, facilitating income-generation activities, advocacy and networking of and with Organization working for People with Disabilities (OPDs). The project is expected to benefit about 2250 people with disabilities, through its life-span of 3 years from January 2022 to December 2024. The activities carried out during the year 2022 and 2023 with support of the respective Dzongkhag administrations are as follows:

### 1. IMPROVING HEALTH AND REHABILITATION SERVICES

- 30 community volunteers trained to carry out baseline data collection of PWDs.
- 2747 Persons with Disabilities registered with ABS.
- 62 Health Workers trained on early identification and interventions.
- 1717 PWDs benefited from medical assessment camps.
- 267 assistive devices distributed to children and persons with disabilities in 3 Dzongkhags



## 2. FACILITATING ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

- 54 ECCD Facilitators trained in disability management.
- 116 Teachers trained in inclusive education.
- 18 Children with Disabilities were supported in terms of their enrolment in mainstream schools
- 172 participants attended the parent-teacher meetings to facilitate education services for CWDs.
- 49 Children/Persons with Disabilities and 55 parents/caregivers and families attend daily life-skill development trainings.

## 3. INCOME GENERATION AND IMPROVING THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES

- 40 participants attended long-term skills development training, such as tailoring, and bamboo crafts.
- 33 PWDs were supported with start-up capital for community-based sustainable income generation activities.

## 4. PROMOTING ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS PROGRAMS

- 10000+ participants including civil servants, local leaders, service providers, religious leaders, youth, persons with disabilities and their families attended programs during 2022 and 2023.

## 5. COVID 19 DAMAGE LIMITATION

- Developed an educational audio-visual video on COVID-19 pandemic education and protection against transmission in schools.
- 538 PWDs and their families at risk of hunger received the basic nutrition support, disinfectant, detergent, sanitary pads, and diapers among others.

## PROGRAM V: SMALL PROJECTS



- With support from SNV Bhutan, ABS organized a workshop on Transformative Leadership for Change from 6th to 7th of June 2022 at Paro to promote social inclusion and empower girls/women with disabilities as advocates for WASH in their communities. A total of **11 girls and women** with disabilities attended the workshop.
- An orientation on Handbook on Early Childhood Intervention was conducted on 23 - 24 June 2022 at Paro, for **23 participants** comprising of ECCD Facilitators, Parents, Caregivers, and staff from OPDs (Organizations working for Persons with Disabilities).
- The Progresso Foundation, an NGO based in Norway supported **2 children** from low-income background with basic necessities, learning resources, and rations for six months during the COVID-19 crisis in 2022.
- Hope 108, a charity foundation in UK sponsored **10 children** under difficult circumstances with provision of assistive devices, clothes, additional nutrition, learning materials, and nutrition.



# AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT

**ABILITY BHUTAN SOCIETY**  
**RECEIPT AND PAYMENT STATEMENT**  
 From 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022 to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023

RECEIPTS	SCHEDULE	AMOUNT (NUL)	PAYMENTS	SCHEDULE	AMOUNT (NUL)
<b>Opening Balance:</b>		1,364,208.28	<b>Expenditures:</b>		8,436,598.51
Cash-in-Hand	1	-	Program Expenses	3	5,013,403.42
Cash at Bank		1,364,208.28	Administration Expenses	4	3,423,195.09
<b>Fund Received during the Year:</b>		11,482,264.72	<b>Investment:</b>		3,000,000.00
Donations & Contribution		1,246,854.98	Fixed Deposit	5	3,000,000.00
Program Fund		6,156,293.50	<b>Closing Balance:</b>	6	1,409,874.49
Seed Money for Fund Raising:		267,039.40	Cash-in-Hand		-
Interest Earned		246,376.84	Cash at Bank		1,291,644.49
Fixed Deposit Matured		3,500,000.00	Advance unsettled		118,230.00
Other Income		65,700.00	<b>Total</b>		12,846,473.00
<b>Total</b>		12,846,473.00			12,846,473.00

**For Menuka Chhetri & ASSOCIATES**

**For Ability Bhutan Society**

  
 Menuka Chhetri  
 (Managing Partner)


  
 Sangay Rinchen  
 Accounts Officer  
 Ability Bhutan Society

  
 Kunjama N. Shering  
 Executive Director

# AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT

ABILITY BHUTAN SOCIETY  
**RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS STATEMENT**  
 For the year ended 1 JULY 2021 TO 30 JUNE 2022

RECEIPTS	SCHEDULE	AMOUNT (NU.)	PAYMENTS	SCHEDULE	AMOUNT (NU.)
Opening Balance:			1,619,251.98		
Cash-in-Hand		-			7,241,865.89
Cash at Bank	1	1,619,251.98	Programme Expenses	3	5,049,464.64
			Administration Expenses	4	2,192,401.25
<b>Fund Received during the Year:</b>					
Donations & Contribution		4,435,598.41	Investment:		1,500,000.00
Program Fund		3,337,377.58	Fixed Deposit	5	1,500,000.00
Interest Earned	2	83,428.75			
Fixed Deposit Matured		528,479.45	Closing Balance:		
Other Income		101,938.00	Cash-in-Hand	6	1,364,208.28
			Cash at Bank		
<b>Total</b>			<b>Total</b>		<b>10,106,074.17</b>

  
 (Sangay Kinchen)  
 Account Officer  
 Ability Bhutan Society



  
 (Kumang Wangdi)  
 Executive Director  
 Ability Bhutan Society  
 Thimphu : Bhutan

  
 (Kesang Wangdi)  
 Partner



## ABS INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

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### INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

- Australian Catholic University (ACU)
- Asian Development Bank (ADB)
- Bhutan Foundation
- Switzerland Society for Bhutan (SSB)
- Project DANTAK
- Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Germany
- German Leprosy and Relief Association (DAHAW), India
- Hope 108, UK
- HELVETAS Bhutan
- Opening Your Heart to Bhutan
- Perkins International
- Progresso Foundation, Norway
- Save The Children Bhutan
- SNV Bhutan
- Shuchona Foundation, Bangladesh
- UNDP Bhutan
- UNFPA Bhutan
- UNICEF Bhutan

### NATIONAL PARTNERS

- Bhutan Insurance Limited
- Bhutan Stroke Foundation
- Bhutan Toilet Organization (BTO)
- Civil Society Organization Authority (CSOA) of Bhutan
- Disabled People's Organization of Bhutan (DPOB)
- Draktsho Vocational Training Center for Special Children and Youth
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Education & Skills Development
- National Commission for Women and Children (NCWC)
- Nazhoen Lamtoen
- Paro College of Education
- Phensem Parents Support Group
- RENEW
- Royal Society for Senior Citizens (RSSC)
- Samtse Dzongkhag Administration
- Thimphu Thromde
- Tsirang Dzongkhag Administration
- Zhemgang Dzongkhag Administration

## WAYS TO GIVE

### NATIONAL DONORS

Cash/Cheque may be handed over directly at the ABS office in Thimphu (or) Cash/Cheque may be wired into the ABS bank account.

T Bank Ltd. Acc. No.: 77777005865003

Bank of Bhutan Acc. No.: 100921109

Bhutan National Bank: 0000067934014

Druk PNB Acc. No.: 110210009621

### INTERNATIONAL DONORS

Intermediary Bank for online transfer option:

State Bank of India,  
460 Park Avenue, New York, USA.

Swift Code: SBINUS33XXX

Routing No. 026009140

Beneficiary Bank Name: T Bank Limited

Beneficiary Bank Account Number: 77608355520001

Swift Code: TBBTBTBTXXX

Ultimate Beneficiary Name: Ability Bhutan Society

Ultimate Beneficiary's Account No. 77777005865003

Ultimate Beneficiary Address: PO Box 1715, Thimphu, Bhutan



ABS sustain its efforts in providing much needed services to children and their families living with disabilities in our society, through invaluable support from both institutional and individuals. Your kind assistance is vital in empowering the children with disabilities in reaching to their fullest potential. Your generosity can help us achieve our mission of improving the quality of their lives and realize their dream to live with dignity within our extended family system, one day in their life-time.

***Be Kind and it's always Possible!***

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABS would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the generous donors, both national and international, the Civil Society Organization Authority (CSOA) of Bhutan, our development partners, standing instruction (SI) members, individual supporters, volunteers and all our valued well-wishers for the good-wills bestowed upon us so far. Your continued assistance will go a long way in the lives of children and families living with disabilities in the land of compassion and GNH.

**THANK YOU!**

**“If you want to go fast, go alone, if you want to go further, go together.”**

**- African Proverb**



## WAY FORWARD

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ABS will always strive to strengthen its collaboration with its development partners, improve & extend its services to all those people living with disabilities in Bhutan, by reinforcing its resources and reach-outs to the unreached. ABS is determined to uphold the broader national policy of leave no-one behind, with focus on its vision to look at the person, not the disability towards an inclusive future. For realization of all those noble thoughts and initiatives, ABS will continue its efforts in building our partnerships with all the stakeholders working in the field of disability, both within and abroad.

During 2024, ABS in collaboration with BMZ/DAH project, will focus on social inclusion and empowering the persons with disabilities, their parents/caregivers, and the community at large in three project districts, through which ABS intends to bring the various stakeholders at all levels, like ECCD facilitators, special education teachers, principals, public health workers, and the local leaders to come together to uphold the noble cause of ABS.


We are also working on a new project to collaborate with a UK based InvestInChild to continue working towards the wellbeing of PWDs in Bhutan and improve their livelihoods. Further, in line with our vision, and more importantly for future sustainability of the ABS intervention center, we will strive to build a well-equipped disable-friendly resource center, something to be called a home-away from home for the persons with disabilities. This will be a model center with universal design for providing early intervention services with respect and dignity, meeting the requirements of 21 st century. Among others, it will include the following facilities accessible to the PWDs and sustainability of ABS, as a Public Benefit Organization (PBO):


- i. Spacious Therapy Rooms, inclusive of accessible restrooms
- ii. Library & IT Center
- iii. Training and Conference halls
- iv. Management Office & Board Rooms
- v. Dormitory with self-service facilities: a home-away from home for those coming from far-flung and low-income brackets of our society.
- vi. Quality Canteen for nutrition supplements
- vii. Disabled-friendly playgrounds, mini-parks & garden


In addition, we will continue building capacity of our social workers, parents/caregivers, volunteers and interns in close collaboration with the government and through increased networking with our donors, development partners, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders, including the private/corporate sectors and individual supporters.





**ABILITY BHUTAN SOCIETY**

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 @abilitybhutansociety

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