**RENEW Founder’s Day Press release**

**11th May 2017**

**RENEW (**Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women)under the Royal patronage of Her Majesty Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck observes Founder’s day at the Tara Zhingkham Lhadron Lhakhang, Parigzampa on May 11th, 2017.

*“My message is very clear to all those of you who still continue to suffer in silence, gather the courage to speak up if you are being abused- You do not have to face it alone”*

-Her Majesty the Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck

On this Founders Day we pay tribute to Her Majesty the Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck for her contributions to the country through her Royal patronage to various charitable organizations which includes:

1. RENEW was established in 2004 as a Civil Society Organization mandated to empower women and children with a special emphasis on survivors of Domestic Violence, Sexual and Gender based Violence.

**Highlights:**

* The RENEW Crisis Center was operational in 2008 with fund support from the Government of India.
* Gawailing Happy Home a safe house for victims of domestic, sexual and gender- based violence was inaugurated in 2015.
* RENEW-CBSS established its Community based support systems in 2005. Today, CBSS is a network of over 3500 volunteers registered with RENEW throughout the country.
* DAISAN or Druk Adolescent Initiative for Sexual Awareness Network, a youth network to raise awareness on sexual and reproductive health amongst adolescents was launched in 2011.
* Yeshey Dawa -A lead protagonist representing an embodiment of liberation, compassion and actions was created by RENEW in 2015 to educate people on the legal provisions for women and children’s rights.
* RENEW- Micro Finance was established in 2017 in collaboration with German Savings Bank Foundation for International Cooperation in 2017. It’s services have expanded to eight Dzongkhags and has enrolled over 10,000 members as a licensed Micro Finance institute by the Royal Monetary Authority.
* Bhutan Board for Certified Counselors or BBCC was established in 2011 in collaboration with the National Board for Certified Counselors, USA with the objective to expand mental health and counseling services in the country.
* Creative Minds Busy Fingers – Livelihood Skills Training programmes funded by FIDA International was initiated in 2011, which has expanded its services to 8 Dzongkhags to date.

RENEW has benefited all sections of society through its services:

* Cases handled by RENEW- 2753 since 2009
* Counseling- 2896 clients since 2004
* Gawailing Happy Home- 722 clients since 2016

1. As the **UNFPA Goodwill Ambassador** Her Majesty travels extensively across the nation to address priority health and social issues and spreads awareness on HIV/STI and family planning to communities. Her Majesty campaigns against social stigmas related to many issues including HIV/AIDS and the survivors of Gender Based Violence.

* Her Majesty has initiated a Nation-wide High level Advocacy Tour 2016-2017 in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and has completed the tour of 14 Dzongkhags to date.

Her Majesty has also made a significant contribution towards the preservation of Bhutan’s rich cultural heritage. Her Majesty has initiated and supported key charities for the preservation of Bhutan’s Textile traditions.

III. **Royal Textile Academy**

RTA of Bhutan is a registered CSO founded in May 2005 under the Royal Patronage of Her Majesty Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck. The RTA was established to preserve and promote the unique and traditions of Bhutan. Textiles are an integral component of our culture heritage thus it furthers one of the guiding principles of GNH to preserve and promote the Bhutanese culture.

**Highlights**:

* Conducted 11 in-country exhibition from 2013-2017
* Conducted 4 international exhibitions
* Successfully conducted 13 weaving training programmes
* Hosted international and national events at the RTA premises

IV. **Textile Museum**

Textile Museum, DoC, MoHCA was established in 2001 under the royal patronage of her Majesty the Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck. The museum was established to create a better understanding and inculcate a sense of pride for Bhutan’s rich textile heritage, which is symbol of our national identity. The textile museum is presently located in RTA premises and is the national center to collect, document, preserve, interpret and display Bhutan’s textile heritage.

Highlights:

* Successfully conducted 11 thematic exhibitions in the country from 2006-2016.
* Conducted 7 international exhibitions in Augsburg, Germany in 2008, NID-Ahmedabad, India in 2011, Kuwait in 2012, ICCR, New Delhi in 2013, National Gallery, Canberra, Australia in 2014, and Royal Bridges, Dubai, UAE in 2016.
* Organized 11 National Design Competitions from 2006-2016.
* Organized 6 National Crafts Festivals from 2006-2011.
* Acquired a sizable permanent collection of 1043 requisite textile artifacts from 2001-2016.
* Organized 4 textile conservation workshops for monastic textile collections
* Developed and implemented the strategic collections management policy and published various research based articles on Bhutanese textiles.

V. **Gyalyum Charitable Trust**

Gyalyum Charitable Trust (‘the Trust’) was registered with the civil Society Organization Authority under the Civil Society Organization’s Act of Bhutan 2007 as a public Benefit Organization to foster cooperation between RENEW, RTA and chapters in pursuance of their aims, objectives and the plans.

The Trust was established to ensure the long-term sustainability of the charitable organizations so that the indispensible services provided by them will continue to expand and positively benefit all sections of society.

The chapters under Trust are:

1. Gyalyum Scholarship Programme
2. Gyalyum Scholarship Initiative
3. The Craft Gallery

**Highlights:**

* Her Majesty The Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck and Her Royal Highness Ashi Eeuphelma Choden Wangchuck launched the Trust on January 12th 2016.
* Gyalyum Scholarship Programme- Currently two students have received scholarship through this programme in Thailand and Sri Lanka. It provides scholarships for further education to deserving candidates at national and international educational institutes and help them to continue their education.
* The Craft Gallery- Inaugurated on April 3rd 2017. It promotes all forms of Bhutanese handicrafts, identify avenues to promote marketing the products and generate income to support the development of Bhutanese art.
* In collaboration with RENEW, Gawailing Happy Home exhibited Bhutanese textiles and crafts at the exhibition held for Druk Asia’s Travel Fair at ION Orchard Mall in Singapore in October 2016.

Her Majesty the Gyalyum’s selfless dedication and her efforts to improve the welfare of disadvantaged and marginalized have been recognized at the highest levels. Both RENEW and the Royal Textile Academy of Bhutan were conferred by His Majesty the king Jigme khesar Namgyel Wangchuck the national order of Merit (1st class) on December 17th 2016. The highest honor awarded to Civil Society Organization’s for distinguished and meritorious service to the state.

On Founders Day we celebrate Her Majesty the Gyalyum Sangay Choden Wangchuck’s contribution to the country to various charitable organizations that they may continue to uplift the lives of every Bhutanese by supporting their endeavors and helping create new opportunities for a better life.

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