



# Presentation of the organizations

## Renew Bhutan

- Non- profit organization that campaigns to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and children.
- ECPAT International

Global network of 102 organizations in 93 countries whose mission is to fight Sexual Exploitation of Children (SEC).



# Sexual Exploitation of children in Bhutan

Catherine Mbengue

UPR 33 Pre-Session- Geneva, 5 April 2019



# National Consultations

- Statement is based on the joint Renew / EI report submitted to the Human Rights Council for the UPR.
- Report based on the research and work experience of both organizations in Bhutan



## Follow-up of the last UPR

- UPR of the country in 2014 - the report of the Working
- 17 recommendations on SEC
- 2 recommendations on *combating violence against women and children*”
- *1 recommendation* on need to *increase efforts to prevent worse forms of child labour* which includes SEC.

# Status and developments on sexual exploitation of children

*Sexual exploitation of children through prostitution-* In a 2016 study on “*Violence against Children in Bhutan*” by the National Commission for Women and CWC and UNICE,

- SEC emerged as an issue in the southern and south-eastern regions, together with physical and emotional violence.
- Half of female commercial sex workers in southern cities are Bhutanese and Indian *children, from poor background and working in hotels*, entertainment centers, with many of them addicted to drugs and alcohol.
- few examples of boy victims also emerged.

.

# Status and developments on sexual exploitation of children (continued)

*Sexual exploitation of children through prostitution-* In a 2016 study on “*Violence against Children in Bhutan*” by the National Commission for Women and CWC and UNICE,

- SEC emerged as an issue in the southern and south-eastern regions, together with physical and emotional violence.
- Half of female commercial sex workers in southern cities are Bhutanese and Indian *children, from poor*, with many addicted to drugs and alcohol.
- few examples of boy victims also emerged.

# Status and developments on sexual exploitation of children ( continued)

## *Child marriage*

- 6% of children is married by the age of 15; and 26% by 18.
- Child marriage is both a factor enhancing vulnerability to SEC and a form of SEC itself-
- as the marriage is settled between two families, the economic transaction behind it establishes full control over the life of that child, including using a child for sexual),

# Status and developments on sexual exploitation of children

## *Sexual exploitation of children through trafficking-*

- Bhutan is both a source and destination for child trafficking for sexual purposes.
- Girls from Bhutan are trafficked from rural areas to urban areas, in Bhutan or India.

## *Sexual Exploitation of Children through on line (OSEC) and in travel and tourism (SECTT)*

- No evidence for these forms of SEC in Bhutan,
- Might change, as Bhutan undergoes transformation with rapid expansion of in tourism and connectivity to internet (37% use in 2016) and mobile phones (82% use in 2015)



# General measures of implementation Progress and Challenges

## *National Action Plans and overall Strategies*

- The National Plan of Action for Child Protection of 2012 is being reviewed
- RGoB is also developing a comprehensive National Plan of Action for Child Wellbeing and Protection( NPACWP) to prevent and respond to violence, abuse and exploitation of children
- The protection services in NCWC recently reshaped from its original legal service mandate to professionalize and enhance the protection.

# General measures of implementation Progress and Challenges ( continued)

## *Coordination and Evaluation*

- Ministries responsible to end SEC are: Home and Cultural Affairs , Health , and Labour and Human Resources
- INational Commission for Women and Children (NCWC)- 2014
- National Action and Coordinating Group (NACG) to End Violence Against Children and Women in 2013.
- The NCWC and NACG- important steps towards coordination of child protection,
- Need to enhance their capacity for them to efficiently carry their responsibility

# General measures of implementation Progress and Challenges ( continued)

## Legislative framework-

### *Sexual Exploitation of Children through prostitution*

- Prohibited expressly in the *Child Care and Protection Act*; and the definition is consistent the OPSC.

### *Child trafficking for sexual purposes*

- Prohibited through the and the Penal Code. However
- Bhutan is not a party to UN Protocol to Prevent Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children
- Definition of child trafficking is narrower than the Protocol's

# General measures of implementation Progress and Challenges (continued)

## Legislative framework ( Continued)

### *Sexual exploitation through pornography*

- Prohibited in the *Child Care and Protection Act*, and in line the OPSC.
- The Penal Code criminalizes pedophilia, acts of photographing or videotaping a child in a sexual act, and or selling, manufacturing, distributing material that contains any depiction of a child engaged in sexual contact.

### *On line Sexual exploitation of Children*

- Criminalized under the Penal Code ; and punishable under the Bhutan Information, Communications and Media

# General measures of implementation Progress and Challenges ( continued)

## Legislative framework ( Continued)

### *Sexual exploitation of children through travel and Tourism*

- No specific legislation addressing SECTT nor legislation that providing for extraterritorial jurisdiction for SEC offences

### *Child Early and forced marriage (CEFM)*

- Since 1996 the minimum age for marriage for both man and women is 18 years. However CEFM remains an on going issue

# General measures of implementation Progress and Challenges ( continued)

## Prevention

- Conducted by Government institutions and a myriad of civil society organizations.
- Efforts are not coordinated and their impact have not been evaluated

## Protection of the rights of child victims

- Bhutan also has a specialized law enforcement units, which address violence against women and children, including child marriage.
- RGoB established a toll free helpline/ 2018 that- provide counseling, legal and referral services around the clock. The biggest challenge is the lack of reporting.

# Recommendations to RGoB

## *Coordination and Evaluation*

- Establish an adequately staffed, financially and technically resourced government entity, mandated to coordinate the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its ratified protocols

## *Legislative framework*

- Align CCPA definition of child trafficking in line with the UN Protocol to Prevent Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children.
- Ratifying the International Protocols, Convention and Treaties

# Recommendations to RGoB ( continued)

## *Prevention*

- Expand the NCWC mandate to support, coordinate and evaluate prevention efforts
- Enhance awareness raising among vulnerable populations and in remote and poor communities
- Provide economically vulnerable families with adequate support and welfare
- Deny entry to convicted child sex offenders
- Work with the media to increase public awareness on online sexual exploitation of children



# Recommendations to RGoB ( continued)

## *Protection of Child Victim*

- Institute Mandatory reporting of suspected sexual exploitation of a child, with strong sanctions for non-compliance; and protection mechanisms for those who report the crime.
- Improve access to justice through professional training curricula for law enforcement officers and judges.
- Ensure that child-sensitive services are available; regulated by quality standards; administered by knowledgeable , well-trained staff; adequately resourced; and easily accessible to all children.

