



# 4TH FOUNDATION DAY

FOUR YEARS OF PURPOSE, SERVICE AND PROGRESS

JUNE 16, 2022 – JUNE 16, 2026

A COMMEMORATIVE REPORT



ESTABLISHED UNDER  
THE GRACIOUS LEADERSHIP OF  
**HER MAJESTY THE GYALTSUEN  
JETSUN PEMA WANGCHUCK**





*"Mental health will have the national priority it deserves."*  
**Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck**

**June 16, 2026**  
**(4th FOUNDATION DAY)**



## Commemorative Message

*"Our strength lies in our shared purpose and collective commitment."*



It is with great pride and deep gratitude that we mark the fourth Foundation Day of The PEMA Secretariat. Over four remarkable years, guided by the visionary leadership of Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen, we have grown from a fledgling institution into a dynamic national force, delivering meaningful programmes, forging strong partnerships, and directly improving the lives of thousands of Bhutanese.

Our journey has been defined by unwavering commitment to our mandate: to safeguard and strengthen the mental health and wellbeing of every citizen. From the *Salhang Tendrel* of The PEMA Centre and the inauguration of the 200-bedded PEMA Rehab, to the launch of the BRAVE Programme and the operationalisation of helpline and protection services across Bhutan, each step forward reflects the collective dedication of our team, our partners, and our stakeholders.

As we mark this milestone, we remain firmly focused on the road ahead, deepening our impact, expanding our reach, and ensuring no Bhutanese is left to suffer in silence. The years behind us have laid a strong foundation. The years ahead call us to build higher and dream bigger.

Tashi Delek

Dasho Dechen Wangmo

Head, The PEMA Secretariat

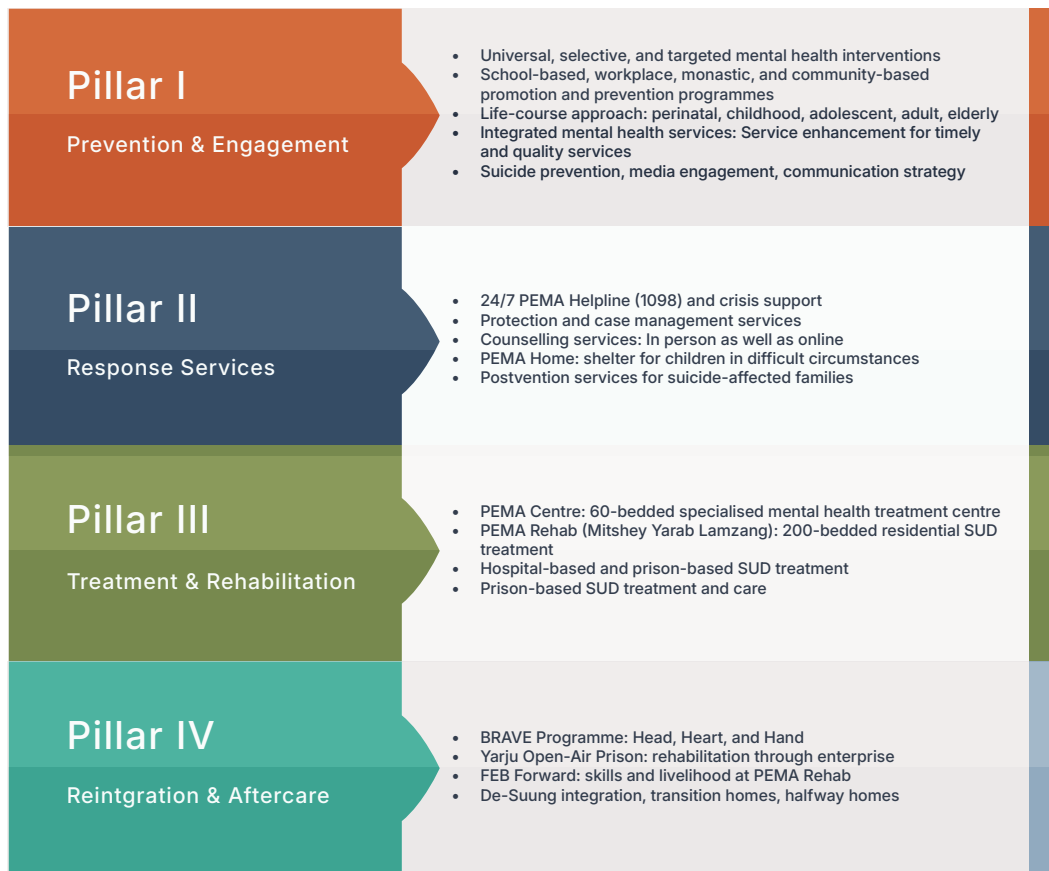


# About The PEMA Secretariat

The PEMA Secretariat was inaugurated on June 16, 2022 by Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck and serves as Bhutan's nodal agency for mental health. PEMA, meaning Lotus, embodies hope and resilience: like the lotus that blooms despite the murkiest water, The PEMA signifies that every individual has the potential to overcome challenges and flourish.

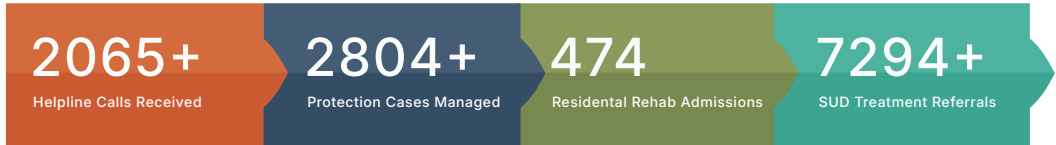
The Secretariat coordinates a comprehensive, multi-sectoral mental health ecosystem spanning promotion, prevention, response, treatment, rehabilitation, and reintegration, ensuring a continuum of care for every Bhutanese, from early intervention to lasting community reintegration.

## Our Four Pillars of Action



# Four Years at a Glance

Key Numbers That Tell Our Story



## National Indicators (13th FYP): Progress and Targets

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline	Target	Achievement
Suicide rate per 100,000 population	14.6 (2022)	9.8 (SDG)	12.4 (2026)
Mental health professionals per 100,000	25 (2022)	35	30.6
Psychiatrists per 100,000 population	0.5 (2022)	1.1	1.15
Clients receiving comprehensive protection services	N/A	90.1%	98.76%
Individuals with SUD/MH receiving livelihood support	N/A	90%	91.18%

# Our Journey : 2022 - 2026

Milestones That Shaped The PEMA

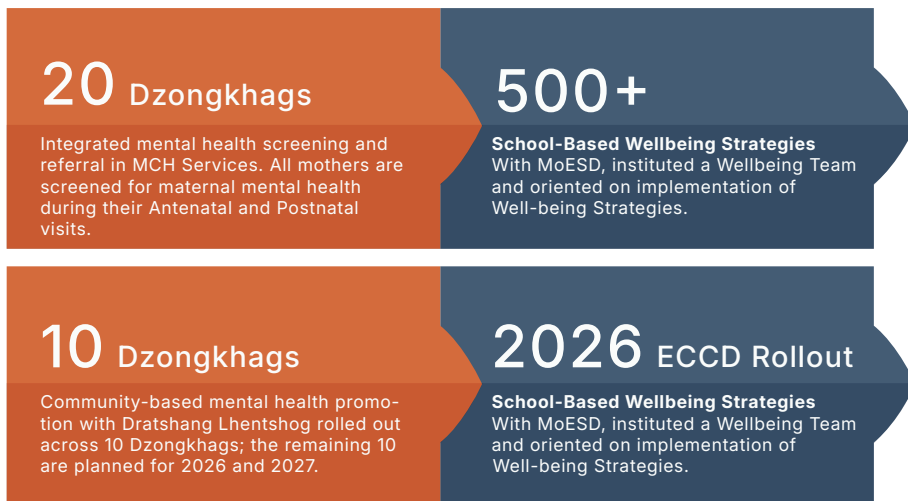


# Pillar I : Prevention & Engagement Programmes

The Life-course approach

*"We will direct our focus in preventing and promoting mental health through improved policies, major resource allocation, strengthened intersectoral partnerships, research and information. This will lead to an overall system that is comprehensive, responsive and improved."*

**Her Majesty The Gyalsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck**



Our prevention and engagement work spans the full life-course from perinatal care - maternal mental health screening integrated into Mother and Child Health services, to ECCD-based programmes, school-based Health and Wellbeing Programmes (including mentoring, anti-bullying, resilience, parenting, and counselling), through to adult workplace programmes and dedicated elderly care interventions in partnership with Goensho Tshamkhang.

A comprehensive Communication Strategy has been developed to promote mental health universally. Through this plan, we are leveraging digital platforms, traditional media, and community networks to enhance mental health literacy and promote mental health. Our strategies are informed by Situational Analysis for targeted approaches for communities, monastic institutions, and the general population.

## National Mental Health Strategy 1.0

Bhutan's first National Mental Health Strategy 1.0 was published in 2025, a landmark guiding document setting the national direction for mental health care through 2030. Developed in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, including WHO and UNICEF, the strategy is structured around four strategic objectives: governance and leadership; promotion, prevention and response; treatment, rehabilitation and reintegration; and information systems and research. All strategies and actions in this strategy are aligned with our approaches - strengthening promotion and prevention, enhancing response services, improving treatment and rehabilitation, and instituting reintegration and aftercare.



*"This strategy sets the national direction for mental health care and reflects our collective promise to place wellbeing at the centre of Bhutan's promising journey ahead."*

**Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck**

## Mental Health Workforce Development

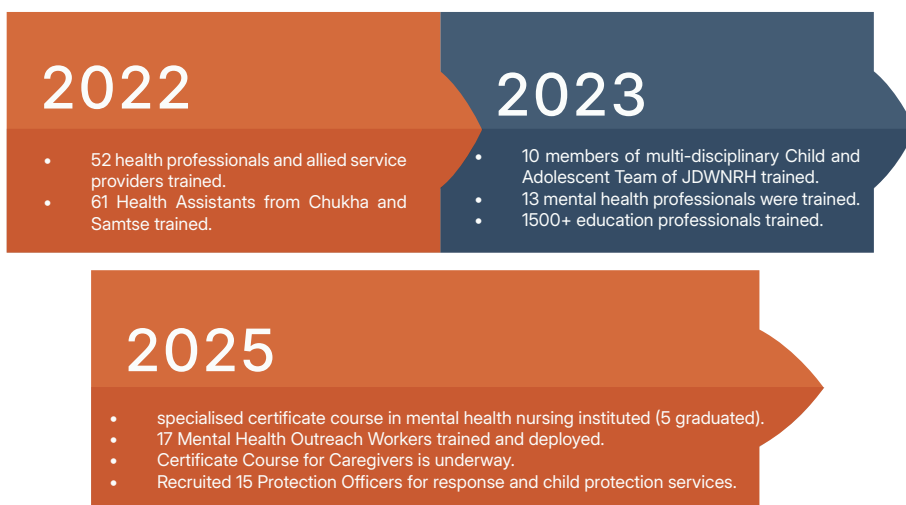
Implementation of national human resource development plan is underway. It aims at equipping services by building a resilient mental health workforce in the country. It comprises the workforce and their capacities at community level to health centres, schools, protection services, and specialised centres. These plans are executed in collaboration with KGUMSB, MoESD, NIMHANS (India), and other training institutes within and outside the country.

In 2022, we trained 52 health professionals and allied service providers on community based mental healthcare in NIMHANS, a WHO-recognised training centre. Subsequently, 61 Health Assistants from Chukha and Samtse have been trained in community-based mental health care, while a nationwide scale-up is planned in phases. In 2023, 10 individuals were trained for the multi-disciplinary Child and Adolescent Team of JDWNRH in Department of Mental Health, Thailand. Subsequently, 13 mental health professionals were trained on Psychometric tools for assessing children. With MoESD, we trained more than 1500 education professionals comprising of DEOs, Principals, School Counsellors and Wellbeing Focal Teachers on basic mental health care, child protection and substance use prevention.



A specialised certificate course in mental health nursing has been instituted, and 5 graduated in the first cohort in 2025. Similarly, the first cohort of 17 Mental Health Outreach Workers has been trained and deployed, and the Certificate Course for Caregivers is underway. We also recruited 15 Protection Officers for response and child protection services.

The MoU with NIMHANS, India, was signed on November 11, 2025 during the visit on Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi for capacity building of mental health and allied professionals for service enhancement and research initiatives.



### Leveraging Technology for Mental Health

A web-based Health and Wellbeing Screening System for screening of depression, anxiety, substance use, adverse childhood experiences, and suicidal behaviours has been developed. By the end of the next fiscal year, a web-based Health and Wellbeing Screening System will be used to assess students of Classes 10 to 12 nationwide. The system has been developed as a proactive measure to prevent mental health conditions by scanning for depression, anxiety, substance use, adverse childhood experiences, and suicidal behaviours, among others.

Beyond screening, the system enables management, referrals, and aftercare, thus closing the care loop.

## Annual Mental Health Symposiums

Three national Mental Health Symposiums have been convened since 2023, organised in collaboration with national partners, WHO and UNICEF. The symposium is a platform created for high-level advocacy aiming to advocate for a whole-of-society approach for mental health and wellbeing. The third symposium held in October 2025 focused on Child and Adolescent Mental Health, bringing together national and international experts to inform policy and programming.

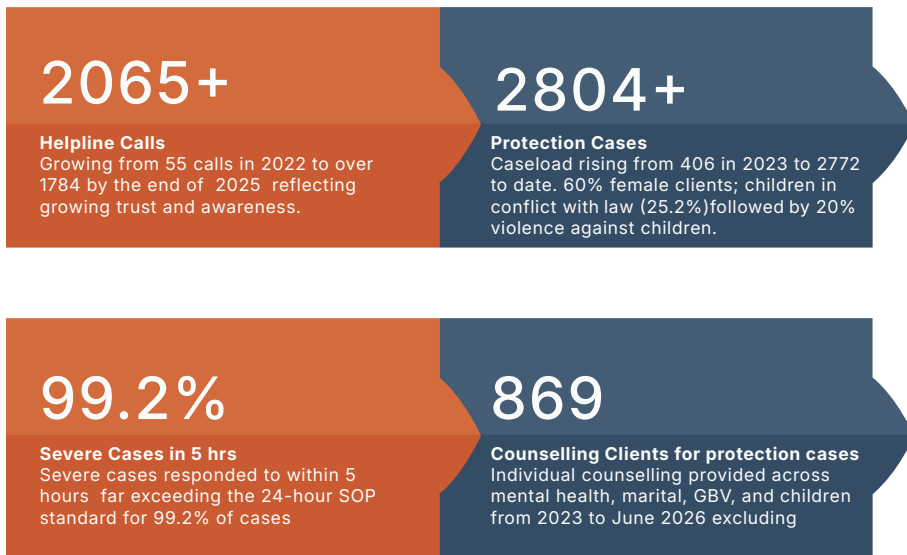


# Pillar II : Response Services

Reaching People in Their Moment of Need

*"Since the establishment of the PEMA Secretariat three years ago, important progress has been made. I am happy to share that child protection cases are now immediately referred to the Secretariat, and services are activated within a turnaround time of just five hours. Where it once took 10 to 15 days for a child to receive protection, today services are provided within the first 24 hours. This is possible because of the tireless dedication of our protection officers working in close collaboration with the Royal Bhutan Police and the Office of the Attorney General."*

**Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen Jetsun Pema Wangchuck**



## PEMA Helpline (1098)

Launched in October 2022, the PEMA Helpline has become a critical lifeline for vulnerable Bhutanese. Women represent 67.5% of callers, and children 5.3%. The most common concerns are mental health challenges (26.2%), gender-based violence (11.6%), and marital issues (10%). The Avaya system is being set up to enhance confidentiality and efficiency of helpline delivery.



## Protection and Case Management

From June 2023 to June 2026, the Secretariat handled 2,804 protection cases. Of these, 1,787 have been successfully closed. Key case types include: children in conflict with law (25.2%), violence against children (20%), and gender-based violence (12.6%). Services are provided across all 20 Dzongkhags, with plans to extend to Gewog level through Gewog Administration Officers. Of the 554 VAC cases, 71.8% are sexual violence cases followed by physical abuse (13.7%), neglect (7.8%), bullying 3.6% and emotional abuse (2.7%). Of the 734 cases of CICL, battery cases tops the chart (48.8%) followed by burglary (23%) and drug use (11.2%).

## PEMA Home: Centre for Empowerment and Healing

PEMA Home received provisional accreditation from the National Commission for Women and Children in April 2025. The Home has provided shelter to 40 residents and successfully reintegrated 37. It serves children at risk of violence, homelessness, neglect, or abandonment, working in close collaboration with RENEW, Nazhoen Lamtoen, hospitals, schools, and the Royal Bhutan Police.

*"In March 2026, a three-year-old child was found alone late at night, vulnerable and exposed to neglect in a home deeply affected by alcohol dependency. In that moment of crisis, The PEMA Secretariat stepped in to protect what mattered most, the child's life and dignity. The child was brought into The PEMA Home, a sanctuary of safety and care, where fear was replaced with warmth, stability, and protection. While the caregivers began their difficult but hopeful journey of recovery through counselling and rehabilitation, the child was enrolled in an Early Childhood Care and Development programme, taking first steps into a world of learning, play, and possibility that had once seemed out of reach.*

*What followed was a quiet but powerful story of change. Through sustained support, reflection, and treatment, the caregivers slowly began to reclaim their roles as parents, showing growing awareness, responsibility, and hope. Over time, healing took root within the family. On June 12, 2026, they were reunited, not as they were, but as a family given a second chance. A child once at risk has become safe and thriving, and parents once lost in struggle have returned with renewed commitment. It was not just a discharge, but a restoration of a family's dignity, and a fragile hope carefully rebuilt."*

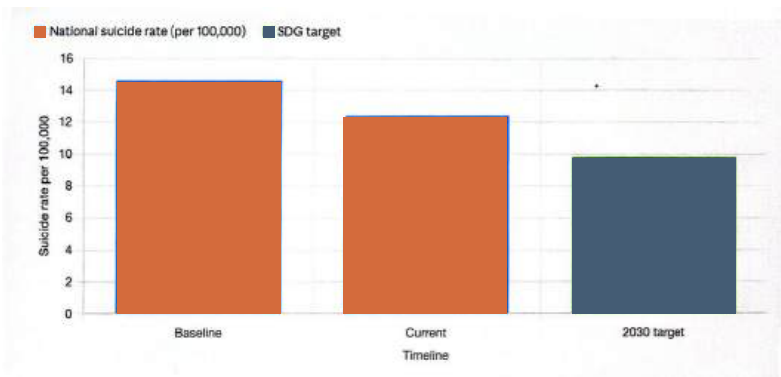
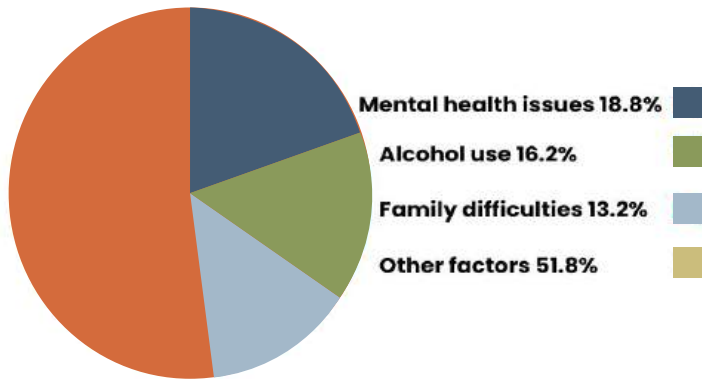
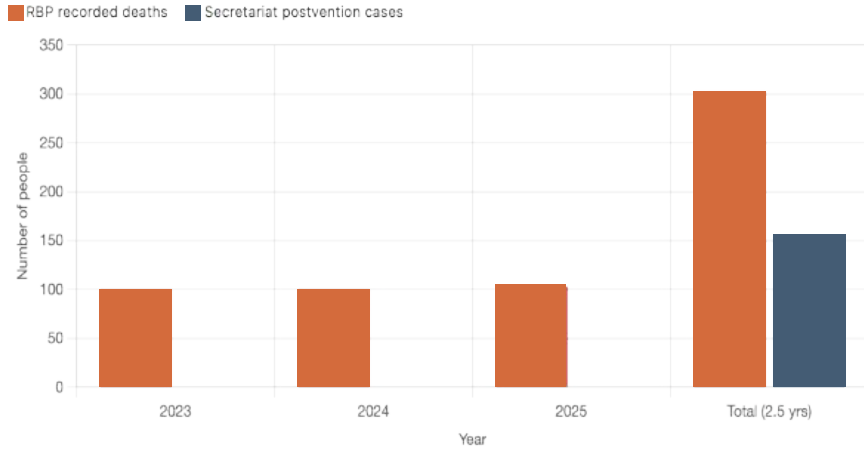
**Protection Officer at The PEMA Home**



Given the challenges in the identification and reporting of violence against children, The PEMA Secretariat reviewed the Early Identification and Safe Referral (EISR) handbook and trained 30 national trainers to cascade the training to communities.

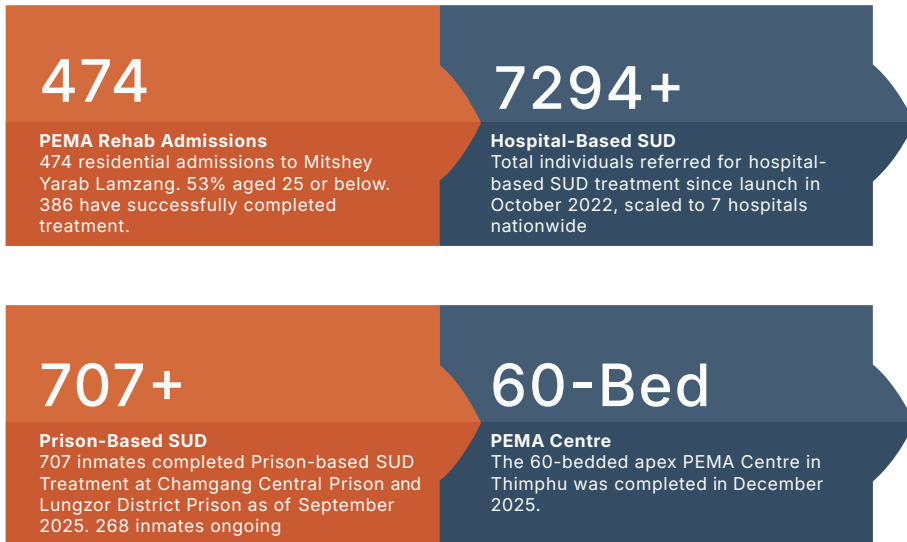
### **Postvention Support for Suicide**

The Secretariat provided postvention support to more than 200 families affected by suicide over the last two and a half years. 303 lives were lost to suicide from 2023 to 2025, an average of 100 per year. Most cases involved individuals aged 25-50 (48.8%). The leading contributing factors were mental health issues (18.8%), alcohol use (16.2%), and family difficulties (13.2%). The national suicide rate has reduced from a baseline of 14.6 to 12.4 per 100,000, a meaningful early gain on the path toward the SDG target of below 9.8 by 2030.



# Pillar III : Treatment & Rehabilitation Services

Reaching People in Their Moment of Need



## The PEMA Centre- Apex Centre for specialised Mental Health Care

Constructed with a total budget of Nu. 327 million, the PEMA Centre was handed over to the Secretariat on December 2, 2025. The centre is within JDWNRH and serves as the national referral centre for specialised mental health and substance use disorder care, setting treatment standards, conducting research, and training specialists. The Centre offers child and adolescent services, counselling services, addiction management, intensive care for chronic and acute cases, and serves as the apex of Bhutan's tiered mental health service pyramid. As part of our commitment to enhancing child and adolescent mental health services, psychometric tools were procured, practitioners were trained and are currently implemented in JDWNRH with plan to replicate in other hospitals. Additionally, day treatment programmes are offered as part of a comprehensive aftercare service.



### **PEMA Rehab: Mitshey Yarab Lamzang**

Inspired by His Majesty The King's address on the 115th National Day, the 200-bedded PEMA Rehab provides comprehensive residential and outpatient services for substance use disorder. Of the 474 cases admitted to date, 386 have completed treatment with more than 80% completion rate. The Secretariat is currently reviewing and strengthening the treatment regime, including consideration of international expert recruitment and systematic restructuring.



*"I grew up in comfort, in a life carefully planned by loving parents who believed in me. When I started my first year in college, wanting to fit in, I followed friends into late-night parties and quiet experiments along the Thimphu chuu. It started as a dare, a way to belong, but quickly became a need I couldn't ignore. I could hide it well because I had good grades, polite smiles, but inside I was a mess.*

*When the truth surfaced after getting caught by my teacher, disappointment hit harder than any consequence. Now I am rebuilding, learning that strength isn't in following others, but in choosing my own path, even when it means standing alone and facing what I tried to escape."*

**Mr. Karma Tshering (name changed for confidentiality), The PEMA Rehab**

### Prison-Based SUD Services

Launched at Chamgang Central Prison (November 2023) and Lungzor District Prison (February 2024), the Prison-based SUD programme has treated 707 inmates to date. Currently, 268 inmates are undergoing treatment. This programme reflects Bhutan's commitment to addressing substance use within the criminal justice system and reducing recidivism through care.



# Pillar IV : Reintegration & Aftercare Programmes

Restoring Dignity, Rebuilding Lives

*"BRAVE seeks to psychosocially and economically empower the most vulnerable, in pursuit of empowering the forgotten human capital."*

## The BRAVE Programme

Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen inaugurated the BRAVE (Bhutan Reintegration and Value Enhancement) Programme on October 6, 2025, at the opening ceremony of the third PEMA Symposium. BRAVE represents a transformative national framework for rehabilitation with dignity built on four interconnected pillars: Care, Skilling, Entrepreneurship, and Sustainability, guided by the 3Hs philosophy:

- Head: Behaviour change and mental resilience
- Heart: Compassion, empathy, and emotional healing
- Hand: Economic empowerment and self-reliance

BRAVE targets prisoners, individuals recovering from SUD and mental health conditions, women, and youth, ensuring rehabilitation is tailored, humane, and future-oriented rather than custodial.

## Yarju Open-Air Prison, Wangduephodrang

A flagship initiative under BRAVE, Yarju spans 437 acres in Hebisa, Wangduephodrang and is being developed in collaboration with the Royal Bhutan Police and Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, along with other stakeholders. As of June 2026, the following physical milestones have been achieved through the deployment of 340 inmates who receive support from the Department of Employment and Entrepreneurship, MoICE ranging from Nu. 10,500-15,000 every month based on their qualification:



- 118 acres of agricultural land developed; crop cultivated in 27.5 acres
- 62% of physical progress achieved for the construction of 8 dormitory blocks
- 20.3% of physical progress achieved for the construction of 7 1BHK blocks
- 250 inmates trained as master trainers in welding, carpentry, masonry, electrical, and plumbing

*"At a time when I felt overwhelmed by challenges and uncertain about the future, The PEMA gave me something I had almost lost- HOPE. Knowing that there were people who cared, listened, and stood beside me gave me a sense of security and dignity that transformed not only my outlook on life but also my ability to care for my children and family. Their support has allowed me to meet my responsibilities with renewed determination and to dream of a better future for my children, filled with opportunities, stability, and happiness, even from behind bars.*

*The PEMA's guidance and encouragement have inspired me to work hard, stay positive, and believe that my circumstances do not define my future. They helped me see possibilities where I once saw only obstacles and reminded me that every person deserves the opportunity to rebuild one's life with dignity. As I move forward, I carry with me not only gratitude but also a deep desire to give back. Just as The PEMA helped me find hope and strength, I hope one day to inspire and support others on their own journey towards a better life."*

**Mr. Dorji (name changed for confidentiality), Yarju OAP**

## FEB Forward & Skills Development

Launched on April 3, 2025 at Mitshey Yarab Lamzang, the FEB Forward initiative provides clients with transformative skills and pathways. 152 clients were inducted into courses including Lhadri, Patra, Western and Traditional Music, Contemporary Art, Applique, and Digital Literacy, delivered in collaboration with National Institute for Zorig Chusum, Royal Institute of Performing Arts, VAST, and professional artists.

## De-Suung Integration

40 clients who completed treatment at PEMA Rehab participated in two batches of De-Suung Training Programme as a Royal Soelrey. Five individuals completed basic training in bakery and barista and are now in on-the-job training under the De-Suung Skilling Programme, a powerful model of aftercare through national service.



*"I entered the PEMA Rehab as someone I hardly recognised anymore, lost in anger, confusion, and choices that were quietly spoiling my future. I did not fully understand the depth of where I was headed until, through the rehabilitation process, I was finally able to see myself clearly. That moment of realisation was painful, but it became the turning point of my life. It was the first time I truly felt that change was still possible.*

*Today, I carry a gratitude that is difficult to put into words. I have been substance-free for almost a year, and in that time, I have slowly rebuilt not just my life, but my sense of self-worth. The training, support, and trust granted to me helped me rediscover dignity and confidence I thought I had lost forever. After completing Barista and Bakery training through the DSP after completing De-Suung Training Programme, and my OJT at Buddha Point Café, I am now working as a barista at Mangala Lounge in Thimphu, earning Nu. 15,000 a month.*

*It is proof that I can stand on my own, that I can choose a different path, and that I can contribute to my family, especially my mother, in ways that bring me quiet pride. My family's belief in me has slowly returned, and with it, a sense of belonging I once feared I had lost. Today, I am not just rebuilding a career, I am rebuilding a life, step by step, with humility, hope, and deep gratitude to the PEMA Rehab for giving me a second chance. Long Live Her Majesty The Gyaltsuen."*

**Mr. Sherab (name changed for confidentiality), former client of the PEMA Rehab**

## **Empowering Women Inmates**

In the last fiscal year, 24 inmates at Dawakha Open-Air Prison were trained in tailoring. A bakery was also established at Chamgang Central Prison, and 35 inmates, of which 11 were female, were trained in bakery and pastry. In the current fiscal year, three rounds of training in bakery and pastry were conducted. Of the total, around 20 female inmates were trained.



### Youth Development and Rehabilitation Centre (YDRC)

The Secretariat, with support from UNICEF, seeks to transform YDRC into a holistic, child-centred rehabilitation facility by upgrading infrastructure, improving sanitation, and creating therapeutic and family-friendly spaces, aligned with restorative justice principles. Stronger systems and policies will be introduced, including individualised care plans, enhanced intake screening, case management, and rights-based behavior and data protection frameworks. Staff capacity will be strengthened through training in child rights and restorative practices, replacing punitive approaches. Education, vocational training, and structured reintegration support, bolstered by partnerships and aftercare services, will ensure better rehabilitation outcomes and smoother community reintegration for children.



# Financial Stewardship

Responsible management of Public Trust



The PEMA Secretariat has demonstrated exemplary financial stewardship throughout its four years of operation. Budget utilisation has consistently exceeded 95% annually well above the national average.

Out of the total 13th FYP outlay of Nu. 810 million (with a revised figure of Nu. 874.552 million incorporating additional GoI funding and PEMA Rehab expansion), 47.78% has been received and 88.19% of funds received have been utilised (including advances). All projects remain on track. The Secretariat maintains strong partnerships with development partners GoI, UNICEF, WHO, and the World Bank diversifying funding and maximising impact.

# The Road Ahead : 2026 - 2030

## Building Up on a Strong Foundation

As we enter our fifth year, The PEMA Secretariat is poised to accelerate impact across all four pillars. Our path forward is shaped by the National Mental Health Strategy 1.0, the BRAVE Programme, the 13th FYP commitments, and the ambitions set out in the Paro Declaration on Universal Access to People-centred Mental Health Care.

### Our Priorities for 2026 - 2030

#### Prevention and Engagement Programmes

- Scale up mental health promotion and proactive prevention across the life course
- Establish Centre for Child Development and Wellbeing, a dedicated facility for neurodivergent conditions (ADHD, ID, ASD), providing child and family-centred intervention services
- Expand integrated, community-based, and holistic mental health programmes and services across mainstream service delivery systems, including suicide prevention

#### Response Services

- Expand protection services to gewogs and communities
- Strengthen early identification and streamline care pathways for timely and effective service delivery
- Integrate and mainstream psychosocial support into emergency and disaster response

#### Treatment and Rehabilitation Services

- Decentralise and strengthen mental health services at regional, district and PHC Levels
- Enhance specialised treatment capacity and workforce development
- Strengthen drug demand reduction programmes and services

## **Reintegration and Aftercare Programmes**

- Expand the BRAVE Programme to enhance psychosocial and economic empowerment of vulnerable populations in alignment with Gross National Happiness values
- Transform Yarju Open-Air Prison into a fully operational model of restorative justice, demonstrating the principles of rehabilitation, reintegration, and human dignity through the BRAVE Programme
- Strengthen community support systems for persons with severe and chronic mental illness

# Acknowledgements & Partnerships

Grateful to All our Partners on This Journey

The achievements of The PEMA Secretariat over four years are the product of extraordinary collaboration. We extend our deepest gratitude to:

## Government Partners



Prime Minister's Office



Ministry of Health/JDWNRH/NMS



Royal Bhutan Police



Ministry of Education & Skills Development/NCWC



Ministry of Agriculture & Livestock



Dratshang Lhentshog



GovTech Bhutan



JSW



KGUMSB



Justice Sector (Judiciary, OAG, BNLI, Legal Aid Centre)



Royal Civil Service Commission

## International Partners



Government of India / NIMHANS



WHO



UNICEF



World Bank



The Origins Project, USA



Bhutan Foundation

## Civil Society and Other Organisations



De-Suung/DSP



RENEW



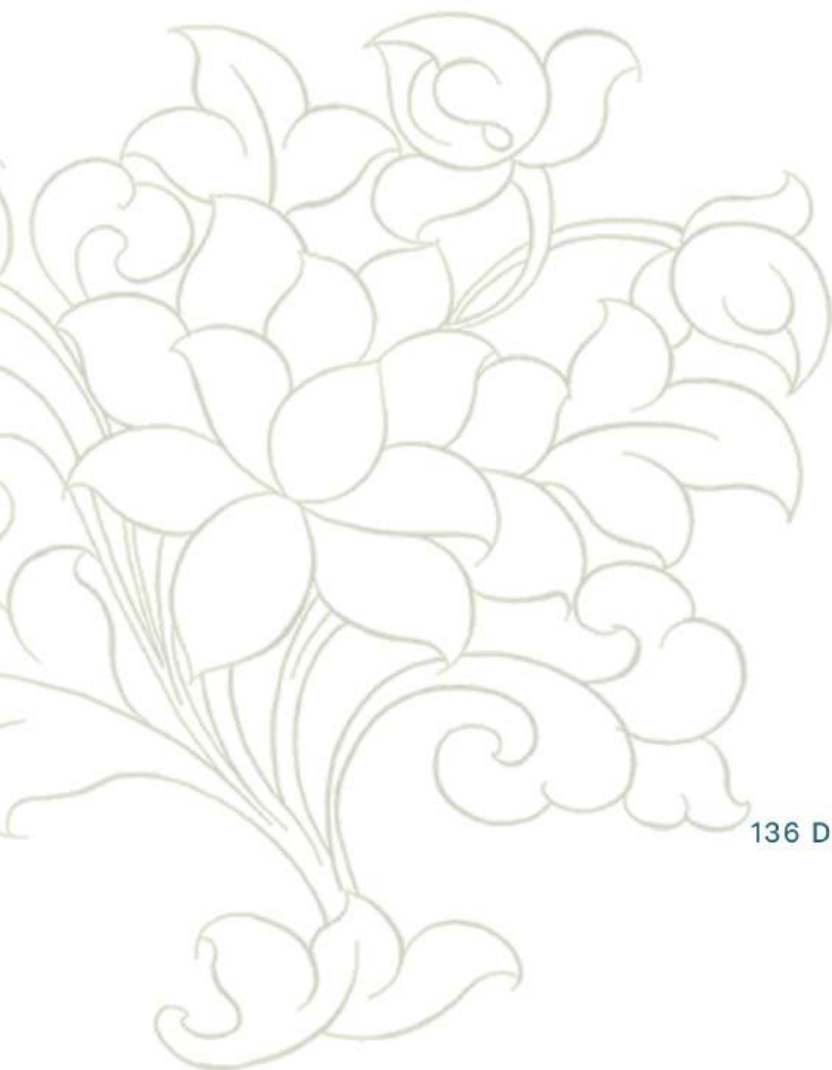
Nazhoen Lamtoen



YDF



# **TOUCHING PEOPLE, BUILDING LIVES**



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