Country Cooperation Strategy
at a glance

Bhutan

http://www.who.int/countries/en/

WHO region
South East Asia

World Bank income group
Lower-middle-income

HEALTH SITUATION

Bhutan is best known for its guiding philosophy of “Gross National Happiness (GNH)” which strives to balance economic development with spiritual wellbeing. Health is one of nine key domains under the GNH. The National Health Policy 2011 articulates investment in the health sector as essential for both happiness and wellbeing.

The Constitution mandates that the Royal Government “provide free access to basic public health services in both modern and traditional medicines” and “endeavor to provide security in the event of sickness…” This has positive ramifications for achieving both better health outcomes as well as poverty reduction.

Bhutan made commendable progress in several health indicators due to a number of factors, robust policies, overall socio-economic development and consistent investments in public health over several decades. The elimination of endemic goitre and leprosy, significant reduction in maternal, infant and under-five mortality, and in cases and deaths due to major communicable diseases such as tuberculosis and malaria, are documented public health successes. However, rapid demographic, epidemiological and environmental transitions, including rapid urbanization and the changes in lifestyle of the population present new challenges.

HEALTH POLICIES AND SYSTEMS

The National Health Policy and plan pursues free universal health coverage based on the primary care approach as the strategy for social protection and development. Substantial investments have been made in strengthening the national health system in terms of service delivery, human resources and infrastructure.

WHO Country Cooperation Strategy 2014-18 is fully aligned with National health priorities defined in the 11th Five Year Plan 2014-2018 which states that the Ministry of Health shall continue its efforts towards achieving universal health coverage by focusing on providing improved and equitable access to quality health care services, achieving goals and targets beyond the MDGs, and work to fulfill the global monitoring framework for prevention of NCDs. Key health priorities include: responding to the growing burden of NCDs, further reduction of maternal and child deaths by investing in skilled birth attendants and newborn care; sustaining case detection and treatment of HIV/AIDS and TB; working towards elimination of malaria and neglected tropical diseases; addressing the double burden of malnutrition and strengthening the capacity to respond to emergencies.

COOPERATION FOR HEALTH

In its endeavor to implement 11th Five Year Plan, Royal Government of Bhutan seeks to strengthen partnership with bilateral as well as multilateral development agencies including WHO.

Working together at all three levels of the Organization, WHO brings strategic advantages in terms of global health initiative networks, innovative health technologies, global partnerships, and capacity to support national efforts for adoption of best practices in health policy development, programme implementation and monitoring health situation and trends in Bhutan. WHO collaborates in areas of health promotion, maternal and child health, communicable and noncommunicable diseases, climate change adaptation, health system strengthening and emergency preparedness and response amongst others.

WHO has been working towards inclusive development partnerships with sister UN agencies for sustainable development involving not only governments but also civil society, media and academia among others.
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<th>Strategic Priorities</th>
<th>Main Focus Areas for WHO Cooperation</th>
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| **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1:** Achieving and sustaining Universal Health Coverage through a revitalized primary health care approach and sustainable service delivery through strengthening of health systems | • Strengthened health systems capacity through human resource development, improved health information system, effective procurement and supply management, and improved regulatory mechanisms and quality assurance of health services  
• Costing and economic analysis and sharing of best international practices in financing health services, based on principles of universal access and equity  
• Increased availability of quality-assured essential medicines and appropriate health technologies |
| **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2:** Scaling up of prevention, early detection, monitoring and treatment of noncommunicable diseases and addressing their determinants through intersectoral collaboration | • Enhanced national capacity and intersectoral action for the prevention, early detection and management of noncommunicable diseases and to address determinants of noncommunicable disease  
• Scaled-up response to mental health, alcohol and substance abuse, disability and injury prevention |
| **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3:** Pursuing a health through the life course approach with focus on maternal, new born, child and adolescent health | • Improved health services and enhanced equity in access to safe delivery, neonatal care and reproductive health  
• Action plans that promote healthy and active ageing for a continuum of affordable health services at community level  
• Strengthened management of environmental health risks due to climate change, unsafe water, chemicals and poor sanitation |
| **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 4:** Strengthen prevention and control of priority communicable diseases, in particular neglected tropical, vector borne and vaccine preventable diseases, and achieve and sustain MDG 6 targets | • National capacity built to achieve and sustain elimination of leprosy and rabies and combat kala-azar and other vector-borne diseases  
• Sustained immunization coverage for effective control of vaccine-preventable diseases  
• Measurable improvements in the prevention, early detection and control of TB and HIV and elimination of malaria |
| **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 5:** Achieving national capacity to prevent, reduce the risk, respond and manage health security threats | • Enhanced national capacity to prevent, detect, investigate and respond adequately, and in a timely manner, to outbreaks of priority communicable, foodborne and emerging diseases, in line with the IHR  
• Strengthened risk-reduction, health-sector preparedness and response to disasters |
| **STRATEGIC PRIORITY 6:** Forging effective partnerships and sector coordination mechanisms that support the national health policy and plan and health agenda reflected in all area of policy across government | • Enhanced partnership, sectoral coordination and health agenda appropriately reflected across all areas of the government  
• National adherence to internationally agreed instruments, global and regional strategies and international norms and standards, adjusted to the country setting |