CHAPTER 2

**HEALTH**

Guided by the national development philosophy of Gross National Happiness, the health sector envisions building “a healthy and happy nation through a dynamic professional health system with attainment of highest standard of health for the people within the broader framework of overall national development, in the spirit of social justice and equity.”

Since the early years (1960s) of the introduction of modern health care development in Bhutan (Allopathic), the health programmes and interventions have focused on the preventive aspects of health care and services including, the prevention of morbidity, the promotion of positive determinants of health, and the control of infectious disease. These measures were further being reinforced after being signatory to the Alma Ata declaration in 1978.

There have been a continuous efforts and remarkable strides in improving the modern health care systems and services since then. The Ministry of Health has now a wide spread network of Health Facilities covering around 95 percent of the total population within three hours walking distance from the health facility. Institutional health facilities were earlier concentrated in the urban agglomerated centers, but today the emphasis has shifted to the rural areas where the majority of the population live.

Health Care is delivered in a totally integrated three-tiered system with National Referral Hospital at the apex, regional referral hospitals, district hospitals, and Basic Health Units (BHUs) at the Community Level. BHUs serve remote populace and are staffed by well-trained health personnel who are equipped to treat minor ailments and advice on preventive measures to avoid the spread of communicable diseases. Extended Health Centers such as Out Reach Clinics (ORCs) and Sub-posts support these BHUs.

There are also a number of special health programs in Bhutan administered by the Ministry of Health. These mainly cover Expanded Program on Immunization (EPI), Reproductive Health (RH), Acute Respiratory Infection (ARI) later upgraded to Integrated Management of Neonatal and Childhood Illness (IMNCI), National HIV/AIDS & STIs Control Program (NACP), National Tuberculosis Control Program (NTCP), National Leprosy Program, Rural Water Supply & Sanitation Program (RWSS), Village Health Workers Program (VHW), Vector Borne Disease Control Program (VDCP), Mental Health Program, among others.

Therefore, in order to provide some account of health sector in Bhutan, this chapter presents statistics covering health infrastructures, top ten morbidity and mortality, outpatient and inpatient cases, immunizations, nutrition, maternal health, child health, family planning and sanitation.