

Tour Report of Hon'ble Secretary's visit to Phuntsholing & Samtse (19th – 24th October)

Abstract

The Hon'ble Secretary undertook a tour to Phuntsholing and Samtse from the 19th of October to 24th of October 2008, with the intention to undertake the following activities:

- 1. 2nd Bilateral Cross Border Meeting on Public Health Issues between Chhukha Dzongkhag, Bhutan and Jalpaiguri District, West Bengal*
- 2. High Level Advocacy Meeting on Bird Flu Preparedness and Response Plan*
- 3. Sensitize the Higher Secondary Schools & Colleges on the issues related to:*
 - a. Increase in Non Communicable Diseases like diabetes among the youths
 - b. Issues related to Substance Abuse
 - c. Teenage Pregnancy and
 - d. Increase awareness regarding the STD/AIDs in Bhutan
- 4. Meet with all the staff of the border hospitals to discuss the emergency preparedness especially during the coronation and centenary celebrations¹.*

¹ Refer Annex 1 for detail discussion

2nd Bilateral Cross Border Meeting on Public Health Issues between Chhukha Dzongkhag, Bhutan and Jalpaiguri District, West Bengal (20th October)

On the 20th of October, the 2nd Bilateral Cross Border Meeting on Public Health Issues between the Ministry of Health and a delegation from Jalpaiguri District was conducted at the Drungpa's Office in Phuntsholing. The Ag. WR, WHO Country Office was also invited to participate in the Meeting.

The major issues discussed during the meeting were:

1. Both the parties agreed that though some of the recommendations from the 6 points recommendations of the 1st Bilateral Meeting held on 8th of January 2008 have been achieved, more has to be done to achieve the recommendations.
2. It was agreed that there was a need to further enhance and strengthen information sharing between both the parties to tackle the public health issues related to Dengue, Malaria, Tuberculosis (TB) and STD/AIDs.
3. The floor agreed that the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in disseminating issues related to communicable diseases at the grass root level is very important and urged the NGOs to be more proactive.
4. Based on the recommendations of the Ag. WR., WHO Country Office, Bhutan, the Ministry of Health will facilitate in obtaining money to conduct various research studies from the WHO – MCA (multi country activity) provided that both the parties submit a joint proposal to undertake research activities related to public health issues.
5. It was also noted that the WR Country Office in Bhutan will try to tie up with the WR Country Office in New Delhi, India and facilitate as technical body and extend full support to all cross border issues related to health.
6. For the effective implementation of cross border activities yearly, both the sides agreed that it is important to identify a focal person from both the sides immediately. The focal person from Bhutan will be the Chukha Dzongdag and the focal person from Jalpaiguri District will be the Chief District Magistrate.

High Level Advocacy Meeting on Bird Flu Preparedness and Response Plan in Phuntsholing & Samtse (21st & 22nd October 2008).

There has been no recorded case of bird flu (H5N1) in Bhutan. The virus (H5N1) has been reported in more than 60 Countries. According to the WHO, 380 people have been infected and around 240 people have died showing that there is a high fatality case in human (more than 60%). Further, the host range of the virus is increasing rapidly and may lead to sudden epidemic in any country.

After conducting the high level advocacy in Thimphu, it was deemed that High Level Advocacy Meetings on Bird Flu Preparedness and Response Plan in Phuntsholing & Samtse was necessary because of the following:

- Both Phuntsholing and Samtse share porous border with India.
- Bhutan falls under the *Trans-Siberian Migration Path of Migratory Birds* who migrates to Siberia in summers and to the tropical places like India, Myanmar and Cambodia in winters. This seasonal migration of birds from Siberia to the tropical regions of South East Asia could increase the risk of outbreaks and Human infection, especially among workers at poultry farms, cannot be ruled out.
- Sporadic outbreak of Bird Flu was reported in the neighboring State of West Bengal (Darjeeling) and some of the States in North East India.

Thus, the Ministry in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture conducted a high level advocacy meeting on bird flu preparedness and response plan in Phuntsholing and Samtse on 21st and 22nd October respectively. The basic objective for undertaking these high level advocacy meetings were to undertake the following measures:

- Sensitize and create awareness among our Dzongkhag Authorities regarding bird flu (preventive measures) so that the information percolates to the communities where information regarding the prevention may play a vital role.
- Present various strategies and policies that are in place to prevent bird flu outbreak.
- Seek support from the Dzongkhags Officials and Community Heads in undertaking preventive measures.
- The impact of bird flu in the economy of the country.

Visit to Higher Secondary Schools and Colleges in Chukha and Samtse Dzongkhags (20th October - 24th October).

During the tour, the Hon'ble Secretary also made it a point to visit the Higher Secondary Schools and Colleges in Chukha and Samtse Dzongkhags respectively.

As of now, the Hon'ble Secretary has given talks to Higher Secondary Schools and Colleges in 17th Dzongkhags (including Chukha and Samtse).

The main purpose of visiting the Higher Secondary Schools and Colleges all over the country was to sensitize and make the students aware of the following issues.

- *Increase in Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) like diabetes among the youths*
- *Issues related to Substance Abuse*
- *Teenage Pregnancy and*
- *Increase awareness regarding the STD/AIDs in Bhutan*

After the talk, presentations regarding the four issues were shown to the students followed by Question and Answer Sessions.

The following higher secondary schools and colleges were visited:

1. 20th October - College of Science and Technology, Kharbandi, Phuntsholing
2. 21st October - Reldri Higher Secondary School, Phuntsholing
3. 22nd October - Samtse College of Education
4. 23rd October - Samtse Higher Secondary School
5. 24th October - College of Business Management, Gedu

Annex 1

Meeting with the Various Hospital staff in Chukha and Samtse Dzongkhags respectively (21st October - 24th October)

During the visit, the Hon'ble Secretary also made it a point to meet with the staff of various hospitals in Chukha and Samtse:

General Instructions² to all the Hospital Staff of Chukha and Samtse Dzongkhags respectively:

The Hon'ble Secretary instructed that all the hospitals have to be ready and vigilant during the upcoming celebrations in Thimphu as some anti-social elements may try to sabotage the celebration to get international media attention. These saboteurs may plant bombs in any area especially government institutions and instructed that the disaster management teams have to be ready 24/7. He further pointed out that the referral to Siliguri should be kept open in case of bomb blasts. The Hon'ble Secretary also instructed all the hospitals to carry out simulation exercises.

The Hon'ble Secretary also recommended that for smooth functioning of the hospitals, the following activities have to be institutionalized:

- a. Monthly Coordination Meeting in the hospitals (more focus to administration and logistical aspects)
- b. Monthly Clinical Mortality Meeting, where the staff of the respective hospitals can share information and experiences faced during a month.

Since the MoH has been receiving complaints that the staffs of various hospitals are rude and at times unhelpful to the patients, the Hon'ble Secretary reiterated that as a health professionals, all the staff should treat the patients humanely and if not, the concerned heads are required to submit the name of the health worker to the Ministry.

² For specific instructions and recommendations please refer individual hospital reports

Meeting with the Medical Supply Depot (MSD) Staff (20th October)

The Hon'ble Secretary met with the staff of MSD and made a site visit to all the rooms where the Drugs and Non-Drugs were kept to be send to various hospitals and BHUs in the country.

During the visit the following issues were discussed and agreed upon:

1. Since all the drugs and non-drugs are send from MSD to various hospitals, security concern about the shipment reaching Gelephu and Samdrupjongkhar was deemed a threat. Therefore, it was proposed that a feasibility study be carried out to make a store in Gelephu and Samdrupjongkhar so that the drugs/non-drugs for central and eastern region can be send from these two places. *(Follow Up - DMS, DVED & MSD)*
2. It was felt that instead of relying on one source to get the oxygen (in cylinders), possibility of exploring from other places like Gawhauti be looked upon. Further, the possibility of developing an oxygen concentration tanker in major hospitals was also recommended to be looked upon. *(Follow Up - JDWNRH, DMS, DVED & PPD)*
3. Though the existing MSD (old Phuntsholing hospital) Infrastructure is well kept, it was felt that as it has not been designed to keep the drugs and non-drugs, thus, the DMS should start a dialogue with the Phuntsholing Drungkhag/Chukha Dzongkhag to explore and find a suitable land for the construction of a new depot. *(Follow Up - DMS, DVED & MSD)*
4. If the Phuntsholing Drungkhag can give a suitable land for construction of the depot, the MoH will give the existing MSD to be converted into a school. *(Follow Up - DMS, DVED & MSD)*
5. It was directed that the MSD should review the methods used for sending drugs/non-drugs to various hospitals and BHUs, since some of the drugs and equipments can be directly send to DVED. This will save resources and manpower. *(Follow Up - DMS, DVED & MSD)*
6. The Hon'ble Secretary instructed the Head of MSD to transport the Intravenous Drips (IV Drips) lying in MSD to JDWNRH and DVED immediately. *(Follow Up - MSD)*
7. It was agreed that the MSD in Phuntsholing should be a transit camp only. *(Follow Up - MSD)*

Meeting with Phuntsholing Hospital Staff (21st October)

1. At the onset, the Hon'ble Secretary reiterated that since Phuntsholing is the economic hub, people from all the Dzongkhags including non nationals from across the border may avail treatment; hence the staff should try to inculcate the humane approach while treating the patients. *(Follow Up - All the Hospital Staff of Phuntsholing)*
2. The Hon'ble Secretary further emphasized that out of the 20 bomb blast that has occurred in Bhutan, 14 blasts happened in Phuntsholing – indicating that the staff should be more alert and the disaster management team should be ready anytime to tackle and save lives. *(Follow Up - Medical Superintendent, Phuntsholing & Dr. Gosar Pemba, National Focal Point for Disaster Management).*
3. Since two hospitals in Siliguri have been identified as referral hospitals, the Phuntsholing Hospital will be the main coordinating hospital to refer the patients to Siliguri and back. *(Follow Up - Director, JDWNRH & Medical Superintendent, Phuntsholing)*
4. It was recommended that some of the nurses should undergo training in the field of Oncology, since many of the cancer patients will be referred to Siliguri. Gradually, an Oncology Unit has to be developed in the hospital. Further, it was also recommended that some Nurse Anesthetist should be placed in Phuntsholing Jospital *(Follow Up - Director, JDWNRH, DMS & HRD/M of MoH)*
5. Since there are lots of Private Clinics in Jaigon, there may be temptations to sell hospital equipments and reagents by the staff as such incidences have occurred in the past. Hence, it was directed that any staff selling any equipments will be terminated immediately. *(Follow Up - Medical Superintendent, Phuntsholing)*
6. As Bhutan and India have very close ties, any emergency cases of life threatening nature from across the border can be treated if deemed necessary. *(Follow Up - Medical Superintendent, Phuntsholing)*
7. To ease the administration burden, an additional Assistant Dzongkhag Health Officer (ADHO) will be send to Phuntsholing Hospital at the earliest. *(Follow Up - HRD/M, MoH and DMS)*
8. It was found out that though there are 6 Lab. Technicians, the laboratory services are carried out from 9 am to 12 pm only. The Hon'ble Secretary

- directed that any lab tests which are possible apart from regular examinations, like Blood CBC, Blood Grouping and Transfusion, Clinical Test like urine and stool tests and Immunology test like Dengue, widal and all should be carried out till 3pm or else it is not justifiable to keep 6 Lab Technicians. (*Follow Up - Medical Superintendent, Phuntsholing*)
9. There were incidences where some of the hospital staff are not willing to do night duty. Thus it was instructed that any hospital staff is not undertaking the night duty, the list of the staff be provided to the HRD/M of the Ministry. (*Follow Up - Medical Superintendent, Phuntsholing & HRD/M, MoH*)
 10. To enhance the private public partnership (PPP), the Hon'ble Secretary instructed the Medical Superintendent to look into the possibility of outsourcing the patient diet, laundry and cleaning services. (*Follow Up - Medical Superintendent, Phuntsholing*)

Meeting with Samtse Hospital Staff (22nd October)

1. While meeting with the Staff, the Hon'ble Secretary pointed out that the Ministry has been receiving complaints from the public that the hospital staffs are obnoxious and rude while dealing with the patients. He pointed out that though the staff is being overstretched, due to lack of man power, the services should be delivered with positive attitude and humanely. *(Follow Up - DMO & DHO, Samtse)*
2. It was agreed that as an interim measure all the Gynecology Cases from Samtse be referred to Phuntsholing Hospital. Once the new batch of Doctors from Myanmar joins Health, a Gynecologist will be posted to Samtse Hospital to cater to the needs of the population. *(Follow Up - DMO Samtse, HRD/M & DMS, MoH)*
3. It was appraised that not even a single contractor is willing to construct the Dorokha BHU Grade 1 due to the difficult geographical terrain. To this, the Hon'ble Secretary clearly pointed out that based on the advice from Health Infrastructure and Development Programme (HIDP), the construction of BHU Grade 1 in Dorokha will be feasible only after the road and supply of electricity is made available. Further, he also made the floor aware the all the BHU Constructions have been decentralized to the Dzongkhags. *(Follow Up - Dzongkhag Administration, Samtse)*

**Meeting with Gomtu Hospital Staff and the Managing Director of PCAL
(23rd October)**

1. As of now, the Gomtu Hospital is being manned by 9 government staff and 15 corporate staff. The Hon'ble Secretary pointed out that there should be no rift or distinction between the project employed staff and government manned staff.
2. While visiting the Hospital, a brief site visit to the construction of new 20 bedded hospital was made. It was appraised that the construction of the hospital will be completed in February 2009. Further, the Managing Director of Penden Cement Authority Limited (PCAL) pointed out that a dormitory for the patient attendants will be provided as part of Coronation and Centenary Celebration.
3. While visiting the Gomtu Hospital, it was found out that acute respiratory infection (ARI) was the highest morbidity case. It was directed that the staff of Gomtu Hospital should further educate the public to protect themselves from ARI. *(Follow Up - Gomtu Hospital)*
4. Since there was no qualified pharmacist in the Gomtu Hospital, the Hon'ble Secretary instructed that a pharmacist be immediately transferred to Gomtu Hospital. *(Follow Up - HRD/M, MoH)*
5. Some of the corporate employees requested that they do not get training – especially ex-country training to further enhance their knowledge. To this, the Hon'ble Secretary stated that when ever there are trainings both in-country and ex-country, the Ministry will nominate some of the corporate staff also. *(Follow Up - DoPH & HRD/M, MoH)*
6. Further, some of the corporate staff stated that the Bhutan Medical and Health Council (BMHC) have not accepted their certificate to be registered as a bona fide health worker. To this, the Hon'ble Secretary pointed out that as BMHC is an autonomous body, the MoH cannot intervene, but he clearly instructed that to register with BMHC, the following procedures has to be undertaken:
 - Enroll in crash course at RIHS and
 - Sit for examination
7. If the PCAL requires additional health workers, the PCAL should first discuss the need for health workers with the MoH. *(Follow Up: CMO, Gomtu Hospital & HRD/M, MoH)*

8. The Hon'ble Secretary instructed the Chief Planning Officer (CPO), PPD to coordinate with HRD/M to send adequate man-power required for functioning of 20 bedded hospital as per the HR Guidelines, once the 20 bedded hospital gets functional from February 2009, after discussing the HR Modalities with PCAL including in-patient diet facilities. ***(Follow Up - PPD, HRD/M & CMO, Gomtu Hospital)***
9. The Managing Director (PCAL) agreed that upon completion of the new hospital, all the administration should be undertaken by the Samtse Dzongkhag and MoH. While the PCAL will take part in facilitating resources such as Human Resources and Financial Resources for effective functioning of the Hospital. ***(Follow Up - PPD, MoH, PCAL & Samtse Dzongkhag)***
10. The future of Gomtu Hospital as a Government Hospital or Corporate Hospital is still under discussion between the two agencies. ***(Follow Up - MoH, Samtse Dzongkhag & PCAL)***

Meeting with Gedu Hospital Staff (24th October)

Upon completion of the activities in Samtse and Phuntsholing, on the way to Thimphu, the Hon'ble Secretary visited the Gadu Hospital and had a meeting with the hospital staff.

The following issues were deliberated during the meeting:

1. The Hon'ble Secretary made the staff aware that the existing health workers send to the Gedu Project Hospital from the Ministry on secondment was based on their performances, seniority and dedication in delivering the services. As of now, there are 71 staff in Gedu Hospital out of which 23 health workers and 2 doctors are send from the MoH.
2. It was appraised that the Gedu Hospital will be handed over to the Chukha Dzongkhag on the 31st of March 2009. The hospital will be handed over lock-stock-barrel to the Government. The Hon'ble Secretary instructed that while taking over the hospital from THPA, detailed inventory of all the equipments must be undertaken. *(Follow Up - CMO, Gedu & DHO, Chukha)*
3. Concern was voiced regarding where the current staff both project and government staff will be transferred once the government takes over the hospital. To this, the Hon'ble Secretary directed the CMO and DHO to work out the details and submit the report to the Ministry for further discussion in the HRC. *(Follow Up - CMO, Gedu, DHO, Chukha & HRD/M, MoH)*
4. Since the MoH will be taking over the Gedu Hospital from the Project on 31st March 2009, the Hon'ble Secretary instructed the Dr. Nado Zangpo, CMO to continue till the hospital is taken over by MoH (i.e 31st March 2009) though the CMO's contract expires on 31st December 2008. *(Follow Up - CMO, Gedu, DHO, Chukha & HRD/M, MoH)*