

COUNTRY PAPER

BHUTAN



UNFPA

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I. Responsible Sexual and Reproductive Health Behavior among adolescents

1.1 Definition and Demographic profile

Adolescence has been defined by the World Health Organization¹ as being between the ages of 10 and 19, and youth as between 15 and 24 years. When these two groups are combined (10 to 24 years of age), it is defined as young people. With dramatic decline in the crude death rates, WHO estimates that South East Asia's population reached 1.4 billion in 1995 and will rise to a projected 2 billion by the year 2020².

Table 1. Population Projection by age & sex, 1997, Bhutan

Age Gr.	Total	%Male	%Female
0-4 yr	95575	7.6	7.8
5-9 yr	89613	7	7.4
10-14 yr	74936	6	6.1
15-19 yr	55606	4.4	4.5
20-24 yr	49121	3.8	4.1
25 -29 yr	42159	3.3	3.5
30- 34 yr	37825	3	3.1
35-39 yr	34631	2.8	2.7
40-44 yr	29190	2.3	2.3
45-49 yr	23467	1.9	1.8
50-54 yr	22264	1.8	1.8
55-59 yr	19697	1.6	1.6
60-64 yr	18089	1.5	1.4
65-69 yr	10920	0.8	0.9
70-74 yr	7423	0.6	0.6
75 +	8041	0.6	0.6
	618557		

Source: R.H. Chaudhury, Population Projection for Bhutan, July 1996

¹ WHO, Geneva; The health of young people – A challenge and promise

² Regional Health Report 1997

Table 2. Comparative demographic indicators, 1984 and 1994
National Health Survey

Indicators	1984	1994
Sex ratio at birth, males/100 females	102.0	105.1
Crude Birth Rate per 1000 population	39.1	39.9
Crude Death Rate per 1000 population	13.4	9.0
Population Growth rate (percent)	2.6	3.1
Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	102.8	70.7
Maternal Mortality rate (per 1000 live births)	7.7	3.8

Bhutan's population is estimated at 618,557 in 1997³ with an annual growth rate of 3.1%⁴. Therefore, the population of Bhutan will double in approximately 23 years. This is a relatively young population with adolescent constituting 21%, youth 17%, and young people, about 29%. More than 58% of the total population is less than 25 years of age and over 43% less than 15 years of age.

1.2 The Adolescent Girl in Bhutan

Many around the world consider an adolescent girl in South Asia to be doubly disadvantaged: as an adolescent and, more significantly, as a girl. However, the situation in Bhutan is vastly different, both in terms of an adolescent girl's opportunities and status in the society. Indeed, she enjoys a much better position than her counterparts in other regions of South Asia.

Indeed, it cannot be emphasized enough that the vital factor accounting for a unique situation for adolescent girls in Bhutan is the relative absence of gender discrimination. Numerous efforts to enhance the status of adolescent girls would not hold much relevance if they were to enter a world of discrimination based on gender.

The Buddhist tradition has no marked gender preference, be it in the everyday affairs or even in religious matters. It is true that only men became monks; but there are numerous nunneries in the country that provided the avenue for a woman seeking a life of spiritual pursuits. Segregation exists in that there are no co-habitation of the two groups, but for good reasons. In general more than 80% of Bhutan is still agrarian with subsistence farming as the principle mode of livelihood. In the rural life setting, the girl child grows to be an equally responsible family member. There are no distinctly known gender preferences for boy; in fact, if any preference exists, it is for girls. This is especially true

³ R.H. Chaudhury, Population Projection for Bhutan, July 1996

⁴ National Health Survey, 1994, Health Division

amongst the Drukpas as the parents look upon the female child as their support and companion in their twilight years: men are expected to marry and move out.

The societal attitude towards sex and sexuality is fairly tolerant. Premarital sex is not a taboo. Although there is no hard research data as yet available on age of menarche, it is believed that Bhutanese girls become sexually active at an early age. In the 1994 National Health Survey, it was found that 55% of the women were married before the age of 20. Until recently the age of marriage was 16 for girls and 18 for boys.

The Marriage Act of 1980 was amended during the 74th Session of the National Assembly (1996). According to the new act, the legal age of marriage for girls was raised from sixteen to eighteen. This act has been favourable in that it has given women legal rights to property and child support. Divorce though considered fairly common is not associated with any stigmatization and both partners can initiate the procedure for divorce irrespective of the grounds on which separation becomes desirable. If wrong doing by either partner is cited as a reason for divorce and guilt is proven, the guilty partner receives only one third of all properties and liabilities held individually or jointly by the couple. With respect to the custody of children, minors under the age of nine are awarded to the mother, regardless of who bears guilt for the separation. During this period the father, has to provide 20 to 40% of his monthly income as alimony and child support up to the age of eighteen and but ceases once the women remarries. After the age of nine, the children themselves decide which of the two parents they wish to live with. In matters of marriage, there is a great deal of freedom and flexibility. Young Bhutanese men and women choose their partners with a high degree of freedom without parental/family restrictions. The practice of dowry, which is prevalent in many Asian societies, is unknown in Bhutan. Although the new Marriage Act discourages divorce and marriage out of wedlock, separation is just as easy and there is no social stigma attached to divorce.

While gender segregation and biases are not common issues in the life of an average Bhutanese, dictated by the needs of the sort of work in the rural setting, there is a well-defined job distribution. Ploughing, axe-wielding tasks and the hardest physical work is left to the men, while household chores and child rearing practices are more of the domain of the female. The woman contributes equally to the household earnings. In fact in many parts of the country, women earn more through weaving. Although, legally a woman has as much right to make decisions in the house, women are known to be more subservient to the men and the men, in turn, often leave out women's opinion in making decisions.

While a liberal society provides the environment for equal opportunities, especially for girls, adolescence is not without its attendant risks. Early marriages lead to early pregnancies. In addition unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases become unavoidable problems. In Bhutan, abortion is not legal, except for strict medical reasons.

It is in the health arena that women face a much greater threat to their lives than men. Along with pregnancy and childbirth, they are often malnourished, with anemia as the predominant problem, and they suffer from many problems related to pregnancy and childbirth. The maternal mortality was 7.7 per 1000 live births (1984), one of the highest rates in the world, but now this has fallen to 3.8 by 1994 which is still significant. Given Bhutan's rugged terrain and difficulties in communication, maternal mortality continues to be a major concern. In the 1994 Health Survey, the commonest cause of maternal deaths were postpartum hemorrhage (38.8%), puerperal sepsis (16.6%), obstructed labour (11%), retained placenta, ante-partum hemorrhage and toxemia contributing about 5% each. Of course the data for this came from a very small sample of maternal deaths reported during this survey's recall period and, therefore, rates are likely to have wide confidence intervals.

1.3 STDs/HIV

As it is common in all societies, sexually transmitted diseases are an under reported disease burden. From the available data it certainly indicates that STDs are an important cause of morbidity. Although there is no marked difference in the overall distribution of STDs among men and women, certainly it is most common in the age group 15 – 29 years.

Table 3. Reported cases of sexually transmitted diseases, 1996

<i>Diagnosis</i>	<i>Males</i>		<i>Females</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Gonorrhea	173	71	71	43	244	60
Syphilis	23	10	13	8	36	9
Chancroid	5	2	1	1	6	1
Urethral discharge	22	9	18	11	40	10
Vaginal discharge	0	0	55	33	55	14
Genital ulcer	19	8	7	4	26	6
Total	242	100	165	100	407	100

Source: Annual Health Bulletin, 1996

HIV/AIDS is a relatively new entrant in Bhutan. Since the introduction of surveillance for HIV/AIDS, till the end of 1997 there have been only 9 HIV positive cases picked up by the authorities. There is no significant difference in the sex distribution of these cases, but the age groups are almost within 20 and 35 years. The potential for the spread of HIV/AIDS is high given the high prevalence of STDs.

1.4 Alcohol abuse

Alcohol consumption is traditional. In many parts of the country, it is customary that when a guest is received in the house, the first that is offered is some form of alcohol. In the rural areas most people brew their own alcohol in their houses. Mostly it is *Ara*, which is the distillate from grain such as wheat, millets, buckwheat or maize. *Bangchang*, a form of beer, again brewed from grains is also popular. While there are difference in the consumption pattern between regions in the country, alcohol is available everywhere. In addition, with the emerging markets in the growing towns and urban centers, commercially produced alcohol such as whisky, rum, gin and beer are freely available. Due to the easy and cheap availability of alcohol, its consumption becomes increasingly popular. As yet there are no studies to assess the extent of disease burden due to alcohol, but health problems related to alcohol consumption is on the rise. The social impact, especially on the family life and the psychology of a young child growing in a family known for alcohol abuse is likely to be significant.

Furthermore, although there is now a legal restriction to the serving of alcohol to anyone under 18 years of age, this rule applies only to open consumption in bars and restaurants.

1.5 Drug abuse

Distinct from alcohol, drug abuse is a completely new phenomenon in the Bhutanese society. The hill slopes of the country are covered with marijuana which, traditionally, was occasionally used to feed pigs, but never known for human consumption. With modernization, the use of marijuana and its products is being reported. Substance abuse is gaining popularity with children and adolescents engaging in the experimental abuse of benzodiazepines cough sedatives, morphine, amphetamine, pethidine, glue sniffing, and even some hard core drugs such as cocaine. The Ministry of Health and Education has stepped up its information and educational campaigns related to substance use and abuse since 1996. The establishment of the Youth Guidance and Counseling Center under Education and the establishment of a Youth Center in the Capital City indicate the seriousness of the Govt. in this area.

1.6 Tobacco use

The Mahayana Buddhists have strong religious sentiments against use of tobacco. Therefore, the people of Bhutan, especially in the rural areas, tend to discourage the use of tobacco. In fact in some of the districts, the people themselves have made strict regulations against the sale of tobacco. 5 Dzongkhags have been awarded the *WHO No Tobacco Medal* for their initiatives for countering the Tobacco menace. As such tobacco is forbidden to use in temples, dzongs and anywhere near a religious artifact, be it a wall painting or a statue. While there is no stringent commercial rule against import and use of tobacco, there are also no major efforts to promote the use of tobacco. Nevertheless, both among the adolescents and youths, smoking may be observed. This is especially more prevalent in the townships and urban areas. In addition to smoking, chewing of tobacco, either in the form of simple tobacco leaves with lime or the commercially prepared items such as khaini are also seen.

1.7 Juvenile delinquency and Youth unemployment

With rapid urbanization, more and more people; including the youths migrate to towns and peri-urban areas. In addition with increasing enrolment, there is also a large segment of adolescents who are dropouts from school. Most of these youngsters stay in the cities in the hope of finding opportunities for further studies or jobs. Given the limited market for jobs and with their lower educational background, finding satisfactory employment is difficult. Consequently, many of these youngsters veer towards a delinquent lifestyle. Thefts, gang fights, and even murders are now slowly emerging in an otherwise peaceful society. At present, within the strong familial institution, relatives take care of many of these youngsters. But with increasing population, this aspect of support for youths without employment is likely to become less and, therefore, exacerbating further the concerns for juvenile delinquency and rising crime.

To address the above concern, the Youth Guidance and counseling Services Section in the Education Division is presently working towards conducting a national survey on school drop outs with the objective of organizing Dzongkhag based rehabilitative training for the drop outs.

1.8 Rape

The subject of rape has recently received increased attention in the government. Rape was made a criminal offence in 1953. Existing laws have, therefore, have been amended by the national legislature in 1993, reflecting much more serious punishment, especially when minors are involved. The penalties include the

payment of compensation along with imprisonment and, in case of minors, the sentence range from five to seventeen years, depending on the severity of the crime. In extreme cases, the law can award life imprisonment.

II. Literacy and education, both formal and non-formal, including Family Life Education

The national literacy rate increased from 14.2% in 1980 to 54% in 1997. This is indeed an achievement despite the limited resources. The adult literacy is about 20% and the overall female literacy rate however is less than 10%. The primary school enrolment of girls has reached 43%. It is one of the highest in the SAARC region as well as in the developing countries. Within a period of three and half decades, the government has been able to create a modern education system from primary to tertiary level. The Royal Government's commitment to education is well reflected in the impressive rate at which enrolment is growing at all levels. Education is free and without any discrimination

Formal western education was started in the early 1950's, and with the launching of successive five-year plans, school enrolment grew from 1500 pupils in 59 schools in 1959 to over 70,000 students in 195 institutions in 1990. From a total

Table 4. Drop out rates, in percent, 1992-94									
Gender	Cl. VI			Cl. VIII			Cl. IX		
	'92	'93	'94	'92	'93	'94	'92	'93	'94
Boys	3.2	18.2	9.0	22.5	25.8	10.4	14.7	9.9	8.4
Girls	16.4	16.2	8.6	37.3	31.3	11.9	8.6	8.5	16.7

enrolment of 52,071 students in 1991, by 1997 the total enrolment rose to 92,267. The estimated gross enrolment in 1997 was 72% at the primary level. Formal education

consists of one year pre-primary, six years of primary, four years secondary, two years senior secondary, and three years of degree programme.

2.1 School enrolment, total and male/female ratio

With the increase in the number of schools and other educational facilities, the enrolment of the students in these various categories rose sharply. The enrolment in community schools rose from 7239 in 1992 to 9425 by 1996 (+30%); primary from 38973 to 45937 (+17.8%); junior high school enrolment rose from 6503 to 8870 (+36.4%); high schools from 3511 to 4185 (+19.2%), and institutions from 1524 to 1732 (+13.6%) in the same time span.

The overall dropout rates ranged from 4.99 % of the total enrolment between 1991/1992 to 4.79% in 1993/94. While there does not seem to be any major difference between boys and girls in the overall drop out rates, a closer look

indicates that the drop out rates for girls can be as high as 37.3% between class VI and Class VIII/Class IX. The imputed rates of drop out are shown in table 4.

It is estimated that the enrolment of girls is around 43%. In the 7th FYP, one of the main objectives is to raise girl's enrolment to at least 47%. It appears that the examinations at Class VI and Class VIII have a significant effect on the drop out rates for girls. For the period covering 1989-90, it was observed that drop out rates for girls were lower than that for boys till class V, but thereafter the rates rose as high as 35% and 23% in classes VIII and VI, respectively. There may be genuine reasons why girls drop out at this stage, but to date there are no studies carried out to find out the causative factors that contribute to this phenomenon. It could possibly arise due to difficult terrain that force children to walk long distances, lack of boarding facilities at primary level institutions, shortage of manpower on the farms, or even family pressure on girls to marry early.

As of May 1995, there were 102 community schools, 143 primary schools and 7 private schools catering to primary education in the country. Besides, all the 19 junior high schools had primary sections attached to them. In all, 59,718 students were enrolled in primary education programme (PP-VI) in these schools out of which 25,872 (43%) were girls.

2.2 Non-formal education

In 1992, the Dzongkhag Development Commission (DDC) initiated an Adult Education Programme with the objective to provide functional literacy to those who had never attended school. UNICEF supported this, mainly in producing teaching and learning materials as well as training of instructors. By 1993, the Education Division was entrusted with the responsibility of starting the now Non-formal Education (NFE) programme which had components of the adult education programme as well as bearing of life skills. The target population was further widened to cover not only those that did not attend school at all, but also those that had dropped out of school. Today, this programme, although still school based covers almost all districts, except for Samtse and Sarpang. Since the initiation of this programme about 60% completed the course successfully. Between July 1997 and May 1998, a total of 1831 students had enrolled, out of which 1274 (69.6%) were females. The NFE Unit carried out a sample evaluation in 1997 by visiting 9 such centres. The data from these visits are presented in the tables below.

Table 5. Age group of pupils at NFE class, 1997⁵

<i>Age Group</i>	<i>No. of students</i>	<i>Percent (of total)</i>
< 15 yrs	34	10.0
16 – 20 yrs	122	35.0
21 – 30 yrs	137	39.0
31 – 40 yrs	47	13.0
> 41 yrs	11	3.0
Total	350	100.0

In addition to the age breakdown, the occupation of the students at the NFE classes shows 76% that of farmers.

Table 6. Occupation of the students at NFE centers, 1997⁴

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>No. of pupils</i>	<i>Percent (of total)</i>
Government service	7	2.0
Spouse of govt.servant	53	15.0
Farmer	266	76.0
School drop-out	11	3.0
Business	11	3.0
Clergy	1	0.3

III. Exploitation of and Violence Against Adolescents

Among the countries of the world, Bhutan must rank so far as the safest place for children and young people; there is no commercial exploitation of girls, girl trafficking, prostitution or other forms of violence against adolescent girls. There is no known tradition of gender biased preference for children, and in the rural and farming tradition, exploitation of children for commercial gain is unknown. Given the economic development stage of the country, there are not many industries where child labor becomes necessary. Bhutan is still largely (>80%) agrarian. It is traditional that even children contribute their share of work on the farm through such chores as looking after cattle, helping the grown-ups around the house with mundane and tasks appropriate to their physique.

However, with increasing urbanization, in some of the sectors such as hotel businesses, young children are being employed to work as waiters & waitresses. There is a legal restriction against employment of any person below the age of

⁵ NFE Unit, Education Division

15 years. Prostitution is neither legal nor is there any organized form of prostitution in Bhutan. Nevertheless, particularly in the urban areas, it is known that a few girls and young women engage in willing sexual liaison for monetary gain. But already there are severe penalties laid out within the legal system of the country for anyone engaging in such activities.

IV. Strategies to address adolescent concerns regarding their sexual and reproductive health and innovative programs to operationalize them

4.1 The Royal Government's Development philosophy

The physical and spiritual well being of the people within a safe and secure environment lies at the very core of Bhutan's development philosophy. Investments in the social sector, thus, receive highest priority. Throughout its development, Bhutan has placed special emphasis on human development. Economic growth is regarded not as an end in itself but rather as a means to strengthening the physical and intellectual capacity of individual citizens to shape their own destiny. His Majesty the King defined this approach as the pursuit of 'Gross National Happiness'.

The development of health and education infrastructure focused on equitable distribution; this consistent development strategy pursued by the RGOB has helped the country make impressive strides both in the health and education sector. Investments in health have produced a dramatic decline in infant, under-five and maternal mortality between 1984 and 1994. At the same time growth rate as well as life expectancy rate have risen significantly.

From a rural community with a scattered population thinly spread over the rugged and mountainous terrain with emerging townships, the population shift from a rural to an urban setting began so that as of now an estimated 20 to 30% of the population reside in urban or peri-urban areas. Through successive development plans, there have been dramatic changes, both in the landscape of the country as well as the lifestyles of its people. Today a network of roads and telecommunication facilities link the entire country, slowly making the boundary between rural and urban areas more indistinguishable.

Bhutan is a Buddhist state. With its central tenet of non-violence and compassion, tolerance is central to the philosophy of an average Bhutanese. From a traditional rural and agrarian society, within the last three decades, the Bhutanese have emerged confidently into the modern and monetised economy without any dramatic upheavals.

4.2 Reproductive Health Program

Given that the population growth rate of Bhutan was estimated at 3.1% per annum, in the Eight Five-Year Development Plan (1997-2002), the Royal Government gave the highest priority for population issue. In accordance with the ICPD Recommendations, the erstwhile MCH/FP programs are now re-grouped as reproductive health. In the 8th FYP, the first objective for the Health Sector is to 'intensify population-planning activities.' Within the framework of Reproductive Health, adolescent health features as an important component.

The Reproductive Health Program in the country is supported by UNFPA. The main objective charted out for the Reproductive Health Services is "to have improved the reproductive health of women, men and adolescents through intersectoral coordination and community participation." The strategies to achieve the above objective are:

Enhancing access to primary health care through the expansion of infrastructure, especially Basic Health Units, to reach those areas that are still un-reached. This will be supplemented through increased home visits by the BHU staff 'so that access to health service, especially in the case of the woman, improves.' At the end of the 7th FYP, the health infrastructure was as follows:

Table 7. Health Infrastructure, July 1996⁶

Number of hospitals	26
Number of Indigenous hospital	1
Number of Basic Health Units	97
Number of Dispensaries	32
Indigenous units	10
Out Reach Clinics	454
Number of training institutes	3
Number of malaria centers	19

By the end of the 8FYP, there will be 145 Basic Health Units; all dispensaries will be upgraded to Basic Health Units in addition to new construction of BHUs.

4.3 Improved quality of reproductive health care services.

Within the Reproductive health services package is included training of all categories of health workers to improve the quality of services that they provide, both for reproductive tract infections as well as family planning services. Special

⁶ 8th FYP Document, Vol 1, Main Document



efforts will be made to make condoms available, not only for family planning purpose, but also to prevent STDs, especially among the male adolescent group. Efforts will be made to improve access to RTI/STD/HIV services by supporting training of women in the community about RTIs/STDs & HIV as part of the training package for reproductive health. Education and services will be provided to adolescent schoolgirls and girls out of school through the Non-formal Education program. For this purpose, in collaboration with the Division of Education, under the IECH of Health Division, a school health program is being charted out.

4.4 School Health Services

Although some basic first aid has always been there in schools, school health was primarily limited to de-worming and health education on various topics. Realizing the lacunae of services in schools, and also seeing the opportunity of involving students to spread the message of health to their respective communities, the Comprehensive School Health Program was initiated with the start of the current development plan. In this program special attention will be provided to the adolescents. Advocacy will be given the highest priority with development of educational materials for raising awareness among school children about reproductive health issues, prevention of STD/RTI/HIV and their potential contribution to promote positive reproductive health.

4.5 Promotion of Universal Education

Through out the past decades of planned development, the Royal Government has given the highest priority to education. Bhutan is committed to achieve universal primary education by the year 2000. Despite the constraints of inadequate teachers, limited school infrastructure and the rising cost of education, the Royal Government has been able to provide free education to all its children, irrespective of gender. By the end of the 7th FYP, it was estimated that the primary enrolment had reached 72%. The 8th FYP objectives strive to "increase the number of children who attend school in order to meet the goals of Education for all," and "enhance the literacy rate through alternate forms of education such as non-formal and adult literacy programs.

With the rising primary level enrolment and limited opportunities for higher level education, there is a burgeoning group of adolescents that are not yet competent to enter the usual job market and, at the same time, are now reluctant to return to a farming life. To enroll them into some gainful vocation, special emphasis is being given to the strengthening of vocational and technical education training. At present there are two formal technical institutes; the Royal Technical Institute at Phuentsholing and the Royal Bhutan Polytechnic at Deothang. Those students that leave after class VI gain entry into trade level education and training courses and those from classes VIII to X to craft and

technician level courses. In all these institutes, both boys and girls are given equal opportunity. In addition, there are other institutes- Royal Institute of Health Sciences, Natural Resources Training Institute, Forestry Institute, School of Fine Arts and Crafts, and Driving School- that provide opportunities for the youth and adolescent to employ themselves gainfully.

4.6 Non-formal Education, NFE

Bhutan has made a commitment to provide educational and literacy services for all its population. While the main thrust for increasing literacy levels will be geared through the formal education sector, the literacy programme recently established to cater to out-of-school youths and adult illiterates will supplement this.

The NFE programme is an effective means by which youth and adults who have had no opportunity to attend formal schooling can acquire literacy and functional skill necessary for living a productive life in the modern world. The programme uses resources available within the formal system to ensure cost effectiveness and sustainability. So far 4080 illiterate men and women have benefited from the programme out of which 70% are women.

The NFE programme has been a valuable channel for dissemination of information and communication on health and hygiene and development programmes.

4.7 Youth Guidance and Counseling Section, YGCS

Realizing the huge potential to guide the youths of this country in the right direction the Royal Government, through the Education Division, established the Youth Guidance and Counseling Section, YGCS, in 1996. The primary purpose of this unit is to develop a comprehensive youth guidance program to guide individual youths towards a meaningful approach to life. The YGCS has initiated a program of systematic counseling in schools, through the active and interactive participation of the teachers, students and the parents, with teachers taking the lead role. The focus of such counseling is to provide career counseling to students, promotion of their understanding of their own abilities and to guide their interest into areas of their talents and potentials. In addition, extracurricular activities, be it in cultural, literacy, sports, etc. are given further impetus to involve the youths and the adolescents in schools.

4.8 Druk Scout Program

Another move within schools to provide a supportive environment for development of adolescents, is the initiation of scouting. This activity is also coordinated by the YGCS. Any student between ages 10 to 18 is eligible to become a member of the scout association. Almost all junior high level has introduced scouting as a regular activity.

Scouting is seen as an important youth leadership-training forum. It helps to develop desirable characteristics in adolescents by promoting values of sharing, instilling team spirit and including dignity of labour besides learning useful life skills such as first aid. Through this activity, scouts, as usual agents will be actively involved in community service and organizing awareness campaigns on various issues such as adolescent reproductive health (STD, HIV/AIDS, Family Planning), health and hygiene, environmental education, drug abuse etc.

4.9 National Women's Association of Bhutan, NWAB

The NWAB is a non-governmental organization that strives mainly to support women's development in the country. Within its scope of work special attention is being given to the adolescent girl and the young child. The association promotes health and developmental issue awareness among the rural women, provides support for income generating schemes through micro-credit systems and the promotion of cottage industries such as weaving, small scale agricultural activities such as kitchen garden promotion. The association also supports the schooling of indigent children and orphans. Both for the education and health sectors, NWAB is an important partner in the promotion of various health and educational activities in the country.

V. Challenges and Opportunities for the Promotion of Involvement of Adolescent in Development mainstream.

Through the successive enlightened rule of the Kings of Bhutan, great emphasis was given to the social sector. Consequently, in a short span of time, Bhutan has made tremendous progress in both health and education sectors. Mortality from diseases has declined, life span has risen significantly, and the overall economic situation of the country is on the upswing. There is now a growing population of young in the country with the potential for further strengthening of the achievements made so far. It is timely that the region is now looking at the issue of youths and adolescents. There are many challenges facing youths of today, but at the same time, there are also opportunities where adolescents can contribute to building of the nation.

5.1 Education and Vocational Training for adolescents

Although the Royal Government has not made primary education compulsory, due to the major expansion in the education infrastructure and education being provided free, by now the gross primary level enrolment has exceeded 80,000 students – almost 1/6th of the country's population. Therefore, the opportunity for a child in Bhutan to be in a school is indeed high. At the same time, there are major challenges.

With the expansion of education facilities in the light of severe shortage of teachers, inadequate facilities or lack of quality in the existing facilities make the provision of education a very challenging task. At the same time with a larger number of dropouts at the end of the primary level, there is an increasing population of adolescents that may not wish to return to a life of an ordinary farmer, yet at the same, their level of education does not provide them the opportunity to seek gainful employment. This is made more difficult due to the limited number of vocational institutes that can absorb them. Thus, there is an emerging group of youngsters, moving from the rural to the urban areas seeking employment opportunities. Unless appropriate mechanisms and opportunities are created, this vulnerable group could emerge disenchanted and frustrated. More attention is therefore; being given to basic skill development through organization of need based training at localized levels so that these people will be effectively utilized after the training.

5.2 Changing social milieu and conflicting socio-cultural patterns

The development history of Bhutan is indeed short. Till the end of the 1950's Bhutan pursued a policy of self-imposed isolation, almost totally oblivious to the advances in the rest of the world. The country, even after more than three decades of modernization, still continues to make energetic efforts to preserve and promote its cultural values, traditions and practices. Yet, at the same time, education and modernization has provided the avenue to see and experience another form of life and, perhaps, whetted the appetite for more materialistic life styles. With the amount of printed materials, electronic and other media, today's adolescents and youths have no dearth of information. Thus, while a larger portion of the country still remains rural and simple with strong beliefs and tradition in their cultural practices, the emerging youths and adolescents are often torn between simple blind faith versus a rational approach to many such practices. This is likely to produce either stress between the young and the adults, sometimes commonly called the "generation gap," or to lead the adolescents of today to abandon the rich cultural tradition to pursue a life of materialism, propped and supported with the intoxication of drugs and violence. It is at this critical time that the country must ensure that the rich spiritual

heritage is not lost, but strengthened through adaptation that is relevant to the mood of the day. Spiritual and religious teachings must come out of the cloisters of esotericism and mysticism. To that end, the Royal Government is pursuing vigorously the preservation and promotion of Bhutan's rich cultural traditions and, at the same time, striving to inculcate in the young a sense of belonging and responsibility and national identity.

5.3 Adolescent and Community Development

Within Bhutan's school, social service is given great emphasis to prepare the adolescents to emerge as socially conscious and responsible adults. Such activities have included assisting farmer-parents during sowing and harvesting seasons, helping in the promotion of water and sanitation by assisting the construction of latrines in the rural areas; participating in rural festivals and staging educational and entertainment activities for the benefit of communities. In the capital, the Bhutan Youth Development Association aims to channel the energies of the adolescents and youths through the promotion of sport activities, organizing social services to support the destitute and disadvantaged, and supporting the YGCS to organize scouts activities for students. In addition, the Youth Association is also increasingly focussing itself on the issues of juvenile crime, delinquency and substance abuse. The strengthening of such initiatives and the expansion of similar efforts to the rest of the country should be given priority.

5.4 Adolescent and Environmental concerns

Bhutan has a pristine and rich environmental heritage. The government has committed itself to the preservation and promotion of the environment to the extent that it is the stated policy of the Royal Government to maintain at least 60% forest cover for all times to come. In order to increase environmental awareness among the adolescents and youths of the country, environmental concerns are accorded the highest consideration even in the school curriculum. Further, 2nd June is observed as Social Forestry Day and school children participate in activities related to awareness arising on environment conservation etc. Nature Clubs are also encouraged in schools that promote such activities as:

- Art works contests on environment theme Environmental beautification of school campuses
- Street campaigns for environmental preservation and promotion
- Joining public campaigns for environmental protection, etc

VI. UNFPA's assistance

The Third UNFPA Country Programme will help contribute towards: (i) increased institutional capacity for the delivery of RH services, including FP, and information to all couples and individuals, particularly adolescents; (ii) a significant reduction in maternal and infant mortality, as well as the stabilisation of population growth, through expanded access and improved delivery of RH services. (iii) increased primary school enrolment and continuation rates, particularly of girls, through active advocacy; and (iv) capacity-building for population and health data collection, analysis and utilisation, so that progress towards the stated goals can be accurately measured and population and development plans strengthened.

For these purposes, UNFPA will provide US\$ 4.4 million, of which \$4 million would be programmed from UNFPA's regular resources, and the balance of \$ 0.4 million from multi-bilateral and/or other sources. Some 70 per cent of UNFPA's input will go towards implementing reproductive health programmes, including FP activities; approximately 16 per cent will go towards implementing population and development strategies; about 4 per cent for advocacy, and 9% for other related expenses.

Within the Third UNFPA CP, the RH projects aims at improving access to and provision of integrated quality reproductive health services for men, women and adolescents. Assistance will be given in developing a critical mass of trained health manpower, and in creating an enabling environment for the delivery of reproductive health services through multisectoral collaboration and IEC efforts. The population education project will support the institutionalisation of population education in primary, junior high, and high schools as well as in teacher training institutes, non-formal education programmes, and outreach programmes. The population and advocacy project will strengthen advocacy in support of a broader reproductive health approach. Focussing on various target groups, the project will advocate girls' education, responsible male sexual and reproductive health behaviour, and women's empowerment and employment opportunities. The project on population and development strategies will strengthen the information base and mainstream gender concerns for population and development planning, and conducts policy research for planning purposes.

VII. Conclusion

In conclusion, it may be stated that at the core of Bhutan's development philosophy is the quest for self-reliance. His Majesty the King had stated that "National self-reliance in the Bhutanese context means ultimately to be able to stand on one's own feet, have the power of decision in one's own hands, and not be dependent on others." The supportive framework for this development philosophy is to ensure sustainability, preserving Bhutan's own cultural and spiritual identity and striving for quality of life. Without taking the concerns of the adolescents and youths of the country today, neither the future adults will be able to stand on their own feet, nor can they acquire the ability to make their own decisions.