

# A Review Paper on “Current Status of Allied Health Courses in South East Asia Region (WHO)”

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In the field of health care delivery, allied health personnel plays an important role in providing primary, secondary and tertiary level health care in different countries of SEAR; most of them engaged in primary and secondary level health care. For the production of such health personnel, the countries of SEAR has many allied health courses; the eligibility, duration, working area and further study depends upon the national policy, universities’ rules and structure of national health care system. Here, the current status of allied health courses in SEAR is described in brief.

## Meaning of Allied Health Personnel

An Inter-country Consultation on Allied Health Services and Education, held in Bangkok, Thailand from 20-24 March 2000 defined allied health personnel in context of SEAR as “those personnel who have specific connections with the art and science of health care and are recognized as members of health team in the national health system. They are educated, at either professional or lower levels, in a recognized or accredited health or health related or academic institution.”

## Meaning of Allied Health Course

Allied Health Courses are such courses which are concerned with various branches of allied health, aimed of producing the capable health personnel by developing appropriate knowledge and skill in them, duration of course ranging from short term – vocational training (in months) to university graduation – professional (UG & PG). The different branches of allied health include pharmacy, medical lab technology, radiography, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, ophthalmology, public health, etc.

## Existing Status of Allied Health Courses in SEAR

The 11 countries of SEAR (Nepal, India, Bangladesh, Sri-Lanka, Bhutan, Maldives, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, DPR Korea and Timor-Leste) have various branches of allied health courses, more or less offered on the basis of the demand of such personnel in concerned countries, either by governmental sector or by private sector or both.

**Nepal** has 1 national level vocational training institute, 4 universities, 1 Institute of Health Sciences along with their affiliated colleges/institutions that are conducting various allied health courses ranging from short term vocational training to Master’s degree.

**India** has hundreds of universities/institutions (both public & private) offering different allied health courses. Although the national policy of India has planned to establish one ‘University of Health Sciences (UHS)’ in each state, currently

only seven exist; (Rajiv Gandhi UHS, NTR UHS, MGR UHS, Baba Farid UHS, Maharashtra UHS, West Bengal UHS and Rajasthan UHS). Besides the UHS, other public and private universities/institutions are also conducting many allied health courses of various level and duration.

**Bangladesh** has 4 public universities and other institutions along with more than 20 private universities/institutions that offer the different allied health courses of certificate, diploma and graduates level, duration of course ranges from 1 – 4 years.

**Bhutan** is rich in producing the health personnel of primary level. “Royal Institute of Health Sciences” is only the institution for producing the primary level health workers; all courses are of 2 years duration after passing class 10. Bhutan doesn’t have any medical college and other graduate level college of paramedical sciences till 2009 and has to be dependent on neighboring countries for medical and paramedical education of graduate level and higher. Recently, “Bhutan Institute of Medical Sciences” is established with the financial and technical support from Government of India.

**Sri-Lanka** has more than 10 universities (public & private) and professional colleges responsible for the production of various allied health manpower of different level. Professional Colleges like colleges of ophthalmologists, radiologists and medical administrator offer the concerned professional courses. The development of health manpower for service delivery is the responsibility of “Department of Health Services”, except the training of medical graduates.

**Maldives** has diploma and advanced Certificate level for some courses and Bachelor’s level (only in Health Service Management), for producing the primary level health workers needed for its five tier health care system. The “Institute of Health Sciences” (IHS), now a part of “Maldives College for Higher Education”, is the only facility for the training of health personnel, be it paramedical or otherwise. The duration of such courses ranges from 1 – 2.5 years.

**Myanmar** has a different system regarding the allied health courses. It has specialized and separate universities like University of Pharmacy, University of Medical Technology, University of Paramedical Sciences and other universities for teaching medicine, dental medicine, community health and public health separately. Public training institutes, hospitals and laboratories are also implementing some courses for primary level. The responsibility of producing different categories of Human Resource for Health is taken by the “Department of Medical Sciences” under the guidance of the Ministry of Health.

**Indonesia** has experienced a massive growth in the education programmes of allied health offering undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate within the last decades. Under the combined project implemented by Indonesian government, international donor and external agencies, hundreds and even thousands of civil servants have been recruited and trained for graduate and post-graduate education in public health & other disciplines at various public and private education institutions. Recently, more than ten public universities are offering various levels of allied health courses.

**DPR Korea** has about 100 health personnel training institutions including the central and provincial medical universities, Re-education University, nursing school, midwife school and schools for dental prosthesis, massagists and X-ray. DPR Korea has regular education system, the study-while working system and reorientation system. The Ministry of Public Health is closely cooperating with the training institutions of health personnel. Due to

the strictly controlled media, internet censorship and restriction of information outlets in DPR Korea, accessibility for required information was affected.

**Thailand** has many institutes, public & private, producing different public health personnel. The production of public health personnel in the public institutes is the responsibility of the Ministry of University Affairs and the colleges under the Ministry of Public Health. More than 15 public universities and institutions are offering various allied health courses ranging from diploma to post graduate level.

**Timor Leste** is severely passing through the inadequacy of its own health resources and required courses & institutions. It has found that most of the graduate health personnel in Timor-Leste are foreigners, recruited either by government or by UN and other international agencies

Following table shows the summarized form of different level of allied health courses offered by various public and private universities and institutions of South East Asia.

Country	Level	Courses Offered
Nepal	Technical SLC	CMA, ANM, Lab Assistant,
	Certificate	Health Science, Pharmacy, Lab, Radiography, Ophthalmology, Ayurved
	Bachelor's	Public Health, Pharmacy, Medical Lab Technology, Radiography, Health Care Management, Audiology and Speech Language, Optometry
	PG Diploma	Health Care Management
	Master's	Public Health, Pharmacy, MLT, Health Care & Hospital Management
India	Short Term	Village Health Guide
	Certificate	Health Education, Medical Record Technician
	Diploma	Health Lab, Pharmacy, Dental Hygienist/Technician, Health Science, Optometry/ophthalmology, Physiotherapy, Radiology, ECG Technology
	Bachelor's	Above Diploma level courses plus Dietician, Audiology, Hospital Administration, OT Technology, Prosthetics and Orthotics, ASLP, Medical Record Science, APB
	PG Diploma	Health Education, Health Statistics, Public Health, Applied Nutrition and Dietetics, Public Health, MLT, Ophthalmology, Hospital Administration, Learning Disability, Community Health and Development,
Master's	Health Lab, Pharmacy, Public Health, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Radiology, Hospital Administration/Management, Epidemiology, Biostatistics, Applied Nutrition, APB, ASLP, Prosthetics and Orthotics	
Bhutan	Technician Courses (2 yrs)	Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, Health Assistant, Laboratory, Dental, X-ray, Ophthalmology, Operation Theatre
Bangladesh	Certificate	Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, OT, Radiology & Imaging
	Diploma	Lab, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, Optical Refraction, Integrated Medicine, OT, Radiology & Imaging
	Bachelor's	Pharmacy, Lab Technology, Physiotherapy, Food Science & Nutrition
	Master's	Pharmacy, Lab Technology, Public Health
Sri-Lanka	Certificate	Dental Therapy, Health Sciences, Physiotherapy, MLT, Health Profession Education
	Diploma	Pharmacy, MLT, Radiography, Speech Therapy, Physiotherapy, Critical Care Medicine
	Bachelor's	Pharmacy, MLT, Radiography/Radiology, Physiotherapy, Speech & Language Therapy,
	PG Diploma	Medical Education
	PG/Master's	Radiology/Radiotherapy, Ophthalmology
Maldives	Diploma	Primary Health Care, MLT, Pharmacy
	Advanced Certificate	Primary Health Care, Pharmacy, Family Health, Social Service Work, Traditional & Complementary Medicine, Emergency Medical Treatment
	Bachelor's	Health Science
Myanmar	Diploma	Medical Science, Medical Education, Dental Technology
	Bachelor's	Community Health, MLT, Physiotherapy, Radiology, Medical Imaging & Technology
	Master's	Public Health, Pharmacy

Indonesia	Diploma	Pharmacy, Radiology, Physiotherapy, Occupational Health & Safety,
	Bachelor's	Public Health, Pharmacy, Health & Nutrition,
	Master's	Public Health Science, Public Health Nutrition, Pharmacy, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Occupational Health Science, Health Policy Administration, Health Promotion, Environmental & Occupational Health
Thailand	Certificate	Dental Science
	Bachelor's	Public Health, MLT, Physical Therapy, Radiological Therapy, Pharmacy, Nutrition & Dietetics, Nutrition & Food Safety Management, Industrial Hygiene & Safety, Environmental Health, Occupational Health & Safety
	PG Diploma	Medical Technology, Lab Technology, Epidemiology
	Master's	Public Health, Pharmacy, Physical Therapy, Radiological Therapy/Technology, Food & Nutrition, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Epidemiology

## Conclusion

There are so many allied health courses of various level and duration in different countries of South East Asia. The study reveals that India has the largest number of allied health courses. In contrast of this, no any allied health courses were found in Timor Leste despite of numerous electronic searches. Bhutan is found to be the country of no graduation courses of allied health. Maldives has not also adequate allied health courses of various levels. Other countries including Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia have the adequate number of diploma, graduate and post graduate courses of allied health.

Pharmacy is found to be the most common and medical technology as the second common courses in the countries

of South East Asia. The duration and eligibility of related courses are almost same in all countries but in some cases, differs although the course is same. For e.g. Master in Public Health is of 1/1.5 year in Bangladesh, 2 years in India, and 1.5/2 years in Nepal. Similarly, the entry criteria for MPH in Nepal, India, Bangladesh and other countries include Bachelor in any health science stream or Bachelor in any discipline or MBBS only. Same condition exists in other courses of Bachelor's, PG Diploma and Post Graduate level.

Regarding the involvement of public Vs private sector, it is found that public sector seems to be dominant over the private sector in the countries like Bhutan, Maldives and Myanmar. In contrast to this, countries like Nepal and Bangladesh has dominant private sector compared with the involvement of public sector.