

Concept Note on Antimicrobial Resistance Policy

I. Concept and Background

Antimicrobials are critical in preventing and managing infectious diseases. They are also essential tools for protecting animal health and welfare and contribute in meeting the increasing demand of safe food of animal origin. However, over the past years, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has emerged as a global human and animal health concern.

Inappropriate use of antimicrobials can lead to antimicrobial resistance (AMR) resulting in high morbidity and mortality with serious social and financial consequences. It is estimated that as much as 30% of patients in hospitals at any given time receives antibiotics, whilst up to 50% of antimicrobials used in hospitals are inappropriate. The data on use of antimicrobials in Bhutan is limited, but anecdotal evidence suggests irrational use of antibiotics, although not as rampant as reported elsewhere.

Infections caused by multi-drug resistant pathogens are increasingly becoming untreatable with available arsenal of antimicrobials whilst there are a very few or no new antibiotics being developed. In Bhutan, resistance to critical antibiotics has been reported mainly in gram negative bacteria which are responsible for range of life threatening infections. Rise in multi-drug resistant tuberculosis is also a concern.

Antimicrobials are different from other categories of medications that their use in one patient can influence their effects to other patients. Considering the rapid rate at which resistant pathogens can spread, the misuse of antimicrobials can adversely impact the health of patients who are not even exposed to them. Whilst it is impossible to abolish antimicrobial resistance altogether, prudent use of antibiotics can curtail the emergence and prevalence of resistance.

Increase in travel, tourism and trade means increased opportunities for resistant organisms to be carried from one geographical area to another, thus making globalization of AMR a reality. The return of the pre-antibiotic era is eminent if appropriate actions are not taken.

II. Critique of the Current Policy Options and Approaches

AMR is a global issue and every country has a part to play. Recognizing the eminent threat of AMR, several resolutions have been passed by the World

