

Terms of Reference (ToR) for Liaison Officer (Health Attache)

Position Title: Liaison Officer (Health Attache), For Ex-country referral

Position Level (Entry): P4-P2 A

Duty Station: Kolkata/Delhi/Vellore/Guwahati/JDWNRH

Reporting to: RBE/BRCG/Referral Division

Employment Type: Full-Time

1. Background and Rationale

The Royal Government of Bhutan continues to invest in strengthening the national healthcare system to ensure equitable and timely access to quality medical care. While substantial progress has been made in expanding health infrastructure and services across the country, a significant number of patients still require referrals, both within Bhutan and to hospitals abroad, for specialized diagnostics and advanced treatments that are not yet available domestically.

As the volume and complexity of patient referrals grow, so do the challenges related to coordination, documentation, budgeting, and service delivery. These challenges can result in administrative delays, patient distress, inefficient use of resources, and compromised continuity of care.

To address these issues, the establishment of Liaison Officer (LO) positions at strategic points in the referral network, namely the Royal Bhutan Embassy (RBE), Royal Bhutan Consulate General (RBCG), and the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital (JDWNRH), has become increasingly essential.

The Liaison Officer serves as a key facilitator in the referral process, ensuring effective coordination among patients and their families, referring and receiving hospitals, foreign medical institutions, and referral governance bodies. Their responsibilities include overseeing referral documentation, coordinating travel and hospital appointments, providing timely updates, and supporting patients and attendants throughout their referral journey. Moreover, Liaison Officers contribute to monitoring referral trends, tracking fund utilization, processes of referral budget estimation and ensuring compliance with national referral protocols.

By institutionalizing this role, the Ministry of Health aims to enhance the functionality and accountability of the referral system, improve patient outcomes, and ensure that the referral process is efficient, compassionate, and transparent. This initiative is aligned with the broader goals of strengthening health system governance, promoting patient-centered care, and optimizing public resource utilization.

2. Purpose of the Position

The purpose of the Liaison Officer position is to provide dedicated coordination, communication, and logistical support throughout the patient referral process, both within Bhutan and in foreign referral locations. The Liaison Officer acts as the primary link between patients, healthcare

facilities, diplomatic missions, and health authorities to ensure that referred patients receive timely and appropriate medical care.

Through the facilitation of referral documentation, arrangement of travel and medical appointments, and provision of on-ground assistance, the Liaison Officer plays a critical role in reducing delays, minimizing patient burden, and ensuring a smooth referral experience. The position is central to enhancing the efficiency, responsiveness, and quality of Bhutan's national and international referral system.

3. MAJOR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Roles and Responsibility of The Liaison Officer

- Report directly to the Embassy/ Consular General and functionally to the Referral Division and the National Referral Committee (NRC), JDWNRH
- Liaise closely with JDWNRH, the Referral Division, referral committees, and other relevant hospitals and institutions regarding all matters pertaining to referred patients.
- Submit proposals, policy issues, and operational concerns to the Embassy/Consular General/Referral Division for review and approval.
- Maintain updated agreements with empaneled hospitals and propose revisions or renewal of hospital package rates to the Royal Bhutan Embassy(RBE)/Royal Bhutan Consulate (RBC).
- Coordinate all official correspondences related to patient referrals, including those from government agencies and corporate offices.
- Organize and participate in referral coordination meetings and support visits from Ministry of Health officials and other delegations.
- Ensure that patients are referred only to authorized empaneled hospitals.
- Facilitate patient admissions, consultations, treatment planning, and medical follow-up in coordination with treating doctors and Bhutanese health professionals.
- Liaise directly with hospital management to ensure timely admission, continuity of care and transportation
- Review and verify treatment plans to ensure clinical relevance, necessity, and cost-effectiveness.
- Monitor and report the treatment progress of all referred patients, both in-patient and out-patient, to the JDWNRH and the NRC.
- Ensure that medications prescribed by treating doctors are dispensed for one month only, unless otherwise authorized.
- Inform patients and escorts to report to the referring doctor upon return and submit the discharge summary to the Referral Division.
- Investigate and report any unexpected deaths or adverse events to the Embassy/Consular General, NRC Chairperson, and the Head of the Referral Division.
- Arrange pickups for patients and escorts from airports, train stations, or bus terminals.
- Facilitate fair and transparent accommodation arrangements at the Kidu Guest Houses or other suitable lodgings, ensuring they are clean, safe, and well-maintained, in coordination with relevant offices.
- Provide patient guidance and emotional support throughout the referral journey.

- Liaise with welfare centers, support organizations, and local service providers to meet patient needs.
- Ensure the timely return of patients to Bhutan upon completion of treatment or hospital discharge, in compliance with referral guidelines and SOPs.
- Scrutinize treatment bills and ensure charges do not exceed approved package rates or include non-justified items.
- Verify hospital claims for authenticity and forward them for timely payment processing.
- Disburse travel allowances/Daily Allowance (TA/DA) to patients and escorts strictly based on actual entitlements and duration.
- Maintain accurate and up-to-date financial records of all transactions related to patient care, accommodation, and hospital payments.
- Submit monthly and quarterly reports on patient expenditures and referral budgets to the Finance Service, JDWNRH and Referral Division.
- Ensure that no advance payments are made to patients or escorts, except for DSA and return travel expenses, as per policy.
- Ensure that referred patients receive the treatment prescribed by the referring Bhutanese doctors.
- Liaise with hospital management to ensure understanding of Bhutan's referral rules and financial policies.
- Ensure that referral hospitals do not prescribe drugs still in the experimental stage or propose excessively costly treatments when effective alternatives are available.
- Keep the liaison office properly maintained and supervise staff to ensure professional and compassionate patient care.
- Maintain and complete up-to-date patient records for administrative and clinical reference in the ePIS and reporting sheet.
- Report regularly to the NRC Chairman and Head of Referral Division on the quality of services provided by referral hospitals and flag any concerns or deviations from referral standards.
- Uphold the integrity and efficiency of the referral process by ensuring compliance with referral protocols, budgetary controls, and ethical standards.
- To make arrangements and take decisions on operational matters in consultation with the Embassy/Consulate General/Chair NRC/Head of referral Division/Parent agency.
- May recommend changes in referral hospital if in the patient's best interest, with due intimation to NRC through Referral Division.

4. Qualification and Experience Requirements

- **Minimum Qualification:** Bachelor's degree (preferably Bachelor's degree in Public Health).
- **Work Experience:** At least 10 years of work experience in health systems
- **Technical Proficiency:**
 - Familiarity with Bhutan's healthcare referral system.

- Basic clinical knowledge to understand common medical terms, diagnoses, treatment plans, and prognosis.
- Proficient in MS Office, hospital data systems, and electronic health records.
- Strong verbal and written communication skills in both English and Dzongkha.

5. Competencies Required

- Strong coordination and organizational skills.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal abilities.
- Empathy, cultural sensitivity, and patient-centered mindset.
- Analytical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Ability to work under pressure and navigate bureaucratic systems.
- Diplomatic and proactive approach to stakeholder engagement.

6. Reporting and Supervision

- The Liaison Officer will report directly to the RBE/RBCG/Head of referral Division/MD, and work in close coordination with relevant stakeholders.
- The individual work plan on Max System will be evaluated by RBE/RBCG/Head of referral Division/MS depending on their place of work.
- Given the nature of the role, which requires close coordination with the Referral Division, the Head of Division shall conduct continuous performance monitoring, and submit an annual performance report.
- JDWNRH, MoH in consultation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and external Trade, shall retain the authority to terminate the foreign transfer tenure and deploy a replacement if the performance of the incumbent is not satisfactory.

7. Working Conditions

- Full-time position based in RBE/RBCG/JDWNRH
- May require flexible working hours including weekends or evenings in response to emergency referrals.
- May involve occasional travel to health centers and places for liaison or training activities.

8. Performance Evaluation

Performance will be assessed annually based on:

- Turnaround time for referrals and appointments.
- Reduction in patient complaints and inappropriate referrals.
- Improvement in departmental satisfaction with referral processing.
- Timeliness and accuracy of referral data and reports.
- Contributions to system-wide referral improvements. etc