



Report



SAARC Second Conference on TB, HIV / AIDS & Respiratory Diseases December 15-18, 2008 Kathmandu, Nepal

Organized by:

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Background

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) comprises of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. SAARC is a manifestation of the determination of the people of South Asia to work together towards finding solutions to their common problems in a spirit of friendship, trust and understanding and to create an order based on mutual respect, equity and shared benefits.

SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) is one of the Regional Centers of SAARC. It was established in 1992. The Centre has been working for Control of TB and HIV/AIDS in the region by coordinating the efforts of National TB Control Programs (NTP) and National AIDS Control Programs (NACP) of member states.

While underscoring the importance of intensifying the awareness campaign for TB & HIV/AIDS in the region, 12th SAARC Summit held in Pakistan in January 4-6 declared Year 2004 as SAARC Awareness Year for TB and HIV/AIDS on the recommendation of 13th Meeting of Governing Board (GB) of STAC. SAARC, STAC and Member countries have organized special activities and awareness programs at larger scale and reinforced awareness campaign to move towards Millennium Development Goals. SAARC Second Conference on TB, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases was a continuum of this campaign. The centre organized First SAARC conference on TB, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases in December (14-17) 2004 with great success. The event achieved its objectives and over the time period outcome too. One of the recommendations of first conference was to organize SAARC Second conference on TB, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases. With the theme of **“Working Together to Fight against TB, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases”**, the Centre organized SAARC Second Conference on TB, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases in Hotel Yak & Yeti, Kathmandu on 15-18 December, 2008.

2. Introduction

TB and HIV/AIDS are among priority global public health problems. TB is an age-old problem while HIV/AIDS is a recent occurrence. Tuberculosis is the foremost cause of death among adults from a single curable infectious agent in the developing world. The SAARC region bears disproportionate burden of TB; 22.6 % of population bearing 28.3% of the global burden in the year 2006.

The emerging trend of HIV/AIDS has posed great challenges to TB control in the SAARC Region. The estimated adult HIV prevalence rate in SAARC

countries is still less than 1% percent. However, the high-risk groups and high risk factors are present, which indicate the situation is alarming.

Respiratory Diseases are also major public health problem in the SAARC region. It is estimated that more than 40% of the outpatients attending hospitals for their care are suffering from respiratory diseases.

Accordingly, the Conference was organized with the Theme “**Working Together to Fight against TB, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases**”. More than Six hundred participants and 50 Regional and International Resource Persons and Program Managers participated in the conference. More than 200 scientific papers were presented in the conference. PLHAs working for the PLHA network were provided free registration for attending the conference. More than 10 PLHA attended the conference.

3. Objectives

- To disseminate new research on TB, HIV/AIDS & Respiratory Diseases.
- Sharing the experiences of Programme implementation, research and innovations
- Generating awareness on the urgency of tackling TB, HIV/AIDS and TB/HIV co-infection.

4. Program & Proceedings

The Conference was conducted on four days, i.e. 15th-18th December,2008. The venue of the conference was Hotel Yak & Yeti. The Conference Program and constitution of Advisory, Scientific committees and Steering Committees are placed at [Annex A-I, II, III & IV](#).



Welcome address by Director, Dr. Kashi Kant Jha

4.1 Inaugural Session

The Inaugural Session was chaired by Hon'ble Minister for Health & Population Mr. Girirajmani Pokharel. The Conference was inaugurated by the Chief Guest Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister, Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal by lighting the Traditional Lamp.



Inauguration by Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister, Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal

Agenda of the Inaugural Session is at **Annex- B-I**

The proceedings started with presentation of Conference Badges to the dignitaries on the Dias. Consequently, a welcome address was delivered by Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, SAARC Tuberculosis & HIV/AIDS Centre. He highlighted the problem of Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases and emphasized that although, a lot of work has been done for tackling the problems, however, a lot more is required to be done.

The Chief Guest Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister, Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal, the Chairperson, Hon'ble Minister for Health & Population Mr. Girirajmani Pokharel and His Excellency, Secretary General SAARC, Dr. Sheel Kant Sharma released the publications of STAC- TB & HIV Updates and Salient features of TB & HIV/AIDS Control Programmes of SAARC member countries.



Release of publications by Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister- Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Hon'ble Minister for Health - Mr. Girirajmani Pokharel and H.E. the Secretary General SAARC - Mr. Sheel Kant Sharma

His Excellency, Dr. Sheel Kant Sharma during his inaugural address highlighted the problems of Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and TB-HIV Co-infection within the SAARC Region and stressed on the need of strengthening and scaling up of the Health Services.

Dr. D. S. Bam, Secretary Health during his inaugural address stressed the need for strengthening Primary Health Care infrastructure and allocation of adequate resources for effective and efficient health care delivery. He congratulated SAARC Secretariat and SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre for organizing the Conference at a very important time.

Rt. Honorable Prime Minister, Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal during this inaugural address expressed his satisfaction on the outstanding contributions from all sectors and major progress made by Member Countries in the region over the last decade. He emphasized that with this strong foundation, acceleration of efforts is required to sustain and expand effective measures with new vaccines, diagnostics and drugs to effectively control these devastating infectious diseases. He stressed that to achieve the long term goal to eliminate TB by 2050, all Member Countries must first achieve the goal set for 2015 and pay attention to other factors impacting these diseases like poverty, housing, work environment and malnutrition and influenced by socio-economic inequalities like marginalization, Illiteracy, stigma and discrimination. He highlighted that **“Lead-Empower-Deliver”** the slogan of World AIDS Day should be reflected into effective action for the benefit of the needy people. He assured that we are

determined to build partnerships with all the sectors and affected people in this fight. This is the opportune time for consolidating past successes and instituting new interventions. We have to think for more investments in human resource capacity building and infrastructure development especially at community level to reach the un-reached and serve the under-served. He congratulated SAARC for undertaking many exemplary works for the upliftment of the life of the people of the region and emphasized that SAARC has opened new areas of opportunities for the cooperation among our countries of the Region.

Hon'ble Minister for Health & Population, Mr. Girirajmani Pokharel during his address as Chairperson expressed his gratitude to the Chief Guest Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister for his gracious presence and inaugurating the Conference in spite of his busy schedule. He expressed his views that deliberations during this conference will provide participants with necessary information and updates, experiences and views, new inventions, as well as new ideas for planning future steps to further strengthen the ongoing efforts and responses to tackle these diseases. He expressed his desire that this conference of eminent experts, scientists, stakeholders and developmental Partners from the region and abroad, will serve as very useful forum to review progress, to address common constraints, share experiences and best practices, identify priorities and plan the next steps for effective implementation to combat these diseases.

Dr. Virender Singh Salhotra, Deputy Director, STAC delivered vote of thanks. Inaugural ceremony was followed by cultural programme and dinner.

4.2 Technical Sessions



Country Presentation on MDR/XDR-TB by Dr. Pushpa Malla, Director, NTC

Technical sessions on TB, HIV/AIDS, Tobacco and Respiratory Diseases were organized on 16th to 18th December, 2008. Apart from the presentation of important Research Papers by the participants.

The following important Technical Sessions were organized:

- *Plenary Session on MDR & XDR TB*
- Plenary Session on Molecular Biological Techniques for TB Diagnosis
- Plenary session - Country Presentations on National Tuberculosis Control Programmes
- Plenary Session - Guest Lectures on HIV/AIDS

Topics and Speakers

- - Management of HIV and TB: Issues and Solutions
By - Dr. S. Rajasekaran, Superintendent, Govt. Hospital of Thoracic Medicine, Tambaram Sanatorium, Chennai, India

- - Multi-sectoral response on HIV/AIDS: Some experience from APACHA

By – Mr. Prabodh Devkota, Asian People’s Alliance for Combating HIV/AIDS (APACHA)

- - Speak out pictures..... “Fortunate Drug Users?”
By - Mr. Kanchan Jha, Executive President, Sano Paila

- Skills Building Workshop: HIV prevention programming for and with most-at risk and especially vulnerable adolescents, (MARA and EVA) in South Asia
- Laboratory Demonstration on Molecular Technique for Rapid Results in TB Diagnostics
- Plenary Session - Country Presentations on National HIV/AIDS Control Programmes
- Plenary Session - Guest Lectures on Tuberculosis

Topics and Speakers

- - Challenges in Global TB Control & way forward
By – Dr. G. R. Khatri, President World Lung Foundation

- - MDR/XDR –TB in India: TheCountry Response
By - Dr. D. Behera, Director, LRS Institute, India

- Recent Advances in Laboratory Diagnosis of Tuberculosis –
By - Dr. N. Selvakumar, Deputy Director, TRC, Chennai, India
- - Air borne Infection Control (Tuberculosis)
By - Dr Rohit Sarin, AMS & HoD of TB Control & Treatment & L.R.S. Institute of Tuberculosis and Respiratory Diseases, India
- - Role of Medical School in TB control - A Nepal Experience **By - Prof. Nilambar Jha**, Professor & Head, School of Public Health and Community Medicine, BPKIHS, Dharan, Nepal



Laboratory Demonstration on Molecular Techniques for Rapid Results in TB Diagnostics by Knot Dr. Feld Man

In addition to the above special sessions, oral & Poster presentations were made on different topics by investigators from SAARC countries and abroad. President of Nava Kiran Plus, a PLHA network organization of Nepal was especially invited to deliver a guest lecture.

Detailed program is placed at [Annex A-1](#)

4.3 Exhibition

After the Inaugural Ceremony, Hon'ble Minister for Health & Population, Secretary (Health), Director General of Health Services, Govt. of Nepal, delegates, dignitaries, resource persons and participants observed the exhibition. National, Bilateral and Non Governmental Organizations displayed their Resource Materials and the information on the activities conducted by them. The Exhibition continued till 18th December 2008.



Hon'ble Minister for Health Mr.Girirajmani Pokharel visiting the exhibition stalls during the conference

List with names of the organizations who set up their stalls is placed at [Annex C](#)

4.4 Closing session

Dr. D.S.Bam, Secretary (Health), Ministry of Health & Population, Govt. of Nepal was the Chief Guest and Mr. Hassan Shifau, Director, Social Affairs Division, SAARC Secretariat was the Chairperson for the Closing Ceremony. Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, SAARC Tuberculosis & HIV/AIDS Centre during his Closing remarks thanked all the participants and resource persons for their contribution for success of the Conference. He also thanked the members of Review & Recommendation Committee for their excellent work in bringing out recommendations relevant for the region. He wished all the participants and resource persons a safe journey back to their homes.



Remarks by Director, Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, STAC during Closing Ceremony

Dr. Ajay Kumar Khera, Chairperson of Governing Board of STAC presented the Recommendations made by the Review and Recommendation Committee.

Dr. D.S. Bam, Chief Guest & Secretary (Health), during his closing remarks congratulated STAC for the success of the Conference and remarked that the Conference was very beneficial for the SAARC region and particularly the participants from Nepal. The Chief Guest distributed the Letters of Appreciation to the Resource Persons and the Volunteers. He also presented Souvenirs of the Conference to all the Resource Persons.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha presented Souvenirs of the Conference to the Chief Guest, Chairperson and Chairman, Governing Board of STAC.



Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director presenting Conference Souvenir to the Chief Guest - Dr. D. S. Bam, Secretary for Health, MoH, Nepal

Mr. Hassan Shifau during his closing remarks congratulated STAC and all the Resource Persons for success of the Conference and also thanked the Review and Recommendation Committee for giving clear cut and pragmatic recommendations which are very relevant in the present and Regional Context. He reiterated SAARC's commitment not only for the development of Health Sectors but also other important Sectors which also have direct or indirect influence on the health of the people of the region.

Dr V. S. Salhotra, Deputy Director, STAC delivered vote of thanks.

5. Participants, resource persons and speakers

More than six hundred fifty participants including resource persons and speakers from Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and other countries attended the conference. UNICEF – ROSA organized a workshop during the conference and about 30 participants from different NGOs of Nepal attended the workshop.

Lists of Resource Persons (invited by SAARC & UNICEF-ROSA), Participants and Volunteers are placed at *Annexures D, E, F & G*

6. Collaborating Organizations

WHO SEARO, UNICEF & World Lung Foundation (WLF) provided support in organizing symposium, workshop, sponsoring speakers and participants for the technical sessions and setting up stalls in the exhibition.

Other organizations like National TB Centre (NTC), Nepal Anti TB Association (NATA), German Nepal Tuberculosis Project (GENETUP), Britain Nepal Medical Trust (BNMT), Sakriya Sath, Health Research & Social Development Forum (HERD), STAC and Nava Kiran Plus set up their stall in the exhibition.

STUPA College, HERD, APACHA and Sano Paila contributed by providing Volunteers for the Conference.



Dr. G. R. Khatri delivering a Guest Lecture on challenges in Global TB Control & way forward

7. Expert Group to develop recommendations of conference



Expert Group reviewing, discussing & developing recommendations of the conference

To formulate the recommendations of conference, an Expert Group (Review and Recommendation Committee) consisting of members of Governing Board of STC, resource persons from member countries and resource persons from bilateral organizations was formed. The Committee met on the sidelines of the Conference on 16th, 17th and 18th December and discussed various issues and challenges being faced by the SAARC Region and gave its recommendations. Constitution of Review and Recommendations and Minutes of meeting are placed at **Annex H & I**.

8. Recommendations

Participants of SAARC Second conference on TB, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases held from December 15 – 18, 2008 at Kathmandu, Nepal placed on record their appreciation of the efforts of SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre in organizing this conference.

The conference unanimously makes the following recommendations:

1. The Conference noted significant increase in case detection (nearly 70%) and treatment success (more than 85%) in recent years in SAARC Region. To ensure achievement of targets for TB control recommended by WHA (2007) as part of MDG's, it is recommended to enhance accessibility and promote partnership in the member countries to make ISTC accessible to all with a priority to HIV/TB vulnerable population.
2. As HIV/TB co-infection is a major threat to the success in controlling HIV/TB in the Region, it is recommended that all HIV positive cases should be actively screened for Tuberculosis and simultaneously Provider

Initiated Counseling and Testing may be offered to TB Patients in identified high risk and vulnerable geographical pockets.

3. Member Countries should also strengthen and operationalise mechanism for cross referral among TB and HIV facilities and also to ensure the provision of CPT to eligible HIV/TB co-infected patients.
4. In view of the global economic recession, the Conference suggests to all partners and all member countries to ensure that DOTS Strategy and HIV prevention efforts, care and support continue to be the priority.
5. Keeping in view the implementation of Stop TB Strategy and noting that out of 489,000 MDR-TB cases globally, estimated 144,000 cases of MDR-TB in SAARC Region constitute an important problem in the SAARC countries. It is recommended that a culture and drug susceptibility testing SAARC Supra-National TB Laboratory should be established with in the SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre.
6. The conference notes with concern that annually 10 million people die globally on account of lung related diseases out of which tobacco accounts for 5 million deaths. Keeping in view PAL as one the components of Stop TB Strategy, member countries are advised to adopt interventions enlisted in manpower - a policy package to reverse the tobacco epidemic formulated by World Health Organization.
7. In the wake of emerging XDR-TB in the region, Member Countries are suggested to effectively implement infection control guidelines including HIV clinical settings.
8. The Conference notes with satisfaction, the priority accorded by member countries in the area of advocacy and communication. Efforts need to be strengthened in the field of social mobilization to engage society, especially the poor, marginalized group, cured TB patients and PLWHA in the campaigns against TB and HIV/AIDS. This will help member countries in building greater commitment to fight these two diseases individually and their deadly combination.
9. Considering the large pool of young population in SAARC Region and 50% of new HIV infections occurring in this population, the Conference recommends the Member Countries to strengthen Sexual and Reproductive Health Services related to young population on a priority basis.

10. The stigma and discrimination related to TB and HIV/AIDS in the community as well as in health care settings needs to be addressed adequately through involvement of opinion leaders and various medical and other social organizations. The socio-economic development and ethical considerations should be given high priority while framing HIV/TB related guidelines.

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