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Rt. Hon’ble Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Prime Minister, Government of Nepal
Inaugurated SAARC Second Conference on TB, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases organized from 15th to 16th December 2008 in Kathmandu

...... This conference is very important to timely address the burning public health problems like these diseases for coming up with innovative solutions with good recommendations in the way forward to achieve the MDGs ............... 
.......... It is an opportunity to renew our collective commitment and efforts to stop TB, HIV and Respiratory Diseases to emphasize the need for concerted actions globally, regionally, nationally and locally....... 

 Rt. Hon’ble Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal

Congratulations.........................

We wish to extend our best wishes and congratulations to
Ms. Shabana Azmi, Indian First Star and
Mr. Gunath Sagesriya, Star Cricketer, Sri Lanka for their nomination as SAARC Goodwill Ambassadors for 2008

STAC Newsletter is a regular publication of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, it includes reports on activities, decisions of important meetings of the Centre and recent information on tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and their control

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Editorial

Major progress has been achieved in the Member States in implementing the DOTS Strategy since its implementation in the early 1990s. All the Member States had achieved global targets of treatment success. The scale of the HIV epidemic varies immensely across the SAARC region. The size of the SAARC region, its diversity, the number of social and economic forces at work in the region presents both opportunities and challenges to maintain the low prevalence state of HIV in the region. With the launch of New Stop TB Strategy in 2006, countries have adopted their multi-year plans to additional interventions in line with this strategy to consolidate the gains made and expand the scope of services.

Mainstreaming of HIV prevention, encouragement of widespread public discussions to de-stigmatize HIV and AIDS issues, co-ordination and collaboration between stakeholders, improving the underlying root causes associated with vulnerability are the factors that need to be addressed in order to contain the epidemic. Advocacy, communication and social mobilization play a critical role in supporting, enhancing and sustaining these requirements and helps to generate programmatic interventions. On this background, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS center organized SAARC Second Conference on TB, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases. Ms. Shabana Azmi SAARC Goodwill Ambassador for HIV/AIDS visited Kathmandu in January 2009 with a view of increasing the awareness amongst masses, reducing stigma and discrimination and highlighting the needs, demands and available resources to tackle the problems. The benefits of the success will go beyond the HIV epidemic and are expected to bring positive changes in broader health behaviors, gender issues, economic opportunities and social constructs.

The region is sufficiently geared up to meet the challenges. However, we need to consolidate and sustain the gains made so far and also approach the epidemic control in the light of new research and consequent strategy implementation.

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1. Public Awareness and Advocacy Programs on TB and HIV/AIDS

Commemoration of World AIDS Day (1st December)

SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) commemorated the World AIDS Day with the theme “Stop AIDS, Keep the Promise – Leadership” by organizing An Interaction Program on TB and HIV/AIDS with Teachers and Students of Shraddha Nursing College, Bhaktapur, Nepal on 30 Nov. 2008. Sixty nursing & twenty pharmacy students along with the Principal and panel of teachers took part in the program.

Ms. Bimala Khadka, College Principal Chaired the program. Mr. Jaya Bahadur Karki, District Health Officer, Government of Nepal, Bhaktapur District, experts from National TB Centre (NTP), Nepal and SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre facilitated the program.

Students were acquainted with updated information regarding the technical aspects of the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS & Tuberculosis.

Celebration of SAARC Charter Day (8th December)

SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre, Thimi and SAARC Information Centre, Kathmandu jointly celebrated the 24th SAARC Charter Day by organizing An Interaction Program with Media on Prevention and Control of TB and HIV/AIDS at Thimi, Bhaktapur on 8th December 2008. Journalists / media representatives from National level located in Kathmandu and Bhaktapur participated in the program. A delegation of senior officials from Bhutan, who came for a training program at NTP, Nepal also attended the program.

The program was facilitated by experts from SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre, National TB Centre, Thimi, Bhaktapur and SAARC Information Centre, Kathmandu, Nepal.

2. SAARC Regional Training of Trainers on Essential Technical & Operational aspects for Management of Drug Resistant Tuberculosis (DOTS Plus), Kathmandu

SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre organized Training of Trainers on essential technical and operational aspects of management of drug resistant TB in collaboration with National TB Program, Government of Nepal from 1st to 5th July 2008 in Kathmandu, Nepal. Participants from NTP -
Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, and Sri Lanka participated in the training.

Dr. Bishnu Prasad Pandit, Secretary for Health & Population, Government of Nepal graced the opening session as the Chief Guest.

Dignitaries of Department of Health Services, Nepal deliberated on the challenges confronted for TB control and also highlighted upon ways & means for scaling up the services like, expansion of quality DOTS & DOTS Plus, training & research activities.

The training program was facilitated by Dr. Rohit Sarin, AMS & HoD, LRS Institute of TB & RD, New Delhi & Dr. Rani Balasubramanian, TRC, Chennai, India and Dr. Mohan Kumar Prasai, Director, Regional TB Centre, Pokhara, Nepal, Dr. Bhawana Shrestha, Chief Medical Officer, GENETUP, Nepal Anti-TB Association, Kathmandu, Nepal, Dr. Sundar Shyan Jha, Medical Officer, National TB Centre, Nepal and Dr. Rajendra Pant, Deputy Director, National Centre for AIDS and STD Control, Nepal.

3. SAARC Regional Training of Microbiologists for Sputum culture and Drug Susceptibility Test, Bangalore

SAARC Regional Training of Microbiologist for Sputum Culture and Drug Susceptibility Test was organized jointly by SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, Kathmandu and National TB Institute, Bangalore, Government of India at Bangalore from 14th to 18th July 2008. Participants from Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Maldives and Nepal attended the training.

Dr. P. Kumar, Director, NTI, Dr. N. Selvakumar, Deputy Director, TRC, Dr. Pritish Vaidyanathan and Ms. Reena Kingsburry, (Jr. Bacteriologist) from NTI along with the experts from SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, Kathmandu facilitated the program.

The training was concentrated in enhancing the knowledge and skills of the Microbiologists in diagnosing and monitoring of the treatment efficacies of TB & MDR-TB as well as improving of the status of the National Reference Laboratories for providing TB culture and Drug Susceptibility Testing (DST) services.

At the end of the training Dr. P. Kumar, thanked the respective Governments for sending participants and congratulated the participants for successfully completing the training.

4. Eighteenth Meeting of the Governing Board

The Eighteenth Meeting of the Governing Board of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre was held in Kathmandu from 25th to 26th September 2008.

Dr. Dirgh Singh Bam, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Population, Government of Nepal graced the meeting as the Chief Guest. The opening session of the meeting was held under the chairmanship of Dr. Govinda Prasad Ojha, Director General, Department of Health Services, Government of Nepal.

The Meeting was attended by Dr. Kazi Shahadat Hossain, Line Director, NASP & SBTP, DGHS, Ministry of Health, Dhaka, Bangladesh, Dr. Lungten Z. Wangchuk, Program Manager
Dr. Ajay Kumar Khera, Joint Director, National Control Organization, New Delhi, India, Mr. Ibrahim Shaheem, Director General, Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health, Male, Maldives, Dr. Pushpa Malla, Director, National Tuberculosis Centre, Thimi, Bhaktapur, Nepal, Mr. Deepak Dhital, Under Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nepal, Dr. Hassan Abbas Zaheer, National Program Manager, National AIDS Control Program, National Institute of Health, Islamabad, Pakistan, Mr. A. M. Ranaweera Banda, Charge d’Affaires ai, Embassy of Sri Lanka, Kathmandu, Mr. Hassan Shifau, Director, Social Affairs Division, SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu and Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director (Member Secretary), SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Dr. Ajay Kumar Khera, Governing Board Member from India was elected as Chairman of the Governing Board of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre for the coming two years. All the Members of the Governing Board congratulated the newly elected Chairperson and thanked the outgoing Chairperson from the Government of Bhutan for valuable contributions extended during his/her chairmanship.

The Board discussed program activities and budget (Institutional & Program cost) for the year 2009 submitted by the SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre and recommended for the approval through Standing Committee.

5. SAARC Trainings on Technical and Operational Aspects of Anti-Retro Viral Therapy, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh

Sri Lanka
SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, Kathmandu organized SAARC Training on Technical and Operational Aspects of Anti-Retro Viral Therapy in collaboration with National STD and AIDS Control Program (NSACP), Ministry of Health and Nutrition, Government of Sri Lanka in Colombo from 20 - 24th August 2008. This was the first training on ARV organized by SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre. Fifteen participants from NSACP of Sri Lanka participated in this training.

Dr. Sujatha Mananwatha, Acting Director, National STD/AIDS Control Program, the opening session of as Chairperson. She thanked SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, Kathmandu for conducting this training program in Colombo. Ms. Thiloma Abeyjeewa, Deputy Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SAARC Division), Sri Lanka also attended the opening session.

Dr. Himali Priyathna Perera, Senior Registrar, NSACP, Sri Lanka. Dr. Manoji from NSACP, Sri Lanka, Dr. Kulasiir Buddhikorale, Consultant Venereologist, NSACP, Sri Lanka, Dr. S. Rajasekaran, ART Consultant, NACO, India, Dr. Richa Dewan, Professor & Head of Dept. of Medicine, Maulana Azad Medical College, India and experts from SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre facilitated the training program.

Bangladesh
SAARC Training on Technical and Operational Aspects of Anti Retro Viral Therapy was jointly organized by SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC), Kathmandu and National AIDS/STD Program, Government of Bangladesh in Dhaka from 10th - 14th November 2008 with the objectives to strengthen the skills of the participants in managing HIV infected people who need
SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre organized a conference on TB, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases for the second time in Kathmandu from 15th to 18th December 2008. The theme selected for the conference was "Working Together to Fight against TB, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases". Similar conference was organized in Kathmandu in 2004 in time with the SAARC Awareness Year for TB and HIV/AIDS – 2004.

The training program was facilitated by Dr. Rajasekaran, ART Consultant, NACO, India and experts from SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, Kathmandu.

During the training, participants visited different VCT and ART centres, such as Ashar Alo Society and Jagori, ICDDR, B for the practical exposure to the services.

Mr. Abul Kalam Azad, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Bangladesh graced the closing session as Chief Guest. He explained the importance of this training in this era of expanding epidemic of HIV and also advised to carry on such activities in all Member States of this region.

ART treatment and to strengthen the capacity of the participants in implementation and monitoring of ART program.

Nineteen participants from various governmental and non governmental organizations of Bangladesh participated in the training.

Prof. Hosneara Tahmin, Acting Director General of Health Services, Government of Bangladesh graced the inaugural session as the Chief Guest. Dr. Ferdous Alam Shibib, Programme Manager/Acting Line Director National AIDS/STD Programme, Bangladesh Chaired the session.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC delivered welcome address and expressed his thanks to the Government of Bangladesh for continuous support to SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre as well as for organizing this training in Dhaka.

6. Fifth Round Proficiency Testing of Sputum Smear Microscopy for National TB Reference Laboratories in SAARC Region

SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre conducted the fifth round proficiency testing of Sputum Smear Microscopy for National TB Reference Laboratories of SAARC Member States to implement an ongoing proficiency testing program for sputum microscopy within the Network of National TB Reference Laboratories in SAARC Region in 2008.

The results revealed that almost all laboratories reported very good and excellent performance. The National TB Reference Laboratory Network showed similar performances to previous four proficiency testing rounds.

The results also proved that SAARC Regional TB Reference Laboratory should continue such type of activities. It is hoped that all the National TB Reference Laboratories will sustain their performance.

7. SAARC Second Conference on TB, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases

SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre organized a conference on TB, HIV/AUIDS and Respiratory Diseases for the second time in Kathmandu from 15th to 18th December 2008. The theme selected for the conference was "Working Together to Fight against TB, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases". Similar conference was organized in Kathmandu in 2004 in time with the SAARC Awareness Year for TB and HIV/AIDS – 2004.

Rt. Hon’ble Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Prime Minister, Government of Nepal graced the conference as Chief Guest and inaugurated by lighting the oil lamp “Panas”. The inaugural ceremony of the conference was organized under
the Chairmanship of Hon’ble Mr. Girirajmani Pokharel, Minister for Health and Population, Government of Nepal.

The Chief Guest, the Chairperson and His Excellency Dr. Sheel Kant Sharma, Secretary General, SAARC released STAC’s new documents – NTPs and NACPs in all Member States of SAARC Region – 2008, TB Update – 2008 and HIV/AIDS Update - 2008.

The Chief Guest expressed happiness and satisfaction regarding the progress made by the SAARC Member States in control of TB and prevention of HIV/AIDS as well as management of Respiratory Diseases. He highlighted the slogan of the World AIDS Day “Lead-Empower-Deliver” and desired that it should be reflected into effective action for the benefit of the people of the Region. He congratulated SAARC for undertaking many exemplary works for the upliftment of the life of the people of the Region and he also emphasized that SAARC has opened new areas of opportunities for the cooperation among our countries.

From the Chair Hon’ble Health Minister expressed his gratitude to the Chief Guest for his gracious presence and inaugurating the conference. He expressed his views that deliberations during this conference will provide participants with necessary information and updates experiences and views, new research as well as new ideas.

His Excellency Dr. Sheel Kant Sharma, Secretary General, SAARC stressed the need of strengthening and scaling up of the health services for the people to combat the problems on TB and HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Dirgh Singh Bam, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Population, Government of Nepal highlighted the need of strengthening Primary Health Care infrastructure and allocation of adequate resources for effective and efficient health care delivery. He congratulated SAARC Secretariat and SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre for organizing the conference at a very right time.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre delivered welcome address. He highlighted problems of TB, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases and emphasized the responsibilities to be taken in health care delivery of the people by working together. In this context, he clarified the theme of the conference “Working together to fight against TB, HIV/AIDS and Reparatory Diseases”.

Dr. Virender Singh Salhotra, Deputy Director, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre delivered Vote of Thanks.

Technical sessions of the conference started from 16th to 18th Dec. 2008. Six plenary sessions and more than 120 scientific papers on different important topics were presented. Different posters were displayed by dividing into 3 categories; Workshop on HIV prevention programming for and with most-at-risk and especially vulnerable adolescents (MARA and EVA) in South Asia – by UNICEF-ROSA and Lab demonstration on Molecular Technique for Rapid Results in TB Diagnostics were also held during the conference.

TB and HIV/AIDS exhibition was organized from 16th to 18th December 2008 at the conference venue which was also observed by Health Minister, National and International Dignitaries and participants.
Dr. D. S. Bam, Secretary, Ministry of Health & Population graced the Closing Ceremony of the conference as chief guest. The closing ceremony was organized under the Chairpersonship of Mr. Hassan Shifau, Director, SAARC Secretariat. Dr. K. K. Jha, Director, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre thanked all the participants and resource persons for their invaluable contributions to make the conference success. He also thanked Review & Recommendation Committee for bringing out fruitful recommendations.

Dr. Ajay Kumar Khera, Chairman, Governing Board, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre presented the recommendations.

Mr. Hassan Shifau, Director, SAARC Secretariat congratulated SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre and all Resource Persons, Participants and recommendation preparation committee for their excellent works. Vote of Thanks was delivered by Dr. V. S. Salhotra, Deputy Director, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre.

Dr. D. S. Bam, distributed the Letters of Appreciation, Souvenirs and Certificates in the Closing Ceremony as Chief Guest.

1. Participation in Regional Meeting

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director and Dr. Lochana Shreshta, Epidemiologist, STAC participated in Regional Meeting of South Asian Forum for Health Research organized by Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC) on 7th July 2008 in Kathmandu as Members of Ethical Review Board of NHRC.

2. Participation in 39th IUATLD World Conference

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC participated and presented papers in 39th IUATLD World Conference on TB and Lung Health organized in Paris from 16th to 20th October 2008. In the conference a paper on “HIV Prevalence among Diagnosed TB patients” was presented. This study was done by SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre with collaboration of NTP and NACP, Government of Pakistan in Gulab Devi Hospital, Lahore.

3. Laying of the Foundation Stone

We express profound grief at the sad demise of Dr. Thir Man Shakya, former Director, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre and National TB Centre. Late Dr. Shakya has made lots of contribution in control of tuberculosis. He had developed modern TB control concept by developing TB Control Manual which was very basic requirement for the establishment of National TB Program (NTP) in Nepal. His demise has caused a grievous loss in the field of TB control. His contributions to the SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre will always be remembered. We convey our heartfelt condolence to the bereaved family.

We pray to the Almighty GOD for eternal peace to the departed soul.
1. Visit of WHO Regional Director

Dr. Samlee Plianbangchang, Regional Director, World Health Organization, South East Asia Region visited SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre on 7th July 2008. Dr. Samlee observed the functioning of the Centre and discussed about the collaborative activities of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre and WHO/SEARO.

2. Visit of Ms. Shabana Azmi, SAARC Goodwill Ambassador for HIV/AIDS


Ms. Azmi visited Hon’ble Mr. Girirajmani Pokharel, Minister for Health & Population, Government of Nepal. In the meeting she was informed about the status of level of National TB & HIV/AIDS Control Programs in Nepal & in the response, Ms. Azmi suggested to scale up the ART services for eligible HIV infected people as well as to tackle the cross border issues on these diseases.

Press Conference was organized with media for advocacy on TB and HIV/AIDS control in Kathmandu. Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre welcomed the media people and highlighted the objectives of the visit of SAARC Goodwill Ambassador to Nepal. Mr. Hassan Shifau, Director, SAARC Secretariat presented remarks describing that the visit of SAARC Goodwill Ambassador is a good opportunity for advocacy on HIV/AIDS.

Talking with the media people, Ms. Azmi highlighted her views, objectives of visit and role of advocacy through media for control and prevention of HIV/AIDS. She also emphasized to mitigate the stigma, discrimination and social issues associated with HIV/AIDS prevail in the society.

Participant-journalists reiterated their solidarity to support National TB and HIV/AIDS control programs as they have already built partnership with SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre. The Press Conference was attended by over 60 journalists for different media.

Ms. Azmi visited Kataketi Ashram and Super Specialty Centre for AIDS care run by Nava Kiran Plus (NGO), Budhanilkantha, Kathmandu and discussed the status of care, support and facilities.
A meeting of Ms. Shabana Azmi was organized with Rt. Hon’ble Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Prime Minister, Government of Nepal. During the meeting various issues related to Health Care, TB and HIV/AIDS in Nepal were discussed.

On 7th January, Mr. Rishi Ram Ghimire, Acting Secretary General, SAARC, Mr. Hassan Shifau, Director, SAARC Secretariat, Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, Dr. Pushpa Mall, Director, National TB Centre and all staff working for control and prevention of TB and HIV/AIDS collectively congratulated and thanked Ms. Azmi for visiting Kathmandu & addressing different issues related to HIV/AIDS & Tuberculosis.

3. Appointment of New Professional at STAC

Dr. Ganga Chathurani Pathirana, (Sri Lanka)

MBBS, DCH, MSc. MD, Dip GUM (Lon.), DFFP (RCOG-UK)

Dr. Ganga Pathirana joined SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre as a Professional Staff on the post of Technical Officer (HIV/AIDS) on January 27th, 2009. She graduated in Medicine from University of Ruhuna, Sri Lanka and obtained her Masters of Science and Doctor of Medicine from Post Graduate Institutions of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. She completed her Post-MD overseas training in United Kingdom and obtained Post Graduate Diploma in Genito Urinary Medicine and Family Planning.

She started her career as a Medical Officer in Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka and became a Specialist Medical Officer in Venerology. She had been working for National STD and AIDS Control Program in Sri Lanka since 1996. Being a Clinician and a Public Health Specialist her responsibilities involved both curative and preventive health care. She was a Resource Person to Governmental and Non-governmental organizations engaged in providing preventive health care as sexual health to the community. Dr. Pathirana was a teacher to undergraduate as well as postgraduate students in Medicine and was the course coordinator for the Diploma in Venerology course, PGIM, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

She is a life member of Kandy Society of Medicine, Sri Lanka and an Honorary Member of the Research Institute of TB, Japan Anti TB Association, Tokyo, Japan.

STAC staff welcomed her on joining STAC Family.

Visit of TB Experts to STAC

- Dr. Rohit Sarin, LRS Institute of TB and RDs
- Dr. S. K. S Chaturvedi, CTD, MoH & FW, New Delhi
- Dr. Ballab Sharma, JDWNRH, Thimphu, Bhutan
- Dr. Manohar Joshi, Bhim Hospital, Bhairahawa, Nepal
- Dr. Damayanthi Wijesinghe, Sri Lanka
- Ms. Shameema Hussain, Maldives
- Dr. Ghanashyam Kharel, Kathmandu
- Prof. Nilamber Jha, BPKIHS, Dhara, Nepal
- Dr. M. Kamin, NTP, Afghanistan
- Dr. M. K. Prasai, Director, RTC, Pokhara, Nepal
- Dr. Aradhana J. Jha, Kathmandu
- Dr. Rakesh Jha, Wuhan University, PR, China
- Dr. Rinchen Chophel, Bhutan
- Dr. N. Selvakumar, India

Visit of Bhutanese Team

A team of 8 trainees from Bhutan who came for training at NTC, Nepal visited STAC and acquired the information on the functioning of the Centre on 8th December 2008.
World TB Day 2009
"I Am Stopping TB"

If undelivered, please return to:

SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre
GPO Box 9517, Kathmandu, Nepal