



STAC

(SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre)

Newsletter



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Mr. Prasanna Gamage, Director, SAARC Secretariat delivering speech in stage programme organized by NTP Nepal on World TB Day 2014



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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, news of important activities of National TB and HIV/AIDS Control Programmes of SAARC Member States and recent information on TB, HIV/AIDS and their control.

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Editorial

The SAARC TB Day along with World TB Day was commemorated on March 24 which aimed at focusing international attention on the importance of combating tuberculosis in the region and worldwide. Theme of the TB day for this year is “**Reach the three million’ A TB test, treatment and cure for all**” as mentioned in the WHO 2013 Global TB Report that three million people are missing every year by the health system since last six years.

The SAARC region, with an estimated annual incidence of 3.1 million TB cases, carries 37% of the global burden of TB incidence among which only 1.7 million are notified in the health system. Hence, the number of missing cases is 1.4 million that accounts for almost half of the global missed cases.

TB is curable however the current effort to find, treat and cure everyone who gets ill with the disease is still not sufficient. Out of the three million people who get sick every year with TB, a second of them do not get opportunity to access the TB services in the region. The probable reason being expressed globally is that these 1.4 million people live under poverty and are most vulnerable communities.

It is necessary to find those cases and provide treatment and cure which may include expanding the services throughout the health system with the support of stakeholders to diagnose and report cases. Further, intensified collaboration with public hospitals and private health facilities are required to strengthen the reporting system.

The cornerstone of finding these cases is early diagnosis with the support of improved technology such as auramine stain and LED fluorescent microscopy which are also cost effective for TB screening program. Moreover, the WHO supported GeneXpert in resource poor setting has started proving to be effective in finding out the unreached cases.

Finding cases without appropriate treatment is not a successful program. TB is curable but it takes longer duration for cure and the service is not easy to deliver. However, there are few drugs on pipeline (RIFAQUIN, OFLATUB and REMoxTB) apart from existing effective drugs in the National Tuberculosis Program which may reduce the magnitude of the burden of tuberculosis in future.

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**Message from the Secretary-General of SAARC
on the World TB Day, 24th March 2014**

The World TB Day, falling on March 24 each year, assists to focus international attention on the importance of combating TB and MDR-TB worldwide. Globally by 2012, the TB mortality had been reduced by 45% since 1990. The rate of new cases of TB has been falling worldwide for about a decade and reaching the MDG target. Almost 60 per cent of TB cases worldwide are now detected and, out of those, the vast majorities are cured.

The World TB Day is also being observed in SAARC region as the SAARC TB Day. It is commemorated in the region for greater advocacy and creating awareness among the general population and to appreciate the member states' efforts to reduce the burden of disease. It is also an opportunity to mobilize political and social commitment to curtail the TB cases by reaching the unreached. This year the theme of the World TB Day as well as the SAARC TB Day is "Reach the three million" *A TB test, treatment and cure for all* as highlighted in the WHO 2013 Global TB Report, three million people are missed every year by health systems. This has been the case for six years now.

The SAARC Region has made immense progress in implementing DOTS strategy since its inception and by 1997 all member states have committed towards 'Stop TB Strategy'. The Region has been able to achieve almost 90 percent treatment success rate with a hundred percent DOTS coverage. Nevertheless, an estimated three million cases still exist annually which carry 36 percent of the global burden of TB incidence. Four of the eight Member States in the Region are among the 22 high burden countries with the highest burden of TB namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, which represent 97% of total new smear positive cases notified in the Region.

SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) was established with a vision to support and coordinate with SAARC Member States to make the Region free of Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS. The mission to support the efforts of National TB and HIV/AIDS Control Programmes through evidence based policy guidance, coordination and technical support and to achieve the goal to minimize mortality and morbidity until both the diseases cease to be a major public health problem in the region.

In commemorating this Day, I would like to call on all member states and concerned development partners to join together for strengthening the efforts of TB prevention and control initiatives in the Region.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Arjun B. Thapa'. Below the signature, the name '(Arjun B. Thapa)' is printed in a smaller font.

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World TB Day/SAARC TB Day- March 24, 2014

Message from Director, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre

World TB Day & SAARC TB Day is a day to bring global and regional focus on the epidemic of Tuberculosis and the way to address challenges in the years to come. The theme of **World TB Day & SAARC TB Day** this year is "Reach the three million", A TB test, treatment and cure for all. An aggressive scale up of TB programme is required by ensuring access and coverage for all to reach the three million unreached. No one should be left behind in the fight against TB so as to move towards a ZERO TB death globally and in the region.

Tuberculosis remains one of the major public health concerns in the SAARC Region. The Region accounts for 36 percent of the global burden of TB incidence with an estimated annual incidence of 3 million TB cases in the year 2012. Four of the eight Member States in the Region are among the 22 high burden countries with the highest burden of TB namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, which represent 97 percent of total new smear positive cases notified in the Region. And out of the sputum smear- positive pulmonary TB patients 89 percent were successfully treated in the Region among the 2011 cohort.

HIV-TB confection is a serious problem in the Region. National TB control and National AIDS control programmes in all countries in the Region are jointly implementing a comprehensive package of interventions against this problem. Similarly, Drug-Resistant TB (DR-TB) is beginning to appear in many parts of the region. This has further added to the challenges of TB control. Control of MDR-TB requires further and larger investment of resources for treatment.

Since its establishment in 1992, SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) has taken up the challenges of combating the threats of Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS in the SAARC region, being the coordinating Centre for National Tuberculosis Control Programmes (NTPs) and National HIV/AIDS Control Programmes (NACPs) in the SAARC Member States.

The Centre has developed regional strategies on TB control along with strategies on Advocacy, Communication & Social Mobilization (ACSM) and TB/HIV co-infection. It is also organizing Trainings, Workshops, Meetings, Seminars, Conferences, advocacy on regular basis to strengthen the member states to fight against TB & HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, it is conducting research on TB & HIV/AIDS and publishing technical documents such as peer reviewed SAARC Journal, updates on TB & HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, the SAARC Regional TB Reference Laboratory (STRL) has been established to coordinate the National TB Reference Laboratories in the Region for quality assurance of sputum microscopy. It has aimed to establish SAARC Supra Reference Laboratory. It is also a collaborating Centre of World Health Organization (WHO).

Our experience revealed that the SAARC Goodwill Ambassador Programmes have been very effective for generating Advocacy & Awareness relating to HIV/AIDS in the region. This year, SAARC has decided to confer the honorary title of SAARC Goodwill Ambassadors to Ms. Runa Laila, Bangladesh, Shri Ajay Devgan, India, and Ms. Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy Pakistan.

Finally, I call for intensified global/ regional solidarity to ensure that all people are free from fear of tuberculosis and its devastating effects. Let us vow to end the neglect of TB and to end deaths from this disease.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha
Director

Welcome News

New Secretary General of SAARC

SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre has the honour to Welcome His Excellency Mr. Arjun Bahadur Thapa, the Secretary General of SAARC

His Excellency joined the Secretariat of South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) as Secretary General. He is the twelfth Secretary General of the Association and succeeds H. E. Mr. Ahmed Saleem of the Maldives.



H. E. Mr. Thapa was appointed to the position by the Thirty-fifth Session of the SAARC Council of Ministers held in the Maldives on 20 February 2014. Endorsing the nomination from the Government of Nepal, the Council “approved the appointment of H. E. Mr. Arjun Bahadur Thapa as the next Secretary General of SAARC for a three-year term commencing from 1st March 2014.”

Prior to this appointment he served as the Foreign Secretary of Nepal. In his diplomatic career, H. E. Mr. Thapa has also served as Ambassador of Nepal to the United Arab Emirates and as Deputy Permanent Representative/Minister Plenipotentiary as well as Charge d’Affaires, a.i., at the Permanent Mission of Nepal to the United Nations in New York.

Born in January 1956, H. E. Mr. Thapa has a Masters’ Degree in International Law

Report on Activities

Commemoration of World TB Day/SAARC TB Day 2014 by STAC

World TB Day/SAARC TB Day falling on March 24 each year is designed to build advocacy to policy makers and to create awareness to general public. The Government of SAARC Member States decided in 1997 to commemorate World TB Day and SAARC TB Day on the same day for the same theme. It commemorates the day in 1882, when Dr Robert Koch astounded the scientific community by announcing that he had discovered the cause of tuberculosis, the TB bacillus. Dr. Robert Koch's discovery opened the way towards diagnosing and treating TB. The theme of the Day this year is “**Reach the three million**”, **A TB test, treatment and cure for all**. For scaling up of TB programme is required by ensuring access and coverage for all to reach the unreached three millions. No one should be left behind in getting TB services so as to move towards a ZERO TB death globally and in the region.

Every year SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) commemorates World TB Day/SAARC TB Day by organizing different activities. STAC takes this day as an opportunity of advocacy for mobilizing support from policy makers, National & International organizations, women groups and community at large, in order to implement NTP

successfully. In this year STAC organized the following activities to commemorate the World TB Day 2014 which supports in spreading awareness messages among the people in the community.

- Interaction Programme with Nursing Students on Tuberculosis Control and its Preventive Strategy

- Releasing of Messages of His Excellency Mr. Arjun Bahadur Thapa, Secretary General of SAARC and Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC and
- Participation in Stage Programme, organized by NTP, Nepal.

Interaction Programme with Nursing Students on Tuberculosis Control and its Preventive Strategy

On the occasion an interaction programme with Nursing Students on TB control and its preventive strategy was organized on 21st March 2014 at



Thimi, Bhaktapur. Nursing Colleges can play an important role in the National efforts for control and prevention of tuberculosis. They are in a unique position to reach various levels of health care providers. They have the potential to create a new generation of health professionals who have updated knowledge about priority communicable diseases such as Tuberculosis. However, their active participation in control programmes has so far been inadequate. The academia and



practitioners lack consensus on the rationale and practices of National TB control programmes largely on account of an absence of information and adequate involvement in these programmes.

The objectives of the programme were to discuss the role of Nursing Colleges in building capacity, service delivery in relation to TB control programme, to disseminate updated information on TB and to seek coordination and cooperation for control efforts on TB.

Over 100 Nursing Students from Dr. Iwamura College of Health Science, Bhaktapur and Shraddha Nursing College, Thimi, Bhaktapur including faculty teachers participated in the programme. The programme was facilitated by Experts from WHO/NTP Nepal, Professionals from STAC and Officials.

The methodology used by the facilitators were PowerPoint Presentations, Discussion and Participatory Interaction

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC, welcomed all the dignitaries and participants and highlighted objectives of commemoration of the World TB day/SAARC TB Day. Dr. Jha highlighted the ways how to reach to un-reached and marginalized population. He also addressed the social determinants for effectiveness of TB control. He briefed about the history of tuberculosis, its symptoms, preventive strategy and role to be played by Nursing Students in the community for controlling tuberculosis. At the end he appealed





to convey TB awareness message to their nearer and dearer in the community. He thanked to the officials and students for participating the programme.

Dr. Ghanshyam Kumar Bhatta, Research Officer, STAC briefed the Introduction of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre along with the TB burden in SAARC Region. Dr. Bhatta highlighted the key role of nursing students in controlling tuberculosis.

Dr. Giam Paolo Mezzabotta, Medical Officer, WHO/NTP, Nepal presented a paper on Global & National scenario of Tuberculosis. He highlighted the global burden, achievements and efforts for stopping the tuberculosis.

On behalf of the participants Ms. Archana Adhikari, Teacher, Shraddha Institute of Health Sciences, Thimi & Ms. Sanumaiya Khadka, Nursing Director, Dr. Iwamura Memorial Hospital & Research Centre, Bhaktapur expressed their views about the programme. They also advised to continue this type of programme in future.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha Director STAC awarded the Souvenir to the representatives of participating colleges. He also delivered the closing remarks and vote of thanks.

At the conclusion it was realized that participants were made aware of about different issues related to TB disease and its control programme in the country as well as in the world. At the end participants expressed their solidarity to spread the awareness messages to the general people

in the community as they realized their role in the control of Tuberculosis.

Releasing of Messages by His Excellency Secretary General and Director, STAC

On the occasion of World TB Day/SAARC TB Day 2014, SAARC Secretariat released a message of His Excellency Mr. Arjun Bahadur Thapa, Secretary General of SAARC which was conveyed to National TB Control Programmes of SAARC Member States to publish on National daily Newspapers. SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre released the message of Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director of STAC. Both the messages were published on STAC website. (Full text of the messages can be read in page No. 1 & 2 of this newsletter).

Participation in Stage Programme, organized by NTP, Nepal

On 24th March 2014, NTP, Nepal in collaboration with partners organized a stage programme at Nepal Academy Hall, Kathmandu.

Hon'ble Mr. Khaga Raj Adhikari, Minister for Health and Population, Government of Nepal graced the occasion as Chief Guest.

Mr. Prasanna Gamage, Director, SAARC Secretariat, attended the programme and delivered speech.

On this day His Excellency Mr. Arjun Bahadur Thapa, Secretary General, SAARC issued a



Message on the occasion. The message was conveyed to National TB Control Programme of SAARC Member States to publish on National daily Newspapers. Director, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre issued a Message on the occasion of World TB day 2014.

Displaying of Flexes

STAC prepared number of flexes with information about STAC and its activities for TB and HIV/AIDS control in SAARC Member States which were displayed at the entrance of venue of the stage programme which was observed by the Chief Guest, guest and visitors.

Commemoration of World TB Day 2014 in SAARC Member States

NTPs and NGOs/INGOs working for the control of TB in the SAARC Member States commemorated the day by organizing different activities. Some information as browsed from the different websites regarding the commemoration on World TB Day 2014 are as follows:

Pakistan

Awareness Seminar

National TB Control Programme organized an "Awareness Seminar" in Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA), Islamabad on 25th March, 2014 under the chairmanship of **Honourable State**



Minister Mrs. Saira Afzal Tarar. TB patients, their families, health care/service providers, volunteers from Pakistan Girls Guide Association & Pakistan Boy Scouts, local community elders/members, representatives of donor agencies, INGOs, NGOs and officials from vertical programmes participated in this seminar.

Source: <http://ntp.gov.pk/cmsPage.php?pageID=11>

"Walk-a-cause"



A "Walk-a-Cause" was organized by the Ojha Institute of Chest Diseases, DUHS, Karachi in collaboration with Stop TB Partnership Pakistan to commemorate the World TB Day 2014. The walk was led by Chief Guest, Professor Dr Masood Hameed Khan, Vice Chancellor, Dow University of Health Sciences & Chairman Stop TB Partnership Pakistan along with Guest of Honour, Mr Khalid Shah, Chairman Private School Owners Associations, Sindh, Dr Ismatara Khurshid, Manager, Provincial TB Control Program, Sindh, Professor Dr Muhammad Masroor, Director Ojha Institute of Chest Diseases and Dr Iqtidar Ahmed, Executive Secretary (Hon.), Stop TB Partnership Pakistan. Dr Nadeem Ahmed, MDR-TB Focal Person OICD, moderated the ceremony. People from all walks of life also participated. A band performed National Anthem and a Group of Boys Scouts lead the procession. Later in the price distribution ceremony, organized to acknowledge the services of the employees of Ojha Institute of Chest Diseases, speaking on the occasion, Professor Dr Masood Hameed Khan stresses

the need for developing strong linkages between service providers and emphasized on developing a strategy to reach the missing patients.

*Source: www.stoptb.org/assets/documents/countries/partnerships/Pakistan%20WTBD.pdf

Afghanistan commemorates World TB Day 2014

Kabul, 25 March 2014 - World TB Day was commemorated across Afghanistan on 25 March 2014. Afghanistan is one of 22 TB high-burden countries in the world. In 2013, a total of 31 622 of the estimated 56 000 TB cases were notified through expanding DOTS coverage within the basic package of health services and essential package of hospital services with a 90% treatment success rate.

Dr Surya Dalil, Minister of Public Health, said that the drug resistant form of TB might become a major challenge and the treatment of such cases expensive. She stressed the importance of vaccination among children and developing a comprehensive package of services for women affected by TB based on a nationwide research.

Dr Rik Papper Korn, WHO Representative in Afghanistan, said, "Of the 9 million people a year who get sick with TB worldwide, a third of them are "missed" by public health systems. Many of these 3 million people live in the world's poorest and most vulnerable communities. Afghanistan being in complex emergency situation is one of those In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, the case detection rate is only 63% (Global TB report 2013). This means that out of the 670 000 new TB cases estimated to have occurred in 2012, around 250 000 cases were missed." Also he added "We believes that no one should be left behind in the fight against TB. This World TB Day, we call for a global effort to find, treat and cure the three million and accelerate progress towards zero TB deaths, infections, suffering and stigma. To reach the three million and move towards eliminating of TB as a public health problem we will need to aggressively

scale up TB programmes, especially for the most vulnerable groups and in hotspots, while investing in research and development for the new tools that we urgently need.

Mr. Shorida on behalf Stop TB Partnership in Afghanistan stressed on the need to address the link between TB and poverty and its consequences. He said that we all knew TB is curable but still TB is one of the top three major causes of death among women ages 15–44 worldwide.

<http://www.emro.who.int/afg/afghanistan-events/afghanistan-commemorates-world-tb-day-2014.html>

Bhutan

World TB Day Observation-2014

'Reach the THREE million; A TB test, Treatment & Cure for All'

The World TB Day in Bhutan was observed in Gidakom Hospital under Thimphu Dzongkhag/District on 25 March 2014 on the theme "Reach the 3 million; A TB test, Treatment and Cure for



(Dr. Frank H. Paulin, Acting WHO Representative from the Regional Director of South-East Asia Region, Dr. Poonam Khetrapal Singh)

all". The event was graced by Hon'ble Health Secretary, Dasho Nima Wangdi and was attended by the acting country representative of WHO, Dr. Frank Herbert Paulin and the Director General of the Department of Public Health, Dr. DORJI wangchuk along with other key officials from the Ministry of Health. In showcasing our united

solidarity and fight against TB, both the infected and affected communities in Gidakom Hospital also attended the event.

Similar events were also held in other parts of the country showcasing the country's continued commitment to stop TB. The Hon'ble Health Secretary in his address called on the united action to fight against TB through multi-sectoral approach, he also emphasized and urged the nation that everyone suffering from TB have access to TB

diagnosis, treatment and cure and highlighted the country's challenge with the growing number of MDR-TB cases despite commendable treatment success rate.

The acting country representative from WHO read out the message from the Regional Director of South-East Asia Region, Dr. Poonam Khetrpal Singh.

http://www.searo.who.int/bhutan/world_tb_day_2014/en/#



Brief News

Farewell to Dr. Abdul Malik, Technical Officer (HIV/AIDS), STAC

Dr. Abdul Malik returned his home country (Maldives) after partial completion of his tenure as Technical Officer (HIV/AIDS) of this Centre on 25th April 2014.



Staff of the Centre organized a farewell programme and thanked him for his contributions for the Centre even for the short period of time. STAC wishes him for a great success in his coming days.



Participation in Regional Conference of UNION

The 2nd Conference of The Union South-East Asia Region (SEAR 2014) was organized from 9th to 12th March 2014 in Dhaka, Bangladesh in liaison

with the NTP and the NATBA of Bangladesh. The theme of the conference was 'TB in 2050: challenge to humanity'.


Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director and Dr. Ghanshyam Kumar Bhatta, Research Officer took part in the conference on behalf of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC). The STAC is an organizational member of the Union, South-East Asia Region and it is a unique organization working for control of TB TB/HIV Co-infection and prevention of HIV/AIDS in South Asia Region. Since, TB/HIV co-infection is one of the major challenges for National TB Control in SAARC Member States. It should be addressed properly to get desired outcome.

The objectives of the participation from STAC were to share experiences gained by the Centre in research on TB control conducted by STAC in collaboration with NTPs of SAARC Member States and advocacy on SAARC/SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre in international platform.

HIV Prevalence Among Newly Diagnosed Tuberculosis (TB) Patients in Bhutan

Jha KK¹, Dorji T², Dendup T³, Tshering K⁴, Rinzin C², Tshering N⁵, Wangchuk D⁶



Poster
Presentation

¹SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, Kathmandu, Nepal
²Communicable Diseases Division, Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health, Bhutan
³National TB Control Programme, Ministry of Health, Bhutan
⁴Public Health Laboratory, Ministry of Health, Bhutan
⁵National HIV/AIDS Control Programme, Ministry of Health
⁶Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health, Bhutan

Introduction of SAARC:
 SAARC is an association of eight countries and 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.

SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC):
 STAC is established in 1992 in Kathmandu, Nepal with objectives to work for prevention and control of TB & HIV/AIDS in the Region by co-ordination the efforts of the National TB Control Programmes and National HIV/AIDS Control Programmes of Member States.

Objective of Study:
 To determine the HIV prevalence among newly diagnosed TB patients in Bhutan.

Methodology Used: Cross sectional study of HIV sero prevalence among 150 consecutive new TB patients >14 years of age presenting at seven selected TB centers of Bhutan from February till March 2012

Results:

- A total of 150 participants were enrolled
- Only 149 were considered (one of the participant had to be excluded because of age)
- The mean age among the study participants was 31 years
- The most common occupations were students (22.2%)
- The majority of the study participants resided in urban areas (69%)
- Of the 149 participants 65% were diagnosed as pulmonary TB and 35% as extra pulmonary TB
- Among pulmonary TB cases 80.4% were smear positive and 19.6% were smear negative cases,
- Among them 33% of the cases had close contacts with TB cases while 28.2% informed having history of TB in the family
- Among the study participants, 7.4% had past history of blood transfusion
- The most common form of extra-pulmonary TB was gland TB (50%) followed by pleural effusion (26.9%)
- None of the 149 TB patients diagnosed HIV positive

Conclusion:
 The HIV prevalence among TB patients is very low in Bhutan indicating slow spread of HIV. Presently, HIV does not appear to have impacted TB epidemic in Bhutan. Early intervention for TB/HIV collaboration would prevent the devastating impact of this dual epidemic.


Regional Efforts to Control TB/HIV co-infection in SAARC Region

The Strategy consists:

- Political & Administrative Commitment
- Support National HIV/Surveillance among TB Patients and TB surveillance among PLHA
- Decrease the Burden of HIV in TB patients and TB in PLHA including four "I"s
- Support Regional and National Capacity Building including, Training and Research
- Monitoring and Evaluation of Collaboration activities

Research/Study carried out by STAC on HIV/AIDS

- HIV Prevalence among diagnosed TB patients in Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh
- Acceptability of HIV testing by TB patients in Member States
- Operational Research on TB/HIV Co-infection (treatment Adherence among Co-infected) in Nepal



SAARC Regional Strategy for
TB/HIV Co-infection
2011-2015

A poster presentation on "HIV Prevalence among Newly Diagnosed TB Patients in Bhutan" was made during the conference which was a scientific research conducted in Bhutan.

The study was done on 149 TB patients. The results showed that none of the HIV positive was found in this cohort.

Visit of STAC by Dr. Stephanie Langevin

Dr. Stephanie Langevin from Canada met the Director, STAC on 25th February 2014 at the Centre. During visit the matter related to the treatment of Tuberculosis and Research was discussed. The Director, STAC briefed about the status of MDR & XDR TB, TB/HIV Co-infection and TB Lab services. Professionals working in the Centre were also present in the discussion.

To

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