



# STAC

(SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre)

## Newsletter



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(Hon'ble Minister Mr. RamJanam Chaudhary, Ministry of Health, Government of Nepal delivering his speech at the World TB Day function jointly organized at Thimi, Bhaktapur, Nepal)



(Dr. S. C. Verma, Director, STAC with NTP and NACP Managers, Nepal and other guests at the Interaction Programme with students held at STAC on the occasion of World TB Day 2016)



Participants, Guests and Experts at Interaction Programme with students held at STAC on the occasion of World/SAARC TB Day 2016)

STAC Newsletter is a regular publication of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, it includes reports of 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 and HIV/AIDS.

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## Editorial

### Childhood TB

The urgency of the problem of TB in children cannot be underestimated. Worldwide, at least 1 million TB cases occur each year in children under 15 years of age. The true global burden of TB in children is unknown because of the lack of child-friendly diagnostic tools and inadequate surveillance and reporting of childhood TB cases.

World Health Organization (WHO) estimates in 2013 revealed that up to 80 000 children die from TB each year and children account for over half a million new cases annually. It should be noted that the estimated deaths only include those in human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)-negative children. The HIV epidemic has increased the burden of childhood TB and the clinical challenges. In fact, the actual burden of TB in children is likely to be higher, especially given the challenge in diagnosing childhood TB. Children are more likely to develop more serious forms of TB such as miliary TB and TB meningitis resulting in high morbidity and mortality.

The burden of TB in children is an important indicator of ongoing transmission within the community. However, the actual burden of TB in children at national or global level is not exactly known as children with TB are often not registered with or reported by National TB Programme.

Most public health programs have limited capacity to meet the demand for care and high-quality services for childhood TB. Despite policy guidelines, the implementation of contact tracing and delivery of isoniazid preventive therapy (IPT) to young and HIV-infected children is often not adequately addressed by public health programmes.

Due to low case detection it is estimated that a large number of children suffering from TB are not appropriately treated. This is further compounded by drug stock outs and the lack of child-friendly formulations of drugs for TB treatment and prevention.

Also TB care for children is not consistently integrated into HIV care and maternal and child health programs.

Compounding this difficulty, it is the fact that children with TB often come from families that are poor, lack of knowledge about the disease and live in communities with limited access to health services. Another compelling reason is that TB is important in the context of children's overall survival. We do not know the extent to which TB is a cause of childhood deaths that are reported in global statistics as deaths due to HIV, pneumonia, malnutrition or meningitis, but the number is likely to be substantial. Since the children with TB can present with complications such as Miliary TB and TB meningitis 'it is very important to diagnose them early and manage properly to prevent morbidity and mortality. Therefore it is essential that all children with tuberculosis are managed as early as possible. The main source of transmission of TB infection to a child is usually an adult with positive tuberculosis in the lungs. Adults who do not complete their TB treatment put young children at risk of being infected with TB bacilli with a high risk of developing MDR-TB.

SAARC Tuberculosis & HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) is a regional Centre of eminence working for the prevention and control of TB and HIV/AIDS in the region. In line with the End TB Strategy (2016- 2035) envisions a world free of TB with zero deaths, disease and suffering, the STAC has also developed "The SAARC Regional Programme Guidelines of Diagnosis & Management of Pediatric Tuberculosis (TB) and SAARC Regional Training Manual on Pediatric Tuberculosis" to gear up to end TB by 2035 in the region.

The goal of reaching zero TB deaths among children worldwide is not beyond our grasp. Achieving this requires sustained advocacy, greater commitment, mobilization of increased resources and a joint effort by all stakeholders involved in providing health care that would also include managing TB among children.

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**SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION  
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**Message from the Secretary General of SAARC  
on World TB Day/SAARC TB Day, 24 March 2016**

World TB Day and SAARC TB Day is held each year on March 24th and, aims to build public awareness for tuberculosis, a disease which despite being curable, remains a destructive epidemic in many parts of the world.

World TB Day is an opportunity for people everywhere to join this fight by helping to educate others about TB and by urging governments to take action. We believe that together we can End TB once and for all, and the theme for this year's World TB Day "Unite to End TB" has rightly called for a united fight to end TB from our communities across the globe.

The post-2015 End TB Strategy aims to end the TB pandemic by 2035, for which a dramatic change needs to take place over the next few years in how we fight TB. I hope that the "End TB Strategy" facilitates accelerating the fight against tuberculosis and the fight for those most affected by it: the poorest, most vulnerable, socially marginalized and inequitably served. TB is a public health scourge, a health security threat and a development challenge. While global trends in the lives saved through effective TB diagnosis and treatment shows positive results, 3.6 million people with TB are still missed by health systems every year and therefore may not get adequate care they need. Also, in 2014 alone, an estimated 480,000 people developed multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB) globally.

The SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) has developed the SAARC Regional Strategy for Control/ Elimination of Tuberculosis( 2013-2017).National TB Control Programmes of the Member States are implementing their programmes in line with the SAARC TB Elimination Strategy and showing satisfactory trends in terms of decline in TB related deaths and incidence. The STAC has also developed HIV/AIDS and TB/HIV Co-infection strategies to address the issues and challenges in the context of the SAARC Region.

In terms of progress in TB control, all Member States in the SAARC Region have sustained country wide access to directly observed treatment, short-course (DOTS). The SAARC region, with an estimated annual incidence of 3.1 million TB cases, carries 32% of the global burden of TB and estimated deaths due to TB was 0.37 million in 2014. 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.

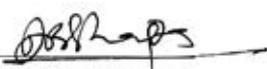
The epidemiology of tuberculosis & HIV/AIDS is such that sustained effort is required for a long period in order to control these problems. SAARC Member States are highly committed to tackle these major public health problems of TB, HIV/AIDS and TB-HIV Co-infection and the commitment is both at the national & regional level.

In commemorating this day, I would like to call on national authorities of the Member States and development partners to strengthen TB prevention and control initiatives in the Region to stem the tide of this epidemic.

Finally, I would urge all Member States to spread the message that TB is fully curable with appropriate and full course of treatment available.

Let our voices, and our efforts, reach every TB patient.

Kathmandu, Nepal

  
Secretary General

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# Report on Activities

## World TB Day/SAARC TB Day

### World TB Day

World Tuberculosis Day is celebrated every year by the people all across the world at international level on 24th of March. It is celebrated to raise the common public awareness about the epidemic disease of tuberculosis as well as get their efforts in order to totally eradicate this disease. Many people are dying of this disease every year. The 24th of March has been established to commemorate the tuberculosis day by all at one place in order to get some solution to eradicate it from the world.

Tuberculosis was first discovered by the Dr. Robert Koch in the year 1882 and announced by him at "the University of Berlin's Institute of Hygiene" about the cause of tuberculosis means the TB bacillus. He announced publically about this virulent human infectious disease and explained about the aetiology of the tuberculosis through the presentation of many microscope slides. During

his announcement in Berlin, TB was spreading very fast in the Europe and the Americas where the death ratio due to TB was one out of seven. His discovery about the tuberculosis had opened a big door in front of the people to get diagnosed and cured of tuberculosis.

### SAARC TB Day

In compliance with the recommendation of the Sixth Meeting of the Governing Board of SAARC TB Centre held on 7- 8 January 1997, the Centre has been observing "SAARC TB Day" along with "World TB Day" each year on 24th March to commemorate the date in 1882 when Dr. Robert Koch announced his discovery.

### Why the Day is commemorated?

The Day is established as an annual event to be commemorated by the people to aware them about the

basic and essential knowledge of tuberculosis. It is very necessary to aware people of all groups and field about this epidemic disease to take precautions.

People must know that it is a completely curable disease at very low-cost through the DOTS strategy. Its treatments and diagnostic tests should be accessible by each and every person affected by the tuberculosis. The Day's commemoration provides a big opportunity to all the people to get aware about Tuberculosis. It mobilizes the political and social authorities for further progress towards the disease prevention for the effective reduction in the TB cases and death rate in the coming years. Since 1990, the mortality rate of TB has decreased all over the world. Invention of various new TB tools has led to rapid diagnostic tests of TB. This has become possible because of the awareness campaign.

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## Commemoration of World/SAARC TB Day 2016 by STAC

World TB Day/SAARC TB Day is commemorated on 24<sup>th</sup> March every year all over the world. It is designed to build advocacy to policy makers to create public awareness on TB control and prevention and to the Government for reiterating their political commitments to support TB control programme as a National public health priority programme.

The theme of the Day was "**Unite to End TB**". World TB Day is an opportunity for people everywhere to join this fight by helping to educate others about TB and by urging

governments to take action. We believe that together we can End TB for once and for all: Unite to End TB!

Considering the situation of TB, the 25<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Governing Board of STAC recommended to commemorate the World TB Day along with SAARC TB Day by organizing advocacy and awareness programme on TB. Accordingly, STAC had organized following programmes as an advocacy & awareness programme to generate the level of awareness on TB and its prevention.

### 1. Interaction Programme on TB Control with Students

Students of the Colleges can play an important role in the community to manage TB patients by providing them awareness messages, tips and convince them to get early diagnosed and treatment. They have the potential to impart the messages to their nearer and dearer regarding every aspects of life; one of them may be the health care. However, students are accustomed to receiving instructions



(Directors, STAC, NTP Manager & NACP Manager, Nepal, WHO MO, Education Foundation Chairman, TB Lab Expert at the Interaction Programme on TB Control Management with students on the occasion of World/SAARC TB Day 2016)

in classroom situations, and they are thus more receptive and responsive to special health education messages and are more inclined to assimilate the information and relay it to other household members and also their active participation in National TB Control Programmes has so far been inadequate.

On this occasion a one day "Interaction Programme on TB Control Management with Students of Bachelor in Public Health of Nobel College of Health and Education Foundation, Kathmandu " was organized by STAC at Thimi on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2016 with the following objectives:

- to create public awareness on tuberculosis control,
- to discuss the role of college students on spreading of awareness in community
- to disseminate updated information on TB and its control and

- to seek coordination and cooperation for controlling efforts on TB

### Participation

About 100 students and teachers participated in the programme as participants from the college. Staff working in NTP Nepal also attended the programme.

The programme started with arrival of the students, teacher, resource persons and guests. The participants registered their names and obtained STAC publications as resource materials, awareness materials and stationeries.

### Technical Programme

Dr. Sharat Chandra Verma, Director, STAC, welcomed participants, resource persons and officials at the programme. He highlighted objectives of the commemoration of World TB day along with SAARC TB Day as a form of interaction programme with students of higher level. He thanked to the participants, officials from NTP Nepal, resource persons and guests.

Dr. Verma presented – Introduction of STAC and Current Situation of TB in the SAARC Region.

Dr. Bikash Lamichhane, Director, National Tuberculosis Centre/NTP, Nepal presented his presentation on –General Information on TB and Activities of National TB Control Programme (NTP), Nepal.

Dr. Tarun Poudel, Director, National Centre for AIDS And STD Control (NCASC), Nepal attended the meeting and the presentation was presented by Dr. Bhesh Raj Pokharel, Senior Integrated Medical Officer, NCASC, Nepal on – Situation of HIV/AIDS and TB/HIV Co-infection in Nepal.

Dr. Keshav Yogi, WHO Medical Officer/Focal Person for TB in Nepal presented his presentation on – Global Situation of TB.

Mr. Dhruv Khadka, Microbiologist, National TB Centre, Nepal presented TB lab related presentation on – TB Diagnosis (Lab Networks & Gen Expert Service) facilities in Nepal.

### Discussion

After technical presentation, a discussion session was held. Participants raised different queries about TB control status in Nepal as well as in the world. Mainly, the discussion was focused on MDG to SDG, Childhood TB and Urban TB. Resource Persons/Directors of National TB Control Programme and National AIDS Control Programme explained the situation.

On behalf of the participating Colleges, Mr. Nawaraj Pandey, Chairman, Nobel College of Health & Education Foundation expressed his views and thanked STAC for inviting them to attend the programme. Mr.

Pandey proposed during his speech to develop a MoU between STAC/ NTP Nepal and Nobel College to take TB control programme to door-to-door in the community.

Dr. Sharat Chandra Verma, Director STAC delivered the vote of thanks and closing remarks.

## Outcomes

Participants were made aware of issues in relation to TB and its control in Nepal as well as in the Globe/ SAARC region. The participating students and teachers showed their commitment to provide co-ordination and cooperation for spreading awareness regarding TB to the general people and they realized the social responsibility to spread the awareness messages against TB in the community.

## Preparation of Awareness Materials

A hoarding board was placed at the entrance of STAC office with theme of World TB Day/SAARC TB Day 2016.

## 2. Joint Function

A function was organized jointly by National TB Control Programme (NTP)Nepal and SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC)on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2016 at Thimi, Bhaktapur, Nepal. Mr. Shanta Bahadur Shrestha, Secretary, Ministry of Health, Government of Nepal Chaired the programme.

Hon'ble Mr. Ramjanam Chaudhari, Minister for Health, Government of Nepal graced the function as Chief Guest and inaugurated the programme by pouring water in a flowerpot.

Dr. Bikash Lamichhane, Director, NTC presented glimpse of NTP Nepal and



*(Hon'ble Health Minister, Government of Nepal, guests and dignitaries with the NTP staff who got the appreciation letters for their remarkable contributions)*

Dr. Sharat Chandra Verma, Director, STAC presented glimpse of STAC. Dr. Verma read out the World TB Day message of H. E. Mr. Arjun Bahadur Thapa, Secretary General of SAARC.

Dr. Jos Vandelaer, WHO Representative to Nepal gave his remarks.

As Chief Guest, Hon'ble Minister delivered his inaugural speech. He reiterated the expansion of awareness programme and political commitment which is crucial for National TB Control Programmes.

Dr. Pushpa Chaudhary, Director General, Department of Health

Services, Government of Nepal delivered the closing remarks.

## 3. Display of Exhibition

An exhibition of STAC was organized at the premises of NTC, where different NGOs, INGOs displayed their activities and progress related to the TB control programme. STAC displayed the introductory flex of organization, its progress, publications and awareness materials. The progress of SAARC Member States on TB and HIV/AIDS control, current status of TB and HIV/AIDS control and activities of SAARC Goodwill Ambassadors for HIV/AIDS were also exhibited in the exhibition.



*(Mr. Shanta Bahadur Shrestha, Secretary, Ministry of Health, Nepal observing STAC publications at the exhibition displayed during World TB Day 2016 joint function, where Dr. S. C. Verma, Director, STAC accompanying him and briefing about the publications)*

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## Commemoration World TB Day 2016 in SAARC Member States:

World TB Day has been commemorated in all over the Member States of SAARC by organizing different activities. Following are some of the information compiled regarding the commemoration of World TB Day:

### Bangladesh

24 March 2016 - Tuberculosis (TB) is an infectious disease that can be fatal if not treated properly. In 2014, 9.6 million people were infected with TB worldwide and 1.5 million died from the disease. Over 95% of TB deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries. The South-East Asia region accounts for a disproportionately high number of global TB cases and Bangladesh is one of 22 'high TB-burden' countries.

In 2014, there were 187,005 new cases of TB in Bangladesh and it was the leading cause of death, accounting for 81,000 fatalities. Ending the TB epidemic by 2030 is one of the health targets of the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals. WHO has set a target for a 95% reduction in deaths and a 90% reduction in TB incidence by 2035. As World Tuberculosis Day marks renewed efforts to 'Unite to end TB', we give some insight into the disease that remains a major public health problem for Bangladesh.

Source: <http://www.searo.who.int/bangladesh/world-tb-day-2016/en/>, 24 May 2016



### Bhutan



Source: <http://www.searo.who.int/bhutan/world-tb-day-2016/en/>

The World TB day in Bhutan was celebrated at Gaeddu College of Business Studies, Chukha Dzongkhag. The event was graced by Honorable Lyonpo Dawa Gyaltshen, Hon'ble Minister for Home and Cultural Affairs, Secretary of Health, Governor of Chukha Dzongkhag, WHO Representative, Sector heads and the students and faculties of Gedu College.

Global and regional role on TB were presented as well as national achievement and challenges. Bhutan has achieved the MDG's target for TB, however, the country is facing the challenge of an increasing number of MDR-TB and TB-HIV co-infection.

### World TB Day: Government of India launches unique TB drug in partnership with Johnson & Johnson (J&J)

A new drug **Bedaquiline**, which treats multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB), was launched in India on World TB Day, March 21, 2016. For the initiative, the Indian government has joined hands with U.S. based healthcare firm Johnson & Johnson (J&J). The breakthrough TB drug has been developed by Janssen Pharmaceuticals, a pharma arm of J&J.



Hon'ble Union Health Minister Mr. JP Nadda launched the drug, which was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) in December 2012.

Bedaquiline is described by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a drug that has a "novel mechanism of action" for the treatment of MDR-TB. The WHO has also issued interim guidelines for administering the drug.

The Health Ministry said on Twitter that Bedaquiline will be introduced in 104 districts across five states of India for the treatment of new drug resistant TB patients.

The Health Ministry would also set up 500 Cartridge Based Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (CB-NAAT) machines, which detect MDR-TB in two hours. Currently, there are 121 CB-NAAT machines operational across the country.

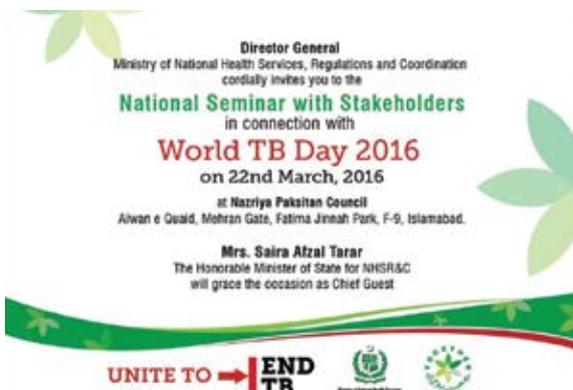
Source: <http://www.ibtimes.co.in/world-tuberculosisday-indian-govt-launches-unique-tb-drug-partnership-johnson-johnson-671507>

## Maldives: HPA Maldives

National Event to mark World TB day 2016 at National Art gallery. (Photo Source: Internet)



## Pakistan



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/NTP.Official/photos/a.1576270902593055.1073741830.1569734523246693/1737278739825603/?type=1&theater>

## Sri Lanka



World TB Day 2016 Vavunia, Sri Lanka Source: [http://www.nptccd.health.gov.lk/a\\_news.php?id=4](http://www.nptccd.health.gov.lk/a_news.php?id=4)

## Brief News

### Handing over of the SAARC Prize on Tuberculosis:

SAARC Prize on Tuberculosis – 2015 was conferred to Ms. Shameema Hussain of Maldives for her remarkable contributions in control of Tuberculosis in Maldives. The prize was handed over to her on the occasion of World TB Day 2016 by H. E. Ms. Iruthisham Adam, Minister of Health, Government of Maldives.

Picture Source: Internet



### Participation of Director, STAC in National and International events:

#### 1. Regional Review Meeting of Far-western Region, Nepal

Dr. Sharat Chandra Verma, Director, STAC participated in the Annual Performance Review Meeting at the invitation of the Far Western Regional Health Directorate, Dipayal, Dhangadhi, Nepal held from 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2016. The objective of the participation was to support Member States to carry out the review of TB and HIV/AIDS programmes. STAC has regular programme to support Member States to review the NTP and NACP on their request.



#### 2. 12<sup>th</sup> International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (ICAAP I2) 12-14 March, 2016, Dhaka Bangladesh

Dr. Sharat Chandra Verma, Director, STAC participated in the 12<sup>th</sup> International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (ICAAP I2), Dhaka, Bangladesh on 12-14 March 2016. The visit was performed at the invitation of UNICEF, ROSA. The STAC has its aim to disseminate new research findings, and achievements by participating in



(STAC's Participation in Review Meeting of Far-western Region, Nepal)

Regional Conferences in the Member States as well as in other countries.

The Director Co-chaired a satellite session under the title "Improving



(Dr. Annefrida Kisesa-Mkusa, Regional Advisor, UNICEF, ROSA Chairing and Dr. S. C. Verma, Director, STAC Co-chairing the session)

Access and Coverage of HIV Prevention, Testing and Treatment Services for Adolescents, Asia and Pacific ("ALL IN" ADOLESCENTS)". The facts of the session were; adolescents (aged 10-19 years) are the only age group where AIDS-related deaths are not decreasing, among adolescents, AIDS the second most common cause of death globally, seeks to reduce AIDS-related deaths by 65%, reduce new HIV infections by 75% and eliminate HIV/AIDS related stigma and discrimination among adolescents by 2020.

The vision of ICAAP12 was an opportunity to firmly entrench communities' efforts to promote the game changers with respect to AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support in the Asia Pacific region that will lead to shared vision in the post 2015 agenda and end AIDS by 2030.

### The objectives of participation in ICAAP12:

- To provide the information on current status of HIV and AIDS in the SAARC Region.
- To advocate the SAARC

Regional Strategy on HIV/AIDS in international forum.

### 3. Sixth meeting in SEAR Technical Working Group on Tuberculosis (TWG-TB), 12-13 April 2016, Male, Maldives

Dr. Sharat Chandra Verma, Director, STAC participated in the sixth meeting in SEAR Technical Working Group on Tuberculosis (TWG-TB) was in Male,

Maldives from 12th -13th April 2016 at the invitation of WHO/SEARO. The objective of the meeting was to provide guidance on the implementation of the "End TB Strategy" for TB care and control interventions in countries of the Region.

The General objective of the meeting was to provide guidance on the implementation of the "End TB Strategy" for TB care and control interventions in countries of the Region and the specific objectives were as follows:

- to review the progress and identify challenges and constraints in implementing activities based on recommendations of TWG meeting (2014) in the countries of the Region;
- to review and discuss the Regional Strategic Plan 2016-2020;
- to provide guidance on adopting and applying revised WHO policies and guidelines for more comprehensively addressing in the specific context of countries in the Region;
- to provide technical guidance on identification of specific need of technical support from WHO and other partners in relation with the activities proposed for the 2016-2017 biennium in the countries of the region.



(Hon'ble Minister Ms. Iruthisham Adam, Ministry of Health, Government of Maldives gracing the Sixth Meeting of SEAR, TWG on TB at Male, Maldives)

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## Visit of STAC by Executives from Johnson & Johnson

A new Anti-TB drug **Bedaquiline**, is used to treat multi-drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB). It was launched in India on World Tuberculosis Day 2016. For the initiative, the Government of India has joined hands with U.S. based healthcare firm Johnson & Johnson (J&J).

Mr. Jason Williams and Mr. Anand Rishi from J&J, India visited SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, Thimi, Bhaktapur, Nepal on 3<sup>rd</sup> March, 2016 as Nepal is also going to launch Bedaquiline shortly. The purpose of their visit was to discuss with the Director, STAC Dr. S. C. Verma about the initiatives STAC may take with the new drugs for the management of MDR-TB, XDR-TB in the SAARC Region.



## Joining of New Professional at STAC

Dr. Ajith P. Weerakoon (Sri Lanka)  
MBBS, MSc. MD,



Dr. Ajith P. Weerakoon joined SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre as a Professional Staff on the post of Epidemiologist on March 30<sup>th</sup> 2016. He Graduated in Medicine from University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka and obtained his Masters of Science and Doctor of Medicine from Post Graduate Institute of Medicine, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. He completed his Post-MD overseas training in University of Melbourne, Australia.

He started his career as a Medical Officer in Ministry of Health, Sri Lanka and became a Specialist Medical Officer in Community Medicine. He was working as a Consultant Epidemiologist

in Provincial Health Department in Central and North Western Provinces before joined STAC.

He is a life member of Indian Association of Epidemiologists and Kandy Society of Medicine, Sri Lanka. He also worked as a Research Officer in SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, Kathmandu from 2007-2010. He has conducted many researches in SAARC region and outside the region and published the findings in many reputed journals. He has obtained the presidential awards for best research in Sri Lanka in 2014.

STAC staff welcomed him on joining STAC Family.