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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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World TB Day Message of 
His Excellency Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial

Message from the Secretary General of SAARC 
on the World TB Day

The World TB Day is observed on 24 March each year to create awareness about the threat posed by the disease to public health and to advocate global campaign against its spread. One cannot overemphasize the significance of the Day in view of the fact that TB continues to remain a major public health challenge across the world, even while it is preventable and curable.

“Unite to End TB” is the theme for the World TB Day for the years 2016 and 2017. In the meanwhile, the post-2015 End TB Strategy envisions a world free of TB, with the eventual goal of ending the global pandemic by 2035.

South Asia accounts for 31% of the Global TB burden with nearly 3.1 million of new TB cases, of which about 1.2 million are estimated to be sputum smear positive infectious cases, capable of spreading the disease to others. More than 75% of these cases and deaths occur among the age group of 15-54 years, economically the most productive age group.

Globally, HIV-associated TB is spreading rapidly. Similarly, Multi Drug-Resistant TB (MDR-TB) is beginning to appear in many parts of our region, adding further to the burden of TB. Since the control of MDR-TB requires concerted efforts and large investments, the Member States of SAARC have not only shown strong political commitment, but have also mobilized funds both from within the region and beyond, to mitigate its spread. As a result, during the last decade, the SAARC region has made remarkable progress in achieving the related target of the Millennium Development Goals. Drawing complacency from the past accomplishments, we now need to redouble our efforts to further strengthen TB control programmes in the region to achieve substantial reduction in TB cases and consequent mortality. I am glad to note that, to make this vision a reality, the Member States of SAARC are working together to eliminate this disease from the region. In this context, the SAARC Tuberculosis & HIV/AIDS Centre based in Nepal is doing a commendable job.

As we mark the World TB Day today, we would like the Member States of SAARC to step up efforts to: (a) increase sustainable financial and operational resources; (b) invest in better technical and management capacity of the National Programmes at all levels; (c) strengthen supply management mechanisms and national laboratory networks; and (d) invest in early detection and interventions for control of HIV-TB and Drug Resistance TB.

On this Day, as we commemorate achievements made so far, let us all vouch ourselves to intensify coordination and collaboration to achieve the goal of eradicating TB from the region by 2035.

Kathmandu, 24 March 2017

(Amjad Hussain B. Sial)
Twenty-sixth meeting of the Governing Board of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) was held on 11th and 12th January 2017 in Kathmandu, Nepal.

The Governing Board Members, Dr. Feda Mohammad Paikan, National Manager, National HIV/AIDS Control Programme, Ministry of Public Health along with Mr. Sayed Jahid Shah Banoori, Director of CARECs, Colombo Plans, SAARC Division Member, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Afghanistan, Mr. Mohammad Barikul Islam, First Secretary & Head of Chancery, Embassy of Bangladesh, Kathmandu, Mr. Namgay Tshering, Chief Programme Officer, Communicable Disease Division, Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health, Government of Bhutan, Dr. V. S. Salhotra, Addl. Deputy Director General (TB), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare along with Mr. S. R. Patnaik, Under Secretary (SAARC), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, Dr. Ali Nazeem, Director, Medical Services, National AIDS Programme, Health Protection Agency (HPA), Ministry of Health, Government of Maldives, Mr. Ramesh Prasad Adhikary, Chief Public Health Administrator, Ministry of Health along with Mr. Dornath Aryal, Under Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal, Dr. Nasir Mahmood Khan, Manager, NTP, Government of Pakistan participated in the meeting. Simultaneously, Ms. Fathimath Najwa, Director, Social Affairs, SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu and Dr. Sharat Chandra Verma, Director, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre participated in the meeting.

Ms. Najwa participated in the meeting as representative of His Excellency, Secretary General of SAARC and Dr. Verma act as Member Secretary of the Board.

The meeting was chaired by the Governing Board Member from Afghanistan Dr. Paikan.

Dr. Sharat Chandra Verma, Director, STAC delivered welcome remarks in the opening session. Ms. Fathimath Najwa, Director, SAARC Secretariat highlighted the importance of Regional Centres of SAARC and she reiterated the commitment of SAARC Secretariat to extend full cooperation for the establishment of SAARC Supranational Laboratory of TB and HIV/AIDS in STAC. At the end, the Chairman of the meeting appreciated the efforts of STAC and raised the issues on not implementing most of the activities in the year 2016, its cause, challenge and problem.

The Board reviewed the current year’s (2016) programme activities and recommended the programmes & budget for 2017, which are as follows:
Programmes Recommended by the Board for the year 2017

1. SAARC Regional Meeting of Programme Managers and Cross Border issue on TB and HIV/AIDS Control Programmes
2. SAARC Regional Training on Operational Research on TB and HIV/AIDS
3. SAARC Regional Training on TB for Microbiologist on Culture & DST, Gene Xpert / NAAT and its maintenance
4. SAARC Regional Training of Trainers (ToT) on Diagnosis, Treatment and Programmatic Management of Pediatric TB
5. Exposure visit to observe the best practices on TB in India
6. Exposure visit to observe the best practices on HIV/AIDS in Nepal
7. SAARC Training on Management of Information for Action
8. Development of framework and Guidelines for Private Public Mix by STAC
9. Participation in International Conferences
10. Participating in the regional conferences in the member States
11. Participation in the Review of activities NTPs and NACPs in the SAARC Member States by STAC
13. Fourteenth Round Proficiency Testing of SSM for NRLs of SAARC Member States
14. Conferment of SAARC Award on Tuberculosis- 2017
15. Public Awareness and Advocacy programmes on TB and HIV/AIDS
   i. World TB Day – 2017 - Interaction Programme/Joint activities, Preparation and publication of advocacy materials and distribution to the Member States
   ii. World AIDS Day – 2017 - Interaction/ Joint activities, Preparation and publication of Advocacy materials/booklet and distribution to the Member States
   iii. SAARC Charter Day – 2017 - Awareness programme/Joint programme, Preparation and publication related documents and distribution to the member states.
17. Review of Article for SAARC Journals of TB Lung Disease and HIV/AIDS
18. Procurement of chemicals and glassware for the STAC Laboratory work
19. Printings/Bindings
   i. Electronic publication of STAC Newsletters and circulation through e-mail
   ii. Printing STAC Journal of Tuberculosis Lung Disease and HIV/AIDS
   iii. Electronic publication of SAARC Epidemiological Response on Tuberculosis & TB/HIV Co-infection 2016- and circulation through e-mail
   iv. Electronic publication of SAARC Epidemiological Response on HIV/AIDS Control 2016 and circulation through e-mail
   v. Printing of SAARC Regional Training Manual for ART
   vii. Printing of SAARC Regional Program Guidelines on diagnosis and management of pediatric TB
   viii. Printing of the SAARC Regional Training Manual on pediatric TB
   ix. Printing of SAARC Regional Training Manual for Infection Control at Health Facilities
   x. Printing of Wall Calendar 2018 / promotional materials
   xi. Electronic publication of Annual Report- 2016
   xii. Preparation of report of Fourteenth Round Proficiency Testing of SSM for NRLs and SAARC Members States
   xiii. Printing/binding of other Documents/ Publications;
   xiv. Update regional data on TB, HIV/AIDS and TB/HIV co-infection and analysis to generate evidence to the region
20. E-circulation/distribution of STAC Publications
21. Strengthening of STAC Library
   i. Purchase and subscription of scientific books and journals on TB and HIV/AIDS
   ii. Software maintenance
   iii. Digitalization of library resources (TB, HIV/AIDS and Laboratory) and link to STAC Website and Networking among the Medical Libraries in the Region
   iv. Collection, compile and e-circulation of published scientific articles and important news related to TB and HIV/AIDS in the national daily news papers/journals
World TB Day/SAARC TB Day

The global theme of the day was “Unite to End TB - Leave no one behind”

World TB Day

The 24th March of every year is World TB Day. It is not a celebration but a commemoration in the name of people who passed away due to TB disease in the year. The Day is designed to build public awareness about the global epidemic of Tuberculosis and efforts to eliminate the disease. Today tuberculosis causes the deaths of about 1.7 million people each year, mostly in the developing countries, in spite of effective TB control programmes. 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 totally from the world.

SAARC TB Day

In compliance with the declaration of SAARC, the Centre has been observing “SAARC TB Day” along with “World TB Day” every year on same day, i.e. 24th March since 1997.

Commemoration of World TB Day/SAARC TB Day by STAC

1. Interaction Programme with Nursing Students and Media on Tuberculosis and its Preventive Strategy

STAC commemorated the day by organizing “Interaction Programme with Nursing Students and Media on Tuberculosis and its Preventive Strategy” keeping in view the significance of involvement of nursing students and media in the fight against TB campaign in the country. It was a one day programme organized by STAC at Thimi, Bhaktapur on 22nd March, 2017.

Objectives

- To create awareness among the nursing students & media people
- To reduce the burden of disease by spreading awareness against Tuberculosis
- To mobilize political and social commitment to curtail the TB cases by reaching the unreached

Participation

Forty nursing students from Chakrabarti Habi Educational Academy, School of Health Science Bhaktapur, Nepal including faculty teachers participated in the programme. Dignitaries from Ministry of Health, Department of Health Services, Government of Nepal, dignitaries from SAARC Secretariat, UNAIDS, and experts from WHO/NTP Nepal
participated in the programme. Staff from National TB Centre (NTP, Nepal) and National Centre for AIDS and STC Control (NCASC, Nepal) also attended the programme.

**Opening of the Programme**

Dr. Rajendra Prasad Pant, Director General, Department of Health Services, Government of Nepal graced the programme as Chief Guest. Mr. Sangya Rinchhen, Officer In-charge from SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu attended as Special Guest. Dr. D. S. Bam, former Secretary, Ministry of Health, Government of Nepal as well as former Director, STAC/NTP, Nepal attended the programme as Guest of Honour.

Dr. Ajith Weerakoon, Epidemiologist, STAC delivered welcome address and presented a paper on “**Introduction, function and objectives of STAC**”. He highlighted the regional situation of TB and efforts of STAC towards prevention and control of TB in the Region.

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**Felicitation to Dr. Dirgh Singh Bam, former Director, STAC**

STAC honoured Dr. Dirgh Singh Bam with Woolen-shawl and Khada (a traditional ceremonial scarf). Dr. Rajendra Prasad Pant, Chief Guest felicitated Dr. Bam on behalf of STAC for his outstanding contribution in TB Control Programme in Nepal as well as in SAARC region. Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director, STAC conferred the Latter of Appreciation to Dr. Bam.
Remarks

Dr. Tarun Poudel, Director, National Centre for AIDS and STD Control (NCASC), Kathmandu gave his remarks. He thankfully acknowledged for STAC for organizing the important activities related to the awareness to avoid the stigma and discrimination attached to PLHA. He urged to enhance the collaboration between STAC and NCASC. He also informed that Isoniazid Prophylaxis Treatment (IPT) is made available in all ART sites in Nepal.

Dr. G. D. Thakur, former Director of Epidemiology Division, Department of Health Services, Government of Nepal spoke on the current challenges of TB and HIV/AIDS Control in Nepal. To meeting the goals both programmes should address the social determinants.

Dr. D. S. Bam appreciated the present activities of STAC. He advised the National TB Control Programme to reach unreached population. He expressed his grateful for continuing the TB control activities and its sustainability in the country and in the Region.

Dr. Subash Lakhe, National Professional Officer, communicable diseases at the WHO expressed his commitment to support STAC in its activities.

Dr. Ruben Fidel Prado, UNAIDS, Country Director, Nepal spoke on the issues and topics on the TB control Programme at the global level. He also highlighted the global challenges, achievements and efforts for stopping the tuberculosis.

Mr. Sangye Rinchhen, Officer In-charge, SAARC Secretariat highlighted the vision and objectives of the SAARC. He thanked to the Government of Nepal for rendering valuable support to SAARC & SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre. He extended sincere thanks for the success of TB Control in Nepal as well is SAARC and in World as a whole.

Releasing of Publications
On this occasion, the Chief Guest, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Pant released two publications, *SAARC Regional Programme Guidelines of Diagnosis & Management of Pediatric Tuberculosis – 2017* and *SAARC Journal of TB, Lung Diseases and HIV/AIDS*.

In his remarks, Dr. Pant highlighted the programmatic management of tuberculosis and briefed the entire problems faced by the developing country like Nepal. He also highlighted the importance of STAC at the SAARC region for coordination between member states in TB and HIV/AIDS programmes. Dr. R. P Bichha, Director, delivered the closing remarks and explained the rational of the theme of the World TB Day of this year *“Unite to End TB Leave no one behind”*. He also highlighted the main purpose of the commemoration of World TB Day. Since, the TB Control is only possible, when the entire stakeholders joined their solidarity for this noble cause. He also highlighted the recently released STAC publications. He then spoke on the rational of SAARC Pediatric Guidelines. He extended thanks to the Chief Guest for his gracious presence. He also extended thanked to all the dignitaries spared their valuable time for this programme and declared the session closed. The opening session was followed by group photo and technical session.

**Technical Session**

Dr. Ajith Weerakoon, Epidemiologist, STAC highlighted the general information of tuberculosis, its symptoms, mode of transmission and its preventive strategy. He explained that the one sputum positive TB patient can transmit the disease to 10-15 people in a year. He also presented the SAARC Regional burden of TB along with the vital role of advocacy, communication and social mobilization in TB control. He also pointed out the key role of nursing students in controlling tuberculosis.

Dr. Ashish Shrestha, WHO/NTP Nepal spoke about TB in the global scenario. He mentioned the efforts of the WHO at the global level for controlling this disease.

Ms. Kopila Karki coordinator at the Chakrabarti Habi Education Academy College of Health Science spoke on the role of nursing students and college. She also appreciated the programme and thanked to the organizer for giving opportunity to participate in such important event.

Dr. D. S. Bam, former secretary for health and Director of STAC shared his past experiences during
the implementation of DOTS in Nepal.

Dr. R. P Bichha, awarded the appreciation letter to the participating college followed by delivering the closing remarks.

Outcomes

- Participants were made aware of about different issues in relation to TB and its control strategy in Nepal as well in SAARC.

- Students and Teachers shown their commitment to support for TB control programme.

2. Publication and Circulation of Message

STAC received World TB Day 2017 Message from His Excellency Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, Secretary General, SAARC Secretariat and circulated to the Member States for publication in National Daily News papers and also published on website of STAC. (The full text of the Message is printed on front page of this newsletter)

3. Participation on National event on World TB Day- 2017

On Friday, 24th March 2017, National TB Control Programme (NTP), Nepal in collaboration with its different partners organized a National function at National TB Centre, Thimi Bhaktapur. Dr. Senendra Raj Upreti, Secretary, Ministry of Health graced the occasion as Chief Guest. The programme was chaired by Dr. Sharat Chandra Verma, Director, National TB Centre.

Dr. Mohan Kumar Prasai, Sr. Consultant Chest Physician, National TB Centre, delivered welcome speech. He also highlighted the efforts of NTP Nepal for control of TB.

The Chief Guest inaugurated the programme by lighting the traditional lamp and letting the bunch of balloons carrying different TB control messages.

The chief guest also awarded the appreciation letter to Mr. Jog Bdr. Gurung for his remarkable contribution in TB control in Nawalparasi district of Nepal. Mr. Gurung has been involving as a
volunteer in TB treatment centre since 20 years.

Mr. Bijaya Rajthala, MDR TB patients shared his experiences as patient. He explained the challenges he faced during the treatment.

Mr. Devendra Bdr Pradhan, President of Nepal Anti TB Association, Kalimati shed light on the activities of NATA and their contribution in TB control.

Dr. R. P Bichha, Director, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre presented “Introduction & Achievements of STAC”. He also quoted the His Excellency, Secretary General’s, special Message released on the occasion of World TB Day 2017.

Dr. Jos Vandelaer, WHO representative to Nepal shed light on the global scenario of TB control programme.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad Pant, Director General, Department of Health Services, Government of Nepal appreciated the functions and achievements of NTP, Nepal. He advised that we need to accelerate the activities to meet the goals set by End TB Strategy. Still there are numbers of challenges, for that the collective efforts can only fight against all these challenges such as poverty, TB HIV co-infection, MDR TB etc.

Dr. Senendra Raj Upreti, Secretary for Health appreciated the activities of National TB Centre. He highlighted the challenges faced by Government of Nepal to combat this disease. Dr. G. D Thakur Ministry of Health spoke on the various aspects of TB control strategy. Dr. Sharat Chandra Verma, Director, NTC and Chairperson delivered closing remarks.

The programme was attended by the representative of Government officials, STAC, NATA, USAID, WHO, UNAIDS, HERD and large number of people from I/NGOs and journalists from different media.

Displaying of Flexes & Banners

STAC prepared number of flexes/banners with information about STAC and its activities for TB and HIV/AIDS control in SAARC Member States and displayed at the main venue of World TB Day function and hording board at the entrance of STAC.
Commemoration of World TB Day 2017 in SAARC Member States

Afghanistan

Ministry of Public Health celebrated World TB Day in Afghanistan under the slogan of (Unite to End TB) on March 28, 2017 and World TB Day was commemorated across Afghanistan at a World TB Day event in Kabul. Dr Ahmad Jan Naeem, Deputy Minister of Public Health on Policy and Planning said, "Tuberculosis is a communicable disease and most commonly attacks the lungs (as pulmonary TB) and also can affect other human organs as well.

Common signs of TB are cough for more than two weeks, sneeze or spit, anorexia, night sweating, fatigue and weight loss.

Tuberculosis is preventable and curable disease. H.E added that Ministry of Public Health delivering TB services through 2023 diagnostic and treatment centers in Afghanistan.

The Case Notification Trend has also increased from 9668 cases in 2001 to 43046 cases in 2016 and treatment success rate is 88% among all cases.

National Tuberculosis program expanded the TB interventions; establishing TB diagnostic centers in prisons, involvement of multi sectorial approach for diagnosis of TB, especially urban DOTs program in Private Hospital, establishing of Regional Reference Laboratories in Kabul, Kandahar, Hirat, Nangarhar, Balkh and Paktia provinces, and it shows the strong and sustainable commitment of MOPH to fight against TB.

Representative of WHO Dr. Supriya mentioned that 10.4 million people got sick with TB worldwide in 2015 which includes 5.9 million males, 3.5 million females and one million children.

WHO estimates 61000 people are newly infected by TB annually and 12000 people died due to the Tuberculosis in Afghanistan.

It is worth to mention that 63% patients are sputum positive TB and 58% of total patients are female.

Bhutan

Bhutan joined the Regional and International Community in observing the World TB Day on 24th March, 2017. The day was observed in Bajo Higher Secondary School with a theme “Unite to End TB – Leave No one Behind”. The day was graced by His Excellency Lyonpo Tandin Wangchuk, Minister of Health. The other invitees and guests present during the event were Hon’ble Member of Parliament Dasho Kinga, Dr. Lobzang Dorji from WHO CO, Dr. Karma Lhazeen, Director, Department of Public Health, Regional and sector heads of Wangdue Dzongkhag administration, Leaders of the Local Government, officials from Royal Bhutan Army, Royal Bhutan Police, Business Communities, VHWs, Principal, teachers and students of Bajo Higher Secondary School, trainees of Vocational Training Institute and the public gathered on the day.

The Hon’ble Health Minister informed the gathering that, we have all gathered here to observe this year’s World TB Day with the theme “Unite to End TB- Leave No One Behind”. His Excellency stated that the main aim of observing this day is to create awareness and educate public on Tuberculosis which today, still remains an epidemic in much of the world causing deaths of many.

TB is a communicable disease that is preventable and curable if early diagnosis and treatment through Directly Observed Treatment (DOT) of 6 to 8 months are ensured. However, most TB patients will start feeling better in the few weeks of treatment, therefore they STOP taking medicines resulting in incomplete treatment. This sets a dangerous precedence as partial or incomplete treatment leads to development of resistance to TB medicines resulting in MDR-TB.

In order to understand the root causes of TB and its treatment, everyone should be given the opportunity of education to understand the importance of a good health. However, during the day, His Excellency highlighted that TB and MDR-TB is a major public health problem which is of a great concern for Ministry of health and urged all for the greater ownership to be responsible to fight against TB by educating yourself first and then educating your family, people in your community about the causes of TB and its outcome.
Although, Bhutan is considered a low TB burden country in the region; TB is still considered a priority public health problem mostly affecting productive age groups of 15-44 years.

Despite having made progress in the treatment outcome, Ministry is challenged with increasing number of MDR-TB cases, TB-HIV co-infection, sub-optimal implementation of DOTs, delays in diagnosis and treatment. But with the introduction of rapidly diagnostic GeneXpert machine in 2016 and improvement in the road infrastructure, Ministry will be able to detect more number of TB cases and eventually Leave No One Behind in terms of access to public health services provided in the country.

His Excellency also informed that the, fight against TB and MDR-TB is not the responsibility of the health sector alone but of all family members of TB patients and the community at large and requires concerted efforts with multi sectoral approach to represent your country and people to help educate and encourage those with COUGH FOR MORE THAN TWO WEEKS to visit the nearest health facility to be screened for TB and to play a greater role in ensuring that their patients take their full course of treatment of 6 to 8 month for better outcome.

His Excellency Lyonpo Tandin Wangchuk, also emphasized that observation of World TB Day is considered to be one of the many important occasions to advocate public on health education in the country. His Excellency also shared the global report, 2016, that approximately 10.4 million were reported with TB cases, of which 45.6% have been reported in South East Asia Region. And of the 580,000 cases of MDR-TB reported globally, about 34.5% were in South East Asia Region. Besides the cases related to MDR-TB, Bhutan has also detected with one XDR-TB case recently. Not to forget, Bhutan is also one of the countries under South East Asia Region, thereby Bhutan also shares brunt of such global consequences.

His Excellency concluded the day with the key message that the Ministry will remain grateful to all our development partners without whom the achievements made so far would not have been possible. We also look forward to their continued support to help achieving the milestones and targets of TB elimination strategy to “Unite to End TB and Leave No One Behind” and commit to make Bhutan a TB Free Nation Collectively. With this, His Excellency wished the august gathering a Happy World TB Day.

The Ministry of Health would also like to thank Wangdue Dzongkhag administration, district health sector, Principal, teachers and students of Bajo Higher Secondary School for your active participation and support without which this event wouldn’t have been a successful one.

India

http://tbcindia.nic.in/WriteReadData/p92g8/5898466971IMG_20170324_191449.jpg

Pakistan


(World TB Day 2017 activities downloaded from respective websites. Activities on the day of some Member States could not be downloaded)
Brief News

Appointment of the New Secretary General of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

His Excellency Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial has assumed charge of the office of Secretary General of SAARC from 01 March 2017 on completion of the tenure of former Secretary General.

H. E. Mr. Sial was born on 20 June 1956 and did M. Sc. Degree in Defense and Strategic Studies.


He remained on deputation with SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu (2003-2006). He also served as Ambassador/Alternate Permanent Representative, at the Pakistan Permanent Mission to the UN, New York (2009-2011) and also served as Ambassador of Pakistan to the Republic of Tajikistan (2011-2014).

Presently, he is serving as Secretary General of SAARC with effect from 1st March 2017. He is from Pakistan and married.

The STAC family wish to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency and his family.

Appointment of New Director at STAC

Dr. R. P. Bichha, M.B., B.S., M.D.

Dr. Bichha joined SAARC TB and HV/AIDS Centre in the post of Director on March 2, 2017.

He did his Graduation (MBBS) from All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, India and completed Post Graduation in Paediatrics (M.D. Paediatrics) from the same institution in 1991.
He started his service as Paediatrician and Head of Department of Pediatrics in Koshi Zonal Hospital, a Governmental Hospital with 50 beds having separate paediatric department with Neonatal Care Unit and Nutritional Rehabilitation Center in 1992. He has very good experience of Child Health Division, Department of Health Services, Government of Nepal where he worked as Director. He also worked as Director and Chief Neonatologist and Pulmonologist at Kanti Children Hospital for 6 years. Before joining STAC he was Director at Family Health Division, Department of Health Services, Government of Nepal.

He is a very good researcher and had performed research on “Prevalence of Physiological Neonatal jaundice and effect of Phototherapy in Kanti Children Hospital. He has done research on “Treatment of TB Resistance Cases a Trial Study in Nepal Medical College and Neonatal BW difference in Mongolian tribes in Nepal Medical College. He has gained very good teaching experiences from different Medical Colleges such as BPKIHS, Dharan, Nepal Medical College, Kathmadu, Nepal Academy of Medical Sciences, Bir Hospital, Kathmandu etc., He has published different research articles in the Nepal Medical Journal in different times and presented papers in different conferences.

STAC staff welcomed him in STAC family.

Visit of STAC by Dr. Jos Vandelaer, WHO/R Nepal

Dr. Jos WR, Nepal visited SARRC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre along with Dr. Subhash Lakhe, National Professional Officer, Communicable Disease Control, WHO county Office Nepal on 4th April 2017. A meeting with organized to provide the relevant information related to the STAC WHO/SEARO collaboration. The
STAC is only one Collaborative Centre of WHO/SEARO in Nepal.

**Visited of STAC by Dr. Peter Small, Founding Director, Global Health Institute, New York**

Dr. Peter Small from Stony Brook University, New York visited STAC on 21st March 2017 and discussed with Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director, about the functioning of STAC, its vision, mission and objective. He expressed his happiness by getting the information on TB and HIV/AIDS in the Region.

**Visit of STAC by a team from National Anti-TB Association**

A meeting was held with the Dignitaries and Officials from Nepal Anti TB Association (NATA) and German Nepal TB Project (GENETUP) on 21 April 2017 at SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, Thimi, Bhaktapur.

The objectives of the meeting were to strengthen and explore the areas of collaboration between STAC and NATA in different areas such as research, human resource development, sharing of technical expertise in TB laboratory, advocacy and awareness campaign etc. since the STAC is developing a SAARC Supranational Reference Laboratory of TB and HIV/AIDS in very near future. It was decided to set up a committee of four (2 each from NATA and STAC) people from both the organization to formulate required ToR.

**Participation in NCASC Workshop on IRRTTR**

Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director and Mr. P. Bhandari, Computer Technician, STAC participated in a two-day workshop organized by National Centre for AIDS and STD Centre (NCASC), Government of Nepal from 6th to 7th April 2017 in Kathmandu. The title of the workshop was Implementing National HIV Strategic Plan
(NHSP) 2016-2021 – Fast-Tracking “IRRTTR” in Nepal. The workshop was participated by key population from over 25 organizations working for prevention of HIV/AIDS in Nepal. Along with them, STAC also presented its presentation on Status and Challenges related to prevention of HIV/AIDS in SAARC Member States. The workshop was inaugurated by Dr. R. P. Pant, Director General, Department of Health Services, Government of Nepal and facilitated by Mr. Sambhu Kafle, NCASC, Ms. Mukta Sharma, WHO (Thailand), Dr. Raj Kumar Mahato, Director, NPHL, Government of Nepal, Dr. Marcelo Naveira (UNAIDS), Dr. Ruben del Prado (UNAIDS), and Ms. Marlou De Rouw (Constellation).

The programme was concluded with the remarks from Dr. Tarun Poudel, Director, NCASC.

Visit of STAC by students from Kathmandu Medical College (KMC), Sinamangal, Kathmandu, Nepal

A team of KMC, Kathmandu visited the Centre on 10th Jan 2017 and observed the function of the Centre and attended class related to TB, its magnitude in Nepal and preventive strategy, clinical aspects of TB disease, management of DR/MDR and XDR TB along with the co-infection with HIV/AIDS. The team also imparted with the current situation of TB and HIV/AIDS in SAARC Region. The team of students got chance to discuss with the Senior Consultant Chest Physician Dr. Naveen Prakash Shah and Dr. Ajith Weerakoon, Epidemiologist regarding TB diseases and its preventive strategies.