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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SAARC Regional Meeting of Programme Managers and Cross Border Issues on TB and HIV/AIDS Control Programmes, 29-31 May, 2017, Thimphu, Bhutan


The meeting was participated by 18 participants from SAARC Member States, namely Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The objectives of the meeting were:

- to share the achievements, experiences and innovations on TB and HIV/AIDS by the SAARC Member States and learn from best practices.

- to identify the regional activities of STAC according to felt needs of the region.

- to discuss issues and challenges faced by the SAARC Member States on TB and HIV/AIDS in order to suggest possible solutions and

- to discuss and share the information on Cross Border Referral Mechanisms related to TB and HIV/AIDS patients in border area of the SAARC Member States.

Inaugural Session

Hon’ble Minister Mr. Tandin Wangchuk, Ministry of Health, Royal Government of Bhutan graced the occasion as Chief Guest and inaugurated the programme. In inaugural speech Hon’ble Minister thanked the SAARC TB &

Inaugural Session of the Meeting

(Prof. Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director, STAC delivering opening remarks)
HIV/AIDS Center for organizing the programme in Bhutan and highlighted the importance of the Programme Managers’ Meeting along with the meeting on Cross Border Issues for the Control and Prevention of TB and HIV/AIDS in SAARC Region. He also underscored the vulnerability associated with cross border migration and the challenges in assuring comprehensive medical interventions across the borders. Hon’ble Minister appealed to united for resolving the issues concerning to cross border. He expressed his good wish to all for the success of the meeting.

Mr. Namgay Tshering, (STAC Governing Board Member from Bhutan) the Chief Programme Officer, Communicable Disease Division, Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health, Royal Government of Bhutan extended welcome to all the delegates of the meeting. He expressed his gratitude to Hon’ble Minister for Health, Royal Government of Bhutan for his presence inauguration of the meeting. Mr. Tsering congratulated Prof. Dr. R. P. Bichha for his new responsibility of Director of SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre.

Prof. Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director, SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre delivered remarks in the opening ceremony. He propounded his gratitude to the Royal Government of Bhutan for concurrence to organize this meeting in Bhutan. He thanked Hon’ble Health Minister, Royal Government of Bhutan for gracing the inaugural session of the programme. Dr. Bichha also highlighted the overall objective of the meeting and problem raised by the migration of the patients in National Programmes of TB and HIV/AIDS. On behalf of SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre, he also expressed his gratitude to the Governments of SAARC Member States for giving high priority to STAC activities and nominating the high level participants to participate in the meeting.

Discussion and Technical Session

Mr. Namgay Tshering, (STAC Governing Board Member from Bhutan) Chief Programme Officer, Communicable Disease Division, Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health, Royal Government of Bhutan Chaired the meeting and Dr. Nasir Mahmood Khan (STAC Governing Board Member from Pakistan), Manager, National TB Control Programme (NTP), Government of Pakistan Co-chaired the meeting.

Prof. Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director, STAC presented the Introduction of SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) and requested SAARC Member States for their cooperation to accomplish the incomplete activities of STAC.

Dr. Ajith Weerakoon, Epidemiologist, STAC made a presentation on Current Situation of Cross Border Issues related to TB and HIV/AIDS in the SAARC Region. He also presented challenges and possible intervention to overcome these issues.

Country presentations as Technical Session

Dr. Noor Aga Zahid, National TB Coordinator from the Ministry of Public Health, Kabul, Afghanistan presented TB epidemiology and achievements of NTP Afghanistan.

Dr. Raghuram Shyamsunder Rao, DADG (TB), Central TB Division, Directorate of Health Services, Nirman Bhawan, Government of India presented status of National TB Control Programme in India.

The second session of the discussion and presentation was chaired by Dr. Raghuram Shyamsunder Rao, India and co-chaired by Dr. Kanthi Ariyarathe, Director, National Programme for Tuberculosis Control & Chest Diseases, Sri Lanka.

Dr. Ramesh Bikram Singh, Deputy Director-General, Department of Health Services, Government of Nepal presented status of National TB Control Programme in Nepal.

Mr. Shambhu Kafle, Senior Public Health Officer, National Centre for AIDS and STD Control, Government of Nepal presented status National HIV/AIDS Control Programme in Nepal.

Dr. Nasir Mahmood Khan, Manager, National TB Control Programme (NTP), Government of Pakistan presented status of National TB Control Programme, Pakistan.

Dr. Kanthi Ariyarathe, Director, National Programme for TB Control & Chest Diseases, Government of Sri Lanka made presentation on TB Control Diagnosis and Cross Boarder Issues in Sri Lanka.


Ms. Lila Adhikari, Laboratory Officer, National TB Reference Laboratory, Royal Center for Disease Control, Government of Bhutan presented a paper on Laboratory situation in Bhutan.

Dr. Ajith Weerakoon, Epidemiologist, STAC made a presentation on SAARC Supranational Reference Laboratory on TB and HIV/AIDS.

Recommendations

A Brainstorming discussion was made for finding the solution on the problems related with strengthening of cooperation and coordination among the National TB and HIV/AIDS Reference Laboratory of SAARC Member States and SAARC Supranational Reference Laboratory for TB and HIV/AIDS. The meeting made the recommendations regarding the current issues. Meeting also recommended Programme Activities of STAC for the Year 2018 and list out some activities for the approval of STAC Governing Board/SAARC Programming Committee.

Closing Session

Closing Ceremony was graced by Dr. Ugen Dophu, Secretary for Health, Royal Government of Bhutan, as Chief Guest. Mr. Namgay Tshering, welcome him in the closing ceremony on behalf of all delegates.

Dr. Kanthi Ariyarathe extended gratitude on behalf of the delegates for excellent organization of the meeting.
Prof. Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director, STAC awarded Letter of Appreciation to Mr. Namgay Tshering and his team for their invaluable contribution to organize the programme. Prof. Bichha delivered a vote of thanks expressed gratitude to the Royal Government of Bhutan for concurrence for the STAC activity and arrangement of the excellent hospitality and meeting.

Dr. Ugen Dophu, Secretary, Ministry of Health, Royal Government of Bhutan delivered closing remarks. He highlighted why people moving from one country to another, he also mentioned that cross border issue is a very sensitive subject and when taking decisions this factors should considered carefully. He also highlighted the importance of proper referral mechanism across country in border areas.
SAARC Regional Training on Operational Research on TB and HIV/AIDS,
12-16 June 2017, Jaipur, India

SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC), Nepal and Central Tuberculosis Division, Government of India jointly organized a SAARC Regional Training on Operational Research on TB and HIV/AIDS at Indian Institute of Health Management Research (IIHMR), Jaipur, India from 12th to 16th June 2017.

Dr. Anoop Khanna, Associate Professor, IIHMR, open the programme by addressing welcome remarks. Dr. Vivek Bhandari, President IIHMR University, Jaipur, delivered his remarks and emphasized the importance of Operational Research in NTP as well as in NACP. He congratulated the Director, STAC for organizing this training programme in Jaipur, India. He extended his best wish for successful completion of the programme.

Dr. V. S. Salhotra, Additional DDG National Programme Manager, (TB) Government of India delivered his remarks. He mentioned the collaboration between STAC and IIHMR to go ahead for future course of time. He assured the cooperation from the Government of India for future activities of STAC.

Prof. Shashi Kant Jha, Head, Department of Community Medicine, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi and Dr. P. R. Sodani Dean, (Training), IIHMR delivered their opening remarks and mentioned the value of the working with National Programmes of TB and HIV/AIDS.

Prof. Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director, STAC delivered his remarks and expressed his thankfulness to the National Programme Managers of TB and HIV/AIDS Control of SAARC Member States. He also thanked staff of IIHMR for excellent facilitating in organizing this programme. He highlighted the role of STAC in prevention and control of HIV/AIDS and TB in SAARC Region. He propounded his gratefulness to Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India for the concurrence to organize the programme in India. He also expressed his gratitude to all SAARC Member States for sending high level participants to participate in this programme.

Dr. Ajith Weerakoon, Epidemiologists, STAC delivered vote of thanks.

Technical session

The session started with the presentation of Dr. Ajith Weerakoon on Introduction of SAARC TB and AIV/AIDS Centre. Dr S. D. Gupta, Chairman, IIHMR, delivered presentation on the introduction of Operational Research and Dr. J. P. Singh, IIHMR, made a presentation on Problem Identification, Hypothesis and Objectives. Participants were divided into 2 groups for identification of research
problem, objectives and formulation of hypothesis.

Dr. S. D. Gupta presented a paper on Operational Research designs. Dr. Anoop Khanna presented a paper on Methods of data collection. Dr. J. P. Singh presented a paper on sampling and sample size determination. This session was held in computer lab for practical experience on SPSS and Microsoft excel. It was also discussed on Operational Plan and Budgeting for Operational Research as well as Ethics in Research on Human Subject and Reporting, Dissemination and Use of Operational Research. Operational Research Protocols were developed and presented by participants.

Closing Session

Dr. S. D. Gupta delivered remarks and congratulated all participants and organizers for the success of the programme. He acknowledged the efforts made by STAC for prevention and control TB and HIV/AIDS in the region. He also highlighted the value of the Operational Research in TB and HIV/AIDS Control Programmes.

Prof. Dr. Shashi Kant Jha, Resource Persons, gave his remarks and appreciated for excellent arrangement of the training by STAC and Government of India. He also thanked STAC for giving opportunity to take part as resource person in this training programme.

Dr. P. R. Sodani, Dean Training, IIHMR University, Jaipur, appreciated the efforts of STAC in the field of TB & HIV/AIDS. He spoke on the role and importance of research in TB and HIV/AIDS Control Programmes.

Prof. Dr. R. P Bichha, Director, STAC, Nepal delivered his closing remarks. He extended special thanks to the Dr. S. D. Gupta, Dr. R. P. Sodani and Dr. Anoop Khanna & officials for their kind support to make the training a grand success. He also extended special thanks to Resource Persons and participants from SAARC Member States for their active participation and remarkable inputs.

All the participants and Resource Persons were awarded certificates for their participation in the five days training. The certificate was provided jointly by Director, STAC, and Chairman of the IIHMR.
SAARC Regional Training on TB for Microbiologist on Culture & DST, GeneXpert/CBNAAT (Nucleic Acid Amplification Test) and its Maintenance was organized jointly by the SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India at National Institute of Tuberculosis and Respiratory Diseases (NITRD), New Delhi from 10th to 14th July 2017.

Two participants working in TB, NTRL/ITRL (Microbiologists or Medical Technologist or Laboratory Technicians) from each SAARC Member States namely Afghanistan, Bhutan, Indian, Maldives, Nepal and Sri-Lanka participated in the training. The sixteen participants attended the programme.

Objectives of the Training were to improve the capacity of the NRLs for Culture & DST services under National TB Control Programme as well as be capable to participate in surveillance activities and to produce trainers to train the personnel on Culture, DST & GeneXpert(NAAT) of M. tuberculosis and their maintenance.

**Opening Session**

Prof. Dr. R.P. Bichha, Director, STAC and Dr. Rohit Sarin, Director, NITRD and other dignitaries jointly opened the training by lighting the traditional lamp.

The Director, NITRD welcomed the participants and resource persons & delivered his remarks. He thanked the STAC for selecting NITRD as training venue and appreciated the role played by the Centre for control of Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS in the Region. He also mentioned about revolutionary changes in the TB Laboratory areas in the world and NITRD is ready to collaborate with STAC for operational of SAARC Supra-national Reference Laboratory for TB and HIV/AIDS.

The Director, STAC delivered the opening address and he highlighted the importance of the Training Course and appreciated the support rendered by the RNTCP, Government of India and NITRD for excellent arrangement. He mentioned about the development of SAARC Supra-national Laboratory for TB and HIV/AIDS and explained about series of discussions, meetings and works in the couple of
months for procurement of equipment and functioning of laboratory.

Dr. Ajith Weekakoon, Epidemiologist, STAC delivered remarks in opening ceremony and he highlighted the objective and expected outcomes of this training Course.

Prof. Dr. Vithal Prasad Myneedu, Sr. Microbiologist/Head, Department of Microbiology, NITRD, New Delhi, delivered vote of thanks.

**Technical Sessions**

were performed by Dr. Jyoti Arora Consultant Microbiologist, Dr. M. Bhalla, Microbiologist (SAG), Dr. Niti Singh, Consultant Microbiologist, Dr. Gavish and Dr. Himanshu Jha, Dr. Ajoy Verma, Dr. Ritu Singhal, from NITRD.

**Closing session**

Mr. Arun Kumar Jha, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India attended at the closing ceremony as Chief Guest. Dr. Sunil D. Khaparde, DDG (TB) Directorate General Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Governments of India attended as special guest in the Ceremony.

Mr. Arun Kumar Jha, the chief guest of the closing ceremony thanked to STAC for organizing the Training in India and appreciated the efforts of the Centre for Control TB and HIV/AIDS Control in the Region and re-iterated the commitments of government of India regarding the support for activities of STAC. The special guest Dr. Sunil D. Khaparde thanked Director, STAC.

Dr. Rohit Sarin, Director, NITRD, thanked all the participants and Resource Persons for their active participation for making the training successful. Dr. Dr. V. P. Myneedu highlighted the outcomes of the training.

Dr. Mahen Kothalawala, Consultant Microbiologist, Kandy Teaching Hospital, Sri-Lanka spoke in the closing
ceremony on behalf of the participants and highlighted their satisfaction. He requested to the SAARC to organize the Hands-on Training in future.

Prof. Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director, STAC delivered the vote of Thanks. He propounded his gratitude to the Government of India for timely concurrence to organize this activity in India as well as Governments of SAARC Member States. He thanked NITRD family, Participants and Resource Person for making the training successful. Certificates were awarded to participants and facilitators.

**Outcome of the Training**

The participants learned laboratory standards required for TB culture and DST and liquid culture systems (MGIT 960). They also got knowledge on policy and guidelines on TB diagnosis. Similarly, the participants learned infection control and prevention standards and practices on MTB infection prevention and control in TB laboratory. The participants also learned sterilization and disinfection techniques applicable for TB laboratory as well as they became able to identify the problems and their solutions in culture and DST. They also learned FM microscopy technique and External Quality Assurance System and to assess the performance of their TB laboratory. They also learned more about GeneXpert/CBNAAT and maintenance of Gene pert, etc.
SAARC Regional Training of Trainers (ToT) on Diagnosis, Treatment and Programmatic Management of Pediatric TB
07-11 August 2017, Sri Lanka

A “SAARC Training of Trainers on Diagnosis, Treatment and Programmatic Management of pediatric TB” was organized jointly by SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) and National Programme of Tuberculosis Control and Chest Diseases (NPTCCD), Ministry of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine, Government of Sri Lanka in Colombo from 7th to 11th August 2017.

Nineteen participants participated in the programme. Participants were Pediatricians, Chest Physicians, Medical Officers, Health Officers etc. from all eight SAARC Member States, namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.


Objectives
Following were the objectives of the training:
- To strengthen participants’ capacity in the clinical management of Pediatric TB
- To discuss and share experiences of clinical management, challenges to
be faced in diagnosing &
treating of childhood TB and

Opening Ceremony:
Mr. Janaka Sugathadasa, Secretary, Ministry of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine, Government of Sri Lanka inaugurated the Training Programme by lighting beautifully decorated lamps on the different symbolic bowl-ponds representing the eight SAARC Member States.

Dr. Kanthi Ariyarathne, Director, NPTCCD delivered welcome address. and welcomed all participants, facilitators, resource persons, guests, dignitaries and officials in the programme.

Prof. Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director, STAC delivered his remarks and express his gratitude and happiness for the presence of high-level dignitaries from Government of Sri Lanka which reflects that there is strong commitments for prevention & control of TB & HIV/AIDS in the SAARC Region.

Dr. T. L. C. Somatunga, Deputy Director General (Medical Service), DGHS, Government of Sri Lanka also delivered her remarks in the inaugural ceremony of the programme.

Dr. V. S. Salhotra, Participant from India as well as Governing Board Member of STAC delivered his remarks and highlighted the challenges to be faced in management of childhood TB and role to be played by STAC to support the Member States.

Dr. Ajith P. Weerakoon, Epidemiologist, STAC delivered Vote of Thanks. He thanks Governments of SAARC Member States for supporting STAC and nominating the high level participants for the programme. He thanked Secretary, Ministry of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine, Government of Sri Lanka for his presence and inaugurating the parogramme. He also thanked Director, NPTCCD and her team for their generous support and made the programme a grand success. He thanked all participants and resource persons, facilitators, guest-lecturers and officials for their support and co-operation in the programme.
On behalf of the STAC, Dr. Ajith expressed his gratitude to His Excellency Secretary General of SAARC and Director of SAARC Secretariat for continuous support and guidance for organizing the STAC activities not only in the Sri Lanka but also in the other SAARC Member States.

Technical Sessions
Prof. Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director, STAC presented his presentation on “Introduction of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, its vision/mission and objectives along with its achievements & progress. He also highlighted the objectives of this training. The country presentations started in alphabetical order of the member country where the participants presented their presentations on the status of childhood TB in respective country.

Dr. Kanthi Ariyarathne, Director, NPTCCD, Sri Lanka presented her presentation on “Efforts of NTP Sri Lanka in diagnosis & Treatment including Epidemiology, Challenges & Special Initiatives of Child Hood TB and “Pediatric TB within NTP”.

Dr. Binod Lal Bajracharya, President, Nepal Pediatric Society (NEPAS) presented “Challenges of Childhood TB in SAARC Region”.

Dr. Ganesh Kumar Shrestha, Consultant Pediatrician from Kanti Children Hospital, Kathmandu, presented “Diagnosis of TB in Pediatric” as Regional Resource Person.

Dr. Kala Somasundaram and Dr. Anuradha, Senior Registrar in Pediatric Pulmonology, presented “History Taking in Pediatric TB” “Community Participants in Childhood TB” and “Counseling in Childhood TB”.

Dr. Niranjan Dissanayake, Consultant Respiratory Physician on “Management of DR TB in Pediatrics” and “Prevention of Pediatric TB”.

Dr. Saumya Liyanage, Lecturer, Dept. of Pathology, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya, Ragama presented her presentation on “Pathology and Pathogenesis of Pediatric TB” as Guest Lecturer.

Dr. Dhammika Vidangama, Microbiologist, NTRL, Welisara presented her presentation on “Laboratory Aspects of Pediatric TB” as Guest Lecturer.

Dr. Chathurika Munasinghe, Consultant Radiologist, LRH, Colombo presented her presentation on “Pathology and Pathogenesis of Pediatric TB”.

A field visit at Colombo Chest Clinic and Medical Officer for Health (MOH), Nugagoda was conducted.

Group discussion for field report preparation and presentations was conducted.

Closing Ceremony
Hon’ble Minister Dr. Rajitha Senaratne, Ministry of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine, Government of Sri Lanka graced the occasion as Chief Guest.

Dr. Kanthi Ariyarathne, Director, NPTCCD, Government of Sri Lanka delivered the welcome speech in honor of the Hon’ble Minister, guests and participants. She presented a brief report on this five-day SAARC ToT on childhood TB at the presence of Hon’ble Minister, Director General of
Health Services and other dignitaries of Government of Sri Lanka.

Prof. Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director, STAC delivered closing remarks and propounded his gratitude to the Government of Sri Lanka for the concurrence to organize the training programme in very appropriate time. Prof. Bichha explained the need of the ToT on childhood TB which was very important aspect of National TB Control Programme in the SAARC Member States. He expressed his gratitude to the Hon'ble Minister for his gracious presence in the programme.

Dr. Jayasundara Bandara, Director General, DGHS, Government of Sri Lanka attended as Chairperson of the closing ceremony. Dr. Bandara, highlighted the progress made by the SAARC Member States in TB and HIV/AIDS. He also explained about the status of childhood TB in the SAARC Region as well as in Sri Lanka.

Hon'ble Minister Dr. Rajitha Senaratne delivered his remarks and shown his satisfaction on the programme organized on the important subject of the National TB control programme. He thanked all for their efforts to control TB in the SAARC Member States. He expressed the commitment of the Government of Sri Lanka to support SAARC activities. Dr. Refai Cadare, Deputy Director, NPTCCD, delivered Vote of Thanks.

**Outcome of the Training**

The participants shared their experiences and information acquired in their work place. Participants also got chances of discussion with the experts regarding their doubts, challenges faced and the programme related to the childhood TB. So, it is obvious that participants acquainted with the real problems of childhood TB. They also familiarized in the management of cases of pediatric TB and updated their knowledge regarding the matter. They updated their skills to provide the health care delivery especially to the children with TB, TB/HIV as well as DR-TB.
Brief News

- **Visit of STAC Team to New Delhi for SAARC Super-national Reference Laboratory or TB and HIV/AIDS**

A team of Prof. Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director and Dr. Ajith Weerakoon, Epidemiologist, from STAC visited New Delhi, India from 2nd to 4th May 2017 to interact about the SAARC Supra-national Reference Laboratory for TB and HIV/AIDS which is going to be established in STAC. The team interacted with Dr. Rohit Sarin, Director, NITRD, New Delhi, Dr. V. S. Salhotra, ADG (TB) (STAC Governing Board Member from India), Central TB Division, New Delhi, Prof. Dr. Vithal Prasad Myneedu, Sr. Microbiologist/Head, Department of Microbiology, NITRD, New Delhi and Dr. Md. Khurshid Alam Hyder, Regional Adviser, Tuberculosis, WHO-SEARO, New Delhi, officials of Hites/find organisation regarding the initiation of SAARC Supra-national Reference Laboratory for TB and HIV/AIDS in Kathmandu under the organization of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre.

- **Visit of Sri Lanka by Director, STAC in NTP Review**

Prof. Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director, STAC visited Sri Lanka to support in Review of NTP and Preventive Activities from 26th to 30th June 2017. STAC is supporting SAARC Member States for external reviewing of NTP upon their request. It is one of the regular activities of STAC to provide technical support for monitoring and evaluation of the TB and HIV/AIDS control programmes.

- **Participation in Sixth Meeting of the SAARC Ministers of Health and preceding Meeting of Senior Officials, Colombo, Sri Lanka**

Prof. Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director, STAC attended the Sixth Meeting of the SAARC Ministers of Health and preceding Meeting of Senior Officials organized in Colombo, Sri Lanka from 27th to 29th July 2017. The meeting was inaugurated by Honourable Dr. Rajitha Senaratne, Minister of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine, Government of Sri Lanka. Honourable Dr. Senaratne, in his address at the Ceremony, pointed out that non-communicable diseases, malnutrition and tuberculosis are identified as major health issues facing by the people of South Asia. In this context, Minister Senaratne shared the experience of Sri Lanka in curbing the increase in non-communicable diseases and highlighted the important role of universal access to education and the empowerment of women.

STAC Director interacted with the Senior Officials regarding the progress, challenges and future plan of STAC.
Welcome and Farewell Visits

- Visit of STAC by H. E. the Secretary General, SAARC and Director from SAARC Secretariat

H. E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B Sial, Secretary General, SAARC and Ms. Rishfa Rasheed, Director, SAARC Secretariat visited STAC on 4th August 2017 and observed the infrastructure and the functioning of the Centre. Prof. Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director, STAC presented the progress of the Centre as well as explained about the challenges and problems related to the Centre. H. E. expressed his satisfaction on the progress and functioning of the Centre and assured to support the Centre. STAC highly encouraged by the suggestions and guidance provided by H. E. for exploration of innovative and effective programmes.

- Visit of Director (Social Affairs), SAARC Secretariat

Ms. Rishfa Rasheed, Director, SAARC Secretariat (Social Affairs) visited STAC on 3rd August 2017. Prof. Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director and STAC family welcomed her in the Centre and presented a brief presentation on Introduction and Progress of the Centre. She observed the Centre’s infrastructure and available facilities.
• Farewell to Director (Social Affairs), SAARC Secretariat

A farewell function was organized at STAC in honour of Ms. Fathimath Najwa, out-going Director, (Social Affairs), SAARC Secretariat on 3rd August 2017. All staff of the Centre expressed their gratitude to Ms. Najwa for her support and guidance and cooperation to carry out the activities of STAC. Her guidance and co-operation to STAC was highly remarkable. STAC family wishes her a bright future.

• Visit of a team from IOM

A team consisting Mr. Paul I. Nortorn & Mr. Bishnu Rai from International Organization for Migration, Nepal Office visited STAC and discussed about the problem related to migrant TB and HIV/AIDS patients. The IOM works in migration management including migration health and the gender dimension of migration in close collaboration with governmental, intergovernmental organizations.

• Visit of Governing Board Member from Pakistan

Dr. Nasir Mahmood Khan, STAC Governing Board Member from Pakistan visited STAC on 1st June 2017 and observed the functioning of the Centre. He appreciated the work done for the establishment of SAARC Supra-national Laboratory for TB and HV/AIDS in STAC and promised to help as much as he can for the establishment of this laboratory.

• Visit of STAC by a team from Save the Children, Nepal

Ms. Tara Chhetry, Chief of Party & Team from Save the Children, Nepal visited STAC on 19th June 2017 and discussed with the Director, STAC regarding
cooperation and support in conducting activities for TB and HIV/AIDS. In the meeting, Introduction, Functioning and Progress of STAC was presented and discussed on joint venture with Save the Children, Nepal and STAC.

- **Visit of STAC by Member of Parliament (MP) of Nepal**
  
  Hon'ble Member of Parliament Mr. Sakal Dev Sukla visited STAC on 20th June 2017 and observed the functioning of the Centre. He interacted with staff about the problems to be faced during the office work and way-out to solve them. He assured to support STAC from his side in any aspects of the situation.

- **Visit of National Programme Manager, NTP, Nepal**
  
  Prof. Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director, STAC along with the staff welcomed Dr. Kedar Nursingh K.C., Director, National TB Centre/NTP, Nepal at STAC on 4th July 2017. Dr. K.C. interacted in a meeting about the activities and cooperation between NTP Nepal and STAC. Dr. K. C. was newly appointed in the post of Director, National TB Centre, Government of Nepal.

- **Visit of STAC by Health Secretary, Ministry of Health, Government of Nepal**
  
  Dr. Kiran Regmi, Secretary of Health along with the high-level dignitaries from Ministry of Health, Department of Health Services visited STAC on 20th July 2017. Prof. Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director, STAC presented Introduction of STAC, its functioning and challenges along with the future programmes. Dr. Regmi expressed her satisfaction regarding the progress of the Centre and its activities in the Region.

- **Visit of High School Students from Lalitpur, Nepal**
  
  A group of students along with their teacher from Sudesha School, Nakhkhu, Lalitpur visited STAC on 20th July 2017 and observed the infrastructure and functioning of the Centre. A presentation
on Introduction of TB and HIV/AIDS, free Diagnosis & Treatment in Government Hospitals and Health units were presented. Prof. Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director, STAC highlighted about SAARC and SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre and their objectives. Director, STAC also informed that Students are the partners of STAC to spread the messages against TB and HIV/AIDS in the community as Child Ambassadors.

Dr. Kiran Regmi Secretary of Health, Government of Nepal observing available facilities in STAC