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STAC Newsletter is a regular publication of SAARC Tuberculosis 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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Reports on Programme Activities

SAARC Meeting of Programme Managers on TB and HIV/AIDS Control Programmes and Cross Border Issues


H.E. Abdulla Nazim Ibrahim, Honourable Minister of Health of Maldives graced the inauguration session as Chief Guest.

Ms. Maimoona Aboobakuru, Director General of Public Health, Government of Maldives extended a warm welcome to all the delegates from the SAARC member states for sparing time for this important regional event. She also expressed gratitude to H.E. Abdulla Nazim Ibrahim, Honourable Minister of Health of Maldives for gracing the occasion as Chief Guest.

Dr. Ali Nazeem, Medical Director, IGMH, Government of Maldives and Governing Board Member of STAC, also delivered his remarks at the opening Session.

Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director, SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre, Kathmandu, during his opening statement welcomed all the delegates and thanked the Ministry of Health, Government of Maldives for co-organizing the Meeting. He also highlighted the performance of STAC and achievements of the last year 2017.

Ms. Rishfa Rasheed, Director, Social Affairs, SAARC Secretariat conveyed greetings from the Secretary General of SAARC, H.E. Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial, to all the delegates wishing successful outcome of this meeting and stated that the Member States of SAARC have accorded a high priority to control of TB and HIV/AIDS and other communicable and non-communicable diseases.

H.E. Mr. Abdulla Nazim Ibrahim, Honourable Minister of Health, Government of Maldives welcomed all the delegates and stated that various initiatives have been taken by the SAARC Member States to reduce the burden to TB and HIV/AIDS. He also mentioned that Maldives remains as a low prevalence country for both HIV AIDS and TB, which was achieved by hard work and dedication of the health care providers and also by workers and programmatic efforts. Honourable Minister also commended the role of STAC in undertaking the principle role for prevention and control of TB and HIV/AIDS in the region and noted that STAC has been very instrumental and remains a driving force for harmonizing and developing regional specific activities related to TB and HIV AIDS.
STAC conducted a meeting through video conference method on 22nd June 2018 with the programme managers of Bangladesh and India on TB/HIV Co-infection. The objectives of the programme were to discuss and share the country situation, knowledge and skills on the new initiatives on TB and HIV/AIDS Co-infection.

Dr. Rabeya Sultana, Research Officer welcomed the participants on behalf of STAC.

Dr. R.P. Bichha, Director extended his best wishes to the participants and briefed about the achievements and efforts of STAC towards the control of TB/HIV co-infection in the SAARC region. Dr. Ajith Weerakoon, Epidemiologist gave a presentation on situation of TB/HIV co-infection globally and in SAARC Member countries.

During the video conference Dr. Nazis Arefin Saki, MO (NTP) Bangladesh mentioned that Bangladesh is a low HIV prevalence country with prevalence less than 1% and informed that out of 4000 TB cases only 19 (0.36%) was found HIV positive in 2017. Out of 559 HIV positive patients 89 were TB positive. 84 out of 89 (95%) have received ART treatment.

Dr. Sunil Rao, Executive Director (VCT) India gave information on the preventive care of HIV patients in 2017. He informed that out of 58% patients, who are notified from the private sector, were also screened for HIV test. All PLHIV who visited the ART centre were tested for TB and symptom screening. He informed that the mortality among TB/HIV co-infection was around 11-13%.

The outcome achieved from the meeting were to learn the best practices and experiences from each other and support to replicate the best practices among the countries of SAARC region.
STAC conducted a meeting through video conference method on 30th July 2018 with the programme managers of Bangladesh and Nepal on Pediatric TB. The objectives of the programme were to learn about the current situation and challenges in diagnosis and treatment outcome and risk factors for unfavorable outcome and to share the best practices on childhood TB in their respective country. The discussion was held with Dr. Md. Monjur Rahman, Focal Person of Child TB, NTP, Bangladesh, Dr. Navin Prakash Saha, Chest Physician, National TB Center (NTC), Nepal, Professionals and staff of the Centre.

Dr. M. Rahman, FP (NTP,) Bangladesh explained about diagnosis of childhood TB in Bangladesh is round 4%. He informed that a specialized childhood TB centre is going to be established in Dhaka with the facilities to diagnose it. Dr. Navin Prakash Saha, Chest Physician (NTC), Nepal said that childhood TB is difficult to diagnose and treat as there is no proper diagnosis kit and medicine available in Nepal. He informed a programme called “As soon as preventive therapy” was started for management and diagnosis of childhood TB. He also said that five district hospitals around the valley have trained doctors to perform gastric lavage tests to diagnose childhood TB.

The outcome achieved from the meeting were to learn the best practices and experiences on pediatric TB from each other and support to replicate the best practices among the countries of SAARC region.
Visit to research sites (Nepalgunj & Dhangadi)

A team from the SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Center comprising Dr. Ajith Weerakoon, Epidemiologist, Dr. Rabeya Sultana, Research Officer and Mr. Kailash Bdr. Karki, Training Officer visited to Bheri Regional Hospital, Nepalgunj & Seti Zonal Hospital, Dhangadi, from 5 -9 August 2018. Dr. Prakash Bdr. Thapa Director at the Bheri Regional Hospital, Nepalgunj and Dr. Sajan K. C. Director, Seti Zonal Hospital, Dhangadhi including all HoD attended the consultative meeting. Dr. Ajith Weerakoon and Dr. Rabeya Sultana presented and discussed the objectives and rational of the study, research methodology, etc. The meeting also identified the Research Coordinators and Research Assistant for both the Centre & thereby data collection has been started.

Visit to research sites (Dharan)

A team from the SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Center comprising Dr. Rajendra Prasad Pant, Director, Dr. Rabeya Sultana, Research Officer and Mr. Sanjeeb Kumar Jha, Statistician visited to BPKIHS, Dharan from 26 -29 August 2018. All concern HoD attended the consultative meeting. Dr. Rabeya Sultana presented and discussed the objectives and rational of the study, research methodology, etc. The meeting also nominated the Dr. Robin Maskey, Endocrinologist as a Research Coordinators and also identified Research Assistant for the Centre & thereby data collection has been started.
Dr. Rajendra Prasad Pant joined SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre in the post of Director on August 9, 2018. He completed his Graduation (MBBS) from Rajshahi University, Bangladesh. He has also completed MPH from the Johns Hopkins University, School of Hygiene and Public Health, USA in 1998.

He started his service as Medical Officer, National Tuberculosis Center, Government of Nepal in 1996. He has many more working experiences as Director in the field of Tuberculosis, AIDS and STD Control, Child Health Division of Department of Health Services, Government of Nepal. In February 2017, he became Director General, Department of Health Services, Government of Nepal. Prior to joining STAC he was working as a Director at National TB Centre, Government of Nepal.

He is a very good researcher and had performed on “TB prevalence Survey” in National TB Centre. He has presented scientific papers during different International Conferences. STAC staff welcomed him in STAC family.

A formal farewell was given to former Director of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, Dr. R. P. Bichha, He served as Director STAC for 17 months. In this Programme, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Pant, newly joined Director-STAC awarded Letter of Appreciation to him. STAC is very much thankful to Dr. Bichha for his contribution to the Centre and whishes him great success in coming days.
Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director-STAC participated in the Meeting for discussion of issue related to SAARC- National Reference Laboratory for TB and HIV/AIDS on 30th April-4th May 2018 in New Delhi, India.

Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director, STAC participated in the Inter provincials Review meeting for TB in Pakistan, 25-28 June 2018.

Dr. Ajith Weerakoon, Epidemiologist-STAC participated in the Strategic planning for a comprehensive response to human rights-related barriers to HIV and TB services in Nepal, Multi-stakeholder meeting and working group meeting, 27-28 June, 2018 in Kathmandu, Nepal

Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director and Dr. Ajith P. Weerakoon-Epidemiologists STAC attended two days partnership conclave on 2nd and 3rd July 2018 as organized by SAARC Development Fund at International Centre New Delhi. The objective of attending this meeting was to explore the possibility of funding a project “Optimizing strategies to enhance Tuberculosis Case Detection in SAARC Member states” which the project proposal has already prepared by STAC.

Dr. R. P. Bichha, Director, STAC participated in “22nd International AIDS Conference”, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 23-27 July 2018. The theme of the conference was “Breaking barriers, building bridges”.

Dr. Ajith P. Weerakoon, Epidemiologist-STAC participated in the Mid-Term review of National Prevalence Survey on 4th August 2018 in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Visit of STAC Director to SAARC Secretariat: The Director of SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Pant paid a courtesy call on His Excellency the Secretary General of SAARC, Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial on 10 August 2018 at the SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu.
Visit of STAC by Dr. Lungten Z. Wangchuk

Dr. Lungten Z. Wangchuk, Scientist-Communicable Disease, WHO-Nepal visited SARRC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre along with Dr. Subhash Lakhe, National Professional Officer, Communicable Disease Control, WHO country office Nepal and Dr. Ashish Shrestha, National Consultant for TB program at World Health Organization Country Office Nepal on 17th August 2018. A meeting was 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.
SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre

Newsletter

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