In this issue

Editorial

Messages from his Excellency Mr. Amjad Hussain B. Sial Secretary General of SAARC on the occasion of World TB Day/SAARC TB Day - 2019

Report on Activities

1. World TB Day 2019 ---------------------------------------------------------- 1

2. Review of NTP in province no -2, Janakpur ----------------- 2

3. SAARC Regional Training of Trainers(TOT) on Diagnosis, treatment and programmatic Management of Pediatric TB, Colombo, Sri Lanka ---------------------------- 3

4. Skill enhancement Training of GSS, Nepal --------- 4

5. MOU Signing with HITES, India and for SRL of STAC----- 5

6. SAARC Regional Training on ART for HIV/AIDS, Nepal ---- 6

7. SAARC Regional meeting of program managers on TB and HIV/AIDS Control Programs , Colombo, Srilanka --------------- 7

8. Trend ( Frequency and Distribution patterns ) of opportunities infections associated with HIV/AIDS- A multi centric study Consultative meeting held on Nepal . -------------------------- 8

Brief News

- Audit report of the account of STAC for the year 2018
- Farewell Program of Dr. Ajith P. Weerakoon, former Epidemiologist
- Staff Day Celebration 2019
- National Tree Plantation
- Farewell Program of Dr. R. P. Pant, Former Director
- Visit of Srilankan Delegates
- Joining of New GS Staff

For more information and correspondence, please contact
SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre, Thimi, Bhaktapur, G. P.O.Box No. 9517, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: 00977-1-6632601, 6632477, 6631048 , Fax: 00977-1-6634379, E-mail: saarctb@mos.com.np Website: www.saarctb.org
Editorial
Shorter regimen to treat MDR TB: a new hope to End TB

Multi Drug Resistance tuberculosis (MDR-TB) is defined as a disease that is resistant to at least both rifampicin and isoniazid with or without resistance to other anti TB drug. Rifampicin-resistant TB (RR-TB) and MDR-TB is emerging as a major concern. MDR-TB is treatable but the drug regimen is expensive, long duration and toxic.

Globally, in 2018 an estimated 558 000 people were newly eligible for MDR-TB treatment. Approximately 1.3 million people died of TB in 2017 and an additional 0.3 million deaths from TB among people who were HIV-positive. The SAARC region, with an estimated incidence of 3.7 million TB cases, carries 37% of the global burden of TB. Three of the eight Member Countries in the Region are among the 30 high burden countries (Bangladesh, India and Pakistan) together notified 95% of the cases. India alone accounted to 73% of all notifications in the SAARC region. The SAARC region has 0.1 million total number of an estimated MDR/RR-TB cases among notified pulmonary TB cases in the year 2017.

All SAARC Member States have developed their strategic plans for expansion of TB/HIV collaborative activities. Constraints and retention of adequately trained human resources, is one of the major concerns.

The recently recommended shorter regimen (9- to 12-month standardized alternative shorter MDR-TB regimen) to the current 20-month MDR-TB treatment by WHO has proven successful in developing countries like Bangladesh and Nepal. Hence, it should also be accelerated in other countries in the SAARC region. The present results of the Shorter regimen showing satisfactory compliance as it reduces duration by almost half, cost by one-third and number of adverse events which ultimately will lead improvement in treatment success rate. Decision-makers of especially high TB burden countries in SAARC region need to make use of new opportunity by adapting shorter MDR-TB regimen to fulfill the goal of end TB strategy by 2030 or earlier as envisioned in sustainable development goal 3.

Thus, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre is optimistic to End TB by 2030.
MESSAGE

The World TB Day is observed on 24 March every year globally to build advocacy and public awareness about the disease, which still remains a major public health problem in the world. The Day has been particularly useful in mobilizing political and social commitment to end the global TB epidemic.

The theme of this year’s World TB Day is "It's Time ...".

As we are aware, TB is one of the top ten causes of death worldwide. Although TB is preventable and curable, many people in the developing countries, including those in South Asia, continue to suffer from this menace because of poverty, gender inequality, vulnerability, discrimination and marginalization. In the meanwhile, millions of people with TB do not have access to quality care, including affordable diagnostic tests and treatment facility.

It is estimated that one quarter of the world's population is infected with TB bacteria that causes the disease. In the SAARC Region, which has over 36% of the global burden, about 3.7 million new TB cases occur and about 0.5 million die every year due to TB. These morbidity and mortality from TB occur mainly in the economically productive age group of 15-49 years.

SAARC attaches high priority to the prevention and control of TB and other communicable diseases, with several of its Member states committing themselves to eradicate TB before 2030. In order to eliminate TB from the SAARC Region before the global target, the SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre has formulated: (i) SAARC Regional Strategy on Migrant Health/Cross border issues in the SAARC Member States (2018-2023); (ii) Revised SAARC Regional Strategy on ACSM (2018-2023); (iii) Revised SAARC Regional Strategy on HIV/AIDS (2018-2023); and (iv) Revised SAARC Regional Strategy on Elimination of Tuberculosis (2018-2023).

Although recent achievements in TB Control are encouraging, more needs to be done. It is time to ensure effective implementation of TB control activities to achieve the desired outcome. Now it is time to intensify advocacy, social mobilization, partnership, research and inter-sectoral efforts to achieve the target of ending the TB epidemic by 2030.

In commemorating the World TB Day, I wish to call upon the Member States and our partners to redouble their efforts to fight the TB epidemic. I also wish the SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre further success in its endeavours.

Kathmandu, 24 March 2019

(Amjad Hussain B. Sial)
Report on Programme Activities

World TB Day and SAARC TB Day is commemorated in Province No. 2 on 24th March 2019, Janakpur

On this occasion, dissemination of findings of NTP review of Tuberculosis Program of Province- 2 was done which was completed just before the World/SAARC TB Day, 2019.

The programme was attended by the Hon’ble Chief Minister Shree Lal Babu Raut, Hon’ble Health Minister and Parliamentarians. The Theme of the Programme was “Its Time for action: End TB “.

Review of the Tuberculosis program in Province no- 2, Nepal on 17th to 18th March, 2019

Considering the Tarai belt is one of the densely populated area of Nepal with higher Case Notification Rate (CNR) (57% in 2017) of TB. Moreover according to the Nepal Tuberculosis Centre report, 2017, CNR is gradually decreasing in the Province (In 2013- 139/100000 population and 2017-109/100000 population). Keeping the SDG goal to eliminate TB by 2030 in Nepal as well as in SAARC region a review of the TB surveillance system was carried out in Province No-2 of Nepal by a technical team of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre by targeting to find out the gap and situation of TB in Tarai region and to make recommendation to overcome those. The recommendations were as under;

The NTP review findings and recommendations were discussed with the provincial government heads and key stakeholders.
RECOMMENDATIONS

- There should be a clear human resource policy which can help to sustain and to run the program properly.
- The human resources should be increased with clear TOR and standard and regular remuneration should be ensured.
- Infection control should be strengthened by preparing a national TB infection control guideline and regular refresher training as well as maintain a clear supply of infection control material to the district level as well as below that level.
- Waste disposal system should be regulated according to the National Infection Control guideline.
- Regular monitoring and supervision plan should be there along with feedback system will improve the motivation and data management system with increasing integrity and data quality.
- Contact tracing at the field level and train the field level health workers with updated NTP guideline would improve the data quality and increase the positive predictive value of the laboratory.
- Regular uninterrupted drug and reagent supply along with maintenance of the microscope and genexpert machine should be maintained for stability of the program.
- Strengthening the PPM and regular advocacy meeting with the field level health care providers will improve the data quality and to catch up any missing cases.
- There should be a drug policy at the national level for selling and using of ATT drugs from the private sector and that should be implemented by regular monitoring along with law endorsement department. Making legislation for selling ATT drugs in private stores.
“SAARC Training of Trainers on Diagnosis, Treatment and Programmatic Management of Pediatrics 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 17th to 21st April 2019.

The opening session was started by National Anthem of Sri-lanka. Dr. M. A. C. M. Refai, Director, NPTCCD delivered welcome address and welcomed all participants, resource persons, guests, dignitaries and officials in the programme. He expressed his happiness to be the focal person for hosting such important training. He also thanked the Government of Member States for their great support by sending relevant participants to make the programme a grand success.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad Pant, Director, STAC delivered his remarks and expressed 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. He also expressed his gratitude to all SAARC Member States for their Ending TB targets and ending TB by 2025 taken by the Government of Sri-Lanka it’s really tough task. He highlighted the challenges to be faced in management of childhood TB and role to be played by STAC to support the Member States. He thanked officials of NPTCCD, Sri-Lanka for working hard since last one month for making the programme successful.
Skill enhancement Training of GSS, Nepal

The group training programmes for GSS of STAC conducted the “Skill enhancement Trainings “from 2-3 June, 2019 in Hotel Himalayan Horizon, Dhulikhel with the objectives to strengthen the knowledge and skills in their respective fields; & to update the knowledge and increase the skills as well as to motivate them to work.

List of participants are as follows: Mr. K.B. Basnet, Admin Officer , Mr. K.B. Karki, Training Officer, Ms. M.K. Dhakal, SPA, Mr. S.K. Jha, Statistician ,Ms. S. Dhakal, P.A., Mr. D. Subba, Librarian, Mr. S.A. Majeed, Accountant , Mr. H.K. Maharjan, Computer Assistant ,Mr. R Chaudhary, Admin Assistant , Mr. B.P. Basyal, Store keeper and Mr. B. Kunwar, Lab Technician .

All staff Member were trained about appreciate inquiry about communication, office management , Leadership skill, Conflict resolutions , Concept Note Writing, Report Writing, Preparation of News letter and Editorial Drafting. The training was conducted by renounced resource person from Nepal NHRC, Teaching Hospital & other relevant institutes.
SAARC TB Reference Laboratory (STRL) has been created under STAC, which already has excellent networking with the Ten National TB Reference Laboratories (NRLs) of Member States under NTPs. STRL has supported microscopy network, quality assurance (QA) of NRLs of Member States. In 2003, STRL carried out the first round of QA testing and since then, fifteenth round proficiency testing has been completed in 2018. In addition, STRL also offers training for distinct categories of laboratory staff and conducts operational research to create new efficient techniques for early tuberculosis diagnosis and early detection of drug-resistant tuberculosis.

There are two Supranational TB Reference Laboratories in the SAARC region, i.e. National Research Institute for Tuberculosis in Chennai, India, and National Institute of TB and Respiratory Diseases, New Delhi, India. However, given the geographical size, population and burden of TB and TB / HIV co-infection, SAARC Supra-National Reference Laboratory for TB and HIV/AIDS has been established at STAC. The STAC and HLL Infra Tech Services Ltd (HITES), India has recently signed MOU for procurements and installation of equipments. The operation of SAARC Supra-National Reference Laboratory for TB and HIV/AIDS in the field of TB/HIV diagnosis, quality control and skill development. The aim of this laboratory is to promote scientific research, to build up skilled workforce by useful timely trainings, quality assurances of SAARC Member States laboratories and to build up an organism bank for future endeavor.
SAARC Regional Training on ART to HIV/AIDS

SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre in collaboration with National STD and AIDS Control Division Government of Nepal organized “SAARC Regional Training on Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART) for HIV/AIDS Control Programmes” from 13-15 June 2019 with the objectives; to strengthen the skills of the participants in managing HIV infected people who need ART treatment, and to strengthen the capacity of the participants in implementation and monitoring of ART Programme and imparting training to health care providers in this respect. Participants from six Member States participated in the training.

SAARC Regional Meeting of Programme Managers on TB and HIV/AIDS Control Programmes

SAARC Meeting of Programme Managers on TB and HIV/AIDS Control Programmes was held on 20-22 June, 2019 in Colombo, Sri-Lanka. The SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) received confirmations of participation from the National programmes of Governments of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. However, the participants of Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan were not able to Participate due to unknown reasons at the last minute.
RESEARCH

Trend (frequency and distribution patterns) of opportunistic infections associated with HIV/AIDS – A multi-centric study- Nepal, Afghanistan and Bhutan

A consultative meeting was organized by STAC to finalize the research Protocols pertaining to this study on 28-29 June 2019 in STAC, Thimi, Bhaktapur. The meeting discussed the draft protocol and finalized the panel of opportunities infection (OI) for the study. The study time line and budget breakdown was also discussed. The participants were Dr. Shawali Maroofi, CDC/OOPH, Afghanistan, Dr. Naqibullah Hamdard, MOPH, Afghanistan, Mr. Kinley Wangchuk, Microbiologist, Bhutan, Mr. Lekey Khandu, Programme Manager, NACP, Bhutan, Dr. Purusotam Raj Shedain, Sr. Health Administrator, NCASC, Nepal, Dr. Rajendra Pd. Pant, Director, STAC, Dr. Rabeya Sultana, Research Officer, STAC, Mr. Kailash Bdr. Karki, Training Officer, STAC, Mrs. Meena K. Dhakal, SPA, STAC and Mr. Sanjeev K. Jha, Statistician, STAC.

AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS OF STAC FOR THE YEAR 2018

A joint audit for the year 2018 (JAT 2018) comprising auditors Mr. Muhammad Ishaq, Director Establishment, CGA, Office of the Auditor General of Pakistan, and Mr. Rabindra Prased Devkota, Director, Office of the Auditor General of Nepal, carried out the audit of the accounts and related activities of SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS centre for the year 2018, on 20-21 February, 2019.
STAFF DAY CELEBRATION

After a comprehensive evaluation, Mr. Kailash Bdr. Karki, Training Officer and Mr. Kedar Shrestha, Driver were awarded by Director, STAC as best employee’s prize for 2018 which comprises of appreciation letter and cash prize.

TREE PLANTATION

On the occasion of World Environment day 2019, STAC planted several trees in the back garden of STAC. The programme was attended by All Staffs Member of STAC along with guests from Afghanistan, Bhutan and Nepal NACP (who were present for another meeting).
Farewell Program of Dr. Ajith P. Weerakoon, Epidemiologist

A formal farewell was organized to the Dr. Ajith P. Weerakoon, He served as Epidemiologist for 3 Years, In this Programme, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Pant, Director-STAC awarded letter of appreciation to him. STAC is very much thankful to Dr. Ajith for his contribution to the centre and wishes him great success in coming days.

Farewell Program to Dr. R. P. Pant, Director, STAC

A farewell function was organized at STAC in honour of Dr. Rajendra Pd. Pant, Director, STAC on 29th June 2019. Dr. Rabeya Sultana, Research Officer including all staff of the Centre expressed their gratitude to Dr. Pant for her support and guidance and cooperation to carry out the activities of STAC. His guidance and co-operation to STAC was highly remarkable. STAC family wishes him a bright future.
VISITS

A team of Medical Doctors from Srilanka made five days observation tour on TB Control programmes in Nepal from 29/04/2019 were as under;

Dr. Ruwan L. De. S Wijemuni- CMOH, Colombo, Dr. M.A. C.M Refai- Acting Director/ NPTCCD, Dr. R.P.K Rajapaksha -and Dr. Kishan Suriaaratchie- MO/NPTCCD visit the STAC .

JOINING G.S. STAFF

On May 27, 2019, Mr. Yogendra Bahadur Mahata, Computer Technician as GS-I, Krishnamaya Shrestha and Sita Khadka Supporting staff joined SAARC TB and HIV Centre staff family. On June 4, 2019, Sapana Khatiwada, Supporting staff joined as G.S. Staff. We welcome them to continue to do their best in their respective field.
To,

If undelivered, please return to:

SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre
GPO Box 9517, Kathmandu, Nepal