



# STAC

(SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre)

## Newsletter



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(Dr. S. C. Verma, Director, STAC and Specialists in Pediatric TB & TB Control Programme in Nepal)



(Dr. Laxman Shrestha, Pediatric TB Specialist giving his lecture on childhood TB and its prevention, treatment and cure)



(A team from MoFA, Royal Government of Bhutan with STAC official during their visit at STAC)

STAC Newsletter is a regular publication of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, it includes reports of activities, decisions of important meetings of the Centre, news of important activities of National TB and HIV/AIDS Control Programmes of SAARC Member States and recent information on TB and HIV/AIDS.

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## Editorial

### Tuberculosis (TB) Infection Control

TB infection control is a sub-component of the World Health Organization's (WHO) updated "Stop TB" strategy, contributing to strengthening of health systems. In addition, it is also one of the elements of collaborative activities for control of TB and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection as recommended by the WHO. It is one of the "I"s in the WHO's "Three I"s for TB/HIV" (the other two being Isoniazid Preventive Therapy (IPT) and Intensified case finding). It is an essential part of sound TB/HIV control programmes in countries with high TB and TB/ HIV prevalence.

TB infection control requires and complements the implementation of core interventions in TB control and strengthening of health systems. In addition, countries should include TB infection control strategies in their national infection prevention and control policies, and should maximize synergies between TB and HIV programmes that deal with infection prevention and control, and those focusing on TB and HIV control.

Health care workers in most facilities are at high risk of becoming infected with TB (nosocomial transmission), especially when they have immunosuppression due to HIV-infection. Hence, it is very important to improve the knowledge, attitudes and practices for infection prevention and control strategies among health care workers and patients for a better understanding of health care settings on issues of TB transmission. Preventive and control measures to reduce the risk of TB infection and protection of health care workers should be given the highest priority in health care planning and development.

The SAARC Member Countries have shown their commitment to address the aforementioned issues, through many activities conducted by SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Center (STAC). These activities include: SAARC Regional TB and drug resistant TB infection control training, research on knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP) regarding household infection control practices among drug resistant (DR) and X-DR patients in the SAARC region and formulating of SAARC Regional Training Manual for Infection Control at health facilities.

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# Report on Activities

## Workshop on Piloting the SAARC Regional Pediatric Tuberculosis Guidelines and Training of Trainers (ToT) Manual

SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre organized a workshop on Piloting the SAARC Regional Pediatric Tuberculosis Guidelines and Training of Trainers (ToT) Manual in Dhulikhel, Kavre, Nepal for the purpose of serving as an experimental undertaking prior to full-scale operation of the both technical documents (Guidelines and Manual) from 5 to 6 Sept. 2016. The objective of the workshop was piloting of the Pediatric TB Guidelines and ToT Manual as well as to build the capacity of health workers on management of Pediatric TB at their work station.

The workshop was participated by 27 participants and 10 resource persons from children hospitals, teaching hospitals and TB treatment centres of Nepal.

Dr. Sharat Chandra Verma, Director, STAC open the workshop by delivered the welcome address. He briefly explained the need of the piloting of the Pediatric TB Guidelines and ToT Manual. He also highlighted the urgency of the pediatric guidelines and ToT manual in SAARC Region which have been developed by the Centre.

Prof. Dr. Ramesh Kant Adhikari, Professor of Pediatrics, Kathmandu Medical Collage and resource person for the workshop highlighted the importance of scaling up the pediatric TB activities in the SAARC Region. He appreciated the efforts made by the Centre for control and prevention of pediatric TB.

Prof. Dr. Laxman Shrestha, Pediatrician, Head, Dept. of Pediatric,



*Dr. S. C. Verma, Director, STAC delivering welcome address in the opening session of the workshop*

Tri-bhuvan University, Teaching Hospital, Kathmandu, Nepal, briefed about the importance being given to pediatric TB diagnosis and treatment in National TB Control Programme is remarkable steps by the Centre. As the children are always been neglected in TB control programme and though that they will not be infected by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. He emphasized the development guidelines and manual could be strengthened of overall quality of programme. He appreciated the role being played by the STAC and thanked the organizer for organizing this important workshop in time.

Dr. Bhabana Shrestha, Chief Medical Officer, German Nepal Tuberculosis Project, Nepal Anti-TB Association, Kathmandu shared her experience in diagnosis and treatment of childhood TB, as well as childhood DR TB. She elaborated the challenges faced during the diagnosis and treatment of DR TB in Children.

Dr. Prashant Rijal Assistant Professor Pediatric Pulmonologist, Nepal Medical College and Teaching Hospital, Kathmandu thanked SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre for organizing this important workshop. He appreciated the efforts of the Centre towards pediatric TB and also urged the Centre to develop child TB management and prevention as a shared responsibility under National health infrastructure.

All participants divided into 4 groups for required workout on documents. They discussed, exercised and read the Guidelines and Manual in depth. Brainstorming discussions were held during the two days group discussion. The Guidelines and Manual reviewed/ revised as per the need.

At the end of the workshop, participants were awarded by certificates and resource persons honored by Certificate of Appreciation.



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## Brief News

### 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference of South East Asia Region (SEAR) of The UNION, 26<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> May 2016, Kathmandu, Nepal



The 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference of South East Asia Region (SEAR) of The UNION was organized from 26<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> May 2016 in Kathmandu, Nepal.

People from the South-east Asia Region and abroad participated in the conference. The theme of the conference was “TB and Lung Health”, which reflects that TB; to a great extent is a lung disease.

SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre supported for organizing the conference by providing different services, such as participating in the preparatory meetings held many times, active participation in the conference & workshop during the conference, chairing and co-chairing of the technical sessions,

keeping good coordination with the participant who presents papers in the sessions. Mr. P. Bhandari, Computer Technician, STAC provided IT support during the conference.

Dr. S. C. Verma, Director, STAC chaired “Free Paper Presentation Session VIII on Tuberculosis,

“Symposium on Tobacco Control in the SAARC Countries Where are We for Achieving WHO FCTC Recommendations” and “Symposium on Tobacco Cessation into Regular TB services from TB patients in Low income countries”

Dr. Ajith Weerakoon, Epidemiologist, STAC co-chaired

the Symposium, Oral presentation on Adult & Child Health related to TB epidemiology. He also presented papers on “Constraint of Involvement of General Practitioners in the National TB Control Programme in Sri Lanka” in plenary sessions.

Mr. K. B. Karki, Training Officer and Mr. Sanjeev Kumar Jha, Statistician from STAC participated in the conference.

In the workshop ‘The Ethics of Health Research’ organized by The Union’s Ethics Advisory Group (EAG) during the conference was participated by Mr. K. B. Basnet, Administrative Officer and Ms. Meena Kumari Dhakal, Sr. PA from STAC.

## Participation in PPM Workshop, NTP Nepal

Dr. S. C. Verma, Director, STAC participated in the Public-Private Mix (PPM) workshop in TB Control organized by NTP Nepal in different parts of Central Region of Nepal from 5 to 8 July 2016. The objective of the workshop was to provide TB orientation to Medical Officer from government as well as private hospitals, Medical Colleges, Nursing Homes etc. One of the major functions of STAC is to support Member States in strengthening/ updating the knowledge and skills of existing manpower working in control of TB and HIV/AIDS upon the request of Member States. Dr. Verma contributed in the workshop as a TB expert and main Resource Person. The workshop was conducted at Birgunj, Janakpur and Chitawan from 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> July 2016.



*Dr. S. C. Verma, Director, STAC briefed about National TB Control Programme of Nepal at PPM Workshop organized by NTP Nepal*

## Audit of Accounts of STAC for the year 2015

A joint audit team (JAT 15) for the year 2015 comprising auditors Mr. Kamal Prasad Silwal, Director, Office of the Auditor General of Nepal, Kathmandu, Nepal and Mr. Muhammad Ajmal Gondal, Director General, Office of the Auditor General of Pakistan, Islamabad, Pakistan carried out the audit of the accounts and operations on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2016 of the SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, Kathmandu, Nepal for the period of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015.

## Regional Workshop on Introduction of New Drugs & Regimens for DR-TB treatment in SEAR, New Delhi, India, 18-19 August, 2016

Dr. S. C. Verma, Director, STAC participated in the above mentioned workshop organized by The Union East Asia (USEA) in collaboration with KNVC, Challenge TB, and with support from CDC and USAID in New Delhi, India from 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> August 2016. The objectives of the workshop were to provide updates on current WHO policies related to new drugs and regimens for DR TB and mechanisms to access these drugs; to discuss preparatory activities for the introduction of new drugs and regimens under programmatic conditions and to



*Participants from SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, Nepal, NTP Managers from SEAR, DR-TB focal points, CDC, India, USAID, Washington DC, USA, India, Bangladesh; KNCV TB Foundation, The Union, WHO, Challenge TB projects, IRD, Damien Foundation- Bangladesh, HERD-Nepal, JANTRA-Nepal, FIND- India, PATH- India*

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share experiences of countries and partner organizations who have introduced new regimens for the treatment of DR TB cases.

The recent WHO recommendations on the use of shorter treatment regimens and Second Line Drug Susceptibility Testing (SL DST) are expected to radically change the management

of DR TB. Several countries in the South-East Asia with high burden of DR TB stand to benefit from these new recommendations. However, it will be critical that the countries take necessary steps to adopt and implement them quickly. This workshop brought together the National TB Programme (NTP) managers,

NTP focal persons for DR TB, TB partners and experts; and provided an opportunity to provide updates to ensure strengthening of capacity to rapidly introduce shorter regimens and new drugs for the treatment of DR TB with a focus on the **Bedaquiline** and **Delamanid** containing regimens and 9 month shorter treatment regimen.

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## News from Member States



### Afghanistan:

#### HACCA Meeting September 5, 2016

HIV and AIDS Coordination Committee of Afghanistan (HACCA) meeting was held on September 5, 2016, at Dr. Sohaila Sediq Conference Hall. A total of 43 individuals from many relevant agencies including the line ministries, donors, UN agencies, civil societies, and implementing partner NGOs participated at the meeting. Following the recitation of verses from the Holy Quran, His Excellency Dr. Ahmad Jan Naeem, Deputy Minister for Technical

Affairs, Ministry of Public Health welcomed the participants to the meeting and admired for well follow-up of last meeting's agreed points by HACCA secretariat and the joint efforts by HACCA members, since the HIV and AIDS issues need for a multi-sectorial efforts and need to be discussed in each HACCA meeting.

In last HACCA meeting, NACP presented the updated HIV information to the participants, especially the final and last HIV data, which indicated about 50% HIV prevalence in general population. Due to the existing stigma and discrimination most of

the people do not report reliable and accurate information (related to the rout of HIV transmission), therefore, NACP re-analyzed the received data, in which the HIV prevalence is 47% in Key affect population, 11 % in vulnerable population and 42% in General population, as well as in the recent provincial cross sectional survey in Nangarhar and Mazar-e-Sharif by GCMU/MOPH, adapted and used the WHO STEP-wise tool to determine the level of risk factor for non communicable diseases, which all samples were tested for HIV and none of them were positive.



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## NACP Program Review Workshop Conducted

The NACP Program Review Workshop was held on August 21-22, 2016 at Dr. Sohaila Sediqe conference hall, Ministry of Public Health. Around 30 participants from HIV projects partner NGOs, National AIDS Control Program, and the MoPH attended the workshop. The objectives of which were to:

- Review NACP progress and achievements.
- Discuss the existing challenges and find the appropriate solutions to overcoming those issues.
- Improve the quality of HIV and AIDS services.

Dr. Samaruddin Samar Zazai, Harm Reduction Consultant, officially opened the workshop, and declared that the objective of the MoPH is to provide quality HIV and AIDS preventative services in the country, he said, “program quarterly workshop is a golden chance for information sharing and learning opportunity among implementing partners in different provinces of Afghanistan.

The program implementing partner’s presented HIV and AIDS prevention projects progress, especially of last quarter achievements towards indicators, Lesson learned / innovation, Challenges and recommendations.

During the workshop, it was realized that some actions agreed points of last quarter workshop did not accomplish by the IPs, therefore it was decided, that all agreed points of the workshop must be fulfilled and should be followed. The program quarterly review workshop wrapped up by closing and thankful remark of Dr. Muhammad Younas Bargami technical Coordinator NACP of MoPH and meanwhile he emphasized on improvement of quality of services. NACP team wrap-up the workshop and acknowledged all the partners for their active participation and summarized the important topics discussed at the workshop and way forward.

*(Source: Report received from Afghanistan)*

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## Visit of an Official Team from Bhutan

A team from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan visited STAC office on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2016. The team observed functioning of the Centre and available infrastructure and progress made by the Centre. The team members, Ms. Yangchen Lhamo and Tshewing Pelden gave their remarks. STAC always welcome people of SAARC Member States to observe the Centre.



*Director, STAC discussing with the team members in his chamber at STAC*

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