



SAARC TUBERCULOSIS AND HIV/AIDS CENTRE

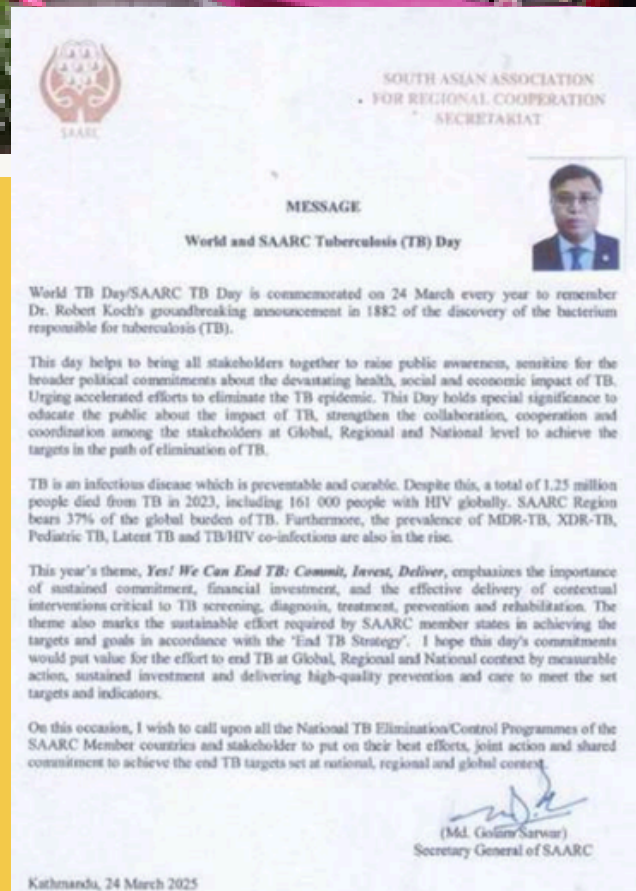
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Editorial

The first half of 2025 represented a significant milestone for the SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC), reinforcing its role as the regional organization dedicated to combating tuberculosis (TB) and HIV/AIDS across the SAARC Member States. By enhancing partnerships, adopting digital innovation, and maintaining a strong focus on regional and global health priorities, STAC greatly amplified its impact on the public health landscape.

One of STAC's most visible contributions during this time was its leadership in advocacy and public awareness. This was especially noticeable during World TB Day and SAARC TB Day on March 24, 2025. STAC coordinated high-impact campaigns and educational initiatives. These efforts revitalized regional commitment toward ending TB by 2030, with an ambitious target of achieving this goal regionally by 2027.

Digital transformation emerged as a milestone in STAC's development. A highlight of this progress was the transformation of the STAC Library into an interactive and dynamic digital resource hub. Moving beyond its traditional physical format, the Library now enables broader and more efficient access to health information for professionals and stakeholders throughout the region. The virtual meeting with the SAARC Secretariat Library in January 2025 served as a meaningful step in fostering digital collaboration.

Simultaneously, STAC placed strong emphasis on preparing the next generation of public health professionals. Its regional internship program for SAARC youth became a key platform for nurturing future leaders in TB and HIV/AIDS control. Through hands-on experience, expert engagement, and exposure to real-world health challenges, interns developed a greater sense of collaboration, innovation, and commitment to public service.

In line with its commitment to bridging research, policy, and practice, STAC welcomed new experts into its core team during this period. This strategic recruitment enhanced the Centre's capacity to implement proactive, evidence-based strategies and interventions in TB and HIV/AIDS prevention and control. By integrating experienced professionals into its operations, STAC continues to elevate the standard of public health response in the region.

STAC demonstrates a commitment to a multi-sectoral approach that blends regional leadership, digital knowledge sharing, youth empowerment, and collaborative research. Together, these actions reinforce the Centre's role as a hub of innovation, technical coordination, and capacity-building across South Asia.

Looking forward, STAC is dedicated to advancing innovation, enhancing partnerships, and further digital transformation initiatives. Achieving the goal of eliminating TB and HIV/AIDS in the SAARC region will require Continuous commitment and unified efforts from all Member States and stakeholders.

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World TB Day and SAARC TB Day-2025

TB Epidemiology:

Tuberculosis is one of the leading causes of death globally. It is estimated that 10.8 million people develop TB diseases in 2023, among which 8.4 million were identified. The estimated death due to TB is 1.25 million and the treatment success rate is 88% (2022 cohort). Around 0.4 million people fell ill with Drug-Resistant TB. The disease is one of the major public health problems in the SAARC Member States. Out of 30 high TB diseases burden countries in the world, Bangladesh, India and Pakistan are in the SAARC region and Nepal accompanies as the fourth country in the region for high MDR TB burden. The control of TB in the SAARC region is progressing, however, there are many obstacle and challenges for MDR-TB, XDR-TB, PTB, Latent TB and TB/HIV co-infections etc. to address.

World TB Day and SAARC TB Day:

Dr. Robert Koch announced his discovery of Mycobacterium Tuberculosis as causative bacteria to cause Tuberculosis on 24th March, 1882 which opened the way towards diagnosing and curing this deadly disease for his contribution in identifying TB Bacilli, he was given Noble Prize in Physiology or Medicine in 1905. The World TB Day is a day to educate the public and raising awareness about the impact of TB in global, regional and national level. It also brings all the stakeholders together to fight against this deadly disease.

SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) has been commemorating the World TB Day and SAARC TB Day every year by organizing different level of advocacy and awareness activities. It also participated in the programme organized by National TB Control Centre, Government of Nepal. The Centre has commemorated the World TB Day and SAARC TB Day-2025 by conducting non-budgetary works due to budget constraints:

- i. Message for World TB Day and SAARC TB Day from H.E. The Secretary-General of SAARC
- I. Organized an event at STAC by inviting Representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National TB Control Centre, Govt. of Nepal and SAARC Secretariat
- II. Participated in the host Institution of National TB Control Centre's activities, Govt. of Nepal.
- III. Displayed the awareness information on Tuberculosis in flex banner

MESSAGE BY H.E. THE SECRETARY- GENERAL of SAARC

His Excellency Mr. Md. Golam Sarwar, the Secretary General, SAARC issued a Message on the occasion of World TB Day and SAARC TB Day 2025, which was circulated to all the Member States.



An event was organized in STAC premises to commemorate World TB Day and SAARC TB Day 2025 by inviting dignitaries from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National TB Control Centre, Govt. of Nepal and SAARC Secretariat

The programme was held on 24th March 2025 at STAC hall II with the invited dignitaries. The agenda of the programme is places at Annex- I.

Dr. Anuj Bhattachan, Director, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) delivered his welcome remarks by extending a warm welcome to all the invitees and dignitaries with Khada and Flower Buke. He thanked to the dignitaries from Ministry of Foreign Affairs, SAARC Secretariat and National TB Control Centre for the participation in the event. He read out the message issued by His Excellency Mr. Md. Golam Sarwar, the Secretary General of SAARC on behalf of the Secretary General. He highlighted the importance of the commemoration of World TB Day and SAARC TB Day 2025. He reiterated the theme of World TB Day “Yes! We Can End TB: Commit, Invest, Deliver” (हो ! हामी क्षयरोग अन्त्य गर्न सक्छौं । लगानीको प्रतिबद्धता र सेवा प्रवाहको सुनिश्चितता आजको आवश्यकता)”. He emphasized that TB is a serious threat in the SAARC Region and to reach the global target to End TB by 2030 and the Regional target of SAARC by 2027, all the SAARC member countries must work together for TB free region with zero deaths, disease and suffering due to TB and to achieve the decline in burden of TB, morbidity and mortality while working towards the elimination of TB by 2027. The presentation is placed at Annex-II.



Dr. Prajjwal Pyakurel, Research Officer, STAC, delivered his presentation on the Epidemiological Profile of TB in SAARC Member States. He highlighted the Global and SAARC Regional TB Commitments, Strategy and Targets. He also informed the situation of global TB vs. SAARC Region TB burden. The presentation is placed at Annex-III.

The SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre published an Annual Report of Epidemiological Response on TB-2024, Chief Guest, Mr. Dawa Tshering, Director (Environment Natural Disasters And Biotechnology), SAARC Secretariat released the 22nd issue of the report.

Mr. Narayan Prasad Wagle, Under Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Govt. of Nepal delivered his remarks. He highlighted the importance of SAARC in the Regional context. He assured for any kind of support needed from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the control of TB and HIV/AIDS activities, Revision of SAARC Regional Strategies and functionalized the SAARC Supranational Reference Laboratory for TB and HIV/AIDS. He wished for the successful achievement of the Centre endeavors.

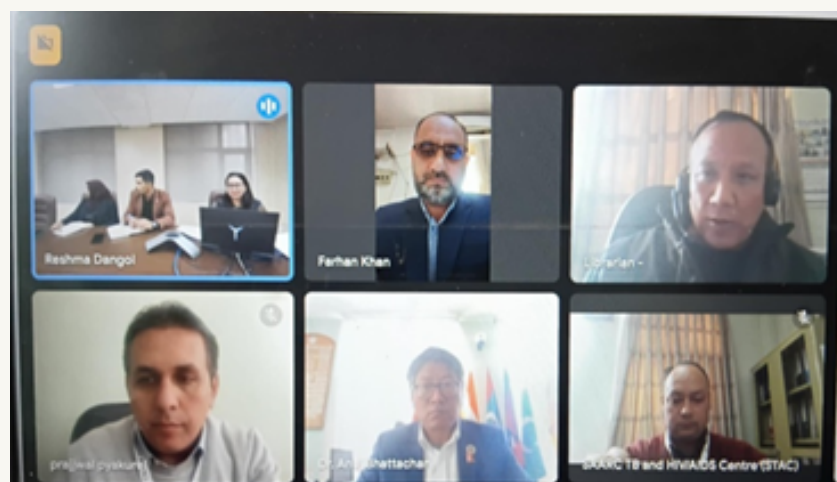
Dr. Shree Ram Tiwari, Director, NTCC gave his remarks in the event. He highlighted the National TB Control Centre commemorated World TB Day 2025 and in all the places of the country. He also informed that the NTCC has initiated TB free Palika in 149 local municipalities (Ward/rural) of the country. The NTP aims to reduce transmission of the diseases and increase TB case finding from hard to reach area in coming days. He informed about the adverse effects of tuberculosis and how a small effort from a community level can help to find and treat TB patients.



Chief Guest, Mr. Dawa Tshering, Director (Environment Natural Disasters and Biotechnology), SAARC Secretariat delivered his closing remarks. He expressed his happiness that he was able to visit the SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre of its establishment of 30 years. He conveyed congratulation to the SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre for this important initiative. He also informed that more than quarter of the World population resides in the SAARC hence, it is very important role played in line with the theme to target TB Preventive activities in the region. He assured for full support of the SAARC Secretariat office to achieve the target to eliminate TB from the region. He also appreciated the concept of reimagine the role of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre.

The programme concluded by group photo and followed by snacks. The dignitaries visited the SAARC Supranational Reference Laboratory for TB and HIV/AIDS and a Library of STAC as an observational visit.

Dissemination of the STAC Library Resources to the Users using the Digital Platform (Virtual) 17th January 2025



STAC library was established with the objectives for collection, management and dissemination of documents and resources on TB and HIV/AIDS. The library also has the archives of documents such as Strategies, Guidelines, Epidemiological updates, Journals, Bulletins, Training Modules and Research manuscripts on TB and HIV/AIDS published by the Centre. It also has a collection of medical books and international journals especially on TB and HIV/AIDS. It is open to the all professionals, research specialist, NGOs /INGOs, students and general public seeking information on TB & HIV/AIDS.

With the rapid growth of information and its dimensions, it has been necessary to maintain the digitally published documents. Libraries' has its own challenges while maintaining these electronic recourses. Hence, it is necessary to use library software for the proper management and dissemination of these digital resources. STAC library is using PMB software to maintain the digital resources for the quick retrieval of the information to its users. Users can login STAC/library/http://www.saarctb-library.org/catalog/opac_css for accessing to the digital resources. For the wider visualization of the library, it was felt to advocate and create a platform with libraries having similar objectives to share the resources among themselves.

In this regard, a virtual meeting was organized on 17th January 2025 between SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) Library and SAARC Secretariat Library.

I. Objectives:

- To share information on the digital resources
- To disseminate STAC library resources using the digital platform
- To share/exchange digital resources between the Secretariat library and STAC library

II. Meeting Report:

The meeting was attended by Dr. Anuj Bhattachan, Director, Dr. Prajjwal Pyakurel, Research Officer, Mr. Deependra Subba, Librarian and Mr. Yogendra Mahata, OAO/CT from STAC. And Ms. Iroshah Coorey, Director (Admin/ESC)), Mr. Faran Khan, Desk Officer (SA), Ms. Hawwa Mishiya. IT Officer, Ms. Reeshma Dongol, Librarian and Mr.Vishwabandhu Adhikari, IT Assistant from the SAARC Secretariat.

Mr. Deependra Subba, Librarian STAC, welcomed the participants to the virtual meeting. He made his presentation by introducing the STAC library and the resources available in the library. He informed about the services provided by the library to its users. He also briefed about the physical documents and the digital resources available in the library. He described about the online catalogue access provided on the physical holdings and the digital resources available in the digital platform of the STAC library. He also informed about the digital resources such STAC journal and audio visual materials on TB and HIV/AIDS available in the digital platform. He informed about the various STAC publications achieved in the library and how to access the digital resources available by login into the link address from the STAC homepage.

Ms. Reshma Dongol, Librarian, SAARC Secretariat, introduced the Secretariat library in her presentation. She briefly introduced the SAARC Secretariat and its activities. She informed about the facilities available in the digital library in the Secretariat's library. She highlighted on the importance of the resources and how the library has maintained its resources and haw it provide services to the user using the digital resources. Further she described about the activities carried out by SAARC Secretariat library by conducting the school educational visit program, organized workshop for librarians in secretariat library and visit of the delegates in the library. She also informed that the Secretariat library had developed its own software for maintaining the digital resources of the library. She gave a demonstration on how to access the digital resources of the library from the Secretariats' homepage.

Ms. Irosha Coorey, Director (Admin), SAARC Secretariat congratulated the Director STAC and the STAC library for organizing the meeting. She emphasized the importance of sharing the resources among the stakeholders by using digital platform. She also informed about some resources already being shared between the Secretariat library and STAC library by using the links provided in the official websites. She highlighted on the collaboration among the different stakeholders on sharing of digital resources in the regional level and work on possible mechanism on how to share resources among all the concerned. She also gave some important suggestions during the meeting as following;

- Prepare necessary guidelines/SOP in sharing of the digital resources and to be clear on what documents/resources to be shared among the users.
 - Work on the technical and other facilities that should be considered while sharing resources
 - Create awareness and visibility among the users by organizing awareness program to the potential users such as school children and make them aware of SAARC
 - Develop proposal/plan for internship for wider involvement to the users focusing on health related activities
 - Prepare and plan for virtual meeting with stakeholder thus keeping all in the loop for sharing of resources
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- She gave direction to take necessary approval for the documents and resources from the concerned authorities before sharing it to the users.
 - Dr. Anuj Bhattachan, Director, STAC extended a warm welcome to Ms. Irosha Coorey, Director (Admin), and to all the participants from the SAARC Secretariat attending the meeting. He thanked the Secretariat for giving their time and support. He highlighted on the importance of the library stating that it was the center of information collection, scientific management and dissemination and should be developed into a resource Centre for sharing digital resources. Since, STAC had published so much information on TB and HIV/AIDS in the past year, it was important to maintain the digital resources of this information. He also emphasized on the sharing these information to the wider user using the digital platform. He thanked the Director and the participants from the SAARC Secretariat for giving valuable suggestions and advice in the meeting.

SAARC Interns visit to SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) 26 May 2025



A team of SAARC Interns visited SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) on 26 May 2025. The team was led by Ms. Shahiya Ali Manik, Director, Social Affairs and Mr. Gaurav Nagar, Desk Officer, IPA from the SAARC Secretariat. Dr. Anuj Bhattachan, Director, Dr. Prajjwal Pyakurel, Research Officer and Mr. Deependra Subba, Librarian from STAC welcomed the visiting team.

Twenty students representing different universities of India who were doing their internship at the SAARC Secretariat visited the Centre. This was the first visit made by the SAARC Interns to SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC). An interaction program was conducted with the visiting SAARC Interns in the STAC Hall I.

The interaction program commenced with self-introduction from the delegates and the participants. Dr. Prajjwal Pyakurel, Research Officer, STAC inducted the program by welcoming the Director (SA), Desk Officer and the visiting SAARC Interns. He expressed that such type of visit would help to recognize the Centre at the regional level within the SAARC Member States.

Dr. P. Pyakurel made a presentation on the introduction of STAC as a Regional Centre. He highlighted on the brief history of the Centre, its vision, mission, goals and objectives. He also provided information on the functions and various activities carried by the Centre. He informed about the regional strategies on TB and HIV/AIDS developed by the Centre. He also informed about the SAARC journal of TB and HIV/AIDS published from the Centre. During his presentation, epidemiological data on TB and HIV/AIDS of the SAARC Member States was also shared with the participants. He also mentioned about the research activities carried by the Centre at the SAARC regional level.

The SAARC Interns took keen interest in the presentation. After the completion of it, the floor was opened for discussion and queries by the interns. During this session, the interns put forward queries on how students' contribution at SAARC level could help to overcome the challenges made by these diseases (TB and HIV/AIDS). They also enquired about the AI technologies that may have been used in the treatment of these diseases. The discussion also focused on the pediatric tuberculosis and its challenges in available treatment facilities. The stigma, discrimination and the cultural value in perspective of HIV/AIDS and its challenges faced in the society was also the focus of the discussion. The Director (SA), Director (STAC) and the Research Officer (STAC) facilitated the discussion and answered the queries made by them.

The interaction program concluded with a thank you note from Ms. Shahiya Ali Manik, Director, (SA). She thanked the team of STAC for facilitating the interaction program. She informed that it was the first program of its kind and such program would be able to bring wider understanding about the SAARC Secretariat and SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS (STAC) to the people of this region.

At the end of the program, the interns made an observation of the physical facilities, the supra reference laboratory, library and the administrative section of the Centre.

Joining of New Professional Staff- Epidemiologist at STAC

Mr. Bihari Sharan Kuikel was appointed as the Epidemiologist of the SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Center (STAC) on 1st July 2025. He is a public health professional and researcher from Nepal, with expertise in epidemiology, health care management, and health systems strengthening. Mr. Kuikel holds a Master of Science in Public Health (Epidemiology) from Kathmandu University, a Master of Health Care Management, and a Post Graduate Diploma in Health Care Management from Pokhara University.

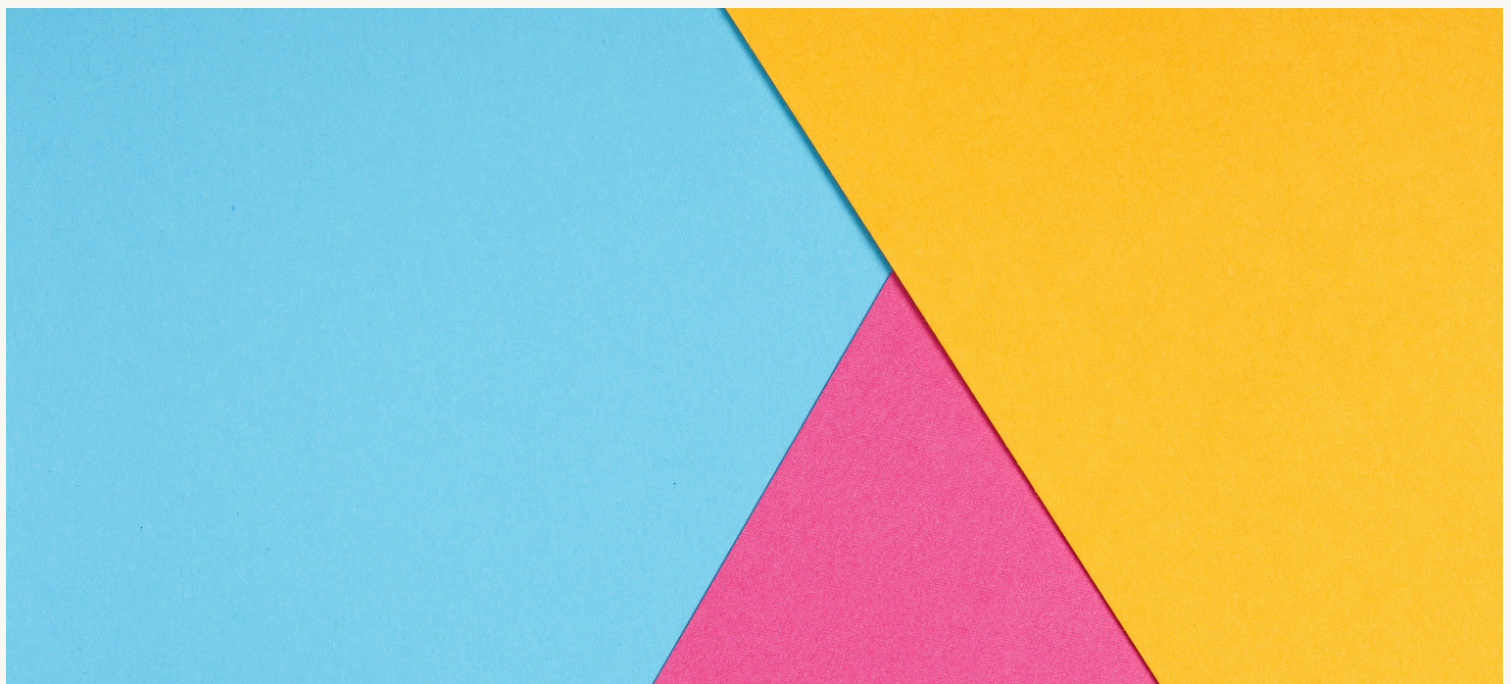


Throughout his career, Mr. Kuikel has contributed to several peer-reviewed publications on subjects including childhood development, antiretroviral therapy, mental health among workers, and critical analysis of Nepal's health system. Mr. Kuikel's professional experience spans roles in research, academic mentorship, and public health program management, reflecting his commitment to advancing public health outcomes in Nepal and the broader South Asian region.

Joining of GSS Staff at STAC



Ms. Shreya Shrestha, joined SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) family as an Administrative Officer (GSS –I) on 1 July 2025 and Mr. Binod Bhandari joined SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) family as an Accountant (GSS-II) on 16 June 2025. The Centre welcomed them and wished to do their best in their respective field for the betterment of the Centre.



National Tuberculosis Program Annual Review Workshop

The National Tuberculosis Program (NTP) Annual Review Workshop was held at the Airport Hotel on 1-2 July 2025. The event brought together key stakeholders, program leaders, and representatives from various organizations to review progress, discuss challenges, and strategize for the future of tuberculosis control in Nepal.

On 01 July 2025, Mr. Bihari Sharan Kuikel (Epidemiologist) represented STAC at the opening session.

Dr. Shree Ram Tiwari (Director, NTCC) chaired the opening session, providing an overview of the workshop's objectives and setting the tone for collaborative discussions.



Participants reviewed the achievements and challenges of the past year, focusing on case detection, treatment outcomes, and programmatic innovations.

Discussions centered on identifying gaps, setting priorities for the coming year, and aligning efforts with national health policies.

The Annual Review Workshop served as a vital platform for reflection and strategic planning for the upcoming year's tuberculosis control efforts.

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