



SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre
Kathmandu, Nepal



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

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Annual Report 2020

SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC)

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Preface

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) comprises Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Guided by the commitment of the people of South Asia to work collectively in a spirit of friendship, trust, and mutual understanding, the SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) was established in 1992. The Centre operates with the mission of making the region free from TB and HIV/AIDS.

STAC has been conducting a wide range of activities to support the national programmes of the Member States, including meetings, research initiatives, seminars, trainings, and workshops. The Centre successfully implemented almost all its planned activities for the year **2020**. During this period, STAC organized meetings with Programme Managers of NTPs and NACPs of the Member States, carried out research, awareness, and advocacy activities, and disseminated information through its journals, epidemiological reports, and official website. Additionally, STAC developed the SAARC Regional Training Manual on Pediatric Tuberculosis.

The Annual Report of the SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) presents detailed information on the programme activities and achievements for the year **2020**. It also provides an overview of the Centre's introduction, goals, objectives, vision, mission, and key accomplishments.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the managers of the national TB and HIV/AIDS programmes of the SAARC Member States for their cooperation and support in organizing various activities. My heartfelt thanks also go to the dignitaries of the Ministries of Foreign/External Affairs of the Member States, His Excellency the Secretary General of SAARC, and the esteemed Members of the Governing Board of STAC. I further extend my appreciation to the Director, Social Affairs Division, SAARC Secretariat, for their continued support and guidance in the implementation of the Centre's programmes.

We remain committed to supporting the SAARC Member States in their mission to eliminate TB and HIV/AIDS. The Centre welcomes suggestions, guidance, and feedback on our activities so that we can continue to improve and serve more effectively in the days ahead.

Dr. Bibek Kumar Lal
Director, STAC

Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge Dr. Anuj Bhattchan, Director (STAC), Dr. Bibek Kumar Lal Former Director (STAC), Dr. Rabeya Sultana, Deputy Director (STAC) for their contribution in bringing out this document.

We also acknowledge Mrs. Meena Kumari Dhakal and Mr. Yogendra Bahadur Mahata, Mr. Deependra Subba, for their sincere handwork in the preparation of this document.

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is a manifestation of the determination of the people of South Asia to work together towards finding solutions to their common problem in a spirit of friendship, trust and understanding. The SAARC comprises of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and SriLanka. The main objectives of the association is to accelerate the process of economic and social development in Member States through joint action in the agreed areas of cooperation. SAARC is supported by different regional Centres established in Member States to promote regional cooperation. The Heads of States or Government of Member States of SAARC at their 5th Summit held in Male on 22-23 November 1990 decided to establish SAARC Tuberculosis Centre in Nepal.

SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC)



Office Building of STAC, Thimi, Bhaktapur

The Centre was established in 1992 as SAARC Tuberculosis Centre (STC) and started functioning from 1994. The Centre had been supporting the National Tuberculosis Control Programmes of the SAARC Member States. The Thirty-first session of Standing Committee of SAARC held in Dhaka on November 9 – 10th 2005, appreciating the efforts of the centre on TB/HIV co-infection and other works related to HIV/AIDS discipline and approved the renaming of the Centre as SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) with additional mandate to support SAARC Member States for prevention of HIV/AIDS. Since then with its efforts and effective networking in the Member States the Centre is contributing significantly for control of both TB and HIV/AIDS.

Vision

SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) plays the role as a leading institute to support and guide SAARC Member States to make the region free of TB and HIV/AIDS.

Mission

To Support the efforts of National TB and HIV/AIDS Programmes through evidence-based policy guidance, coordination and technical support.

Goal

To bring to an end the morbidity and mortality due to TB and HIV/AIDS in the region and end the transmission of both infections until TB and HIV/AIDS cease to be public health problems in the SAARC Region.

Objective

To eliminate TB and end HIV/AIDS epidemic in the region by coordinating the efforts of the National TB Programmes and National HIV/AIDS Programmes of the SAARC Member States.

Functions

- To act as a Regional Co-ordination Centre for NTPs and NACPs in the Region.
- To promote and coordinate action for the prevention of TB/HIV co-infection in the Region.
- To collect, collate, analyze and disseminate all relevant information regarding the latest development and findings in the field of TB and HIV/AIDS in the Region and elsewhere.
- To establish a networking arrangement among the NTPs and NACPs of Member States and to conduct surveys, researches etc.
- To initiate, undertake and coordinate the Research and Training in Technical Bio-medical, operational and other aspects related to control of Tuberculosis and prevention of HIV/AIDS in the Region.
- To monitor epidemiological trends of TB, HIV/AIDS and MDR-TB in the Region.
- To assist Member States for harmonization of policies and strategies on TB, HIV/AIDS and TB/HIV co-infection.
- To assist National TB Reference Laboratories in the Region in quality assurance of sputum microscopy and standardization of culture and drug sensitivity testing and implementation of bio-safety measures.
- To carry-out other important works identified by the Programming Committees/Governing Board.

Twenty-ninth meeting of the Governing Board of STAC

Twenty-ninth meeting of the Governing Board of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) was organized from 20-21st November 2019, Kathmandu, Nepal. The Board reviewed the activities carried out by the Centre in 2019 and recommended the Programmes and Budget of the Centre for the year 2020.

Recommended Programmes of the Centre for the year 2020

1. The SAARC Meeting of Programme Manager of National TB and HIV/AIDS Control Programmes
2. Sharing/learning of Best Practices on TB in the SAARC Member States by Experts/Officials of National Programmes Through the Observation Visits
3. Sharing of Best Practices on HIV/AIDS in the SAARC Member States by Experts/Officials of National Programmes Through the Observation Visits
4. SAARC Regional Meeting to develop appropriate mechanism for Regional Drugs/Logistic (TB and HIV/AIDS) procurement
5. SAARC Parliamentarian's meeting on TB and HIV/AIDS
6. The SAARC Regional 5th Meeting of Heads/Chief of Identified National TB and HIV/AIDS Laboratories.
7. SAARC Regional ToT on Latent TB Infection.
8. SAARC Regional Training on Operational Research on Methods and Data Analysis in TB and HIV/AIDS
9. SAARC Seminar to develop/finalization of SOP on Cross Border/Migrant Health issues on TB and HIV/AIDS
10. Meeting of Assessment of Cross Border situation on TB and HIV/AIDS
Afghanistan and Pakistan
11. Meeting of Assessment of Cross Border Situation on TB and HIV/AIDS
India & Nepal
12. Meeting for Assessment of Cross Border Situation on TB and HIV/AIDS Bhutan and India

Research

13. Bacterial risk factors responsible for unfavorable treatment outcome in Multi Drug Resistant Tuberculosis infected patients, Bangladesh-carry forward from 2019
14. Estimating tuberculosis cases and their additional economic costs incurred by TB Patients and their Families for TB Diagnosis and Treatment- A multi centric study (3 countries) Bhutan, Nepal and Sri Lanka
15. Operational Research on Evaluation and Effectiveness of oral/newer drugs of shorter Regime of MDR-TB Treatment in Bangladesh
16. HIV and STI Sero-Prevalence Survey and risk factor analysis among Prisoners in Nepal
17. Assessment of compliance of shorter Regimen of MDR -TB Treatment in Bhutan
18. Piloting of active case finding in most risk populated district of Nepal to trace missing TB cases (Two Districts) and development of guidelines.

Regular Activities

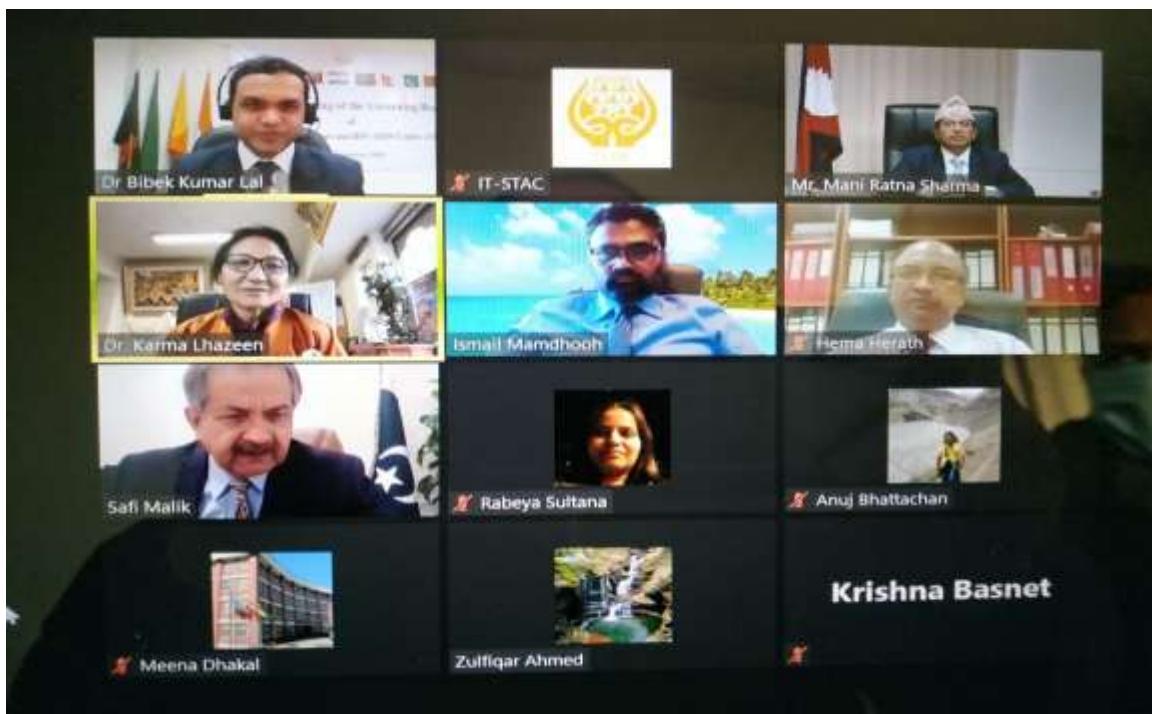
19. World TB Day, World AIDS Day and SAARC Charter Day
20. Regular Works/Activities in SAARC Supra-National Reference Laboratory for TB and HIV/AIDS

21. SAARC regional Consultation/Workshop/Conferencing on TB and HIV/AIDS (through Video Conferencing methods) -(migrant health issue and TB/HIV co-infection issue)
22. Participation and presentation of scientific papers in International Conferences on TB-Tobacco, HIV/AIDS and STI by STAC
23. Participation/presentation of scientific papers in the SAARC Regional Conferences/workshops/meetings/consultations in the Member States Director/Professional/GSS
24. Participation in the Review of activities NTPs and ACPs/Communicable diseases in the SAARC Member States by Director/professional STAC
25. Participation in Meeting of collaborating Institutions for Strengthening of Networking WHO/UNAIDS/UNFPA & other collaborating institutes.
26. Review of Articles of SAARC Journals of TB, Lung Diseases and HIV/AIDS
27. Skill enhancement of GSS in Trainings/Workshops/Conferences etc.
28. Procurement of Laboratory consumables
29. Meeting/consultation with the editors of the medical journals published in the valley to enhance SAARC journal of Tuberculosis, Lung Disease and HIV/AIDS
30. Publications
 - STAC Journal of Tuberculosis Lung Disease and HIV/AIDS
 - SAARC Curriculum of different level Training on TB and HIV/AIDS in the SAARC Region
 - SAARC Guideline and SOPs for Health Response on natural and epidemic Disasters in SAARC Member States
 - Printing of Wall Calendar 2021
 - SAARC Epidemiological Report on Tuberculosis & TB/HIV Co-infection 2019
 - SAARC Epidemiological Report on HIV/AIDS 2019
 - STAC E-Newsletters
 - Strengthening of STAC Library
 - Establishment of Digital/Record Archives in STAC (Internal)
31. Strengthening of STAC Library
32. Establishment of Digital/Record Archives in STAC (Internal)

Activities under External Funding

- SAARC Regional Meeting to Develop and Finalize the Protocol for Tuberculosis Patient Cost Survey Study
- SAARC Regional Meeting for Mapping and Identifying to designate the referral sites across the borders in Member States.
- SAARC Regional Training of the Trainers on HIV and Social Protection

Thirtieth Meeting of the Governing Board of STAC



Thirtieth Meeting of the Governing Board of STAC 12 November 2020

Thirtieth Meeting of the Governing Board of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) was held virtually on 12 November 2020 in Kathmandu, Nepal. The Governing Board Members, Dr. Karma Lhazeen, Chairperson Governing Board, Director of the Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health, Government of Bhutan, Dr. Mohammad Khaled Seddiq, In Charge of National Control Programme of Tuberculosis, Prof. Dr. Shamiul Islam, Director MBDC & Line Director, Bangladesh, Dr. Anuj Bhattachan, Director, National TB Centre, National Tuberculosis Centre, Thimi, Dr. Sudha Devkota, Director, National Center for AIDS and STD Control, Kathmandu, Dr. Malik Muhammad Safi, Director General, Ministry of National Health Services Regulation and Coordination, Pakistan, Dr. H.D. Herath, Director, National Programme for Tuberculosis and Chest Disease, Sri Lanka, Dr. Rasanjali Hettiarachchi, Director, National STD/AIDS Control Programme, Sri Lanka and Mr. Mani Ratna Sharma, Under Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal, Mr. Ismail Mamdhoo, Director (representative of SAARC Secretary General), SAARC Secretariat and Dr. Bibek Kumar Lal, Director, SAAC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (Member Secretary) participated in the virtual meeting.

The Board reviewed the activities carried out by the Centre in 2020 and recommended the programmes & budget for 2021, which are as follows:

Recommended Programmes of the Centre for the year 2021

1. Meeting to develop collaboration mechanism on cross boarder for TB and HIV/AIDS patients to ensure their treatment. (Afghanistan and Pakistan)
2. Meeting to develop collaboration mechanism on cross boarder for TB and HIV/AIDS patients to ensure their treatment. (Bangladesh and India)
3. Meeting to develop collaboration mechanism on cross boarder for TB and HIV/AIDS patients to ensure their treatment. (Bhutan and India)
4. Meeting to develop collaboration mechanism on cross boarder for TB and HIV/AIDS patients to ensure their treatment. (India and Nepal)
5. World TB Day- 2021 Advocacy programme/Joint function
6. SAARC Meeting to review the SAARC Regional Strategies on ACSM and Migrant Health and Cross border issues
7. SAARC Regional Meeting to develop/refine appropriate mechanism for Regional Drugs/Logistic (TB and HIV/AIDS) procurement
8. SAARC Training on occupational health and safety for health worker of Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS NTPs and NACPs.
9. SAARC Regional ToT on Latent TB Infection
10. SAARC Training on TB-Tobacco and COVID-19 association
11. SAARC Training on Risk Assessment for mass gatherings on pandemic/epidemic situation
12. SAARC Meeting for situation assessment to measure the impact of COVID-19 on National TB and HIV/AIDS Programmes strategic plans
13. SAARC Seminar to develop and finalization of SOP on Cross Border/Migrant Health issues on TB and HIV/AIDS
14. World AIDS Day-2021, Advocacy programme/Joint function
15. SAARC Charter Day- 2021

Research

- Study-Tracing the Possible Source of Multidrug Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR-TB) into Bhutan: A 2018-2020 Cohort Study- Bhutan
- The impact of the covid-19 pandemic on directly observed treatment short-course (DOTS) program for tuberculosis in Nepal
- Call for EoI from Member States for small scale research grants –one/two country

Regular Activities

16. Participation and presentation of scientific papers in International Conferences by STAC Union World Conference on Lung Health/Tobacco OR/and International AIDS Conference on HIV/AIDS, STI and/or Any other relevant conference
17. Participation/presentation of scientific papers in the SAARC regional conferences/workshops/meetings/ consultations in the Member States by the Director/professional/GSS
18. Participation in the Review of activities NTPs and NACPs in the SAARC Member States by STAC.
19. Participation in Meeting of collaborating Institutions for Strengthening of Networking WHO/UNAIDS/UNFPA & other collaborating institutes.
20. Review of Article for SAARC Journals of TB Lung Disease and HIV/AIDS.

21. Skill development of GSS by conducting Training/attending field related Trainings/Workshops/Conference
22. Regular works/activities in SAARC Supra-national Reference Laboratory for TB and HIV/AIDS and Procurement of Laboratory consumables
23. Regular Collection and compilation of data and information patients form joint SAARC/National Reference Laboratory at NTCC and analyze the data and information for situation assessment and recommendation.
24. Technical assistance support to the STAC/NTP/NACP by providing/hiring short term consultancy, utilizing the experts from the region without financial liability to respective programmes of member states/ mid-term review of SAARC regional strategies on TB and HIV/AIDS
25. Meetings/consultations to refine and finalize the technical documents/reports of STAC by involving the Kathmandu based experts from WHO/UNAIDS/IOM/others (Nepal)
26. The Meeting of Programme Managers/representatives of National TB and HIV/AIDS Programmes of SAARC Member States for discussion of pipelined activities and other issues
27. Purchasing/renewal of Journal TB, HIV/AIDS and software for Library, strengthening digital library
28. Publications
 - Preparation and Publication of STAC E-Newsletters- (E-publication and circulation)
 - Preparation and Publication of SAARC Epidemiological Report on Tuberculosis& TB/HIV Co-infection 2021 (E-publication and circulation)
 - Preparation and Publication of Annual Report- 2020 (E-publication and circulation)
 - Printing-STAC Journal of Tuberculosis Lung Disease and HIV/AIDS
 - Printing-SAARC Guideline and SOPs for Health Response on natural and epidemic Disasters in SAARC Member States/Other document.
 - Printing of Wall Calendar 2022/ promotional materials
 - Printing of other Publications/Technical Document/Reports

Activities carried out by the STAC in 2020

Commemoration of World TB Day 2020

1. Orientation Programme with the students of Fine Arts College, TU, Kritipur



Dr. Bibek Kumar Lal Director, STAC addressing the orientation programme



Students of Fine Arts College, (TU) Participating in the orientation programme

An orientation programme was organized on 11 March 2020 at the **Fine Arts College**, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, with the objective of introducing the concept of a painting competition based on the theme of World TB Day. The event also aimed to provide an overview of the global and regional situation of tuberculosis (TB) and the targets set for its elimination. The programme was held under the chairmanship of **Dr. Bibek Kumar Lal, Director of STAC**, who welcomed the Campus Chief, faculty members, and students. In his remarks, Dr. Lal emphasized the significance of painting as a medium of awareness and highlighted the importance of World TB Day 2020, celebrated under the theme "**It's Time: It's time for action, It's time to End TB (sfo{casf], Ifofju cGTosf])**". A total of around sixty-five students and teachers from the Fine Arts College actively participated in the orientation programme

Dr. Ramesh Kumar Pokhrel, Chief of the Fine Arts College, delivered the welcome address, expressing his appreciation to the Director of STAC and his team for organizing the painting competition to mark World TB Day and SAARC TB Day 2020.

Dr. Rabeya Sultana, Research Officer at STAC, gave a presentation introducing the SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) and highlighting the global and regional status of tuberculosis, particularly within the SAARC member states. She encouraged the students to creatively interpret the event's theme and produce meaningful artworks that would deliver a strong social message.

2. Painting competition among the students of Fine Arts College at STAC

On the commemoration of World TB Day 2020 the painting competition was held on 18 March, 2020 at STAC. Student of Fine Arts College, Tribhuvan University Binita Khadka, Bishal Manandhar, Kiran Shrestha, Kopila Rai, Manisha Shah, Narendra Malla, Namuna Kandel, Puskar Rai, Rakesh Maharjan, Ram B. Shahi, Ramesh Shrish Magar, Ratnaman Gurung, Rosan Khatri, Sajina Maharjan, Sanod Maharjan, Sujan Bir Bajracharya, Sujan Shrestha, Sreemila Shrestha, Sunil B.K., Vikram Shrestha, Yambang Thapa Magar participated in the painting competition. The themes of the painting competition was **“Find, Treat All # End TB, Promote an End To Stigma and Discrimination”**



Students of Fine Arts College -TU Participating in the Painting Competition at STAC on

18 March, 2020

3. Prize distribution programme of the painting competition STAC Hall I



Dr. Bibek Kumar Lal, Director STAC Dr. Rabeya Sultana Research Officer STAC, Mr. Nem Bahadur Tamang, Lecturer and student of the Fine Arts College in the prize distribution programme

Dr. Bibek Kumar Lal, Director of STAC, delivered the opening remarks, followed by **Dr. Rabeya Sultana**, Research Officer at STAC, who briefed participants on the arrangements and materials provided for the three-hour painting session. The competition was supervised and evaluated by faculty Members from the Fine Arts College.

Dr. Rabeya Sultana delivered a presentation on the COVID-19 pandemic, providing insights into the virus and its modes of transmission. She shared detailed information about COVID-19 and recommended essential preventive measures to reduce the risk of infection. Additionally, she demonstrated the correct methods for wearing a mask and washing hands to minimize the chances of exposure.

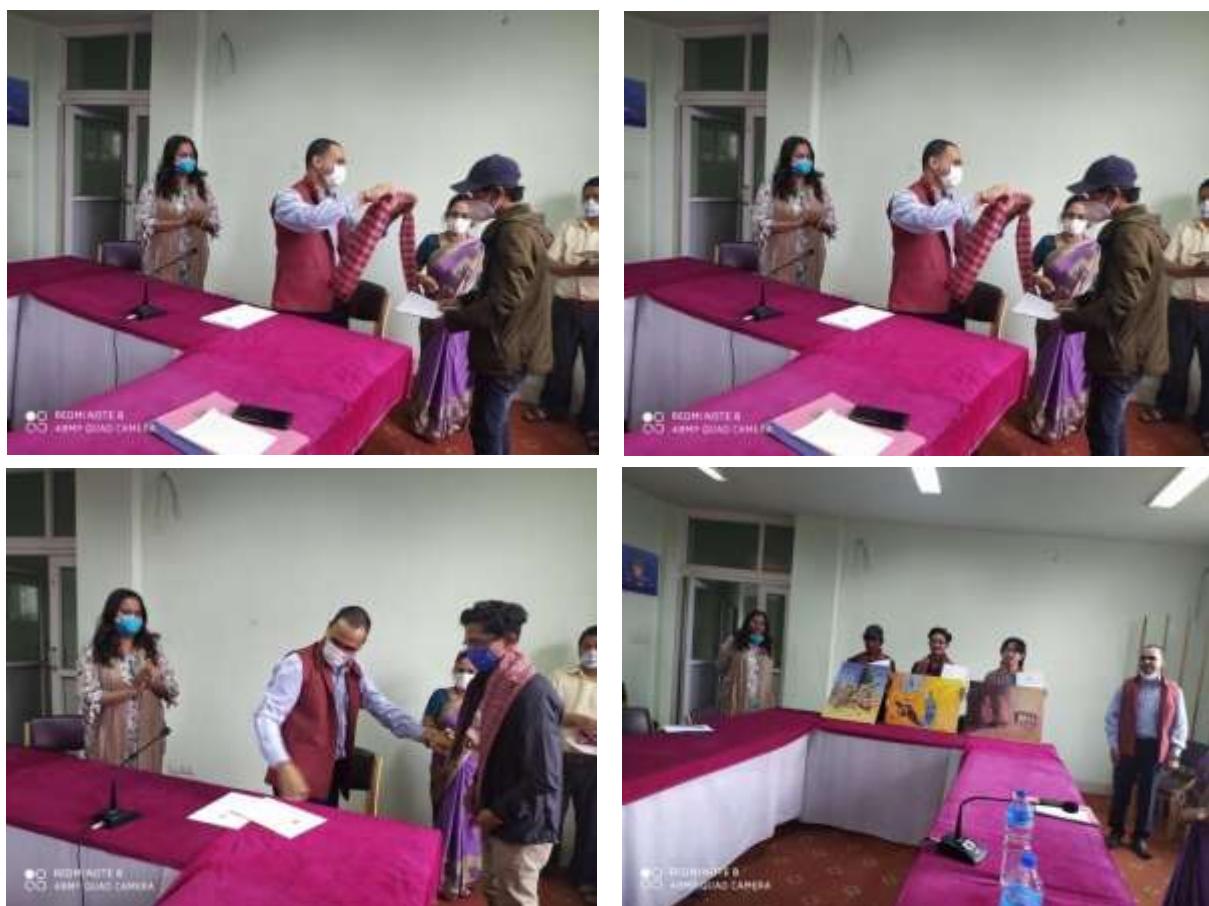
Dr. Anuj Bhattachan, Director of the National TB Control Centre, congratulated the participating students for their active involvement in the painting competition. He spoke about the adverse impacts of tuberculosis and emphasized that even small efforts at the community level can play a vital role in identifying and treating TB patients. Encouraging the students, he noted that their artwork could serve as a powerful tool to spread awareness, echoing the phrase, "A picture speaks a thousand words." He expressed his hope that the painting competition would serve as an effective platform to promote the themes of World TB Day and SAARC TB Day.

Mr. Nem Bahadur Tamang, Artist and Lecturer at the Fine Arts College, expressed his gratitude to the SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre for providing such a valuable platform for aspiring artists to showcase their talents.

Dr. Bibek Kumar Lal, Director of STAC, delivered the vote of thanks, expressing his sincere appreciation to the Director of the National TB Control Centre, the faculty members of the Fine Arts College, and the students for their active participation in the painting competition despite their busy schedules. He shared his delight in organizing such an event, emphasizing that SAARC

countries value initiatives that create a strong and lasting impact on society. He noted that the paintings would serve as powerful advocacy tools, conveying meaningful messages in the fight against tuberculosis.

STAC had initially planned to present the prizes in a joint ceremony with the National TB Control Programme and other stakeholders on 24 March 2020, in observance of World TB Day. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the nationwide lockdown, the event could not take place as scheduled. Consequently, a small award ceremony was held at STAC Hall-I on 24 July 2020, where the winners—**Mr. Ratnaman Gurung** (1st place), **Mr. Narendra Malla** (2nd place), and **Mr. Puskar Rai** (3rd place)—were invited. During the event, the Director of STAC presented them with cash prizes and certificates.



Dr. Bibek Kumar Lal, Director STAC presenting the prize to the winners of Painting Completion 2020

Message from H.E. Secretary General of SAARC on World TB Day 2020

His Excellency Mr. Esala Ruwan Weerakoon, Secretary-General of SAARC, issued a message on the occasion of World TB Day and SAARC TB Day 2020. The message was circulated to the National TB Programmes of all SAARC Member States for dissemination through media channels.



SECRETARY GENERAL

SOUTH ASIAN ASSOCIATION
FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION
SECRETARIAT

Message World Tuberculosis Day 24 March 2020

The World Tuberculosis Day is commemorated globally on 24 March every year to raise public awareness about the adverse health and socioeconomic impacts of Tuberculosis. The Day is an opportune occasion to garner support and collaboration at global, regional and national levels to step up efforts to end TB. The Day is also observed as the SAARC Tuberculosis Day across South Asia to combat the epidemic.

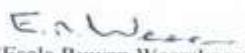
This year, the theme of the Day is “It’s time for action! It’s time to End TB”. The theme is very apt in that it is indeed time to scale up access to prevention and treatment of TB; it’s time to build accountability and ensure sufficient and sustainable financing for the global fight against the epidemic; and it’s time to end stigma and discrimination against people affected by it.

Despite being a preventable and curable disease, TB continues to remain the world’s deadliest infectious disease. Every day, approximately 30,000 people fall ill and more than 4000 people lose their lives due to TB. South Asia, home to 25% of the global population, has an estimated annual TB incidence of 3.7 million, which is equivalent to 206 cases in 100000 people, accounting for 37% of the global TB burden. Three out of eight Member States of SAARC are among the thirty highest TB and Multi Drug Resistant-TB burden countries of the world.

At the global level, efforts are underway to achieve the target of ending TB by 2030 as one of the Sustainable Development Goals. In the attainment of this universal goal, SAARC adopted a Regional Strategy for Elimination of Tuberculosis (2018-2023) with a target to eliminate TB in the region by 2027, even before the global timeline.

Established in 1994, the SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre has been coordinating the efforts of the National TB Programmes in prevention, control and elimination of TB in the region. The recent initiatives of the Centre on cross-border and migration health on TB/HIV and up-gradation of its laboratory as the SAARC Supra-national Reference Laboratory for TB and HIV/AIDS, which will be operational in the near future, will be instrumental in achieving the regional target of ending TB by 2027.

On this World Tuberculosis Day, I wish to call upon the Member States to re-double their efforts to make the region TB free by the regional timeline. I also wish the SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre every success in this endeavour.


(Esala Ruwan Weerakoon)

Kathmandu, 24 March 2020

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Meeting of the Programme Managers of the National TB and HIV/AIDS Control Programmes of SAARC Members States for discussion of pipelined activities and other issues, 16 September, 2020 (virtual)



Programme Managers Meeting on TB and HIV/AIDS Control Program on 16 September 2020

The SAARC Meeting of Programme Managers on TB and HIV/AIDS Control Programmes was virtually held on 16th September, 2020 for discussion on pipelined activities and to invite feedbacks and suggestions on the list of activities of STAC for the year 2021. The Centre received confirmations of participation from the National programmes of Governments of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri-Lanka.

As per the SAARC practice, **Dr. Anuj Bhattachan**, Director, National TB Control Centre, Ministry of Health & Population, Government of Nepal chaired the Meeting. Dr. Bhattachan opened the Meeting and delivered the opening remarks. He thanked STAC for organizing this meeting using Zoom technology and for the arrangements made for the Meeting. He also mentioned the present situation of TB Control programmes and initiation taken by the national TB Control Programme, Ministry of Health & Population, Government of Nepal, to tackle the situation created by COVID-19.

Dr. Bibek Kumar Lal, Director, STAC delivered the welcome remarks in the opening of the Meeting. He mentioned the effect of COVID-19 on the calendar of activities. He regretted that the extraordinary situation created by this pandemic did not allow for a physical meeting. He recalled the recommendation of the Meeting of Program Managers on TB and HIV/AIDS Control Programs that was held on 20-22 June 2019, in Colombo, Sri Lanka (approved by the twenty-ninth meeting of Governing Board of STAC) for frequent virtual meetings with the Program Managers /representatives of the respective member countries, to discuss the pipelined activities and other

relevant issues, which would be supportive for better understanding, closer cooperation and frequent sharing of lessons learnt, to overcome these challenges and to achieve the targets. He informed the meeting about the arrangement of some regional level activities, planned for 2020, to be conducted in virtual mode. He also mentioned that the Center aims to accomplish most of the activities of 2021 through virtual mode, as per the general guideline of SAARC Secretariat.

Dr Rabeya Sultana, Research Officer, STAC, made brief presentations on status of pipeline activities of STAC for the year 2020 and list of some activities proposed by Centre in upcoming Meeting of Governing Board of STAC for the year 2021. The meeting discussed on the presentation and made the recommendation.

Country Presentations and discussions:

The presentations from national programs on current situation and impacts of COVID19 on the National Programmes and proposal/suggestions of specific activities from National Programs for inclusion in STAC's calendar of activities for the year 2021, were made in following order:

Bangladesh

Dr. Md. Abdul Wadud, Programme Manager of the AIDS/STD Programme, Bangladesh, informed the meeting that the COVID-19 pandemic had significantly affected the HIV/AIDS programme. He noted that HIV testing had declined by 50% (1,500 tests) in the first quarter compared to the previous quarter. However, ARV services remained unaffected due to transport cost support provided to long-distance PLHIV patients and doorstep delivery of medications to ensure uninterrupted treatment.

Dr. Afzalur Ragman, Program Manager (In-Charge) of the National Tuberculosis Programme (NTP), Bangladesh, outlined the impact of COVID-19 on the country's TB programme. He reported that case detection in Bangladesh fell by 60% in the second quarter, with 28,352 cases compared to 71,811 in the first quarter. Despite these challenges, the NTP continued its efforts to manage the situation, distributing PPE and other protective equipment to healthcare workers engaged in community TB services. Of the 272 Gene-Xpert machines in the country, 11 were temporarily repurposed for COVID-19 testing. The detection of MDR-TB cases dropped to 95 in the second quarter from 353 cases in the first quarter, though numbers were increasing in the third quarter. Similarly, only 137 pediatric TB cases were detected compared to 3,000 in the first quarter. He emphasized that all peripheral-level healthcare workers were adhering to government-issued COVID-19 health guidelines while providing TB services.

Bhutan

Mr. Ugyen Dendup, Program Officer of the National TB Control Programme (NTCP), Bhutan, delivered a presentation detailing the structure of health facilities in Bhutan. He highlighted the National TB Reference Laboratory in Thimphu and 40 microscopy centers, along with 8 GeneXpert sites and 32 TB reporting sites. According to WHO TB estimates of 1,100 cases, the national programme had detected 1,016 cases, leaving an 8% detection gap. For MDR-TB, out of 150 estimated cases, only 70 were detected, leaving a 53% gap. He discussed the impact of COVID-19 on the national TB programme, noting advantages such as the establishment of 54 flu clinics, which also served TB patients, and public awareness initiatives to reduce transmission. However,

challenges included delays in transporting samples to GeneXpert centers, concerns over potential drug shortages, and the diversion of attention from TB services due to the COVID-19 response. He recommended organizing a cross-border TB meeting between Bhutan and India to enhance TB case management.

Mr. Lekey Khandu, Program Manager of the National HIV/AIDS & Hepatitis Control Program, Bhutan, reported that 34 new HIV cases were diagnosed during the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted that the national programme faced similar challenges as other countries but routine services were largely uninterrupted. Essential services such as medical screening, VCT, contact tracing, ANC, and blood donor services continued during the pandemic, while targeted groups, including MSM, TG, and HRWs, were somewhat affected.

He highlighted that preventive services, care, support, and treatment for HIV/AIDS and STIs were being provided to MSM, TG, HRWs, and pregnant women through online testing at onsite HISC and VCT focal sites. Treatment continuity for people living with HIV was maintained due to an adequate buffer stock of essential drugs at all service sites. Additionally, he outlined the key achievements and challenges faced by the National HIV/AIDS Control Programme.

Maldives

Mr. Abdul Hameed, Manager and Senior Public Health Programme Officer, representing both programmes in the Maldives, briefed the meeting on the impact of COVID-19 on the National TB and NACP Programmes. He noted that the country's resources were primarily focused on managing the COVID-19 pandemic, while medications continued to be provided to TB patients. He highlighted that the migrant population posed a significant challenge for the programmes. Despite this, the National Programmes maintained strong emphasis on diagnosis and treatment. Additionally, he mentioned that one COVID-19 patient had been transferred abroad at the patient's request.

Nepal

Dr. Sudha Devkota, Director of NCASC, Nepal, highlighted the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the country's National HIV Programme. She presented key HIV indicators, noting that 78% of people living with HIV (PLHIV) knew their status, 63% were on treatment, and 42% had achieved viral suppression. She also detailed the nationwide coverage of HIV services, which are provided free of charge at 185 sites across all 77 districts, including ART services at 78 sites, PMTCT services at 77 sites, and OST services at 12 sites. She noted that the nationwide lockdown and the COVID-19 pandemic had affected treatment services, but necessary measures were implemented to ensure uninterrupted delivery of HIV-related care. For instance, ARV drugs were delivered to PLHIV at home with support from community organizations.

Dr. Sharad Kumar Sharma, Chief of the MESR Section at NTCC, Nepal, delivered a presentation on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the National Tuberculosis Programme in Nepal. He reported that NTCC had conducted a rapid assessment by visiting 49 TB centers and interviewing 71 patients during this period. He noted that new TB case detection had declined due to the nationwide lockdown, with TB services experiencing a 45% decrease in enrollment, 42% in follow-up, and 61% in sputum collection. He highlighted key measures taken to mitigate these

challenges, including the timely release of guidelines for managing TB during the COVID-19 situation, which allowed patients to receive a one-month supply of medication at a time. He also confirmed that TB service sites were functioning optimally with adequate resources, sufficient drug supplies, and rapid diagnostic testing capacity, although nine GeneXpert machines were being repurposed for COVID-19 diagnosis.

Pakistan

Dr. Razia K. Fatima, Chief of Research at CMU, Pakistan, reported that the National Tuberculosis Programme of Pakistan was facing challenges in providing treatment and care to TB patients due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She noted that the National Programme was conducting a rapid assessment to evaluate the impact of the pandemic on TB patient care. Special service delivery measures had been implemented for TB patients, and health advisories were developed to manage the situation effectively. She also highlighted that the TB control programme was facilitating the tracing of DR-TB and MDR-TB patients. COVID-19 testing was being conducted in BSL-2 and BSL-3 health facilities for both TB and COVID-19 cases. She added that currently, 262 dedicated healthcare workers were actively involved in simultaneously tracing and managing both COVID-19 and TB patients.

Dr. Quaid Saeed, HIV/AIDS Advisor, Pakistan, provided an overview of the HIV/AIDS situation in the country. He reported that, based on the 2016 IBBS survey, HIV cases were distributed as 38.4% among IDUs, 56% among TG and MSM, and 2.2% among FSWs. He noted that Pakistan was following the Asian Epidemic Modeling (AEM) approach. He shared key statistics on the HIV epidemic and response, including 25,000 new infections, 19,000 people living with HIV (PLHIV), 22,947 individuals on ART, and 6,800 HIV-related deaths. He explained that prevention and intervention measures were implemented through a Community-Based Organization (CBO) model guided by AEM data. Regarding the COVID-19 response, he highlighted the establishment of a helpline and focal points to connect patients remotely, the introduction of telemedicine services, and the provision of PPE to frontline staff. Additionally, 24-hour monitoring ensured the availability and continuous supply of ARV drugs throughout the pandemic.

Sri Lanka

Dr. Lilani Rajapaksa, Deputy Director and Consultant Venereologist, representing NSACP, Sri Lanka, reported that the country maintained a low HIV prevalence, with only 3,550 PLHIV in 2019. She noted that from March to June, the country faced challenges due to curfew measures and reported 3,000 COVID-19 cases with 12 deaths. She highlighted that all HIV services, including ART, were maintained by ensuring ARV drug availability at clinics, with services provided through STD clinics. She acknowledged challenges during the curfew, such as inadvertent disclosure of HIV status to family members, difficulties in sending drugs via postal services, and telephone communications being answered by others. Information on ART services was disseminated through NSACP's website, Facebook, and hotline to meet the needs of PLHIV. She also noted that community-based activities, including condom distribution and testing among key populations, were disrupted due to the pandemic. These populations faced increased infection risks due to limited access to community services, drop-in centers, outreach programs, and challenges in maintaining physical distancing.

Recommendation on STAC's pipelined and future activities:

The meeting reviewed the presentation by STAC on the status of its pipeline activities for 2020, as well as a list of demand-driven and specific activities planned for 2021. It advised STAC to proceed with the virtual meetings and training sessions scheduled in the revised calendar of activities for the current year.

1. SAARC Seminar to develop/finalization of SoP on Cross Border / Migrant Health issues on TB and HIV/AIDS - 2nd week of October 2020.
2. SAARC ToT on Latent TB Infection - 1st week of November 2020.
3. SAARC Regional Consultation/Workshop/Conferencing on TB and HIV/ AIDS - migrant health issue and TB/HIV co-infection issue - 2nd week of November 2020.
4. SAARC Regional Training on Operational Research on methods and data analysis in TB and HIV/AIDS- 3rd week of November 2020.
5. The SAARC Regional 5th Meeting of Heads/Chief of Identified National TB and HIV/AIDS Laboratories- 4th week of November 2020.
6. The SAARC Meeting of Programme Manager of National TB and HIV/AIDS Control Programmes, 1st week of December 2020.
7. SAARC Regional Meeting to develop appropriate mechanism for Regional Drugs/Logistics (TB and HIV/AIDS) procurement- 2nd week of December 2020.

The meeting also reviewed the list of activities for 2021 presented by the Centre and expressed appreciation for the Centre's efforts in proposing and planning several regional-level activities to be implemented through virtual or physical modes.

1. SAARC Training on occupational health and safety for health workers of Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS NTPs and NACPs - Bangladesh
2. SAARC Meeting to review the SAARC Regional Strategies on ACSM and Migrant Health, and Cross border issues - Bhutan
3. SAARC Meeting for situation assessment to measure the impact of COVID-19 on National TB and HIV/AIDS Programmes strategic Plans-India
4. The SAARC Meeting of Programme Manager of National TB and HIV/AIDS Control Programmes - Maldives
5. SAARC Training on TB-Tobacco and COVID-19 association - Nepal
6. SAARC Regional ToT on Latent TB Infection - Nepal
7. SAARC Training on Risk Assessment for mass gatherings on pandemic/epidemic situation – Pakistan
8. SAARC Regional Meeting to develop/refine appropriate mechanism for Regional Drugs/Logistic (TB and HIV/AIDS) procurement, Sri Lanka (follow up meeting) - Sri Lanka

Research

- Tracing the Possible Source of Multidrug Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR-TB) into Bhutan: A 2018-2020 Cohort Study - Bhutan
- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on directly observed treatment short-course (DOTS) program for tuberculosis - Nepal

- Call for Expression of Interest from SAARC Member States for small scale research grants - Member States

The meeting also reviewed the activities proposed by the national programmes for inclusion in STAC's calendar for the fiscal year 2021 and recommended that STAC incorporate these activities into the 2021 list for discussion and approval at the upcoming Governing Board meeting.

Recommendation on country presentations and programmes

- All meeting participants delivered their presentations and remarks, discussing the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to the National TB and HIV/AIDS Programmes of SAARC Member States. The meeting noted that the activities and services of these national programmes had been significantly impacted by the pandemic.
- All participants agreed that regular consultations among programme managers and representatives to share experiences and best practices would be mutually beneficial. The meeting urged all national programmes (TB and HIV/AIDS) and STAC to prioritize such consultations to address common challenges, discuss future directions, and review planned activities whenever requested by STAC
- The meeting also advised STAC to give priority to multicentric research and to continue activities that promote the sharing of knowledge and best practices across multiple countries.
- The Meeting urged STAC to enhance collaborative activities and to actively seek the participation of various research institutes and academic organizations from member states to carry out research under the guidance of the national program.

Closing of the Meeting

Dr. Anuj Bhattachan, Chairperson of the Meeting, Director, National TB Control Centre, Ministry of Health & Population, Government of Nepal thanked all participants for their active participation and fruitful discussions. He appreciated the arrangements made by the SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre for the meeting. Dr. Rabeya Sultana, Research officer, STAC delivered vote of thanks. She thanked Chairperson and all the participants from the Member States for their active participation in the deliberations and valuable inputs. The Chairperson declared the meeting closed.

Meeting/consultation with the editors of the medical journals published in the valley to enhance the quality of SAARC Journal of TB, Lung Diseases and HIV/AIDS, 11 December, 2020, STAC



Meeting with the editors of the medical journals published in the valley, 11 December, 2020

The Meeting/consultation with the editors of the medical journals published in the valley to enhance the quality of SAARC Journal of TB, Lung Diseases and HIV/AIDS was held on December 11, 2020 to consult with editors of medical journals published in the valley and aiming to improve the quality of the SAARC Journal of TB, Lung Diseases, and HIV/AIDS. The meeting was attended by the Chief Editor of the Journal of Nepal Health Research Council (JNRC), the Editor of the Journal of Kathmandu Medical College (JKMC), and representatives from NepJol, Tribhuvan University Central Library.

Dr. Rabeya Sulatana, Research Officer at STAC, extended a warm welcome to all distinguished guests at the editorial meeting. In her welcome remarks, she highlighted the objectives of the meeting and delivered a presentation providing a brief historical overview of the SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC). She also described the SAARC Journal of Tuberculosis, Lung Diseases, and HIV/AIDS, noting its long publication history since 2004 and the upcoming release of its 18th volume in 2020. Additionally, she explained the procedures authors must follow to submit articles for publication in the journal.

Prof. Dr. Ganesh Dangal, Editor of JNRC, expressed his gratitude to the Centre and the Director of STAC for inviting him to the important meeting. He appreciated the opportunity to share his

experience as a senior editor at the *Journal of Nepal Health Research Council* and provided a brief review of the *SAARC Journal*. He recommended including international and national editors beyond the SAARC member countries, establishing an online system for article submission, and handling all communications via email. He also suggested requesting ORCID IDs from authors to ensure authenticity and including the submission and acceptance dates in publications. Dr. Dangal emphasized the importance of proper referencing and proposed introducing widely used styles such as NLM. He highlighted the need for peer review, recommending at least two reviewers to maintain article quality, and advised including author guidelines at the end of each journal issue with corresponding links.

Mr. Purnalal Shrestha, Chief of Tribhuvan University, expressed his gratitude to the SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre and its Director for organizing such an important meeting. In his remarks, he emphasized the significance of indexing systems for medical journals. He noted that although the *SAARC Journal* is indexed in NepJOL, it still needs to meet certain basic requirements to increase its visibility among a broader audience. He explained that improving the journal's quality and readership—reflected through higher views and downloads—would enhance its credibility and help it qualify for inclusion in other major indexing databases such as PubMed and Medline. Mr. Shrestha also highlighted the INASP database facility available at the Tribhuvan University Central Library, which provides access to various journals, including medical publications.

Mr. Geb Nath Neupane, Head Office Assistant at NepJOL, expressed his gratitude to the Director of STAC for providing the opportunity to introduce the Nepal Journals Online (NepJOL) platform. He briefly discussed the International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) and the Strengthening Research and Knowledge Systems (SRKS) initiatives, both of which aim to provide affordable access to scholarly literature. He explained that NepJOL serves as a comprehensive database of journals published in Nepal, encompassing a wide range of academic disciplines. He noted that the platform enhances the visibility of participating journals and the research they disseminate. He further informed that NepJOL is managed by the Tribhuvan University Central Library and hosted by Ubiquity Press. Currently, 196 journals, including the *SAARC Journal*, are listed on NepJOL.

Dr. Ashik Rajak, Editor of the Journal of Kathmandu Medical College (JKMC), expressed his gratitude to the SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre and its Director for inviting him to such an important meeting. He assured his full cooperation and support whenever needed. In his presentation, Dr. Rajak provided an overview of the Journal of Kathmandu Medical College and informed that it is indexed in IMSEAR. He also introduced several prominent indexing systems, including Medline, PubMed, and Scopus, explaining their significance in enhancing journal visibility and credibility.

He elaborated on the concept of the Impact Factor (IF) or Journal Impact Factor (JIF), a scientometric index calculated by Clarivate that reflects the average number of citations received per article published in a journal during the preceding two years. Dr. Rajak emphasized the importance of obtaining an e-ISSN for the online version of journals, along with proper archival backup and maintenance. He highlighted the need for timely publication, consistent frequency, high quality, and adherence to publication ethics as essential prerequisites for indexing eligibility.

Additionally, he introduced the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), which indexes and provides access to high-quality, open-access, peer-reviewed journals.

Mr. Subash Chandra Sharma, Assistant Professor at JKMC, conveyed his appreciation and good wishes, thanking the Centre and the Director of STAC for organizing such an important meeting. He expressed his admiration for the *SAARC Journal*, noting its long history and continued regular publication. Drawing from his experience and knowledge of medical journal indexing processes, he suggested that the *SAARC Journal* could begin by seeking inclusion in smaller indexing platforms. He explained that this approach would gradually enhance the journal's credibility and help it qualify for inclusion in major international indexing systems in the future.

Dr. Sujaya Gupta, Assistant Professor at JKMC, expressed her pleasure in participating in the editorial meeting and thanked the Director of STAC for his kind invitation. She shared her insights and offered several valuable suggestions for enhancing the *SAARC Journal*. Dr. Gupta recommended including the full names of authors along with their ORCID IDs, where available. She emphasized the importance of mentioning both the submission and acceptance dates of articles in each publication. Additionally, she highlighted the need for uniform presentation of tables within articles and proposed the formation of a dedicated core team—including technical staff and other necessary personnel—to support the preparation and publication of the journal.

Dr. Bibek Kumar Lal, Director of STAC, expressed his sincere gratitude to all the participants for their valuable suggestions and insights. He acknowledged that several measures need to be undertaken to further enhance the quality of the *SAARC Journal* and assured that all the recommendations and advice provided would be taken positively. Dr. Lal also emphasized that such consultative meetings with subject experts are highly beneficial for the continued improvement of the journal.

World AIDS Day/SAARC Charter Day 2020

Participating in the programme on the commemoration of World AIDS Day/SAARC Charter Day 2020



Commemoration of World AIDS Day/SAARC Charter Day, Dec 11 2020

On the commemoration World AIDS Day 2020 and 36th SAARC Charter Day, a programme was organized December 11, 2020 at STAC hall. The event was attended by **Dr. Anuj Bhattachan**, Director of the National Tuberculosis Control Centre (NTCC), Thimi, a team representing the National Centre for AIDS and STD Control (NCASC), Kathmandu, **Dr. Bibek Kumar Lal**, Director of STAC, **Dr. Rabeya Sultana**, Research Officer, STAC, and other staff members of the Centre.

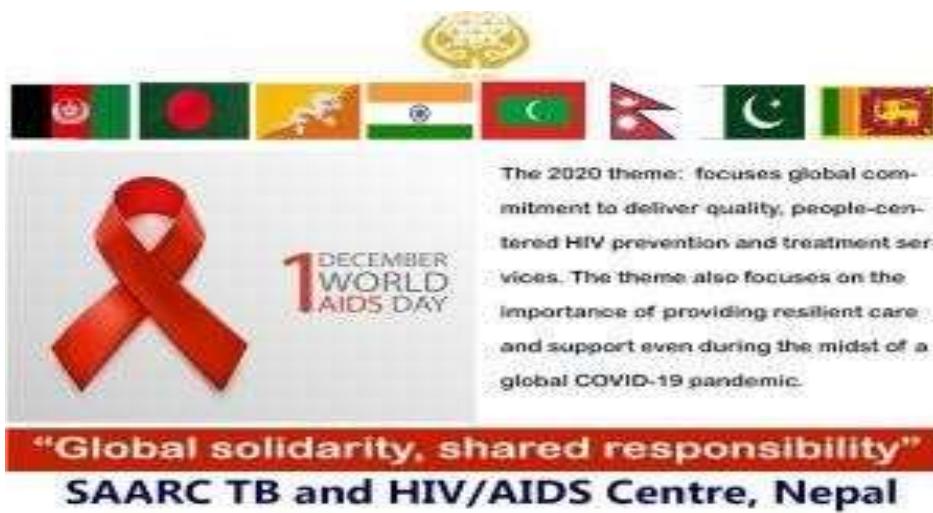
Dr. Rabeya Sultana, Research Officer at STAC, delivered the welcome remarks, warmly greeting all distinguished guests and participants of the programme. She stated that the gathering was organized to commemorate World AIDS Day and the 36th SAARC Charter Day 2020. In her remarks, Dr. Sultana highlighted the significance of the SAARC Charter, which was signed during the first SAARC Summit held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on December 8 1985. She emphasized the importance of SAARC as a platform that unites member countries in addressing common challenges through friendship, trust, and mutual understanding, while fostering regional cooperation based on respect, equity, and shared benefits.

Dr. Bibek Kumar Lal, Director of STAC, delivered his welcome remarks by extending a warm welcome to Dr. Anuj Bhattachan, Director of the National Tuberculosis Control Centre (NTCC), representatives from the National Centre for AIDS and STD Control (NCASC) and all participants present at the programme. He introduced the SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre

(STAC), outlining its vision, mission, goals, and objectives. Dr. Lal also provided an overview of the Centre's key activities and major functions, and highlighted the significance of observing World AIDS Day and the SAARC Charter Day in strengthening regional collaboration and awareness.

Mr. Pawan Kumar Shah, representative from the National Centre for AIDS and STD Control (NCASC), expressed his pleasure in being part of the programme and extended his gratitude to Dr. Bibek Kumar Lal, Director of STAC, for the invitation. He highlighted several key activities undertaken by the NCASC and emphasized the importance of collaborative efforts among all stakeholders working in the field of tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS for achieving common public health goals.

Dr. Anuj Bhattachan, Director of the National Tuberculosis Control Centre (NTCC), congratulated the SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) on the occasion of the 36th SAARC Charter Day and the commemoration of World AIDS Day. He expressed his appreciation to the Director and staff of STAC for inviting him and his team to participate in the programme. Dr. Bhattachan emphasized the importance of joint efforts in addressing regional health challenges and reaffirmed that the National Tuberculosis Control Centre remains committed to supporting STAC in its collaborative initiatives.



World AIDS Day/SAARC Charter Day digital banner display 2020

Skill Development Training of GSS of STAC 20-22, October, 2020



Dr. Bibek Kumar Lal, Director, STAC with STAC Officials on GSS Training on 20-22 October 2020

A group training programme for the General Services Staff (GSS) of STAC was held from 20–22 October 2020 in Dhulikhel, Kavre, Nepal. The programme aimed to strengthen their knowledge, enhance job-related skills, and motivate the staff in performing their respective duties effectively.

The training programme was facilitated by **Mr. Bidhan Acharya, Mr. Gautam Acharya, and Mr. Binod Kumar Bista**, resource persons from the **Nepal Administrative Staff College (NASC), Jawalakhel, Lalitpur**. The skill development sessions covered a wide range of topics, including the research process, research proposal and report writing, research report preparation, developing a positive attitude at work, self-management for improved performance, teamwork building, leadership skills, interpersonal relationships, negotiation skills, epidemiological concepts, and infectious disease epidemiology.

All GSS officials (Levels I to III) actively participated in the three-day training programme.

Research

- Estimating tuberculosis cases and their additional economic costs incurred by TB patients and their families for TB Diagnosis and Treatment-A multi centric study (3 countries) Bhutan, Nepal and Sri-Lanka
 - Sri-Lanka has submitted the technical and financial report and completed the research.
- Operational Research on Evolution and Effectiveness of oral/newer drugs of shorter regime of MDR-TB Treatment in Bangladesh.
 - The research could not be conducted.
- HIV and STI Sero Prevalence and risk factor analysis among prisoners in Nepal.
 - The research is under the progress National Control of AIDS and STI Control Programme, Nepal
- Bacterial risk factors responsible for unfavorable treatment outcomes in Multi Drug Resistant Tuberculosis infected patients in Bangladesh-Carry forwarded from 2019.
 - The research could not be conducted.
- Piloting of active tuberculosis case finding in the most risk populated district of Nepal to trace the missing cases "A situation Analysis"

As per the contract between STAC and JANTRA, the research titled Piloting of active case finding in most risk populated district of Nepal to trace missing TB cases four districts (Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, and Tanahun) in the year 2020 in collaboration with the National Tuberculosis Control Centre (NTCC) was conducted and disseminated the technical report with findings of study on 31 December, 2020 at a function organized in the STAC. During the function, the best staff award-2020 was awarded to Mrs. Meena Kumari Dhakal, SPA, SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre considering her continued outstanding performances and contributions since long period as per her responsibilities.

Resource Centre for TB and HIV/AIDS (STAC Library)

A Library has been established in STAC with the purpose of providing information on TB and HIV/AIDS as a regional resource Centre for TB and HIV/AIDS. Books, journals, newspapers, reports and other related publications are catalogued for the use of TB control workers, researchers, specialist, medical practitioners, students, journalist and general people seek information on TB and HIV/AIDS. This library has also linked all its resource on the STAC website www.saarctb.org

Review of Article for SAARC Journals of TB, Lung Diseases and HIV/AIDS

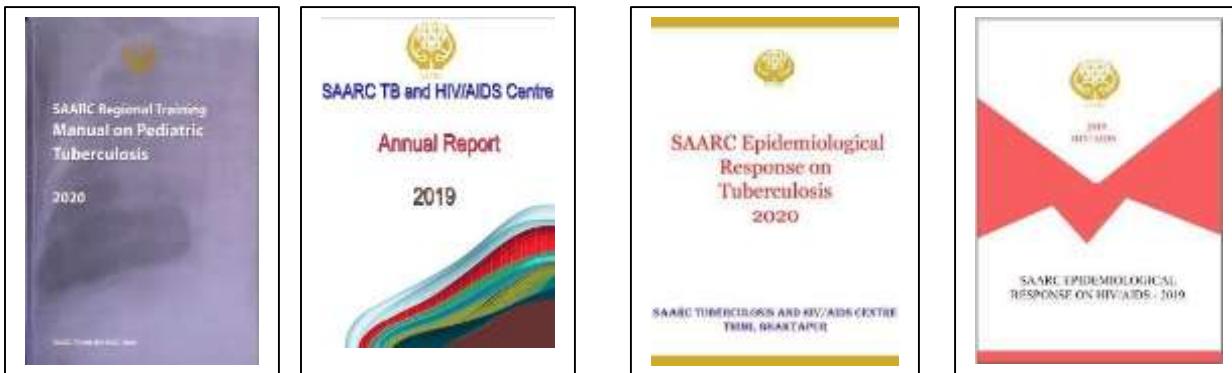
The following six articles were reviewed by external reviewers and published in Vol. XVII, No. 1 2020;

- i. Diagnostic Challenges and Clinical Profile of Spine Tuberculosis- An Experience from Medium Size Health Care Centre, South India
- ii. Factors Associated with Treatment Adherence Among Tuberculosis Patients in Gandaki Province of Nepal
- iii. Intervention Strategies to Mitigate Psychosocial Challenges and Improve the Quality of Life of MDR-TB Patients: An Evaluation Study
- iv. Strengthening Childhood TB Management in Nepal: Challenges, Progress and Lesson Learned
- v. Tuberculosis and Stigma in India: Evidence from a Nationally Representative Survey
- vi. Case Study: Adult Onset Still's Disease Presenting with Tuberculosis Bronchopneumonia.



STAC Publication and Distribution

STAC has published these following documents. These documents are disseminated and distributed to the SAARC Member States, experts and concerned stake holders both electronic publications and print copyt. All the publications are available on STAC website which can be downloaded for noncommercial use. The full document is available in the following link



- Manual of Pediatric TB: <https://www.saarctb.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/ToT-Pediatric-Tr-manual-Final-PDF.pdf>
- Annual Report 2019 : <https://www.saarctb.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Annual-Report-2019-12-03-2025.pdf>
- SAARC Epidemiological response Report on TB : <https://www.saarctb.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/SAARC-Epidemiological-response-on-TB-2020.pdf>
- SAARC Epidemiological response on HIV/AIDS 2020: <https://www.saarctb.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Final-HIV-Update- 2020.pdf>