



SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC)

Annual Report 2008

SAARC Tuberculosis & HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC)

Thimi, Bhaktapur

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Preface



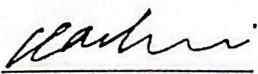
This Annual Report is a summary of activities carried out by SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) during the period of January to December 2008. It is my pleasure to inform that STAC has completed almost all assigned responsibilities for the year. I would like to thank Program Managers of National TB Control Programs and National HIV/AIDS Control Programs of SAARC Member States for their generous cooperation, guidance and support for implementation of activities of STAC.

I believe that the activities performed by SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre have provided support to National Tuberculosis Control Program and National HIV/AIDS Control Programs of SAARC Member States in the implementation of TB & HIV/AIDS control and prevention activities.

I want to offer my sincere gratitude to His Excellency Dr. Sheel Kant Sharma, Secretary General of SAARC, Former Secretary General of SAARC His Excellency Mr. Chenkyab Dorji, and Mr. Hassan Shifau, Director, SAARC Secretariat for their generous support, guidance and full cooperation to carry out all activities effectively. I would like to thank WHO/SEARO for providing technical support for the activities of the Centre.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the Government of SAARC Member States for their cooperation and support for successful organization of STAC activities, such as Partnership Programs, Trainings, Workshops, Meetings, Seminars etc. on different aspects of TB and HIV/AIDS.

We are committed in our endeavour to provide support to SAARC Member States for prevention and control of TB & HIV/AIDS.



Dr. Kashi Kant Jha

Director

SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre

11. SAARC Regional Training of Microbiologist for sputum Culture, Drug susceptibility Test
12. SAARC Training on Leadership and management skills at National/Regional level
13. SAARC Training on Technical and Operational Aspects of Anti Retro Viral Therapy, Bangladesh
14. SAARC Training on Technical and Operational Aspects of Anti Retro Viral Therapy, Sri Lanka
15. SAARC Training of Program Manager on DOTS Plus (MDR TB), Afghanistan
16. Strengthening of STC library
17. Dissemination of information of TB & HIV/AIDS by updating STC Website and Installation of Broad band internet connectivity & yearly charges
18. Production of STC Publications
 - i. STC Newsletters
 - ii. SAARC Journals of TB, Lung Diseases and HIV/AIDS
 - iii. SAARC Epidemiological Yearly Reports on TB and HIV/AIDS
 - iv. Annual Report of STC
 - v. Print a booklet giving salient programme details NTP & NACP of all Member States.
 - vi. Updating and Printing of History of TB Control Program in the SAARC Region – (IInd edition).
 - vii. Wall Calendar –2009
 - viii. Services of Professional Editor/s (volume basis) from Nepal as and when necessary.
 - x. Distribution of STC Publications
19. Fifth round Proficiency testing of Sputum Microscopy in Reference Laboratory
20. Procurement of chemical and other lab materials for regular works at SAARC TB Reference Laboratory at STC
21. Collection of Information/Data and publish book on Epidemiological Trend of last ten year on TB and HIV/AIDS in the Member States (analytical study book on TB and HIV/AIDS)
22. Review of research activities as conducted by Member Countries in last five year pertaining to TB and HIV/AIDS.
23. Review of available training facilities/manuals, types of training for different level health workers in the field of TB and HIV/AIDS

Research Activities

24. Case –Control Study to identify risk factors for MDR TB in Nepal
25. Barriers to DOT for MDR-TB patients in Nepal
26. Baselines CD4 count in the adult population in India.

Eighteenth Meeting of the Governing Board of STAC

The Eighteenth Meeting of the Governing Board of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre was held in Kathmandu from 25th to 26th September 2008.

Dr. Dirgh Singh Bam, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Population, Government of Nepal, graced the meeting as Chief Guest. The opening session of the meeting was held under the chairmanship of Dr. Govinda Prasad Ojha, Director General, Department of Health Services, Government of Nepal.



The Meeting was attended by:-

1. **Dr. Kazi Shahadat Hossain,**
Line Director, NASP & SBTP, DGHS, Ministry of Health, Dhaka, **Bangladesh**
2. **Dr. Lungten Z. Wangchuk,**
Program Manager NTCP, Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health, Thimphu, **Bhutan**
3. **Dr. Ajay Kumar Khera,**
Joint Director, National Control Organization, New Delhi, **India**
4. **Mr. Ibrahim Shaheem,**
Director General, Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health, Male, **Maldives**
5. **Dr. Pushpa Malla,**
Director, National Tuberculosis Centre, Thimi, Bhaktapur, **Nepal**
6. **Mr. Deepak Dhital,**
Under Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, **Nepal**
7. **Dr. Hassan Abbas Zaheer,**
National Program Manager, National AIDS Control Program, National Institute of Health, Islamabad, **Pakistan**
8. **Mr. A. M. Ranaweera Banda,**
Charge d' Affaires ai, Embassy of Sri Lanka, Kathmandu
9. **Mr. Hassan Shifau,**
Director, Social Affairs Division, **SAARC Secretariat**, Kathmandu
10. **Dr. Kashi Kant Jha,**
Director (Member Secretary), **SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre**, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Dr. Ajay Kumar Khera, Governing Board Member from India was elected as Chairman of the Governing Board of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre for the coming two years. All the Members of the Governing Board congratulated the

newly elected Chairperson and thanked the outgoing Chairperson from the Government of Bhutan for valuable contributions extended during his/her chairpersonship.

The Board discussed program activities and budget (Institutional & Program cost) for the year 2009 submitted by the SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre and recommended for the approval through Standing Committee.

Recommended Programs for 2009

1. Public Awareness and Advocacy Program on TB and HIV/AIDS- Commemoration/Celebration of
 - i. World TB Day
 - ii. World AIDS Day
 - iii. SAARC Charter Day
 - iv. Partnership Program with and NGOs & Medical College in Nepal
 - v. Awareness and advocacy material -Brochures etc. on the occasion of World TB Day and World AIDS Day 2009
2. Participation in International/Regional Meetings, Seminars, Conferences in the field of TB and HIV/AIDS by Director and Professionals of STAC.
 - i. Participation in the 40th Union World Conference on Lung Health, Mexico.
 - ii. Participation in the International AIDS Conference on TB/HIV (one conference)
 - iii. Participation in Meeting of Collaboration Institutions- WHO/UNAIDS/UNFPA (Two Meetings)
 - iv. Participation in NTP/HIV-AIDS Review in Member States (on the basis of invitation/s)
3. Production of STAC Publications
 - i. STAC Newsletters (by including News/information/reports of World TB Day, World AIDS Day of member States)- 2 issues
 - ii. SAARC Journals of TB, Lung Diseases and HIV/AIDS- 2 issues
 - iii. SAARC Epidemiological Yearly Reports (Updates) on Tuberculosis-2009
 - iv. SAARC Epidemiological Yearly Reports (Updates) on HIV/AIDS including TB/HIV Co-infection-2009
 - v. Annual Report of STAC-2008
 - vi. Technical Guidelines for Quality Assurance of Sputum Smear Microscopy
 - vii. SAARC Training Module for Quality Assurance of Sputum Smear Microscopy
 - viii. Revision and print of "SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre at a Glance"
 - ix. Wall Calendar for 2010
4. Distribution of STAC Publications.
5. Services of Professional Editor/s from Nepal as and when necessary.
6. Review of Articles of SAARC Journals of TB, Lung Diseases and HIV/AIDS.
7. Constitution and expansion Pool of experts from the Region in the field of TB, HIV/AIDS and Laboratories.

8. Engagement of Service of Professional microbiologist from the region for in house training of Laboratory staff of STAC at the Centre.
9. Engagement of Service of Expert - Epidemiologist from the region for in house training/discussion for collection and analysis and management of data
10. Strengthening of STAC library.
11. Dissemination of information of TB & HIV/AIDS by updating STAC Website, internet connectivity and Hiring a consultant for upgrading of Website.
12. Sixth Round External Proficiency testing in Reference Laboratory.
13. Procurement of chemical and other lab materials for regular works at SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Reference. Laboratory at STAC.
14. The Meeting of the Managers of the National TB and HIV/AIDS Control Programs of the Member States.
15. SAARC Regional Training of Program Managers on DOTS Plus (MDR-TB).
16. SAARC Regional Training of Microbiologist for sputum Culture/sensitivity in collaboration with NTI, Bangalore, India.
17. SAARC Regional Workshop to revise SAARC Regional Strategy on TB/HIV Co-infection.
18. SAARC Regional Training on counseling, testing, care and support and ART.
19. SAARC Training on Leadership and management skills at National/Regional level.
20. SAARC Regional Training for operation Research.
21. Situation Analysis of National TB and HIV/AIDS Control Activities in Afghanistan by STAC officials.
22. SAARC Regional Training on Data Management.
23. Conferment of SAARC Award on TB and HIV/AIDS.
24. SAARC Goodwill Ambassador's Program.

Research Activities

25. A study to determine the Constraints in involvement of Private practitioners in Sri Lanka.
26. Baselines CD4 counts in the adult population in Pakistan.
27. Estimation of under/over diagnosis of the sputum negative & extra pulmonary TB cases in TB/HIV Co-infection in resource limited settings in National Tuberculosis Institute, India.
28. Study on culture positivist amongst smear negative patients.

Report on Activities Carried out and Achievements of the Centre in 2008

1. Public Awareness & Advocacy and Partnership Programs on TB and HIV/AIDS

1.1. Partnership Programs with Industry Workers:

1.1.1. Bhaktapur Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bhaktapur, Nepal

On the occasion of World TB day 2008, SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre commemorated the day by organizing "Partnership Program with Industry" with the managerial groups and executive members of Bhaktapur Chamber of



Commerce & Industry (BCCI) involved in various types of industries in industrial complex at Byasi, Bhaktapur. The program was organized on 20th March 2008. Mr. Bibek Man Karmacharya, President, BCCI graced the program as Chief Guest and presided over by Dr. Pushpa Malla, Director, National TB Centre Thimi, Bhaktapur. The programme was attended by industrial workers and personnel at the Bhaktapur Chamber of Commerce and Industry, (BCCI), Bhaktapur.

The objectives of the partnership programs with industry workers were to make industry workers aware about causes, symptoms,

spread and prevention & control of TB & HIV/AIDS, to strengthen partnership with industries committed to spread factual information about these diseases, and to seek their cooperation and active involvement in control and prevention of TB and HIV/AIDS.

Mr. Jaya Bahadur Karki, District Health Officer, Bhaktapur district welcomed the officials from STAC, NTC, NATA, BCCI and industrial workers at the program. He highlighted the need of this partnership program to control TB in the community. He thanked STAC and BCCI for organizing such program in the Bhaktapur district.

Dr. V. S. Salhotra, Deputy Director, STAC, presented General Information and Prevention Strategy of TB. He highlighted the causes, symptoms, mode of transmission, methods of prevention as well as use of DOTS.

Dr. Lochana Shrestha, Epidemiologist explained "TB/HIV Co-infection and HIV/AIDS", its causes, symptoms, mode of transmission. She also highlighted the ways of prevention from HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STC highlighted the importance of the industrial managerial groups to prevent workers from this communicable disease in industrial set-up and to create community awareness about this disease. In addition, Dr. Jha presented "Introduction of STAC and Role of Industry-workers in Control of Tuberculosis". He highlighted the role played by Bhaktapur districts in control TB in district and urged people of this district to continue their efforts.

Mr. Bibek Man Karmacharya, President at the BCCI, Bhaktapur extended thanked to the organizer for bringing this valuable program in their complex. He mentioned about the vulnerability of industrial workers to get TB infection. On behalf of BCCI, he delivered his commitment to work with STAC and NTP for prevention and control of tuberculosis.

Dr. Pushpa Malla, Director, NTC, Nepal made a presentation on TB control program of Nepal, its success and challenges. She explained the need of collective efforts to fight against TB.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC, Dr. Pushpa Malla, Director, NTC, Dr. V. S. Salhotra, Deputy Director, STAC and Dr. Lochana Shrestha, Epidemiologist, STAC clarified the queries raised during interaction.

The program was concluded by acknowledging the warm reception & full cooperation from the President of Bhaktapur Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Mr. Dhruva Kumar Khadka, Microbiologist, STAC delivered vote of thanks at the program.

1.1.2. Partnership Program with Industry under Public-Private Mix Strategy on Prevention and Control of TB and HIV/AIDS, 31st May 2008, Male – Maldives

With a view to mobilize the corporate sector into health and social activities, the SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) organized a partnership program with the corporate sector on 31st May 2008 in Male, Maldives. Around 50 participants from members of the Police Department, nurses, guides, and students participated in the program.



Mr. Ibrahim Shaheem, Director General, Department of Public Health welcomed the participants and STAC officials. In his welcome address he highlighted the necessity of being aware about these dual infections. He thanked STAC for organizing the important program for youth of Maldives. This program was chaired by Dr. Abdul Azeez Yoosuf, Hon'ble Deputy Minister of Health, Republic of Maldives. Dr. V. S. Salhotra Deputy Director STAC and Dr. Ajith Veerakoon, Research Officer STAC presented the key information on Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, respectively.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC delivered his remarks by welcoming the participants and guests in the program. During his presentation he highlighted the role of the corporate sectors in prevention and control of TB and HIV/AIDS. He also presented an "Introduction of STAC and Activities carried out by the Centre in Controlling and Prevention of TB and HIV/AIDS".

Following presentations, participants discussed about the important issues with the experts. The expert panel consisted of Dr. Abdul Azeez Yoosuf, Hon Deputy Minister of Health, Republic of Maldives, Mr. Ibrahim Shaheem, Director General, Department of Public Health, Dr Fathimath Nadiya, Senior Registrar /Internal Medicine, Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital, Maldives, Ms. Shameema Hussain, Assistant Director General, TB Control Unit, Maldives, Dr. Kedar Narsing K.C. Regional Director of Health Services, Eastern Region, Nepal and STAC officials.

In conclusion, the Chairperson Mr. Ibrahim Shaheem, Director General, Department of Public Health, Government of Maldives thanked the participants for their active participation in the program and also thanked STAC for organizing this important event in Maldives. The session concluded with the remarks from Chief Guest, Dr. Abdul Azeez Yoosuf, Hon Deputy Minister of Health, Government of Maldives.

Outcomes

Participants updated their knowledge on TB and HIV/AIDS and strengthened their commitments to work for TB and HIV/AIDS Control Programs.

1.2. Partnership with Shraddha Nursing College, Bhaktapur



On the occasion of World AIDS Day 2008, SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre organized "Interaction Program on TB and HIV/AIDS with Nursing Teachers & Students" on prevention and control of both HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis on 30th November 2008.

The objectives of the program were to enhance the awareness on TB and HIV/AIDS diseases, their control & prevention by disseminating updated information and to seek more cooperation in control of these diseases through raising awareness and strengthening by expanding partnership for control and prevention of TB and HIV/AIDS.

Sixty Nursing and 20 Pharmacy Students attended the program. In addition Principal, panel of teachers, experts from STAC and NTC took part in the program.

The program was started with the lectures on TB and HIV/AIDS through multi media presentations and discussions under the Chairpersonship of Ms. Bimala Khadka, Principal, Shraddha Nursing College, Bhaktapur.

Mr. Jaya Bahadur Karki, DHO, Bhaktapur district delivered welcome address. He appreciated the STAC for organizing this program at Bhaktapur district from which the students of Nursing College will be highly benefited.

Dr. Lochana Shrestha, Epidemiologist, presented General Information on HIV/AIDS and prevention strategy. She highlighted the mode of transmission, symptoms, ways of prevention and risk factors for HIV infection.

Dr. V. S. Salhotra, Deputy Director, STAC urged for collaboration between two programs TB and HIV/AIDS, so that these diseases can be controlled effectively. He highlighted the general information on TB, prevention strategy to control TB. He stressed to disseminate basic information regarding TB to the general people so as to bring the suspected person in treatment as early as possible. He also added about TB and HIV co-infection, DOTS strategy and MDR TB.

Dr. S. S. Jha, Senior Medical Officer, National TB Centre presented the general information of NTP, Nepal.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC extended a warm welcome to the college staff and thanked for their cooperation and participation in this program. Subsequently he appreciated the enthusiasm shown by the students. He presented the objectives of Partnership Program of STAC with College as well as Role of students in prevention and control of TB. This presentation was followed by discussion.

SAARC Guidelines for Partnership with School, Brochure and Pamphlet on TB and HIV/AIDS etc, were distributed to the participants for their information.

Dr. Ajith P. Weerakoon, Research Officer, STAC delivered vote of thanks.

Ms. Bimala Khadka, Principal, delivered concluding remarks as Chairperson of the program. She acknowledged the activities organized by the STAC and thanked for organizing the important program in their college.

1.3. Commemoration of World TB Day & SAARC TB Day- (24th March 2008)

24th March is commemorated as World TB Day in memory of the discovery of TB bacilli, which was discovered by Dr. Robert Koch on 24th March 1882. On the occasion of 100 years anniversary, the first World TB Day was commemorated in 1982 and decided to commemorate every year on 24th March with selected theme and new slogan. Since then the World TB day is being commemorated all over the World. SAARC has also decided to commemorate SAARC TB Day on the same day. In this context, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS in collaboration with National TB Control Program, Nepal organized various activities.



The theme/slogan for the years 2008 & 2009 is "I Am Stopping TB" - which is more than a slogan. It is the start of two-year campaign that belongs to people everywhere who are doing their part to Stop TB. The theme was selected to remind everybody's responsibility & emphasize the role of a person and support to prevent spreading of TB. The campaign aims to enhance awareness of the impact of TB on the World population. It is a health issue that affects the entire community and therefore, commitment of every person in the community is essential to control this disease. On the occasion of World TB Day the following activities were carried out in collaboration with National TB Control Program, Nepal.

1. Press Conference with Media People

On the circumstances of World TB Day 2008, a Press Conference with Media People was organized on 17th March 2008 in the premises of Department of Health Services, Teku, Kathmandu. Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC presented the current status of TB control program in the SAARC Member States.

2. Partnership Program with Industries at Bhaktapur, Nepal

Partnership Program with Industry-workers with the managerial groups and executive Members of Bhaktapur Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BCCI) was organized at Byasi, Bhaktapur on 20th March 2008. (see more information in partnership report)

3. Joint Function at City hall, Kathmandu, Nepal

Hon'ble Ms. Shashi Shrestha, State Minister of Health & Population, Government of Nepal graced the occasion as Chief Guest at a joint function organized at City Hall, Kathmandu under the Chairmanship of Dr. Bishnu Prasad Pandit, Secretary, Minister of Health & Population, Government of Nepal.



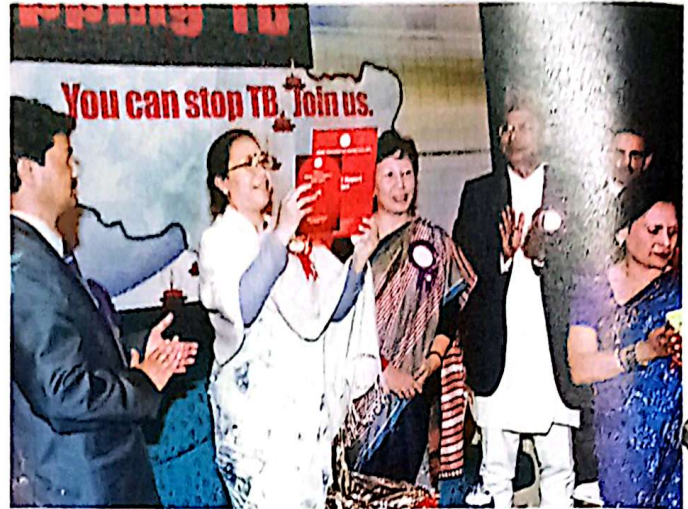
Mr. Hassan Shifau, Director, SAARC Secretariat, attended the program as a representative of His Excellency Secretary General, SAARC. Mr. Shifau quoted the Message of His Excellency on the occasion of World TB Day 2008. Large number of audience from National and International level, community leaders, social workers, students and health care providers attended the program. Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC delivered Vote of Thanks.

4. Releasing of STAC Publications

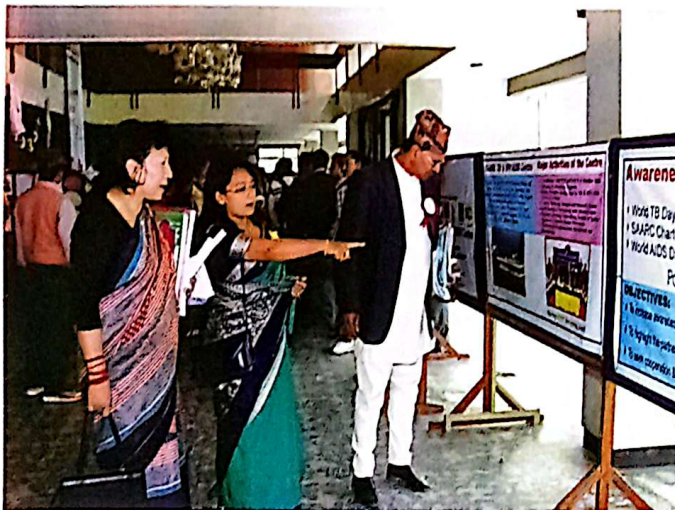
Hon'ble State Minister of Health & Population, Government of Nepal released Annual Report 2007 of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre and History of HIV/AIDS Control Program in SAARC Region published by SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre.

5. Publication of Messages

Message of His Excellency Dr. Sheel Kant Sharma, Secretary General, SAARC issued by Secretariat on the occasion of World TB Day was disseminated to all SAARC Member States and was also published in National daily "Gorkhapatra" of Nepal.



6. Exhibition of TB Control activities



On this occasion, exhibition of achievements and activities of TB control program in the SAARC Member States as well as the progress of STAC were displayed at City Hall, Kathmandu. State Minister, Secretary for Health and Population and other dignitaries of Government of Nepal along with the representatives from different organizations observed the exhibition. Brochure on TB, Pocket Calendar and Sticker with TB information to enhance the public awareness along with other publications published by STAC to create the awareness on TB, were distributed to the general people.

5. Displaying of Banners

The banners incorporating different slogans relating to TB, TB & HIV/AIDS were displayed at the important places of the city.

1.3. Commemoration of World AIDS Day (1st December)

The Day is an opportunity to give visibility to the problem and mobilize the attention of the media, so raising global awareness on the state of the epidemic. An increasing number of countries are hosting advocacy activities on World AIDS Day and governmental, non-governmental and local organizations work jointly forging partnerships against AIDS.

World AIDS day slogan for the year 2007 and 2008 was 'Stop AIDS, Keep the promise' to focus on keeping commitments to stop AIDS at all levels. Leadership has been selected by the World AIDS Campaign as the theme for World AIDS Day. This theme will continue to be promoted with the slogan "Stop AIDS, Keep the Promise"— the World AIDS Campaign (WAC) emphasis from 2005-2010.



Experience shows that in order to sustain the achievement and to expand the disease control activities, partnership with different sectors is very much essential to halve the morbidity and mortality due to these diseases.

Realizing the gravity of the problem SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre organized an "Interaction Program on TB and HIV/AIDS with Nursing Teachers & Students" on prevention and control of both HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis on the occasion of World AIDS Day 2008 at Shradha Nursing College, Bhaktapur, Nepal on 30 November 2008. (more information is given in Partnership Program)

1.4. Celebration of the 24th SAARC Charter Day (8th December)

Eighth December is the Charter Day of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). This day is a very special day for the SAARC. SAARC is a manifestation of the determination of the people of South Asia to work together towards finding solutions to their common problems in a spirit of friendship, trust and understanding and to create an order based on mutual respect, equity and shared benefits. The SAARC was established when its Charter was formally adopted on December 8, 1985 by the Heads of State or Government of Seven Countries.



Twenty-fourth SAARC Charter Day was celebrated by organizing "Interaction Program with Media in Control and Prevention of TB and HIV/AIDS" jointly by SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre and SAARC Information Centre on 8th December 2008 at Thimi, Bhaktapur.

The objectives of the partnership were;

The objectives of the partnership were;

- i) To provide information about SAARC, its aim & objectives and functions

-
- ii) To make media aware about situation of TB and HIV/AIDS, its spread and socio-economic impacts on individuals
 - iii) To strengthen partnership with media for motivating individuals and communities, mobilizing public support, influencing policy makers etc.
 - iv) To convince the media to be part of solution to fight against TB and HIV/AIDS

Journalists/media representatives from electronic and print (national level) media group of Kathmandu and Bhaktapur participated in this program. In addition, the officials from NTP, Nepal, SAARC Information centre and SAARC, National Tuberculosis Centre, Nepal also attended the program. A delegation of Bhutanese Senior Officials who were participating training at NTC also attended the Program. The program was commenced from presentations on TB and HIV/AIDS, Role of Media and Role of SAARC in prevention and control of TB and HIV/AIDS. The presentation was followed by the discussions.

Dr. V. S. Salhotra, Deputy Director, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) delivered welcome address along with the presentation on "Introduction of STAC and the situation of TB and HIV/AIDS in the SAARC Region".

Dr. Sharat Chand Verma, Senior Consultant Chest physician, NTC, Nepal presented "General Information and Achievements of NTP, Nepal".

Dr. Lochana Shrestha, Epidemiologist, STAC presented presentation on the topic on the media can mobilize public support to create awareness among the public.

Mr. Shree Dhar Gautam, Director, SAARC Information Center, Kathmandu highlighted the Role of Media for Communication and Advocacy Activities in Connection to Control of TB & HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC explained introduction of SAARC, its objective and function. SAARC is a manifestation of the determination of the people of South Asia - to work together towards finding solutions to their common problems in a spirit of friendship, trust and understanding and to create an order based on mutual respect, equity and shared benefits. He also highlighted the objectives and functions of STAC and the commitment of SAARC towards TB and HIV/AIDS in the Region.

Dr. Jha acknowledged the cooperation rendered by the Journalists for creating awareness pertaining to TB and HIV/AIDS and thanked all the participants. He urged that since the media play the vital role for awareness generation, the message dissemination through media should be appropriate, acceptable and accurate.

On behalf of the participants Mr. Atul Mishra, Senior Reporter, Kantipur National Daily presented his views on SAARC and its activities in the field of Public Health Care. He explained the activities done by media group in the area of TB and HIV/AIDS. He also added the fact that media is on the way of updating their process for communication. He thanked the experts on TB and HIV/AIDS for providing information about these diseases.

Publications including latest Newsletter, Guidelines for Partnership with Media, etc. were distributed to all the participants to disseminate update information.

The vote of thanks was delivered by Mr. D. K. Khadka, Microbiologist, STAC.

The participants thanked the organizers and expressed their solidarity in prevention and control of TB & HIV/AIDS. They also appreciated the initiative taken by STAC to work with media people in prevention and control of TB and HIV/AIDS.

Outcomes

- Participants acquainted with the SAARC and its objectives and cleared about different issues in relation to TB and HIV/AIDS.

- Media people committed to provide co-ordination and cooperation for the provision of update information regarding TB and HIV/AIDS to the general people.
- Participants acquainted with role of media for the control of TB and HIV/AIDS

2. SAARC Regional Workshop for Development of Research Protocols for 2009 and Observation of TB/HIV Coordination Mechanism 6th -9th May, 2008 Pune, India

A four day workshop for Development of Research Protocols for 2009 and observation of TB/HIV coordination mechanism was jointly organized by SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS centre (STAC) and Revised National TB Control Program (RNTCP), Government of India from 6th to 9th May 2008 in Pune India. Participants from India, Bhutan, Nepal, and Maldives attended the workshop.



Dr. S. Gupta, Incharge/Project Director, Maharashtra State AIDS Control Society, graced the Inaugural Session as Chief Guest, Dr. D. Shirole, President, Maharashtra State, Indian Medical Association, extended a warm welcome to the delegates and guests.

Dr Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC highlighted the problem of TB, HIV and TB/HIV co-infection in the SAARC region and importance of operational research in controlling this dual infection.

Dr. Rajshekhar Iyer, Medical Director, Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation also delivered his remarks.

Vote of thanks was delivered by Dr V. S. Salhotra Deputy Director, STAC.

Dr. Lochana Shrestha, Epidemiologist, STAC presented "An Overview of the SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, its Activities for Prevention and Control of TB and HIV/AIDS in the Region". Dr Ajith Weerakoon, Research Officer, STAC, presented "Objectives of the Workshop, its Methodology and Expected Outcomes".

Dr. Ashok Ladda, State TB Officer, Maharashtra, Dr. Dorji Penjor, Medical Officer, Trashgang Hospital, Bhutan, Dr. Fathimath Nadia, Senior Registrar, Internal Medicine, Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital Maldives and Mr. B. N. Gyawali, Statistical Officer, National TB Control Program, Nepal presented the situation of TB, HIV/AIDS and TB/HIV co-infection in Maharashtra State, India, Bhutan, Maldives and Nepal respectively.

Ten priority research areas were identified during group discussion and selected 8 priority research topics to develop research protocols in detail. A field visit program was arranged at Yashwantrao Chavan Memorial Hospital, Pimpri, Chinchwad Municipal Corporation and participants observed TB/HIV collaborative activities carried out in Voluntary Counseling and Testing Centre (VCTC), designated Microscopy Centre and DOTS Centre.

The drafts protocols were finalized after detailed discussions in the group which were presented by Mr. P. B. Gurung, TB In charge, Paro Hospital, Bhutan and Dr. Prakash Thapa, Senior Medical Officer, District Hospital, Doti, Nepal.

Dr. Prakash Doke, Director General of Health Services, Maharashtra State, India graced the closing session as Chief Guest and highlighted the importance of Operational Research for controlling and prevention of TB and HIV/

AIDS. Dr. V. S. Salhotra, Deputy Director, STAC summarized the priority research areas identified during workshop.

Dr Kashi Kant Jha, Director STAC, chaired the session and delivered his remarks. He thanked the participants and facilitators for their contribution to make the workshop successful. He also thanked to the Government of India, Central TB Division, State Government of Maharashtra, Dr. Ashok Ladda, State TB Officer, Maharashtra and his team for excellent arrangement and cooperation rendered to conduct this workshop. Dr Ashok Ladda, State TB Officer, Maharashtra gave his remarks. Dr. D. Shinde President, Maharashtra State, Indian Medical Association delivered vote of thanks.

Outcomes

Twenty nine participants and resource persons from different sectors related to TB/HIV of Member States of SAARC participated in this workshop. Prioritized research topics identified and research protocol on 8 identified topics were developed and recommended for implementation in 2009.

3. Meeting of Regional TB and HIV/AIDS Program Managers of SAARC Member States, 28th -29th May, 2008 Maldives

Meeting of Regional TB and HIV/AIDS Programme Managers of SAARC Member States was organized by SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC) on 28th and 29th May 2008 in Male, Maldives.

The objectives of the meeting were:

- To share the program achievements, experiences and innovation by the Member States and learn from best practices.
- Identification and suggestion of long term & short term Regional activities of STAC according to the felt needs of the Region.
- To discuss, issues and challenges faced by the Member States, and suggest possible solutions.
- To share the achievements and experiences of the Member States in TB/HIV Collaboration.



Participants from National TB Control Programs and National AIDS Control Programs of the SAARC Member States and officials from STAC attended the meeting.

Hon'ble Madam Dhunya Maumoon Abdual Gayyoom, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Maldives graced the Inaugural Session as Chief Guest and Mr. Ibrahim Shaheem, Director General, Department of Public Health extended a warm welcome to the delegates and guests. During his welcome speech he appreciated the activities conducted by STAC in relation to control and prevention of TB and HIV/AIDS. Hon'ble Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs during her speech called for intensified efforts to combat HIV/AIDS and TB in the SAARC region. In concluding her statement the Deputy Minister for Ministry of Foreign Affairs congratulated Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC and his team for the work carried out by the Centre for controlling and preventing this dual infection of TB and HIV/AIDS in the region.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC welcomed the Chief Guest & participants in the meeting and delivered his remarks. He expressed gratitude to the SAARC Member States for supporting STAC by sending participants for this meeting. He briefed about the burden of TB and HIV/AIDS and emphasized that the magnitude of the global HIV/AIDS epidemic. He also mentioned the stigma and discrimination associated with these dual infections. He added in his remarks that the development and strengthening of coordination and collaboration between TB and HIV/AIDS control programs of SAARC Member States is very essential to address the dual problems. Director, STAC also highlighted activities carried out by STAC in relation to prevention and control of TB and HIV/AIDS and achievements in SAARC Member States in this regard.



Mr. Ibrahim Shaheem, Director General, Department of Public Health, Government of Maldives thanked STAC for organizing this meeting which is very urgent to address the problem posed by HIV/AIDS in TB control program in the Region. He also thanked all the dignitaries, distinguished delegates from Member States participants and official.

A Press Conference was held following inauguration session. Hon'ble Chief Guest, Madam Dhunyaa Mamoon Abdul Gayyoom, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC, Mr. Ibrahim Shaheem, Director General, Department of Public Health and Dr. V. S. Salhotra Deputy Director STAC participated in the press conference.

Technical Session started with the presentation by Dr. V. S. Salhotra Deputy Director, STAC. He presented objectives, methodology and expected outcome of the meeting along with the initiatives on TB, HIV/AIDS and TB/HIV Co-infection of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC presented introduction of STAC and its role and functions in relation to control and prevention of TB, HIV/AIDS and TB/HIV Co-infection.

Dr. Ajith Weerakoon, Research Officer, STAC delivered a presentation on situation of TB and HIV/AIDS globally and in SAARC region along with the situation of TB/HIV co-infection.

Country presentations on TB and HIV/AIDS were delivered by the participants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan.

Participants along with the STAC officials discussed and formulated the draft recommendations.

Outcomes

- Development of Recommendations on mechanism for implementation of collaborative activities between TB and HIV/AIDS programs
- Increased awareness about situation of TB/HIV co-infection in the SAARC Region and importance of collaboration between two programs among the participants.

4. SAARC Seminar to Collaborate and Support Cross Border Activities in Controlling TB and HIV/AIDS, 25th – 26th June 2008 Pakistan



Cross-border problems in health such as HIV/AIDS, TB, Malaria and Kala-azar have emerged as major public health concerns along the international borders inter alia due to migration, inadequate and inefficient health delivery, and lack of coordination in the implementation of program activities.

Mainly the migration brings the problem across the border. To tackle this problem there should be strengthening of the cross border control activities in these areas. Not only for HIV, since there is overlap of problem between TB and HIV, the response to the problem of TB and migration is also needed. There is a

requirement of good collaboration and coordination between the implementing partners on TB and HIV/AIDS across the borders so that the targeted action will reach the target groups with effective results. A number of prerequisite decisions, activities and developments need to occur at the highest levels prior to implementation of cross border TB and HIV/AIDS control initiatives.

As these diseases are spreading rapidly between the SAARC Member Countries through the national borders causing human suffering and tragedies, Government of Member States of SAARC had taken it as a serious concern and acknowledged to initiate measures for cross border control.

Accordingly STAC organized workshops in 2007 in New Delhi to discuss technical policies and operational issues related to cross border disease control with development of recommendations for operationalizing cross border interventions. To review the cross border disease situation currently and responses made by each program to control cross border problems and to achieve the following objectives STAC organized "SAARC Seminar to Collaborate and Support Cross Border Activities in Controlling TB and HIV/AIDS" on 25th - 26th June 2008 in Pakistan.

The Objectives of the seminar were:

- To develop/strengthen coordination & collaboration mechanisms for cross border activities
- To review the cross border activities ongoing in between the SAARC Member States

Representatives from National TB Control Program and National HIV/AIDS Control Program of Afghanistan, India, Nepal and Pakistan attended the seminar.

In the seminar the following resource materials were used as reference and source information:

- WHO publications on Cross Border issues on TB and HIV/AIDS.
- Report of "SAARC Regional workshop to Develop/Strengthen Mechanism for Cross Border Activities in Controlling TB and HIV/AIDS" organized in New Delhi, India from 10th – 12th September 2007.

Dr. Noor Ahmed Baloch, National Manager, NTP, Pakistan chaired the opening session and Mr. Mohammed Hassan, Director, SAARC Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan graced the session as Chief Guest.

Dr. Shahid Hanif, Deputy Program Manager, NTP, Pakistan, delivered welcome address.

Dr. V. S. Salhotra, Deputy Director, SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre, Nepal presented objectives of seminar.

Dr. Shahid Hanif presented the situation of TB in Pakistan and the responses taken by NTP, Pakistan. In addition he highlighted the cross border issues in TB control program in Pakistan, priority areas and challenges to tackle the issues.

Representative from NACP, Pakistan presented the cross border issues on HIV/AIDS and strategies followed to handle the issues.

Dr. Baloch, presented his valuable remarks with focus on importance of mechanism and strategies to tackle the cross border issues. He added in his remarks that the development and strengthening of coordination and collaboration between TB and HIV/AIDS control programs of SAARC Member States is very essential to address the dual problems across the borders.

Mr. Mohammed Hassan, Director, SAARC Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Govt. of Pakistan, presented the role of SAARC Division, in Member States to conduct the activities in relation to different issues in SAARC region and also ensured the commitment of the Government of Pakistan for the coordination in organizing the SAARC activities in the Member States. He expressed his best wishes for the successful completion of the meeting and pleasant stay of participants in Islamabad, Pakistan and thanked STAC for organizing this important seminar which is very urgent to address the problem posed by HIV/AIDS and TB in the Region.

Dr. Lochana Shrestha, Epidemiologist, STAC, delivered vote of thanks.

In the technical session, Dr. V. S. Salhotra, Deputy Director, SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre, Nepal, presented the introduction of SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Center and its activities in relation to TB and HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Lochana Shrestha, Epidemiologist, SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre presented the status of TB, HIV/AIDS and MDR-TB globally and in SAARC region along with the progress achieved in relation to global targets on TB control by SAARC region and its Member States.

Dr. Saifur Rehman, NACP, Director, Afghanistan presented about Health Situation, Health System, HIV/AIDS Situation in Afghanistan and responses taken by National HIV/AIDS Control Program. He shared the cross border collaboration activities like establishment of treatment centers and drop in centers in different provinces of Afghanistan with development of networking with UNHCR, WFP and IOM.

Dr. Shahwali Maroofi, NTP Director, Afghanistan presented the situation of TB and status of achievements in relation to TB control activities in Afghanistan. He highlighted the initiation of cross border activities under TB control program in the border provinces with the support from CIDA. He urged to plan the activities on cross border in Pakistan so that it would be comfortable to control the problems on cross border issues with the implementation of collaborative activities from both sides in both bordering areas.

Dr. Kuldeep Singh Sachdeva, Chief Medical Officer, NTP, India presented the status, achievements and challenges in TB control in India.

Dr. Ajay Kumar Khara, Joint Director, NACO, India presented an overview of National AIDS Control program in India. He also highlighted the salient findings of HIV Sentinel Surveillance 2007, Integrated Counseling Treatment Centers (ICTCs) services, Prevention of Parent to Child Transmission (PPTCT) services, ART services and STI services. He also added the problems faced due to cross border issues on implementation of activities in India.

Dr. Jhalak Sharma Gautam, District Health Officer, NTP, Nepal presented the situation of TB, responses and challenges faced by National TB Control program of Nepal.

Mr. Naeem Akhtar, Sociologist/BCC Coordinator, NACP, Pakistan presented about National AIDS Control Program of Pakistan with focusing on different components of Revised PC-1 (2008-2012). He added that under the priority prevention activities to control HIV/AIDS in Pakistan different packages of activities on Behavior Change Communication (BCC) focused on migration has been implemented successfully in border areas of Pakistan.

Subsequently, participants divided into two groups to note the different issues in relation to cross border problems in TB and HIV/AIDS control program and to propose the plan of action in both the program of Member States.

Discussion on issues between the participants was held before drafting of recommendations. Based on the discussion the following recommendations were made on cross border issues on TB and HIV/AIDS for both National TB Control Program and National HIV/AIDS Control Program in SAARC Member States.

Recommendations:

1. Situation Analysis on TB and HIV/AIDS problems among migrant population in the SAARC Region involving international bodies like UNHCR, IOM, International Red Cross society, WHO etc.
2. Development of Strategy, policy, action plan and monitoring mechanism on cross border activities to control TB and HIV/AIDS in the SAARC region.
3. National TB Control Program and National AIDS Control Program of member countries should give priority to cross border activity to control TB and HIV/AIDS.
4. Scale up the capacity building and advocacy activities focusing cross border issues on TB and HIV/AIDS in neighboring districts of member countries.
5. Involvement of local stake holders (e.g. UNICEF, WHO, UNAIDS etc.) working on TB and HIV/AIDS control in the SAARC Meetings, Seminars, and Workshops.
6. Notification of deported TB and HIV/AIDS cases within and out of the SAARC Region to the relevant authority of the host country and development of mechanism for counseling these cases in the host country.
7. Development of Joint intervention strategy involving neighboring member states of SAARC region to control TB and HIV/AIDS among truckers.
8. In order to control HIV/AIDS among MSM, need advocacy on initiation of activities focusing on this high risk group in member States.
9. Development of mechanism for inter-ministerial collaboration within the member countries of SAARC region.
10. To deal the cross border issues development of mechanism and policy on exchange of technical expertise on TB and HIV/AIDS between the member states.
11. Development of steering committee at program level to deal the emerging issues on TB and HIV/AIDS.
12. Development of monitoring frame work with indicators on cross border activities related to TB and HIV/AIDS Control and endorsement from member states.

Proposed Cross Border Activities for Member States to control TB and HIV/AIDS

1. Multidisciplinary advocacy on cross border issues related to TB and HIV/AIDS
2. Capacity building of health personnel and establishment of infrastructure like Drop in Centers, VCTs in the bordering districts
3. Priority for monitoring the cross border activities based on program performance and disease impact indicators in the bordering districts

Outcomes

Development of coherent recommendations for cross border activities on TB and HIV/AIDS with active participation of representatives of both National TB and HIV/AIDS Control programs of Member States.

5. SAARC Regional Training of Trainers on Essential Technical & Operational Aspects for Management of Drug Resistant Tuberculosis (DOTS Plus) 1st to 5th July 2008, Nepal

Human resource development is essential to implement, sustain and scale up TB control activities. For the development of human resources training is vital. Training is one of the fundamental components of Tuberculosis Control Program and becomes more important when DOTS is being implemented.

At this stage when DOTS is being implemented in full swing in each Member State with almost 100 percent population coverage, attention is to be given towards management of Multiple Drug Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR-TB) cases, for which WHO has recommended second line anti-TB drugs under DOTS-PLUS strategy.



The DOTS PLUS program offers second line drug treatment to patients who have failed first line Drug re-treatment (CAT-II) or who have culture proven MDR-TB, with Drug Susceptibility Testing (DST) showing resistance to at least Rifampicin and Isoniazid. The ultimate goal of the DOTS-PLUS is to reduce the mortality, the morbidity and the transmission of tuberculosis from these chronic patients.

Considering the importance of DOTS PLUS strategy SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre organized Training of Trainers on Essential Technical & Operational Aspects for Management of Drug Resistant Tuberculosis (DOTS Plus) in Kathmandu, Nepal from 1st to 5th July 2008 in collaboration with National TB Centre, Ministry of Health and Population, Government of Nepal.

The **Objectives** of the Training were:

To strengthen the capacity of the participants in managing MDR-TB and imparting training to health care providers in this respect

To strengthen the capacity of the participants in designing, implementation and monitoring of DOTS- PLUS and imparting training to health care providers in this respect.

This was modular training based on the Manual (cum-module) "SAARC Regional Training of Trainers on Technical and Operational aspects for Management of Drug resistant TB (DOTS-PLUS Program)" for the Training of Trainers in DOTS-PLUS developed by STAC on the basis of DOTS PLUS Manual of National Tuberculosis Program (NTP), Nepal, India DOTS-PLUS Manuals and WHO Guidelines for the management of Multi-Drug Resistance TB. Along with the manual, technical presentations, interaction, discussions & solving of exercises by the participants were also used. Field visit to DOTS-PLUS Centre, DOTS PLUS Sub-Centre and DOTS PLUS Reference Lab were organized.

Participants from National TB Control programs of Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka participated in the training. Handouts and soft copies of presentations and training module were provided to each participant and resource person.

Dr. Bishnu Prasad Pandit, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Population, Government of Nepal graced the occasion as Chief Guest, Dr. Govinda Prasad Ojha, Director General, Department of Health Services, Government of Nepal as Chairperson and Dr. Mahesh Kumar Maskey, Chairman, Nepal Health Research Council as Guest of Honour in opening session of this training. Mr. Hassan Shifau, Director, SAARC Secretariat participated in this session.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC delivered welcome address and highlighted the situation of TB and MDR TB cases in the SAARC region. He also explained the progress in TB control in the region since implementation of the DOTS strategy. He mentioned about the problem of MDR-TB in the region and need of organizing ToT for MDR-TB management. He also highlighted the activities done by STAC and its future plan. He expressed gratitude to the Member States, Secretary, Ministry of Health and Population, Chairman-NHRC, Director General, Department of Health Services, Nepal, Director, SAARC Secretariat, Director, NTC, Officials from Government of Nepal and the participants as well as resource persons for gracing the occasion.

Dr. Bishnu Prasad Pandit inaugurated the training and mentioned the achievement of TB Control Program of Nepal. He emphasized that sustaining the DOTS strategy will minimize the chances of development of MDR-TB. Dr. Pandit appreciated the role played by STAC and NTC in control of TB and thanked to the Member States for giving opportunity to Nepal to hold this training.

Dr. Pushpa Malla, Director, NTC briefed the DOTS-PLUS Programme of NTP, Nepal. Dr. Malla explained the challenges being faced by NTP, Nepal in implementation of DOTS-PLUS.

Dr. Padam Bahadur Chand, Director, National Center for AIDS and STD Control (NCASC), Nepal expressed the urgency of training. Dr. Alexander Andjaparidze, WHO representative to Nepal highlighted the importance of DOTS PLUS programme. He assured that the WHO is ready to provide any sort of support to reduce the transmission of MDR-TB cases in the region. He appreciated the efforts made by STAC and SAARC to control the MDR TB cases in the region at a large.

Mr. Hassan Shifau, Director, SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu urged to fight against the new challenges in relation to TB and MDR-TB collectively.

Dr. Mahesh Kumar Maskey, Guest of Honour of the opening session and Chairperson of the Nepal Health Research Council, Kathmandu shared his opinion on importance of controlling the determining factors at the ground level, creating this problem in parallel with strengthening the human resources for the good management of cases.

Dr. V. S. Salhotra, Deputy Director, STAC delivered the vote of thanks.

Technical session began with the presentations from Dr. K. K. Jha on Introduction of STAC, Dr. Lochana Shrestha, Epidemiologist on objectives and methodology of training, Dr. Ajith Weerakoon, Research Officer, presented Global/SAARC situation of TB/MDR-TB. Dr. Rohit Sarin, AMS, LRS Institute, New Delhi, India presented the scenario of DOTS PLUS Program of RNTCP, India and DOTS PLUS Project of LRS Institute, New Delhi.

Mr. D. K. Khadka, Microbiologist, STAC, presented Lab-network, TB Culture & DST in relation to DOTS PLUS. He emphasized the establishment of quality assured NRL is the most important aspect before introducing DOTS Plus Program.

Dr. Rani B. Subramanian, WHO/SEARO, New Delhi, India presented "Treatment strategies on DOTS PLUS. She also shared the experiences in relation to management of MDR-TB and researches in connection to MDR-TB in India and other countries also.

Dr. Rohit Sarin, AMS, LRS Institute, New Delhi presented "Challenges in DOTS PLUS" which made the participants aware regarding need of solid preparedness to initiate DOTS PLUS program.

The participants Visited DOTS Plus Sub-Centre of Nepal Anti TB Association, GENETUP Kalimati and DOTS-PLUS Centre of NTC at Bhaktapur

Dr Rohit Sarin expressed the importance of this sort of trainings in relation to MDR-TB in the region and thanked STAC for organizing and maintaining this training in international standard. Dr. Rani expressed her gratitude to STAC for providing opportunity to come to Nepal and also she advised to add program evaluation (pre-test as well as post test) components in the training to make training more effective.

Dr. K. K. Jha, Director, STAC, distributed the Certificates and Souvenirs to the resource persons and participants. He expressed gratitude to Governments of SAARC Member States and SAARC Secretariat for support and cooperation to making this training a great success.

Outcomes

Participants from Member States have been trained for the Management of Drug Resistant Tuberculosis (diagnosis and treatment of MDR-TB patients). They would be able to impart trainings to health care providers working at different level of health facilities and implement DOTS Plus Program and its evaluation in their respective countries.

6. SAARC Regional Training of Microbiologists for Sputum Culture and Drug Susceptibility Test, 14th – 18th July 2008, India

SAARC Regional TB Reference Laboratory (STRL) has been established with the aim to support National TB Reference Laboratories (NRLs) in the area of External Quality Assessment (EQA) of microscopy, culture and DST, HIV testing and implementation of international laboratory Bio-safety measures in SAARC Member States. In addition, STRL will be conducting training of different categories of laboratory personnel, undertake operational research studies for early diagnosis of tuberculosis, early detection of multi drug resistance tuberculosis MDR-TB.



For this purpose, capacity building of STRL itself is very important, so that it could be able to support the activities of the Ten identified National TB Reference Laboratories (NRLs) of eight SAARC Member States (one each from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka and two each from India and Pakistan). For the purpose, it has been planned to conduct training for Microbiologists from each of the ten National TB Reference Laboratories (NRLs).

SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre organized a training program for the Microbiologists on TB culture and DST with collaboration of National TB Institute (NTI), Bangalore (NRL, India) from 14th – 18th July 2008.

The objectives of the training were:

- To enhance the knowledge and skills of the Microbiologists in diagnosing and monitoring of the treatment efficacies of TB or MDR-TB and imparting trainings to health care providers in this respect
- To improve the status of the NRLs to provide TB culture and DST services and participate in DRS activities.

The training was based on WHO/IUATLD Guidelines on Culture and DST, DRS based on country specific DRS Protocol, NTI training curriculum for culture and DST, Power Point Presentations, Observation of different sections of NRL, Practical sessions and Discussions & exercises. Pre-test and post-test examination and evaluation of the training was done.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC, Kathmandu, Dr. P. Kumar, Director, NTI, Bangalore, Dr. N. Selvakumar, Deputy Director, TRC, Chennai Dr. V. S. Salhotra, Deputy Director, STAC, Kathmandu, Mr. Dhruva Kumar Khadka, Microbiologist, STAC, Kathmandu attended the Inaugural Session.

Altogether 19 participants from Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Maldives and Nepal attended the training.

Dr. P. Kumar, Director, NTI, highlighted the importance of this training and thanked STAC for selecting NTI as the venue for training.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC delivered welcome speech and briefed the role of STAC, SAARC TB Reference Laboratory in the Region and role of quality assured laboratory services. He also highlighted the MDR-TB burden in the world and in the Region. He emphasized the strengthening of NRL networking and explored the plan of establishing SRL at STAC. He reviewed the importance of development of Human Resources, a strengthened quality lab services for which training/retraining/supervision of such kind was very vital. Dr. Jha expressed gratitude to the Member States for sending participants. He thanked Dr. Kumar for his cooperation and Dr. Selvakumar and other Facilitators for their cooperation and support.

Dr. N. Selvakumar, Deputy Director, TRC expressed his view related to Laboratory Scientists in Reference laboratories in SAARC Members States in diagnosis, treatment, monitoring and research of tuberculosis. He also presented "Overviews of Culture and DST".

Dr. V. S. Salhotra, Deputy Director, STAC welcomed participants on behalf of STAC for sharing experiences. He expressed his thanks to Director and all other staff of NTI.

Mr. D. K. Khadka, Microbiologist, STAC, expressed the importance of high quality laboratory services in DOTS, DOTS Plus and whole NTP in SAARC Region.

Dr. Pritish Vaidyanathan, NTI delivered vote of thanks on behalf of NTI and the STAC.

Pre-test/post test examinations were taken at the beginning and at the end of the training.

Ms. Reena Kingsbury, Jr. Bacteriologist, NTI presented "Overviews of Mycobacteriology".

The participants were trained through Modular reading with the help of facilitators and presentations on training.

Participants visited NTI laboratory to observe sample collection/registration, MB Bact system (especially for research purpose), Microscopy section (Ziehl - Neelsen and fluorescence), culture section. Ms. Reena K. facilitated different steps and necessary precautions, use of equipments, glassware, chemical and reagents, washing and sterilization, disposal of laboratory wastages etc.

At the conclusion, Dr. P. Kumar, Director, NTI thanked the Participants for successfully completing the training. He pointed out the importance of trained manpower for TB laboratory. He thanked STAC for selecting NTI as a training venue.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director STAC, emphasized the role of laboratory services in NTP especially in research activities. Dr. Jha added that in future, more cooperation would be needed among STAC, NTI, TRC and all the NRLs of the Member States to control TB in proper manner.

Certificates were distributed to Participants, Facilitators and Resource Persons. Mr. D. K. Khadka, Microbiologist, STAC delivered vote of thanks.

7. SAARC Training on Technical and Operational Aspects of Anti - Retro Viral Therapy, 20th - 24th August 2008, Sri Lanka

The progress has been made in the region on scaling up HIV antiretroviral treatment since November 2003 when the WHO "3 by 5" initiative was launched. Over three years, the number of people started on treatment increased from 18000 to 178000; almost a ten fold increase. However, there are wide variations in ART coverage rates among SAARC Member States.

Human resource development is essential component to implement, sustain and scale up HIV/AIDS control activities. To develop sufficient number of trained professionals and health workers working for prevention and



control of HIV/AIDS focusing on ART management in the Member States, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, Kathmandu organized Training on Technical and Operational Aspects of Anti -Retro Viral Therapy in Colombo, Sri Lanka from 20th - 24th August 2008 in collaboration with National STD and AIDS Control Program (NSACP), Ministry of Health and Nutrition, Government of Sri Lanka.

The **Objectives** of the training were:

- To strengthen the skills of the participants in managing HIV infected people who need ART treatment
- To strengthen the capacity of the participants in implementation and monitoring of ART Program and imparting training to health care providers in this respect

This was modular training based on the Manual (cum-module) **Technical & Operational Training Module: Anti-Retro Viral Therapy for Management of HIV Infection in Adults & Adolescents** for the Training of Doctors involved in ART management. This Module was developed by STAC based on WHO Guidelines on ART, 2006 revision, and National ART guidelines of India, Pakistan and Nepal. Along with the manual, Technical Presentations, Interaction, Discussions, Sharing the experiences and Observation of field activities were also involved.

The training was facilitated with the help of Resource persons from India and Sri Lanka who have expertise for ART treatment. Soft copy of each presentation and training module were provided by STAC to each participant and resource person. Fifteen participants from NSACP of Sri Lanka attended in this training.

Dr. Sujatha Mananwatha, Acting Director, National STD/AIDS Control Program welcomed the participants and officials by delivering welcome remarks. She highlighted the situation of HIV in Sri Lanka and progress in HIV control since its inception in the country. She thanked STAC for conducting this training in Sri Lanka.

Ms. Thiloma Abeyjeewa, Deputy Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (SAARC Division), Sri Lanka, presented remarks on SAARC perspective in relation to control of infectious diseases in the region. She expressed her happiness that HIV Goodwill Ambassadors were selected from India and Sri Lanka to increase the awareness for control of HIV/AIDS in region.

Dr. S. Rajasekaran, Medical Superintendent, Govt. Hospital of Thoracic Medicine, Tambaram, India presented the importance of this sort of training for the human resource development for the control of HIV problems.

Dr. V. S. Salhotra, Deputy Director, SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre mentioned about the problem of HIV in the region and need of organizing this training for ART management. He also highlighted the activities done by STAC and its future plan. He expressed gratitude to the Ministry of Health and Nutrition, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Sri Lanka, Program Managers, NSACP, the Participants as well as Resource Persons for gracing the occasion.

The message of Dr. Athula Kahanda Liyanage, Secretary, Ministry of Health, Government of Sri Lanka was quoted in the opening session of the training.

Dr. Lochana Shrestha, Epidemiologist, STAC delivered the vote of thanks.

Technical session began with the Module Reading along with the presentations.

Dr. V. S. Salhotra, Deputy Director, STAC presented "Introduction of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre", Dr. Ajith Weerakoon, Research Officer highlighted the objectives and methodology of training, Dr. Lochana Shrestha, Epidemiologist presented the Global/SAARC situation of HIV and TB/HIV Co-infection.

Dr. S. Rajasekaran presented the scenario of ART Program of NACO, India and ART implementation experiences.

Dr. Richa Dewan, Professor & Head of Dept. of Medicine, Maulana Azad Medical College, India presented "Treatment Strategies on ART". She expressed the need of team and their commitment for the effective delivery of ART services

The next presentation was by Dr. Rajasekaran on Prioritizing second Line ART Drugs for Adults. He explained different categories of ART treatment failures. He focused on importance of perfect diagnosis of treatment failure and preparedness both from patients and provider sides to initiate second line treatment.

The participants were trained through Modular reading with the help of facilitators and presentations on important components of ART delivery.

Participants visited NSACP for interaction on different components of service delivery. Two field reports were produced in relation to ART management under NSACP and achievements of NSACP. Dr. Himali Priyantha Perera, Senior Registrar, NSACP presented management for ART delivery in the HIV clinic. Dr. Manoji presented about Sri Lankan Scenario of NSACP achievements. Dr. Kulasiri Buddhikorale, Consultant Venereologist, NSACP delivered presentation on Logistic Management of Drugs, Supplies of NSACP

Dr. Nimal Edrisinghe, Director, NSACP, Sri Lanka graced the closing sessions as Chief Guest. He distributed the Certificates to the Participants and Resource Persons. He thanks STAC and NSACP staff for making this training a great success.

Outcomes

Participants acquainted with the problems of HIV/AIDS and ART treatment along with the strengthened the skills of Doctors of NSACP for ART delivery. They would be able to impart trainings to health care providers working at different level of health facilities and implement ARV therapy.

8. SAARC Training on Technical and Operational Aspects of Anti Retro Viral Therapy, 10th - 14th November 2008, Bangladesh

SAARC Training on Technical and Operational Aspects of Anti Retro Viral Therapy was jointly organized by SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC), Kathmandu and National AIDS/STD Program, Government of Bangladesh in Dhaka from 10th - 14th November 2008.

The **objectives** of the program were:

To strengthen the skills of the participants in managing HIV infected people who need ART treatment

To strengthen the capacity of the participants in implementation and monitoring of ART Program and imparting training to health care providers in this respect.



Nineteen participants from various governmental and non governmental organizations of Bangladesh participated in the training.

Prof. Hosneara Tahmin, Acting Director General of Health Services, Government of Bangladesh graced the inaugural session as the Chief Guest.

Dr. Ferdous Alam Shibib, Program, Manager/Acting Line Director National AIDS/STD Program, Bangladesh Chaired the session. He welcomed the participants, officials of Government of Bangladesh and staff of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre (STAC), Kathmandu. In his welcome address he highlighted the importance of the workshop. He thanked STAC for organizing the important training to Medical Officers in Bangladesh.

The participants, resource persons and staff gave their introduction before starting of remarks.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC delivered the welcome address. He briefed about the necessity of human resource development to implement, sustain and scale up HIV/AIDS control activities (i.e. training on Anti Retro Viral therapy). He also highlighted activities carried out by STAC in relation to prevention and control of TB and HIV/AIDS and achievements in SAARC Member Countries in this regards.

Dr. S. Rajasekaran, ART Consultant, National AIDS Control Organization, (NACO) India and resource person for the training highlighted the importance of Anti Retro Viral Therapy in order to prolong the life and improve the quality of life in people living with HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Md. Ishaque Ali, Acting Line Director, National TB and Leprosy Control Program, Government of Bangladesh delivered his remarks. Dr. Hosneara Tahim, Acting Director General of Health Services, Government of Bangladesh and the Chief Guest of Opening Session delivered her remarks. She congratulated to the Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC and his team for the work carried out by the centre for controlling and preventing TB and HIV/AIDS in the region.

Dr. Ferdous Alam Shibib delivered the Chairman's remarks in the opening session of the training program. He thanked STAC for organizing this important training which is very urgent to address the problem posed by HIV/

AIDS in Bangladesh. He also mentioned even though Bangladesh is a low prevalence country for HIV/AIDS there is a no room for complacency because all the risk factors for HIV/AIDS are existing in the country.

Dr. V. S. Salhotra, Deputy Director, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, Kathmandu delivered the Vote of Thanks on behalf of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, Kathmandu

Dr. Hassan Mahmud, Deputy Program Manager, NASP conducted the program as Master of Ceremony.

The Technical sessions started with the presentations from Dr. V. S. Salhotra Deputy Director, STAC. He presented introduction of STAC and objectives, methodology and expected outcome of the training.

Dr. Ferdous Alam Shibib, Program Manager/Acting line Director National AIDS/STD Program presented situation of HIV/AIDS in Bangladesh.

Dr S. Rajasekaran, ART Consultant National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) India and resource person for the training presented Epidemiology and Indian experience of ART implementation.

Dr Ajith Weerakoon Research Officer, STAC delivered a presentation on situation of HIV/AIDS globally and in SAARC region along with the situation of TB/HIV co-infection and ART delivery mechanism currently existing in the Member Countries of the SAARC Region.

The training started with the evaluation of participants' knowledge by administering a pre test based on Manual on "Technical and Operational Aspects of Anti Retro Viral Therapy" prepared by STAC.

All the participants were enthusiastic to read the manual, discussed on their own questions and tried to find out the appropriate solutions. Facilitators discussed with the participants various problems and helped them to consult the exact versions mentioned on training manual.

Dr. S. Rajasekeran made presentations on "TB/HIV Co infection" "Adverse Effects of ART and "Second line ART drugs".

All the participants and facilitators visited for Ashar Alo Society and Jagori, ICDDR, B to observe their functioning.

In Ashar Alo Society, Dr. N. Begum, briefed about the functions of the centre and facilities available to PLWHA.

Post test was carried out in afternoon.

Mr. Abul Kalam Azad, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of Bangladesh graced the Closing Session as Chief Guest. He extended thanks to STAC, Resource Persons and participants from all over the Bangladesh and all supporting staff for their hard work to make the workshop successful. Mr. Azad distributed certificates to the participants and facilitators.

In this session presentations on field visits at Asha Alo Centre and Jagori ICDDR-B were presented.

Dr. Ferdous Alam Shibib, Program Manager/Acting line Director National AIDS/STD Program, delivered his remarks and thanked all participants and organizers for the success of the program.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha highlighted the importance of this workshop and thanked the participants for their enthusiasm and devotion. He expressed gratitude on behalf of STAC to the Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Health, National AIDS Control Program and participants for valuable contributions for the completion of the training program successfully.

On behalf of the participants Dr. Asif Mujtaba Mahmud, thanked to the Dr. S. Rajasekeran, Resource Person and STAC for organizing the important workshop and highlighted the benefit that they obtained from this workshop.

Dr. Md. Ishaque Ali, Deputy Director, National TB and Leprosy Control Program and Dr. S. Rajasekaran, ART Consultant, NACO, India gave their remarks and appreciated for excellent arrangements of the Workshop by SATC and National AIDS /STD Control Program, Bangladesh.

Mr. Azad distributed certificates to the participants and facilitators.

Dr. V. S. Salhotra, Deputy Director presented the vote of thanks.

The closing session was presided over by the Dr. Ishaq Khan, Line Director, National AIDS/STD Program, Government of Bangladesh.

Outcome

Out come of the training was assessed by pre and post test evaluation. The mean knowledge score of the pre test was 46.4 with the range of 15 and 75, in post test 90.8 with minimum 65 to maximum 100. During Post test evaluation out of 19 participants, seven scored 100%. The results show that participants were successfully trained on Technical and Operational aspects of Anti Retro Viral Therapy.

9. SAARC Second Conference on TB, HIV/AIDS & Respiratory Diseases 15th – 18th December 2008, Nepal

Year 2004 was designated as SAARC Awareness Year for TB and HIV/AIDS. SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre organized special activities and awareness programs at larger scale and reinforced awareness campaign to move towards Millennium Development Goals. SAARC Second Conference on TB, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases was a continuum of this campaign. The centre organized First SAARC conference on TB, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases in 2004. The event achieved its objectives and over the time period outcome too. One of the recommendations of first conference was to organize SAARC Second conference on TB, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases. With the theme of "Working Together to Fight against TB, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases", the Centre organized SAARC Second Conference on TB, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases in Kathmandu on 15th – 18th December 2008.



More than Six hundred participants and 50 Regional and International Resource Persons and Program Managers participated in the conference. More than 200 scientific papers were presented in the conference. PLHAs working for the PLHA networks were invited to attend the conference, and more than 10 PLHAs attended the conference. The Conference was conducted from 15th to 18th December 2008 in Kathmandu.

The **Objectives** of the conference were:

To disseminate new research on TB, HIV/AIDS & Respiratory Diseases, sharing the experiences of program implementation, research & innovations and generating awareness on the urgency of tackling TB, HIV/AIDS and TB/HIV co-infection.

Inaugural Session

Rt. Hon'ble Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Prime Minister, Government of Nepal graced the session as Chief Guest and inaugurated the Conference by lighting the Traditional Lamp "Panas". Hon'ble Mr. Girirajmani Pokharel, Minister for Health & Population, Government of Nepal chaired the session.



The proceedings started with presentation of Conference Badges to the dignitaries. Consequently, a welcome address was delivered by Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre. He highlighted the problem of Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases and emphasized that although; a lot of work has been done for tackling the problems, however, a lot more is required to be done.

The Chief Guest Rt. Hon'ble Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal, the Chairperson, Hon'ble Mr. Girirajmani Pokharel and His Excellency, Dr. Sheel Kant Sharma, Secretary General,

SAARC released the publications of STAC - TB & HIV Updates and Salient features of TB & HIV/AIDS Control Programs of SAARC Member States.

His Excellency, Dr. Sheel Kant Sharma during his inaugural address highlighted the problems of Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and TB-HIV Co-infection within the SAARC Region and stressed on the need of strengthening and scaling up of the Health Services.

Dr. D. S. Bam, Secretary for Health, Ministry of Health & Population Government of Nepal, during his inaugural address stressed the need for strengthening Primary Health Care infrastructure and allocation of adequate resources for effective and efficient health care delivery. He congratulated SAARC Secretariat and SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre for organizing the Conference at a very important time.

Rt. Hon'ble Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal during this inaugural address expressed his satisfaction on the outstanding contributions from all sectors and major progress made by Member States in the region over the last decade. He emphasized that with this strong foundation, acceleration of efforts is required to sustain and expand effective measures with new vaccines, diagnostics and drugs to effectively control these devastating infectious diseases. He stressed that to achieve the long term goal to eliminate TB by 2050, all Member States must first achieve the goal set for 2015 and pay attention to other factors impacting these diseases like poverty, housing, work environment and malnutrition and influenced by socio-economic inequalities like marginalization, Illiteracy, stigma and discrimination.

He highlighted that "Lead-Empower-Deliver" the slogan of World AIDS Day should be reflected into effective action for the benefit of the needy people. He assured that Government is determined to build partnerships with all the sectors and affected people in this fight. This is the opportune time for consolidating past successes and instituting new interventions. We have to think for more investments in human resource capacity building and infrastructure development especially at community level to reach the un-reached and serve the under-served. He congratulated SAARC for undertaking many exemplary works for the upliftment of the life of the people of the region and emphasized that SAARC has opened new areas of opportunities for the cooperation among our countries of the Region.

Hon'ble Mr. Girirajmani Pokharel during his address as Chairperson expressed his gratitude to the Chief Guest Rt. Hon'ble Prime Minister for his gracious presence and inaugurating the Conference in spite of his busy schedule. He expressed his views that deliberations during this conference will provide participants with necessary information and updates, experiences and views, new inventions, as well as new ideas for planning future steps to further strengthen the ongoing efforts and responses to tackle these diseases. He expressed his desire that this conference of eminent experts, scientists, stakeholders and developmental partners from the region



and abroad, will serve as very useful forum to review progress, to address common constraints, share experiences and best practices, identify priorities and plan the next steps for effective implementation to combat these diseases.

Dr. Virender Singh Salhotra, Deputy Director, STAC delivered vote of thanks.

Technical session

Technical sessions on TB, HIV/AIDS, Tobacco and Respiratory Diseases were organized on 16th to 18th December, 2008. Apart from the presentation of important Research Papers by the participants.

The following Technical Sessions were organized:

Plenary Sessions on:

- MDR & XDR TB
- Molecular Biological Techniques for TB Diagnosis
- Country Presentations on National Tuberculosis Control Programs
- Guest Lectures on HIV/AIDS

Topics and Speakers

- Management of HIV and TB: Issues and Solutions - By Dr. S. Rajasekaran, Superintendent, Govt. Hospital of Thoracic Medicine, Tambaram Sanatorium, Chennai, India.
- Multi-sectoral response on HIV/AIDS: Some experiences from APACHA - By Mr. Prabodh Devkota, Asian People's Alliance for Combating HIV/AIDS (APACHA)
- Speak out pictures..... "Fortunate Drug Users?" - By Mr. Kanchan Jha, Executive President, Sano Paila
- Skills Building Workshop: HIV prevention programming for and with most-at risk and especially vulnerable adolescents, (MARA and EVA) in South Asia
- Laboratory Demonstration on Molecular Technique for Rapid Results in TB Diagnostics
- Plenary Session - Country Presentations on National HIV/AIDS Control Programs
- Plenary Session - Guest Lectures on Tuberculosis

- Challenges in Global TB Control & way forward - By Dr. G. R. Khatri, President, World Lung Foundation
- MDR/XDR –TB in India: The Country Response - By Dr. D. Behera, Director, LRS Institute, India
- Recent Advances in Laboratory Diagnosis of Tuberculosis – By Dr. N. Selvakumar, Deputy Director, TRC, Chennai, India
- Air borne Infection Control (Tuberculosis), - By Dr Rohit Sarin, AMS & HoD of TB Control & Treatment & LRS Institute of Tuberculosis and Respiratory Diseases, India
- Role of Medical School in TB control - A Nepal Experience By - Prof. Nilambar Jha, Professor & Head, School of Public Health and Community Medicine, BPKIHS, Dharan, Nepal
- In addition to the above special sessions, oral & poster presentations were made on different topics by investigators from SAARC countries and abroad. President of Nava Kiran Plus, a PLHA network organization of Nepal was especially invited to deliver a guest lecture.

Exhibition

Hon'ble Minister for Health & Population, Secretary for Health, Director General of Health Services, Government of Nepal, delegates, dignitaries, resource persons and participants observed the exhibition. National, Bilateral and Non Governmental Organizations displayed their Resource Materials and the information on the activities conducted by them. The Exhibition continued till 18th December 2008.



Closing session

Dr. D. S. Bam, Secretary for Health, Ministry of Health & Population, Government of Nepal grace the session as Chief Guest and Mr. Hassan Shifau, Director, Social Affairs Division, SAARC Secretariat Chaired for the session. Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre during his Closing remarks thanked all the participants and resource persons for their contributions for success of the Conference. He also thanked the members of Review & Recommendation Committee for their excellent work in bringing out recommendations relevant for the region. He wished all the participants and resource persons a safe journey back to their homes.



Dr. Ajay Kumar Khara, Chairperson, Governing Board of STAC presented the Recommendations made by the Review and Recommendation Committee.

Dr. D.S. Bam, Chief Guest & Secretary (Health), during his closing remarks congratulated STAC for the success of the Conference and remarked that the Conference was very beneficial for the SAARC region and particularly the participants from Nepal. The

Chief Guest distributed the Letters of Appreciation to the Resource Persons and the Volunteers. He also presented Souvenirs of the Conference to all the Resource Persons.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha presented Souvenirs of the Conference to the Chief Guest, Chairperson and Chairman, Governing Board of STAC.

Mr. Hassan Shifau during his closing remarks congratulated STAC and all the Resource Persons for success of the Conference and also thanked the Review and Recommendation Committee for giving clear cut and pragmatic recommendations which are very relevant in the present and Regional Context. He reiterated SAARC's commitment not only for the development of Health Sectors but also for other important Sectors which have direct or indirect influence on the health of the people of the region.

Dr. V. S. Salhotra, Deputy Director, STAC delivered vote of thanks.

Workshop

A Skill Building Workshop on HIV prevention program for and with most at risk and especially vulnerable adolescents (MARA and EVA) in South Asia was organized by UNICEF – ROSA during the conference and about 30 participants from different NGOs of Nepal and conference participants attended the workshop.

Collaborating Organizations

WHO/SEARO, UNICEF & World Lung Foundation (WLF) provided support in organizing symposium, workshop, sponsoring speakers and participants for the technical sessions and setting up stalls in the exhibition.

Other organizations like National TB Centre (NTC), Nepal Anti-TB Association (NATA), German Nepal Tuberculosis Project (GENETUP), Britain Nepal Medical Trust (BNMT), Sakriya Sath, Health Research & Social Development Forum (HERD), STAC and Nava Kiran Plus set up their stall in the exhibition.

Stupa College, HERD, APACHA and Sano Paila contributed by providing Volunteers for the Conference.

Expert Group to develop recommendations of conference:

To formulate the recommendations of conference, an Expert Group (Review and Recommendation Committee) consisting of members of Governing Board of STAC, resource persons from Member States and resource persons from bilateral organizations was formed. The Committee met on the sidelines of the Conference on 16th, 17th and 18th December and discussed various issues and challenges being faced by the SAARC Region and gave its recommendations.

Recommendations

Participants of SAARC Second conference on TB, HIV/AIDS and Respiratory Diseases held from December 15 – 18, 2008 in Kathmandu, Nepal placed on record their appreciation of the efforts of SAARC TB & HIV/AIDS Centre in organizing this conference.

The conference unanimously makes the following recommendations:

1. The Conference noted significant increase in case detection (nearly 70%) and treatment success (more than 85%) in recent years in SAARC Region. To ensure achievement of targets for TB control recommended by WHA (2007) as part of MDG's, it is recommended to enhance accessibility and promote partnership in the member countries to make ISTC accessible to all with a priority to HIV/TB vulnerable population.
2. As HIV/TB co-infection is a major threat to the success in controlling HIV/TB in the Region, it is recommended that all HIV positive cases should be actively screened for Tuberculosis and simultaneously Provider Initiated

Counseling and Testing may be offered to TB Patients in identified high risk and vulnerable geographical pockets.

3. Member Countries should also strengthen and operationalise mechanism for cross referral among TB and HIV facilities and also to ensure the provision of CPT to eligible HIV/TB co-infected patients.
4. In view of the global economic recession, the Conference suggests to all partners and all member countries to ensure that DOTS Strategy and HIV prevention efforts, care and support continue to be the priority.
5. Keeping in view the implementation of Stop TB Strategy and noting that out of 489,000 MDR-TB cases globally, estimated 144,000 cases of MDR-TB in SAARC Region constitute an important problem in the SAARC countries. It is recommended that a culture and drug susceptibility testing SAARC Supra-National TB Laboratory should be established with in the SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre.
6. The conference notes with concern that annually 10 million people die globally on account of lung related diseases out of which tobacco accounts for 5 million deaths. Keeping in view PAL as one the components of Stop TB Strategy, member countries are advised to adopt interventions enlisted in manpower - a policy package to reverse the tobacco epidemic formulated by World Health Organization.
7. In the wake of emerging XDR-TB in the region, Member Countries are suggested to effectively implement infection control guidelines including HIV clinical settings.
8. The Conference notes with satisfaction, the priority accorded by member countries in the area of advocacy and communication. Efforts need to be strengthened in the field of social mobilization to engage society, especially the poor, marginalized group, cured TB patients and PLWHA in the campaigns against TB and HIV/AIDS. This will help member countries in building greater commitment to fight these two diseases individually and their deadly combination.
9. Considering the large pool of young population in SAARC Region and 50% of new HIV infections occurring in this population, the Conference recommends the Member Countries to strengthen Sexual and Reproductive Health Services related to young population on a priority basis.
10. The stigma and discrimination related to TB and HIV/AIDS in the community as well as in health care settings needs to be addressed adequately through involvement of opinion leaders and various medical and other social organizations. The socio-economic development and ethical considerations should be given high priority while framing HIV/TB related guidelines.

10. The Fifth Round of Proficiency Testing of Sputum Smear Microscopy

SAARC TB Reference Laboratory supports National TB Reference Laboratories (NRLs) in the area of Quality Assurance (QA) in sputum smear microscopy. Panel Testing is one of the three components for External Quality Assessment (EQA) or proficiency testing. SAARC TB Reference Laboratory conducted first round of proficiency testing in Member States with the support of TRC, Chennai in 2003, the second round in 2004, the third in 2005, the fourth round in 2007, and this fifth round in 2008, ten NRLs participated.

The **Objective** of the study was:

To implement an ongoing proficiency testing program for sputum microscopy within the network of National TB Reference Laboratories in SAARC Region.

Early morning sputum specimen was used for smear preparation. Concentration of AFB and/or preparation of different grade of slides were done as per the methods recommended by WHO. The sputum smears for the

proficiency testing were stained by Ziehl-Neelsen staining technique for AFB. Each batch of the sputum smears was blindly checked for validation by three SAARC TB Reference Laboratory staff. Using three Laboratory staff's results, the sputum smears were validated. Sets of standard/validated smears (with true or sufficient consistency) and known results, consisting two set of stained and unstained smears was sent to the National TB Reference Laboratories. Five slides per set covering full range from negative to strongly positive (negative, scanty, 1+, 2+, 3+), was sent to the participant laboratories for assessment.

All the stained and some unstained smears with true or sufficient consistency from same batch were checked by the Microbiologist of STAC to confirm the grades of positivity before coding and dispatching. Individual laboratory was requested to examine the panel of slides by any two Lab staff and send back the result along with slides within one month. The reports were analyzed at SAARC TB Reference Laboratory after receiving the results and slides from all NRLs.

Reporting criteria was applied according to WHO/IUATLD guidelines.

Analysis of the Results

The result revealed that only one of the Ten National TB Reference Laboratories reported a minor error (QE) and achieved 95 percent score. Rest of the nine laboratories reported no error of any type and achieved 100 percent score. One of the NRLs reported a smear washed off among a panel of ten slides. Only one NRL submitted the examination results completed by two Sr. Laboratory Technicians.

Discussion and conclusions

The objective of the study was to implement an ongoing proficiency testing program for sputum microscopy within the Network of National TB Reference Laboratories to improve the quality of smear microscopy. With this purpose, present proficiency testing was done for the fifth time.

The first proficiency testing was done in 2003 and seven NRLs and SAARC TB Reference Laboratory were participated and demonstrated best performances. Of the eight Laboratories took part in first proficiency testing; only one laboratory had two minor errors (a LFN and a QE). In second proficiency testing results revealed no errors of any kind. Of the nine Laboratories took part in third proficiency testing only one laboratory had one minor error (a QE). During the fourth round proficiency testing only one laboratory among ten NRLs took part had one minor error (a LFN). Among ten NRLs took part in the fifth round of proficiency testing; only one laboratory had one minor error (a QE), but the performance was within the limit of acceptance. During the fifth round, all the 10 NRLs in the Member States were requested to examine the panel of sputum slides by any two laboratory technician blindly and send back both the results separately, but only one NRL completed as per instruction. The performance of both the laboratory technicians of this NRL was acceptable and similar (there was no significant variation/difference of two LT's results). The slides for panel testing should be examined by any two laboratory technicians blindly and separately and individual report feed-back will be sent in the years to come.

The results also proved that SAARC Regional TB Reference Laboratory should continue such type of activities. It is hoped that all the National TB Reference Laboratories will sustain their performance.

11. Participation in International/Regional Meetings, Seminars, Conferences in the field of TB and HIV/AIDS

Participation in 39th IUATLD World Conference

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC participated and presented research paper in 39th IUATLD World Conference on TB and Lung Health organized in Paris from 16th to 20th October 2008. In the conference a paper on "HIV

Prevalence among Diagnosed TB patients" was presented. This study was done by SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre with collaboration of NTP and NACP, Government of Pakistan in Gulab Devi Hospital, Lahore.

12. Visits of STAC Officials to identified National TB Reference Laboratories in Member States



Strengthening of diagnostic services of NTPs/ NACPs and obtaining reliable data on anti-TB drug resistance and TB-HIV co-infection for the region is very much required. SAARC Regional TB Reference Laboratory (STRL) has been established with the aim to support National TB Reference Laboratories (NRLs) in the area of External Quality Assessment (EQA) of microscopy, culture and DST, HIV testing and in implementation of international laboratory Bio-safety measures in SAARC Member States. In addition, STRL will be conducting training of different categories of laboratory personnel, undertake operational research studies for early diagnosis of

tuberculosis, early detection of multi drug resistance tuberculosis (MDR-TB) and HIV infection or TB/HIV co-infection. Further, efforts will be made to pursue research program of relevance with international laboratories and research centers.

The identified sites of visit are Tuberculosis Research Centre (TRC), Chennai (WHO recognized SRL), which is also a HIV Reference Laboratory and National TB Institute (NTI), Bangalore (NRL, India). A team from STAC headed by Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, visited both of the identified laboratories.

The Objectives of the visits were:

- To update the knowledge of TB and HIV reference laboratory management and observe the set up of recognized SRL and NRL
- To observe the best practices of Bio-safety in TB culture and DST and HIV laboratories
- To prepare STAC laboratory to work as a SRL for the SAARC Region

The team performed the visit by observing the Culture and DST and HIV laboratories, observing the Bio-safety measures applied along with discussions, meetings with Managerial Authorities and Laboratory Scientists.

The team visited NTI, Bangalore and TRC, Chennai

National Tuberculosis Institute (NTI), Bangalore, India

A meeting of was organized in NTI with Dr. P. Kumar, Director and faculty members of NTI. Dr. Chaddha, Epidemiologist of NTI briefed about the Epidemiology Unit. This unit has 3 coordinating institutes; a. National JALMA Institute for Leprosy, Agra (ICMR), Post Graduate Institute (PGI), Chandigarh, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). This unit is also providing supports to DPR Korea, Indonesia along with direct support to Sri-Lanka and Bhutan. The team also discussed with the other unit heads, such as - Human Resource, Training, Operational Research, TB and HIV, Statistics, Monitoring & Evaluation, National TB Reference Laboratory and Animal Research units.

The Director NTI also explained the importance of STRL, improvement of the STRL for the recognition of WHO by building up capacity for becoming a Supra-National TB Reference Laboratory for SAARC Member States.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC expressed thanks to Government of India and NTI, Bangalore for giving concurrence for this visit. Dr. Jha expressed his willingness to get support from NTI for strengthening and developing of STRL. Dr. Jha invited all to attend the SAARC Second Conference, which was being organized in December, 2008. The meeting was continued with the presentations:

Revised External Quality Assessment (EQA)

Dr. Shekhar Anand, Consultant Microbiologist presented the structure of National TB Reference Laboratory (NRL) and External Quality Assessment (EQA).

Laboratory network and Quality Control (QC) for Culture and Drug Susceptibility (DST)

Dr. Hema Sundaram, Consultant Microbiologist presented the structure of Quality Control (QC) for TB culture and drug susceptibility test (DST) as per the National Laboratory Committee (NLC) recommendations.

Culture and DST for *M. tuberculosis*

Dr. Reena K, Jr. Bacteriologist explained different methods of diagnosing or screenings of tuberculosis (ELISA- to direct detection of 30KDa Ag or indirect AB detection), Mantoux test and so on.

Observation of Robert Koch Memorial Building

STAC team observed the functioning of Robert Koch memorial building along with the following units at NTI:

Sample collection unit, Walk-in cold room, DST room with negative pressure, DST reading room and walk-in incubator, Culture room, Media section, Washing and sterilization section, Fluorescence microscopy section, HPLC/ molecular microbiology technologies, Power back-up system, Accreditation of NRL, Animal Model research Unit.

Observation of Tuberculosis Research Centre (TRC), Chennai, India

Dr. Kumaraswamy, Acting Director, and Dr. N. Selvakumar, Deputy Director, Laboratory Department welcomed STAC team in TRC. TRC is the first Supra Regional Laboratory (SRL) recognized by WHO in South East Asia Region.

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC presented the introduction of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre and its activities along with the objectives of this visit.

The team observed different facilities in Supra National Reference Laboratory

Observation of Myco-bacteriology Culture Lab:

Dr. Vanaja Kumar, Deputy Director, Laboratory Department, demonstrated the different activities of the lab. Dr. Ranjani Ramachandran, Assitant Director, presented on DST for *M. tuberculosis* and DRS for MDR and XDR tuberculosis in India. Dr. Ranjani highlighted the methods used for isolation culture and DST of *M. tuberculosis*, merits and demerits of different methods of DST.

Observation of Molecular Epidemiology Unit:

Dr. Sujatha Narayanan, Deputy Director, explained the objectives and functioning of this unit along with several molecular techniques, prevalent strains of *M. tuberculosis* (East African Indian strain in South India, Central Asian

type in North India, Beijing strain, Latin American strain etc), factors affecting/causing endogenous and exogenous tuberculosis infections.

Observation of Sero-diagnosis Unit:

Dr. Alamelu Raja, Deputy Director, described the methods of serologically diagnosing (RIA, ELISA) *M. tuberculosis*, purification of *M. tuberculosis* antigens/proteins (16, 27, 30 and 38 KDa) using HPLC and horizontal electrophoresis, Testing kit evaluation using chromatography.

Observation of HIV-TB Laboratory:

Dr. Elizabeth Hanna explained various methods of diagnosing HIV like ELISA (within 3 hrs, at least 2 times testing for screening 1st and confirmation 2nd) than Western Blot (time consuming 5 hrs). HIV-TB laboratory at TRC is mainly responsible for Diagnostics, Epidemiology of TB prevalence and Vaccine development

Dr. K. K. Jha, Director, STAC, expressed thanks to staff of TRC for their cooperation and support to complete the observation visit of TRC. During discussion the following recommendations have been noted:

Recommendations:

- Strong MoU to create the linkage between TRC and STAC should be made as soon as possible.
- TRC agreed to support SAARC Tuberculosis Reference Laboratory, so that SAARC Tuberculosis Reference Laboratory could become capable to function as Supra Regional Laboratory for the SAARC Region.
- STRL should fulfill the basic criteria of Regional TB/HIV Reference Laboratory and be accredited as soon as possible.
- The research papers related to TB and HIV control program produced from TRC/NTI should be invited for the publication, as many as possible. Same way, some research papers prepared by STAC/STRL should be published in the ICMR Journal.

13. Constitution of Scientific Committee for Reviewing Articles for SAARC Journal of TB, Lung Diseases and HIV/AIDS

SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre is publishing SAARC Journal of TB, Lung Diseases and HIV/AIDS since 2004. This Journal has been indexed in 2006 and given ISSN 1818-9741. To enhance the quality of this Journal a scientific committee of more than 35 peer reviewers for reviewing articles has been formulated in 2008.

14. Development of Training Materials for Quality Assurance of Sputum Smear Microscopy

SAARC Regional TB Reference Laboratory is to coordinate the National TB Reference Laboratories (NRLs) in SAARC Member States in the areas of Quality Assurance (QA) for Sputum Smear Microscopy, Culture and Drug Susceptibility Testing, Surveillance on Drug Resistant or Multi-drug Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR-TB) and TB-HIV co-infection as well as Bio-safety in TB laboratory. In this context and carry out the requirement the SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre has developed



following two documents. In the process of preparation of the documents, there are series of SAARC regional consultation meetings involving the expertise from SAARC Member Countries were held in Bhutan & in Sri Lanka:

- 1) **Technical Guidelines for Quality Assurance of Sputum Smear Microscopy**
- 2) **SAARC Training Module for Quality Assurance of Sputum Smear Microscopy**

15. Collection of Information/data and publish book on Epidemiological Trend of Last Ten Years on TB and HIV/AIDS in SAARC Member States

SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre has prepared "An Analytical Study Book on TB & HIV/AIDS in SAARC Member States" by collecting data from SAARC Member States. This document has been prepared to share the information on TB and HIV/AIDS to the people of the SAARC Region. The epidemiological trend of Ten years on TB and HIV/AIDS in the SAARC region has been incorporated in this document.

16. Dissemination of information of TB & HIV/AIDS by updating STAC Website and Installation of Broad-band Internet Connectivity

ADSL system of internet connectivity has been installed to disseminate information regarding TB & HIV/AIDS. STAC website has been updating regularly by incorporating available data and information.

17. **SAARC Training on Leadership and Management Skills at National/Regional Level in Bhutan could not be held due to logistics problems.**
18. **Review of Research Activities as conducted in Member States in last five years pertaining to TB and HIV/AIDS could not be completed due to non submission of information by some Member States.**
19. **Review of available training facilities/manuals, type of training for different level health workers in the field of TB and HIV/AIDS could not be performed.**
20. **SAARC Training of Program Manager on DOTS Plus (MDR TB) in Afghanistan could not be performed.**

21. Procurement of chemicals and other lab materials for regular works at SAARC TB Reference Laboratory at STAC

Required chemicals and materials have been procured.

Research Activities:

22. Case control study to identify risk factors for MDR TB in Nepal

The study has been carried out in Nepal with consultation of National TB Control Program. The report is in the process of finalization.

23. Barriers to DOT for MDR TB patients in Nepal

Study on barriers to DOT has been performed and report is being prepared.

24. Baseline CD4 count in the adult population

This study could not be performed.

25. Production of STAC Publications

STAC printed the following publications in 2008:

- STAC Newsletters (Vol. XVIII, No. 1 & 2)
- SAARC Journal of TB, Lung Diseases and HIV/AIDS (Vol. V No. 1 and 2)
- SAARC epidemiological yearly reports on TB, HIV/AIDS including TB/HIV co-infection
- History of TB and TB Control Program in the SAARC Region
- Annual Report of STAC
- STAC At A Glance
- Wall Calendar 2009
- NTP and NACP of Member States of SAARC Region
- Awareness and advocacy materials (pocket calendar, brochure on TB and HIV/AIDS)
- Distribution of STAC Publications - The publications of STAC have been distributed as per mailing list,

26. Strengthening of STAC Library

- Purchase/subscription of books and journals:

The following books have been purchased –

1. Mahajan – TB of Preventive and Medicine with CD 3rd edition
2. Baride – Manual of Biostatistics
3. Kirkwood – Essential Medical Statistics 2nd edition
4. Rao – Biostatistics: The Manual of Statistical Methods for use in Health and Nutrition
5. Davidson – Davidson Medicine
6. Salatker – Pharmacology
7. Baveja – Diagnosis and Management of HIV/AIDS: a Clinician's Perspective
8. Greenwood – Medical Microbiology 16th edition

9. Cappuccino – Microbiology: A Laboratory Manual 5th edition
10. Tortora – Microbiology: An Introduction 5th edition
11. Clarke, H. R. – The Cure for all HIV/AIDS

- Updating of Audio Visual materials in Library

Audio visual materials related to TB and HIV/AIDS have been collected

- Dissemination of information on TB & HIV/AIDS by updating STAC website

The updated information on TB and HIV/AIDS has been disseminated through STAC website and different publications. The website of STAC is being updated

27. Other Activities

STAC's participation in HIV/AIDS Workshop

On behalf of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre Dr. Lochana Shrestha, Epidemiologist participated in HIV/AIDS Workshop, Education Program, Dissemination Workshop, Kathmandu organized by ILO Office, Nepal from 27 to 28 May 2008. This participation will help to work in collaborative approach to prevention HIV/AIDS in the region.

Audit of STAC Accounts 2007

A Joint Audit Team 2007 (JAT 07) consisting of Mr. M. J. Joseph, Principal Chief Controller of Accounts, Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, India and Mr. Indika Premadasa, Director, Internal Audit, Investigation & Budgetary Control, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka audited the annual accounts and related activities of SAARC Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Centre from 19 to 20 May 2008.

Visit of STAC Director to Indonesia

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC participated the Regional Workshop on Planning and Budgeting for TB Control organized by World Health Organization held in Bali, Indonesia from 21st to 25th April 2008.

Participation in UNDP Workshop

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre participated in Workshop on Leadership and Development Challenges in addressing HIV/AIDS and Mobility in South Asia organized by SAARC Secretariat in partnership with UNDP and ILO on 23rd June 2008 in Kathmandu.

Participation in Workshop on Global Fund

Dr. V. S. Salhotra, Deputy Director, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre participated in Workshop on Global Fund Round 8 Proposal Development organized by WHO/SEARO in Jakarta, Indonesia from 11 to 13 March 2008.

Participation in Regional Meeting

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director and Dr. Lochana Shrestha, Epidemiologist, STAC participated in Regional Meeting of South Asian Forum for Health Research organized by Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC) on 7th July 2008 in Kathmandu as Members of Ethical Review Board of NHRC.

Participation In 39th IUATLD World Conference

Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, STAC participated and presented papers in 39th IUATLD World Conference on TB and Lung Health organized in Paris from 16th to 20th October 2008. In the conference a papers on "HIV Prevalence among Diagnosed TB patients" was presented. This study was done by SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre with collaboration of NTP and NACP, Government of Pakistan in Gulab Devi Hospital, Lahore.



Laying of the Foundation Stone

Hon'ble Mr. Girirajmani Pokharel laid foundation stone of new building of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre at Thimi, Bhaktapur, Nepal on 28th November 2008.

28. Visit of STAC by different Dignitaries

Visit of Dr. Samlee, Regional Director, WHO/SEARO

Dr. Samlee Plianbangchang, Regional Director, World Health Organization, South East Asia Region visited SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre on 7th July 2008. Dr. Samlee observed the functioning of the Centre and discussed about the collaborative activities of SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre and WHO/SEARO.

Dr. Samlee also discussed about the burden of TB, which is disproportionately high in the Region so it needs to intensify TB control efforts without any delay. Primary Health Care facilities in many countries in the Region are weak. There are many health problems competing with TB, one of them is HIV/AIDS. TB is increasing in areas hard-hit by HIV infection. We need a comprehensive approach to ensure enhanced collaboration between National TB and HIV/AIDS control programs.



Visit of WHO/SEARO Team

A team from WHO/SEARO consisting, Dr. Alexander Andjaparidze, WR & Chief of Mission to Nepal, Dr. Richard Stern, Dr. Krongthong Thimasarn, Dr. Nani Nair, Dr. Sangay Thinley, Advisors for WHO/SEARO and Dr. Rajesh Bhatia from WHO visited SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre on 25th Feb. 2008. The team discussed the matter related to HIV/AIDS.

A team from Bhutan visited STAC

A team of 5 persons from NTP Bhutan observed DOTB implantation in Nepal on 5th June 2008. They also visited SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre and observed the functioning of the Centre.

Visit of SAARC Director to STAC

Mr. Hassan Shifau and his spouse visited SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre on 20th March 2008. The purpose of visit was to observe the functioning of the Centre. Mr. and Mrs. Shifau were welcomed by the staff of the Centre at STAC premises. Mr. Shifau observed all sections of the Centre.

Visit of SIC Director to STAC

Mr. Shree Dhar Gautam, Director, SAARC Information Centre, Kathmandu, Nepal visited SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre on 28th March 2008. Mr. Gautam observed the functioning of the Centre and appreciated the progress and development of the Centre.

Visit of Member SAARC Division, MoFA, Afghanistan

Mrs. Latifa Wali Rahimi, and Mr. Abdul Ahad Hadif, Member of SAARC Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Afghanistan visited SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre on 19th June, 2008. They observed the functioning of the Centre and discussed the different issues related with the programs.



Visit of Ms. Shabana Azmi, SAARC Goodwill Ambassador for HIV/AIDS

Ms. Shabana Azmi, SAARC Goodwill Ambassador for HIV/AIDS visited Kathmandu for three day visit from 5th – 7th January 2009 on the invitation of SAARC Secretariat and SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre for Advocacy on HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis.



Ms. Azmi visited Hon'ble Mr. Girirajmani Pokharel, Minister for Health & Population, Government of Nepal. In the meeting she was informed about the status of level of National TB & HIV/AIDS Control Programs in Nepal & in the response, Ms. Azmi suggested to scale up the ART services for eligible HIV infected people as well as to tackle the cross border issues on these diseases.

Press Conference was organized with media for advocacy on TB and HIV/AIDS control in Kathmandu. Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre welcomed the media people and highlighted the

objectives of the visit of SAARC Goodwill Ambassador to Nepal. Mr. Hassan Shifau, Director, SAARC Secretariat

presented remarks describing that the visit of SAARC Goodwill Ambassador is a good opportunity for advocacy on HIV/AIDS.

Talking with the media people, Ms. Azmi highlighted her views, objectives of visit and role of advocacy through media for control and prevention of HIV/AIDS. She also emphasized to mitigate the stigma, discrimination and social issues associated with HIV/AIDS prevail in the society.

Participant journalists reiterated their solidarity to support National TB and HIV/AIDS control programs as they have already built partnership with SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre. The Press Conference was attended by over 60 journalists for different media.

Ms. Azmi visited Katakoti Ashram and Super Specialty Centre for AIDS care run by Nava Kiran Plus (NGO), Budhanilkatha, Kathmandu and discussed the status of care, support and facilities.

A meeting of Ms. Shabana Azmi was organized with Rt. Hon'ble Mr. Pushpa Kamal Dahal, Prime Minister, Government of Nepal. During the meeting various issues related to Health Care, TB and HIV/AIDS in Nepal were discussed.

On 7th January, Mr. Rishi Ram Ghimire, Acting Secretary General, SAARC, Mr. Hassan Shifau, Director, SAARC Secretariat, Dr. Kashi Kant Jha, Director, SAARC TB and HIV/AIDS Centre, Dr. Pushpa Mall, Director, National TB Centre and all staff working for control and prevention of TB and HIV/AIDS collectively congratulated and thanked Ms. Azmi for visiting Kathmandu & addressing different issues related to HIV/AIDS & Tuberculosis.

Visit of Experts

The following experts visited the Centre on different occasions:

- Dr. Rohit Sarin, LRS Institute of TB and RDs
- Dr. S. K. S Chaturvedi, CTD, MoH & FW, New Delhi
- Dr. Ballab Sharma, JDWNRH, Thimphu, Bhutan
- Dr. Manohar Joshi, Bhim Hospital, Bhairahawa, Nepal
- Dr. Damayanthi Wijesinghe, Sri Lanka
- Ms. Shameema Hussain, Maldives
- Dr. Ghanashyam Kharel, Kathmandu
- Prof. Nilamber Jha, BPKIHS, Dhara, Nepal
- Dr. M. Kamin, NTP, Afghanistan
- Dr. M. K. Prasai, Director, RTC, Pokhara, Nepal
- Dr. Aradhana J. Jha, Kathmandu
- Dr. Rakesh Jha, Wuhan University, PR, China
- Dr. Rinchen Chopel, Bhutan
- Dr. N. Selvakumar, India

Visit of Bhutanese Team

A team of 8 trainees from Bhutan who came for training at NTC, Nepal visited STAC and acquired the information on the functioning of the Centre on 8th December 2008.

Annexes

1. SAARC Regional Workshop for Development of Research Protocols for 2009 and
Observation of TB/HIV Co-ordination Mechanism
6th -9th May, 2008, Pune, India

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2. Meeting of Regional TB and HIV/AIDS Program Managers of SAARC Member States, 28th -29th May, 2008, Maldives

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3. SAARC Seminar to Collaborate and Support Cross Border Activities in Controlling TB and HIV/AIDS, 25-26 June 2008 Pakistan

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**4. SAARC Regional Training of Trainers on Essential Technical & Operational Aspects for Management of Drug Resistant Tuberculosis (DOTS Plus)
1st to 5th July 2008, Nepal**

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