

Saath-Saath Bulletin

Volume 4 | November 2013

20 Years of Partnership Towards an AIDS-free Generation in Nepal – This is not just a mere phrase but a true reflection of our united and ongoing dedication to the achievement of that ambitious yet attainable goal of an AIDS-free generation, both in Nepal and around the world.

Sheila Lutjens
Acting Mission Director
USAID/Nepal



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Message from the Chief of Party

HIV epidemic has been severe worldwide. Its pervasive nature has left no country or geographical location spared. When the first case was detected in the world 30 years ago, it was unimaginable that the impact of the virus will be so great. The impact certainly would have been much greater had the world not rallied together and demonstrated the solidarity it did to prevent the spread of HIV and mitigate the impact of AIDS. United States Government and USAID have been at the forefront of this right from the start.

As in the rest of the world, USAID been the pioneer to support and implement an evidence-based epidemic drive response within the framework of the Government of Nepal. When little was known about the nature of the epidemic and the required response, USAID supported a series of studies to understand the epidemic better in Nepal. Its early programs implemented in a very testing environment among those most at need helped the country understand 'what works' best in the context of Nepal. This has, over the last twenty years, evolved into a very effective and well-renowned response to the epidemic. Nepal is now ready to join the rest of the world in creating an AIDS-free generation.

USAID's continuous support to the HIV response in Nepal for the past twenty years has helped Nepal to reach this stage full of optimism and new opportunities. Saath-saath Project is the current example of such valuable contributions. We are very thankful to USAID for supporting Nepal's HIV response for the past 20 years and are very happy to be celebrating two decades of USAID's support to the Government of Nepal's HIV and AIDS Response with the slogan "Moving towards an AIDS-free generation."

Success from the field: Community and home based care program ensuring a continuum of care for HIV

On finding out that they are HIV positive, most people lose all hope. Some would even try to commit suicide. Sharing my own life experience has helped many to embrace and start anew, A Life Beyond HIV



Summer in Mid-Western Nepal is harsh. The rising mercury brings life to a grinding halt as fewer vehicles ply across the hot tarmac along the national highway and most opt to stay indoors to enjoy an afternoon siesta. However, even the scorching sun does not deter Nayan Singh, who prepares to visit a nearby village with his teammate to check on people living with HIV as part of their routine work. Nayan has now become a familiar face in many villages of Banke district which

he visits regularly. Most people immediately recognize him and his ever-familiar blue bag with the 5-leaf BISHWAS (Nepali for trust) emblem. For the individuals living with HIV here, Nayan Singh is their mentor- a savior, many would say. Leading a happy life with the love and support of his wife and three daughters, his story is an inspiration for others of life beyond HIV.

Says Nayan, "I contracted HIV nearly fifteen years ago while working in India. I hardly knew about HIV to know any better." His health, later, started to deteriorate and during a routine test, he returned HIV positive result. "My wife, also, got the virus from me and she was pregnant at that time. It was entirely my fault!" Distraught over the news, the couple returned home. "We shared our problem with our relatives. Instead of any support, we were taunted constantly. They assumed that we would not make it beyond 2-3 years, says Nayan, recollecting his sad past. Nayan knew he needed to be strong for his family and for himself. "Bheri Zonal Hospital staff in Nepalgunj supported us financially so we could live nearby and get regular checkup. Luckily our newborn was not infected with HIV". Gradually, Nayan started working as a volunteer to bring others like him to get tested for HIV. "While volunteering I came across Junkiree, a local NGO partner implementing CHBC program with USAID support. I joined the CHBC team there. This was my chance to redeem myself and help others like me. I continue to do so even today. It gives me a great sense of pride to visit them at their homes, check them up, and refer them for services. At times, I have even carried them on my bicycle to visit nearby clinics. Travel over rough terrains, long hours or harsh weather is all worth it for the work we do and the gratitude we receive. My life is now an example for others to learn from and for those with HIV to learn to live with it."

Innovation: Promoting Family Planning through "Edutainment"



Saath-Saath Project (SSP) has been providing HIV and Family Planning (FP) services through its outreach activities and clinical sites. FP integration was initiated to address the gap in uptake of FP services by key population such

as female sex workers and migrant workers. The messages sensitize them on the importance of dual method to safeguard from HIV and STIs, and unwanted pregnancies. To generate demand for FP services, SSP has developed a wide array of informative and educational (IEC) materials. SSP's FP-focused IEC publications now include flyers, brochures, stickers, pocket booklets, flip charts, paper strips and posters. These materials have been developed targeting all or specific key populations of people such as female sex workers or migrant workers and their families. Along with printed education materials, SSP's Strategic Behavior Communication approach also introduced educational games that are adapted from traditional games such as wheel game, match the cards and snakes and ladders. These games provide the opportunity to impart the message on dual method use in an interactive and entertaining manner.



Capacity strengthening: Organizational Strategic Planning

Saath-Saath project (SSP) provides the capacity building support to its local NGO partners based on the expressed needs in their action plans from the TOCAT assessment. Between April-September 2013, SSP supported twenty-five local NGO partners, including six national beneficiary networks, in developing their organizational strategic plans. The crafting of an organizational strategic plan is a process that helps promote joint organizational wide thinking about best future direction and can lead to improvements in overall management of the organizations. The strategic planning exercise used saw active involvement within each NGO partner in setting priorities, focusing energy and resources, strengthening operations, and ensuring that employees and other stakeholders are working toward common goals. It also helped them in establishing agreement around intended outcomes/results and assessing and adjusting the organization's direction in response to a changing environment. The workshops brought together senior staff members for a disciplined effort that assisted to produce fundamental decisions and actions that will go on to shape and guide what their organization is, who it serves, what it does, and why it does it, with a focus on the future. Through the planning exercise, local NGO partners have now developed a draft strategic plan that they will continue to build on with technical assistance and individualized coaching from SSP's capacity building team. Also, four of the six national networks have now finalized their strategic plans. Support to the six national networks helped implement SSP's Network NGO Capacity Building Strategy.



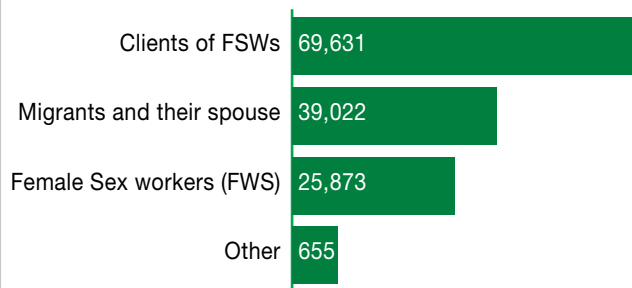
Saath-Saath Project Annual Achievements

August 2012-July 2013

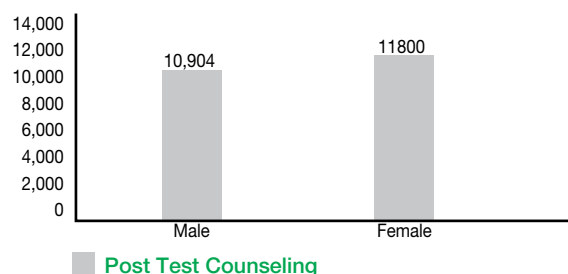
As the second year of Saath-Saath Project (SSP) draws to a close, here are some key achievements of the project. Some key highlights between August 2012-July 2013 include the large-scale integration of family planning (FP) into existing HIV services, establishment of integrated clinical sites within government health facilities to provide HIV and FP services, technical assistance to Government of Nepal for national level HIV surveillance, support in

development of national documents and strengthening of essential HIV services, FP baseline survey including Rapid assessment of HIV in SSP's four migrant-focused districts and capacity strengthening initiatives for local NGO partners based on their post TOCAT-based action plans. The project also saw visits by Government of Nepal officials, US Government and FHI 360 officials to oversee ongoing project activities.

Total number of individuals reached with HIV prevention and family planning promotion activities

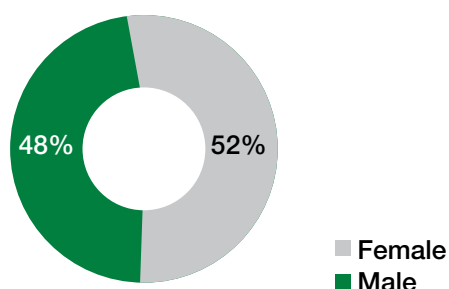


Total number of individuals who received HIV counseling and testing and the results



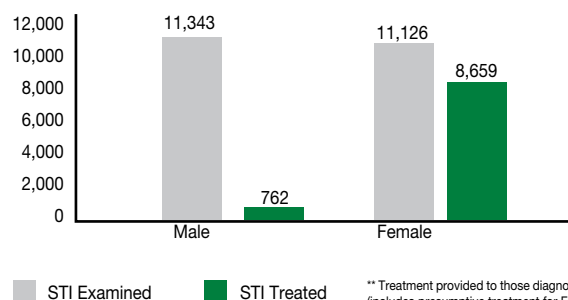
Number of people living with HIV reached with Positive Prevention-related outreach activities

Achievement



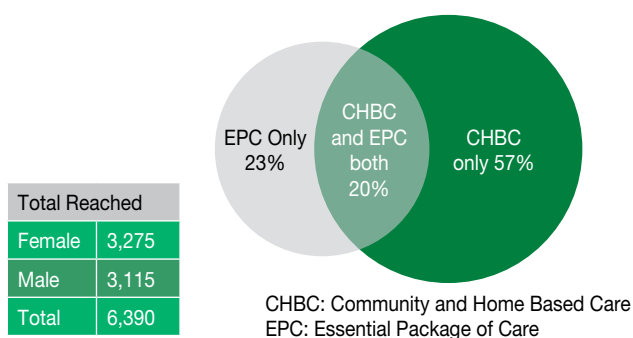
Total = 3,544

Total number of individuals who received STI examination and treatment**



** Treatment provided to those diagnosed with STI (includes presumptive treatment for FSWs)

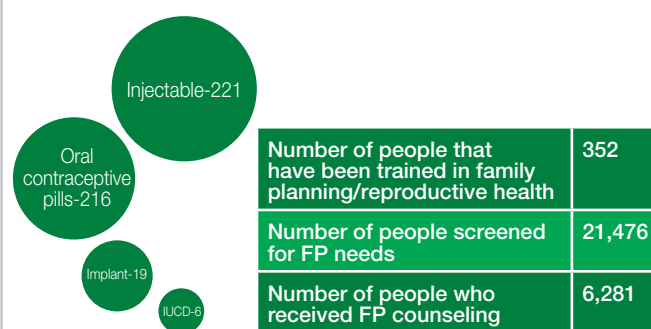
Total number of HIV-positive adults and children who received a minimum of one care service



CHBC: Community and Home Based Care
EPC: Essential Package of Care

Total Reached	
Female	3,275
Male	3,115
Total	6,390

Number of people received any family planning method (apart from condom)



Number of people that have been trained in family planning/reproductive health	352
Number of people screened for FP needs	21,476
Number of people who received FP counseling	6,281

Total number of individuals trained

Type of Training	Total individuals trained
HIV-related stigma and discrimination reduction	10,923
Prevention (Other than abstinence and behavior change)	839
Institutional capacity building	1,389
Strategic information	382
Medical injection safety	215
In service training on (including CMT, clinical, lab, PMTCT, ARV)	239
Counseling and testing	45
Total	14,032

MOVING TOWARDS AN AIDS-FREE GENERATION

Two Decades of Supporting the Government of Nepal's HIV and AIDS Response

The year 2013 marks the 20th anniversary of USAID's long standing partnership with the Government of Nepal (GoN) to support the national HIV response. Two decades of USAID's technical and financial support have helped pioneer some of the most effective evidence-based interventions that have saved lives and contributed to the health and well-being of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLHIV).

Over time, USAID-funded projects have provided valuable insights on how best to tailor and successfully implement activities to effectively address the epidemic in Nepal. The foundation laid by USAID and partners has contributed greatly to streamlining and standardizing the country's HIV prevention and care programs, improving the reach of treatment activities, and increasing access to quality services for key affected populations. The first-ever USAID project to work in HIV and AIDS in Nepal - the AIDS Control and Prevention Project I - became a model for future HIV interventions and ground breaking initiatives in the country.

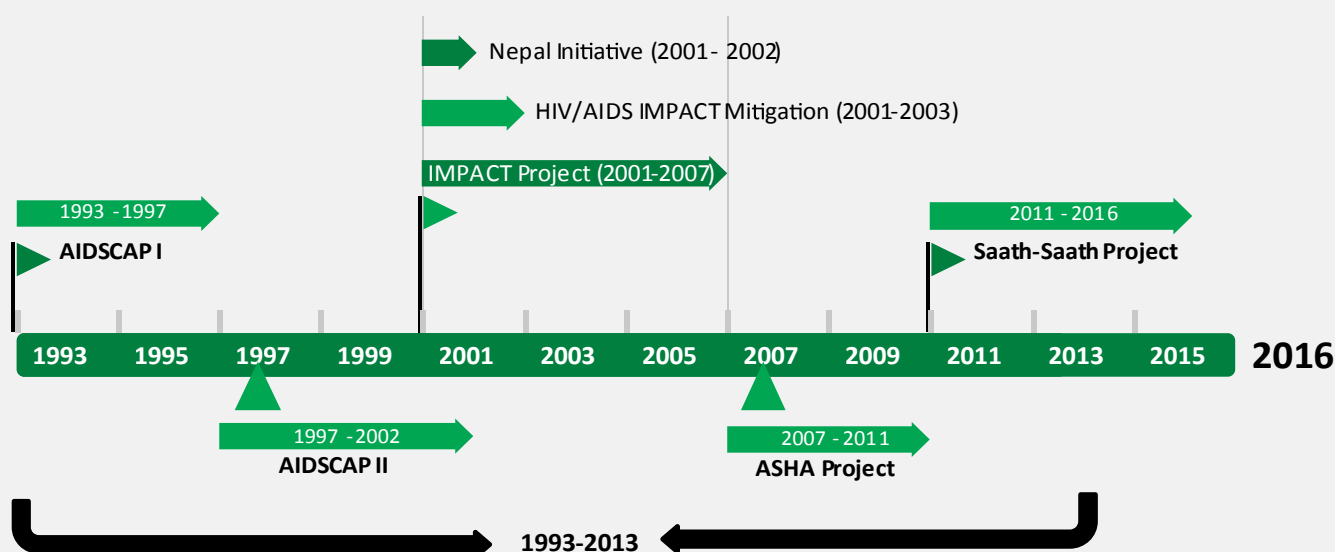
Over the past 20 years, USAID-supported projects under the leadership and guidance of the GoN and in collaboration with multiple national, international and local stakeholders, have built a valuable body of operational know-how that has improved the ability of programs to reach key affected populations. USAID's projects

have translated new technologies and innovative strategies at the global level to real success on the ground in Nepal.

Today, under the umbrella of the Global Health Initiative, USAID remains steadfast in its commitment to achieve an AIDS-free generation by reaching hundreds and thousands of Nepali people with quality, standardized HIV prevention, care, support, and treatment services. USAID's continuous contributions have made real impacts in both preventing new infections in target populations and working to improve the lives of those already living with HIV and the lives of their families as well.

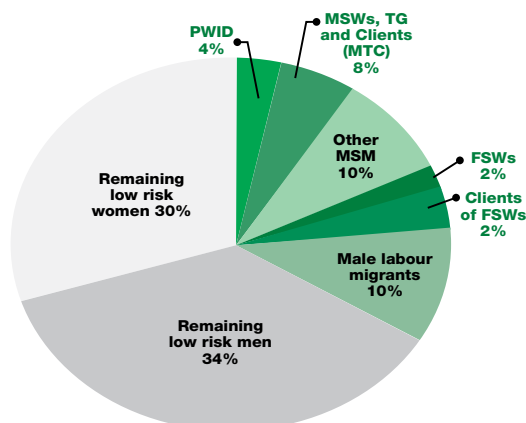
To commemorate the contributions that USAID, the GoN, and its partners have made over the past 20 years, USAID has planned a series of special events to celebrate this legacy as the country's HIV response enters a new decade filled with great challenges and exciting new opportunities. The successes from the past two decades resonates the invaluable support from GoN and local NGO partners whose tireless efforts ensured countless lives saved through the effective implementation of HIV programs. The 20 years milestone also provides an opportunity for us all to renew the pledge to remember the lives lost, celebrate the lives saved, and recognize the lives still at risk.

Snapshot Of USAID-Funded Interventions Supporting Nepal's National HIV Response



2013 National HIV Estimates released by the National Centre for AIDS and STD Control

- 48,600 individuals in Nepal are infected with HIV.
- Overall national adult HIV prevalence is at 0.28%.
- 1,186 new HIV infections.
- 4,136 AIDS-related deaths
- New HIV Infections key populations at higher risk of HIV as people who inject drugs, female sex workers and their clients, migrant workers and their spouses and men who have sex with other men.



“Be Safe, Get Tested – Know Your HIV Status”

As in most countries facing a concentrated HIV epidemic, HIV counseling and testing services in Nepal have mostly targeted key population included as those at higher risk from HIV. The general population in comparison hasn't received the same level of focus to get tested for HIV. A large proportion of people living with HIV still do not know their HIV status. Nepal is in desperate need to close this gap so that the gap in providing required care, support and treatment can also be closed. As part of the 20 years commemorations, USAID and Saath-Saath Project (SSP) planned the theme for October month as “Be Safe, Get Tested” Campaign to increase the number of people who know their HIV status by sensitizing the general public to visit the nearest health facility for HIV testing. HIV testing is an entry point for treatment, care and support and knowing one's status will help on link with treatment care and support in time.



The campaign utilized multiple media channels to sensitize the masses to know their HIV status. Messages promoting HIV testing were printed in national and local dailies and broadcasted via TV on Kantipur TV. Similarly radio jingles on the same were broadcasted through Ujyaalo Radio Network to every part of the country. Social media, primarily Facebook and Twitter, saw USAID/Nepal and SSP



actively promoting the theme month as well.

SSP also utilized the 19th National Condom Day platform to further promote this campaign by distributing ‘Be Safe, Get Tested’ flyers to general masses, urging all to take the initiative to “Know their HIV Status”. As the campaign continued via radio, television and print, SSP also used short messaging services (SMS) to promote the messages on National Condom Day. The campaign also targeted male migrant workers visiting their homes for the Dashain festival and their families. The video broadcasted via TV to promote HIV testing can be viewed on the USAID/Nepal YouTube site: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=85xa18cxMsw&feature=youtu.be>.

Commemoration of 20 Years of USAID support to the National HIV Response



USAID and its flagship project for Family Planning and HIV integration -Saath-Saath-Project organized a special event to commemorate the 20th anniversary of its partnership with the Government of Nepal and other stakeholders in supporting the national HIV response. The event was attended by key stakeholders from the Government of Nepal, other development partners, USAID officials, civil society and media.

During the event, the Chief Guest, Dr. Naresh Pratap K.C., Director of National Centre for AIDS and STD Control (NCASC) and Special Guest Ms. Sheila Lutjens, Acting Mission Director of USAID Nepal, unveiled the theme-tagline “एड्स रहित पुस्ताका लागि २० वर्षदेखि सहयात्रा” (“20 Years of Partnership Towards an AIDS-free Generation in Nepal”), which will be actively used to promote USAID's longstanding partnership with various stakeholders and increase awareness of Nepal's commitment to a comprehensive and evidence-based HIV and AIDS response is more widely used.

During his closing remarks, NCASC Director Dr. K.C. thanked all stakeholders including USAID for their continued support to the

Government of Nepal-led National HIV Response. He remarked, “Under the leadership of the Government of Nepal and the support from our partners, we have standardized HIV-related prevention to care, support and treatment services through out the country. As we enter the third decade, I call upon all our key stakeholders, donors and other stakeholders for their continued support to achieve the goals set by the existing Nepal's National HIV and AIDS Strategy to reduce new infections by 50%, Reduce AIDS-related deaths by 25% and reduce new infections among children by 90% by 2016”.

20 years commemoration details

To commemorate the two decade milestone, a series of special events at both the national and district level have been planned. These activities are planned to reflect the progress made over the past 20 years, and more importantly, to further strengthen the relationship with the Government, local and international partners, civil society, academia, and media. This will encourage all to move forward reinforcing Nepal's efforts to realize the promise towards an AIDS-free generation.

Key dates for commemoration:

September 3, 2013:	Commemoration event in Kathmandu
October, 2013:	Theme Month – Be Safe Get Tested
October 19, 2013:	National Condom Day
December 1, 2013:	World AIDS Day 2013
December 15, 2013:	National Consultation Meeting on HIV and Migration
September-December 2013:	Social media promotion of progresses made.

SSP Regional program review

Saath-Saath Project (SSP) organized annual regional level review meetings with its local NGO partners in July 2013 to review the progress of the ongoing project activities, achievements and collectively address any issues or challenges associated with program implementation. In total six regional review meetings were organized in Biratnagar, Bharatpur, Kathmandu, Pokhara, Nepalgunj and Dhangadhi. These review meetings provided the opportunity for partners to share information on example of “what works” for others to replicate. Issues related to coordination and collaboration

among partners and with other stakeholders were discussed in depth. The meeting also acted as a platform for partners to share program implementation challenges and to identify possible solutions in a collaborative manner. Following the review meetings, a series of way forwards have been developed which are continually monitored by SSP during program monitoring visits and review meetings with each local NGO partners. Also, district profiles for districts where SSP is operational in have been updated based on the information shared at the review meetings

Efforts continue to ensure safer and healthy workplaces

Saath-Saath Project (SSP) partners STEP Nepal, Jagriti Mahila Maha Sangh, Sahara Nepal and Child and Women Empowerment Society Nepal have supported and facilitated the Safer and Healthy Workplace Coordination Committee meetings in Kathmandu, Itahari and Pokhara respectively. The committees were formed following the successful conclusion of three workshops on Safer and Healthy Workplaces in the afore-mentioned districts in 2013. The committees are responsible for the overall implementation, management and monitoring of the safer and healthy workplace activities in respective workplaces.

The committee meetings reviewed the progress on assessment conducted at thirty-six workplaces in Kathmandu, nine in Itahari and six in Pokhara as per the Safe and Healthy Workplace guideline. Through the efforts of the committee, seven workplaces in Kathmandu and three workplaces in Itahari now have first aid boxes available for employees. SSP partners obtained the required medicines from the District Public Health Offices. The committee members observed improved working conditions and cleanliness at the workplaces following the assessment.



2nd National Coordination Meeting on Combating Trafficking organized

Continuing the project's ongoing efforts at monitoring trafficking in person (TIP) cases in the districts, SSP organized the 2nd National Coordination Meeting with agencies working in combating TIP on July 29, 2013. Participants at the meeting shared their ongoing TIP activities and also reviewed key issues, challenges and good practices. The meeting also assisted to update the TIP referral directory which has been vital in ensuring a coordinated intra-organization TIP referral system in the districts.

Participating agencies were ABC Nepal, Forum for Women, Law and Development, Nari Chetana Samaj, Community Action Center Nepal, Alliance against Trafficking in Women and Children in Nepal, Center for Legal Research and Resource Development Center, Biswas Nepal, Change Nepal, Jagriti Mahila Maha Sangh, Legal Aid and Consultancy Center, Pourakhi, Forum for Protection of People's Right Nepal, Raksha Nepal, STD/AIDS Counseling and Training Services, STEP Nepal, CARE-Nepal, The Asia Foundation and World Education Inc.

In accordance with the US Government's Unified Policy Guidelines for TIP, SSP has maintained a recording and reporting system for suspected trafficked persons in its project districts. These suspected cases are provided relevant services and referral to anti-TIP organization in the districts. From August 2012-October 2013, 585 individual suspected TIP cases were identified under SSP.



Saath-Saath supports in strengthening national monitoring & evaluation system

Under the leadership of National Centre for AIDS and STD Control (NCASC) and Family Health Division (FHD), Saath-Saath Project (SSP) organized the Training on Monitoring and Evaluation of National HIV Response in July 2013. The training was designed for SSP program staff and local NGO partner staff partner involved in the reporting of program data

and supervising the recording and reporting system to meet the standards set by Government of Nepal (GoN). The training concluded successfully to create uniform understanding on the tools used for recording and reporting to GoN. All training sessions were facilitated jointly by NCASC, FHD and SSP representatives.

19th National Condom Day commemorated in Nepal

Nepal marked its 19th National Condom Day on October 19th 2013. The day is commemorated each year on the first Saturday after the Nepali festival of Dashain. The National Condom Day commemoration was led by National Centre for AIDS and STD Control (NCASC), Nepal Government's apex body regulating the national HIV response in the country, and saw a series of programs organized nationwide promoting the message of Universal Access to Condom for Dual Protection. Programs organized on this day lay emphasis on the dual role of condom as both a preventive tool from HIV and STIs and to avoid unwanted pregnancy. Supporting the National Government-

led initiative, Saath-Saath Project (SSP), through local NGO partners, supported the commemoration in all its 33 program districts in coordination with local government and civil society stakeholders. Key events organized by SSP partners in the respective districts included local street processions, information dissemination stalls, interaction program among stakeholders and key populations, street drama, quiz competitions, documentary shows, condom distribution, condom use radio jingles and musical concerts. SSP also utilized the day to promote its ongoing "Be Safe Get Tested" campaign among general population (see page 5)



Project organizes special festival campaign to reach returning migrant laborers



Periodically, festival seasons such as Dashain, Tihar and Chhath sees a large number of migrant workers returning to Nepal for holidays. Understanding the large number returning home, SSP organized a special festival campaign and utilized the opportunity

to increase utilization of HIV and family planning (FP) services among the migrant population. As the festival approached, SSP and its local NGO partners developed this special campaign and worked tirelessly over the festival time to address the gap in services among the targeted migrant population. The campaign carried the tagline *Sallaha ra sewa lina swasthya sanstha jaun, dhukka bhayera chad bad manau* (Nepali for Visit nearest health facility to seek health-related advice and services and celebrate the festival with a peace of mind).

As planned, SSP initiated the campaign in its four migrant-focused districts Bara, Kapilbastu, Nawalparasi and Palpa in October 2013 and included various approaches such as street drama at strategic locations, hoarding boards with HIV and FP information, public service announcements via radio, group education on HIV and FP at locations where targeted population gathered, information dissemination stalls and festival greeting cards.

The campaign was effective in reaching male labor migrants returning home during Dashain festival. As the campaign progressed, SSP conducted similar activities during the Tihar and Chhath festivals in November 2013.



Visitor: US Ambassador to Nepal H.E. Peter W. Bodde

Venue: Birgunj, Parsa district

Date: August 29, 2013

Objective: Observe SSP's integrated family planning (FP) and HIV prevention, care and treatment services for female sex workers (FSWs) and their clients and people living with HIV (PLHIV) in Parsa district implemented by NGO partner Student Awareness Forum or BIJAM. Visit included tour of the clinic and Drop-in center and interaction with NGO staff.



Visitor: Dr. Naresh Pratap KC, Director, National Centre for AIDS and STD Control

Venue: Dhangadi, Kailali district

Date: September 28, 2013

Objective: Observe multiple SSP program components in the district

- Home visit under Expanded community and home-based care services for people living with HIV implemented by NGO partner Asha Kiran Pratisthan
- Observe HIV and STI Prevention and family promotion (FP) activities implemented from a Community Information Point and Drop-in center by NGO partner Thagil Social Development Association (TSDA).
- Tour of clinic site under SSP's integrated treatment, care, support and FP services for FSWs, clients of FSWs and PLHIV in Kailali district by NGO partner Nepal National Social Welfare Association.



Visitor: Tricia Petruney, Senior Technical Officer, FHI 360 Headquarters

Venue: Pokhara, Kaski district

Date: October 28, 2013

Objective: Observe activities at clinic and collocated Drop-in Center under SSP's integrated treatment, care, support and FP services for FSWs and their clients and PLHIV in Kaski district managed by local NGO partner Naulo Ghumti and HIV and STI Prevention and FP promotion for FSWs and their clients in Kaski district managed by local NGO partner CWES. Visit also included home visit to project beneficiary under expanded community and home-based care services for PLHIV implemented by CWES.



Editorial team: Dr. Bisika Thapa, Salina Joshi and Pravaran Mahat

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