

**Nepal commemorates 26<sup>th</sup> World AIDS Day**

*National program pushes to achieve the global theme of Getting to Zero by 2015 through increased HIV testing.*



Every year, globally and in Nepal, December 1<sup>st</sup> is commemorated as World AIDS Day (WAD) with a multitude of programs aimed at celebrating the successes achieved, remembering the lives lost and pushing forward with a renewed commitment and energy to mitigate the effects of HIV everywhere.

This year marks the 26<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the first World AIDS Day was commemorated by World Health organization in 1988. In Nepal, as done in previous year, national government through the National Centre for AIDS and STD Control (NCASC) led a series of programs at both the national and district levels in collaboration with national and international stakeholders. This year’s theme remains the 2011-2015 global theme of *"Getting to zero: Zero new HIV infections. Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS related deaths"*. For Nepal, NCASC also initiated its own national campaign in support of the global theme to raise awareness on and promote HIV testing by all. WAD 2013 programs in Nepal thus carried the national theme of *“हामीले त एचआईभी जाँच गरायौं, तपाईंले न्नी...?”* (We have done our HIV Testing, have you done yours?).



United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Saath-Saath Project (SSP) and its NGO partners provided financial and technical assistance to the national as well as district WAD steering committee to organize awareness programs across all SSP districts. SSP’s local NGO partners collaborated with other government agencies and relevant stakeholders in its 33 program districts to organize an array of

innovative and informative programs that lay focus on the issues pertaining to HIV and AIDS including awareness, stigma and discrimination reduction, universal access to treatment, care and support and strengthened coordination and collaboration among all stakeholders to jointly curtail the effect of HIV and AIDS in Nepal. Some key activities included rallies, interaction programs, condom and HIV-related information distribution, quiz and poem contests, donation campaigns, sporting competitions, street dramas, HIV-related information dissemination via mass media, HIV orientations to institutions and candle light vigils.



### **National Program: AIDS Mela**



For the first time, Nepal organized the national program as a Mela (carnival) to sensitize the masses on HIV and AIDS-related issues and to promote HIV testing. Titled AIDS Mela, the program was formally inaugurated by Chief Guest Honorable Minister of Health and Population Mr. Vidhyadhar Mallik at the historic Basantapur site in the capital city of Kathmandu. Health Secretary Dr. Praveen Mishra also present as Special Guest and Director General of Department of Health Services Dr. Lakhan Lal Sah chaired the event. Other Distinguished guest included Director of NCASC Dr.

Naresh Pratap KC, USAID's Acting Mission Director Ms. Sheila Lutjens, WHO Country Representative Dr. Ling Aung and UN Resident Coordinator Mr. Jamie McGoldrick and other senior officials from government, public and private sectors.

At the formal program, the Chief Guest unveiled the 2013 National HIV Estimates for Nepal and short documentary and new HIV-themed postal stamp developed by Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The year 2013 also marks two decades of support by USAID to the national HIV response in partnership with the Government of Nepal. In his welcome remarks, NCASC Director Dr. KC thanked USAID for their two decades of support and for laying the foundation for HIV and AIDS programs in the country. During the program, the Chief Guest presented a memento of appreciation to USAID on behalf of the Ministry of Health and Population, Government of Nepal. The memento read as following: *"The Government of Nepal, Ministry of Health and Population acknowledges the*



*invaluable contributions made by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) at the national level over the past twenty years in partnership with the Nepali government in the field of HIV prevention, care and treatment.* This was followed by the joint unveiling of the photo journal "HIV at 20"- a compilation of USAID-funded program's successes and innovations over the past 20 years. At the end of the formal inauguration, the Chief Guest, Special Guest, Chairperson and USAID's Ms. Lutjens visited the free HIV testing site to get tested for HIV and encourage others to get tested as well.



The AIDS Mela saw huge attendance from civil society, media and general population as the program continued till late evening. More than hundred individuals got tested for HIV and others flocked to the many organization information dissemination stalls, retail stalls selling local NGO produce and blood donation camp. SSP set up a mock-up of its HIV and STI testing site and drop-in center and kept the visitors entertained with its HIV and family planning-related games and distributed condoms to all. Renowned musical artists Nima Rumba and 1974 AD kept the crowd entertained

throughout the time. Federation of Sexual and Gender Minorities organized a fashion show and multiple dance performances while the Dance4Life troupe had the crowd copying their moves and sing-alongs. The Mela was formally closed as NCASC director, representatives from all beneficiary networks and Mela participants placed thousands of candles around a special "AIDS ribbon mandala". The program concluded with a high-energy DJ session by local favorite DJ Rupesh.

**AIDS Mela snapshots**



**Figure 1: Crowd at the AIDS Mela**



**Figure 3: a youngster shows his cycling skills**



**Figure 2: 1974 AD performing live at AIDS Mela**



**Figure 4: Anjali Lama, Nepal's first transgender model at the AIDS Mela**

## Saath-Saath Project



Figure 5: Dance4Life sensitizes all to help stop AIDS



Figure 6: Dance performance by Federation of Sexual and Gender Minorities



Figure 7: visitors at the blood donation camp organized by the Blood Bank



Figure 8: Renowned Nepali singer Nima Rumba performing live at AIDS Mela

## ***Saath-Saath Project***



**Figure 9: Distinguished guests reading the recently unveiled HIV at 20 Photo Journal released at the AIDS Mela**



**Figure 11: Memento of appreciation presented by Government of Nepal to USAID**



**Figure 10: Candlelight vigil towards the end of AIDS Mela**