

December 3, 2012

25th World AIDS Day 2012 commemoration in Nepal

USAID-funded Saath-Saath Project utilizes the synergy of its partners to organize numerous programs to sensitize all on HIV and AIDS issues and help reduce HIV-related stigma and discrimination.

On December 1, 2012, The Government of Nepal, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, joined hands with the global community to observe the silver jubilee anniversary of World AIDS Day (WAD) and reiterate call for an AIDS-free future. First observed back in August 1987 in Geneva, the 25th WAD continued on last year's global theme of "Getting to Zero: Zero New HIV infections, Zero Discrimination and Zero AIDS-related Deaths" to ensure zero new HIV infections, zero AIDS-related deaths and zero discrimination by 2015. Also, this year, the US Government's President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) is promoting the theme "Working Together for an AIDS-Free Generation" which reflects the US commitment to shared responsibility in the global response to fight AIDS in partnership with local and international partners, development agencies, government counterparts, media and other sectors. In Nepal, the National Center for AIDS and STD Control, under the leadership of Ministry of Health and Population and in collaboration with national and international stakeholders, coordinated for the nationwide commemoration of WAD with several local level programs and a main national program in Pokhara city.



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. For the first time, the national program was held in Pokhara as a prelude to the 4th National AIDS Conference being held in the same city from December 1-4, 2012. SSP's local NGO partners collaborated with other government agencies and relevant stakeholders 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 school children and candle light vigils.

In addition, SSP organized a special HIV awareness program at the US Embassy in Nepal on November 29, 2012. The one hour program provided a quick overview of the global and national HIV scenario and SSP activities in Nepal and also provided an opportunity to showcase how SSP is utilizing innovative "edutainment" materials including audio/visuals and games to prevent HIV. SSP's Community Mobilizers were also present to indulge the participants in some of the games. However, the main highlight of the program was the first ever one-day free voluntary HIV counseling and testing along with family planning counseling services provided by trained SSP staff to interested embassy staff at the embassy itself. In total, 12 people availed these services of which 11 opted to get tested for HIV.



Pictures from WAD commemoration across SSP districts

