

# THE LINK - NEPAL

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Special Issue on  
Capacity Building

## Building Capacities for Sustainable HIV Programming in Nepal

Capacity building is one of the critical, crosscutting components of [LINKAGES](#) for creating enabling environments to reach the ambitious target of controlling the HIV epidemic and ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030. This process is reflected in LINKAGES goals as well as the cascade of HIV prevention, care, and treatment (CoPCT) services. Multiple approaches and tools are used for the capacity building of individuals, organizations, and systems to enable the performance of core functions and ongoing improvement. These include trainings, workshops, webinars, supportive supervision and on-site coaching, [south-to-south mentoring](#), and knowledge management. As part of the global LINKAGES project, [LINKAGES Nepal](#) also uses these capacity-building tools for staff, government counterparts, implementing partners (IPs), and beneficiary groups. LINKAGES Nepal considers capacity building a tailor-made, focused, and continuous effort. Training is designed and conducted based on needs and gaps identified, and follow-up support is provided. The project also adopts on-site coaching and mentoring during supportive supervision and monitoring visits to enhance the capacity of staff. LINKAGES Nepal facilitates knowledge sharing to keep staff, partners, and stakeholders updated on cutting-edge public health issues and development.

LINKAGES Nepal has conducted training on HIV prevention, care, support, and treatment services, and recording and reporting for IP staff (see Box 1). These trainings enhance the capacity of staff for providing quality prevention and care services to key populations (KPs) and people living with HIV (PLHIV) based on the needs and gaps identified. LINKAGES Nepal has mobilized KPs, PLHIV networks, and IP staff members to facilitate these trainings as part of the [LINKAGES south-to-south mentoring](#) and support strategy.

For capacity building of its staff, LINKAGES Nepal also encourages participation in various webinars organized by global LINKAGES and others. For webinars with national importance, LINKAGES Nepal invites participants from the government and other stakeholders. LINKAGES Nepal organized a joint webinar with government on managing viral load results.

### Box 1

#### Trainings Conducted by LINKAGES Nepal

- Clinical Management of HIV including Antiretroviral Therapy (ART)
- District Health Information System (DHIS) 2
- HIV Care, Support, and Treatment Counselling
- HIV Case Management
- HIV Counselling for Testing
- HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) Laboratory Diagnosis
- Management Information System (MIS)
- Motivation and Communication Skills for HIV Prevention, Care, and Support Services
- Microplanning Process, Data Analysis and Use
- Peer Navigation
- STIs Case Management
- Stigma and Discrimination Reduction in Community and Health Care Settings
- Treatment Literacy

Project staff also participated in technical workshops, conferences, meetings, and trainings at the national and international level. At these forums, staff shared oral presentations, experiences, and learnings from Nepal.

LINKAGES Nepal uses the systematic baseline [organizational performance index \(OPI\)](#) assessment tool with five IPs—who work with men who have sex with men (MSM), male sex workers (MSWs), and transgender people—to assess gaps in organizational systems (see page 3 of this newsletter for more). Furthermore, the

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project mobilized community-based organizations (CBOs) of national PLHIV networks to conduct treatment literacy sessions for capacity building of PLHIV. IPs in collaboration with CBOs helped boost the self-esteem and confidence of PLHIV by facilitating talks by peer champions or positive speakers at PLHIV support groups and adherence club meetings. These sessions helped participants understand the impact of HIV on the family; importance of spiritual activities; opportunistic infections and their treatment, side effects, and process to overcome side effects; importance of ART adherence; nutrition; routine viral load testing; and CD4 count monitoring.

Likewise, LINKAGES Nepal supports IPs with organizational development opportunities. Technical support was provided to Sudur Paschim Samaj (SPS), Kailali, in connecting with international organizations; and [Out in Tech](#) for the development of their website. SPS was selected for website development support through a global competition. SPS was also supported to develop a proposal and small grant application for the [Planet Romeo Foundation and Sports Fund](#). In addition, LINKAGES Nepal supported Nari Chetana Samaj (NCS), Federation of Sexual and Gender Minorities Nepal (FSGMN), Jagriti Mahila Maha Sangh (JMMS), SPS, and SPARSHA Nepal for the online [Global Giving donation](#) platform.

The project also contributes to the capacity-building activities of the Government of Nepal, particularly [National Centre for AIDS and STD Control](#) (NCASC) and [National Public Health Laboratory](#) (NPHL). This includes facilitation of sessions during training organized by NCASC and NPHL; conducting continued medical education (CME) at ART centers; reviewing and providing technical inputs for national guidelines, training manuals, and strategic behavioral communication (SBC) materials (see Box 2). Furthermore, the project, in coordination with NCASC and NPHL, conducts joint monitoring visits and clinical mentoring of staff at ART centers and HIV testing sites including labs, as well as field and lab activities in integrated bio-behavioral surveillance (IBBS) surveys. LINKAGES Nepal supported NCASC and NPHL to conduct training via session facilitation on health care waste management and biosafety, early infant diagnosis (EID), CD4 count, HIV and STI laboratory diagnosis, and logistics management of HIV commodities. LINKAGES Nepal provided technical and financial support to NCASC to organize a workshop on designing mHealth messages to improve ART retention and adherence among PLHIV in Nepal. With the involvement of national stakeholders, LINKAGES Nepal conducted a joint HIV cascade assessment by PEPFAR/USAID and The Global Fund among KPs in Nepal, which helped reveal the key gaps in HIV programming.

The project conducted CME on test and treat including National HIV Testing and Treatment Guidelines 2017 at ART centers, followed by clinical mentoring and supportive supervision. The project organized technical

## Box 2

### National Documents Contributed to by LINKAGES Nepal

- [Nepal Health Facility Survey 2015 Report](#)
- [Nepal Demographic Health Survey 2016 Report](#)
- [National HIV Strategic Plan 2016–2021](#)
- National Mapping and Size Estimation of KPs for 2016–2021
- Integrated Biological and Behavioral Surveillance (IBBS) surveys 2017 protocol and tools
- Treatment Literacy Training Curriculum 2017
- [National Consolidated Strategic Information Guidelines 2017](#)
- National Guidelines for Community-Led Testing 2017
- [National HIV Testing and Treatment Guidelines 2017](#)
- National Reproductive Health Clinical Protocol (forthcoming)
- National Training Curriculum on Clinical Management of HIV (forthcoming)
- National Training Curriculum on Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) (forthcoming)

sessions with national stakeholders on strategic information (SI), use of information and communications technology (ICT), and social and behavior change communication (SBCC) during a technical experts' visit from LINKAGES regional office. The project supported [Expertise France](#) to develop SBC materials, conduct clinical management training, and facilitate a session on pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). Similarly, the project provided support to [B.P. Koirala Institute of Health Sciences \(BPKIHS\)](#) to facilitate sessions during training on SBCC for medical and public health students.

LINKAGES Nepal regularly participates in and contributes to HIV, lab, logistics, and SI technical working groups. The project also provides program- and cost-related data and information, programmatic approaches, good practices, and lessons learned to contribute to designing and planning for national HIV response. The project is supporting the strengthening of the capacity of NPHL for EID services, proficiency testing panel, HIV and viral load testing, and internal quality control measures. The project supported NCASC to strengthen its capacity by developing a master and annual plan for antiretroviral (ARV) drug procurement through international bidding.

LINKAGES Nepal provided human resource support for the [Country Coordination Mechanism \(CCM\) Nepal](#) secretariat, which had been ineligible to receive Global Fund support since 2015 but is eligible again after the rigorous process facilitated by a team of local and international consultants from The Global Fund. The support from LINKAGES Nepal was instrumental in the process to meet the eligibility requirements. CCM Nepal submitted funding applications to The Global Fund and was able to secure \$42.31 million for the period March 2018 to March 2021. This will help the country achieve the treatment targets [90-90-90](#) by 2020 and to end AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.

# Capacity Assessment and Development Plan for Community-Based Organizations Led and Run by Key Populations

LINKAGES supports IPs to assess, plan, and strengthen technical competencies and organizational performance around select areas critical to effective project implementation and closing leaks in the HIV cascade through a tailor-made, focused, and measurable capacity-building approach. Organizational progress is measured using the **OPI**, a unique tool developed and used by LINKAGES partner, **Pact**, to consistently measure outcome change at the organizational level.

LINKAGES Nepal completed a baseline OPI assessment with its five IPs for FY17. Using Pact's standard tool modified for the Nepal country context, the individual baseline score for each partner was obtained in four major domains: effectiveness, efficiency, relevancy, and sustainability. The aim was to measure changes in organizational performance and to link capacity development inputs with community-level impact over the years. While effectiveness assesses achieving results and meeting standards, efficiency examines service delivery and increasing reach for KPs within the IP coverage area. Relevancy explores an IP's practices in engaging the target population and promoting learnings, and sustainability appraises an IP's current and future plan and strategy in mobilizing resources and increasing social capital.

Each domain includes benchmarks that describe a progression of four levels of increasing performance. Benchmark scores are derived through supporting evidence and self-scoring provided by IPs and are further verified by LINKAGES staff. IPs self-identify their current level in each domain and provide tangible evidence to support their conclusions. Against the highest score of 4, LINKAGES Nepal's IPs scores ranged from 1.8 for Naulo Bihani Pokhara (NBP) to 2.3 for SPS in FY17 (Figure 1). All IPs have achieved more than a 50 percent score in LINKAGES Nepal project-related activities under the subdomains standards, delivery, reach, and target population engagement. However, all partners need to improve scores for the subdomains resources and social capital, requiring work on the aspects of organizational sustainability, long-term development plan, and resource mobilization.

## Experience with OPI

*"SPS is a KP-led organization. We have been working with lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-intersex (LGBTI) community of Kailali District and far-western region for more than 10 years. And this OPI assessment has helped us understand and analyze our achievements and status as an independent NGO. It also provided us some guiding actionable points to improve the performance and status of our organization. KP-led NGOs like ours have many administrative and management gaps. And I would like to thank LINKAGES Nepal project for their initiation to improve the status of our organization and guiding us to make it more professional and sustainable."*

-Ashika Chaudhary, President, SPS, Kailali District

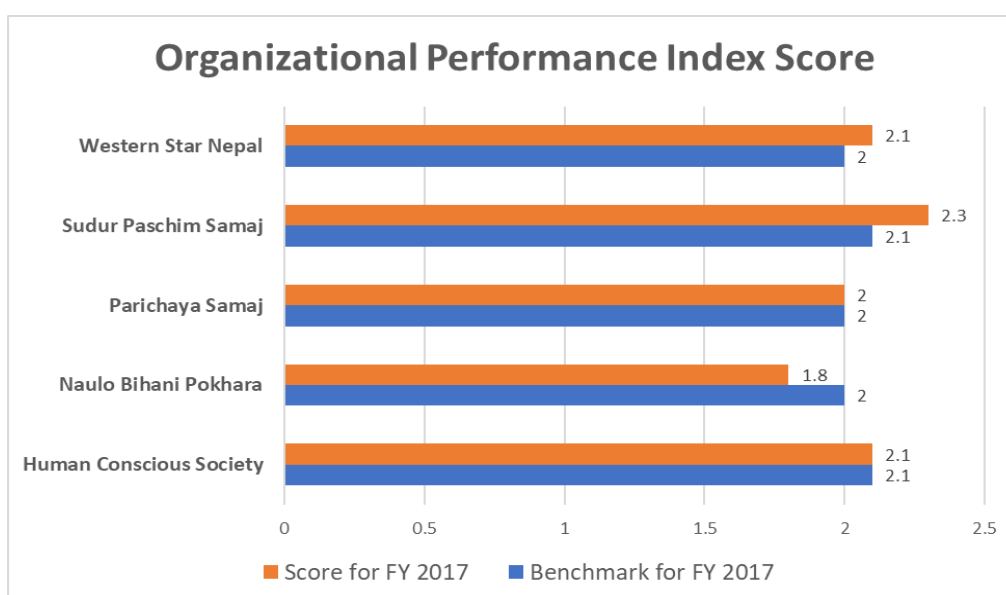


Figure 1. IP organizational performance index score

Based on the scores, LINKAGES Nepal supported IPs to develop a plan of action to support and monitor their performance and to improve their scores for the next round of OPI assessment in FY18. In addition, LINKAGES Nepal provides regular on-site coaching and supportive supervision, and IPs discuss, review, and update the OPI plan of action during monthly and bimonthly review meetings.



## TOTAL

HIV prevention interventions



50,307

HIV testing and counselling services



18,277

HIV-positive diagnosed



93

HIV-positive people linked to treatment



87

HIV-positive people receiving care and support in community

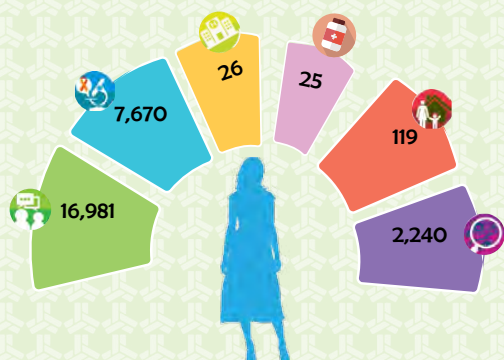


424

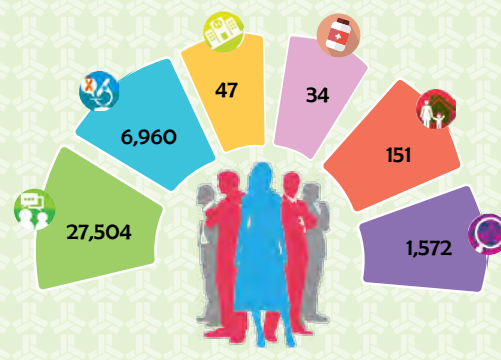
Screened for sexually transmitted infections (STIs)



4,966



FSWs



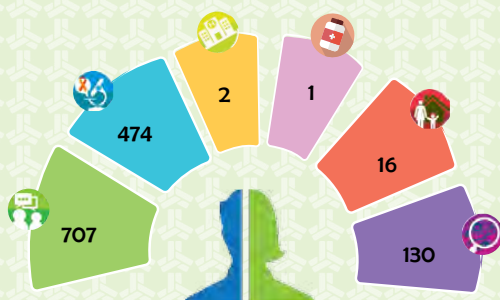
Clients of FSWs



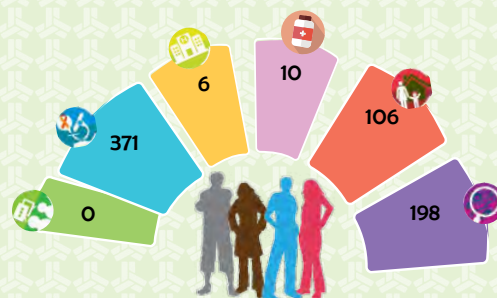
MSM



MSWs



TG People



Others

## Condoms Distributed



Total: 1.08 Million



Male  
536,257



Female  
506,699



TG People  
36,117

## Lubricants Distributed



Total: 190,460



Male  
158,654

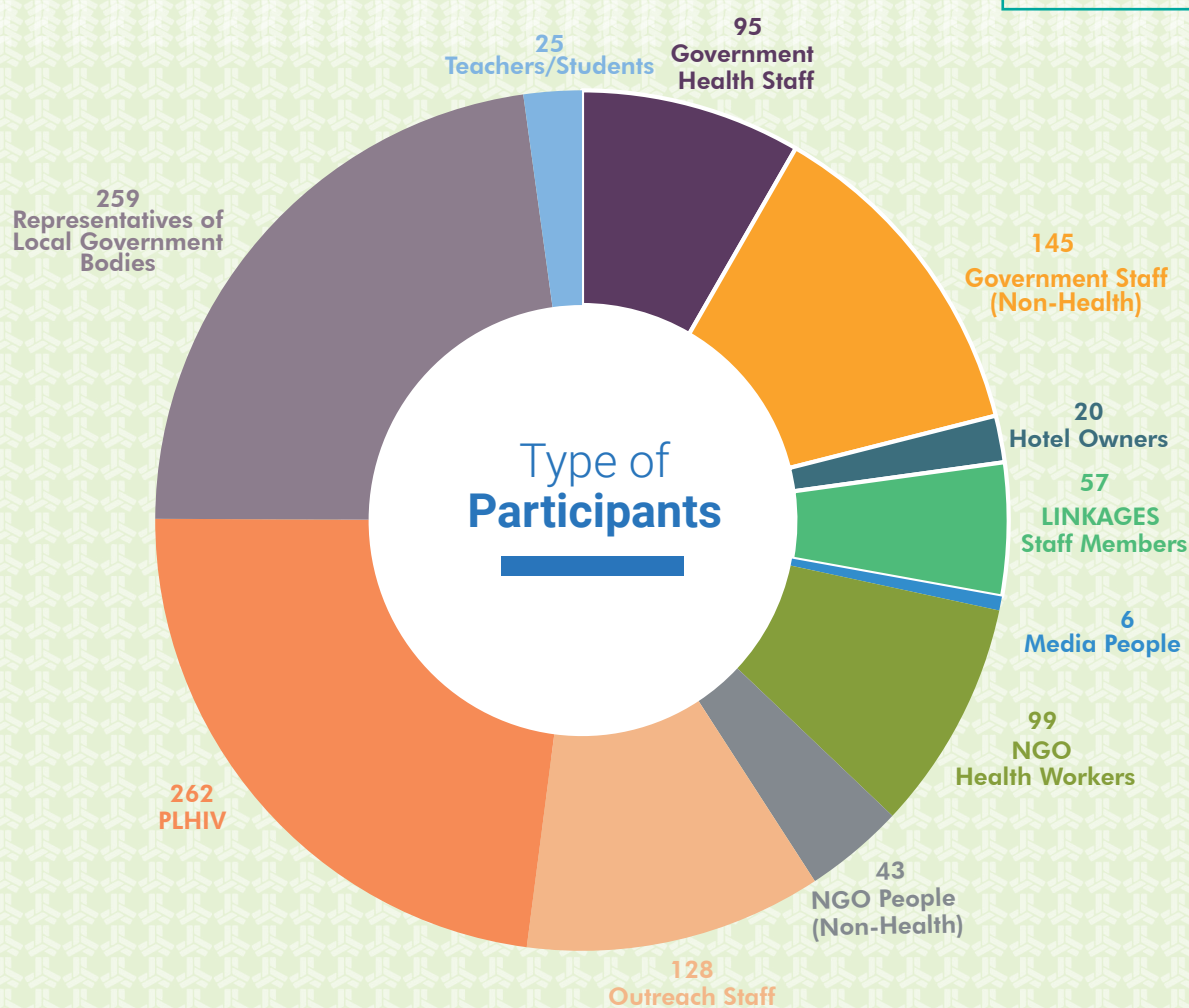


Female  
0



TG People  
31,806





## What LINKAGES Nepal Staff and Partners Say about Capacity Building

"Project coordinator of Nari Chetana Samaj, another LINKAGES Nepal IP, provided support to me to better understand my task. Not only in recording and reporting, he thoroughly supported our organization in every program activity, and we were able to submit all deliverables within the deadlines. He has provided his time and guidance to our organization and now we feel that we are accomplishing our tasks successfully. We are very thankful to him."

**Sajit Das, MIS Associate,  
Parichaya Samaj**

"Training on motivation and communication skills for HIV prevention, care, and support services was very wonderful. All the sessions are useful for program and community-based supporters. As a facilitator in this training, my experiences have been very nice. I am confident this training will support all CBSs and entire team in the field work and contribute to 90-90-90 goal. Thank you so much to the entire group of LINKAGES Nepal for giving me this opportunity."

**Raju Lama, Project Coordinator,  
Sudur Paschim Samaj**

"It's great to see the enhanced capacity of field level outreach staff and upgrade in their understanding in analyzing micro level data. It will really support improving the access of community people to HIV prevention and care services."

**Prakash Chandra Lekhak,  
Program Officer, Mid and Far  
Western, LINKAGES Nepal  
Project**

"We found all the sessions in the training appropriate. We know that our main job is to identify new HIV positives and prevent transmission of HIV from these people to others. In the training, we received adequate knowledge to address these needs."

**Ram Chandra Paudel, Health  
Assistant, LINKAGES static  
clinic, Banke**

"Capacity building and community engagement are integral components of LINKAGES Nepal Project. Besides training, we provide regular on-site coaching and supportive supervision to IPs. This has not only improved the quality of work, but has improved their competency, knowledge, and skills regarding HIV-related services and addressing overarching barriers for KPs and people living with HIV."

**Bharat Shrestha, Program  
Specialist-MSM, MSWs, and  
Transgender People, LINKAGES  
Nepal Project**

"I feel happy and proud to be part of the national capacity building. Whatever we initiated in the past, became part of the national program. I expect what we are introducing with LINKAGES will certainly be one of the major national activities."

**Dr. Durga Prasad Bhandari,  
Technical Advisor, LINKAGES  
Nepal Project**

"The training was very helpful to gain updated knowledge and skills related to HIV prevention, care, and support services. This was very helpful to understand new initiatives and share challenges faced in the field. Thanks to LINKAGES Nepal team for organizing the training. We need support to implement learnings from the training in upcoming days through on-site coaching."

**Participant, Motivation and  
Communication Skills training,  
Hetauda, Makawanpur District**

"Trainings organized by LINKAGES Nepal support the maintaining of quality of HIV laboratory services. Quality of HIV diagnostic services is crucial for achieving the national and global goal of 90-90-90 by 2020."

**Dr. Raj Kumar Mahato, Former  
Director, National Public  
Health Laboratory**



## Important Activities and Events (January–March 2018)

### Shared Rapid Community Assessment Findings

LINKAGES Nepal IPs organized a meeting to share rapid community assessment (RCA) findings in 11 districts. Participants were district-level government and nongovernment stakeholders. The main objective was to share KP estimates for FY17 and key achievements of the district under the LINKAGES Nepal project. The District Public Health Administrator expressed appreciation for the effort of LINKAGES Nepal and requested an increase in testing coverage among KPs.



2017 national HIV infection estimates using Estimation and Projection Package and AIDS Epidemic Model (AEM). The workshop concluded with a draft estimation of HIV population, HIV prevalence, new HIV infections, incidence per 1,000, annual AIDS deaths, mothers needing PMTCT, and other estimates related to HIV. LINKAGES Nepal also participated in the validation workshop and provided inputs to finalize the estimates and Global AIDS Monitoring country report.



### Co-facilitated a Workshop on Health Promotion and Social and Behavior Change Communication in Public Health

LINKAGES Nepal facilitated SBCC sessions during the Health Promotion and Social and Behavior Change Communication in Public Health workshop organized by BPKIHS. The theoretical framework related to health promotion, health communication, and SBCC was described, and practical experiences were shared.



### Conducted Training for Clinical Staff, Project Coordinators, Management Information System Staff, Outreach Staff, and Drop-in Center Operators

- (1) HIV case management, (2) STI case management, (3) HIV counselling for testing, and (4) HIV and STI laboratory diagnosis for clinical staff; peer navigators trained following LINKAGES peer navigation training module
- Two two-day sessions on LINKAGES Nepal's DHIS 2 for project coordinator and management information system (MIS) staff
- Five batches of training on motivation and communication skills for HIV prevention, care, and support services for outreach staff and drop-in center (DIC) operators as well as representatives from national KP and PLHIV networks

### Initiated Piloting of the Service Quality Monitoring System Via Short Message Services

Piloting of service quality monitoring system via SMS (SMS<sup>2</sup>) initiated in three Kathmandu valley districts from February 26, 2018 for a period of three months. SMS<sup>2</sup> assessment monitors health facility service quality by administering surveys to end users or beneficiaries for their experience of service provided—primarily on stigma and discrimination—which is compared with health care providers' self-assessment. The SMS<sup>2</sup> generates a quarterly report with quality improvement interventions. SMS<sup>2</sup> is included as a monitoring and periodic evaluation tool in Guidelines on Community-Led HIV Testing in Nepal and in a Global Fund proposal for national roll-out.

### Participated in National HIV Infection Estimates 2017 Workshop

LINKAGES Nepal participated in and provided technical assistance for National HIV Infection Estimates 2017 workshop organized by NCASC. The objective was to update

### Conducted National HIV Stakeholders Meeting

National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS in Nepal (NAP+N) organized a national HIV stakeholders meeting with representatives from Government of Nepal and stakeholders working on HIV, human rights, and media to share discussion from a national consultation and to disseminate a declaration of 11 points during the meeting.



## Visitors Log

Mr. Mark Austin, Middle East and Asia health specialist, USAID, Bureau of Global Health, Washington, DC, along with Ms. Ivana Lohar, team leader-family planning, HIV, and social marketing, visited LINKAGES Nepal project IP in Banke District. They observed clinical services at Nepal STD and AIDS Research Center clinic, received an overview of clinical procedure, and discussed outreach and clinical services with beneficiary groups.



Mr. Daniel Verschneider, deputy director, Health Office, and Ms. Ivana Lohar, team leader-family planning, HIV, and social marketing, both USAID Nepal; along with Mr. Chiran Pandey, U.S. Embassy, visited IP in Banke District. They observed clinical and DIC setup and services, including interacting with project staff. They also interacted with community-based supporters of Western Star Nepal and with a beneficiary group.



NPHL and LINKAGES Nepal visited IPs in Chitwan and Kaski districts. The monitoring team observed clinical services along with project specific and government recording and reporting system and tools and interacted with staff. They discussed implementation of revised guidelines, EID, external quality assurance scheme, CD4 count test and transportation of viral load samples, and provided technical suggestions regarding inconclusive results and re-testing for HIV.



Dr. Basu Dev Pandey, director, and Mr. Bir Bahadur Rawal, SI focal person, NCASC, visited IP in Banke District. The team was briefed on overall LINKAGES Nepal's strategic framework, goals, and contribution to the national strategy. Prevention and clinical activities in the district were shared. The NCASC team also interacted with IP staff members.



The chief and HIV focal person of District Public Health Office (DPHO), representatives from DPHO, District Coordination Committee, and District Administration Office in Dang, Kailali, Kaski, Lalitpur and Makawanpur districts observed mobile and static clinics run by LINKAGES Nepal IPs in these districts. They observed HIV testing and counselling and STI clinic setup including project specific and government recording and reporting system and interacted with community-based supporters, peer navigators (PNs), and clinical staff.



## Congratulations

to the LINKAGES Nepal Team  
for winning Knowledge Sharing 2017  
IMPACT Awards

### Editorial Team

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