

Virtual Eighth Health Cluster Coordination Meeting
Kathmandu, Nepal
28 May 2020 -THURSDAY (2:00 – 4:00 pm)

The meeting was chaired by Dr. Gunaraj Lohani, Lead of the Health Cluster and co-chaired by Dr. Lungten Z. Wangchuk, Co-lead of the Health Cluster. Distinguished officials from the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP), Health Coordination Team and Provincial teams from all the provinces, and health partners from more than 51 agencies attended the meeting virtually. Dr. Lungten Z. Wangchuk facilitated the meeting.

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Agenda Items

| Agenda Item | Responsible | Time |
|--|---|--------------|
| Welcome and Update | Dr. Gunaraj Lohani, Chair-Health Cluster | 14.00-14.10 |
| COVID-19 Epidemiological Situation | Dr. Basu Dev Pandey, Director, EDCD | 14:10- 14:20 |
| Risk communication during pandemic | Dr. Bikash Devkota, Information Officer (Spokesperson), ICS | 14.20-14.30 |
| Follow-up action points and brief updates from partners | Dr. WANGCHUK, Lungten (Zangmo) Co-chair | 14.30-14.40 |
| Provincial Presentation (5 minutes to each province) | Province-1, Province-2, Province-5, and Sudurpachhime Province | 14.40-15.00 |
| Summary of the meeting followed by discussions/questions | Dr. Lungten Wangchuk, Co-Chair <i>Advisors MoHP and Chair (answers/comments to the questions)</i> | 15:00-15.10 |
| Comments/Answers to the questions | Advisors/Chair | 15.10-15.20 |
| Conclusion and closing | Dr. Gunaraj Lohani, Chair-Health Cluster | 15.20-15.30 |

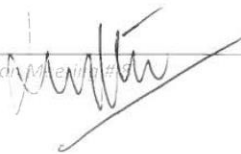
Synopsis of the meeting:

Dr. Lohani welcomed all participants to the meeting and provided brief updates on responses of MoHP to manage and control COVID-19. The details of tests and isolation/quarantine of COVID-19 cases as of 28 May 2020 were also provided.

Dr. Lohani thanked all the countries who provided support and organizations for providing continued support to MoHP through "One Door Mechanism" for COVID-19 response. He informed about the endorsement of Interim Guidance on Reproductive Maternal Newborn and Child Health (RMNCH) services in COVID-19 pandemic and Health-related standards for people within quarantine.

As of 28 May 2020

Total PCR sites: **20**
 Total PCR tests done: **60916** (average of more than 3000 per day in past week)
 Total PCR positive: **1042**
 Total active cases: **850**
 Total discharged: **187**
 Affected districts: **51**
 Total RDT performed: **102043**
 (average of more than 3000 per day in past week)
 Total isolation beds: **3597**
 Total people in isolation: **850**
 Total quarantine beds: **129750**
 Total people in quarantine: **86057**





Dr. Basudev Pandey, Director, Epidemiology and Disease Control Division (EDCD) provided epidemiological updates of COVID-19 in Nepal. He also informed that discharge guideline is being finalized as per new WHO recommendations. Dr. Lungten Wangchuk, Co-chair then provided brief updates/support from partners for COVID-19 response. She mentioned that the asks of Ministry on COVID-19 testing, protective equipment and logistics as well as ramping up tests are the continued key asks until control of COVID-19 is achieved. She further provided information on increased maternal, neonatal, and infant deaths in Nepal in COVID situation and requested partners to support in decreasing maternal and neonatal and infant deaths. She stressed that water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) and other standards and health protective measures in quarantine is also to be focused by the health partners in present context.

Following the health partners presentation, Provincial Health Cluster leads of Province 1, Province 2, Province 5, and Sudurpaschim Province provided the provincial updates, activities, key issues and their way forward. The major issues from the provinces were:

- Management of quarantine facilities and people within those facilities
- Inadequate isolation facilities
- PCR testing issues (machine, lab reagent, RNA extraction kits)
- Inadequate human resources for PCR laboratories and CICT formation
- Lack of involvement of private hospitals/medical colleges in COVID-19 response
- Inadequate protective commodities like PPE (goggles, masks -N95, face shields, gowns) for both COVID and non-COVID (basic and essential) health services
- Need for clear guidelines for management of asymptomatic cases as majority of cases are asymptomatic

Majority of the provinces also informed that they have been planning to build isolation centers and hospitals, modify guideline in changing scenario/based on their circumstances and increase the number of COVID-specific hospitals and laboratories as the cases are increasing rapidly. They asked MoHP as well as health partners for the possible help they can provide, man, materials, or money, whichever is feasible. Following the provincial presentations, Dr. Bikash Devkota, Communication Officer and Spokesperson for ICS, provided the importance of emergency information communication and the flow of information during emergencies. Dr. Lungten then provided the summary of the key issues in different provinces that needs attention and support:

- Quarantine standards and testing ramp up
- Addressing returnees' issues
- CICT support
- Clear guidelines for discharge / release from quarantine and isolation centers

Dr. Suresh Tiwari, Advisor stressed that continued support is required on COVID-19 supplies for testing and PPE through one door mechanism. He focused on the support for expansion of isolation in COVID hospitals and capacitating human resources required in the community or within the hospitals for COVID response at local levels. He also stressed that focus should also be provided to psychological support and streamlining the information through one door mechanism thus providing common messages.

Dr. Reuben Samuel, WHO WHE also provided some solutions to different COVID-19 tests and treatment related issues in Nepal. He informed that use of saline in place of VTM is being discussed in NPHL and guidelines will be forwarded by NPHL for the same, which will help reduce VTM related issues for COVID-19 diagnosis. On the number of days to be at isolation and the negative PCR tests

required for the discharge, he informed that new evidences show that shedding of virus is nearly nil after 10 days after test positive for asymptomatic patients and 10 days after symptom onset plus at-least 3 days without symptoms for symptomatic. This will decrease demand of the test for discharging patients from isolation.


Finally, Dr. Lohani provided following suggestions and recommendations to all the participants of the meeting and thanked all for their support and participation.

- Dr. Lohani informed that guidelines in pandemic/emergencies are dynamic documents and there will updated regularly as per the available evidences and best practices.
- He also informed that efforts have been made on expansion of PCR testing and options on alternatives for VTM is being sought for.
- He also informed that a home isolation guideline is in process which will guide the isolation process within home when there will be high cases scenario (more than 2000 cases in isolation).
- He also suggested that all local levels form a CICT team, the team is lead by public health personnel. In addition, regarding financing the CICT team, he added that a guidelines are being endorsed by cabinet and asked all levels to provide information of human resource they have or require.
- He also informed that guidelines for quarantine of health care staffs will be developed keeping in mind the low infectivity chances after 10 days of infection from COVID-19.
- He also informed that holding areas at point of entry will be formed for returnees where they will be segregated based on their symptoms to isolation for symptomatic and palikas centers for asymptomatic with new discharge protocol for their stay in isolation and treatment.

Decisions/Action points:

- Regular reporting of provincial ICS to HEOC
- Provide list of human resources available and focal points for CICT teams at all levels
- Improve and maintain health-related standards of quarantine facilities
- Optimal use of available resources for COVID-19 case management
- Provide support for updating guidelines

Signed by the Chair:



Dr Gunaraj Lohani
Chair/Lead
2 June 2020





Dr Lungten Z. Wangchuk
Co-Chair/Co-Lead