

## THIRD NATIONAL SUMMIT OF HEALTH AND POPULATION SCIENTISTS IN NEPAL – A SPECIAL REPORT

Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC) organized its Third National Summit of Health and Population Scientists in Nepal with the theme: **Health in Sustainable Development Goals: Are we on Track?** The summit encouraged scientists, researchers, policy makers, scholars and practitioners both from national and international platforms to participate. This platform allows the exchange of research ideas and evidences to motivate young health professionals, scientists and policy makers to translate evidence into actions and set the direction for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and are also vital in sustaining the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) achievements.

Health and Population Scientists as a group can contribute immensely to promote evidence informed decision making process and is instrumental in achieving many of the goals of MDGs. Such scientists can contribute to uncover SDG related evidences which can indicate whether or not we are in track to achieve the SDGs. Tracking of capacities and availability of evidence is key in promoting further actions for the achievement of SDGs.

NHRC hosted the summit with the belief that this would be a productive, inspiring and stimulating opportunity to share and exchange expertise and experience that will be of value and will help promote innovation in all research and policy making in Nepal. The summit had received an overwhelming response from the enthusiastic participants from different sectors and agencies had facilitated dissemination and exchange of vital information.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE SUMMIT

The major objectives of this summit were;

- To bring health and population scientists together to promote evidence informed decision making process for the optimal health and well-being of Nepalese people
- To encourage health and population scientists and practitioners for responsible conduct of research on health and development
- To discourse upon evidences to develop insight and find out the way forward for initiating the efforts to meet the aspirations of the SDGs

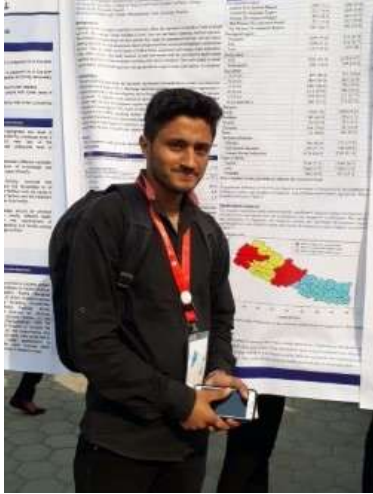
### VIEWS FROM STUDENTS

#### DHUNA SHARMA, BSC NURSING



The main reason for participating in this programme is to learn about various types of research that are being conducted in Nepal and would be helpful for evidence based practice. For freshers like us this type of conference helps us to learn about different types of research, its findings and methodologies which will help us in our academic studies and conducting research. This summit is a great learning opportunity and helps to generate insights on the field of research.

## **BISHWASH SAPTOKA, BACHELORS IN PHARMACY**



This type of programmes are organized very less in Nepal. This type of programme is highly motivational for freshers and their participation alone encourages them to do more in this field. If the organizing committee provides sponsorship for such programmes the flow of the participants would have been even more. The presentation currently being made are focused mostly on public health. If they had also provided a platform to share lab based work it would have been more effective for students like me. Public health helps in plans and policies while lab based works focus on different inventions.

## **VIEWS FROM PROFESSIONALS**

### **PRASANSA SUBBA, TPO NEPAL, SENIOR RESEARCH OFFICER**



This type of conference is very important as we have been conducting various research but the findings of the research have been largely limited to few parties. It is necessary to have policy implications on the findings because if we conduct the study and don't bring the findings into use, the research will be of no use. All the researches that have been conducted have come up with very good suggestion and providing clear directions towards the future. Hence, if we could incorporate these findings and evidence in our health policy, I personally think that it would benefit a large number of people in different sectors.

### **PUSPA LAMICHHANE, DIRECTOR OF CLINICAL SERVICES, MARIE STOPES INTERNATIONAL**



Such conferences are needed more often in the country as it highlights the studies and researches have been conducted throughout the country. It allows gatherings and interactions which can encourage and motivate young researchers to participate and learn. This program comprises a highly mixed group of senior government professionals, professionals, professors and students. This is a good learning opportunity and I am highly impressed with this summit

**DHARMA BHATTA, POST DOCTOR FELLOW, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN FRANCISCO**



Systematic review is an advanced research method and it enhances not only the quality of the researcher and but the quality of the researcher too. This is helpful in deriving further conclusions and conducting meta-analysis. We need quality evidence for systematic review and meta-analysis because without quality evidence such reviews and

analysis would result in invalid and unreliable findings. Conferences like this are a great platform for research and is an effective way of dissemination of vital information and diverse ideas enabling further learnings and new knowledge acquisition. Such conferences need to be held more frequently as it motivates research as researchers can present their studies and their findings to different audience from the same platform. It is one of the way of enhancing knowledge.

**VIEWS FROM THE MINISTER**

**GAGAN THAPA, HEALTH MINISTER**



I would like to thank and congratulate NHRC for organizing the Third National Conference of Health and Population Scientists. The role of health scientists is important in every aspect of the health system and this conference has brought together 1000 experts to disseminate new knowledge.

I am delighted that the organizers have chosen Sustainable Development Goal as the theme of the year, as SDG also broadens the scope of health policy by including more in the area of water, sanitation hygiene as well as reduction of poverty. These essence have also been captured by our constitution, and the constitution guarantees basic health care as a right. It includes emergency medicines, reproductive health and health insurance as state responsibility. Furthermore, the constitution lists nutrition and drinking water as rights of the citizens. The ministry has been working with the cabinet and the partners to define and implement new standards this regard.

I would like to mention to the scientists that polices are based on evidence and adequate and proper evidences can help in bringing changes and derive positive results. Only intension is not enough and we need to generate evidences, data and supporting arguments, which is why we want to values the scientists and the work done by the research council. We encourage these scientists to join hands with the ministry and we encourage evidence based policy making. We want to not only increase the resource allocated to NHRC but also encourage independent researchers to come up with their proposals and collaborate with the ministry.

**VIEWS FROM NHRC**

**ANJANI KUMAR JHA, EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, NHRC**

This summit has received support from presenter, participants and delegates. We have witnessed wonderful presentations from energetic researchers and their active engagement have encouraged us to promote young scientist in research and to support

researchers in implantation of SDG. We would like to congratulate all the presenters for their excellent scholarly contributions. All the presenters have made wonderful efforts to deliver their research findings in their area of expertise in line with the evidence and demand of the SDG. This discussion has improved our understanding on the opportunities and challenges of SGDs with the perspective of research need and evidence requirement. We also had opportunities to include the concepts of systemic review and other methods to sensitize young researchers in the area of evidence informed policy. We hope that the program activities will further support in bridging the evidence gap in health sector in relation to the SDG.

### **BHOJ RAJ ADHIKARI, VICE CHAIRPERSON, NHRC**

It has been an immense pleasure to welcome all guests on behalf of NHRC in this declaration. The declaration has been summarized however the inputs are always welcome.

**Major excerpts of the declaration** made during the summit is as follows:

*Internalizing right to health as a fundamental human right insists in the constitution of Nepal acknowledging social justice and equity in health, realizing the right time to initiate actions for each and every health related SGD and recognizing the partnerships as strategic approach for achieving SGDs, we the organizers, partners and the participants of this summit declare out commitment to:*

- *Generate and synthesize the evidence required in planning and monitoring the progress of SDG*
- *Press the social health security of the population at the center while taking actions related to the evidence*
- *Explore and address social determinants of health on inequalities and social injustice in health*
- *Encourage the policy makers to translate evidences into the desirable actions to serve the needs of the population*
- *Appreciating the role of academia, research organizations, government and non-government organizations, professional and civil society organizations, external development partners and independent researchers in promotion of research culture together with the responsibility for utilizing the evidence into meaningful actions, we ought for allocation of adequate resources for health research as per the international commitment to an create enabling environment for the generation, synthesis and use of the evidence*
- *Multisectoral collaboration and cooperation to foster the participation, engagement and initiating the evidence based actions*
- *Strengthen the routine information system to support the health decision making*

### **HERD'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE SUMMIT**

HERD made its presence felt during the event as a **Gold Collaborator** to the event. Likewise, couple of HERD stories were also featured during the summit in the form of poster presentation and oral presentation:

1. Poster Presentation on Access to Family Planning Services by Migrant Couples in Nepal – Barriers and Evidence Gaps
2. Oral Presentation on Supplies Disruption and its Impact Upon Health Sector in Nepal – Findings from a Media Monitoring Study



Oral and Poster presentations made by HERD during the event

## CONCLUSION

This year's summit sought to provide a platform for health and population researchers in Nepal, particularly the young scientists to join hands towards strengthening evidence informed decision making in Nepal. The theme 'Health in SDGs in Nepal: Are we on track?' aimed to uncover SDG related evidences in order to provide an insight into whether or not Nepal has initiated effort to meet the aspirations of the SDGs. This year, the summit included 33 thematic areas for oral and poster presentation in order to promote diversity in the scientific sessions and cater a wide group of audience. There were 47 oral presentations and 129 poster presentations in the summit on issues ranging from non-communicable diseases, nutrition, health systems, mental health, biomedical research, sexual and reproductive health, environmental and occupational health. All of which are vital national issues related to the attainment of the sustainable development goals. The summit comprised of a steering committee, a scientific community and an organizing committee.

It is an encouraging sight to see the third summit successfully commenced with participation of over 1000 scientists and professions in the program. Evidences are important in policy development and these evidences are found by many researchers on a daily basis. However, evidence alone without communication is deemed useless. This summit has substantially helped in bringing forth and disseminating all the evidence to the relevant stakeholders which can largely contribute in inclination towards the SDGs. This conference was highly informative bringing together experts and professions from all corners of the health system and with wide range of experience to work collectively towards gap analysis, problem identification and evidence generation. Such conferences need continuity as it can help in enhancing the quality of research in the long run in Nepal.

Government ownership is crucial in improving research quality and standards. They have an important role in bringing together all the researchers and scholars in a common ground to work for the common cause of national development. NHRC alone cannot bring the desired changes in the nation and needs to work together with other agencies including government, international organizations, related agencies and external development partners. More summits like this is required if better transparency, coordination and communication among researchers is needed in the long run in Nepal. Such summits can promote the research culture in Nepal and can help build the local capacity and facilitate the translation of evidences into policies and practice.

### Contributors:

**Sudeep Uprety, Bipul Lamichhane and Kritagya Regmi**