INTRODUCTION

In an effort to move towards fulfilling Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Nepal Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) conducted a four-day Orientation Event on the process of developing a National Surgical Obstetric Anesthesia Plan (NSOAP) for the country.

This NSOAP Orientation event marked an important milestone in a roadmap towards formulating an NSOAP for Nepal. It was co-hosted by the Nepal MoHP and UNITAR, in partnership with Harvard Medical School Program in Global Surgery and Social Change (PGSSC), the Global Surgery Foundation (GSF), and the Nick Simons Institute (NSI). The event was held as a 4-day hybrid (partially virtual / partially face-to-face) event and was highly interactive.

The main objective of the NSOAP Orientation event was to familiarize all major stakeholders with the NSOAP initiative and align them towards the common goal of starting the process of developing an NSOAP unique for Nepal.

BACKGROUND

Surgical care as a pathway towards UHC

It has been shown that surgical, obstetric and anaesthesia (SOA) care is the cornerstone for ensuring strong, resilient and sustainable healthcare systems.

The 68th World Health Organization (WHO) Assembly in 2015 passed a resolution (WHA68.15) to strengthen emergency and essential surgical and anaesthesia services as a component of UHC. This effort was directed towards helping WHO member states in realizing the SDGs. Following the political mandate of WHA 68.15 and the Lancet Commission on Global Surgery (LCoGS), experts around the world produced a comprehensive planning methodology for safe SOA care, the NSOAP Manual.

As a UN member state, Nepal was one of the signatories on the Resolution WHA 68.15 and is committed to lead the way in strengthening emergency and essential surgical and anaesthesia services.

Why focus on surgical care – in Nepal?

Most low and middle-income countries (LMICs), including Nepal, are seeing a rapid increase in non-communicable disease (NCD) profiles and traumatic injury. It is well understood that surgical care systems form the foundation of strong health care systems, and in particular the backbone of treatment options for most NCDs. Over two thirds of NCDs cannot be prevented and will require some form of surgical intervention over the course of a patient’s lifetime. Studies have shown that investing in SOA services is affordable, saves lives and promotes economic growth. However, it is a fact that surgical care has largely been left out of the mainstream discussions of global health despite its indispensable role in achieving the SDGs and UHC.

More than 90% of the world’s poor lack access to basic surgical care. At least 77.2 million disability-adjusted life-years (DALY) could be averted by improving access to basic, life-saving surgical care alone. Patients from remote villages and marginalized social groups in Nepal continue to face significant obstacles when attempting to access surgical care. To adequately treat these types of conditions, SOA care must be an integral part of the health system.
EVENT DESCRIPTION

The framework of the Orientation Event followed the NSOAP process outlined in the recently published NSOAP Manual (download). This manual was the result of an exhaustive collaborative effort by multiple stakeholders around the world and published recently by Harvard PGSSC, UNITAR, and the Global Surgery Foundation with the goal of helping countries increase their capacity to deliver safe and affordable emergency and essential SOA services.

The 4-day NSOAP Orientation event was partially held as a private event at the Kathmandu Marriot Hotel Convention Center, as well as virtually via UNITAR’s Division for People and Social Inclusion’s Zoom account.

The event was hosted after-work hours (from 1-3pm CET/ 5-7pm Nepal time) to facilitate stakeholder availability and participation, all the while remaining in line with the necessary COVID-19 security measurements to secure a safe event.

Participants from the 2nd and 3rd day breakout sessions were guided to their respective groupings and dedicated rooms after the daily opening remarks. Each breakout session was monitored by a stakeholder representative and guided by a PowerPoint presentation which highlighted the relevant discussion topics and various country/provincial needs.

EVENT PARTICIPANTS

The series of meetings included key actors from various sectors, including Federal/Provincial Government, Academia, Professional Societies, Private Sector and Donor Agencies.

HOSTS

• Ministry of Health and Population, Government of Nepal (MoHP)
• United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)

PARTNERS

• Harvard Medical School – Program in Global Surgery and Social Change (PGSSC)
• The Global Surgery Foundation (GSF)
• Nick Simons Institute, Nepal (NSI)
• Swedish International Development Agency (Sida)
EVENT SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time (Nepal)</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Session 1 – NSOAP Framework Introduction and Global Lessons on NSOAP Development</td>
<td>19th July</td>
<td>18:00-20:00</td>
<td>All Stakeholders</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>14:15-16:15(CEST)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Session 2.1 – Stakeholder Meeting with Federal/Provincial Government and Donor Agencies</td>
<td>20th July</td>
<td>13:00-15:00</td>
<td>Government Sector and Donor Agencies/EDPs</td>
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<td>09:15-11:15(CEST)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Session 2.2 – Stakeholder Meeting with Academia, Professional Societies, and Private Sector</td>
<td>21st July</td>
<td>13:00-15:00</td>
<td>Academia, Professional Societies, Private Sector</td>
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<td>09:15-11:15(CEST)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Session 3 – The Collaborative Effort for Strengthening of Surgical Care in Nepal</td>
<td>22nd July</td>
<td>18:00-19:30</td>
<td>All Stakeholders</td>
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<td>14:15-15:45(CEST)</td>
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</table>

DAY 1
Orientation Program Schedule
Master of Ceremony: Mr. Santosh Subedi

MONDAY 19TH JULY, SESSION 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5:00–5:30 PM</td>
<td>Welcome Remarks and Keynote Address</td>
<td>Dr. Madan Kumar Upadhya (Chief, Quality Standard &amp; Regulation Division MoHP)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dr. Geoff Ibbotson (Senior Health Advisor, UNITAR)</td>
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<td>Executive Lead, Global Surgery Foundation</td>
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<td>Dr. Rajesh Sambajirao Pandav (WHO Representative to Nepal)</td>
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<td>Dr. Roshan Pokhrel (Secretary, MoHP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:30–6:00 PM</td>
<td>Making the Case for Prioritizing Surgical Care</td>
<td>Dr. Scott Corlew (Lecturer, Harvard PGSSC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:00–6:30 PM</td>
<td>Current Status of Surgical Care in Nepal</td>
<td>Dr. Madan Kumar Upadhya (Chief, Quality Standard &amp; Regulation Division MoHP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:30–7:00 PM</td>
<td>NSOAP Introduction: Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>Dr. Kee Park (Director of Policy and Advocacy, Harvard PGSSC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7:00–7:30 PM</td>
<td>NSOAP Development Process Model</td>
<td>Dr. Lubna Samad (Paediatric Surgeon, IHHN)</td>
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<td>Director, IRD Global</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:30–7:45 PM</td>
<td>Vote of Thanks</td>
<td>Dr. Madan Kumar Upadhya (Chief, Quality Standard &amp; Regulation Division MoHP)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## DAY 2

### Orientation Program Schedule

**Master of Ceremony: Dr. Sangeeta Kaushal Mishra**

**TUESDAY 20TH JULY, SESSION 2.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5:00–5:30 PM  | The Role of Federal/Provincial Governments and Donor Agencies in NSOAP Development | Dr. Sangchul Yoon  
Visiting Professor, Harvard PGSSC                                                             |
| 5:30–7:00 PM  | Group Discussion for Federal and Provincial Government                   | Dr. Madan Kumar Upadhyaya  
Chief, Quality Standard & Regulation Division MoHP  
Dr. Sangeeta Kaushal Mishra  
Director, Chief Consultant, Paropakar Maternity and Women's Hospital MoHP  
Associate Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, NAMS |
|               | Group Discussion for Donor/EDPs                                         | Dr. Bhagawan Koirala  
Head of Department, Cardiothoracic and Vascular Surgery, IOM, TU  
President, NMC  
Dr. Shankar Man Rai  
Plastic Surgeon, Kirtipur Hospital, PHECT-Nepal  
Professor of Plastic Surgery, NAMS  
Country Director, RESURGE International |

## DAY 3

### Orientation Program Schedule

**Master of Ceremony: Dr. Ganesh Dangal**

**WEDNESDAY 21ST JULY, SESSION 2.2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 5:00–5:30 PM  | The Role of Academia, Professional Society, and Private Sector in NSOAP Development | Dr. Rennie Qin  
Research Fellow, Harvard PGSSC                                                             |
| 5:30–7:00 PM  | Group Discussion for Academia/Councils                                   | Dr. Pradeep Vaidya  
Professor, Surgery, TUTH  
Assistant Dean, IOM  
Consultant, Hepato Biliary and Pancreatic, Laparoscopic Surgeon and Therapeutic Endoscopist  
Dr. Peeyush Dahal  
Head of Department, Plastic Surgery, Bir Hospital  
Dean, NAMS  
President, Nepal Burn Foundation  
Executive Member, Nepal Burn Society |
|               | Group Discussion for Professional Societies/Associations                | Dr. Ravi Ram Shrestha  
Professor in Anaesthesiology, NAMS  
Chief Consultant, Anaesthesiologist and Critical Care Physician, Bir Hospital  
Dr. Ganesh Dangal  
President, NESOG  
Academic Director, PHECT-Nepal  
Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, NAMS |
### DAY 4

**Orientation Program Schedule**

**Master of Ceremony: Mr. Santosh Subedi**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5:00–5:15 PM</td>
<td>Welcome Remarks</td>
<td>Dr. Gunaraj Lohani</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chief, Policy Planning &amp; Monitoring Division MoHP</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:15–5:45 PM</td>
<td>Summary of Key Takeaways</td>
<td>Dr. Sangeeta Kaushal Mishra</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Director, Chief Consultant, Paropakar Maternity and Women's Hospital MoHP</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Associate Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, NAMS</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:45–6:00 PM</td>
<td>Commitment Towards Nepal's NSOAP Initiative</td>
<td>Mr. Alex Mejia</td>
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<td>Director, Division for People and Social Inclusion UNITAR</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:00–6:15 PM</td>
<td>Keynote Address</td>
<td>Mr. Nikhil Seth</td>
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<td></td>
<td>UN Assistant Secretary-General, Executive Director, UNITAR</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:15–6:45 PM</td>
<td>Closing Remarks: Vision for Surgical Care</td>
<td>Mr. Laxman Aryal - Chief Guest</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthening Nepal 2030</td>
<td>Secretary, MoHP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:45–7:00 PM</td>
<td>Vote of Thanks</td>
<td>Dr. Madan Kumar Upadhyaya</td>
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<td>Chief, Quality Standard &amp; Regulation Division MoHP</td>
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### SESSIONS

**Plenary (Day 1):**

The event was officially opened with remarks by
- Dr. Madan Kumar Upadhyaya, Chief, Quality Standard & Regulation Division MoHP
- Dr. Geoff Ibbotson, Senior Health Advisor, UNITAR and Executive Lead, Global Surgery Foundation
- Dr. Rajesh Sambajirao Pandav, WHO Representative to Nepal
- Dr. Roshan Pokhrel, Secretary, MoHP

Day 1 continued with a presentation by Dr. Scott Corlew, Lecturer, Harvard PGSSC, on the background and importance of surgical, obstetric and anaesthesia planning to make the case for prioritizing surgical care. Dr. Kee Park, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Harvard PGSSC, followed with an introduction to the theoretical framework and steps for a horizontal integration into national policy and surgical systems. Dr. Lubna Samad, Paediatric Surgeon, IHHN and Director, IRD Global, presented an overview on the NSOAP implementation in Pakistan and its NSOAP model - highlighting key lessons, main challenges and strategies to overcome them. Dr. Madan Kumar Upadhyaya, Chief, Quality Standard & Regulation Division, Nepal MoHP, gave an overview of the current status of surgical care in Nepal, which included progress of existing national surgical initiatives and evidence from situational analysis study: Surgery in Nepal’s Remote Districts, 2018.
Breakout rooms (Day 2 and Day 3):  

On Day 2 and 3, selected participants were divided into breakout sessions according to their respective sectors.

Day 2 included two breakout rooms for stakeholders from Federal/Provincial Government (Group 1) and Donor Agencies (Group 2), respectively. Day 2 included breakout rooms for stakeholders from Academia and Professional Societies (Group 3) and the Private Sector (Group 4). A representative from each stakeholder group presented a summary of the group discussions’ outcomes. This included the role of their sector or field in the NSOAP process and the six domains of surgical health systems:

1) Service Delivery,  
2) Infrastructure, Products and Technology,  
3) Workforce,  
4) Information Management,  
5) Financing and  
6) Governance.

Participants were expected to interact with one another and to identify areas in which they could contribute, including discourse on the collective priorities and anticipated challenges with developing, as well as implementing an NSOAP. The main aim of these group sessions was to gain an understanding of the ongoing efforts of each sector and how this aligns with the NSOAP components and how they could contribute moving forward. In addition, it provided an opportunity to recognize specific stakeholders to have a more in-depth engagement in the future.

Closing ceremony (Day 4):  

The final debrief session on the Thursday brought all participants together to summarize the outcomes of the previously held breakout sessions. Representatives from each working group were encouraged to offer a summary of the key takeaways emerging from their respective breakout sessions to be presented by Dr. Sangeeta Kaushal Mishra. Closing remarks were given by the Secretary of Health and Population, Mr. Laxman Aryal, by the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General and UNITAR Executive Director, Mr. Nikhil Seth, as well as by the Director of the Division for People and Social Inclusion at UNITAR.
WORKSHOP EVALUATION SURVEY RESULTS

Below are results from a survey that was sent to all participants of the event.

Which of these themes did you takeaway from the presentations and discussions?  
Select all that apply.  
27 responses

- A National Surgical Plan is rele...  
  22 (81.5%)  

- Universal Health Coverage can...  
  23 (85.2%)  

- Surgery is an indivisible and in...  
  17 (63%)  

- NSOAP is a framework and ca...  
  24 (88.9%)  

- Role of all different stakeholder...  
  23 (85.2%)  

- Essential and emergency surgi...  
  20 (74.1%)  

- None of the above  
  1 (3.7%)
I have a clear understanding about the NSOAP process.
27 responses

- Strongly agree: 70.4%
- Agree: 22.2%
- Neutral: 7.4%

How important do you think it is to have a national surgical plan for Nepal?
27 responses

- Very important: 96.3%
- Somewhat important: 3.7%
- Not important: 0%
- There are other more important priorities for Nepal: 0%

On a scale of 1 - 5, please rate the virtual format of the NSOAP Orientation Webinar Series (i.e., presentations or international partners joining virtually).
27 responses

- 1 - I did not like the virtual format: 44.4%
- 2 - I was okay with the virtual format: 18.5%
- 3 - I have no opinion on the virtual format: 7.4%
- 4 - I liked the virtual format: 22.2%
- 5 - I really liked the virtual format: 7.5%
EVENT OUTCOMES AND NEXT STEPS

Event participants agreed on the need to develop and implement an NSOAP for Nepal. To achieve this goal, the following next steps were outlined:

1. **Creation of technical working group** led by the Ministry of Health and Population of Nepal to conceptualize the first (and subsequent) phase(s) of the NSOAP development and implementation. The Nepal MoHP requested that the GSF and UNITAR continue to support his process and the working group along with their partner the PGSSC.

2. Organize a follow up **multi-stakeholder planning workshop** to be hosted in Q4 of 2021 to include stakeholders in drafting the NSOAP.

Working groups (for workshop for NSOAP Planning in Q4) to be scheduled and led by the MoHP and organized as follows:

   a. Steering committee led by the Secretary of Health (MoHP) - High level committee to be formed.

   b. Technical working group – led by Head of the Division at MoHP.

   c. Recommend similar committee in all provinces to ensure integration from entire country, as needs from provinces may vary.

3. Conduct a follow up meeting with Official Development Assistance funding agencies to further explore engagement early in the NSOAP development process.

4. Follow up meeting with key leaders from the coordination team (UNITAR/ GSF/ NSI/ PGSSC/ Nepal MoHP) to develop next steps.

5. End Goal within the next fiscal year: Finalize and implement the Nepalese NSOAP.

UNITAR, through its funding support by SIDA, stands committed to continue supporting the Nepal NSOAP process through stakeholder coordination and training.

Please contact Dr. Geoff Ibbotson for any further questions at: geoff.ibbotson@unitar.org