

Situation Updates on COVID-19 in Solukhumbu district, Nepal

As of 20th December 2020, Nepal recorded a total of 253,722 COVID-19 cases and 1,788 deaths. Though the government had implemented early closure of international borders and imposed nation-wide lockdown for several months, COVID-19 has now spread all over Nepal including the Solukhumbu district. At this date, the Solukhumbu district recorded a total of 198 COVID cases.

Kunde Hospital Update:

Kunde hospital and its periphery clinics provide primary healthcare services in the Khumbu Region – the remote northern part of Solukhumbu district. The first COVID-19 case in Khumbu was confirmed on 23rd October when an elderly local resident of Namche having respiratory problem was recued to Kathmandu and tested positive. As there is no PCR testing facility in the Region, the local residents and government made immediate arrangement for testing, flying in medics directly from Kathmandu to Namche by helicopter to collect swab samples. Swabs of 150 people from Namche, Khumjung, Kunde and Thame villages were tested including staffs of Kunde hospital. Out of which nine local residents tested positive confirming community transmission in the Region. Dr. Kami had provided brief counseling to the COVID patients over the phone. Most of them had mild symptoms, stayed in home isolation for two weeks and have now recovered.

Dr. Kami mentioned that people from nearby villages are also sick with COVID-19 like symptoms, such as fever, weakness, body ache and cough. However, it is very hard to discern whether it is coronavirus or not as there is no testing facility in the Region. It is also practically not possible to do contact tracing and testing, thus Kunde hospital is advising people who develop sign and symptoms suggestive of flu or COVID-19 to self isolate at home to minimize the spread of virus.

Dr. Kami and Dr. Kanchi also conducted several interactive and awareness meetings in various settlements on managing COVID-19 cases at home. It also ensured the local people to be more serious in exercising public health measures. Those who have developed COVID like symptoms were advised to measure their body temperature and O2 saturation regularly. Thermometers and Pulse oxy-meters were distributed in every community and clinics. In case the O2 saturation drops down below normal, residents were advised to contact Kunde hospital or nearest health clinic so that O2 concentrator machine and other available supportive drugs could be delivered immediately to them. Patients requiring ICU care or ventilator support are referred to Kathmandu.

Currently, the hospital staffs are doing well and they continue to provide regular healthcare services in the Region. The number of patients seen at Kunde hospital has dropped this year, as tourism in the Region was hard hit by the pandemic.

Zeke O'Connor High School Update:

The High School at Phaplu had shut down for nearly seven months (March to September 2020) because of the lockdown/restrictions imposed by the government due to COVID-19 pandemic. The High School re-opened from October following strict precautionary measures, such as wearing masks and social distancing. They have also taken new students intake for grade 11 for this academic session. Ngima Thendup from the Phaplu High School said that they are planning to continue classes in winter this time in order to make up for class time lost during the lockdown. The National Education Board of Nepal also conducted the board examination of Grade 12 students throughout the country in November this year amid the COVID-19 risks.