

## Raising TB Awareness in Remote Districts of Nepal

*Submitted by Awaaz Nepal*

These photos depict TB awareness programme organized by Awaaz Nepal in two remote districts of Nepal, Morang and Sindupalchowk. We got information that in those districts due to lack of knowledge of TB, many people are dying so, we hurriedly set an awareness programme to make the people of that locality aware about TB on issues such as: What is TB? How it is transferred from one person to another? What are its symptoms? What are the prime causes of TB? How can we prevent it? How can we prevent it from transferring from one person to another? What are the major considerations that the TB patients should take care while taking TB drugs? Etc.



Under this programme, the community is educated about symptoms of TB and villagers are made aware of when they need to receive medical help. It includes a public awareness campaign, education of TB patients about the disease and its cure, training of doctors and nurses in following WHO-recommended treatment programs etc. The project involves community education, training of key activist

groups for social mobilization (students, youth and women's groups); facilitating the engagement of stakeholders from the community with district level medical associations; and promoting a district level campaign on TB.

We aim to promote knowledge about TB; encourage linkages of TB; and promote cooperation of government agencies and local NGOs in TB awareness, education and prevention to educate Public Work Administration (PWA) grassroots communities about TB and to ensure that policy makers are aware of the importance of integrating services to combat the epidemic. Our awareness programme aims to increase public awareness of health issues, especially stigmatized health issues involving marginalized populations. The initiative focuses on supporting health NGOs to develop their relationships with journalists across all media platforms so they may communicate health and human rights issues effectively with the public. Where the media environment is especially hostile, Awaaz Nepal also supports "community journalism" initiatives to encourage NGOs to use digital technology to communicate their stories and issues to each other and to the world at large.



The initiative also seeks to build the capacity of media professionals to report responsibly on public health issues.

Awaaz Nepal aims to help, by providing resources and funding to local groups reaching out to underrepresented communities. Additionally, active contact tracing of children who are members of a household with infectious adults is especially important under this programme. Now DOTS has been started all over Nepal, and treatment for TB is available free of cost in most government hospitals. But, still the people of that locality are facing difficulty in getting drugs from the village health post because of numerous documentation process.



The main target group of the programme are the inhabitants of two districts Sindupalchowk and Morang, especially illiterate people who are totally unaware of tuberculosis. During our research what we have found is that normally people who are infected with tuberculosis try to hide the disease. They think that if anybody knew about a particular person who is suffering from TB then he may get hatred in the society. Other people try to avoid the patients thinking he may transfer the disease to them. Because of this people do not want to tell others about TB, which ultimately leads to the death of patients due to lack of medication on time. Workers working and living on poor hygiene is driving the TB epidemic and are a leading cause of morbidity and mortality. Prevalence areas are of infections known. Factors ranging from lack of knowledge on the importance of adherence, fear of stigmatization, clear policy, pill burden associated with the treatment regimens in many, lack of integration of the government policy at the facility level, poverty and other social economic problems contribute to the possible adherence problems.

Nawaaz Nepal worked to tell people about the symptoms of TB, about treatment and how to stop spreading the disease to other people in the family and locality. We have set an area coordinator in those districts and had told to inform our organization if any type of symptoms is found in that locality. We have also told the villagers how to get drugs easily if anybody gets TB. Therefore, to control tuberculosis, health care programmes should focus in awareness programmes that identify new cases so that treatment could be initiated. Due to the availability of DOTS throughout the country and the high treatment success rate of DOTS, the prevalence of TB has decreased. Awareness plays an important role in identifying disease and its cure.

