

Finding and treating people with TB in

Lao

People's Democratic Republic

- Mass screening in remote, hard to rural reach areas leads to increased case detection
- Approximately 20% more cases detected during the first three months of the project when compared to corresponding period in the previous year
- Laboratory services strengthened to handle the increased demand for diagnosis generated by the project



Champasak Province - In Lao People's Democratic Republic over 70% of the population live in remote areas, far from health services. In the border provinces of Savannakhet and Champasak, rural people, as well as internal and cross-border migrants and ethnic groups, face enormous challenges in seeking health care; their geographic isolation being exacerbated by poverty and language barriers.

Since January 2011 a joint project of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the National TB Centre is working to increase case detection among these hard-to-reach groups. The key interventions are active case finding, informational campaigns and new training for laboratory technicians .

During the project a total of 1855 village health volunteers and 185 health centre staff members will be trained to carry out mass screenings in their communities, using a symptomatic questionnaire and sputum collection. To date, 3234

villagers have been screened, with 315 cases detected. Additionally, volunteers at border crossings will be conducting educational campaigns in appropriate languages aimed at reaching ethnic groups and migrant peoples. This is expected to be a critical component in reducing stigma and increasing community participation, as well as preventing spread across borders. The project began activities in early 2011 and in the first three months has shown an almost 30% increase in case detection over the previous quarter. With the early success of the project, IOM has plans to scale up the active screening campaign to a much larger population area. Because of the greatly increased screening for TB, the project has had to begin trainings in smear microscopy for new lab technicians. The extra work however, is welcomed, as the project brings services and treatment to some of the country's most vulnerable and hard to reach populations.

