

THALI celebrates leadership and collaboration during World TB Day campaign

In the spirit of the WHO theme of “Wanted: Leaders to End TB!”, a two-week campaign was organized from World TB Day (WTD) to World Health Day by teams implementing the Tuberculosis Health Action Learning Initiative (THALI), a patient-centred, family focused TB prevention and care initiative funded by the United States Agency for International Development, in the south Indian states of Karnataka and Telangana, where it is implemented by non-profit organizations KHPT and TB Alert India, respectively.

In the city of Hyderabad in Telangana, THALI teams organized an event on the eve of WTD to celebrate partnerships to eliminate TB, in collaboration with the state office of the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP). Community volunteers, key opinion leaders and THALI outreach workers (ORWs) were awarded for their extraordinary efforts to reach out to their communities by disseminating information on TB symptoms, diagnosis and treatment. Over the two-week period, the team set up information kiosks in public spaces, conducted TB sensitization sessions for school children and daily wage labourers, planned folk art performances interspersed with TB messaging, and organized rallies involving school children raising slogans on eliminating TB. Over the course of the campaign, ORWs engaged over 12,000 people in 76 slums in Hyderabad, and identified 91 symptomatic cases to be sent for testing.



Clockwise from left: US Consul General for Hyderabad Katherine Hadda awards community leaders for their efforts to eliminate TB ; School students led by the local Corporator march through a slum in Hyderabad, raising slogans and placards on TB awareness; outreach workers sensitize the public at the information kiosk; a folk music performance ('kalajatha') in the community is interspersed with messages on TB.

In the city of Bangalore in Karnataka, the two week campaign was positioned as an entry level activity to new slums where THALI activities were being initiated. Each slum was carefully mapped in a microplanning exercise to familiarize the team with each site. Day long community engagement plans were systematically implemented in the new pockets by THALI ORWs. The engagement at each slum consisted of ORWs navigating the slums lane by lane in auto rickshaws playing messages on TB and talking to people on symptoms, diagnosis and available RNTCP services; going house-to-house, introducing themselves, screening chest symptomatics and collecting sputum samples for testing; and creating awareness through information kiosks and mid-media activities like folk art performances, magic shows and street plays. Information sessions were also carried out for vulnerable occupational groups including construction labour and workers at garment factories, flour mills, incense units and vegetable packing plants within these high risk areas. The campaign involved the participation of government TB workers, which strengthened the rapport between ORWs and RNTCP staff. By the end of the campaign, the ORWs had reached almost 26,000 people in 53 slums areas. 103 symptomatics were identified during the campaign, of which 10 tested positive for TB. The intensive efforts during the campaign resulted in a sharp rise in the number of personal contacts, referrals made and TB positivity, when compared with data from community engagement activities in the same areas during the previous quarter. The campaign also resulted in the identification of 75 key opinion leaders as potential community volunteers to help ORWs find and follow up with TB patients in the community.



Clockwise from left: A street play at a marketplace in Bangalore; an information session for construction workers; ORWs drive through slums in an auto rickshaw, playing messages on TB and interacting with residents; a man in the community provided cups for sputum sample collection by ORWs