

Finding and treating people with TB in

Pakistan

- Contact investigation for household members of TB patients leads to massive increase in screening
- More than 11,000 contacts screened and case finding goals exceeded and exceeded project case finding goals
- Patient incentives and follow up have lead to zero defaults for the project



Karachi – In Pakistan, Bridge Consultants Foundation, working in concert with Ojha Institute of Chest Diseases, has implemented a programme to increase early identification and treatment of tuberculosis (TB) specifically among contacts of TB patients. The programme is enjoying marked success.

The programme began in December 2010 in five selected towns of Karachi and five rural districts in Sindh Province, following three years of annual reviews by the National TB Control Programme indicating that contact investigation was a missing link in the national strategy. The project has several well-integrated interventions to address this problem.

Trained Community Mobilizers visit the homes of TB patients, providing counsel and education to help alleviate stigma associated with the disease and to gain their support in identifying contacts. The household contacts are screened verbally and any identified suspects, are brought to local health centers for sputum microscopy. A register of contacts is being maintained at all project health centers and registered patients receive active follow-up from a Community Mobilizer as well as social support in the form of monthly food baskets.

In the first 9 months the programme has verbally screened 11,273 contacts. Among those screened, 269 sputum smear positive TB cases have been identified and registered for treatment, with a treatment default rate of 0% in the project area, as compared to 7% overall in the province. Thirty-three sputum smear negative TB cases were also registered for treatment.

One family of an index patient who received TB REACH counseling on stigma related to the disease was so motivated by the subsequent diagnosis and successful treatment of their daughter that they now actively help the project identify TB suspects in their area.

As one community member says, "Everyone in my neighborhood is helped by this project. When just one of us is sick we can all get sick." It is hoped that the dramatic success of this project will continue and be scaled up to larger areas.

