

## Finding and treating people with TB in

# Lesotho

- Horse riders and text messages help reach patients in remote highland villages
- Project provides access to health care in more than 120 communities
- Text message system allows patients to be put on treatment immediately after diagnosis



**Maseru** - Lesotho, often referred to as the “Kingdom in the sky”, is a predominantly mountainous country, with more than 80% of the country resting above 1,800 metres. Three-quarters of the population live in rural areas and, off the main roads, walking or horse riding are the only transport options. The country has the second highest incidence of TB and the second highest HIV co-infection rate of adult TB cases in the world.

Since 2010, FIND has been working with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare to improve TB case detection in hard to reach communities using a novel combination of mobile phone technology and traditional horse riders.

FIND has hired horse riders in three districts to collect sputum samples from more than 120 remote communities. The horse riders visit the villages two to three times a week and deliver the samples back to the health centre, from where they are picked up by a motorbike rider.

The horse riders work in tandem with a team of village health workers who screen

patients for TB at health centres and in communities and use a novel text message system to track patients’ results. Once patient’s sputum samples have been analysed at the laboratory the results are sent to the health workers by text message, using an open source software system. Patients with positive results can be put on treatment immediately and the health workers provide ongoing support with treatment.

So far, 4154 TB suspects have been registered using the text message system. Of these, 307 tested positive for TB.

Monthly facility reports, available via a web interface are automatically generated to track TB suspects, smear results, MDR-TB suspects and follow up smear results.

In addition, the text message system has brought other benefits in terms of availability of real-time data to help with programme management and troubleshooting, enabling activities in the remote areas to be tracked remotely and any issues rapidly identified and corrective measures implemented more efficiently.

