

Finding and treating people with TB in

Pakistan

- Public private partnership uses mobile phone technology and financial incentives to dramatically increase case detection
- Nearly 300% increase in case detection in first 9 months of project implementation and 500% increase in pediatric notifications
- Indus is now the second largest reporting center in Pakistan.



Karachi – The Indus Hospital has reported a dramatic increase in case detection following the start of a new programme that uses mobile phone technology and financial incentives to track down people with tuberculosis (TB). The hospital has almost tripled the number of smear positive TB cases it reports since the programme started in January 2011. Doctors reported 699 smear positive cases during the first 9 months of 2011, up from 181 in the same period in 2010. Pediatric TB cases have jumped from 42 to 284. These gains have made the hospital the second largest reporting center in the entire country of 187 million people. The hospital attributes their improved results to an incentive scheme that rewards family doctors and community health workers for screening patients and referring suspected cases to TB centres.

Participants are rewarded based on both the number of sputum samples that they collect and the number of patients that test positive for active TB.

The incentive system operates using mobile banking facilities that have emerged recently in Karachi. Doctors or health workers report their activities using their mobile phones on the Indus Hospital mobile data collection system and receive a text message which tells them how many cases they have helped to detect.

At the end of each month, these data are used to calculate the incentives earned by each person. Then their incentive amount is transferred to their mobile banking account, allowing them to pick it up at a local shop or outlet.

A variety of local partners have signed up to the incentive scheme. In private clinics, Indus health workers are training general practitioners (GPs) on TB screening and Indus has provided free advertising boards to promote their TB services. GPs have also joined TB camps where whole communities are screened.

In addition, Indus has launched a communications campaign with billboards, posters and local cable television adverts that encourage people to get tested for TB. Following impressive early results, Indus will continue the scheme throughout the year, enrolling more GPs and recruiting more case workers.

"We are delighted with the programme's early impact and hope that this will become a model for adoption across Pakistan," says Dr. Zafar Zaidi, Medical Director of the Indus Hospital.

