

Finding and treating people with TB in

Somalia

- Mobile teams reach the most vulnerable populations under difficult political and social conditions
- Treatment support is provided by community health workers along with free anti-TB drugs
- High risk populations for screening include internally displaced persons, prison inmates, and soldiers



Mogadishu - Recently, in Baligubadley, a World Vision mobile team visited the home of Asha, mother of two little girls and an infant daughter. Asha's husband had abandoned his family when Asha became ill with a cough and now her two older children were also coughing and weak. Neighbours had alerted the mobile team, who had come to the district to screen for tuberculosis (TB), and after their visit they took Asha and her three daughters to the Baligubadley TB center. After testing confirmed TB, all four started free treatment and are presently doing well. When they return to their home they will be visited regularly by a neighbourhood volunteer who will make sure they continue their treatment in their own community. Asha has benefited from an innovative programme put in place through a TB

REACH grant. World Vision set up the project in 2010 under difficult political and social conditions. Now the project operates in Puntland and Somaliland, where approximately 60% of the population, whether because they are nomadic, internally displaced, prison inmates, soldiers, or remote rural people, finds great difficulty in accessing TB treatment. It can be a long trip to reach a health facility and even then the facility is usually under-equipped to suspect diagnosis and treat the disease. The project has trained three teams for each region to bring health care directly into the community, screening and educating on site, eliminating the need for prohibitively lengthy travel.

As Asha and her children will discover, patients who are intensively treated at TB centers are then re-integrated into their home communities for continuing treatment until they are well. The mobile teams will have trained community volunteers to keep track of the recovering patients, monitoring their medications and ensuring and enabling follow-up visits to the health center. This close follow-up helps to ensure high levels of cure in an area where treatment success rates are quite low. The project in Somalia has enabled mobile outreach as well as the procurement of extra medicines, provided to each patient free of charge. Bringing not only the screening but also the treatment of TB into the community is helping to decrease the stigma usually associated with the disease by helping people understand how it can be handled and that it can be cured. World Vision's Dr. Abura says "Giving people responsibility by engaging them in this positive way, rather than branding and isolating those who suffer from TB, empowers them and improves the health of the entire community."

