



Afghanistan Stop TB Bulletin

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Afghanistan's Western region establishes TB partnership

**"When you save one life from TB, you are actually saving lives of many."
- Keftan, TB patient, Stop TB Partnership in Western Afghanistan**



The first sub-national TB partnership established in Herat, Western Afghanistan

With experiences from the establishment of the National Stop TB Partnership, setting-up the sub-national or regional partnership may seem to be 'undemanding' and maybe, 'effortless.' But this wasn't the case.

When the first regional Stop TB Partnership was born on 20 May 2009 in Herat, Western region of Afghanistan, the challenges posed were different even during the first steps in organizing the partnership, identifying possible members and the conduct of the first forum. The composition of interested partners is varied - from Afghanistan's top businessman to a TB patient. From each partner, one can visibly see what it takes for a successful partnership: enthusiasm and commitment.

"We need to sustain tuberculosis activities even when the technical and donor partners have left - this is the reason why this partnership needs all of you," said WHO Afghanistan Tuberculosis Medical Officer Dr Karam Shah during the meeting in Herat. "Partnership is not just about technical and donor partners - this is a forum for everyone, including TB patients and community representatives," Dr Shah emphasized. "We need this forum to keep transparency, to share information on tuberculosis, and to firm-up collaborative work with all partners."

The partners include representatives from the academe, business sector, medical association,

public health directorate, local media, non-government organizations working to stop TB, TB patients, and representatives from foreign consulates including India, Pakistan and Iran. The partnership has been formed and follow-up meetings will be held before the partnership will be formally launched in June 2009.

Mr Sufi Quddus Safi, one of Afghanistan's top businessmen, underscored the importance of TB partnership, "I believe that it shouldn't just be a partnership of rich people or big businessmen. I am calling all businessmen in Afghanistan - big or small - to take part in this partnership. This is for a very good cause, let us all be involved." Mr Safi who owns Afghanistan's domestic and international airlines Safi Airways said that he will act jointly with the partnership by raising awareness on tuberculosis among his 1,500 Afghan staff.

"This partnership needs to be supported and I am giving my full commitment to this endeavor. We have to involve individuals, communities, and even the medical doctors," said Dr Nasser Ahmad Musadiq, Head of the Herat Doctors and Health Workers Association. "I will advocate among the association's health professionals to take part in the partnership."

Keftan Noorzay, one of the recently cured TB patients, is committed to support the partnership as his way of helping other TB patients in Afghanistan. Keftan became hopeless, few years back, when he thought nobody could help him until he met a TB officer from the National TB Program. Keftan was first introduced to the DOTS and that changed the course of his life.

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WHO TB Medical Officer Dr Karam Shah explains the importance of partnership in the fight against tuberculosis.

Italian Cooperation and TB control in Western Afghanistan



The Regional TB Training Center in Herat, Afghanistan funded by the Italian Cooperation

running costs for the regional reference laboratory and the training center; ensure training of health workers in the Western region; and support activities of regional and provincial TB coordinators. Gender focused interventions are being emphasized in 2009 with support from the Italian Cooperation. Taking into account that around 69% of the detected TB cases are females, there is a need of involving more female community volunteers to take deal with the gender issues.

After establishment of the Tuberculosis Training Center in Herat in the Western region of Afghanistan, the reference laboratory for tuberculosis will be completed by end of 2009. The twin-TB center project, Regional Tuberculosis Training Center and Reference Laboratory, is part of the 1.5 million Euros Italian Cooperation fund to scale-up the implementation of the New Stop TB Strategy. The reference laboratory construction's completion will come from the new Italian grant released in 2009.

The Italian grant has contributed significantly in improving DOTS implementation in the Western Region and also considerably supported TB control activities in the whole country. In 2008, Italian Cooperation supported the human resource development and activities to build up and strengthen local capacity. Various kinds of training sessions were conducted within and outside Afghanistan to ensure delivery of quality TB care. The purpose of these training sessions was to enhance the technical and managerial capacity of the 188 health workers – including doctors, nurses, laboratory technicians, and community health workers - in Herat (at the provincial and district levels) and to increase TB awareness among communities.

In 2009, the new Italian grant helps cover the

Community health workers (CHWs) have successfully been delivering the services after being trained on case detection, referral and treatment support by NTP. This intervention has to be strengthened and sustained by establishing female community groups and ensuring their linkages with the CHWs through training sessions and focused group discussions.

With support from the Italian grant, the sub-national Stop TB partnership has now been established. The Stop TB Partnership in Western Region of Afghanistan will be launched formally by end of June 2009.



Provincial Health Director, Provincial and District TB coordinators in Herat with WHO TB Officer Dr Karam Shah and NTP Manager Khaled Saddiq

CIDA strengthens support to Afghanistan's TB control program

As Afghanistan shows the need for more support in its tuberculosis program, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) sustains its financial assistance to the country. The project which started in 2008 runs for 4 years and focuses on scaling up high quality TB control activities in line with Afghanistan's Strategic Plan of TB Control.

This year's TB control activities funded by CIDA provide support to Kandahar and its 4 neighboring provinces namely - Nemruz, Helmand, Uruzgan, and Zabul. The Southern Region is one of the most TB-affected regions due to high cross-border population movements and social & economic difficulties in the provinces.

In 2009, CIDA supports the implementation of tuberculosis program with 1.6 million US Dollars. It covers activities in the Strategic Plan that are currently financially unmet. With CIDA's support, the National TB Program (NTP) at all levels that provides high-quality TB care throughout the network of general health services (BPHS and EPHS) and private sector will be competent, both with technical and managerial skills.

This year, a model TB control with effective laboratory network including EQA and DST in the Southern Region (Kandahar and its neighboring provinces) will be established. This will lead to an increase case detection of sputum positive cases of TB by 10% each year (2008-2012).



USAID supports the construction of the TB Center in Kandahar, Southern Afghanistan while CIDA grant ensures equipping of the center, an example of strong on-ground partnership.

The various activities outlined this year target to maintain the high treatment success rate (at least 85%) and provide care to 200 MDR-TB cases by the end of 2012.

With this year's support from CIDA a network for HIV/TB collaboration will be established, a strengthened National Stop TB Partnership and the establishment of a partnership in the Southern Region.

CIDA's grant of 2million US Dollars in 2008 supported TB control activities including human resource development, supervision activities yearly from NTP central unit to Southern Region, the establishment of the national Stop TB partnership, capacity building for MDR-TB, HIV/TB collaborative activities,. In addition, the advocacy, communication and social Mobilization (ACSM) developed stop tuberculosis advocacy materials and were widely distributed. Under ACSM, full involvement of Community Health Workers (CHW) is seen as essential for the provision of quality TB care in the area. Ground work to prepare the CHW's for the task were carried out. The successful celebration of the World TB Day in 2008 and 2009 were fully supported by the Canadian grant.

CIDA's support for 4 years (from 2008 to 2012) totals to \$ 7,627,636.



With CIDA's support, capacity building for National TB Program (NTP) at all levels will be given priority.

1.2 million Afghans mobilized for t



With full support from the Ministry of Education, millions of students celebrated the World TB Day 2009 in 34 provinces of Afghanistan on 11 March 2009.

The celebration in various parts of the country has confirmed that even amid security concerns, the people of Afghanistan meet in large numbers and unite on issues of health. The success of the World TB Day in Afghanistan reaffirms that the people of this country support those who suffer from tuberculosis as well as their family members.

On 11 March 2009, more than one million people from all 34 provinces of Afghanistan commemorated World TB Day. From Mazar to Kandahar, people from different walks of life joined hands for a country-wide celebration. Children and adults marched, flags were waved, scarves and caps were worn bearing the message "I am stopping TB." It was a day of jubilation for increased awareness of people about TB, as a curable disease and recognizing TB as one of the country's main public health issues.

In Afghanistan, thousands are still infected with the disease. Decades of conflict, uncertainty, and mass displacement of population have further aggravated the public health challenges, especially TB, in the country. In 2008, of the 42,000 estimated TB patients 28,301 were detected and put on treatment. In the same year more than 8,000 lost their life because of tuberculosis.

"I am stopping TB" is a powerful message for all Afghans," Minister of Public Health Dr Sayed Mohammad Amin Fatamie highlighted during the World TB Day press conference held at the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH). He also added that health workers in Afghanistan fight against TB through delivery of quality health services. Teachers fight against TB through teaching pupils how to prevent tuberculosis. Society and family fight against tuberculosis through discussion and sharing of experiences and knowledge on TB. The Health Minister emphasized that Afghanistan can stop TB.

The WHO/EMR Regional Director Dr Hussein Gezairy through the WHO Representative in Afghanistan Mr Peter Graaff said, "Today, we are making history. Such a large gathering of young people against tuberculosis has never taken place in the country". Mr Graaff continued that this gathering in all provinces signifies the collective will of the people of Afghanistan to fight and defeat this terrible disease.



In Gardez, Paktia Province, government officials one with the global voice of stopping TB.



Jalalabad joined the rest of Afghanistan in the officials participating in a city motorcade and off during the celebration.



Kandahar's celebration maybe different from the outdoor celebration but just like other parts of successfully conducted.

The World TB Day 2009 celebration



and students gathered in a secured park to take part and be



In the capital city of Kabul, the WTBD was celebrated with voices of students, women groups, government workers, and parliament members.



celebration with thousands of students, workers and health officials. Here shown a girl with stop TB flag and scarf



In the highlands of Bamyan, celebration pushed through with hundreds of students and health officials in attendance.



the rest of Afghanistan. The security situation did not allow an official commemoration of World TB Day was



In the Northern city of Mazar, thousands of school children were made aware on tuberculosis during the commemoration of World TB Day.

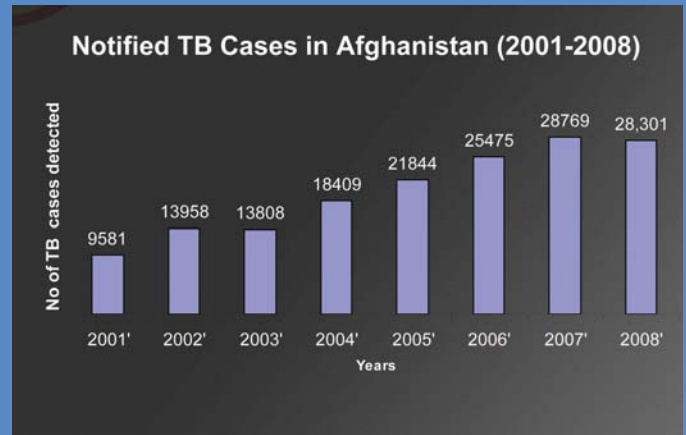
Afghanistan's 'novel' way of engaging partners in the fight against TB

A high level delegation from Afghanistan participated in the Third Stop TB Partners' Forum in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil from 23 to 25 March 2009. The delegation was led by Afghanistan Health Minister and consisted of members from the Ministry of Public Health, Afghanistan National Stop TB Partnership, Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and the World Health Organization.

The Third Stop TB Partners' Forum was an open and dynamic forum where people could share successes, identify barriers and inspire each other to move to a new level in their global fight against TB.

Although it was their first participation in the Forum, the Afghanistan delegation successfully shared their experiences in combatting tuberculosis with representatives from countries with a high burden of TB, donor countries, multilateral and intergovernmental organizations, civil society, affected communities, foundations, corporations and research and academic institutions.

The Forum also served as a General Assembly of the Stop TB Partnership and brought partners together to renew their commitment and intensify their efforts to reach the targets of the Global Plan to Stop TB 2006-2015.



During a plenary session, Afghanistan Health Minister Dr. S.M. Amin Fatimie spoke on the novel ways of partnering in fragile security environment. The Health Minister shared experiences in establishing the Afghanistan Partnership and presented as evidence – the gathering of more than one million youth to celebrate the World TB Day. He also highlighted the importance of the patient community as an effective tool for a TB program.

The effort of Afghanistan to stop tuberculosis was highly appreciated by the participants and global partners and during the session, the Afghan National Stop TB Partnership was identified as a model for other countries struggling against TB.

As a side meeting, the Afghanistan Partners' Forum (APF) was a venue for the Afghanistan delegation to present to global partners the status of the fight against TB in Afghanistan. All donor agencies present at the Rio Conference participated in APF and special guests President Sampaio and Anna Cataldi gave their words of encouragement.



Hundreds of participants showed their interest by visiting the Afghanistan booth where various advocacy materials such as books, pens, calendar, mugs were distributed.

The Health Minister presented during the plenary session Afghanistan's growing partnership over the years in TB control.

National Stop TB Board endorses ACSM working group plan for June-December 2009

On 11 May 2009, the Afghanistan Stop TB Partnership endorsed the Advocacy, Communication and Social Mobilization working group activity plan for implementation between June and December 2009.

The plan includes the establishment of Stop TB Partnership in 3 regions, namely – Herat, Jalalabad and Kandahar and the conduct of TB awareness workshops which include:

- o TB awareness workshop for health teachers, literacy supervisors and master trainers;
- o TB awareness workshop for religious leaders
- o TB awareness workshop for women shora in 4 provinces, namely – Herat, Mazar, Laghman, Badakshan and Kabul. It is expected that women will have the ability to do a house-to-house campaigns in the community level
- o TB awareness/ orientation session for 240 members of the Parliament
- o TB awareness workshop for youth shora in Paktia province
- o TB awareness workshop for women shora in Paktia province
- o TB awareness workshop for 3000 community health supervisors in 5 provinces – Balkh, Nimroz, Badghis, Parwan, Nangarhar

Initial ground work for the integration of special TB subject to primary and secondary schools curriculum in Afghanistan through the Ministry of Education will be carried out for pilot implementation in school year 2010-2011.

This year, reprinting and production of advocacy materials will be focused including the reprinting of TB brochures and posters, production of advocacy billboards, production of children's book in Dari and Pashtu, production of advocacy kits; production of wall calendar, table calendar and diaries for 2010.

Advocacy materials highlighting the contribution of donor agencies will also be produced. One of the materials is a photobook, which will be launched during a special gathering for TB Donors and Partners in Afghanistan.

As a result of the awareness session with the Parliament Members, a one-day salary donation from the Members of the Parliament to TB patients has been planned.



The National Stop TB Partnership endorses the ACSM Working Group's plan for immediate implementation

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Afghanistan's Western region . . .

"They gave me back my life," Keftan said. "When you save one life from tuberculosis, you are actually saving lives of many." Keftan added, "My family was saved, too. We are living life again the way we used." As a way of gratitude, he vows to help other TB patients in the region.

In the Western region, thousands are still infected with the disease. 2008 data show 2,177 TB patients were detected and put on treatment. In the same year 46 lost their lives because of tuberculosis. The treatment success rate in Western region is 86%. The Western region of Afghanistan has a population of 3.24million. It has 4 provinces with 39 districts with Herat as its capital. This region borders with Iran and Turkmenistan.

The Stop TB Partnership in Western Region of Afghanistan is the first sub-national partnership established in the country. Parallel to the objectives and purpose of the National Stop TB Partnership, it aims to realize the goal of eliminating TB as a public health problem, and, ultimately, make Afghanistan TB-free. The partnership aims to sustain political commitment to fight TB in the Western region and as a whole, in the country. A strong partnership will also help in resource mobilization and promote wider use of the national Stop TB strategy with emphasis on advocacy, communication and social mobilization.

The Italian Cooperation supports the establishment of Stop TB Partnership in the Western Region of Afghanistan as one of its activities with the National TB Program and World Health Organization to scale-up the implementation of the new Stop TB Strategy.



During the birth of Eastern Mediterranean Region's first sub-national stop TB partnership in Western Afghanistan, an originally composed song on the fight against tuberculosis was sung by a group of children. Dressed in their national costume, this group of school girls and boys of Herat waved partnership flags to the delight of those in attendance during the first meeting of the Stop TB Partnership in Western Afghanistan.

TB control program activities in Afghanistan are technically and financially supported by:



For inquiries, email: stoptbulletin.afg@gmail.com
 For TB control and partnership updates, visit: www.emro.who.int/afghanistan