The Government of Karnataka conducted the fourth phase of the Active Case Finding (ACF) campaign for TB from July 2- July 12. KHPT supported the campaign in 15 districts; THALI community health workers (CHWs) supported RNTCP staff in conducting house-to-house visits and sensitizing community members on TB. KHPT created and disseminated IEC materials to front line workers including ASHAs for them to better understand TB. These key messages on TB prevention, testing, treatment, as well as patient care and support. KHPT also created short films on the preparation for the campaign, multisectoral collaboration during the campaign, and community responses to it.

Comparative data from THALI and non-THALI districts shows that the proportion of presumptive TB cases who were referred for microbiological testing during the ACF campaign was 89 percent in THALI districts (15) and 84 percent in non-THALI (15) districts. TB positivity in the THALI districts was one percent higher than that in non-THALI districts. The campaign served as an opportunity to build a rapport with RNTCP staff in the expansion districts and demonstrate the value that THALI can bring to community engagement activities. THALI’s support to the ACF campaign helped bring a number of vulnerable people into the continuum of care and lessons from the follow-up of these patients will become integral to formulating THALI activities in expansion districts in the coming months.

THALI CHWs with ASHAs to educate and screen people in the community

Satellite training to build ASHAs’ capacity on TB

KHPT, in collaboration with the RNTCP, worked to insert a TB component into the curriculum for satellite training programs for ASHAs across Karnataka. The objectives of the training were to build the awareness of ASHAs on TB, TB-related services and patient benefits provided by the RNTCP, as well as make them aware of their role in TB control efforts. The training included collaboration between ASHA workers, RNTCP staff and THALI CHWs to improve awareness of TB in the community in order to improve referrals and linkages to patient care and support and available benefits.

The THALI team leveraged the satellite training program to launch THALI activities in 12 districts to which the project is expanding. CHWs introduced themselves to the ASHAs, talked about THALI project Supervisors from the RNTCP and the importance of working together to provide care and support services to patients. CHWs also distributed IEC materials including informational brochures and presentations about TB and its importance to the ASHAs. About 19,272 ASHAs in 15 THALI project districts were trained on TB between June 29 and July 7.

As a follow-up to the training, a counselling specialist will visit the field along with the CHWs, and CCs and RNTCP staff for field trainings. CCs will bring case studies for discussion during their monthly meetings. An assessment will be done to evaluate the uptake of counselling by RNTCP staff as important outcome indicators. These sessions were intended to hone the confidence of CHWs and RNTCP staff, help them to better understand and deal with barriers faced by each of the TB patients and their families, and enable them to tailor their approach to patient care and support based on unique contexts and challenges of each family.

KHPT CHWs apply principles of counselling through role play exercises

Improving patient care and support through counselling training

Two counselling training sessions for front line health workers were piloted in Bangalore from July 26-27 and August 6-7 with the aim of improving relationships between patients and health workers, as well as bettering treatment outcomes. TB Health Visitors and Senior Treatment Supervisors from the RNTCP as well as CHWs and community coordinators (CCs) from THALI, were trained on topics including stigma in TB, communication and counselling skills and documentation of counselling through presentations and role play.

Enlisting support for patients from Community-based Organizations

TB Alert India (TBAI) organized a sensitization programme on TB for 57 Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) Community-based organizations (CBOs) and other local bodies on August 21st in Hyderabad, with the aim of improving and coordinating TB elimination efforts. Dr. Srikanta, Medical Officer TB Control, Musheerabad, took a session on the basics of TB.

Going forward, these groups will include TB in their agenda in their meetings, will facilitate the establishment of Health Information Centers (HICs) on their premises and will refer people with symptoms and provide counselling and support for treatment adherence even after the project period.

A TBAI representative introduces THALI and its objectives to NGO partners

Induction training for THALI staff in existing and expansion districts

The program team conducted induction training sessions for field staff in all the THALI zones of Bengaluru, Koppal, Dharwad, Hyderbad and Vijayawada in the July-August period. The training oriented the staff about the objectives and strategies of the THALI project, as well as their roles and responsibilities, using a participatory approach.

An induction training toolkit was developed and staff were oriented on TB through activities and films intended to prompt them to think and critically engage with the topics. Group activities emphasized the importance of teamwork and supporting each other. Technical sessions on the basics of TB, available services for patients and the RNTCP structure were also held. The program team trained state, zonal and district-level project staff, including Zonal Coordinators, District Coordinators, CCs and CHWs, on standardized procedures to collect information and enter it into data tools.

Government Engagement

THALI Zonal Coordinators and District Program Coordinators had regular meetings to work in coordination with the RNTCP team in Karnataka. The district-level team began getting the list of TB patients who are under treatment. Field level staff began to enroll these patients for care and support after doing RANA. In some districts, DTOs issued letters to staff regarding the deputation and support of CHWs in Designated Microscopy Centres. In Vijayapura district in Karnataka, the DTO attended the CIW monthly meeting and assured the team of support in sorting out issues related to direct benefit transfer (DBT) payment and sample collection and transportation.

TB Alert India had a consultative meeting with the State TB Officer on August 13th, attended by District TB Control Officers and District Public & Private Mix (DPPM) Coordinators of the six THALI districts, and district DTOs. The team focused on the STO role in organizing trainings and involving them to share patient information with the THALI team, support them in organizing trainings and involve them in the RNTCP’s monthly meetings. The team also visited the STO in Vijayawada in Andhra Pradesh to sensitize key staff on THALI project and request support for its smooth functioning.

This series of meetings served as a trust-building exercise between THALI partners and staff at various levels of the RNTCP. The engagement was intended to build the RNTCP’s sense of buy-in and partnership for community activities conducted in alignment with the RNTCP’s priorities.

Strengthening ties with RNTCP Teams in expansion districts

THALI supports the Active Case Finding Campaign in Karnataka

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Risk and Needs Assessment tool finalized

After a pilot of the RANA form, which assesses risks to treatment adherence, in June, the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) team finalized the indicators for RANA, the consent process and choices for follow-up care in mid-August. The team also developed the draft protocol to standardize the procedures followed for RANA, which will be used as a guiding document for THALI CHWs and RNTCP staff.

THALI CMS streamlines for quicker data analysis

The THALI Computerized Management Information System (CMS) was modified to reflect changes in the existing data tools and the new RANA format. Data analysis and monitoring will be carried out more quickly. The dashboard of the CMS is pending and a discussion on the synchronization of the CMS with Nixshay is underway.

Communications

BCC materials piloted in Karnataka and Hyderabad

Following a communications material development workshop in June, the team put together a set of behavior change communication (BCC) materials based on eight behavior change objectives including improving treatment adherence, controlling alcohol and tobacco consumption, reducing stigma, improving nutrition, preventing the spread of infection, getting tested, improving patient notification and general awareness about TB. These materials are intended to serve as job aids for CHWs and RNTCP staff, and as supportive material for TB patients and their families. The BCC materials are uniquely designed to simplify discussion with TB patients on subjects including disclosure, stigma and treatment adherence, through easy-to-understand visuals that are intended to engage the patient and elicit responses and questions that would improve their understanding of TB.

These materials were piloted in Hyderabad, the Bangalore Zone and the Dharwad Zone in Karnataka by THALI CHWs. The BCC materials were modified based on their feedback and insights, and will be rolled out to all CHWs and RNTCP staff in September.

Capacity building activities under J&J initiative

With funding leveraged from Johnson & Johnson, KHPT organized a series of trainings in Karnataka to enhance the knowledge of public and private sector practitioners for effective management of drug-sensitive and drug-resistant TB. The trainings were done to create a resource pool for future trainings, in collaboration with the state RNTCP and the State Task Force (STF). The capacity-building initiative concluded in August.

In the July-August period, KHPT conducted:
- Three Training of Trainers programmes with 65 representatives of 31 medical colleges in Karnataka
- 15 Continuing Medical Education programs, training 772 staff, including DTDs, RNTCP officials, members of the STF and Indian Medical Association
- 40 RNTCP team trainings on PMDT, training 1462 staff
- Seven specialist trainings, training 206 staff

For more information on the above activities, please contact Vrinda Manocha, Communications Officer, at vrinda.manocha@khpt.org

“THALI attends Delhi workshop, plans to test technology innovations

The team attended a workshop in New Delhi on August 20 to discuss an integrated technology model for patients to choose their preferred mode of technology for adherence support. The workshop was attended by the Central TB Division, USAID, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and representatives from technology companies including ZMQ and Everwell. The technologies discussed at the meetings included 99DOTS, Medication Event Reminder Monitor System (MERM) and Video Directly Observed Therapy (VDOT). It was decided that the three technologies would be piloted in three districts, including Bangalore. This will be incorporated into next year’s work plan for THALI.”

List of communications material developed

Print
- Satellite-based Training on Tuberculosis for ASHAs: A collaborative initiative by RNTCP and THALI
- The ACF Campaign in Karnataka 2018: Highlights and Achievements

Audiovisual
- The Real TB Heroes
  - https://bit.ly/2NB8JT (Telugu, Urdu, English)
- Active Case Finding Campaign for TB in Karnataka
  - https://bit.ly/2Q1IPts (Kannada)
- Multisectoral Collaboration to implement the ACF Campaign
  - https://bit.ly/2LOxPC (English)
- Community Responses to the ACF Campaign

A TBAI representative takes part in a demonstration of projective techniques at the workshop

“We would (earlier) not wait for patients and their caregivers to complete their talk, we would hurry them. In these two days we got to know that we must talk less and support the patient and care givers to talk more. We now know that we need to practice to ask open ended questions rather than close ended or interrogative questions.”

- Participant at counselling training, Bangalore

“Even though I work as an ASHA, I had very little knowledge on TB. This (satellite) training helped me to know how TB spreads, the services available for TB treatment and also about direct benefit transfer payment. This training was an eye-opener as the trainer told us to treat TB patients as our friends.”

- Sumalatha, ASHA, Chitradurga, Karnataka

“Voices from the field”

“THALI supports TB partners with formative study on stigma

KHPT and TBAI are supporting a formative qualitative study, conducted by Abt Associates, to understand barriers and emotional triggers affecting desired behaviors along the continuum of TB care. Representatives from the organizations attended a three-day training workshop on projective techniques in New Delhi from August 22-24, along with other USAID partners working on TB. KHPT and TBAI will be conducting focus group discussions and in-depth interviews among nine target groups to identify barriers associated with TB, including stigma, and potential solutions.”

- A TBAI representative takes part in a demonstration of projective techniques at the workshop

Miscellaneous

Voices from the field

“‘I have always been motivated by public service. I have been in touch with the THALI CHWs for two years, and I salute them for their hard work. With their support, I have created a Health Information Centre at my local party office, and have referred TB people for TB testing, four of whom tested positive. I am ready to support you with anything you may need!’”

- Sumalatha, ASHA, Chitradurga, Karnataka

“‘We would (earlier) not wait for patients and their caregivers to complete their talk, we would hurry them. In these two days we got to know that we must talk less and support the patient and care givers to talk more. We now know that we need to practice to ask open ended questions rather than close ended or interrogative questions.’”

- Kaiyyum, local party leader, Hyderabad

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