

TB REACH NATIONAL TUBERCULOSIS PROGRAMME

Finding and treating people with TB in

Afghanistan

- Active case finding reaches internally displaced people with low or little access to healthcare
- More than 200,000 patients screened for TB
- 10% increase in case notification in project areas



Kabul - Tuberculosis is a major health problem in Afghanistan, causing about 11,000 deaths per year. A number of factors, including ongoing conflict, make it difficult for health services to reach many parts of the country. Despite these challenges, the National Tuberculosis Programme (NTP) has chosen to address the problem with interventions that are proving successful. In 10 provinces, the NTP has started active case finding among targeted, previously underserved populations. The group to be reached is large – 6,886,600 people – and includes internally displaced persons/returnees; prisoners; those who have previously sought help but went undetected due to the poor quality of available services ; and household contacts of sputum positive TB cases. The project will be carried out by mobile team staff going from door to door. Visiting health workers will provide information about TB, its diagnosis and treatment. This increases prevention awareness and encourages better health seeking behavior. Through nine months of

project implementation more than 200,000 patients have been screened for TB and case notification is up about 10% from the previous year.

Sakina, a young wife living in the remote province of Badghis, is one person to have benefited from the NTPs work. Sakina shared a home with 18 other people, among them her mother-in-law who was ill with a longstanding bad cough. Villagers believed this sickness to be incurable and when Sakina also developed a cough her husband wanted to divorce her. Sakina sought help in her father's home and one day was visited there by two doctors. After giving sputum samples, Sakina was diagnosed with TB and treatment began with the supervision and assistance of a trained neighbor. The doctors also helped her husband to understand that her sickness was curable and they are now living together once again. Sakina is helping take care of the family, the chain of transmitting TB has been broken and the people in her village now see that there is no stigma in being diagnosed with TB.