

Swaziland Stop TB Partnership - A holistic approach to service delivery

Background

Swaziland is a small landlocked country situated between South Africa and Mozambique covering an area of 17 364km². The country has a predominantly (77%) rural population of about 1.1 million (2006 Census) people. Swaziland is currently facing a severe and unprecedented tuberculosis (TB), TB-HIV and MDR-TB situation. The country has consistently had the highest estimated TB incidence per capita (1198/100 000 population) in the world (WHO 2009). This is in addition to having one of the highest HIV prevalence rate of 26% in the general population (SNAP 2009, UNAIDS 2009).

Why a Stop TB Swaziland?

The national TB programme (NTP) recognized that an estimated 40% of Swazi TB patients received health care services through faith-based organizations, community based organizations and nongovernmental organizations. However, the TB control efforts of these actors were mostly not coordinated, often overlapping and with no support from the NTP, despite the public utility of the services they provided. After a WHO mission to Swaziland in 2008, the NTP vision changed. The strategy was to harness the resources and competencies of these organizations in a way that ensures synergy and complementarity in their operations.

A meeting involving all potential partners (see annex 1) was called in late 2008 - as a follow up to a WHO mission - with the aim to map out the existing actors and their interventions, and propose the formation of a national partnering initiative to stop TB. Such an initiative would be a coalition of partners, consisting of FBOs, CBOs, NGOs, private sector, individuals and affected communities to support the NTP, in the context of the national priorities and strategic direction for TB prevention and control. This initiative would aim at improving geographical and economic access to quality TB diagnosis, treatment care and support as well as empowerment of the community through intensified health promotion interventions.

The Swaziland Stop TB partnership was launched by the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland during the World TB day 2009 commemoration as a platform for concerted effort towards TB control. The Swaziland Stop TB Partnership Framework was signed between the Ministry of Health and 29 TB partners at the same occasion.

What is the value added?

The establishment of a partnering initiative has enhanced coordination and improved services. In particular, the following aspects have been identified by NTP and partners as value added:

1. Coordination of efforts in TB control by implementing partners through the Secretariat housed by the national TB programme.
2. Increased access to TB services at community level: 9 FBOs and CBOs are supporting delivery of TB services to 3000 patients.

3. Joint resource mobilization with partners from local and international mechanisms (e.g. Global Fund round 8 and 10). The Swaziland proposal for Round 8 - developed together by all partners - was approved and funds are now available for all partners' activities contributing to the national TB control plan.
4. Improved relationship between NTP and partners. The NTP recognized partners were doing a lot, but individual consultations between NTP and partners were time consuming and not very effective. Now the NTP manager can focus on what the NTP is supposed to do - coordinating and planning - while other partners concentrate on other priorities, according to their comparative advantages. This has resulted in more discussion between NTP and partners, and less talking behind the back. Quarterly NTP and Stop TB Partners' meetings have been institutionalized.
5. Health Sector. The government accorded to the Ministries of Health, Education, Agriculture and Water & Sanitation the status of 'Sectors'. This means adopting a holistic approach and looking at health beyond the services provided by the public sector. For example, the Ministry of Health can include in its plans budget costs to support the implementation of activities carried out by private (profit and non-profit) care providers.

How was Stop TB Swaziland built?

The partnership was built following a partnering process with clear steps (for more on this see: <http://www.stoptb.org/countries/partnerships/>). The national TB programme initiated the partnering process, and WHO Country Office played a key role in its facilitation, acting as a neutral party.

Following a WHO mission in 2008, partners were brought together for the first time to discuss the vision, goal and objectives of a potential partnering initiative. Partners started with a resource mapping exercise with the aim to identify which organization is doing what and where. The matching of the results of this exercise with the national TB plan led to the identification of specific roles and responsibilities that each partner could assume in different geographic areas based on respective competences. This exercise also helped highlighting gaps and constraints, and facilitated the identification of challenges to be addressed. The second step was to agree on a shared operational plan which outlines the roles and responsibilities of each partner towards the achievement of the objectives set out in the national TB plan. The third and fourth steps were to set up a steering committee and negotiating a partnership framework. Today the partnership is a semi-independent entity housed by the national TB programme. For the chronology of events see annex 2.

What has been the outcome?

1. Improved TB outcomes: TB case detection rate improved from 43% in 2006 to 70% currently. Similarly treatments success rate improved from 47% among 2006 cohorts to 68% among 2008 cohorts as a result of enhanced patient adherence support.
2. Improved implementation of TB/HIV collaborative activities e.g.:
 - a. Number of health facilities initiating DOTS treatment increased from 19 in 2007 to 35 in 2009;
 - b. 84% of all registered TB patients tested for HIV;

- c. 80% of all TB patients started on CPT;
- d. 25% of TB patients initiated on ART.

The Stop TB Partnership

The Stop TB Partnerships supports countries that are willing to initiate a partnering process and have a partnering initiative to stop TB in place. A concept note and tools are available at <http://www.stoptb.org/countries/partnerships/>. Similar experiences to Swaziland are happening in other countries around the world. To have a look at the countries, go to <http://www.stoptb.org/assets/documents/countries/partnerships/map/atlas.htm>.

Annex 1: Partners

□ Ministries:
MOHSW (NTP)

□ Multilateral/bilateral governmental agencies:

- WHO
- UNDP
- Italian Government
- USA Government

□ Nongovernmental organizations:

- World Vision
- Coordinating Assembly of Non Governmental Organization

□ Professional associations/technical societies:
Swaziland Medical & Dental Council

□ Patient associations:
People Living with HIV/AIDS

□ Faith-based organizations:

- Catholic Church
- Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart (Cabrini Ministries)
- Seventh Day Adventist Church
- Nazarene Church
- Anglican Church

□ Community-based organizations:
Lutsango Lwabomake

□ Private practitioners:
Most GPs in the Country

□ Corporate/business sector:

- MUNA Healthlife Consultancy
- Swaziland Business Coalition Against HIV/AIDS

□ Media:

- Times of Swaziland
- Observer Group of Newspapers

Annex 2: Chronology of events

2007:

National TB Programme review revealed huge epidemiological and programme implementation gaps.

2008 :

- Consultation meetings of NTP partners to consider recommendations of the 2007 programme review, which led to the concept of the Swaziland Stop TB Partnership
- Resource Mapping
- Negotiations of the Partnership structure and framework
- Finalization of partnering agreement
- Technical support received from WHO

2009:

- Finalization of a partnering agreement and partnership framework between the MOH and partners with support of WHO
- Launch of the Swaziland Stop TB Partnership on World TB Day 24th March 2009 with 15 Organizations signing the agreement
- The Swaziland Stop TB partnership was launched by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Swaziland during the World TB day 2009 commemoration as a platform for concerted effort towards TB control. The Swaziland Stop TB Partnership Framework was signed between the Ministry of Health and 29 TB partners at the same occasion composed of Government, FBOs, NGOs, CS, Affected population, Private Sector, the UN system.

2010:

- Establishment of the Partnership Secretariat through recruitment of a Partnership Officer and an admin secretary.