
IOM Starts TB REACH Fieldwork in Western Ghana

As of 2011, WHO data shows that Ghana has tuberculosis (TB) incidence and prevalence rates of 79 and 92 per 100,000 population respectively, with a 78% national detection rate of all forms of TB. On 29 May 2013, the Ghana Health Service and IOM Ghana Migration Health Unit launched a TB REACH initiative which seeks to intensify detection of TB among refugees and their host communities, border communities, mining and vulnerable urban communities through the use of a mobile diagnostic van equipped with GeneXpert MTB/RIF technology in the Western Region of Ghana.

The project, working in coordination with Ghana's national, regional and district TB control programmes, will run for one year in five locations in the Western Region. Specific project components include community mobilization and screening for chronic cough through door-to-door visits of targeted communities; TB screening using a mobile diagnostic van equipped with GeneXpert MTB/RIF machine; capacity building of selected TB diagnostic centres and treatment centres through material support; and establishment of a Project Coordination Committee involving all stakeholders.



Ghana

The mobile van enables health officials to easily reach areas lacking access to basic health services, thus improving public health in the region. The project aims at a three-fold increase in the number of new positive TB cases detected and to reach a minimum of 317,000 through mobile screening.

Since field work commenced in mid-2013, health volunteers have reached 212,922 individuals through household visits or individual interviews at markets, community gathering points and prisons. On a daily basis the volunteers provide information about TB and how it is spread, about the new screening process and the availability of free treatment. So far, 3,418 individuals have been referred to the TB diagnostic van for screening and testing for TB. Those who are willing to be tested report to the diagnostic van, where they receive additional education and information on TB and what they should expect from the GeneXpert test. So far, the mobile health team has registered 2,621 individuals. Among those 2,259 (86.2%) met the TB case definition and were tested with GeneXpert MTB/RIF technology. Thus far 126 individuals (5.6%) of the screened case-load were diagnosed with TB.



International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Individuals diagnosed with TB are counselled by health staff and provided a referral letter to seek free treatment at the nearest TB treatment centre. The standard treatment for new cases is a six month course of anti-tuberculous antibiotics. Of those referred for treatment, 105 (83.3%) have started TB treatment. The project team is working to trace the rest for enrolment in treatment programmes. Once treated, individuals can make a full recovery and enjoy a better quality of life.

As one patient stated before being screened: "Prior to my meeting with you (the TB REACH team), I'd the impression that TB is a curse from the gods, and it's incurable. That's why we call it "nsamanwa" (ghost cough). I was afraid. But through your explanations, I'm no more afraid. I know it's not a curse to have TB. Now I'm ready to be tested. Even if I found out that I've the disease too, I'll get help from the hospital."



Stop TB Partnership
TB REACH