



Would community involvement in TB case-finding improve access to TB services? Lessons from Peri-urban Lilongwe, Malawi

SANUDI L, SIMWAKA B N, BANDA H T
REACH TRUST – MALAWI

Geneva Health Forum, 26th May 2008,



BACKGROUND



- Malawi
 - Has implemented DOTS strategy for over 2 decades
 - TB services are provided free of charge in all facilities
 - Utilises passive case-finding
 - Detects 55% of its TB cases (WHO)
- Access to TB diagnostic services was hindered by financial barriers emanating from
 - Transport costs for patient and guardian,
 - Opportunity costs for both
 - Need for repeated visits for diagnosis (Kemp et al, 2001)



BACKGROUND CONT'D



- Due to high costs of accessing services, the poor
 - Spend 3 times more to access a (free) TB diagnostic service (Mann, G et al. 2002)
 - Sought diagnostic services 8 weeks after onset of symptoms (TB Equity Project)
 - Were more likely to stop before diagnosis was made (TB Equity project)
- Community-based groups have helped to support Malaria and TB service delivery (Simwaka, 2007)
- The project was implemented with approval from the Ministry of Health



AIM



- To explore the impact of involving local community-based groups in TB case-finding
- Objectives
 - To involve the community in raising TB awareness
 - To establish a local site for sputum collection
 - To establish a local treatment support and follow-up system



PROJECT DESIGN



- A participatory action research
- Involved stakeholders at national, district and community levels in project design and implementation
- Trained members of community groups
- Provided logistical support
 - Stationery - referral forms
 - Health promotion materials
 - Sputum containers
 - Transportation i.e. bicycles, boxes



METHODS



- Baseline data was collected on TB service utilisation in the community
 - Five year (2000 – 2004) review showed a yearly average of
 - 56 cases of TB of all types diagnosed
 - 26 smear positive cases
- Community-based groups were trained in
 - Health promotion on TB signs and symptoms
 - Referral of TB suspects
 - Collecting sputum specimen from suspects
 - Support on treatment



COMMUNITY ROLES



- Mobilising the community (chiefs)
- Raising community TB awareness through health promotion campaigns
- Enhancing access through
 - Identification of TB suspects
 - Referral of suspects and collection of sputum specimen
 - Transporting specimen and results
- Supporting treatment adherence through
 - Collecting drugs and monitoring treatment
 - Follow-up of newly diagnosed and defaulting patients



RESULTS



- Enhanced awareness of TB led to increase in number of people accessing diagnostic services
- Training built capacity of the community groups to undertake TB-related activities
- Health workers' capacity was also built through training for the project
- A specimen collection point was established and this broke financial barriers to diagnosis seeking
 - Diagnostic services were provided in the community
 - Test results were brought to patients' door-step
 - No repeated visits to hospital for diagnosis and treatment



RESULTS CONT'D



- After intervention period, the yearly average;
 - 296 suspects
 - 140 patients of TB of all types
 - 27 smear positive cases
- Referral system led to early access to TB services
 - Diagnostic services sought within 2 wks of symptom onset
 - Smear positive cases started treatment 3.125 days after submitting specimen
- Community members supported patients' treatment
 - Community members knew homes of their patients
 - No default case was recorded



DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS



- Engaging informal community-based groups
 - utilises existing resources
 - builds capacity of the community-based groups through training
- Raising TB awareness leads to
 - high TB service utilisation
 - increased and early case detection
- Increased and early access to TB diagnostic services breaks the chain of bacterial transmission



DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS



- Participatory approach ensures community involvement and ownership of the project
- Involving community-based groups has a potential to increase case detection among the hard-to-reach groups



The END

Thank you