

Management of Tuberculosis suspects under programme conditions in resource poor settings in Nepal

Following the implementation of the DOTS strategy in Nepal, there has been remarkable progress in TB control and many services have been decentralized to district level and below. However, at sub-district level sputum microscopy services are not available, and TB suspects present to standard OPD services. NTP guidelines are that OPDs should prepare sputum slides, send them to microscopy centres and arrange for results to be sent back as soon as possible. In practice this does not occur: instead, suspects are mostly referred to microscopy centres. Often the referring centre does not get any feedback on whether or not patients have attended the microscopy centre, affecting early diagnosis and treatment of infectious TB cases. Thus appropriate measures of TB suspect management is essential and appropriate interventions need to be introduced at different levels.

Therefore, HERD in coordination with NTC is conducting an intervention study for appropriate management of TB suspects in Kapilvastu; one of the districts with low TB case finding. The purpose of this study is to understand current policies and practices of TB suspect management and identify effective options for improving early identification and diagnosis of TB suspects in Nepal.

Various activities were performed for the project during the year including the participation in district and below level DOTS review and planning meetings, created social awareness in TB through 30 wall paintings with TB messages in different parts of the district, support provided to conduct a DOTS review meeting at district level, made frequent supervision visits at the district, provided other technical support to the DHO in need and performed regular interaction and meetings with DHO/DTLO regarding the project.

Project has made the following major achievements over the time- Increase TB service access: DOTS service expanded to 20 more SHPs, TB suspect management practice has been improved especially the suspect identification, referral and recording/reporting practice; and TB case detection rate has been increased from 46% in 2006/7 to 57% in 2007/8 Due to the sudden civil unrest in the intervention site since 2064/05/30; planned activities could not be performed smoothly. Therefore suspect management program has been extended for few more months.

