

TARGETS

Integrating TB & HIV Care in Sub-Saharan Africa: How it works in practice

Background
Paper

COMDIS

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World TB Day 2009 (25th March) was marked by the release of dramatic new data from the World Health Organization (WHO) ¹ indicating that rates of TB-HIV co-infection are twice as high as originally estimated. ¹ In Sub-Saharan Africa, HIV has caused TB incidence to triple since the 1990s and in some countries 80% of TB patients are co-infected with HIV. A lack of integrated TB and HIV services is one of the biggest problems in controlling these two epidemics. Only 1% of people living with HIV in 2008 had been screened for TB.

This presentation by DFID-funded Research Programme Consortium (RPC) partners aims to highlight some of the issues surrounding TB/HIV co-infection, and report back from key experiences in the field.

COMDIS is a Research Programme Consortium that works to drive research and development to combat communicable diseases in low-income countries. Through more than 50 ongoing and completed projects, COMDIS helps to ensure that prevention and treatment interventions for TB, malaria and HIV/AIDS are effectively delivered through strengthened healthcare systems to reach those most in need. The lead coordinator of COMDIS is the Nuffield Centre for International Health and Development at the University of Leeds (UK), working alongside partners in China, Bangladesh, Ghana, Nepal, Pakistan, Uganda, the UK, and Swaziland. Each country has its own health systems and specific challenges. COMDIS works closely with national health programmes to find solutions which will work in these low income countries. COMDIS runs from 2006-2011.

The **TARGETS Consortium** (Team for Applied Research to Generate Effective Tools and Strategies for Communicable Disease Control) is a RPC generating new knowledge and evidence to support health policy and practice at district, national and international level. The Consortium is based at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and supports projects in more than 17 countries tackling Malaria, TB and HIV/AIDS, with main partners in Sub-Saharan Africa, India and Europe. Currently in its fifth year of research, TARGETS continues to form new partnerships and attract multiplier funding in order to provide a technical and information resource, which identifies barriers to scaling-up and develops new tools and strategies for overcoming the constraints of poverty and vulnerability.

¹ The World Health Organisation report *Global Tuberculosis Control 2009, Epidemiology, Strategy, Financing* can be found at the following link: http://www.who.int/tb/publications/global_report/2009

Project Information

The **Good Shepherd Hospital** is a typical rural general hospital in Swaziland. Swaziland has the highest incidence of TB in the world and the highest prevalence of HIV. Half of the people currently living with HIV (PLWHA) will die of TB – yet in 2006 no TBHIV programmes existed in the country. **COMDIS** supported the Good Shepherd Hospital to introduce HIV testing by TB nurses and implemented the '3 Is' for people living with HIV/AIDS (Increased case finding of TB, Infection control and Isoniazid preventative therapy). By demonstrating the feasibility and effectiveness in this resource limited setting, it has enabled the national programme to follow suit. COMDIS supports other community programmes at GSH including Home Based Care, Food on Prescription, community treatment supporters (Basiti) and Motorcycle adherence officers. New areas of development include community care for Drug resistant TB (MDR/XDR) and a Pre ART programme.



ZAMBART (ZAMBIA AIDS-Related TB Project) is an independent NGO and research partner in the **TARGETS Consortium** based at the School of Medicine, University of Zambia. ZAMBART arose from the collaboration between the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the Zambian School of Medicine and has been engaged in clinical, community, health systems and laboratory research over the past 20 years. The ZAMSTAR Study is a community-randomized trial evaluating two interventions into TB care in high HIV areas. The largest study of its kind, ZAMSTAR covers 24 communities, 16 in Zambia and 8 in South Africa, reaching an estimated 1.2 million people. The project engages in issues surrounding health systems, health seeking behaviour and stigma. ZAMSTAR forms part of the CREATE initiative, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Key Messages

- Two diseases but one patient. Integration of TB and HIV services is needed at all levels to respond to the ongoing epidemics.
- Reducing the burden of TB/HIV needs particular investment in three areas - community agency; health systems and point-of-care diagnosis.
- Flexible core funding through Research Programme Consortia is key to building the independence and influence of Southern partners and organisations.

Further Information & Resources

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