SUMMARY

The global recognition of TB burden, emerging threat of TB-HIV and danger of MDR-TB indicates urgent need to deal with TB not as a medical or even public health problem alone but as a social problem where creative interventions are essential for its effective control. Higher cure rates are now achievable but for improving early case detection, mere access to health facilities with free anti-TB drugs may not be enough to bring about desired success in DOTS strategy under RNTCP. New partners especially youth force has a great potential to bring about desired change in the community through propagating correct information on TB and its control. The project initiated at NTI, Bangalore involved 125 students (7th to 10th standard) of Bethesda School, Bangalore and a cadre of sixteen student ambassadors were groomed to generate an effective movement in fight against TB. A highly motivated student ambassador participated in further sensitization of 150 students of a Government Middle and High School situated in Yeshwanthpur slum area of Bangalore. In the process, a creative network of student ambassadors can now be expanded and utilized to propagate correctly about TB and its control not only to their friends and families but also to the community at large.

INTRODUCTION

Tuberculosis (TB) continues to be major infectious disease killing more humans than any other disease. One third of the world’s population continues to be infected with tubercle bacilli and eight million new cases appear every year besides two million deaths occurring each year due to TB. The global recognition of TB burden and emerging threat of HIV, an important risk factor for the development of TB remains a great challenge in control of TB even though TB is completely curable. Current scenario indicates urgent need to view and deal with TB not as a medical or even public health problem alone but as a social problem where innovative interventions have to be taken seriously for its effective control. In a vast country like India, it is essential to involve every segment of the community for effective prevention and control of TB as there continues to be lack of awareness about the disease. Many are not aware about the danger of drug resistant TB due to irregularity in consumption of anti-TB medication for prescribed period of time. Mere access to health facilities with free anti-TB drugs may not be enough to bring about desired success in DOTS strategy under RNTCP. Need for new partners to jointly fight against TB is now real for achieving success in making our country free from TB. As a part of our innovative approach, involvement of youth for TB advocacy as our partners can play a vital role, in form of a sustained movement, since they are in the process of continuous learning in schools and are capable to propagate correct information about TB not only to their friends and families but also to the community at large. Considering the potential of school children this project was initiated with the following objectives:

INVOLVEMENT OF YOUTH FOR TB ADVOCACY - AN INNOVATIVE EXPERIMENT

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OBJECTIVES
1. Educate School Children about the TB Disease
2. Identity & build a cadre of Student Ambassadors committed to propagate awareness messages about TB and its control.
3. Generate an effective movement in fight against TB through a network of Student Ambassadors.

METHODOLOGY

Project Details
First phase of this project started with the launching of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Section by the Director, NTI on 24th March (World TB Day) 2003. An executive committee associated with the School Project was formed and comprised of Project Director: Dr. Prahlad Kumar, Chairman: Dr. V. Seethapathi Rao & Co-ordinator: Dr. Vijay K Challu besides Mr. Joseph Zacharia, Mr. Sidharthan, Mrs. Suganthi, Mr. Mallikarjuniah and Mr. V. Magesh as executive members.

Bethesda School Society authorities were initially contacted for the first phase of school project in view of its proximity to the Institute besides their regular participation during NTI’s annual functions viz., Republic & Independence Day for past many years. Mr. Nainan, Director, Mrs. Sarojini Devaraj, Hon. Director, Bethesda School nominated Mrs. Ferdoze Begum, High School Head Mistress & Mrs. Lipika Chakraborthy as School Coordinators besides Miss. Sherene, Mrs. T.A. Lalitha, Mrs. Alice Wilson and Mrs. Sheeba as Editors for initial presentation by their respective students.

Five groups out off 125 students comprising of both male and female were briefed by the NTI Co-ordinator about the simple facts & figures on tuberculosis, its symptoms, diagnosis, duration of treatment, its deadly alliance with HIV besides danger of drug resistance and role of BCG vaccination. This was followed by question-answer session and visit to different sections of the institute for on-spot observation of ongoing activities related to tuberculosis control programme. Each group of students had direct interactions with the respective section staff regarding importance of their role in the control of TB programme.

RESULTS EXPLORED

Identification & Selection of Students Ambassadors
Based on the interest & commitment shown by the students observations of school teachers and NTI- IEC team sixteen students were identified as prospective ambassadors who became our partners for propagating awareness about TB. As a first step, these students prepared and presented related topics on TB control. With the collection of enormous information about TB from various sources including available websites, these students made an amazing and impressive power point presentation on their own during the pilot session.

Identification of Issues and the Message Development
NTI – IEC executive team groomed & facilitated the prospective sixteen student ambassadors for incorporating important and correct messages about TB and its control through DOTs under RNTCP. Two student ambassadors were included for each topic besides every one of them was able to narrate total picture about TB in out country and its salient features.
Target Audience

Students over ten years of age studying in 7th to 10th class from Bethesda School, Bangalore got involved in TB awareness programme through the selected student ambassadors. Dissemination of correct information by the student ambassadors and their colleagues to the parents & their family members also got incorporated in TB awareness project.

Innovative Network of student ambassadors

A highly motivated student ambassador Mr. Shashank of 7th standard from Bethesda School was involved in sensitization of about 150 students, studying in one the Government Middle/High School of slum area situated in Yashwanthpur, Bangalore, on TB and its control programme emphasizing the importance of DOTS and RNTCP.

By involving other school for joint partnership in fight against TB through groomed student ambassadors, an effective network for TB awareness is now achievable.

The interest generated among the students in Government Schools of slum area opened

### Assigned topics for student ambassadors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Name of the Student</th>
<th>Topic Assigned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Ashwin &amp; Hari</td>
<td>Problems of TB &amp; its effects on the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Kishan &amp; Vinay</td>
<td>Transmission &amp; Cause of TB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Puneeth &amp; Najeebullah</td>
<td>Symptoms &amp; Diagnosis of TB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Dinesh &amp; Pooja Shetty</td>
<td>Anti – TB treatment &amp; role of B.C.G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Shashank &amp; Kruthika</td>
<td>DOTS under RNTCP in the county</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Shamal &amp; Pramila</td>
<td>Role of Student’s Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>Vishal Bohra &amp; Bharat</td>
<td>Moderator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>Pooja &amp; Deewanjee</td>
<td>Students Co-ordinates for question – answer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sharing of facts & figures about TB with NTI Staff during their visit to different sections
doors for TB awareness campaign in other schools. An innovative network for advocacy on TB control has been started by integrating students of different schools, thus generating a movement in joint fight against TB.

DISCUSSIONS

Since the discovery of TB bacilli in 1882, a substantial period has been for the invention of anti-TB drugs in 1944, implementation of National Tuberculosis Programme in 1960s, beginning of short course chemotherapy in 1970s, declaring TB as a global emergency in 1993 and followed by introduction of DOTS under RNTCP. The tuberculosis situation in our country continues to be serious problem coupled with the emerging threat from MDR-TB and its association with HIV. Building new partnerships with the different segments of our community in joint fight against TB is the need of the hour.

Partnership with the students and teachers of schools in fight against TB has a great potential which needs to be explored further. However, such partnerships could be sustained through their continued participation and propagation of realities about TB and its control. Exchange of information through students and their integration into a creative network of student ambassadors would motivate them to drive the youth force of the country as a catalyst and generate a movement against this disease besides rendering our country free from TB in years to come.

The future plan of action can be focused on sensitizing the students about the ways of combating this disease which continues to kill one person every minute besides making about 3 lakhs students dropout from schools annually due to their parents illness. Keeping in view the

Students ambassadors for a school sharing facts about TB control with students of another school in a slum area & TB awareness messages conveyed through folk songs
target audiences and their perceptions, the important messages about TB need to be articulated accordingly that would prove to be beneficial for success of TB control programme in our country. It is possible to achieve success in this endeavor by expanding our partnerships in fight against TB with other segments like private practitioners, medical association, industries community leaders, journalists, NGOs, woman organizations, bureaucrats & politicians etc., besides sustaining this movement through innovative approaches suitable to specific ground realities existing in our country.

Acknowledgments

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