

THE UNION SOUTH-EAST ASIA REGION IN 2016



A community volunteer raises awareness of TB as part of Project Axshya's community engagement activities in the Sonapat district, India.

Photo: Aditi Sharma

INDIA'S PROJECT AXSHYA: IMPROVING THE LIVES OF TB PATIENTS

Project Axshya is an innovative civil society initiative designed to improve access to tuberculosis (TB) diagnosis and treatment in India. It is implemented by The Union South-East Asia Office under a grant from the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria.

In 2016 Project Axshya has:

- Created a Patients' Charter, translated into 19 regional languages, which empowers 30,000 TB patients to understand their rights, make informed choices and become equal partners in the management of their care.
- Partnered with India's Social Welfare department; connecting poor TB patients with social welfare schemes. These schemes support patients' nutritional and economic needs, which will help them to adhere to TB treatment.
- Reached over 100,000 people with information, counselling and advice through a TB helpline. Following this success, the government of India is sponsoring the service in three new states.
- Partnered with community radio stations, giving presenters information about TB to encourage conversation in local communities.
- Worked with religious leaders in India's Muslim community, to bring crucial TB information to local religious schools, called madrasas, in 15 districts across two states.

FROM EVIDENCE TO PUBLIC HEALTH ACTION

For nearly 100 years The Union has drawn together the best scientific evidence and expertise to address the most pressing public health challenges affecting people living in poverty around the world. Know. Share. Act.

KNOW.

- The Union assisted in a South Asian summit on Sustainable Development Goals in Bangladesh, which addressed reducing tobacco use across the region.
- Union grantees, Work for a Better Bangladesh, received an award from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for contributions to tobacco control.
- Union experts had 27 peer-reviewed papers published in *Public Health Action* and *PLOS ONE*, among others. They covered TB, HIV and diabetes care from countries across the region.

SHARE.

- The 3rd Conference of The Union South-East Asia Region was held in Kathmandu, Nepal. Hundreds of delegates shared the latest research, regional approaches to addressing TB and lung disease, and new strategies for treatment and prevention of TB across the region.
- The Union hosted an extensive TB education programme in Myanmar communities and schools, to increase awareness about TB and teach participants how to recognise the signs and symptoms. The Union Myanmar Office conducts nearly 500 health sessions per month (having run 13,612 sessions from 2014 to June 2016).

ACT.

- In tobacco control, The Union supported:
 - extensive policy initiatives in Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives.
 - the implementation of Graphic Health Warnings on tobacco products in Bangladesh, India and Myanmar.
 - a Regional Tobacco Control Leadership Programme to help build management capacity in Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Timor-Leste and Nepal.
- The Union South-East Asia Office collaborated with the Lilly MDR-TB Partnership to train rural healthcare providers in three districts across three Indian states to provide basic TB care, control and prevention.
- The Union South-East Asia Office piloted a project in India that sends TB patients texts and calls, reported that 95 percent of patients under the project are adhering to treatment. Following the success of the pilot phase, this will be extended across India.
- The Union Office in Myanmar received a Global Fund grant to extend the Community-Based MDR-TB Care project to 10 new areas, bringing its total reach to 33 townships.