

# Mobilizing Informal Healthcare Providers for enhanced TB case detection

Informal healthcare providers are the first and spontaneous choice for the community people when they need immediate medical care and assistance. The absence of qualified doctors, together with affordability and accessibility of these informal providers, makes them a preferred option for people in rural and hard-to-reach areas. Owing to their physical proximity and strong community ties, informal providers command immense trust and respect in the local population. Leveraging the extensive network of these providers, often in difficult to reach locations, have benefitted several public health programs. For instance, these providers play a crucial role in tuberculosis (TB) case detection.

## INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL PRESENCE

The role and relevance of informal health providers have significantly risen over the years in the community health system and the implementation of community-based programmes. As per the TB Report 2023, the coverage of private sector TB notification has increased over seven times since 2014 and accounts for over 30% of total notification as on date. The year 2022 reported the highest private TB case notifications achieved at 7.3lakh.<sup>1</sup>

The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM), launched with the aim to create a digitally linked integrated health ecosystem, will include a comprehensive repository of all formal as well as informal healthcare professionals, which is a notable step in establishing the importance of informal health providers in the overall health system.

1. <https://tbcindia.gov.in/showfile.php?lid=3680>

## ENVISIONING THEIR POTENTIAL

We have been engaging informal healthcare providers for implementing TB intervention under Ni-kshay of the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP), and other public health programmes effectively. In the last decade and half, we have successfully engaged over 15,000 such providers in delivering healthcare services to the underserved communities.

We involved private healthcare providers in remote areas to adopt ISmart technology powered by artificial intelligence for getting accurate chest-x ray reports and active case-finding, thus helping in accessing reliable TB tests, which is one of the biggest challenge in TB care cascade and timely initiation of treatment. As an intermediary agency under the Public Private Service Agency (PPSA), project of NTEP we have linked with 2,044 private providers across the intervention states, which has helped in increasing TB notification and registration. Since October 2023, World Health Partners (WHP) is supporting the Government of India's ABDM mission in mapping formal and informal healthcare providers. Till November 2023, WHP has mapped 576 informal health providers.

2. India TB Report 2023, page 42



Private providers engaged by World Health Partners have been playing an important role in notification and in providing health care services to a large proportion of patients with tuberculosis.

World Health Partners (WHP) is a non-profit Indian society that sets up programs to bring sustainable healthcare within easy access to underserved and vulnerable communities. It innovatively harnesses already available resources more efficiently by using evidence-based management and technological solutions. WHP is best known for its programs focused on early detection and treatment of tuberculosis in urban and rural settings supported by community-based activities to ensure prevention. The organization uses all available resources--both in the public and private sectors to ensure that people living in any part of the country will have access to high-quality treatment.

For more information, please contact: Ms. Prachi Shukla, Country Director, World Health Partners (WHP), [info@whpindia.org](mailto:info@whpindia.org).

[www.worldhealthpartners.org](http://www.worldhealthpartners.org)

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