



SYSTEMATIC SCREENING FOR EARLY DETECTION OF TUBERCULOSIS



BACKGROUND

Timor-Leste is one of the highest Tuberculosis (TB) burden countries in South-East Asia, with an estimated 500/100,000 cases each year. Increasing trends in TB prevalence and mortality suggest there are long delays in diagnosis and the initiation of treatment. Groups in congregated settings with poor access to health care are particularly vulnerable.

IOM Timor-Leste is supporting the Ministry of Health (MoH) to provide systematic screening of TB in border areas. The program, a first of its kind in Timor-Leste, also targets high-risk groups living in congregated settings such as rural communities, universities, prisons, and police departments in Dili and Ermera with the aim of ensuring access to diagnosis and the initiation of treatment services.

As part of the program, IOM health professionals and MoH representatives travel to local administrative posts in selected municipalities to conduct one-day workshops introducing high-risk groups to symptoms, risks, diagnosis and treatment for TB. A TB video contextualised for Timor-Leste is also screened and participants are encouraged to ask questions to the team of IOM health professionals.

Awareness sessions are followed by an individual consultation with medical staff and the completion of a questionnaire to identify symptoms. If three or more symptoms are present a sputum sample is taken for screening using the latest molecular testing technology or as it is commonly known as GenXpert. Patients with a positive sputum sample are then referred to the MoH for treatment.

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IN THE FIRST MONTH OF SCREENING IN 2017:

Number of Patients Screened:	2242
Number of Local Authorities Trained:	225
Number of Doctors Trained:	17
Number of Nurses Trained:	4

The program also includes trainings for medical and nursing staff in preparation for screening in congregate settings. The trainings for health professionals aim to improve case detection, ensure appropriate diagnosis and the initiation of treatment. This not only enhances the capacity of medical staff but also benefits the health system at a grass roots level.

Systematic screening marks an important step towards reducing TB transmission. The screening improves access to TB information and services, and contributes to improving health-seeking behaviours through encouraging target populations to visit their local health clinics. During the first month of implementation 2242 patients have already benefitted from the screening.

Although Timor-Leste is a relatively small Southeast Asian nation it has a very high TB prevalence rate. As a result of IOMs experience and coverage in the country, we are in a unique position to support systematic screening of high-risk groups and produce the first evidence-based research for prevalence rates in Timor-Leste.

IOM Timor-Leste is committed to supporting and strengthening Timor-Leste's health system, and increasing public awareness to reduce TB transmission in Timor-Leste.

