

Pension schemes for tuberculosis patients: An advocacy effort from TB forum members of Kerala,India



Title: Pension schemes for tuberculosis patients: An advocacy effort from TB forum members of Kerala,India

Category: Public health practice

Topic: G00 Civil Society

Sub-topic: G01 Advocacy, human rights and ethics

Content: Background: Civil Society participation in advocacy for TB has increased in India through continued effort of Project Axshya and support from Global Fund. Locally established Tuberculosis Forum (TB Forums) has set an example and model across the World. TB forum members constitute stakeholders like health care workers, opinion leaders, media personnel, bureaucrats and most importantly cured TB patients with a mandate of patient centric and community centric perspective in TB care and control. This is an experience of advocacy effort from a TB forum in Kerala for revisions in revenue guide of government of Kerala to nutritional support for TB patients.

Intervention: Kerala was one among the states to introduce financial support scheme for TB patients in 1963. The utilization of scheme was abysmally low due to lack of information. The pension scheme was therefore revised in 2010 to Rs 300 per month (USD 4.8) and same was revised to Rs 525 per month in 2012 and to Rs 800 in 2013 (USD 13). Despite the continuous revision in the amount of pension, there was no revision regarding the eligibility criteria (annual income below Rs 2400 i.e, USD 39) for availing the schemes which was identified by the TB Forums in Kerala. As a result none of the TB patients were able to avail the service. TB forum members from Kerala, through various forums (government-community) advocated for TB pensions schemes.

Result: Advocacy efforts led to consideration by government for revisions in the TB pension schemes. The government proposed decision for revisions in the local assembly proposing for revisions: eligibility on annual income from Rs 2400 to Rs 100,000 (USD 1613), increase in the amount to Rs 1000 (USD 16). Both the proposals were up-hold and about Rs 1,651,000 (USD 26630) for the current financial year have been earmarked. For the period April 2013 to January 2014 a sum of Rs 1,651,000 (USD 26630) has reached around 300 patients from 26 Taluks (sub-divisions of the district)

Conclusion: Thousands of Tuberculosis patients in the state of Kerala will now be supported financially through TB pensions schemes through continued advocacy by TB forum members and Project Axshya. Other TB forum members across the country are now sensitized and are operating on similar lines for support of TB patients. Global fund and other donors need to take cognizance of these additional indicators while considering value for money.

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