Anika's story – Intensified Case Finding in Bangladesh

Diagnosing TB in children is difficult due to their inability to provide a sputum sample; therefore other techniques were used to complete the diagnosis. For Anika, the tests showed a positive result for TB.

After six months of directly observed treatment (DOT), she was finally cured. To find the origin of her TB, Anika's parents and neighbors were screened for TB, but no one else suffering from TB symptoms was found.

Unfortunately, one year later, Anika became ill again and her parents returned to the hospital. Because it was a relapse case, the doctor sent her sputum sample for GeneXpert testing. GeneXpert is a highly sensitive test that can detect drug-resistant (DR) strains of TB and it indeed showed that Anika had developed DR TB.

Anika was immediately referred to the National Institute of Chest Diseases and Hospital (NIDCH) in Dhaka, where Challenge TB supports treatment initiation for DR-TB. Anika was hospitalized for two months until she showed improvement. She then continued her treatment at home under a community-based TB treatment program provided by Challenge TB trained out-patient teams.

Initially the drugs upset her stomach and made her nauseous, but she soon could tolerate her medication after the doctor taught her parents how to administer the medicine with sugar and milk. Today, Anika's family continues to receive food support from Challenge TB. CTB is also bearing all the costs relating to her treatment. As a result, Anika's physical condition is slowly improving.

Currently, childhood TB cases constitute approximately three percent of the total cases reported in Bangladesh, but the actual disease burden of childhood TB is unknown. However, the international experience of childhood TB suggests that only a small proportion of the estimated number of childhood TB cases are diagnosed and treated in Bangladesh. Anika's story shows that investing in finding children with TB, health provider and community training, and new technologies can save lives.