

# “Community involvement in raising awareness about tuberculosis among Somali population”

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## Background

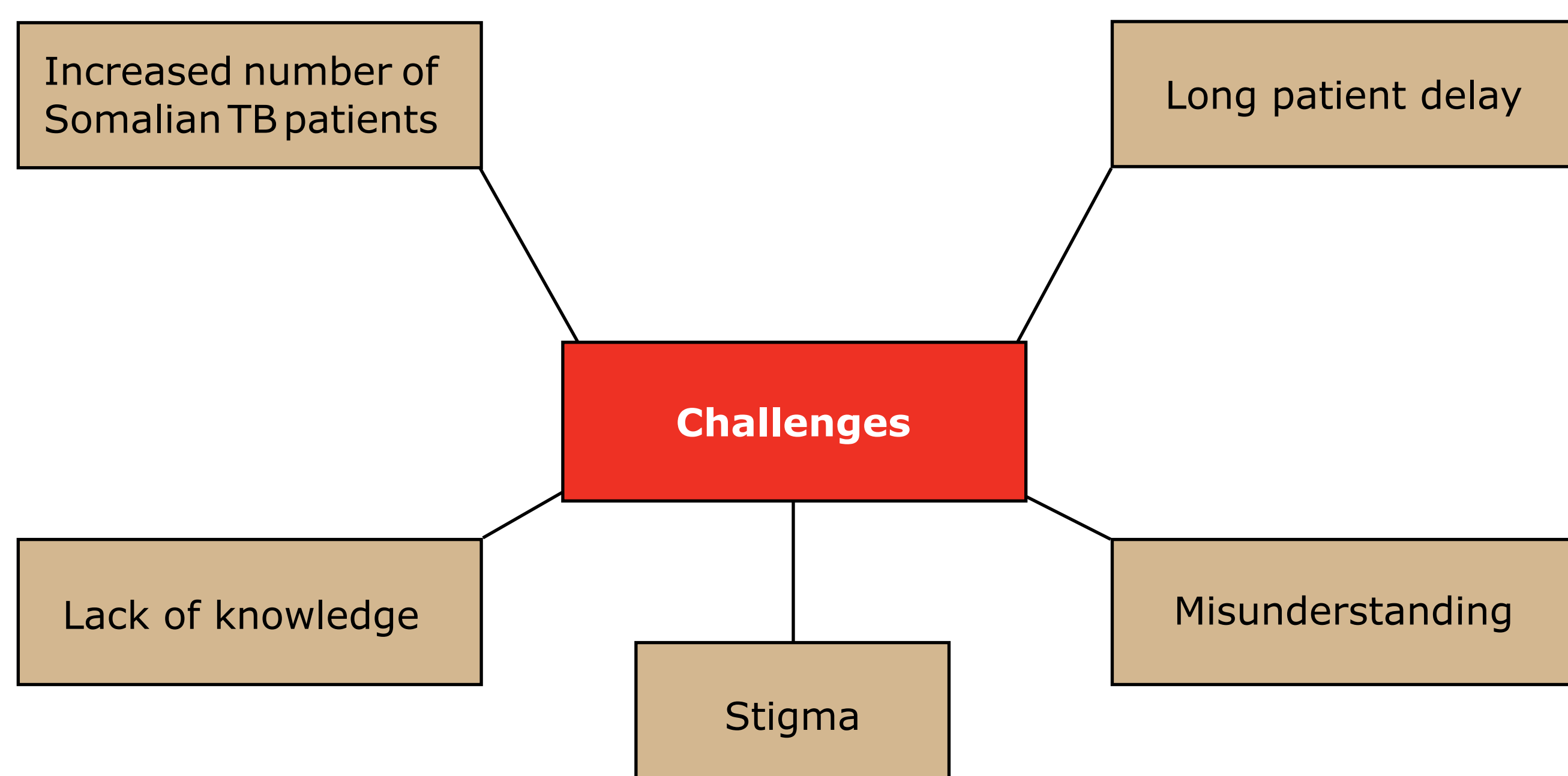
### TB situation in the Netherlands in 2013:\*

- Incidence 5.1: 100,000
- Foreign born: 73%
- Born in Somalia: 17% of TB patients
- Incidence Somali population in the Netherlands 500 x the incidence of the indigenous Dutch population
- 67% of Somali patients has extrapulmonary TB

### Regional situation Public Health Centre (PHC)

#### Hollands Noorden:

- Population of about 1500 Somali (total population 640.000)
- 2012: 19% of TB patients born in Somalia (5/27)
- 2013: 32% of TB patients born in Somalia(9/25)



## Intervention

### Preparation

In 2012 the TB Service of the PHC discussed with organizations specialized in health problems among the Somali population in the Netherlands (Federation of Somali Associations in the Netherlands (FSAN), PHAROS, KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation) the challenges they are facing. (see figure) It was concluded that active involvement of the Somali population was a pre-requisite for a planned project to raise TB awareness in their community.

### Organization

With the help of a local organization (partner of FSAN) the PHC organized two social events. The peers choose time, location and they arranged the announcement. They also provided transportation if necessary to the location. The information about TB was embedded in a more social meeting where also children's books were sold. Beside the information given about TB there was also attention for other healthcare issues, like the use of vitamin A and D and the effectiveness of sun/daylight in the prevention of vitamin D deficiency. A TB nurse of the PHC gave information about TB in a short PowerPoint presentation and showed a DVD in the Somali language about TB.



A Somali doctor told about his experiences treating and dealing with TB in Somalia and in the Netherlands. People were asked to fill in a questionnaire before and after the meeting.

After the official part of the meeting people stayed around to eat, drink and have some social talk.

## Results and lessons learned

The social events were attended by 80 persons (both men and women).

The results of the questionnaires:

Before:

- Lack of understanding and knowledge about TB
- Lack of knowledge about accessibility of TB services
- Tuberculosis is regarded as a stigma

After:

- Improved knowledge about TB/ TB services
- A DVD in Somali language is suitable method to inform this target group

**Community participation is a pillar in TB control**

Since these events, the TB service has noticed a better understanding of TB among Somali and a greater willingness to participate in contact investigation. TB is a topic people are more talking about.

## Conclusions and key recommendations

Talking freely about this issue within their own social group seems to be very important to relieve the stigma around TB and create awareness that TB is a serious problem that can be adequately treated and prevented with the help of the TB services.

Very important in the preparation phase was:

- Involving peers is the key to gain access to the target population.
- The peers need to be people from the Somali community. They need to be well respected by this community to serve as opinion leaders and TB advocates.
- The peers need to be well informed and fully aware of the goal of the meetings. They need to feel the success of the event is a shared responsibility. It is very important for the PHC to invest in educating the peers.
- It is very important that time and location of the social event is convenient for the target group. Professionals should have a flexible attitude.

The PHC plans to approach Somali populations in other cities in their region in a similar way.

**MAXAY TAHAY TIIBISHADU?**

*Warbixinta bukaana*

\* National Tuberculosis Register (NTR), the Netherlands.