



**Bold and Brave Survivor, Now A Dynamic
Young TB Champion**

**ABHISHEK KUMAR
TB CHAMPION
VAISHALI DISTRICT, BIHAR**



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“ We have only one goal - that we help people with TB in accessing the best treatment options available and help them to get cured.

TB से ग्रसित लोगों के लिए हमारा एक ही उद्देश्य है - कि हम उन्हें बेहतर से बेहतर इलाज उपलब्ध करा सके और उन्हें स्वस्थ करा सके. ”

ABHISHEK KUMAR

*TB Survivor, TB Champion and
Member, TMV*

TMV is a TB survivor-led network based in Bihar that is supported by REACH through Challenge Facility for Civil Society



Stop TB Partnership

MBA professional and TB survivor-Champion Abhishek Kumar hails from Vaishali in Bihar. He is an entrepreneur who runs a mobile and online ticketing shop with his father in his village. He was diagnosed with MDR-TB in 2014 when he was working as a banquet sales executive at a hotel in Bangalore. During a regular check-up, a chest X-Ray detected an infection in the lungs, and he was subsequently diagnosed with TB. He returned home and approached a doctor at a private hospital, who started him on treatment.

But Abhishek's health did not improve, and he was eventually asked to begin treatment for drug-resistant TB. "Within a day or two of starting the medication, my heartbeat increased abnormally. I was not able to sleep either," Abhishek recalls.

Abhishek then decided to consult doctors at a major health facility in New Delhi and travelled there. "Doctors at the hospital said that it was a mistake to have started treatment for MDR-TB without doing the right tests," he says. At the hospital, doctors started him on Category II medication. He was then referred back to the TB centre at Hajipur, where he continued his treatment for three months.

However, his symptoms persisted, and there was no visible sign of improvement. In June, Abhishek went to the government hospital again and this time, he was diagnosed with MDR-TB. The treatment went on for 27 months, and in all, Abhishek was home for 37 months. "I was bored at home as I was not used to staying in my house for that long. I had been away from home for eight to ten years," he says.

A few months after starting treatment for MDR-TB, Abhishek experienced some side effects. “I was giving a tough time to my friends and family. I was not even able to have a normal conversation with them because of my disturbed state of mind,” Abhishek says. He distinctly remembers an incident from December 2015 when some friends came home to visit. “I did not behave properly with a friend. I even assaulted him. Seeing this, my family was forced to lock me up in a room,” Abhishek recollects.

In January 2016, Abhishek attempted to take his life. “My mother saw me and cried out loud. Other family members came rushing and, they saved me,” Abhishek says. His family took him back to a doctor, who helped him manage the side effects. As a result, his mental health gradually improved. However, Abhishek points out that the delay in getting a precise diagnosis makes it much more difficult for a person who is affected by TB.

In 2018, Abhishek attended a capacity-building workshop for TB survivors and has since steadfastly worked to provide psychosocial support to families affected by TB. He has advocated with key local stakeholders, including MLAs, PRI members, ASHA workers, SHGs and school teachers. He is a founding member of Bihar's TB Survivor-led Network 'TB Mukt Vahini' (TMV) and has persuaded over 20 other survivors to join the network. His efforts led to the launch of a weekly counselling centre at the Hajipur District TB Cell, with guidance from the District TB Officer. As a TB Champion and TMV member, Abhishek vows to share his experience and knowledge of TB at health facilities. He also has plans to start a nutrition bank with other TB survivors to provide adequate nutritional support to people affected by TB.

During the first COVID-19 lockdown, people with TB on treatment faced challenges in getting their medicines. “To ensure that they didn’t miss a single dose, I spoke to the health facility near me and helped many people get their medicines on time”, says Abhishek.

Watch this film on Abhishek’s journey as a TB Champion and this message for the 51st Union Conference during a Community Connect session.

