

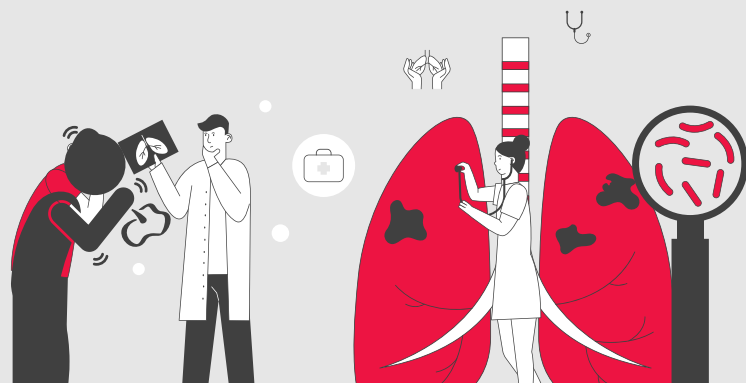


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USAID/India Health Office

USAID'S SUPPORT TOWARDS ENDING TB IN INDIA

February - March 2022



TB ACTIVITY REPORT

About USAID's TB Program

USAID works with India's National Tuberculosis Elimination program (NTEP), the private sector, civil society, communities, academic institutions, development partners, and patients to rapidly and rigorously test person-centered, high-impact solutions that can accelerate the Government of India's goal to eliminate TB by 2025. Since 1998, USAID has invested more than \$140 million to support efforts to end TB in India.



Automated drones collect and transport sputum samples to diagnostic centers in Odisha. Photo: Piramal Swasthya

Demonstrating Automated Drone Logistics to Augment TB Diagnosis in Kalahandi District, Odisha



USAID-supported drone diagnostics system will help bridge the TB diagnostic gap and strengthen the public healthcare system. Photo: Piramal Swasthya

TB prevalence among the tribal communities of India is estimated to be 703 per 100,000 population as against the national average of 256 per 100,000. Out of all the TB notified patients in the country, 10.4% belong to tribal communities. More than 50% of the tribal blocks in the tribal districts also lack molecular diagnostic facilities. The remote location and the hilly, uneven, and forest-covered terrain of most tribal villages add to the challenge of accessing and providing diagnosis and treatment services to patients. Addressing this diagnostic gap, USAID-funded Piramal Swasthya Management and Research Institute, as a part of Anamaya (an initiative by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to end TB in India by 2025), conducted a pilot using drone technology to augment TB diagnosis.

Automated drones were used to collect and transport sputum samples from people with symptoms suggestive of pulmonary (lung) TB to diagnostic centers. Two test runs were conducted between Kesinga and Bhawanipatna, and between Narla and Bhawanipatna, in Kalahandi district in Odisha in March 2022. Battery-operated hybrid unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) operate on significantly low energy, can carry a maximum weight of 5 kg, and are temperature-controlled to ensure that the samples do not suffer damage. Drone systems can be used to transport drugs, vaccines, sputum, blood, and urine samples to and from remote and hard-to-reach areas, thereby bridging the huge diagnostic gap and strengthening the public healthcare system.

Delegation from TB Mukht Chhattisgarh Foundation Meets Chhattisgarh State Health Minister

USAID-funded REACH, through the Accountability Leadership by Local communities for Inclusive, Enabling Services (ALLIES) project, strengthens state-level TB survivor-led networks. A delegation from the TB Mukht Chhattisgarh Foundation (TBMCGF) met Shri T.S. Singh Deo, Health Minister, Chhattisgarh to discuss issues related to the provision of nutritional support to People with TB (PWTBs) in the state. Chhattisgarh was the first state in the country to provide such support to PWTBs.



A delegation from TB Mukht Chhattisgarh Foundation (TBMCGF) met Shri T.S. Singh Deo, Health Minister, Chhattisgarh to discuss issues related to the provision of nutritional support to People with TB (PWTBs) in the state. Photo: REACH

Initially, the Government of India's contribution to the food basket was Rs. 500, which was equally matched by the state, making the basket worth Rs 1,000 per month. Currently, only Rs. 500 is being paid to PWTBs under the Nikshya Poshan Yojana (a program that provides nutritional support to TB patients receiving treatment). The network members demanded the restoration of the provision of the food basket or payment of Rs. 1,000 to PWTBs each month. The minister referred the matter to the Mission Director, National Health Mission (NHM), Chhattisgarh and assured the members of a speedy follow-up.

A Self-learning Course for TB Champions Launched by Additional Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)

One of the most crucial health challenges facing India today in the space of communicable disease is tuberculosis (TB). India has the highest number of reported TB cases in the world. According to the India Tuberculosis (TB) Report 2021, there were 1.8 million TB notifications in the country in 2020. In recognition of this alarming public health crisis, the Government of India has implemented a National Strategic Plan (NSP) aimed at ending TB by 2025, five years ahead of the global target of 2030. An important step in this direction is involving communities in implementing a comprehensive approach to ending TB. Trained TB Champions (TB survivors who sign up to become community leaders to support TB patients) play an important role in creating awareness among communities and in inspiring affected families with their own life experiences.

Over the last five years, USAID has nurtured the concept and trained many TB Champions. It has driven home the need to empower communities to have a voice in the management of the treatment of TB patients while facilitating the provision of quality services from various care providers. To institutionalize the TB Champions initiative, a consolidated training curriculum was developed from a host of materials, and made available through multiple modes and platforms.

The module is packaged in an Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) called "TB Champion Vaani" through a series of audio capsules to reach out to those TB Champions who may not have access to the internet or to smartphones. The self-learning module was launched by Ms. Aarti Ahuja, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), Government of India, on February 10, 2022. Ms. Ahuja underlined the responsibilities of the TB Champions in their communities and acknowledged their contributions towards strengthening India's fight against tuberculosis.

USAID is targeting to train 15,000 TB Champions by the end of March 2022 to ensure that every block in the country has at least one male and one female TB Champion.

Video Series Launched in Collaboration with the National TB Elimination Program (NTEP), Assam to Raise Awareness of TB

The USAID-supported "Breaking the Barriers" (BTB) project, implemented by the Karnataka Health Promotion Trust (KHPT), in collaboration with NTEP Assam launched a video series on TB on February 2, 2022. The series, in both English and Assamese, presents relevant and authentic information on TB such as free-of-cost services offered at government facilities to people with TB, fear of the disease, and role of the civil society organizations and communities with respect to treating and eliminating the disease. The series was launched in Assamese to cater to the people of Assam, as the state had the second highest diagnosed TB cases per lakh population in 2020 among the BTB intervention states, making it a priority state for the project. KHPT's proposition of developing a repository of reference materials in the form of small video clips was endorsed by the State TB Officer (STO). The link to the videos was shared with the Central TB Division (CTD) and the District TB Officers (DTOs) across all the districts of Assam. The initiative is expected to reach around 10,000 people in the first month of its launch. A series of podcasts broadcast in association with the state NTEP office has also been planned in order to reach out to a larger audience.

Collaboration with the Department of Women and Child Development to Highlight TB and Gender

The USAID-funded “Breaking the Barriers” (BTB) project in Warangal, Telangana held a meeting with Smt. Sabitha, District Welfare Officer, Department of Women and Child Development (DWCD), on February 3, 2022, to leverage International Women’s Day (celebrated on March 8) and to draw attention to women with TB. Orientation meetings were planned for the Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs), the supervisors from the DWCD, and the staff of the Mission for Elimination of Poverty in Municipal Areas (MEPMA) on topics such as gender, TB, and the right to health.



BTB conducts a meeting with DWCD officials in Warangal on gender, TB, and the right to health. Photo: BTB

The use of TB Azaan (a TB-related announcement made by a faith-based leader) was emphasized during Anganwadi (pre-school) teacher meetings to inform the Anganwadi workers of the importance of treating TB as a disease.

During the meeting, Smt. Sabitha stated that most women suffer from malnutrition which makes them all the more vulnerable to TB, and that there is an urgent need to draw attention to the critical link between TB and nutrition. A list of activities was jointly finalized with the DWCD, including the development of Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials, and the organization of rallies to reach out to a large audience of women on topics such as gender and TB was discussed.

National Experience-Sharing Workshop on Innovative Doorstep Health Service Delivery Models

USAID-funded Population Services International (PSI), as part of the SAMAGRA project, and in partnership with the Central TB Division (CTD), the program divisions of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW), and subject experts, organized a two-day consultative workshop, on February 10–11, 2022, on doorstep drug delivery models. The selected models will be supported by SAMAGRA for a scale-up under the National Health Mission.

Employer-led Model (ELM) Meeting in Tamil Nadu and Odisha

REACH, through the USAID-supported Accountability Leadership by Local communities for Inclusive, Enabling Services (ALLIES) project, organized Employer-led Model (ELM) meetings in Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu and Jharsuguda District, Odisha. These meetings were organized in collaboration with the National TB Elimination Program (NTEP). Thirty-nine industry representatives attended the meeting in Coimbatore and ten attended the meeting in Jharsuguda. In Coimbatore, the participants expressed their commitment to supporting the cause and their willingness to organize awareness programs and TB screening events for their workers by coordinating activities with the factory management.

Dr. Sripriya Pandurangan, Deputy Project Lead, ALLIES project spoke about the ELM and its activities across the states and emphasized the need to sign the Letter of Intent (LOI) and to join the Corporate TB Pledge. In Jharsuguda, industry representatives were oriented on the concept of ELM for TB Care and Prevention.

The REACH State Operations Lead, Odisha explained the importance and process of ELM, and why it is beneficial for industries to adopt workplace policies for TB care and prevention. The human resource officials from various industries were encouraged to sign the LOI to ensure their engagement in TB care activities.

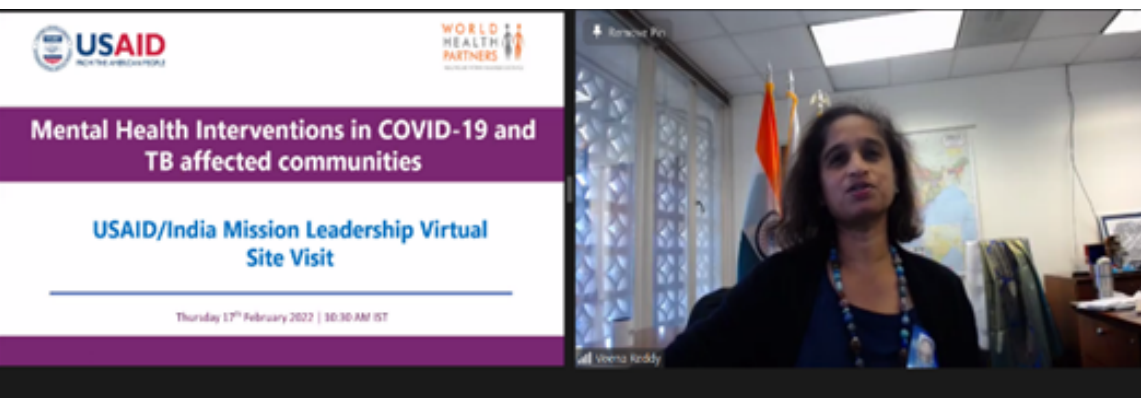
Industry representatives take an oath to support the goals of the End TB Initiative in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. Photo: REACH ALLIES



World Health Partners Organizes a Virtual Site Visit for USAID/India Mission Leadership and Other Stakeholders

World Health Partners (WHP) organized a virtual site visit for the USAID/India Mission Leadership, the State TB cells of Jharkhand and Gujarat, and the beneficiaries of their TB and COVID-19 interventions on February 17, 2022. The virtual site visit spotlighted the learning and insights emerging from the Mental Health (MH) and Gender-based Violence (GBV) interventions undertaken by USAID-funded projects.

Dr. Amar Shah, Project Management Specialist (Tuberculosis Care and Control), Health Office, USAID/India briefed the Mission Leadership on the projects. He was followed by Prachi Shukla, Country Director, WHP who reiterated the commitment of the organization in advancing the cause of mental health and in sharing the learning and insights obtained from the programs they have conducted. Presentations on the progress, the challenges, and the way forward under the TB and COVID-19 interventions were shared by the respective project leads.



USAID/India Mission Director Ms. Veena Reddy attends the virtual site visit organized by WHP. Photo: WHP

The highlight of the virtual site visit was a live screening session with a Delhi-based COVID-19 survivor using the Patient Health Questionnaire -4 (PHQ-4) tool and a live counseling interaction with a TB survivor in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. In a virtual visit to the Centralized Control Center, the WHP team updated the participants on the functions and patterns of tele-screening, counseling, and referral services. Dr. Anindya Mitra, Director, State TB Training and Demonstration Center (STDC), Jharkhand spoke about the efficacy of including mental health components in various national health program verticals. MH and GBV survivors shared their experiences as a testimonial to the benefits they have received through the program. Video clips from a recent symposium acknowledging the support extended by different stakeholders were also shown.

iDEFEAT TB Launches a Six-Month Executive-Level Learning Course for District TB Officers (DTOs)

USAID India's iDEFEAT TB project, implemented by The Union, is conducting a six-month executive-level learning course for DTOs with support from the Collaboration to Eliminate Tuberculosis among Indians (CETI).

The training curriculum focuses on Quality Improvement, Leadership and Healthcare Management, Team Building, and Data Analysis. The six-month training program follows a hybrid model of learning — online and in-person. It is organized on a weekly basis for each batch.

iDEFEAT TB Conducts Training Need and Capacity Assessment for Odisha

The iDEFEAT TB project conducted a training need and capacity assessment in Odisha during February 16–18, 2022. This was done through its consortium partner IQVIA and in coordination with the state National TB Elimination Program (NTEP).

The objective was to assess the training needs at all levels of NTEP, to provide inputs for training content, and to identify existing and required capacity for implementing the e-learning strategy. The assessment witnessed interactions with key officials of various cadres of NTEP.

iDEFEAT TB Launches 15 ECHO TB Hubs

As part of the iDEFEAT TB project, ECHO India (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) held a “Virtual Launch of 15 ECHO TB Hubs” on March 4, 2022. Dr. Rajendra P. Joshi, Deputy Director General, Central TB Division (CTD) inaugurated the hubs which are being established with the goal of institutional strengthening and accelerating activities in India to improve TB and drug-resistant TB management. Approximately 700 people from across the country attended the launch event.



iDEFEAT TB Launches 15 ECHO TB Hubs to improve TB and drug-resistant TB management. Photo: iDEFEAT

TB-free Workplace Campaign Updates – iDEFEAT TB

- Virtual Corporate Consultation in Haryana:** The Corporate TB Pledge (CTP) Secretariat, in association with the Haryana State CSR Trust and the State TB Cell, organized a “Virtual Corporate Consultation on TB” on February 18, 2022 to appraise corporates on the magnitude of TB, its socio-economic impact, and how the corporates can actively contribute to the program through interventions at their workplace and in their communities by joining the Corporate TB Pledge. The event, which was attended by around 50 participants, including representatives from 20 corporates, was graced by Shri Nishant Yadav, IAS, Deputy Commissioner, Gurugram, who urged corporates to come forward and support the national program in eliminating TB. The webinar included technical sessions to sensitize the audience to the TB scenario in India, government services and schemes, the Corporate TB Pledge (CTP) initiative, and TB and the workplace, including two models of corporate engagement. Dr. Bornali Dutta from Medanta The Medicity showcased the hospital’s Mission TB Free Haryana model, and Shri Arindam Goswami from the Adani Group spoke about TB and workplace interventions at the Adani Group’s Mundra facility in Gujarat.
- Meeting at the Central TB Division with Leading Business Associations:** Corporate engagement is key to eliminating TB by 2025. On February 18, 2022, the Central TB Division (CTD) organized a meeting with leading business associations, including the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM), the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), and the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, with the objective of sensitizing the participants on the current TB scenario in India and mobilizing corporates to work on TB prevention and care. Dr. Jyoti Jaju, Project Director, iDEFEAT TB, The Union, shared a brief presentation on the Corporate TB Pledge (CTP) and engagement options. Dr. Rajendra P. Joshi, Deputy Director General (TB), CTD appealed to all the business associations to proactively support the cause. In response, the associations expressed their interest in working on TB in coordination with CTD and The Union. The CTP Secretariat, hosted at The Union, will reach out to interested business associations and support corporates in planning workplace and CSR activities on TB.
- Gujarat State Consultation for Corporate Engagement on TB:** A one-day program was organized on February 23, 2022 in partnership with the state of Gujarat to sensitize District TB Officers (DTOs) and Public Private Mix (PPM) coordinators on corporate engagement and intervention models. The program focused on introducing corporate mobilization strategies, components of workplace interventions, and policy frameworks on TB released by the Ministry of Labor and Employment in 2019. Around 100 participants from all districts of Gujarat along with State TB Officers (STOs), WHO consultants, and representatives from the Gujarat Chamber of Commerce, Employees’ State Insurance Corporation (ESIC), Fujifilm, Adani Group, BEST Mumbai, JK Lakshmi Cement, Lupin Human Welfare and Research Foundation, and BKT Industries, attended the program. Fujifilm announced the placement of a TrueNat machine (used to test drug-resistant TB) and CBNAAT (cartridge-based nucleic acid amplification test) cartridges in Kutch district in Gujarat. As a result, three corporates joined the Corporate TB Pledge (CTP), and the State TB Officer (STO) asked the District officers to expedite corporate engagement in the state.
- Apollo Tyres Foundation Kicks Off “TB Free Transshipment Location Campaign”:** The “TB Free Transshipment Locations Campaign” was launched on March 1, 2022 by Apollo Tyres Foundation (ATF), a diamond member of the Corporate TB Pledge (CTP) program. The campaign will target truckers and related populations at 32 transshipment locations in 19 states. During the campaign, the foundation aims to reach out to 500,000 people to raise TB awareness through a variety of activities.
- iDEFEAT TB launches the Corporate TB Pledge Campaign:** From February 28 to March 31, 2022, the iDEFEAT TB Project’s social media channels hosted a month-long campaign called Corporate TB Pledge (CTP). The campaign’s goal was to run a large-scale drive focused on World TB Day, celebrated on March 24 every year, involving multiple stakeholders and building momentum for the National Tuberculosis Elimination Program (NTEP).

Harnessing the Power of the Community to Fight TB

Gowri (name changed), 35 years old, is a resident of Uttarahalli in Bangalore, Karnataka. She is separated from her husband and lives with her two daughters. While her elder daughter is under psychiatric care, her younger daughter had to drop out of school due to financial constraints and take care of her mother. Gowri was managing her life with difficulty, working as a domestic worker and taking care of her daughters, when she suddenly fell ill.

Members of the Prarthana Swasahaya Sangha, a women's self-help group (SHG), visited Gowri during a door-to-door awareness-raising activity. When they were told of her symptoms, they facilitated sputum collection for her.



Members of Prarthana Swasahaya Sangha during their weekly meeting. Photo: Breaking the Barriers

The test was negative. However, Gowri's health kept deteriorating. So, the SHG members arranged for an early-morning sputum sample to be collected and sent it for testing. Gowri tested positive, and was immediately put on treatment, with support from the SHG members.

“If it were not for the SHG members, my neighbors, the TB staff, and the KHPT-BTB team, I would have been dead today... I cannot thank them enough for granting me a second life.”

Gowri feared that she would be unable to care for her elder daughter whose mental illness makes her vulnerable to abuse. The USAID-supported “Breaking the Barriers” (BTB) project along with the Senior Treatment Supervisor (STS) and the SHG members stepped forward to support her. They attempted to admit her elder daughter to the government-run Bangalore-based National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) so that she could get high-quality institutional care. However, due to the COVID-19 situation, no beds were available. The team then reached out to Gowri's husband and convinced him to let the daughter live with him till Gowri completed her treatment.

With no caregiver to look after Gowri, the SHG members motivated neighbors to attend to her needs, and even provided her with a dry ration kit. After being bed-ridden for two months, Gowri began to respond to the treatment and feel better. Her weight increased from 34 kg to 38 kg.

Gowri says, “If it were not for the SHG members, my neighbors, the TB staff, and the KHPT-BTB team, I would have been dead today and my daughters would be orphaned. I cannot thank them enough for granting me a second life.”