

Breaking the Barriers

Breaking the Barriers (BTB) is a four-year project, supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which aims to develop innovative and effective behaviour change operational models that improve coverage of specific populations vulnerable to TB, such as urban poor, tribal communities, migrants, and mining and industrial workers, for increased case notification and successful TB treatment outcomes.

World TB Day

KHPT exhibits community interventions at World TB Day event in Delhi

KHPT was invited to exhibit at the World TB Day event organized by the Central TB Division (CTD) at Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi on March 24. The team showcased KHPT's community engagement work through posters, films, project briefs, and infographics. A message board was installed for visitors to send supportive messages to frontline workers. Dignitaries including Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Minister of Health, Ministry of Health



Dr. Harsh Vardhan, Health Minister at the KHPT stall

BTB teams support World TB Day events across intervention states

KHPT attended Karnataka state's event observing World TB Day on March 24 at Arogya Soudha in Bengaluru. Dr. K Sudhakar, the Honourable Minister, Department of Health and Family Welfare and Medical Education, Government of Karnataka, released a document on 'Kshaya Mukta Karnataka' (TB-free



Dignitaries at the event release posters developed by KHPT

and Family Welfare (MoHFW), Government of India and Dr. Arti Ahuja, Additional Secretary, MoHFW, Government of India, as well as CTD representatives and TB partners visited the stall, and interacted with BTB Community Coordinator Ms. Khashimbi and representatives of the KHPT team.

Dr. Ahuja also had a brief virtual interaction with adolescent TB Champions from Bagalkot, Karnataka.

A five-minute documentary produced by KHPT in collaboration with the CTD on the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme's (NTEP) sub-national certification process for TB-Free districts/states was screened at the event.

KHPT hosts webinar on keeping community structures at the centre of the TB response

KHPT organized a webinar titled, 'Understanding TB within Community Structures: Integrating the most Vulnerable' on March 22 in collaboration with USAID and the CTD. The panellists at the webinar included Dr Raghuram Rao, Deputy Director, CTD; Mr Mohan HL, CEO, KHPT; Dr Dalbir Singh,

President, Global Coalition Against TB; Dr Lucica Ditiu, Executive Director, Stop TB Partnership; Dr Rajeev Gowda, National Spokesperson-Congress and Indian Parliamentarian; Dr Reuben Swamickan, Division Chief, Tuberculosis and Infectious Diseases, USAID; and Mr Chandan B K, a TB Champion.

The panel discussion was attended by over 200 participants and revolved around strengthening community engagement at the grassroots through policy and programmatic guidance for community structures and was moderated by Dr Sukriti Chauhan, Advocacy Lead, Breaking the Barriers, KHPT. The highlights of the discussion may be accessed [here](#) and the recording of the webinar may be viewed [here](#).



Speakers at the webinar

Karnataka), along with several communications products developed under the USAID-funded Tuberculosis Health Action Learning Initiative (THALI) and Breaking the Barriers projects.

The BTB team was invited to Telangana's observation of World TB Day, at which the Community Engagement Toolkit, officially endorsed by the state NTEP was released. The Chief Guest at the event was Smt. Sweta Mohanty, IAS, District Collector, Hyderabad.

In Assam, the BTB team participated in activities organized by the state NTEP in Nagaon and Kamrup Metro districts. The day was marked with rallies, a parade by high school students, the distribution of masks among health workers, and cultural events. These events were held in collaboration with the Tea Association and high school authorities.

In Bihar the BTB team supported the state NTEP in organizing a month-long TB awareness campaign building up towards World TB Day. A Jan Andolan under the 'TB Harega Desh Jeetega' slogan was



Mr. Mangal Pandey, Minister for Health, Government of Bihar, addressing the gathering

organized in collaboration with NTEP officials and other development partners. The BTB team also supported the State Health Society Bihar and NTEP in organizing the World TB Day programme. The Honourable Health Minister, Mr. Mangal Pandey, emphasized the importance of TB as a Jan Andolan in the state and appreciated the joint initiative of NTEP and BTB in organizing Patient Support Group meetings across all blocks of Bihar.

Communication initiatives

An extensive social media campaign highlighting facts and challenges related to TB, community initiatives and TB Champions' stories from the ground was successfully implemented prior to, during and in the days after World TB Day. Two Facebook Live sessions were conducted with prominent personalities, reaching more than 2000 attendees.



Social media post for Facebook Live



Opinion pieces in print media and television interviews



Extensive print and electronic media activities were conducted with the highest levels of NTEP leadership, including Former Director General, Dr K.S. Sachdeva. Four articles and two television interviews were carried by leading publications and online mediums. About 20 million people were reached through a press release that was carried in over 100 publications.

The BTB teams conducted several community engagement activities on World TB Day in intervention districts. Details of their initiatives can be found [here](#).

Government Engagement

KHPT conducts webinar on community engagement for state NTEP officers

KHPT organized a webinar in collaboration with USAID and the CTD on April 6, titled 'Community Engagement and TB: Informing, Involving & Empowering', for NTEP officials from the BTB states of Bihar, Assam, Telangana and Karnataka. The meeting was addressed by Dr Nishant Kumar, Deputy Director, CTD. He focused on the Health Ministry's vision for Jan Andolan (people's movement) and how TB can truly be addressed if each and every citizen participates in addressing this grave challenge. He thanked USAID for its focus and attention on this key issue and KHPT for creating of an enabling environment that can help reach the goal of TB elimination.

The webinar was attended by State TB Officers, District TB Officers and WHO consultants. The sessions covered the three main topics of Community Structure Engagement, Patient Support Groups and TB Champions, and the Differentiated Care Model. Questions were raised by the participants on measuring success, addressing issues and also preparing to implement the project using the toolkits.

BTB team orients Assam NTEP on project



Dr. Karthikeyan and Dr. Rehana from KHPT interacting with the STO, Assam

Dr Karthikeyan K, Thematic Lead-TB, KHPT, on April 8 led a presentation on the BTB project and the Community Engagement toolkit with Assam STO Dr Nayan Jyoti Das and his team. Dr. Das committed to provide the necessary support for the project and will direct the DTOs to support and work closely with KHPT. Dr. Das further said that the project interventions will be owned as the NTEP's interventions to eliminate TB.

Telangana BTB team supports NTEP Warangal campaign for MDR TB patients

The Telangana BTB team in partnership with the district NTEP Warangal, initiated a campaign on April 17 to understand the barriers Multi-drug Resistant (MDR) TB patients face. Supported by the State NTEP, under the chairmanship of Dr. Pradeep, Medical Officer TB Control and Dr. Mallikarjun, District TB Control Officer, the BTB team undertook home visits to 13 MDR patients along with TB Health Volunteers. During these one-on-one interactions, the case history of each of these patients was collected, and they were counselled and informed of precautionary measures for TB and COVID-19 infection control. Based on findings of the campaign, the NTEP will take corrective actions responding to the needs of such MDR patients.



The Telangana team meets with the Warangal NTEP team at the launch of the campaign

Community Engagement

Hyderabad and Sangareddy teams engage Community structures for COVID-19 vaccine awareness

The BTB team in Hyderabad and Sangareddy have been providing information about the COVID-19 vaccination and facilities at which vaccinations can be received, in collaboration with community structures in these areas. Community structure members have been referring individuals for COVID-19 testing, and have also volunteered to participate in COVID-19 vaccination camps, where they support the medical team in issuing coupons to the individuals. About 1400 persons have been referred for COVID-19 testing in the Hyderabad and Sangareddy districts, and 800 persons have been vaccinated through these efforts.

Community structures in Warangal lend a helping hand during the pandemic

The Durga Auto Union, a community structure in Warangal, provided free auto transport to COVID presumptive cases for three days in Kazipet. The Alpha Omega Youth Association of Hanamkonda has been distributing masks to people in the nearby slums.

Community structure in Belagavi facilitates paediatric TB screening camp for malnourished children

Belagavi is known to be one of the districts in Karnataka worst affected by malnutrition. A review of the TB patients by the BTB team in consultation with District TB Officer found that malnutrition is an issue in the intervention areas as well. The Shree Shakti Mahila Okkuta Sangh, a Self-Help Group in Ramdurg town, sought to address the issue. With support from the Anganwadi workers, the Sangh members put together a list of children suffering from malnutrition in their respective areas. A list of 32 children was drawn up, and a paediatric TB screening camp was planned for April 21 at a Designated Microscopy Centre. Due to the COVID-19 situation, only eight parents of the 32 children identified attended the TB screening camp. Four of the eight children screened were diagnosed with TB and were initiated on treatment.



The paediatric TB screening camp at Belagavi

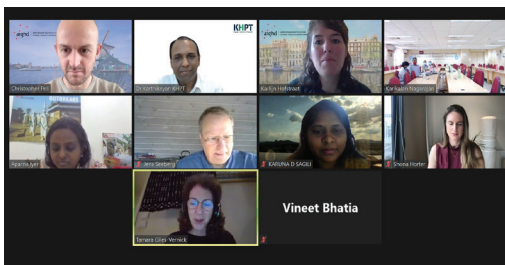
BTB screens presumptive TB cases at COVID-19 vaccination centres, Belagavi

The BTB Belagavi team leveraged the opportunity of screening those coming forward for COVID-19 vaccinations, organizing TB screening camps at various vaccination centres with a high concentration of vulnerable populations. About 250 persons were screened at five such camps, of which 14 presumptive cases were referred for testing; results of these cases are awaited.

Learning and Sharing Platforms

KHPT presents patient-centric models at international symposium

KHPT presented patient-centric approaches to TB care implemented during the USAID-funded THALI project at an online symposium organized by ICMR-NIRT, Chennai, in partnership with Sonar Global, an international network of social scientists working to address infectious diseases. This symposium, titled "Leveraging social sciences in the



Dr. Karthikeyan presenting at the Sonar Global Symposium

global fight against Tuberculosis: Sharing experiences from across the globe", was conducted on April 19 as a first step to create a platform for social science-driven research and interventions to address TB in India and similar high-burden settings.

Dr. Karthikeyan, Thematic Lead-TB, KHPT, presented community engagement models including Community Structure Engagement, Patient Support Groups, and the Differentiated Care Model, which form the foundation of activities of the BTB project.

KHPT hosts virtual round table discussion on gender approaches to health during COVID-19

KHPT organised a virtual round table discussion titled 'A gender approach to equitable health: Perspectives during a pandemic' on March 5, with an aim to provide a platform for women to share their experiences and successes, and the obstacles that dwarf women's ability to access health services in the context of the pandemic, especially with respect to TB. The panel was comprised of expert resource persons with varied work experience in public health, women's issues and rights, TB, and allied fields.

The speakers were Dr Sangita Patel, Director, Health Office, USAID; Dr Nishant Kumar, Deputy Director, CTD; Mr. Mohan HL, CEO, KHPT; Ms. Pallavi Prasad, Senior Journalist; Ms. Blessina Kumar, CEO, Global Coalition of TB Activists; Dr. Dalbir Singh, President, Global Coalition Against TB; and Dr. Avni Amin, Technical Officer, Department of Reproductive Health and Research on Violence Against Women, WHO, Geneva.

The highlights of the discussion are available [here](#) and the recording of the webinar can be accessed [here](#).

TB Careline

The TB Careline is a free outbound counselling service for TB patients, supported by Indegene Lifesystems Private Ltd.

The TB Careline registered 904 new patients in the March-April period. 490 patients were reported to have completed treatment successfully. 25 patients were reported to have died and 11 patients stopped treatment on the advice of their doctor. 2943 patients are currently on active care. 10375 calls were made by the team for follow up, registration of patients and for post-treatment follow up.

Joint Effort for Elimination of Tuberculosis (JEET)

KHPT implements the JEET project, funded by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, implementing private sector engagement initiatives in three districts of Bengaluru.

In the March-April period, JEET notified 2407 presumptive TB cases, of which 693 were diagnosed with TB. 433 samples were transported through the Specimen Collection and Transportation system to different CBNAAT centres.