

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 the urban poor, tribal communities, migrants, and mining and industrial workers, for increased case notification and successful TB treatment outcomes.

Community Engagement

KHPT raised TB awareness in Bihar through health camps in West Champaran, Bhagalpur, and Purnia



Health camp underway in West Champaran, Bihar

KHPT partnered with the District NTEP teams of West Champaran, Bhagalpur, and Purnia to organize health camps. These camps aimed to raise awareness about TB symptoms, screening, prevention, and care services. In January, a total of 44 camps across the three districts were organized, reaching out to 20451 people with information on TB symptoms, diagnosis, treatment and prevention. Among those present 12278 were screened, 183 symptomatic persons were referred for TB testing.

KHPT and NTEP partner for TB awareness and nutritional support at Dhekiajuli Primary Health Centre, Sonitpur, Assam

KHPT collaborated with District NTEP Sonitpur to conduct an awareness training conducted for tea garden community at the Sonitpur, Assam. The training focused on TB symptoms, diagnosis, treatment, prevention, and hygiene practices. NTEP also provided nutritional support by distributing Rs. 500 consumable packages to 7 Persons with TB (PwTB), from outside the Tea Estate areas.

Bagalkote, Karnataka observed National Girl Child day with TB awareness, health camps

Marking the occasion of National Girl Child Day, on January 24, the Bagalkote team in Karnataka observed the day by organizing TB awareness campaigns and health check-up camps. Two TB awareness and health camps were organized in Hukkeri, and Saundatti, on January 24 and 29 respectively. Of those present 113 symptomatic persons were screened for TB, 4 were referred for testing and one was diagnosed to be TB positive.

District NTEP, Dibrugarh, and Maijan tea estate collaborated to organize a TB screening for factory workers

District NTEP, Dibrugarh, and Maijan Tea Estate administration collaboratively organized a TB screening programme for factory workers on February 22. The programme involved an awareness session led by the Senior Treatment Supervisor (STS), Senior Tuberculosis Laboratory Supervisor (STLS), and the Tea Estate's Medical Officer. Following the session, 60 workers were screened for TB, and 42 samples were collected for testing.



Factory workers being screened for TB, Dibrugarh, Assam

Government Engagement

Transition Meeting: Breaking the Barriers teams in Assam, Bihar, Karnataka and Telangana advocates with the state NTEP for integration of community engagement in TB elimination efforts

On January 4 in the presence of Dr B K Mishra Additional Director & State Programme Officer (TB), Bihar, and other representatives from the State NTEP, WHO Consultants, KHPT officials, and development partners, the Breaking the Barriers state team of Bihar, conducted a meeting at the State Health Society, Patna. The primary aim of the meeting was to advocate with the State Health Society to adopt all community engagement activities of the BTB project that aim at TB elimination. A comprehensive presentation on BTB's community-driven initiatives and their pivotal role in the TB response was shared during the meeting. The presentation highlighted the alignment of BTB with NTEP goals, emphasizing specific tools for behaviour change solutions and care and support group meetings.



Transition meeting in Bihar, in presence of Dr B K Mishra, Additional Director & State TB Officer, Bihar

On 5 February, a similar meeting was held with Dr Avijit Basu, State TB Officer, Assam, in presence of Ms Amrita Goswami, USAID,

and WHO Consultants. A meaningful discussion was held on how NTEP can take forward the best practices and what kind of handholding support KHPT can provide during the transition phase.

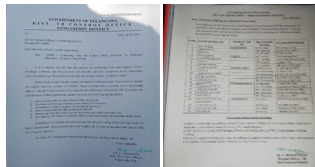
Similar transition meetings were held with Districts NTEPs across five districts of Karnataka. During these meetings the District TB Officers (DTOs) and all the district NTEPs were briefed on the completion and handover of project activities. Important details that were handed over to the DTOs include, TB Champion, TB Volunteer list, vulnerable site and population details, names of active community structures with name, and contact person. Details of Behaviour Change Solutions (BCS), Nikshay Mitra line list, and the CSG line list. In addition, the DTO and other district NTEP representatives were briefed on ways of engaging the community, and structures in community-based activities.



Transition meeting with Dr Avijit Basu, STO Assam in presence of USAID and WHO consultants

State NTEPs in Telangana and Bihar formally take ownership of Care and Support Group (CSG) meetings

The constant effort of the Telangana Breaking the Barriers team bore fruition when the District Tuberculosis Officers of Warangal, Hanumakonda, Hyderabad and Sangareddy took ownership and committed to organize CSG



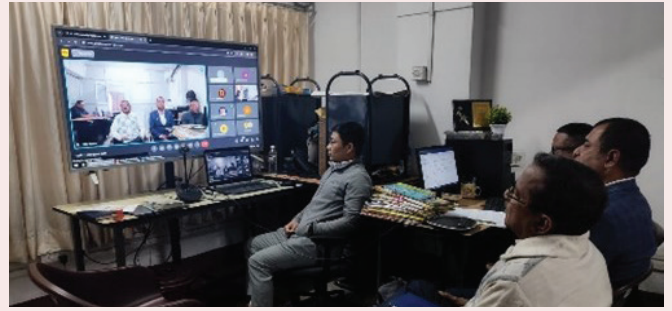
Official orders issued for regularization of CSG meetings

meetings at the facility level. The DTOs issued written directives to the Medical Officers (MOs) to conduct CSGMs regularly, citing their positive impact on PwTB.

In a similar turn of events in two districts of Purnia and

West Champaran, Bihar the DTOs scaled up the CSG meetings in 6 BTB non-intervention TUs of Purnia and 10 non-intervention TUs of West Champaran.

Assam Breaking the Barriers team shares community engagement strategies for TB elimination with all districts



Dr Avijit Basu, STO, Assam at the virtual conference on community engagement approaches towards TB response

On January 6, the Assam Breaking the Barriers team in collaboration with State NTEP, Assam hosted a virtual conference on “Community Engagement Approaches towards sustaining TB Response at Grassroot level” at the State TB Cell, Assam. The conference connected with District Tuberculosis Officers (DTOs) and NTEP teams from all **33** districts of Assam. The focus of the conference was to share key learnings and takeaways from the “Breaking the Barriers” project. This project demonstrated successful strategies for community engagement in TB elimination efforts across **13** Tuberculosis Units (TUs) in Kamrup (M), Dibrugarh, Sonitpur, and Baksa. The conference delved into three main approaches: Community Engagement, Person Support Groups, and Behaviour Change Solutions. Participants shared their experiences and learnings from these approaches, intending to identify strategies that can be scaled up across the state.

After the transition handing over meeting on March 28 CDO West Champaran Dr. Ramesh Chandra, issued letter to all the STS, STLS and MOICs to conduct Care and Support Group Meeting in the respective TUs

District NTEPs, Assam adapts TB mukt certificate, and TB starter kits two of the behaviour change solutions

The district NTEPs across the four districts, Kamrup (M), Baksa, Dibrugarh, and Baksa adapted the TB mukt certificate to suit their need. They committed to print TB Mukt certificates and the TB Starter Kit to cover both BTB and non-BTB TUs. The district NTEP, Dibrugarh has customized the design to include the NTEP and NHM logos and the addition of follow-up test dates. NTEP teams from Kamrup (M), Dibrugarh, and Baksa also committed to printing copies as per their need.



Partner Engagement

KHPT, USAID celebrate women leading the fight for health equity on International Women’s Day

USAID India and KHPT organized a day-long discussion titled, Inspire. Innovate. Impact: A discussion on women driving health equity in Hyderabad, marking International Women’s Day. The discussion focused on the unique health issues that women and girls face, particularly those with TB, which despite the pandemic, remains one of India’s greatest health challenges. Delivering the keynote address at the event, Ms Jennifer Larson, Consul General, U.S Consulate, Hyderabad, stated, “USAID’s policy on Gender Equality and Female Empowerment aims to improve the lives of citizens around the world by advancing equality and empowering women and



Community leaders with their felicitations with dignitaries at the International Women’s Day event

girls to participate fully in, and benefit from the development of their societies. This is true for all our interventions, including the TB programme.

Gender equality and women empowerment are critical to build resilient and healthy societies.”

Drawing attention to the importance of the day, Ms Michelle Lang-Alli, Director, Health Office, USAID India, said, “Today is an important day as we celebrate women on the front lines, driving change for girls and women in marginalized communities. We recognize the vital role of female empowerment and are honoured to support women leading the charge for health equity and stronger health systems. We acknowledge KHPT for bringing the unique challenges faced by women and girls with TB to light. Transforming TB

survivors into TB Champions is an impactful way to empower these women and improve the lives of those around them”.

A powerful cadre of female community leaders who have inspired and motivated others with TB were felicitated at the event.

KHPT showcases Breaking the Barriers Project at USAID’s TB-Free India conclave

To mark World TB Day, the USAID India Health Office brought together partners in the fight against tuberculosis (TB) at a special



Mohan H L, CEO, KHPT shares details of the Breaking the Barriers project with Dr Atul Gawande, Assistant Administrator, Global Health, USAID, at the TB conclave

conclave held at the Lalit Hotel in New Delhi on March 19, 2024. The event, titled “Commitment for Collective Action Towards a TB-Free India,” highlighted the ongoing efforts of various organizations working to eliminate TB from the country. KHPT, a key participant, showcased our initiatives undertaken under the “Breaking the Barriers” project to end TB with Dr. Atul Gawande, the Assistant Administrator for Global Health at USAID.

Stop TB Partnership- Leadership for Triumph

KHPT is implementing the Stop TB Partnership-supported Leadership for Triumph project, which aims to strengthen the TB response by implementing rights-based, people-centred strategies, facilitated by community-led monitoring forums. Its overarching goal is to reduce the stigma associated with TB within the vulnerable communities it serves, including Persons Living with HIV (PLHIV), urban vulnerable, LGBTQIA+ communities, garment factory workers, and female sex worker. The project is being implemented between May 2023 and April 2024, in Kamrup Metro, Assam and Bengaluru, Karnataka.

KHPT conducts Community Rights and Gender training for women shg members at notboma, Assam

In a concerted effort to address the intersection of TB stigma, gender, and community rights, a one-day Community Rights and Gender (CRG) training was held in Notboma and MMCH (Mahendra Mohan Choudhury Hospital) Tuberculosis Unit, Kamrup, Assam. The training, held on February 1, was attended by **33** women Self-Help Group members. The sessions adopted a participatory approach and encouraged participants to contemplate situations in which PwTB and their families experience stigma associated with TB. The activities of the training were centred around the development of mitigation plans to fight stigma associated with TB in their respective communities. The sessions conducted also focused on the basics of TB symptoms, diagnosis, treatment and prevention, gender, and most importantly the unique challenges faced by women and sexual minorities about TB related stigma. The training culminated with the formulation of actionable plans by the participants, detailing the support they would require to implement these plans effectively. Other dignitaries present during the training include, Dr Avijit Basu, State Tuberculosis Officer, NTEP, Assam, and Dr Paranjoy Bordoloi, State IEC

officer. Similar trainings were held in Bengaluru, between February 6-8, 10, 16, and **18** for **125** sex workers and **28** for MSMs and TGs. These trained individuals are expected to become advocates for change, leading efforts to mitigate TB-related stigma and promote the rights and well-being of those affected by TB, especially women and sexual minorities.



CRG training at Pandu TU, Assam

Joint Effort for Elimination of Tuberculosis 2.0 (JEET 2.0)

KHPT has been implementing a three-year project on Latent TB Infection (LTBI) since July 2021 under the Joint Effort for Elimination of Tuberculosis (JEET 2.0) supported by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM). FIND is the Primary Recipient of the GFATM grant. This project is being implemented in six districts in Karnataka, namely BBMP, Bengaluru Urban, Bengaluru Rural, Belagavi, Bagalkot, and Vijayapura. The main objective of the project is to provide TB Preventive Therapy (IPT) to the contacts of persons with pulmonary TB.

JEET collaborates with NTEP to conduct CMEs for private healthcare providers



CME training being conducted at Bagalkot

JEET worked in collaboration with the NTEP to organize Continuing Medical Education (CME), programmes for private providers in Bengaluru City, Bengaluru Urban, and Belgaum districts.

January to March the team organized **13** CMEs and sensitized about **520** private doctors and paramedical staff on TB, NTEP updates, management of TB and Programmatic Management of TB Preventive Treatment (PMTPT). The team requested private providers to support the notification of TB cases, as well as initiate TPT for household contacts of microbiologically and clinically confirmed persons with TB.

The resource persons for these CMEs were WHO Consultants, STEPS Coordinators, and Medical Officers of the TUs/ PHCs, along with the NTEP and JEET teams.

Project Reach

As on March 15, the JEET Project reached more than **25212** Index TB Patient through house visits, and **92232** contacts were enrolled for screening. Out of **92232** contacts, **88373** were screened for ruling out TB, and **52201** were initiated on TPT.

TB Careline

The TB Careline is a free outbound counselling service for TB patients, supported by USAID under the Breaking the Barriers project.

Care line registered **689** new persons in the January-March period.

- **840** persons registered persons on TB treatment have successfully completed their treatment.
- **1452** persons are on active care
- **16453** calls were made by the team for follow-up, registration of PwTBs, and for post-treatment follow-up
- **60** conference calls were made by the team, involving **185** persons on treatment to provide motivation and peer support

Phone-a-friend

21 persons availed of the Phone-a-Friend in January-March

- **84** persons on treatment were reported to have completed treatment successfully.
- **97** persons were on active care
- **1001** calls were made by the team for follow-up, registration of patients, and for post-treatment follow up

Case Story

Swapna: Championing the Fight Against TB

In the heart of Hyderabad, Swapna, a community structure leader of Sri Brahmarambika Community structure, a Self-Help Group, has been at the forefront of the fight against tuberculosis (TB) since 2022.

Witnessing the hardships of those battling TB ignited a spark within Swapna. Her unwavering dedication has touched the lives of over 25 individuals. She fights battles on multiple fronts – malnutrition, treatment adherence, the stigma surrounding the disease, and even self-esteem. Each victory, a testament to her unwavering commitment. Swapna champions a person-centred approach. She spearheads large-scale screenings to identify TB in vulnerable populations. But her fight extends beyond diagnosis. She actively fights the stigma through TB awareness campaigns and tirelessly works with the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP).

“Supporting those with TB with proper nutrition and helping them overcome the stigma has been incredibly fulfilling,” Swapna says. Her efforts have empowered people to speak openly about the disease, dismantling the walls of silence that once surrounded it. “The biggest achievement for me is seeing people talking about TB freely, expressing their views without fear,” she declares. Her journey has not been without hurdles. “There were times when people weren’t receptive,” she reveals. “But with patience and empathy, I was able to bridge the gap.”

Committed to a TB-free future, Swapna plans to continue collaborating with NTEP. Swapna’s message rings loud and clear: “There’s no reason for stigma. TB is treatable”.



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