

BANGLADESH TB RECOVERY PLAN TO MITIGATE THE IMPACT OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching effects on the global tuberculosis (TB) response, threatening to erase years of progress. In Bangladesh, there was a **21 percent decline**¹ in TB case notifications and a **30 percent decline**² in drug-resistant TB (DR-TB) case notifications in 2020, compared to 2019. To address these concerning declines, USAID developed this TB Recovery Plan³ in support of the National TB Program’s (NTP) larger efforts to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 on the country’s TB response. Table 1 below provides detail on the interventions that USAID will support to address TB setbacks and further make progress towards the United Nations High-Level Meeting on TB (UNHLM) targets. USAID is dedicating **\$3,700,000** in assistance towards the recovery plan activities described below.⁴ This is expected to contribute to an estimated 20 percent increase in TB case notifications and an estimated 15 percent increase in DR-TB case notifications in 2021, compared to 2019.⁵ These activities were planned in coordination with and are complementary to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria’s recovery efforts.

Table 1: Snapshot of USAID-supported TB activities to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19.

TB activities most affected by COVID-19	USAID-supported Key Interventions
Reduction in case finding and contact investigation activities	Expand community-based responses to intensify active case finding (ACF) that was disrupted by COVID-19 in urban and rural areas by engaging community based organizations, increasing screening among vulnerable groups and children. Apply systematic approach to strengthen community and facility-based interventions.
	Accelerate the scale-up of TB contact investigations and TB treatment including TB Preventive Therapy (TPT) enrollment for identified individuals as part of the standard of care and to recover from the COVID-19 disruptions.
	Develop and implement a TB awareness campaign with the NTP including the integration of TB-sensitive information into COVID-19 stigma reduction messages.

¹ Based on data collected by the World Health Organization.

² Based on data collected by the World Health Organization and National TB Program.

³ This TB Recovery Plan is implemented over a nine-month period from March to December 2021.

⁴ No additional funding was provided to USAID for implementation of this TB Recovery Plan. While there are other interventions that also require attention and resources, USAID prioritized support for key interventions that could produce the greatest impact on recovery efforts within existing, limited budget levels.

⁵ Given the uncertain trajectory of the COVID-19 epidemic, these plans are made with the assumption that the COVID-19 containment measures are successful in 2021.

TB activities most affected by COVID-19	USAID-supported Key Interventions
Reduction in case finding and contact investigation activities (continued)	Strengthen infection prevention and control (IPC) efforts by implementing the FAST (Find patients Actively, Separate safely, and Treat effectively) Strategy to allow for early TB detection and treatment initiation, and prevent facility-based transmission, considering the new risks of COVID-19.
Limited access to molecular diagnostic testing for TB throughout the country due to limited laboratory and human resource (HR) capacity	Improve access and utilization of molecular tests for TB and DR-TB by: adapting TB diagnostic and clinical algorithms; supporting the NTP in strategic placement of the GeneXpert instruments; providing HR support to increase GeneXpert testing; accelerating introduction of the new tools and technology to improve access to molecular testing (e.g. TrueNat, digital Chest X-ray (CXR) coupled with computer aided detection using artificial intelligence); strengthening the capacity of the referral laboratory network; and launching and scaling up simultaneous TB and COVID-19 testing.
Delayed roll out of eTB manager and Janao (mandatory notification app)	Increase HR training on eTB manager and Janao to enable real-time monitoring of key TB program performance indicators and identification of gaps and challenges to inform timely corrective actions, which is particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic.