

IMPACT REPORT



CALL TO ACTION FOR A TB-FREE ODISHA

Catalyzing a multi-sectoral, community-led
and collaborative response to TB



USAID
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leading the fight against TB

The TB Call to Action Project is a four-year initiative by REACH, supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented in partnership with the Revised National TB Control Programme (RNTCP) at the national, state and district levels. Odisha is a priority state for the project.



The Odisha Context

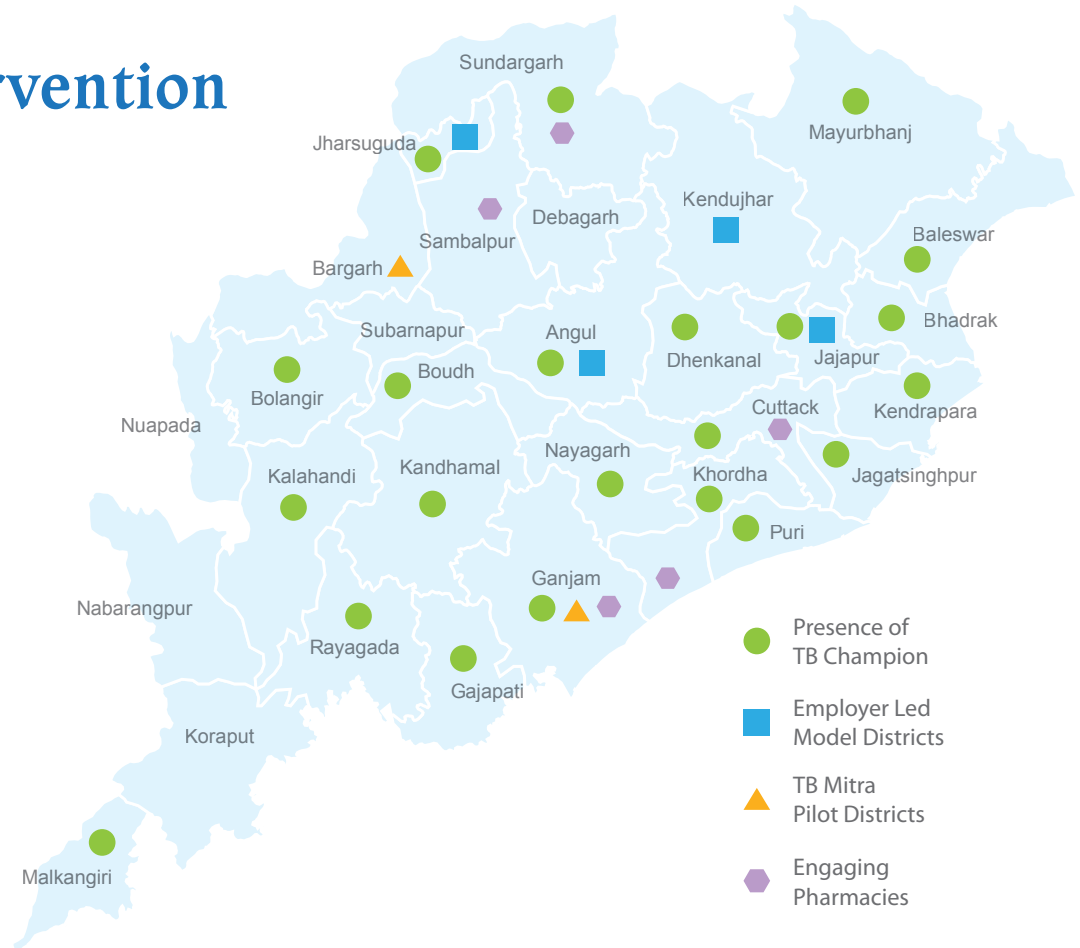
In 2018, Odisha's TB notifications touched 46,629 in the public sector and 3,674 in the private sector, with the pediatric TB notifications numbering 2,351. Although there is widespread awareness that TB is curable, only 63 percent of women and 68 percent of men know that it is spread through the air by coughing or sneezing. Twenty-eight percent of women and one-third of men have misconceptions about how tuberculosis is spread.

- Adivasi tribes account for 23% of state's population
- 32% of the population lives below the poverty line
- Undernutrition widespread with one in four women (26%), one in five men (20%) and about one in three (34%) children below age 5 underweight
- Air pollution severe in the habitats surrounding coal mines
- Miners and their families and populations residing near open mines suffer higher rates of acute respiratory infections and at higher risk of TB.

"The TB Call to Action Project has been instrumental in raising the visibility of TB in the state, by bringing together a range of diverse stakeholders who were previously not involved in our TB response. In partnership with REACH, we have organised the first inter-sectoral meeting on TB and encouraged the involvement of mining companies through the Employer Led Model. We are glad that Odisha's celebrities have also come forward as ambassadors for TB."

— *Dr. Pramod Kumar Meherda IAS, Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Department of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of Odisha*

The Intervention



To support and strengthen the community response to TB

1. From TB Survivors to TB Champions

In a first for the state, 46 TB survivors from 23 districts across the state were trained through two capacity-building workshops, held in December 2017 and February 2019. The workshops built their capacity to become effective TB Champions and helped them utilise their personal experiences of TB for advocacy.



2. TB Champions Mentorship Programme



37 of the trained TB Champions — seven in the first round in 2018 and 30 in the second round in 2019 — enrolled in a six-month mentorship programme to work in their communities and support people with TB. Based on learnings from the first round, the second round was results-based and structured with a three-fold mandate. Each TB Champion was mandated to support at least 60 people with TB over a six month period; organise meetings in their local communities to sensitise people about TB and connect them to services; and advocate with key stakeholders for their involvement in the TB response. The 30 Champions were supported by five mentors.

Over the six months, there were frequent reviews, through field visits and meetings at the state-level, to support the TB Champions and help them achieve their goals. At the review meetings, the TB Champions received feedback and guidance from senior health officials, including the State Director of Health Services, the State TB Officer and the Joint Director TB. The Champions also received hand-holding from their mentors, whenever needed, to assess their progress and help them chart the way ahead.

Their World TB Day efforts extended to the grassroots, where 18 TB Champions shared their experiences at community meetings in various programs organised by the District TB Cell or Community Health Centers in their district.



Anti-stigma campaign

With the guidance of the State TB Cell, TB Champions conducted an anti-stigma campaign across 20 districts of Odisha around Independence Day 2019, with the theme “TB Mukta Bharata Pain Shapatha”. To enlist local support and smooth implementation, the TB Champions held 40 advocacy meetings in the run-up to the campaign with heads of local institutions and other local influencers. During the week-long campaign, 27 TB Champions reached more than 5,000 different stakeholders through over 50 activities, sensitising social influencers, college and school students and teachers, women from Self Help Groups, members of youth clubs, etc.



3. Formation of survivor-led networks

Efforts to build the confidence and capacity of TB survivors and organise them led to the formation of Odisha’s first TB survivor network in 2018. Formally inaugurated in the presence of the State Health Minister in November 2018, the Kalinga TB Survivors Network (KTSN) began with seven members and has expanded to more than 200 today, largely due to the active outreach and guidance from the TB Champions to other TB survivors in their districts. KTSN members led TB awareness rallies in six districts in partnership with the RNTCP. Through a series of meetings, network members elected a governing body, formulated the networks’ objectives and crafted a roadmap and vision statement for the future.



4. Connecting communities and the system: TB Mitra

A mobile-based application named TB Mitra was introduced to improve access to TB information and services for people with TB, their families and the general public. The ‘Learn about TB’ section helps people improve their understanding of TB; ‘Near Me’ locates health facilities that are nearest to them and ‘Report an Issue’ enables them to share any issues they may be facing, for prompt action. With the support of the State TB Cell, the App was piloted in Bargarh and Ganjam districts from September 2018 onwards. TB Mitra presently has 820 registered users and is accessible in all of Odisha’s districts.



5. Engaging community pharmacists

In partnership with the State TB Cell and the Drug Controller, efforts to engage community pharmacies in Odisha were initiated, modelled on a similar intervention in Tamil Nadu. A Pharmacy Review Committee was established, chaired by the Director of Health Services, and with members including the Drug Controller, the Additional Mission Director of the National Urban Health Mission and officials from the RNTCP. Based on consultations with the Drug Controller and representatives of the Utkal Chemist and Druggist’s Association, a state-specific model was finalised under the guidance of the Pharmacy Review Committee.

The pharmacy intervention was piloted in five cities through 330 private chemists. The pharmacists were brought on board through a series of sensitisation meetings where they learnt about the key role that pharmacists could play in TB elimination. The pharmacy model is now being scaled up in all Odisha’s districts and twenty districts have completed training their pharmacists with technical support from REACH.



To advocate for increased financial, intellectual and other resources for TB

1. Employer Led Model for TB Care and Prevention

In 2017, efforts were initiated to institute TB sensitive policies and action in the workplace, with a focus on mining companies, given the vulnerability of their workforce to TB. As a result, the Director of Mines, Government of Odisha, issued an advisory to all the District Collectors to carry out TB education activities at the workplace. Continued sensitisation efforts with district officials and industry representatives led to the introduction of the Employer led Model (ELM) for TB Care and Prevention. District-level sensitisation meetings were held in four districts, chaired by their respective District Collectors, and culminated in the signing of 20 Letters of Intent between companies and the district administration.

Under the ELM, employers take on the responsibility of identifying and linking employees with TB symptoms to services in the RNTCP and supporting those affected by TB. Signatories who have committed to implementing TB activities include Mahanadi Coal Fields, National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) and National Aluminum Company Limited (NALCO), among others. Four of the mining companies who signed the Letter of Intent have also taken a corporate pledge launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, with support from USAID, to increase their resources to fight TB and improve TB outcomes.



2. Involving Elected representatives in the TB response

18 Members of Odisha's Legislative Assembly were sensitised on TB issues at the state and constituency level. Engaged MLAs have interacted with TB Champions to understand the impact of TB, participated in workshops and meetings with various stakeholders, helped launch new initiatives such as TB Mitra and featured in social media campaigns on TB.

3. Inter-sectoral collaboration for TB

With the guidance and active involvement of Odisha's Commissioner-cum-Secretary, Health and Family Welfare, the first meeting on TB between various departments was held in August 2018. This included the Department of Women and Child Development and Mission Shakti, the Department of Social Security and Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, the Department of Panchayati Raj / Drinking Water, the Department of School and Mass Education, the Department of SC&ST Development, Minorities and Backward Classes Welfare and the Department of Mines. The role of each department was discussed and specific activities were identified.

4. Engaging journalists for reporting on TB

Media round tables were held to sensitise the local media about various issues critical to TB prevention and care in Odisha, and to foster a free flow of information between local journalists and TB experts. Over 50 journalists from print, electronic and digital media of English and Odia newspapers and TV Channels came together at a media round table in Bhubaneswar in June 2018 to interact with the Director of Health Services, State TB Cell officials and the WHO Consultant to gain a deeper understanding of the various challenges to TB prevention and care in Odisha and of their own potential to clear misconceptions about TB and promote the uptake of TB services by the public.



5. Involving celebrities as TB Ambassadors

In an effort to raise visibility for TB prevention and care and address knowledge gaps in people's understanding of TB, three Odia celebrities - musician Padma Shri Prafulla Kar, sand artist Padma Shri Sudarshan Pattnaik and actor Kuna Tripathy were involved as state ambassadors for TB. They featured in TB awareness videos and outdoor displays on themes such as TB symptoms, Active Case Finding, the daily regimen for TB and adherence to treatment, TB myths and stigma etc. These were widely shared across districts and broadcast on television.



“Through the TB Call to Action project, REACH has spearheaded efforts to identify, train and engage TB survivors and affected communities for the first time in Odisha. We have also partnered with REACH to involve community pharmacists, who can play a vital role in identifying people with symptoms of TB and connecting them to services. This project has demonstrated the importance of engaging multiple actors, each of whom are key to a comprehensive, community-led and person-centred TB response.”

— Ms. Shalini Pandit IAS, Mission Director, National Health Mission, Govt. of Odisha

Key Highlights

TB Call to Action Project launched in Bhubaneswar in December 2016



TB Champions from 23 districts of Odisha, at the end of a capacity-building workshop held in February 2019



TB Champion Chinmayee speaking at the launch of the TB Harega Desh Jeetega Campaign in New Delhi in September 2019



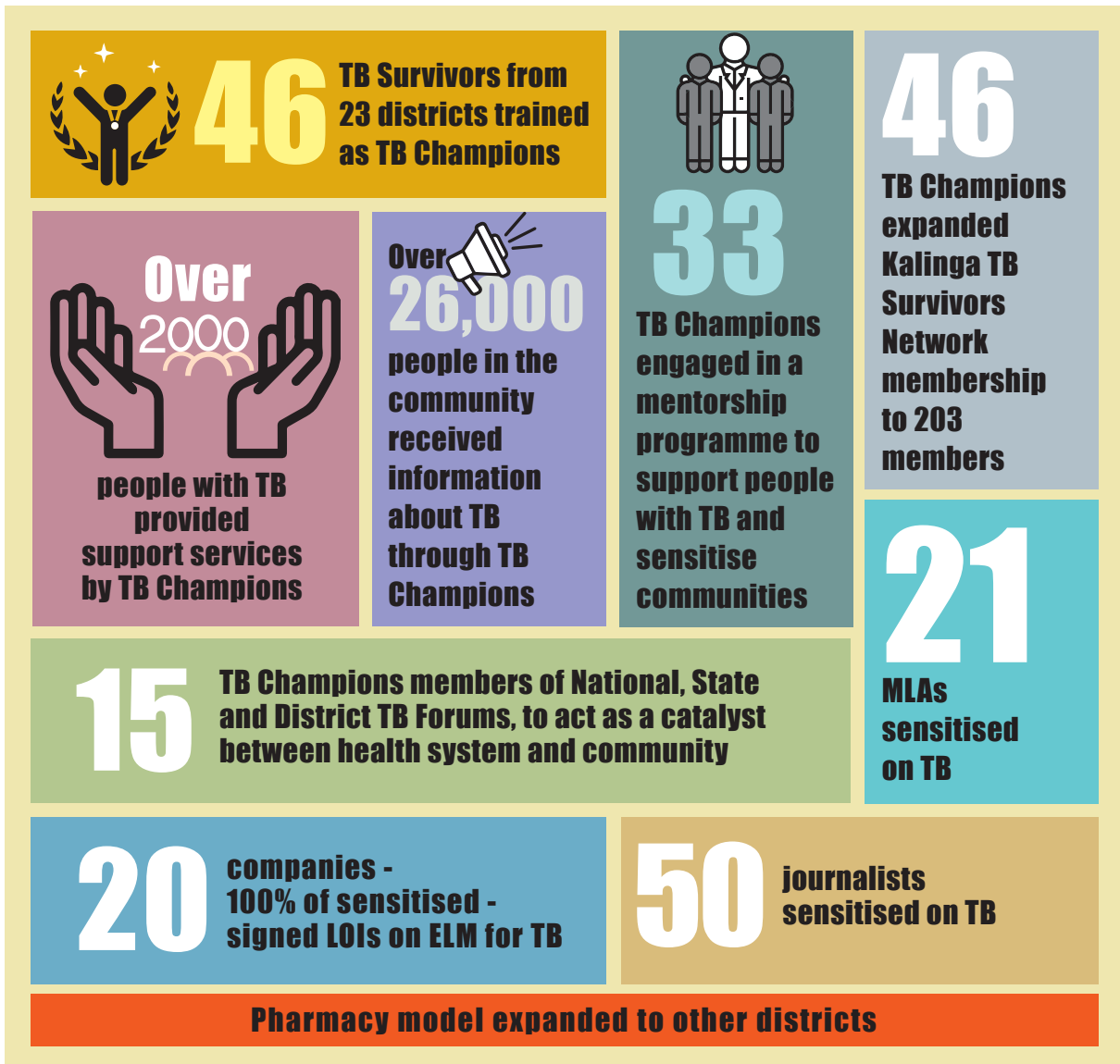
Sand art installation by artist and state TB ambassador Padma Shri Sudarsan Pattnaik, for World TB Day 2017



“My life turned upside down when I had brain TB. I was partially paralysed and my dream of being a Kuchupudi and Bharatanatyam dancer was gone. The mentorship programme helped me rebuild my confidence and focus on my life beyond TB and the distress I faced. I hope to get back on stage in the next six months.”

— *B. Chinmayee, TB Champion, Ganjam*

Key Results



“Through its efforts over the last four years, REACH has supported the TB programme to achieve its goals of increased case finding and improved treatment outcomes. An army of TB Champions has been created and are working closely with the RNTCP at the district level to ensure that people with TB receive the highest quality of care possible.”

— *Dr. Prasant Kumar Hota, Additional Director of Health Services (TB), Odisha*

“Through the Employer Led Model introduced by REACH, we have been able to involve mining companies in Angul and ensure their participation in the TB response. We are confident that this partnership with the mines will help us identify people with TB symptoms, reduce delays in diagnosis, and provide high-quality treatment to this vulnerable population.”

— *Dr. Trilochan Pradhan, Additional District Public Health Officer (TB), Angul*

Key Learnings

The TB Call to Action project has demonstrated the importance of bringing together a range of stakeholders for collective action. Through the different activities, processes of engaging previously unengaged stakeholders have been tested, demonstrated and documented, and have the potential for scale-up and expansion across India. The following are some key learnings from the project:

- ❑ Trained TB Champions are highly motivated to work with and among their communities and must be supported with monetary incentives and continued trainings.
- ❑ The fear of stigma or discrimination does not deter a TB survivor from working as a Champion. TB Champions are increasingly recognized as leaders within their communities and gradually become the go-to persons for all health issues, extending beyond TB.
- ❑ Being a TB Champion and working with the health system for the benefit of other people with TB is an empowering experience for a TB survivor. Most TB Champions reported advancement in their knowledge, skills and overall social standing.
- ❑ The RNTCP values the contribution of the TB Champions to all its activities and is willing to support the TB Champions to work jointly towards the goal of TB elimination at all levels.
- ❑ Survivor-led networks can harness the power of communities and provide a framework to synergise individual efforts, optimise cross-learning, and channel the collective voice of the members. Being a network member reduces the loneliness of having TB or life after TB.
- ❑ Companies in the public and private sector see the value of investing in the health of their employees and are keen to implement the Employer Led Model. Integrating TB into existing health activities, such as camps or regular screenings, is a simple starting point. Adoption of ELM on a larger scale needs a sustained inter-sectoral effort involving the department of health, mines, industries, RNTCP and the administrative structure at the district level.

“We are proud to partner with the Department of Health, the district administration and REACH to implement activities on TB through the ELM. We are committed to establishing a workplace free of any stigma and discrimination due to TB and to ensuring that our employees know when and where to seek care for TB.”

— *Biswajit Behuria, Asst. General Manager – CSR, Essel Mining and Industries Limited*

- For an elected representative, TB must be contextualised in a broader community health setting, and seen as relevant to his or her constituents. Once aware of the scale and extent of TB's impact, most elected representatives are keen to be involved and assume the role of catalysts with the TB programme and the community.
- A biomedical response to TB is inadequate. Multiple stakeholders – survivors, elected representatives, industry leaders, the media, celebrities etc. – have a distinct role to play in eliminating TB and different strategies must be adopted to sensitise and involve them effectively. Engaging these players can amplify the TB response and accelerate elimination efforts across the country.



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“Five members of my family were affected by TB. When I became a TB Champion and met people with TB, I understood the difficulties they were facing and was able to boost their morale to help them complete their treatment and not give up in their fight against TB.”

— *Brundaban Dhal, TB Champion, Boudha*

Odisha's TB Champions





About REACH

Resource Group for Education and Advocacy for Community Health (REACH) is a Chennai-based non-profit organisation established in 1999 in response to the roll out of the Revised National TB Control Programme (RNTCP) in Tamil Nadu. Through an unrelenting focus on TB for two decades, REACH has engaged various stakeholders for a multi-sectoral and comprehensive response to TB, including the Central TB Division, State and District TB Cells, private health care providers, business leaders, celebrities, the media, people with TB and affected communities. REACH has consistently supported the RNTCP in its efforts to prevent, detect and treat TB, by providing holistic care and support along the care cascade to people affected by TB.

With support from USAID, REACH has implemented the Tuberculosis Call to Action Project since 2016 in six priority states – Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh. Through this project, REACH has created a cadre of TB survivors and Champions who are actively engaged in the TB response, advocated for the participation of industries through the Employer Led Model, engaged elected representatives for greater attention to TB, facilitated inter-sectoral coordination between various departments (beyond health) and piloted TB Mitra, a unique mobile-based application for use by communities.

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