



USAID Brings TB Care to Marginalized Indigenous People in Central Luzon

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Minyang, 20

In February 2023, USAID’s TB Platforms conducted a two-day community-based TB screening in Barangay Dueg, San Clemente Tarlac, using an ultra-portable digital chest X-ray system equipped with artificial intelligence-powered software for the computer-aided detection (CAD) of TB. This was conducted in partnership with the Department of Health-Central Luzon Center for Health and Development (DOH-CLCHD) and the Provincial Health Office (PHO) of Tarlac headed by Dr. Jeanette Lazatin, the local government of San Clemente, Tarlac and its rural health unit (RHU). This barangay is home to the Aeta tribes and is classified as a Geographically-Isolated and Disadvantaged Area (GIDA).

USAID’s TB Platforms provided chest X-ray services to screen 178 individuals, testing 12 individuals presumed to have TB based on chest X-ray abnormalities detected by CAD software or with symptoms, and enrolling 2 individuals on TB preventive treatment. The usual 3-day turnaround time for patients to see results of TB screening can now be shortened to just 2-3 minutes when digital a X-ray is paired with CAD software. The X-ray/CAD system was paired with an on-site portable Truenat PCR system for rapid molecular diagnostic testing of TB and rifampicin resistance.

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Stop TB Partnership

The technologies being used to screen for and diagnose TB at the Barangay Dueg community-based screening were provided by the Stop TB Partnership under the USAID-funded *Introducing New Tools Project* (iNTP). Under this project, the Philippines has received eight Fujifilm FDR Xair ultra-portable digital X-ray systems (Fujifilm, Japan) with CAD4TB software licenses (Delft Imaging, the Netherlands). The iNTP has also provided 38 Truenat Duo workstations and MTB Plus and MTB-RIF Dx tests (Molbio Diagnostics, India), which can rapidly provide confirmation of TB and rifampicin resistance, including in hard-to-reach places. These products were procured via Stop TB Partnership's Global Drug Facility (GDF).

At the Barangay Dueg screening, TB care services were integrated with other components of the medical outreach program which includes general medical consultation, blood chemistry, family planning services, dental examinations and the provision of treated insecticidal nets for malaria prevention.

The initiative contributes to the Philippines Department of Health (DOH) TB elimination goals and strategies to screen at least 50 million people and treat at least 1.9 million people with active TB, including those that are often unreached, like the Aetas.

Minyang, 20, who had lined up together with her mother, was excited to participate in the medical mission. "For us natives of the upland areas of Tarlac, health services are very important. As much as we want to consult, we are hindered by the fact that health facilities are distant and going to one will cost us a hefty fraction of what we earn in a day. Today, my mother and I experienced the chest X-ray, it was our first time and it was as fast as taking a photo from a mobile phone. Aside from this I also availed other medical services," she shared.

Within 10 months of conducting both active case finding (ACF) and intensified case finding (ICF) activities in Tarlac, a total of 10,270 individuals from targeted populations have been provided with screening and 97 TB cases have been enrolled on treatment.

USAID's TB Platforms works with national and international partners to deliver life-saving solutions, especially to the underserved populations whose needs are often overlooked. The project strengthens community-based TB service delivery to improve the public's access to TB medical services across the TB cascade of care.



Minyang experiences her first chest X-ray during the active case finding event conducted by the USAID TB Platforms project

Disclaimer: The findings in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government.

For more information on the introducing New Tools Project, visit:

<https://www.stoptb.org/accelerate-tb-innovations/introducing-new-tools-project>

