

Joint SEAR-WPR workshop to plan the accelerated implementation of new WHO TB policies

1-4 April 2025, Hanoi, Viet Nam

Background

In 2024, the World Health Organization (WHO) updated the global policies on TB prevention, diagnostics, nutrition and DR-TB treatment. Among these updates are the new policy of TB preventive treatment (TPT) among contacts of multidrug-resistant or rifampicin-resistant TB (MDR/RR-TB) patients, concurrent initial diagnostic testing in people at risk, use of targeted next-generation sequencing for drug susceptibility testing and patient management, nutritional interventions for people with TB and their households and several new regimens for treatment of DR-TB, a new 6-month regimen, and a range of 9-month regimens. These updates may provide greater flexibility and policy options for countries based on local contexts and are also anticipated to lead to better diagnosis, shorter treatment duration, better quality of life for TB patients and significant cost savings for national TB programs in many settings.

Implementing these updated policies represents a significant shift in the global approach to TB management. Countries must update their national guidelines, train healthcare personnel, secure financial and human resources, and ensure the necessary diagnostic and treatment components are available.

Aim and objectives

To facilitate the smooth transition to WHO's new policies at the country level, the WHO Global Tuberculosis Programme, in collaboration with the WHO Regional Offices for the South-East Asia Region (SEAR), the Western Pacific Region (WPR), together with Unitaid, KNCV, the Global Fund and Vietnam National TB programme are organizing a capacity-building workshop 1-4 April 2025. This workshop will bring together National TB Programme and Reference/National Laboratory representatives, Focal Points for TB in children and adolescents, regional consultants, key stakeholders, technical partners, and donors.

The workshop aims to accelerate the adoption and uptake of WHO's latest policies on TB diagnostics, prevention, DR-TB treatment and nutrition and prepare participants to implement the latest TB policies effectively, contributing to strengthened TB management, prevention and care across the regions. It also aims to give participants an overview of the remaining needs and innovation opportunities in TB diagnostics. The TB diagnostic product pipeline is promising, with new tools to improve TB screening and case detection. While not yet reviewed by WHO, understanding these tools and their potential use in

the TB response will inform global efforts to bring them to countries in an accelerated and more affordable manner.

The specific objectives of the workshop are:

- **Strengthen technical expertise** among country representatives and **enhance understanding and application** of the latest WHO guidelines and operational handbooks on preventive treatment and screening, TB diagnosis, treatment of DR-TB and nutrition for people of all age groups.
- **Improve knowledge** on advanced diagnostic approaches for TB screening and diagnosis
- **Discuss country experiences and implementation drivers and barriers** regarding adoption of the latest WHO recommendations, **share good practices, and review** how to overcome constraints,
- **Plan countries next steps** in optimizing their TBI/DS/ DR TB response and transition plans, taking on board the latest WHO recommendations toward ending TB.
- **Understand the pipeline of non-sputum and/or peripheral tests for the detection of TB**, discuss their relevance and potential to address current challenges, and review possible use cases and essential requirements for country adoption and implementation.

Participation

The workshop will be attended by around 80 participants, including:

- Representatives of national TB programmes, National Reference Laboratories and other key stakeholders from 14 countries with high TB or DR-TB burden in the South-East Asia Region and Western Pacific Region (Bangladesh, DPR Korea, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand, Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, The Philippines and Viet Nam); and
- Representatives of partner organizations e.g. WHO (Global Tuberculosis Programme, SEARO, WPRO and WHO Country Offices), Unitaid, KNCV, USAID, CDC, Global Fund, BMGF, Clinton Health Access Initiative, Stop TB Partnership/Global Drug Facility, FHI360, Partners in Health, Supra National Reference Laboratories.
- Representatives from CSOs from high TB burden countries participating in the Unitaid-funded ASCENT DR TB project.