



Step Up for TB 2020 Report

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Why in News

The “**Step Up for TB 2020**” report by the **Stop TB Partnership** and **Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders** (MSF) has highlighted India’s **conservative approach** regarding the new medicines for **Drug Resistant TB**, putting lives of patients including children in danger.

The current **Pandemic** has further aggravated the sufferings of TB patients in the country in terms of disease **diagnosis, surveillance and treatment**.

Note

- Founded in 1971, **Médecins Sans Frontières** (MSF), sometimes rendered in English as **Doctors Without Borders**, is an **international humanitarian medical non-governmental organisation** (NGO) of **French origin** best known for its projects in **conflict zones** and in countries affected by endemic diseases.
- **It was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1999.**

Tuberculosis (TB)

- **Tuberculosis** is caused by bacteria (**Mycobacterium tuberculosis**) that most often affect the **lungs**.
- **Transmission:** TB is spread from person to person through the air. When people with lung TB cough, sneeze or spit, they propel the TB germs into the air.
- **Symptoms:** Cough with sputum and blood at times, chest pains, weakness, weight loss, fever and night sweats.
- **Treatment:** TB is treatable and curable disease. It is treated with a standard 6 month course of 4 antimicrobial drugs that are provided with information, supervision and support to the patient by a health worker or trained volunteer.

- **Multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB)** is a form of TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to isoniazid and rifampicin, the 2 most powerful, first-line anti-TB drugs. MDR-TB is treatable and curable by using second-line drugs.
- **Extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB)** is a more serious form of MDR-TB caused by bacteria that do not respond to the most effective second-line anti-TB drugs, often leaving patients without any further treatment options.
- Tuberculosis (TB) remains the **world's deadliest infectious disease**, killing more than **1.4 million people in 2019**, despite being curable.

Key Points

- **About the Report:**
 - The report presents data on **37 high-burden countries, including India** (representing 77% of the global estimated TB incident cases), assessing the extent to which **national policies align with international best practices** based on **World Health Organisation (WHO)** guidelines and the latest scientific research.
 - This is the **4th edition** of this report, which focuses on countries' policies and practices related to **4 key areas of national TB programmes (NTPs)**:
 - Diagnosis,
 - Treatment (including models of care),
 - Prevention, and
 - Medicines procurement policies.
- **Findings:**
 - There are barriers to policy adoption and implementation across the surveyed countries.
 - The **critical medical innovations** are reaching very few people who urgently need them.
 - The report emphasised that **oral treatment regimens** for people with drug-resistant TB (DR-TB) must be prioritised over older, toxic drugs that have to be injected and cause serious side effects.
 - Nearly **1 in 3 people** with TB disease is **still not diagnosed and notified**.
 - Almost **2 in 3 countries** surveyed still do not include in their policies urinary **TB lipoarabinomannan (TB LAM) testing** for people living with HIV.
 - TB LAM is the only rapid point-of-care TB test available, and there is more than enough evidence of its benefits as a lifesaving point-of-care test.

- **India Specific Findings:**
 - India was criticised for not scaling up the new Disease Resistant (DR)-TB drugs **Bedaquiline and Delamanid**, needed even more during **Covid-19**.
Pretomanid is the third new drug developed for the treatment.
 - Until March 2020, less **than 10% of India's MDR-TB patients** who were eligible for Bedaquiline had received it. This is alarming, since **India is home to a quarter of the world's DR-TB patients**.
India has the highest TB burden in the world. In 2018, **2.15 million TB cases were reported**, which is 16% more than in 2017.
- **India's Initiative to Fight TB:**
 - **National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme:**
To align with the ambitious goal, the programme has been renamed from the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP) to National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP).
 - **Eliminating TB by 2025:** India is committed to **eliminating tuberculosis from the country by 2025**, five years ahead of the global target by the **World Health Organisation (WHO) i.e. 2030**.
 - **The Nikshay Ecosystem:**
It is the National TB information system which is a one-stop solution to manage information of patients and monitor program activity and performance throughout the country.
 - **Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY):**
This scheme is aimed at providing financial support to TB patients for their nutrition.
 - **TB Harega Desh Jeetega Campaign:**
Launched In September 2019 it is showcasing the highest level of commitment for the elimination of TB.
 - **The Saksham Project:**
It is a project of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) that has been providing psycho-social counselling to DR-TB patients.
 - The Government of India has partnered with the **Global Fund** to launch **JEET (Joint Effort for Elimination of TB)**, a private sector engagement program operating across the country.

- **Global Efforts:**
 - The **World Health Organization** (WHO) has launched a joint initiative “**Find. Treat. All. #EndTB**” with the Global Fund and Stop TB Partnership. The WHO End TB Strategy outlines global impact targets to **reduce TB deaths by 90%, to cut new cases by 80%** between the years **2015 and 2030**, and to ensure that no family is burdened with catastrophic costs due to TB.
 - It aims to accelerate the TB response and ensure access to care, in line with WHO’s overall drive towards **Universal Health Coverage**.
- WHO also releases the **Global Tuberculosis Report**.

Way Forward

- Despite the **notable successes** achieved by the different programmes, robust efforts are needed to improve the early and **accurate diagnosis** followed by a prompt appropriate treatment which is vital for ending TB.
- India must collaborate with global efforts which are being done to eliminate the TB along with the **paradigm shift in the control measure**.

Source:IE