



TB IN THE **COMMUNITY**

IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE



ENDING WORKPLACE
TUBERCULOSIS

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

Ending Workplace TB (EWTB) has identified four key issues that contribute to the challenge of addressing TB in workplaces. They are stigmatisation, access to services, the costs of TB, and community transmission. For each of these we have drafted an Implementation Guide. This is the guide for the fourth challenge: breaking chains of transmission in the community. A fifth guide is available for companies who may not want to implement additional measures for their workforce but are committed to action in their supply chains.

The guide contains information on the challenge and suggested actions that companies can take to address it. We recognise that each of our partner companies will have its own context, skills, and capabilities that will influence how it addresses this challenge, and so the actions outlined in this document are suggestions only. They are not a prescribed list of actions that companies must take.

Many of the activities we propose apply more broadly than TB. They can help employers and workers build the systems to help their communities defend against outbreaks of other lethal respiratory pathogens (LRPs) such as COVID-19.

The document was developed by the EWTB team with support from our core partners and technical advisers. Thank you to everyone who assisted with the development of this document.



ADDRESSING TB IN THE COMMUNITY



SUPPORTING THE
WORKFORCE
COMMUNITY



NATIONAL
COLLABORATION



INTERNATIONAL
CAMPAIGNING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our health is shaped by the actions, behaviour and health of the people around us. As an infectious disease, TB is impossible to beat unless you stop transmission wherever it occurs. This overview focuses on the role that companies can play to improve TB outcomes in their communities.

The first step a company can take is to bring the families and contacts of their workers into their health promotion activities. Going further, companies can campaign at the national level to draw attention to the importance of workforce health or join groups of companies who campaign at the international level for higher standards or more attention from policymakers for the fight against TB.

As with the other challenges EWTB targets, improving community health will have benefits for companies through improving the health of their workforces, strengthening their brands, and building resilience in their communities. It will also have benefits beyond TB. TB is a lethal respiratory pathogen (LRP) and shares many similarities with diseases like COVID-19. Systems that help tackle TB will help protect companies and communities against future outbreaks of LRPs.

WHAT IS A WORKFORCE COMMUNITY?

A workforce community comprises the people who interact with your workers regularly. These might be families, friends, neighbours, or even regular casual acquaintances like a shopkeeper or bus driver. It can also be thought of as a geographic area, if most of your workers live in the same area. In short, it is all the people who engage with, or are affected by, your workforce or workplace.

Workforce community actions can focus just on the immediate family of your workers but companies that want to can also go much further. For example, companies can campaign for stronger workplace health standards at the national or international level or support existing private sector groups who work to raise awareness of the TB epidemic.

Actions to improve access to healthcare for your workforce community recognise that the health and well-being of a worker is linked to the health and well-being of the people around them. Through COVID-19, we have become familiar with the idea that our health is shaped by collective action. Companies who take action in the community will see improvements in the health and well-being of their workers, as well as a significant impact on productivity, as outlined in the EWTB Business Case.



TAKING ACTION IN THE COMMUNITY

There are many ways that a company can take action to support health in its local community – far more than we can include in this overview. Below we suggest some of the measures that companies can take to tackle TB in their communities.

When deciding the kind of projects to implement, we encourage companies to consider that there are, broadly, three possible objectives for work beyond your immediate workforce:

1. To have a meaningful impact on the health and well-being of people in your workforce community;
2. To help shape and improve the level of workplace health at the national level;
3. To raise the international standards of workplace health, with a specific focus on LRPs such as TB.

We welcome companies who are prepared to take action at any of these levels.



SUPPORTING TB EFFORTS IN THE WORKFORCE COMMUNITY

The objective of the first set of actions is to improve standards of health in your workforce community through enhanced knowledge and services.

A. Patient finding in the community

1. *Extending awareness raising campaigns to worker's families and communities.*

Knowing about TB and other LRPs, including how they are spread, what the symptoms are, and what the treatments are, is a first step to tackling them. Awareness raising should focus on tackling the stigma associated with the disease which is a major barrier to people seeking care – and can therefore prolong illness.¹ We have a specific stream of work for partner companies who wish to tackle

stigma, see the Tackling TB Stigma Implementation Guide on our website.

EWTB makes awareness raising materials available for partners to adapt and use. One simple first step would be to produce additional copies of these materials and encourage your workers to take them home and share them with their families.

An alternative option would be to prepare materials specifically targeted at children that workers can take home or, if space permits, invite families and friends to attend or participate in any training or educational sessions that you host for your workers.

Finally, in many countries the National TB Programme (NTP) and partner non-governmental organisations run awareness raising programmes in communities. Consider contacting your NTP with a view to co-organising such a programme or event. If you need help contacting them, please let us know on partners@ewtb.org

2. Make in-house screening or testing campaigns open to family members and the wider community.

As described in our Implementation Guide on Access to Healthcare, a key component of any effort to tackle TB is screening people for the illness.

One way of doing this is through a simple “symptomatic screening” where people are taught to recognise the symptoms of TB and other respiratory pathogens. This approach can be expanded to communities through enhanced awareness as above.

Another way is to operate an in-house screening programme through structured and systematic screening of the workforce using existing workplace resources – if there is a doctor’s clinic onsite for example – or through bringing a mobile X-ray unit into your workplace every six or twelve months.

These programmes can be opened to family members of workers, to ensure that they are properly screened. Alternatively, you could work with local partners to organise a community-based screening at a school or other relevant site.

3. Expanded referral and other health systems

If your company offers health insurance, one possible option would be to expand it to immediate dependents of workers – especially children and family members.

If you don’t provide health insurance but have in-house or referral systems set up, consider making the use of those systems available to family members of workers. One administrative option for this is to ask workers to give details of their eligible dependents when you set up the scheme. We recommend making the system available to all dependent children as a minimum.

B. Supporting patients, families, and communities

4. Expanded social support

Social protection systems are an integral component of a well-functioning workplace health system.² Just as transportation costs are a major economic burden for sick workers, they can also be a significant drain on family resources if a child or partner gets sick.³ We encourage companies to adopt policies that expand these support systems to families.

This is especially relevant for nutritional support as it is common for sick children to require additional nutritional supplementation.⁴

5. Implement a carer’s leave policy

Research suggests that the impact of a TB diagnosis in the family can be particularly profound on the primary carers, who may well be one of your workers.⁵ Primary carers often have to give up jobs, depriving

their family of critical income, to look after a sick loved one.

Carer's leave is one way that a company can support workers at such a difficult time. It works similarly to a sick leave policy, but where the person who is ill is a dependent of your worker rather than the worker themselves. When considering the potential cost of such a policy, remember that workers often end up taking paid or unpaid leave to care for their family anyway and no one should be in the position of having to choose between caring for their child and being able to keep their job. Carer's leave is a good solution.

A secondary benefit of carer's leave is that if a family member of one of your workers has an infectious illness, even if it is only a cold, then encouraging your worker to be at home is an effective way of ensuring that the illness doesn't spread to your wider workforce.



NATIONAL COLLABORATION

Companies can have a major impact on their workforce communities acting in isolation but they also have an important voice in national-level discussions, helping to shape the business environment in which they operate.

COLLABORATION WITH PEERS AND SUPPLIERS

Many sectors have national or international codes of conducts that companies can join voluntarily. One example of this is the [Responsible Business Alliance](#) code of conduct.

We strongly encourage our partner companies to explore whether similar

codes of conduct exist for your sector and, if so, to join or sign up to one. If you are not sure whether such a code of conduct exists for your sector, let us know and we will try to help.

Aside from action with corporate sectors, there are also sometimes national initiatives around workplace health or even, in a few countries, groups of companies are already committed to working on TB or infectious diseases. If such a group exists, we recommend that you join it and can help make connections if necessary.

If no such codes of conduct or groups exist, you might want to consider creating one with a number of peer companies or contacting your national business association or confederation and encouraging them to host an initial roundtable. If you follow this approach, let us know and we will work with you to help make it happen.

In addition to the above actions with peers, we encourage partner companies to consider how their networks, including their supply chains, could do more to build a sustainable and resilient response to workplace infectious diseases such as TB.

COLLABORATION WITH POLICYMAKERS

As a member of EWTB, you are a leading company on workplace health and have taken an important decision to invest in the productivity and wellbeing of your workforce. Through this process, you will have learned much about the benefits of a healthier workforce that other companies in your sector, or even country, may not understand.

One way that you could consider raising the profile of workplace health is to contact your elected representatives such as your local member of parliament or the national TB caucus if one exists in the country where you operate. These groups will be very interested in hearing the progress that you are making and may see your efforts as an example that should be

promoted to other companies. You can find out whether there is a national TB caucus via the Global TB Caucus: www.globaltbcaucus.org

A final option to consider in terms of national partnerships is to seek a dialogue with your National TB Programme (NTP). The NTP is the entity charged with fighting TB in a given country and most are keen to find ways to partner with the private sector to find undiagnosed people and improve access to care and prevention. If you need any assistance contacting your NTP, please let us know.



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGNING

The support of the private sector is critical to making progress on health issues

IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

Unlike our other Implementation Guides, we do not have a checklist for overcoming TB in the Community. There are such a wide range of programmes that companies can make depending on their contacts and connections that a checklist could not possibly cover them all.

REPORTING

EWTB has designed its reporting to align wherever possible with other major reporting initiatives. That means that our member companies can inform us of the progress they're making without having to draft additional materials for other reporting initiatives. Their reports to us can also be used in submission to other initiatives.

Furthermore, our intention is that, via reporting, companies will share their learnings and expertise which we can share – in an appropriate manner – with other partner companies who are looking to improve workplace health.

For addressing TB in the Community, we ask companies to answer the following questions once a year:

1. What steps have you taken to increase access to TB care and prevention in your community and who are your core partners in this work?

around the world. One option for lending your support to efforts to tackle TB globally would be to join the private sector constituencies (PSCs) of either the [Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria](#) or the [Stop TB Partnership](#) where you will find like-minded companies who are similarly committed to improving the health and wellbeing of their workers and communities.

Another option is to work with entities who are campaigning directly at the international level for stronger workplace health – including through the ratification of key conventions agreed by the International Labour Organization.

Lastly, in addition to our work supporting companies to take action in their workforces, EWTB is a campaigning organisation. If you're interested in working with us and engaging with our networks of companies who are campaigning around the world for better workplace health, please make sure to get in touch.

2. What other steps have you taken to improve workplace health and/or support the global fight against TB?

REFERENCES

¹ Courtwright A, Turner AN. Tuberculosis and stigmatization: pathways and interventions. *Public Health Rep.* 2010;125 Suppl 4(Suppl 4):34-42. doi:10.1177/00333549101250S407

² Social Protection systems, World Bank Guidance: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/socialprotection/overview>

³ SILVA, Thatiana de Medeiros Vale da; SANTOS, Maria Áurea dos and ALMEIDA, Fabiane de Amorim. Understanding the experiences of caregivers of children with tuberculosis in directly observed therapy. *Rev. esc. enferm. USP* [online]. 2014, vol.48, n.spe2 [cited 2020-11-26], pp.39-45. Available from: <http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S0080-62342014000800039&lng=en&nrm=iso>. ISSN 0080-6234. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0080-62342014000800007>.

⁴ Nutritional care and support for people with tuberculosis, World Health Organization: https://www.who.int/elena/titles/full_recommendations/tb_nutrition/en/

⁵ See reference 3