TACKLING

TB STIGMA

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 first challenge: tackling TB stigma. 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.

TACKLING
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BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

GATHERING INFORMATION

IMPLEMENTING INTERVENTIONS

ABOUT STIGMA

TB stigma is a form of prejudice directed at and experienced by people who have, or might have, TB. It is a widespread phenomenon, though its impact may vary subtly from country to country.

Stigma is one of the biggest challenges in tackling TB. Results from the Stop TB Partnership's TB Stigma Assessment have shown that stigma reduces people's willingness to report TB symptoms, to seek diagnosis, and can be a major barrier to them completing treatment and returning to their normal social lives after treatment. It is prevalent even in countries which explicitly ban any form of discrimination based on TB status.

One location where people can experience TB stigma is their workplace. The fear of prejudice at work – including dismissal if people's TB is known – might delay or prevent people from seeking care. This means their symptoms and outcomes may be prolonged or worsen. It also means their likelihood of transmitting the disease in the workplace is higher.

Due to the unique challenges associated with TB stigma, EWTB is taking a distinct approach to working with partners to tackle it, including people who have been affected by TB In the workplace.

TACKLING STIGMA

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to tackling stigma. Prejudice and discrimination take many forms. However, the core of a stigma-reduction programme: sharing knowledge and awareness of the disease and building support networks for workers affected by it, are a common component of many workplace health programmes and can easily be expanded to TB.

However, there is also a lot that is not known – and there is a risk of well-intentioned interventions exacerbating rather than reducing stigma. For that reason, whilst we encourage partner companies to raise awareness of the symptoms of TB, how it is transmitted, and how it is treated, we advise a targeted approach to tackling stigma.

Specifically, we are looking for partner companies who will collaborate with us and our technical partners at the Stop TB Partnership, and people who have been affected by TB, to help shape a new, evidence-based, approach to tackling workplace stigma which we will then look to share with the wider EWTB community. We provide an overview of how the projects will work on the following page.

HOW EWTB STIGMA PROJECTS WILL WORK

Our objective is to work with our member companies and technical partners to develop a set of interventions, tailored to understanding, and reducing TB stigma in the workplace. As such, our projects will involve five steps:

1. A preliminary meeting with company representatives, EWTB project staff, technical agencies – which may include representation from TB affected communities - to agree on the scope and timeline of the project. This will include reviewing confidentiality policies to ensure that personal data is kept private.

2. An information gathering stage. This will involve qualitative and quantitative surveys of the workforce, with a specific focus on people in line management roles and the leadership of the company.

3. A review of the data-gathered to understand the specific nature of stigma in the partner's workplace and its impact and further consultation with the project group to agree the most appropriate, specific interventions and next steps.

4. An intervention stage where, along with all relevant stakeholders, we will develop, propose, and enact specific interventions based on the data available to us and the best research as to what works. These interventions will be developed with companies to ensure that they are well-tailored to the company context.

5. A second information gathering stage to assess the impact of the intervention and whether it has helped reduce stigma in the workplace. This may be followed by a further round of interventions, or further data collection at a later date depending on the results.

Stigma-focused interventions, if done poorly, can risk increasing rather than decreasing stigma. Therefore, unlike our other workstreams which are open to all, we are specifically looking to partner with a small group of committed companies to trial and implement workplace stigma interventions. If you're interested, please contact partners@ewtb.org