

PHILIPPINES

Expanded Health Program Eradicating Pulmonary Tuberculosis

SNAP SHOT



THE MUNICIPALITY OF AROROY HAS ONE OF THE HIGHEST PULMONARY TUBERCULOSIS (PTB) INDEX RATES IN THE PROVINCE OF MASBATE. ACCORDING TO THE RURAL HEALTH OFFICE REPORT, FIVE OF THE COMMUNITIES WITH HIGH INCIDENCE OF TUBERCULOSIS ARE NEIGHBOURING BARANGAYS (COMMUNITIES) OF THE MASBATE MINE. AS A RESULT, B2GOLD EXPANDED ITS COMMUNITY HEALTH PROGRAM TO TARGET THE ERADICATION OF PTB.

Typically, high PTB rates are prevalent amongst poor families as they lack potable water, good nutrition, and medicines to combat the disease. Cultural dynamics can also contribute to the spread of the disease. The practice of sharing sleeping quarters, kissing the hands of elders as a sign of respect, using common eating utensils, not isolating the sick from children and seniors, and not adhering to medication guidelines (amongst others) contribute to the spread of PTB within families.

Evaluation by the B2Gold SDMP team determined that most of the previous community PTB eradication programs implemented by other organizations in Aroroy were curative only and didn't consider the contributing factors to the spread of PTB.

The program that B2Gold is supporting takes a holistic approach to PTB eradication. We recognized the crucial role of the barangay health workers as the initial point of contact

for patients. Health workers were trained to observe and identify suspected PTB-positive patients. The patient and their immediate family undergo a comprehensive orientation on the disease, its health impacts, and the opportunities for a full cure. If found PTB positive, the patient undergoes an intensive examination and is provided daily treatment by the barangay health worker.

During the process, we addressed barriers to patients seeking treatment – such as a need for confidentiality, barriers to transportation, and the need for house visits for some individuals with challenges. Nutrition education was also added to the health interventions.

The health workers receive a minimal salary from the local government budget. To sustain their focus on the eradication program, SDMP provided the health workers with a supplemental budget to enable them to maintain their focus on health programs. Already, results are demonstrating a positive impact in the eradication of PTB – 63% (223 individuals) of those who have undergone treatment were cured, while 34% (119 individuals) are still undergoing treatment.

Looking ahead, the Masbate team plans to expand our community health programs to include testing for hepatitis B, diabetes, and HIV for community residents. When community members participate in their own health management it is more likely that we can approach eradication of diseases.