

India to prepare for zero Tuberculosis deaths

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The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) representing health companies, has taken up the initiative of tackling tuberculosis (TB) by collaborating with NGOs, government and international funding agencies.

The program of ASSOCHAM Foundation for CSR (AFCSR), in collaboration with the Central TB Division (CTD), the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) and the ministry of health and family welfare, government of India, calls for the support of the private sector in assisting the government's efforts to tackle India's TB burden through the Revised National TB Control Program (RNTCP).

The two latest reports on the current scenario, have been developed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded Improving Healthy Behaviors Program (IHBP), the knowledge partner of ASSOCHAM for the TB initiative. The reports were unveiled by Mr Lov Verma shortly after the inauguration of the ASSOCHAM Tuberculosis awareness, prevention and wellness program: 'Getting to Zero Death'.

The first report, a monograph on 'Social and Behaviour Change Communication for Tuberculosis Control' details best practices from across the globe on how communicating healthy behaviours around TB prevention and cure has helped reduce TB-related deaths. The second report is an operational handbook on Advocacy, Communication and Social Mobilisation (ACSM), a globally recognised element of the TB control program, and how it is being used in India's RNTCP.

Mr DS Rawat, secretary general, ASSOCHAM, said "In India, two deaths occur every three minutes due to TB. Given this, it is critical to bring together various stakeholders who can address the problem on one platform. They can identify how they can collaborate, and share best practices and successes. 'Getting to Zero Death' is one such platform. ASSOCHAM is privileged to collaborate with CTD and the ministry of health and family welfare on an awareness and preventive healthcare program for TB. We encourage corporates to join us in this endeavour to provide universal access to diagnosis and treatment for TB to all Indians."

Speaking on the occasion, Mr John Beed, mission director, USAID India, said "Working closely with the Government of India, USAID has been supporting the Revised National TB Control Program over the last 17 years. TB remains a challenge, but the government's efforts have helped reduce the rate of infection and mortality of TB, enabling India to meet the Millennium Development Goals for TB. While there is great work being done, much work remains. So let me take this opportunity to echo Shri Lov Verma's invitation to our friends in the private sector to join the fight against TB. I hope that this effort by ASSOCHAM is the start of something big that can demonstrate to the world the abilities of the Indian private sector to support and change the course of a disease and with it, the course of history."

As part of 'Getting to Zero Death,' health camps will be organised at industry sites and villages across India, covering an estimated 2,50,000 people. The program is also supported by the Ministry of Coal, Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, and Ministry of Science and Technology.