

# Community experiences of TB in the Philippines: Using Storytelling to Improve Community Knowledge of TB and Uptake of Screening in an Urban Slum.

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## Introduction and Background

Tuberculosis (TB) remains a major public health problem in the Philippines, with an estimated 27,000 deaths and 3,700 TB cases in Tondo Districts 1 and 2 in 2019. Tondo is a crowded urban area with a high-density population and poor living conditions. MSF is enhancing early TB case detection in Tondo through Active Case Finding using a mobile X-ray van, providing Computer Aided Diagnosis and referring confirmed cases to local health centers for treatment. Community engagement and the provision of health education relating to TB are key to the activities, but it can be challenging to encourage people to screen. The Story of Change methodology has been used by MSF in contexts around the world as an innovative way of using storytelling to enhance community engagement and health promotion activities. Story of Change was introduced in Tondo to improve engagement with communities and understand how uptake of screening could be improved.



Image 1. Collecting stories in Tondo



Image 2. TB screening activity in Tondo



Image 3. Collecting stories in Tondo

## Methodology and Ethics

- Interviews were conducted with community members, who shared their stories relating to TB screening, living with TB and supporting family members.
- All interviews took place in the local language of Tagalog and were conducted by members of the health promotion team.
- Interviews were transcribed and translated into English, analyzed and summarized. The summary was then discussed with the project team and the interviewees to co-create a final story.
- All community members gave their informed consent before participating, and for the use of their images.
- All the names in the story are fictitious, chosen by Tondo community members as representative of their community.

## Results

- Listening to community members share their stories helped the MSF project team to learn more about the lives of those in Tondo.
- Key themes emerging from the collection of stories included: the **fear of testing positive** for TB; **beliefs about TB symptoms**; the **importance of support** for those living with TB; challenges **adhering to treatment and screening services**.
- The final story is about a couple living with TB and shares messages on the importance of screening; managing fears about testing positive and the importance of family support.
- The team will **integrate the story into health promotion activities** to enhance their communication with local populations in Tondo and encourage people to participate in TB screening.
- Findings will also be used to **adapt and contextualize** health education materials to make them more participatory.

*“When they arrived at the screening site, Aling Maria felt scared thinking about her X-ray results. When she was having the X-ray, she began praying that the result would be negative.*

*After the X-ray, both Aling Maria and her husband submitted sputum samples for laboratory testing. She thought that her husband might have TB as he had been coughing for many weeks, but she was still hopeful that the result would be negative.”*

*Extract from final story*

## Conclusion

Tools such as Story of Change demonstrate the power of storytelling and offer a unique, participatory and creative approach to community engagement and health promotion activities.

The project hopes that including storytelling in their work will improve TB screening uptake and community knowledge on TB, and help reduce stigmatization by creating a more supportive community environment for TB patients

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Tondo community members who generously shared their stories and experiences with us. The authors also thank the MSF Tondo team members who collected the stories and shared their feedback. We also thank the project partners: the Manila Health Department and National Tuberculosis Control Program.