

COMMUNITIES, RIGHTS AND GENDER (CRG) DYNAMICS AND APPROACH IN ENDING TB.

Introduction

Globally, women are disproportionately affected by violence, harmful patriarchal practices, forced isolation and other forms of discrimination – and this harmful impact is often compounded by poverty and other vulnerabilities. While everyone is entitled to live a life free from discrimination, women and girls are among the most vulnerable groups to abuse and harassment and have limited access to adequate health care. A right-based and gender-sensitive TB response is both an ethical imperative and a pillar of public health. The Global Goals for Sustainable Development offer an excellent opportunity to combat gender-based violence in all its forms and ensure a world where all women and girls are safe.

Last year, the Stop TB partnership brought together community partners worldwide to Bangkok, Thailand, for the first STP Community Summit in November. The meeting aimed to harness TB Community Experiences to Strengthen the Global Response. There is a need to commit to making the TB response rights-based, just, equitable and stigma-free, with TB-affected communities at the centre through an innovative approach targeted at Communities, Rights and Gender (CRG).

The CRG interventions in TB are committed to an equitable, rights-based TB response to identify and overcome human rights barriers to accessing quality TB services and to find the missing people with TB. This is guided by the Global Plan to End TB 2023-2030 – as a means of realising the commitments made in the UN High-Level Meeting on TB Political Declaration.

Human rights principles, with the TB-affected community central to global efforts, underpin every aspect of the TB response, and our work with civil society and community partners is fundamental for us to achieve our goals. Civil society and TB-affected communities are important in informing, designing, and implementing national TB strategic plans. TB-affected communities are often excluded and need more resources to participate in the TB response at all levels meaningfully. Engaging TB-affected communities is key to ending TB by 2030: Principles of equity and social justice must guide the TB response. Where human rights, gender and the experiences of key and vulnerable populations are central to all parts of TB, health and social protection systems, TB responses are more effective.

Lawyers Alert, as a beneficiary of the Stop TB Challenge Facility for Round 10 and 11 funding, anchors its interventions towards a Right based approach to end TB. And its work is guided towards Empowered networks of people affected by TB and civil society, advancing a rights-based, gender-sensitive TB response

that prioritises key and vulnerable populations and provides technically strong country responses. This aligned well with the summit's objectives and created an avenue for learning from shared experiences and coordination of country partners in TB response. In line with Stop TB Partnership's Communities, Rights and Gender (CRG) interventions, Lawyers Alert prioritise strengthening community TB interventions that overcome barriers to accessing quality TB services, increase community and civil society engagement and improve the impact of national TB programs at all levels. It is believed that People-centered community, human rights and gender TB responses are vital towards eliminating the disease by 2030, in line with the commitment made by world leaders in the Political Declaration at the United Nations High-Level Meeting on Tuberculosis in 2018 and line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. In Nigeria, the TB CRG Action Plan needs to be integrated into the NSP. All interventions geared towards implementing the plan should be centred on key findings that have been analysed across seven thematic areas, including; access, affordability, availability and quality, stigma and discrimination, key populations, freedoms, participation, gender, and legal remedies, keeping TB-affected communities at the heart of everything we do.

Conclusion

Working with vulnerable and key populations has become an area of interest that needs to be explored more often in Nigeria. Aside from the ongoing interventions with nomadic headers, other populations such as Children People living with HIV (PLHIV), health care workers, people who use drugs (PWUD), indigenous populations, prisoners, migrants and refugees, urban and rural poor and miners. The strength of our collective voice needs to be felt as we work towards the next UN High-Level Meeting on TB and will be guided by the values of Social justice, Human rights, Gender equity, Community empowerment, Partnership, Participation and Respect in the fight to END TB. No one should be left behind in the fight to End TB.