

Philippines Work Plan

FY 2021

Program Year 3

October 2020–September 2021



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ACT | EAST PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The U.S. Agency for International Development Act to End Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) | East Program supports national NTD programs in reaching World Health Organization goals for NTD control and elimination through proven, cost-effective public health interventions. The Act to End NTDs | East (Act | East) Program also provides critical support to countries on their journey to self-reliance, helping them create sustainable programming for NTD control within robust and resilient health systems. The Act | East Program is being implemented by a consortium of partners, led by RTI International and including The Carter Center; Fred Hollows Foundation; IMA World Health; Light for the World; Results for Development (R4D); Save the Children; Sightsavers; and Women Influencing Health, Education, and Rule of Law (WI-HER).

In Philippines, Act | East program activities are implemented by RTI International.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACT ON ACT TO END NTDs | EAST (ACT | EAST) ACTIVITIES AND WORK PLANS

Act | East recognizes the impact that the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has had on all programs. On April 1, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued interim guidance to neglected tropical disease (NTD) programs recommending that almost all in-person activities be postponed until further notice. With the support of USAID, Act | East stopped all activities that matched the criteria outlined in WHO's interim guidance.

On July 27, 2020, WHO issued further interim guidance on assessing whether NTD activities could restart safely. Alongside this, Act | East, in collaboration with Act | West and USAID, developed activity restart guidance and resource documents to support each country in safely implementing activities while adapting to the COVID-19 challenge and adhering to global guidance.

The timeline to restart activities will be context-specific, varying by country, region, and activity, and is subject to changes in COVID-19 dynamics. For the sake of brevity, all amendments to activity design to account for COVID-19 have not been listed in each country's work plans.

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ACRONYMS LIST

Act East	Act to End Neglected Tropical Diseases East Program
Ag	Antigenemia
CHED	Commission on Higher Education
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DEC	Diethylcarbamazine
DOH	Department of Health
DSA	Disease-Specific Assessment
FY	Fiscal Year
IDA	Ivermectin, Diethylcarbamazine, Albendazole
LF	Lymphatic Filariasis
MDA	Mass Drug Administration
MHO	Municipality Health Officer
MOH	Ministry of Health
NTD	Neglected Tropical Disease
PHO	Provincial Health Officer
Pre-SAC	Pre-school-age children
PVS	Post-validation Surveillance
R4D	Results for Development
RITM	Research Institute for Tropical Medicine
SAC	School-Age Children
SCH	Schistosomiasis
STH	Soil-Transmitted Helminths
TAS	Transmission Assessment Survey
WHO	World Health Organization

NARRATIVE

1. NATIONAL NTD PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND SUPPORT

The Philippines is the world's 13th most populous country with an estimated 2020 population of more than 124 million people across 17 regions.¹ The Philippines consists of three island groups—Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao—comprising 7,107 islands. The Philippine Government system is decentralized, with autonomous government systems in each of 82 provinces. Implementation, operational planning, budgeting, and funding for most neglected tropical disease (NTD) field activities is the responsibility of the provincial health authorities or of city or municipality governing authorities. The Department of Health (DOH) is the national health governing authority and works through DOH regional offices in coordination with provincial health departments and city or municipality health offices. The Government of the Philippines funds its NTD programs, including: mass drug administration (MDA) and disease-specific assessments (DSAs) for lymphatic filariasis (LF) in areas determined endemic by the results of surveys and mapping activities conducted by the national program in 1994; MDA for schistosomiasis (SCH) in provinces deemed endemic by focal surveys conducted from 2015–2017; and nationwide bi-annual deworming for pre-school and school-age children (pre-SAC and SAC), organized through rural health units and the Department of Education.

2. INTERMEDIATE RESULT (IR)1 PLANNED ACTIVITIES: LF

Program Context

The predominant parasite causing LF in the Philippines is *Wuchereria bancrofti*, transmitted primarily by *Aedes poicilius* and *Anopheles minimus flavirostris* mosquitos, although nocturnally sub-periodic *Brugia malayi* was found historically in 10 provinces, transmitted by *Mansonia uniformis* and *Ma. bonnea*. At the start of the Global Program for the Elimination of Filariasis in 2000, 45 million people in 44 provinces in the Philippines required LF MDA.

In July 2019, the Philippines implemented province-wide LF MDA with locally procured albendazole (ALB) and diethylcarbamazine (DEC) in six provinces, targeting 6.22 million people. The provinces of Aklan and Sultan Kudarat had planned for MDA in July 2020 but due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, these MDAs have been delayed until August–September 2020. These provinces have been implementing MDA for more than 10 years and are struggling to reduce LF prevalence.

Forty-two provinces are expected to be under post-MDA surveillance by the beginning of FY21, with a population of more than 57 million living in areas that have achieved the criteria for stopping MDA.² The Philippines aimed to have all provinces in the post-MDA surveillance phase by 2020, though focal MDA is expected to continue. Due to COVID-19, this milestone has been shifted to 2021.

The Philippines LF program is exploring the use of triple drug therapy, ivermectin, DEC, and ALB (IDA) in 2021 in areas with persistent transmission, e.g. in Sultan Kudarat province where MDA is ongoing, or in hot spots found during post-MDA surveillance in Oriental Mindoro. Currently, the LF elimination plan includes the use of IDA, and the government expects to finalize the registration of ivermectin for use in humans in 2020.

¹ DOH reports population of 110 million people in 2020. This work plan uses a projection from Philippines 2017 Joint Request for Selected Medicines (JRSM).

² DOH reports a population of 44 million people in 2020. This work plan uses a projection from the Philippines 2017 JRSM.

The Government of the Philippines funds and implements its own transmission assessment surveys (TAS) and pre-TAS.

Proposed Activities

Activity 1: Provincial Planning Meetings (2) in Sultan Kudarat (Strategic Planning)

In FY21, Act | East will provide focused, ongoing support to Sultan Kudarat, a province that has conducted more than 10 years of MDA. Sentinel and spot check surveys conducted in 2011, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019, and 2020 in three municipalities of Sultan Kudarat, Kalamansig, Lebak, and Palimbang, continue to find high rates of positivity, both Mf and antigenemia (Ag).

Act | East will host one in-person provincial planning meeting in February 2021 to review outcomes from the August–September 2020 MDA and to support planning for the sentinel and spot check assessment and subsequent MDA in April 2021. The MDA review will include a review of municipality-level MDA coverage data provided by municipality health officers (MHOs), provincial health officers (PHOs), and representatives from the DOH and Act | East will identify common issues across the municipalities and discuss adaptations. Act | East will also support discussion related to splitting the province into smaller groups of municipalities to be surveyed separately (using mini-TAS methodology) to better target areas for focal MDA. If the ivermectin policy is approved and the DOH plans to use IDA in Sultan Kudarat in April 2021, Act | East will also support the DOH to revise training materials and guidelines to support the shift from DEC and albendazole MDA to IDA MDA, ensuring appropriate dose poles, adverse event monitoring, and any other technical support related to preparing for IDA MDA.

Act | East will support a second in-person meeting in June 2021 to review outcomes of the April 2021 MDA in an after-action review and ensure coordination for the forthcoming TAS1 in July 2021, assuming the sentinel and spot check assessment in April 2021 is successful. The process used for Sultan Kudarat could serve as a roadmap for other provinces that continue to require MDA.

FY21 Activity 2: Global Expert Meeting on Research and Implementation in Oriental Mindoro

In FY21, Act | East will support a two-day meeting in October 2020 that will bring research partners and implementing partners together with provincial- and municipal-level health officials in Oriental Mindoro to consolidate research findings and determine next steps in this province. Discussions about Oriental Mindoro's context will help inform future decisions for the LF program in other provinces.

FY21 Activity 3: DOH NTD Division Annual Year-End Review

Act | East will contribute to meeting costs for the national NTD program's annual year-end review meeting. This annual meeting provides a platform for DOH staff and implementing and technical partners, including Act | East and the World Health Organization (WHO), to review activities that took place in the previous calendar year and to prioritize and coordinate activities planned for the upcoming calendar year.

FY21 Activity 4: Assessment of Data Systems for LF Sustainability

In FY21, Act | East will support an assessment to review and document current data-related challenges that impact program operationalization, including data reporting from the provincial level, data gaps, and human resources needed to collect and manage decentralized data reporting. This assessment will also explore opportunities for the DOH to fill gaps in reporting and improve regular reporting by linking LF morbidity management and disability prevention and post-validation surveillance (PVS) data into other mainstreamed health initiatives. Some areas to explore include ensuring data reporting is linked to

the national health insurance initiative (PhilHealth), ensuring data are integrated into health management information systems, and establishing central funding mechanisms that support direct data reporting to the DOH.

Results from this assessment will support the ongoing efforts by the DOH to ensure a strong post-elimination surveillance system and complement other activities in this work plan, including the PVS peer-reviewed publication.

FY21 Activity 5: Financing Assessment and Support

Act | East partner, Results for Development will lead a health financing assessment in the Philippines. Within the scope of that assessment R4D will provide technical assistance aimed at increasing the mainstreaming of NTDs into wider health system planning and coordination structures and, as appropriate, into universal health coverage. R4D will assess NTD financial data availability, quality, and completeness in two provinces. Locations will be determined in consultation with DOH.

FY21 Activity 6: Peer Review Publication on Philippines Post-Validation Surveillance Efforts

Dr. Leda Hernandez, Division Chief of the Infectious Disease Office of the Philippines DOH presented her program's experience with surveillance in areas that have eliminated LF at the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene Annual Conference in November 2019. Act | East country staff and HQ staff will work with Dr. Hernandez to develop the data she presented in that forum into a peer-reviewed publication.

FY21 Activity 7: Finalizing NTD Pre-service Curricula

In Q1 FY21, Act | East will partially support a face-to-face meeting to finalize and approve NTD pre-service curricula modules. Act | East will provide context on how consolidated modules were organized and contribute to discussions on how Commission of Higher Education (CHED) and selected universities will pilot the modules. Act | East Philippines staff will engage with DOH and CHED partners on progress toward launch of the curricula and provide limited technical advice and support as requested.

FY21 Activity 8: Ongoing Support for NTD Laboratory Network and Response

Regional trainings cancelled because of the COVID-19 outbreak prompted the Regional Institutes of Tropical Medicine (RITM) to consider opportunities to configure training modules into a virtual format. Act | East staff will continue to engage with RITM as it explores options and develops a strategy for moving to a virtual learning format. Act | East also will explore and connect RITM to resources within RTI as appropriate.

APPENDIX 1. MAPS



