

# Philippines Work Plan

**FY 2023**

**Program Year 5**

**October 2022–September 2023**

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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 provides critical support to governments to create sustainable platforms for NTD services within robust and resilient health systems. The Act | East Program is implemented by a consortium of partners, led by RTI International and including The Carter Center; Fred Hollows Foundation (FHF); Light for the World (LFTW); Results for Development (R4D); Save the Children; Sightsavers; and WI-HER.

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

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## ACRONYMS LIST

Act   East	Act to End Neglected Tropical Diseases   East
DOH	Department of Health
DPCB	Disease Prevention and Control Bureau
DSA	Disease-Specific Assessments
IDA	Ivermectin, Diethylcarbamazine Citrate, and Albendazole
IVM	Ivermectin
LF	Lymphatic Filariasis
MDA	Mass Drug Administration
NTD	Neglected Tropical Disease
R4D	Results for Development
RTI	RTI International
SCH	Schistosomiasis
STH	Soil-Transmitted Helminths
TAS	Transmission Assessment Survey
UHC	Universal Health Care
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

## 1. NATIONAL NTD PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND SUPPORT

The Philippines is the world’s 13th most populous country with an estimated 2021 population of more than 114.8 million people across its 17 regions.<sup>1</sup> 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) 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 activities, including mass drug administration (MDA) and disease-specific assessments (DSAs) for lymphatic filariasis (LF) in areas determined endemic by 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 to 2017; and nationwide bi-annual deworming for pre-school and school-age children, organized through rural health units and the Department of Education.

### *LF Program Context*

At the start of the Global Program for the Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis in 2000, 45 million people in 44 provinces in the Philippines required LF MDA. Redistricting in the Philippines governance system since 2000 has changed the number of endemic provinces to 47, according to Act | East.<sup>2</sup> There are currently three provinces continuing LF MDA activities, covering 2.2 million people: Oriental Mindoro, Sultan Kudarat, and Zamboanga del Norte.

School-based Transmission Assessment Survey (TAS) is the principal strategy used to determine if MDA can stop (TAS1) and for post-MDA surveillance (TAS2 and TAS3), although the Philippines adapted protocols and guidance to provinces to undertake community based pre-TAS and TAS during the COVID-19 pandemic. In the 31 provinces that had passed TAS3 by the end of 2019, ongoing surveillance systems are being piloted by the national program with technical support from WHO and the Task Force for Global Health. The DOH uses filariasis test strips in *Wuchereria bancrofti* areas.

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<sup>1</sup> Population figures in this work plan align with Act | East data and are based on projection from Philippines 2017 Joint Request for Selected Medicines. The DOH figures may differ from those reported here.

<sup>2</sup> The DOH recognizes 46 endemic provinces. It does not officially count Davao Occidental, which split from Davao Del Sur in 2015. Davao Occidental is targeted for pre-TAS and TAS1 in August 2022.

## **2. ACT | EAST FY23 ACTIVITIES**

### **FY23 Activity: Technical support to DOH**

To further the country's LF elimination goal, Act | East will support a staff position in FY23 that will provide technical and programmatic help to the integrated DPCB teams, with specific time dedicated to LF. This Act | East staff position was vacated in FY22. To continue implementing Act | East in the Philippines until a new person is recruited, Act | East will engage former employee Dr. Roderick Poblete through Q1 of FY23.

### **FY23 Activity: Integrated Elimination Plan write shop**

In Q4 of FY22, Act | East supported transportation, per diem and accommodation costs for technical working group members to attend the first in a series of writing workshops, "write shops", coordinated by the DOH to develop an ambitious Integrated Elimination Plan covering fifteen diseases targeted for elimination in the Philippines, including LF, SCH, STH, rabies, leprosy, and malaria. The Integrated Elimination Plan is part of the DOH's commitment to integrate previously siloed programs and coordinate across partners, including the Global Fund which supports malaria programming and Act | East which supports primarily LF activities. In FY23 Act | East will provide technical support for the workshop through an experienced consultant, and support transportation, per diem, and accommodation costs for members of the technical working group to attend the FY23 write shop, during which the plan will be finalized. Other partners, including the DOH, will support remaining costs of venue and refreshments.

### **FY23 Activity: World NTD Day**

Act | East will encourage a national-level commemoration of World NTD Day and contribute to costs for an advocacy event organized by the DOH in January 2023.

### **FY23 Activity: LF dossier development support**

In FY23, Act | East will support a consultant to travel to the Philippines to facilitate the handover of dossier management from the previous DOH system to the newly restructured DOH. The Act East consultant will update the current version of the LF elimination dossier and identify a new point of contact in the DPCB to manage the dossier. Act | East's consultant with technical support from Act | East HQ staff will analyze and clean historical and current data and recommend next steps for the dossier.

### **FY23 Activity: Provincial planning meetings for year 2 of IDA MDA**

In FY22, provincial and regional authorities in Oriental Mindoro and Sultan Kudarat and the DOH requested Act | East to support a 2-day planning meeting to orient local administrative and health officials on IDA MDA and to provide technical support for MDA planning, including review of data from previous rounds in the two provinces. Act | East shared costs with the DOH in support of an in-person meeting in each province, with technical support from WHO, which will take place in August 2022. IDA is scheduled for September 2022 in all locations.

In FY23, Act | East will again provide technical support to in-person planning meetings in Oriental Mindoro and Sultan Kudarat (one meeting in each province) prior to the second round of IDA to re-

orient municipality officials on 2023 IDA MDA plans. Act | East's Philippines Program/Technical Advisor, in collaboration with the Act | East NTD advisor and LF focal point will review agendas and training materials prior to the meetings. The meetings will take place in the provincial health offices, with Act | East covering costs for participant travel and accommodation.

**FY23 Activity: Health financing technical support for LF planning and budgeting at national and provincial level**

In FY21, Act | East consortium partner Results for Development (R4D) co-authored a case study with Dr. Leda Hernandez, then Division Chief of the Infectious Disease Office of the Philippines DOH, on the Philippines' successful mobilization of domestic resources for its NTD program, along with its effective positioning of NTDs within larger health initiatives. Building on recommendations from the case study, senior DOH officials and regional program managers selected Southern Leyte Province for further technical support to strengthen local LF planning and budgeting capacity because it is in post-MDA surveillance and prioritized by the DOH to implement the Universal Health Care (UHC) law.

Building on the cost analysis of targeted NTD interventions conducted in FY22 in Southern Leyte Province, R4D will assist selected municipalities within Eastern Visayas region (which includes six provinces and one city) to streamline planning, budgeting, and execution of LF and STH services into the local UHC platform. In FY23, R4D will work with the DOH to provide regional health officials with technical support to ensure LF and STH activities are prioritized and streamlined into province and municipality budget and planning cycles. Additionally, the team will identify lessons to share with other provinces and municipalities for improved integration into other disease programs and earlier in the LF elimination process.