

Philippines Work Plan

FY 2024

Program Year 6

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ACT | EAST PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) 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 governments critical support 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 and R4D.

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ACRONYMS LIST

Act East	Act to End Neglected Tropical Diseases East
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
DOH	Department of Health
DPCB	Disease Prevention and Control Bureau
DSA	Disease-Specific Assessments
IDA	Ivermectin, Diethylcarbamazine Citrate, and Albendazole
LF	Lymphatic Filariasis
MDA	Mass Drug Administration
MDEP	Multi-Disease Elimination Plan
MMDP	Morbidity Management and Disability Prevention
NTD	Neglected Tropical Disease
R4D	Results for Development
RTI	RTI International
TAS	Transmission Assessment Survey
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

1. NATIONAL NTD PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND SUPPORT

The Philippines is an island country located in Southeast Asia. It has a total projected population of more than 113.7 million people for calendar year 2024 (CY24), with people aged 0–24 years making up at least 50% of the population. The Philippines consists of three island groups—Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao—comprising 7,107 islands. The Philippine Government health system is decentralized, with autonomous government systems in each of 82 provinces and 148 cities. Implementation, operational planning, budgeting, and funding for most neglected tropical disease (NTD) activities is the responsibility of the provincial health authorities or city or municipality governing authorities. The Department of Health (DOH) is the national health governing authority and works through DOH regional offices called Centers for Health Development (CHDs) in coordination with provincial health offices 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) and schistosomiasis (SCH), 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

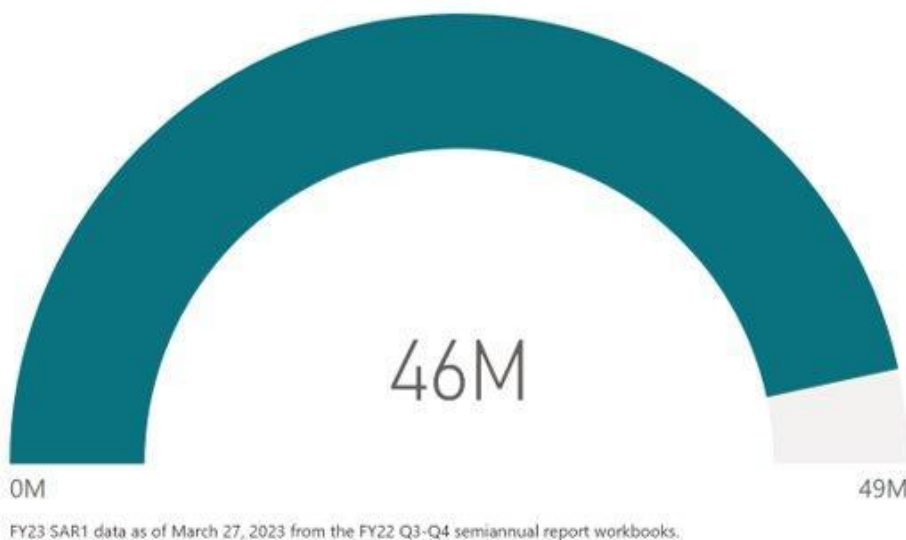
At the start of the Global Program for the Elimination of Lymphatic Filariasis in 2000, 45 million people in 44 provinces in the Philippines required LF MDA. Redistricting in the Philippines governance system since 2000 has changed the number of endemic provinces to 47. The Philippines has a goal of reaching the threshold for stopping MDA (undertaking TAS1) for all endemic areas by 2030. There are currently four provinces requiring MDA, two of which will implement round 2 of IDA MDA in 2024, and two of which will start IDA MDA in 2024, as noted below in **Table 1**. This means that the Philippines is on track to stop province-wide MDA by 2026/2027, well before the 2030 goal. **Figure 1** demonstrates the Philippines progress toward LF elimination, with approximately 46 million people no longer at risk. The Government of Philippines funds and implements all MDA activities.

Table 1. Provincial MDA in the Philippines

Province	2022	2023	2024
Oriental Mindoro	—	Round 1–IDA	Round 2–IDA
Sultan Kudarat	Round 1 – IDA	Focal IDA MDA	Round 2–IDA
ZDN	—	—	Round 1–IDA
Davao Occidental	—	—	Round 1–IDA

Figure 1. Progress towards LF elimination, Philippines

Number of persons no longer at risk as compared to number of persons ever at risk



Although school-based TAS is the principal strategy used to determine whether MDA can stop (TAS1) and for post-MDA surveillance (TAS2 and TAS3), the Philippines adapted protocols so that provinces could undertake community-based TAS during COVID-19. In the 32 provinces that had passed TAS3, CHDs perform special focal surveys while waiting for post-validation surveillance guidelines. The DOH uses filariasis test strips in *Wuchereria bancrofti* areas.

The Government of the Philippines funds and implements its own surveys and does not utilize electronic data collection. Act | East does not provide technical assistance to the national program for DSA implementation but does provide survey supervision support and technical support for training and orientation, prioritizing places where surveys have not been conducted in a long time, or where provincial health administration is new. In FY23, Act | East provided technical support to provincial authorities in Oriental Mindoro, Sultan Kudarat, ZDN, Davao del Sur, DO, Davao City, and Antique, in coordination with the National and Regional DOH.

2. ACT | EAST FY24 ACTIVITIES

FY24 Activity: Provincial IDA MDA Planning Meetings

In FY24, Act | East will support four in-person planning meetings for IDA MDA in Oriental Mindoro, Sultan Kudarat, ZDN, and DO (one meeting in each province) prior to IDA MDA. In Oriental Mindoro and Sultan Kudarat, these meetings will re-orient regional, provincial, city, and municipality officials on IDA MDA and allow officials to conduct more detailed planning. In ZDN and DO, this meeting will be an IDA orientation and planning session ahead of their first round of IDA MDA. The Philippines-based Act | East Senior Technical Advisor and headquarters (HQ)-based Act | East LF focal point will review agendas and training materials prior to the meetings.

FY24 Activity: Program Implementation Review

Act | East will provide technical support and co-financing for a 3-day annual Program Implementation Review meeting hosted by the DOH. This meeting will bring together regional and provincial health officials to review progress and encourage annual planning for LF activities, among other health activities. This includes review on disease burden, information sharing on activities' status and innovations and best-known practices, discussion on gaps and challenges including drug management, discussion on opportunities for integrating service delivery across platforms, and planning activities for the following year.

FY24 Activity: Technical Support and Supervision for MDA and TAS

The Philippines faces complex challenges in areas that continue to require LF MDA, including staffing limitations from the central DOH restructuring and a lack of provincial-level technical knowledge. To further the country's LF elimination goal, Act | East will provide in-person technical and programmatic support to the integrated DPCB teams, with specific time dedicated to LF. This will include focused support to districts implementing IDA MDA and regions that are planning assessment surveys after a long programmatic gap, or where provincial staff have changed and new staff require additional support or orientation.

FY24 Activity: World NTD Day Internal MDEP Celebration

Act | East, the DOH, and WHO will collaborate on a half-day event in Manila to celebrate World NTD Day. This event will be an internally focused celebration of the MDEP's launch, acknowledging the work of the DOH and international partners who came together to draft this historic strategic plan. This will not be the official, public launch of the MDEP, as all levels of political and administrative validation are not expected to be completed by this date.

FY24 Activity: World NTD Day Provincial Convening Event

The second World NTD Day-related event will bring together representatives from eight provinces and two regions selected by the DOH to participate in the first meeting of the Philippine NTD Committee, a core group of NTD leadership proposed by WHO, to be co-led by WHO and the DOH. At this event, the four provinces continuing MDA (see first proposed activity above) will join representatives from four high-performing provinces for information sharing and motivation.

FY24 Activity: Technical Support for LF Webinar for Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Country Health Workers

The Philippines co-leads the implementation of the ASEAN LF Work Plan for 2021–2025 with ASEAN member state Cambodia. In this role, the Government of the Philippines hosted the first and second ASEAN LF Forum and has also committed to support consolidating the documentation of annual LF initiatives in the region and organizing two webinars, one in 2024 and one in 2025. In FY24, the Act | East Senior Technical Advisor will provide coordination and planning support to the DOH to host a webinar on LF for ASEAN country health workers. Priority topics for the proposed webinars may include experiences in the following areas, and other topics that may be identified by the ASEAN LF contact:

- using IDA for MDA
- responding to cases found during TAS and post-validation surveillance

- responding to implementation units that have not met the appropriate epidemiologic goals in sentinel and spot-check site surveys or in TAS, despite meeting drug coverage goals
- responding to communities where post-MDA or post-validation surveillance identified infection, suggesting local transmission
- implementing border control operations
- conducting morbidity management and disability prevention (MMDP)
- xenomonitoring
- sustaining elimination
- integrating LF to other public health programs

FY24 Activity: Budget Negotiations Advocacy

Decentralization of the health system in Philippines means that funding for health activities is currently available through different streams for the central level (DOH/DCPB), regional level (CHDs), and provincial or municipal level activities. At the national and regional level, annual negotiations are informed by programmatic data and financial analysis, presented as “budget cue cards” that provide key data points for representatives negotiating for funds in the Philippines Congress. In FY24, Act | East with the R4D consultant will develop business cases on NTDs ahead of national- and provincial-level budget negotiations, based on data collected and presented in national- and provincial-level case studies. These business cases will present evidence to support continued investment in NTDs as part of the MDEP and will feed into the official budget cue cards for 2024 budget negotiations. At the provincial level, Act | East will develop and validate business cases in one or two provinces, informed by the case study developed in Southern Leyte, to support budget requests through the Department of Interior and Local Government. These documents will make the case for continued investment in NTD elimination activities at the local level, including ongoing and post-validation surveillance, as the country draws closer to LF elimination. Act | East will also use the business cases to develop a template to help other disease areas (e.g., other NTDs and diseases targeted for elimination under the MDEP) to develop similar types of tools to support advocacy. FY24 will be an especially important time to ensure that programmatic and financial data are informing budget negotiations because it will be the first year that aligns with the new MDEP timeline (2024–2030).

Dossier Status

USAID supported the development of the Philippines’ LF elimination dossier under its END in Asia and ENVISION projects through short-term technical assistance. By 2020, 46 provinces in the 12 endemic subnational regions were trained by the national program in dossier development. Additionally, global expert Dr. Ramaiah Kapa worked with the DOH to collect historical program and epidemiological data from subnational and local partners, a process that encountered validation and knowledge management challenges brought about by the turnover of personnel in the program’s periphery.

LF program data are being collected at the provincial and regional levels and reported back to the central DOH. To date, 46 provinces have started dossiers, and 2 of the 12 endemic regions¹ have completed their dossier reports. In FY24, dossiers will be updated and current and historical MMDP information will continue to be compiled by the national program, with the goal of having all data updated in advance of reaching the stop-MDA goal for all endemic provinces before 2030.

¹ There are 17 regions total in the Philippines.

FY24 Activity: Dossier Development Support

In FY24, Act | East will support a regional consultant to travel to the Philippines to facilitate the handover of dossier management from the previous DOH system to the newly restructured DOH. Act | East will support the DOH to update the current version of the LF elimination dossier, begin to consolidate the multiple provincial versions, consider how ongoing surveillance data be documented, facilitate the development of a timeline and process for the dossier development, and identify a new point of contact in the DPCB to manage the dossier.

FY24 Activity: Dossier Development Workshop

Act | East will support a 2-day dossier workshop and Direct Inspection Protocol readiness and planning session in FY24 for 21 people in Tagaytay. Attendees will include all the regional LF coordinators from the 12 LF endemic regions who will assist in updating the provincial dossiers and contribute to the development of the draft national dossier. WHO and Act | East will facilitate the activity, in coordination with the DOH Central Office. Monitoring, including follow up, and information management will be done by the DOH.