

STRENGTHENING THE TB AND HIV RESPONSE IN TIMOR-LESTE THROUGH REDUCTION OF STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION

2 -3 June 2025: Dili, Timor-Leste

On 2nd – 3rd June 2025, The World Health Organization (WHO) Timor Leste, in collaboration with Ministry of Health of Timor-Leste, and the Global Coalition of TB Advocates (GCTA), convened a landmark national workshop in Dili to advance the fight against stigma and discrimination associated with TB and HIV. The two-day event brought together 63 participants from national and municipal TB and HIV programs to build capacity for identifying, addressing and reducing stigma across healthcare systems and within the communities.

PURPOSE AND APPROACH

The workshop aimed to equip health providers, program managers, and community representatives with the knowledge and skills to recognize stigma, understand its harmful effects on service uptake and health outcomes, and implement practical, rights-based solutions to reduce stigma. Sessions spanned a broad range of topics including the drivers of stigma, human rights frameworks, gender sensitivity, and the role of community-led monitoring (CLM) using robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems. A participatory methodology ensured active engagement through interactive sessions, real life reflections and strategic group work.

PROGRESS AND IMPACT

The workshop generated a shared vision for a stigma-free Timor-Leste where no one faces barriers to care because of TB or HIV status. Multi-sectoral action plans were developed, addressing stigma at individual, community, institutional, and policy level. Pre and post assessment findings showed significant gains in participant confidence and competencies: those confident in developing stigma action plans increased from 48% to 75%, while understanding of monitoring stigma efforts surged from 42% to 78%. These outcomes reflect a strengthened capacity to transform intent into action.

INSIGHTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

Participants called for scaling up efforts with localized solutions, including IEC materials in Tetum, greater involvement of young people, religious and traditional leaders, and periodic follow-up trainings. There was a clear demand to integrate stigma reduction systematically within national TB/HIV programs and to empower affected communities to take leadership roles in shaping the response.

MOVING FORWARD

This workshop marks a pivotal step in advancing a people-centered rights-based health response in Timor-Leste. The strategies, priorities, and Logical Framework Approach (LFA) matrix developed through this process will inform national and municipal actions moving forward. Sustained collaboration between government, WHO, civil society, and community leaders/networks will be critical to ensure that stigma and discrimination are not only addressed but eliminated, creating a health system where dignity, equity, and respect are core to all processes.

