

India's Progress in Tackling Tuberculosis - Explained

November 16, 2025 • vajiramandravi.com



Tuberculosis Latest News

- The WHO Global TB Report 2025 highlighted that India's TB incidence has declined by 21% since 2015.

Background

- The **World Health Organisation Global Tuberculosis Report 2025** has reaffirmed that **tuberculosis (TB)** continues to be among the world's **deadliest infectious diseases**, claiming over **1.2 million lives** and affecting **10.7 million people globally in 2024**.
- While India remains the **largest contributor** to the global TB burden, the country has made **significant strides in reducing incidence**, with a **21% decline between 2015 and 2024**, nearly double the global average rate of decline.
- However, despite these achievements, India has **missed its self-imposed target** of eliminating TB by **2025**, underscoring persistent challenges such as **drug-resistant strains, healthcare gaps, and social stigma**.

Global and National Burden of Tuberculosis

- According to the WHO report, **87% of the world's TB cases** are concentrated in just 30 countries, with **India (25%)** leading the list, followed by **Indonesia (10%)**, **the Philippines (6.8%)**, **China (6.5%)**, and **Pakistan (6.3%)**.
- India's estimated TB incidence rate fell from **237 per lakh population in 2015** to **187 per lakh in 2024**, marking a commendable improvement in detection and treatment coverage.
- The **Union Health Ministry** reported that India's **treatment coverage now stands at 92%**, outpacing most high-burden countries.
- States such as **Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh** account for the highest number of TB cases, while **Delhi** records the highest infection prevalence rate.

Government Initiatives and Policy Framework

- India's TB elimination efforts are anchored in the **National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP)**, launched in 2020 after rebranding the earlier **Revised National TB Control Programme (RNTCP)**.
- The NTEP set an ambitious goal to eliminate TB by **2025**, five years ahead of the **global target of 2030**. Key interventions under the NTEP include:
 - **Expanded Diagnostic Infrastructure** – India has established 9,391 rapid molecular testing laboratories and 107 culture and drug susceptibility testing labs, forming the largest TB diagnostic network in the world.
 - **Use of Technology and AI** – Over 500 AI-enabled portable X-ray units have been deployed nationwide to enhance community screening, with 1,500 more units planned for delivery.
 - **Decentralised TB Care through Ayushman Arogya Mandirs** – Around 1.78 lakh primary health centres provide TB services closer to communities, improving accessibility.
 - **Nutritional Support under Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana** – Monthly Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) to TB patients has been doubled from Rs. 500 to Rs. 1,000, supporting better treatment adherence and recovery.
 - **Community and ASHA Worker Engagement** – Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs) have been trained to identify early TB symptoms and ensure treatment compliance.

Persistent Challenges in TB Elimination

- **Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis**
 - India has one of the highest burdens of **multi-drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB)** in the world, making treatment longer, more expensive, and less effective.
 - Drug resistance continues to threaten the country's progress in curbing overall TB cases.
- **Healthcare Infrastructure and Workforce Gaps**
 - Rural and remote areas continue to face **shortages of trained personnel**, diagnostic delays, and **weak referral systems**, affecting timely detection and treatment.
- **Supply Chain and Drug Stockouts**
 - Periodic disruptions in the **anti-TB drug supply chain** have led to stockouts in several states, forcing patients to skip doses, a critical risk factor for developing drug resistance.
 - Although authorities have denied widespread shortages, regional inconsistencies persist.

- **Funding and Research Deficits**

- Globally, only **\$5.9 billion** was available for TB control in 2024, just a quarter of the **\$22 billion annual target** set for 2027.
- Research funding remains limited at **\$1.2 billion (24% of the target)**. These shortfalls directly impact the rollout of new diagnostics, drugs, and vaccines.

- **Social Stigma and Awareness Gaps**

- Deep-rooted **stigma and discrimination** discourage patients from seeking diagnosis and adhering to treatment, particularly among women and marginalised groups.

Global Efforts and India's Role

- The WHO highlighted that globally, TB incidence fell by **2% between 2023 and 2024**, and deaths decreased by **3%**. Since 2000, timely diagnosis and treatment have **saved 83 million lives**.
- India's accelerated decline in TB incidence, nearly **twice the global average**, demonstrates strong national ownership and effective public health strategies.
- The government's expansion of the **"Ni-kshay Mitra" initiative**, under which individuals and organisations adopt TB patients to provide nutritional and social support, has also gained momentum.
- However, to meet the global **End TB Strategy**, India must sustain annual declines of **10-12%**, supported by greater investment, innovation, and intersectoral collaboration.

Way Forward

- Experts emphasise the need for a **multi-pronged strategy** focusing on:
 - **Universal access to diagnosis and treatment**, especially for marginalised communities.
 - **Integration of TB care with primary health services** to ensure continuity.
 - **Scaling up digital surveillance** and AI-based diagnostic tools.
 - **Increased domestic and global funding** for TB research and vaccine development.
 - **Public awareness and destigmatisation campaigns** to encourage early treatment.

Source : **TH**

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/india-tuberculosis-elimination/>

© Vajiram & Ravi. For personal use only.