

# The Impact of COVID-19 on Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS Policies: an assessment by Brazilian Civil Society

## In line with the U.N. Secretary-General's Report and Recommendations on Tuberculosis

### Summary of interim data – 1st stage of the assessment – October 2020

In March 2020, ART TB Brazil, ANAIDS, CAB TB Brazil, the SC segment of the Brazilian Stop TB Partnership, civil society movements against tuberculosis (TB) and HIV/AIDS, with the support of the CSTF-WHO, decided to monitor (without academic intent) the possible impacts of the COVID-19 epidemic on TB and HIV/AIDS policies in Brazil. The initiative is supported by the WHO Global TB Program, PAHO, REDE-TB, and the NTP and NAP, MoH Brazil, as well as other social and research movements in TB and HIV/AIDS in the country.

The assessment uses online questionnaires with the main objective of mapping how the guidelines issued by the National TB and National AIDS Programs of the Ministry of Health, through two Official Memoranda (no. 8/2020/CGAHV and no. 5/2020/CG-DR), have been incorporated and implemented in the States, their capitals and Federal District by the respective programs over the course of 2020. The assessment further seeks to identify the impacts of the COVID-19 emergency plan on activities related to prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of persons affected by TB and persons living with HIV/AIDS.

The interim data reported in this document were collected in the five major geographic regions of Brazil from June to August 2020 and reflect the perceptions of three stakeholder groups: TB and HIV program managers, frontline healthcare workers for these diseases, and people in treatment for TB and/or HIV/AIDS. The final data from this assessment will be presented in December 2020.

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**I do my follow-up at the [...], and I think it's absurd that they cancel the appointments and force us to go to other services at a time like this. In my opinion, referral services are to protect their patients, not to dump them at such a sensitive time, or we'll soon have other parallel pandemics.**

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The following is a summary of the data:

### TB Policies

- 50% of program managers report not knowing whether there was any change in the budget funds allocated to TB policies in 2020;
- 50% of program managers and 51% of healthcare workers report staff cutbacks;
- 75% of program managers and healthcare workers state that some strategy was maintained with directly observed therapy (DOT), but only 42% of people in treatment in the services confirm this information. According to 47% of healthcare workers, DOT is maintained through the use of online tools, while 0% of people in treatment reported this kind of follow-up;
- 20% of program managers and healthcare workers agree that it was not possible to dispense TB drugs for 30 days, according to the NTP-MoH guideline, while 63% of people in treatment report receiving medication for 30 days;
- 50% of program managers and healthcare workers identify a decrease in the laboratory network capacity for TB diagnosis.

### HIV/AIDS Policies

- 44% of program managers and 56% of healthcare workers identify staff cutbacks;
- 25% of program managers and 30% of healthcare workers report a reduction in the testing supply at the referral services and 32% of program managers and healthcare workers point to a reduction in testing in the Health Units;
- 81% of program managers state that ARVs are being dispensed for 90 days, according to the NAP-MoH guideline, but only 32% of healthcare workers confirm this information, while 42% of people in treatment report receiving ARVs for 90 days, 42% say they receive ARVs for 60 days, and 9% that they receive ARVs for 30 days;
- 56% of program managers and 57% of healthcare workers report that the services have not maintained routine appointments, while 64% of people in treatment state that routine appointments have not been maintained and 60% say that they have had some cancellation or difficulty in scheduling regular appointments.

### Gerais

- 27% of all the healthcare workers that were interviewed report shortage of soap in the health services' daily routine;
- 68% of people in treatment at the services report not accessing any preventive materials to protect against COVID-19.

### Social Policies

- 31% of people in treatment at the services confirm that they have accessed the Federal government's emergency assistance, a proportion very similar to that of persons that have received support from NGOs during the COVID-19 epidemic, which was 28%.

ART TB Brazil – Brazilian Social Alliance in the Fight against Tuberculosis  
ANAIDS – National Alliance in the Fight against AIDS  
CAB TB Brazil – Community Advisory Board on TB Research in Brazil  
Brazilian Partnership against Tuberculosis – Civil Society Segment (Stop TB Brazil)  
CSTF-WHO – Civil Society Task Force for the World Health Organization