



# Second Chance Feels Like Second Life

Bringing Innovative Health Solutions to the Unreached

*I remember being strong, vigorous, and active in my prime age. But TB weakened me and slowed my life. Sometimes, I would ask God why I was given this long battle not once, but twice.*

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Domingo Leron

At a young age, Domingo Leron, 62, had been forced to leave his hometown in the province of Albay in the Bicol region in hopes of escaping from poverty but not from the hefty responsibility he had to help his family. He took any job he could, and as many as possible. But it was in the construction field where he found himself most useful. For general construction workers like Leron, performing extensive labor demands strong physical stamina.

After he was first diagnosed with tuberculosis (TB) in 2014, he moved to a mountainous, remote area in the locality of Bataan in Central Luzon, the northern part of Manila. It was in a private health facility where he first sought treatment, but his medication was discontinued due to financial constraints. He endured intensive coughs, recurring chest pains and the feeling of being unwell.

*"I started coughing blood, felt weak and lost weight drastically. This was when I decided to stop working in Manila and move to a province where I could heal peacefully. I changed my diet and started eating more vegetables, less meat."*

In 2022, USAID, through its TB Platforms Project, in partnership with the local government unit of Bataan and its rural health unit, reached out to geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas (GIDA) to conduct an active case finding (ACF) activity in Barangay Bangkal, Bataan, where Leron resides. The TB Platforms Project aims to strengthen TB interventions at the regional, local government, and community levels to increase TB case detection and treatment success rates.

When he heard of the free chest X-ray that would be available in the nearby health facility, he immediately planned his visit. "It was an opportunity I would never want to miss. It is the first time that such a health service will be brought right to our doorstep," he shared. He also mentioned that he seldom goes down to the health center because he cannot afford the transportation expenses that cost around 500 Philippine pesos or US\$ 10 for a one-way ride to the city center.

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In November 2021, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) donated, through the Stop TB Partnership, a package of new tools worth 130 million Philippine pesos (US\$ 2.6 million) to support better TB services in the Philippines—part of a global initiative called the *introducing New Tools Project* (iNTP).

The highlight of the ACF activity was the use of ultra-portable digital chest X-ray (UP CXR) system; Bataan was part of the few selected sites that received the iNTP package.

Along with 51 individuals screened that day, Leron shared that he was really amazed when he saw the UP CXR. “Back in the day, all we had was the gigantic X-ray machine enough to occupy a whole room. I did not know that we have this technology that is very compact but does the same thing and can be carried like a personal device. It really amazes me, and I was so happy to have been able to experience that. The process is very fast; results are instant, unlike before,” he added.

After the results, Leron was diagnosed as positive for TB for the second time around. The community nurse in the barangay immediately enrolled him on to treatment, and he is now in his second month. He was elated upon receiving the news that his full-course medication would be free. According to him, USAID’s TB Platforms initiatives like this are far beyond detecting a disease but extending one’s life journey and purpose.

USAID’s TB Platforms has screened over 21,400 individuals using the UP CXR systems across the Philippines over the course of 10 months (247 ACF events). Of those 21,400 individuals, 12, 831 of them are people at high risk for developing TB disease. This includes individuals with compromised immune systems, such as people living with HIV, malnutrition or diabetes, or people who smoke, and are old like Leron.

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*If it were not for USAID, disadvantaged people like us would not have a second chance to have the will to be treated and be back to normal again. We do not have anything to rely on financially. I also thank God that we have organizations willing to reach out to us.*

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*Domingo Leron*

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**Disclaimer:** The findings in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the U.S. Government.

For more information on the *introducing New Tools Project*, visit:

<https://www.stoptb.org/accelerate-tb-innovations/introducing-new-tools-project>



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