



# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY



# Introduction

---

Public engagement is an essential activity of BNMT Nepal to improve the relevance of our programmes to our communities. Our public engagement activities aim to facilitate participation, listening and engagement of a broad range of stakeholders with our activity. We believe the two-way process helps us to broaden our understanding of health related issues, and improve the relevance and trustworthiness of our work to our communities.

## **Defining our public**

We have broadly defined our public as:

project participants and beneficiaries, policy influencers, community advocates, government officials at central and local level; health workers; school students, parents, teachers; non-governmental organizations; funders and collaborators; academics, national/international multilaterals; and national/international policy makers.

# Vision

---

**To embed high quality, effective and creative public engagement within all BNMT activities.**

# Our strategic aims

---

Birat Nepal Medical Trust envisions embedding public engagement at the core of our programme, projects and research by prioritizing it within all organizational strategies and practice.

Our developing research portfolio along with our long history of community engagement through our projects will lay a strong foundation for our fledgling public engagement activity to flourish.

Our public engagement activities align with the five strategic pillars of BNMT, namely: Accelerating the Elimination of Infectious Diseases, Strengthening Health Systems, Improving Mental and Adolescent Health, Generating Evidence to Inform Policy and Building Resilient Prosperous Communities.

## **Five strategic aims will guide our public engagement work for the next five years:**

**Aim 1:** Embed public engagement at the core of BNMT programmes, research and events.

**Aim2:** Engage in bidirectional dialogue with a broad range of public stakeholders to develop our programmes and understand their impact and value to our communities.

**Aim 3:** Increase our international network, engagement with the global community and advocacy for issues affecting Nepali communities.

**Aim 4:** Secure funding streams for innovative public engagement approaches which can engage and inspire diverse audiences and create new advocates for change in communities.

**Aim 5:** Develop skills, confidence and a resource base relevant to public engagement for staff at all levels and foster creativity in public engagement activities for high quality, effective public engagement approaches.

# Aim 1

---

## **Embed public engagement at the core of BNMT programmes, research and events.**

A defining principle of BNMT, since its foundation, has been to engage with communities, government partners and a broad range of relevant stakeholders throughout our project cycles. This takes place from consultations which refine the conception and design of interventions, to dissemination of results, coupled with evaluation and learning feedback loops. These processes ensure our programmes are relevant to our beneficiary communities and integrated within existing support systems.

In the next five years we will strengthen our public engagement programme, systematically integrate public engagement principles into our processes and broaden the scope of public engagement activities. Moreover, as we expand the scope and depth of our public engagement programme, systematic guidelines are needed for our staff to improve quality and effectiveness of activities, consistency of branding, and ensure the inclusion, respect, dignity and safeguarding of all our participants.

We will strengthen our internal guidelines by developing branding guidelines and systematic social media strategies. We will systematically review and update our web and social media presence to maintain stimulating, accurate and engaging content for our stakeholders and to ensure visibility and transparency of BNMT activities.

BNMT has conducted annual activities for World TB Day, Menstrual Hygiene Day, and International Women's Day in recent years. The PE department will consult with staff and review the appropriate 'advocacy days' to mark which are within our capacity and relevant to our active programmes. Any proposed changes to the list will be agreed at biannual strategic planning meetings of the senior management team. A proposal to add International Nurses Day to raise awareness and appreciation for nurses who provide the backbone of all health systems has been agreed during the first review.

Effective approaches to communication will be promoted through communication guidelines and training sessions. Internal sharing of best practice, including the lessons learned, will be promoted at all levels including field, district and regional levels.

To improve communications within the remote teams, regular periodic discussions will be organized by the PE department to foster new ideas for engagement and synergising existing ideas.

# Aim 2

---

## **Engage in bidirectional dialogue with a broad range of public stakeholders to develop our programmes and understand their impact and value to our communities.**

Public engagement is a two-way process. BNMT Nepal believes in engaging our public to improve the quality, relevance and impact of our work, and to broaden our impact by widening the scope of

contributors to the design, optimisation, implementation and evaluation of our programmes. This can be achieved through creating diverse forums to listen to the voices of public stakeholders and interacting with each other. BNMT will learn more about the concerns, perceptions, experiences, priorities, ideas and feedback of the public by utilizing different approaches such as formal and informal talk programs, community get-togethers, creative art events, social media platforms, podcasts, stakeholders' dialogues and discussions, co-creation and screening of documentaries, community stories and other media.

BNMT has been working with local cultural artists to create health messaging through the unique local cultural heritage in our project districts. This has included developing health education murals for community health centres in the internationally renowned Mithila art style, health murals representing Tharu (ethnic group) cultural context and Tharu song and dance performances which convey health messaging. These methods have proved to be eye catching, stimulating positive discussions, local pride and engaging audiences to communicate the messages in a clear and friendly style to improve effectiveness. We will continue to explore and utilize creative art forms for improving health awareness and promotion.

BNMT recently successfully developed the 'COVID Kurakani' (COVID Conversations) television series with a funding supplement to the Epidemic Intelligence grant from the Wellcome Trust. This comprised three 'Question Time' style panel discussion episodes which created a dialogue exploring stakeholders' perceptions, perspectives, concerns and priorities for pathogen genomic sequencing in Nepal in the response to emerging diseases. Audiences included research participants, health workers, government partners, public health specialists and academics. The production was broadcast in a primetime slot on national television and received many requests for similar programmes on related topics, such as vaccines, the emerging dengue epidemic in Nepal and antimicrobial resistance. The recording of such a programme in provinces outside Kathmandu was also noted and appreciated by stakeholders as a welcome innovation. We will continue to work on similar concepts related to public health issues and other emerging diseases in the future.

We have also explored the application of animation videos for disseminating public health messages around COVID-19, TB related stigma and cervical cancer.

We will continue to develop and promote effective information-sharing, stigma reduction, advocacy and empowerment platforms. These include forums like community get-togethers for vulnerable populations, such as families affected by TB.

To hear unheard voices and connect those voices to the international community, we are initiating podcasts from 2023 to highlight stories of people affected by tuberculosis, healthcare workers and community members providing TB services.

We will increase our mechanisms for soliciting feedback from our beneficiaries such as patients, and stakeholders such as health workers along with community workers with the help of focused discussions and consultations. Mapping of our audiences will be carried out to improve the effectiveness of our approaches. The engagement of the stakeholders will be promoted in the design of our projects through consultations, periodic meetings and workshops. We will embed support for these within our funding applications.

To broaden the scope of our engagement and dissemination of findings, relevant conferences, seminars and workshops will be conducted and we will screen documentaries and video stories in academic institutions.

## Aim 3

---

### **Increasing our international network, engagement with the global community and advocacy for issues affecting Nepali communities.**

BNMT aims to have global impact through addressing local challenges with internationally relevant solutions, and generating evidence to inform local, national and global policy. BNMT has built an extensive network of international collaborators, donors, friends and supporters. Our academic network includes many globally leading institutions and multilateral agencies.

In the last five years, we have increased the global awareness of our activities through websites, social media, and attendance at international conferences, seminars and workshops, both virtually and in person. BNMT believes in meaningful engagement of our audience with accurate and timely information about our work. We aim to prosper with the trust of our global community and look forward to their interest and engagements with our initiatives.

In order to build international confidence for our initiatives, we are utilizing digital mediums like websites and social media to present our work and through our Annual reports, project/policy briefs, research articles, and project specific materials like booklets or leaflets.

We publish our research in open access international academic journals, and produce summary 'briefs' in English and Nepali, to make our outputs accessible to a broader range of stakeholders.

We have three active websites, which contain information and updates on our community interventions, events and academic research, testimonials, team information. We will systematically update them to ensure we provide accurate, timely and transparent information in a user-friendly format to our stakeholders, both nationally and globally.

Through our social media engagements, we connect our global audience with our work, posting project activities, research publications, our team updates, advocacy for relevant health days, advocacy for TB funding and political commitment, COVID19, sexual reproductive health and mental health. We also post information from the global community in relevant areas including reports from multilateral agencies, online courses, conferences, funding opportunities, posts on gender issues and gender equity and global health and development news.

We will continue to build our social media audience and explore novel content styles to attract and engage a diverse national and international audience. We will aim to develop connections with international public engagement teams, to stimulate creativity and innovation within our approaches to public engagement.

## Aim 4:

---

### **Secure funding streams for innovative public engagement approaches which can engage and inspire diverse audiences and create new advocates for change in communities**

The relatively small public engagement team of BNMT has successfully developed a broad range of public engagement activities within three years of founding our public engagement department. The growing demand for increased public engagement, from both internal and external partners, reflects the success and creativity of these activities. Within the next five years we aim to increase the breadth and the depth of public engagement at BNMT, through integrating appropriate funding for public engagement into all funding applications. The public engagement team will be consulted at the concept, design and costing stages of project applications. We will also continuously explore opportunities for funding for broader public engagement activities, including advocacy grants and supplementary funding to large projects. To develop successful competitive funding applications, we will consult with partner organisations experienced in public engagement and broaden the training of our public engagement team.

## Aim 5:

---

### **Develop skills, confidence and a resource base relevant to public engagement for staff at all levels and foster creativity in public engagement activities for high quality, effective public engagement approaches.**

Public engagement does not happen in isolation; it results from synergistic efforts of a multidisciplinary team. The engagement at BNMT is at the developing stage, hence to create a culture of engagement, staff training and engagement with public engagement at all levels will be strengthened. The idea will be to create an enabling environment for staff to be aware of the opportunities, resources and benefits of public engagement, and to promote their contribution to generate high value engagements with the public.

We will identify skills gaps and training needs among our staff and foster creative skill development, to empower our staff to create stimulating content for social media platforms and presentations to different audiences.

The public engagement skills of staff will be developed through in-person/online orientations and workshops on our engagement activities. This will foster mutual learning about the current engagement approaches and understanding how they should be promoted to stakeholders, how to increase impact of engagement, proper use of audio/visual materials including pictures, what works and what doesn't in engagement practice.

BNMT has been developing confidence and staff skills around communication, leadership and storytelling, utilizing the expertise of executive performance coach, Rob Hale. We will continue to

develop the skills of our staff further through more intensive approaches. Furthermore, trainings on mindful photography and videography will be explored to maximize the impact of audio-visuals engagement with the public.