



# ASCOT: Addressing the Social Determinants and Consequences Of Tuberculosis in Nepal

Policy brief



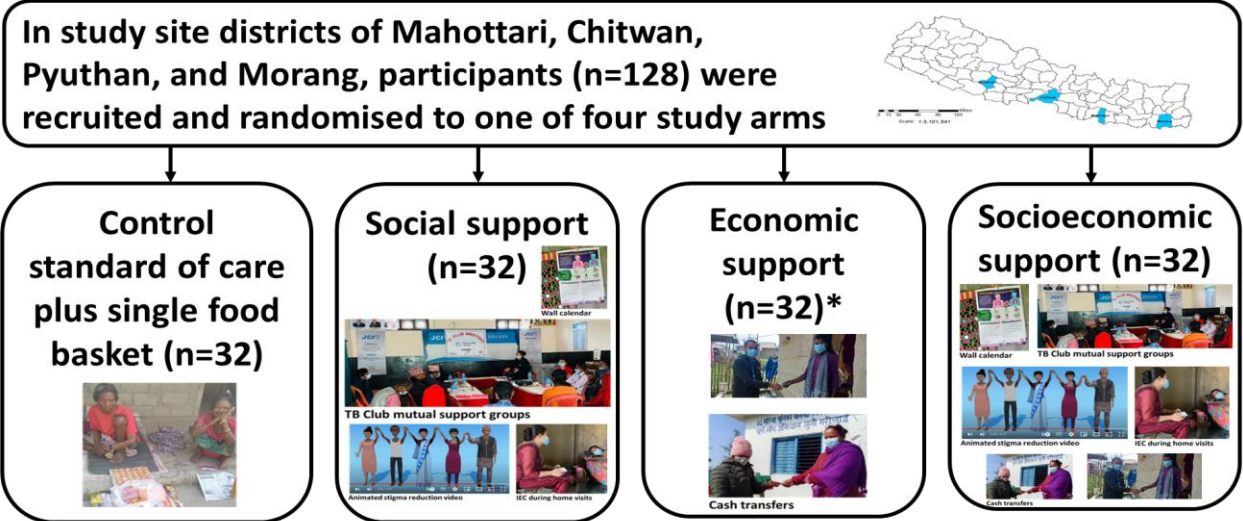
## WHY IS SOCIOECONOMIC SUPPORT IMPORTANT IN TB CARE?

- Biomedical approaches do not address the main driver of tuberculosis (TB): **poverty**. Being ill with TB and seeking even “free” TB care is associated with **catastrophic costs**, which **exacerbate poverty** in TB-affected households.
- A key shared goal of the **Nepal TB Control Centre’s National Strategic Plan** and **WHO’s End TB Strategy** is to “**reduce catastrophic costs of people with TB to zero**”. WHO advocates social and economic (**socioeconomic**) **support for TB-affected households** but there is little evidence in low-income countries.
- From 2018-2021, with key stakeholders in Nepal including TB-affected people and the NTCC, we co-developed a **locally-appropriate socioeconomic support intervention for TB-affected households in Nepal**.
- From 2021-2023, we implemented the ASCOT pilot trial to **field-test the intervention’s feasibility and acceptability**.

**Funded by:**




## WHAT DID WE DO DURING THE ASCOT PILOT TRIAL?



\*3000 NRs / month

## WHAT WERE THE KEY FINDINGS OF THE ASCOT PILOT TRIAL?

- ASCOT pilot results showed **high fidelity across all intervention arms** but TB Club Attendance was lower (78%) in the social arm. The **socioeconomic arm showed optimal feasibility and was selected** for future trial evaluation.
- Cash transfers, home visits with IEC, and TB Clubs had **highly positive feedback** (Table) in surveys and in-depth interviews.



Recruitment, follow-up, study activity completion and participant survey feedback			ASCOT pilot trial arm				Participant qualitative survey feedback on support package activities received
			Control	Economic	Social	Socioeconomic	
Recruitment and follow-up	Recruited (%)		32 / 32 (100%)	32 / 32 (100%)	32 / 32 (100%)	32 / 32 (100%)	-
	Completed all study follow-up (%)		30 / 32 (94%)	30 / 32 (94%)	30 / 32 (94%)	32 / 32 (100%)	-
Support package activities received and completed as per protocol and participant survey feedback	Cash Transfer	Completed (%)	-	30 / 32 (94%)	-	32 / 32 (100%)	"Timely financial support" "My family was able to buy fruit and meat" "Cash transfers helped to reduce my out-of-pocket costs"
		Rated Good or Very Good (%)	-	26 / 30 (87%)	-	29 / 32 (91%)	
	Home visits and IEC	Completed (%)	-	-	30 / 32 (94%)	27 / 32 (84%)	"Good counselling and motivation" "We had the opportunity to ask about drug side effects"
		Rated Good or Very Good (%)	-	-	29 / 30 (97%)	27 / 27 (100%)	"The wall calendar gave useful information on TB symptoms and treatment"
	TB Clubs	Completed (%)	-	-	25 / 32 (78%)	29 / 32 (91%)	"TB Clubs and the TB video provided new knowledge and were educational"
		Rated Good or Very Good (%)	-	-	25 / 25 (100%)	29 / 29 (100%)	"I liked sharing experiences with other people with TB at the TB Clubs" "TB Clubs will help reduce TB stigma"



- Participants used the TB calendar to learn about TB transmission, prevention, and treatment but also marked dates to **support adherence to TB treatment**.
- Participants reported increased **motivation** by exchange of TB knowledge and experience, and **empowerment** and **reduced self-stigma** from social support.
- Participants reported cash **improved their ability to buy nutritious food and reduced their out-of-pocket costs**.
- PHC TB Focal Persons have since continued to run **TB Clubs independently**.

## WHAT ARE ASCOT'S RESEARCH AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS?



- The MRC-funded ASCOT pilot trial has shown that a socioeconomic support package for TB-affected households in Nepal is **feasible, acceptable, and suitable for large-scale evaluation** in an effectiveness-implementation trial.
- The **ASCOT team is applying for funding** to conduct a **large-scale two-arm trial** of integrated socioeconomic support for TB-affected households in Nepal, which will be vital to **inform future evidence-based policy and practice**.

## CONTACTS

**Central Office**  
BNMT Nepal  
PO Box: 20564 lazimpat-2, Kathmandu  
**Tel:** +977 1 4436434, **Fax:** +977 1 4439108  
Email: bnmtnepal@bnmt.org.np

**Mr. Raghu Dhital**  
Executive Director, BNMT  
Phone: +977 1 4436434  
Email: raghu.dhital@bnmt.org.np

**Mr. Bhola Rai**  
Project Manager  
Phone: +977 57 521023  
Mobile: +977 9851107709  
Email: bhola@bnmt.org.np

 BiratNepal  bnmtnp  
**Dr. Tom Wingfield**  
Principal Investigator ASCOT  
LSTM  
Email: tom.wingfield@lstm.ac.uk