

## US assists QC vs TB, Covid-19

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IN celebration of National Lung Month, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) supported the **Quezon City local government** in boosting its tuberculosis-detection efforts by integrating free TB screening at select Covid-19 booster vaccination sites in the city, which started on August 22.

USAID Philippines Acting Mission Director Rebekah Eubanks joined House Speaker Martin Romualdez, Health Department Officer in Charge Dr. Maria Rosario Vergeire and Quezon City **Vice Mayor Gian Sotto** in launching the integrated TB screening and booster-vaccination events at the Batasang Pambansa Complex.

“The US government continues to demonstrate its commitment to help the Philippines achieve its development goals and more important, survive this pandemic that has hampered economic activities and continues to affect the health of Filipino families,” said Eubanks. “Together, we are forging stronger public-private partnerships to bolster health response efforts for both TB and Covid-19.”

Romualdez thanked USAID for its partnership and reiterated the Lower House’s support of prevention efforts for the two diseases: “Our role in Congress will be to engage our peers to allocate funds for sustainable TB detection, care, treatment and prevention. We will include [in our agenda integration efforts to contain them].”

To support the Philippines’s TB and Covid-19 prevention efforts, USAID is training health-care workers on infection prevention and control, as well as offering workshops on community TB screening and contact tracing. USAID is also offering free chest X-rays, referrals of Tb-presumptive individuals for treatment, and linking with the QC Health Office to spread information about TB prevention and control.

“Through this program, TB screening will be more accessible to high-risk communities,” said Vice Mayor Gian Sotto. “We will be able to reach out to a greater number of individuals and provide them access to treatment.”

Sotto also underscored the importance of joint efforts between the Philippine government and private partners to end TB amid Covid-19: “We are very [thankful as well for] the additional resources from USAID, University Research Co. LLC and their partner Advance Abilities. [With their help, our work in QC will be easier].”

Since the pandemic began the US government has invested more than P2.8 billion (\$50 million) in the country’s Covid-19 response. USAID has also armed the Health Department and local-government partners with P130 million (\$2.3 million) worth of innovative tools for TB detection, diagnosis, treatment and prevention.