

March 2010 action:

TB: a disease of the past? Action now!

Calling on the new UK government to ensure TB is a priority

RESULTS
the power to end poverty

TAKE ACTION:

Ask your Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs) to ensure that their party makes fighting TB a priority after the General Election.

- Identify which candidates are running for election in your constituency (the RESULTS office can help you gather information on who your candidates are and how to contact them).
- Write to each candidate. Introduce yourself as a constituent who is concerned about the lack of progress made in tackling TB globally. Keep your letter short (1½ max) and to the point. Take care when writing to your current MP to address them as your current representative in parliament, as well as acknowledging that they are a candidate in the upcoming election, and make it clear that you are looking for an election pledge.
- Outline why it is so important for the new government to prioritise TB, particularly in light of the challenges mentioned in the action sheet and background sheets.
- Highlight the actions that you would like the new government to take to help stop TB using information from this action sheet and the UK Coalition to Stop TB's 'election asks'.
- End by making specific requests: ask your PPCs to (a) forward a copy of the UK Coalition to Stop TB's 'election asks' to their party leader; (b) ask that the PPC's party make a public statement around World TB Day outlining how they would support the fight against TB if elected; (c) ask your PPC to personally commit to supporting the fight against TB if they are elected.
- Ask for a response and remember to forward any responses you get to the office!

Introduction

In 2010, tuberculosis (TB) will kill 2 million people - that is 5,000 people every day. Along with HIV/AIDS, TB is one of the leading causes of mortality in the world and was declared a "global emergency" by the World Health Organisation (WHO) back in 1993. Almost two decades later, TB remains a global pandemic, with more than two billion people – equal to one third of the world's total population – currently infected with TB bacilli, the microbes that cause TB.

With both World TB day (24th March) and the UK general election approaching, RESULTS and the UK Coalition to Stop TB are calling on the new UK government to put TB at the top of their global health agenda. TB is an ancient disease that has been with us for centuries but by taking action now, the new UK government can help to ensure that TB really does become a disease of the past.

TB: the ongoing pandemic

TB is an airborne disease which is both preventable and curable, yet millions of people are infected with, and die of TB every year. TB is a disease of poverty mostly affecting young adults in their most productive years. The latest figures from the WHO show that globally there were an estimated 9.4 million new cases of TB in 2008 (3.6 million of whom were women) and 1.8 million people died from TB that same year including 500,000 people with HIV.

The greatest burden of TB is felt in developing countries, particularly Africa and Asia which together account for more than 80 per cent of all TB cases worldwide. TB is also on the rise in developed countries. In the UK, TB has re-emerged from the history books, with almost 8,000 cases reported in England in 2008 (a rise of 2% on the previous year) Major cities like London, Manchester and Leeds are at the front-line showing major rises in TB cases. TB rates in parts of London rival that of some countries in Africa.

The Global Plan to Stop TB

Over the past few years, the global TB problem has received greater attention from the international community. Governments, donors and NGOs have been working together to develop policies and initiatives aimed at eliminating TB as a global health problem. This charge has been led by the Stop TB Partnership, a global network of organisations (including RESULTS) established in 1998 to accelerate social and political action to stop the spread of TB.

In 2006, the Stop TB Partnership launched the *Global Plan to Stop TB*. This document provides a detailed blueprint for what actions are needed to reach the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of reducing TB incidence by 2015 as well as the Stop TB Partnership's more ambitious targets of halving TB prevalence and deaths by 2015 (from 1990 levels). If the *Plan* is implemented it will result in 14 million lives saved.

The UK's response

Gordon Brown, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, participated in the launch of the *Global Plan to Stop TB* and called on world leaders to ensure that the Plan was implemented and fully funded. Since 2006, RESULTS UK has helped to mobilise support for the *Global Plan to Stop TB* amongst MPs and the media. This, plus the efforts of other organisations working on TB has resulted in the UK government increasing the amount of money it spends on TB programmes as well as research and development into new TB drugs. The UK has also significantly increased its support to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, the biggest funder of TB programmes in poor countries (see background sheet 1 for more information on what the UK has done to date).

Although the UK has stepped up its response to TB since 2006, there is still much more that the Department for International Development (DFID) could do to help ensure that global TB control targets are met.

Why do we need action now?

There is more TB in the world today than ever before. Despite TB's devastating impact both in the UK and worldwide, TB is still not a priority within DFID's global health agenda. With less than 5 years to go to achieve the *Global Plan* objectives and to meet the MDGs targets on TB, urgent action is needed.

Although funding for TB control has increased, it is estimated that there will still be a funding gap of US\$ 2.1 billion in 2010. In addition to a lack of resources, TB-HIV co-infection, drug-resistant TB and the lack of new updated drugs, vaccines and diagnostic tools pose major challenges to TB control efforts (see background sheet 2 for more details on these challenges).

Moreover, the economic crisis is jeopardising the lives of millions of people as governments and donors are threatening to cut back on development and health financing. For example, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) recently announced it is at least \$4 billion short of the money it will need to continue funding essential HIV, TB and malaria services in 2010.

Opportunities for World TB Day 2010

The UK Coalition to Stop TB was formed in 2008 to raise the level of awareness, commitment and political will to eradicate TB worldwide. RESULTS UK is a

founding member of the Coalition and currently coordinates its activities.

In the run up to the UK General Election the Coalition is marking World TB day 2010 by launching a campaign urging the new UK government to prioritise TB in its domestic and international health agendas. Through a collection of "election asks", the UK Coalition to Stop TB is calling on all political parties and future decision makers to step up and ensure the fight against TB is won.

Our asks to the new UK government

As both a donor and a TB-affected country, the UK is uniquely placed to play a pivotal role in the fight against TB. The purpose of this campaign is to call on a new government to seize the opportunity to be a leading actor in the international response to TB by implementing these key measures:

- Increasing financial support to TB programmes in the poorest countries, and contributing its 'fair share' in the replenishment of the GFATM this October.
- Integrating TB into all of DFID's health policies and programmes, including HIV, maternal health and nutrition.
- Reviewing and updating DFID's 2005 Practice Paper on TB and Malaria.
- Ensuring TB is a priority at the MDG Review Summit in September and at other key global meetings.
- Promoting the research and development of new drugs, diagnostics and vaccines.
- Addressing the key social and economic determinants that increase people's vulnerability to TB and other diseases of poverty (see background sheet 2 for an example dealing with the particular case of women and TB).

How you can influence the fight against TB

In the run up to the General Election, Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (PPCs), who are the people standing for election, will be keen to learn which issues are important to their constituents.

By writing to your PPCs in advance of World TB day, you can help encourage each political party to make a public statement outlining their support for tackling TB and to articulate what specific actions they would take to fight TB if elected into government.

Through this action, you will also be educating your future MP about an important issue that may be new to them. You will be building a relationship with a potential

new parliamentary champion for international health and development issues. The PPCs who are not elected may turn out to be powerful champions in your community and could be a useful ally for your local advocacy and media work.

For more information, visit:

www.stoptb.org/globalplan

www.stoptbuk.org

www.who.int/tb/en