



Rio de Janeiro hosts the first Subcommittee of Diseases Determined by Poverty public hearing to listen to civil society organizations

Last Thursday, June 6, the first public hearing of the Subcommittee of Diseases Determined by Poverty was held in the Legislative School of Rio de Janeiro. The public hearing purpose was to hear civil society and acknowledge actions being taken in order to fight diseases such as TB and leprosy.

More than 170 people attended the hearing, including government representatives and civil society. Professor Cristina Pimenta from the University Veiga de Almeida used the event as an opportunity to have an extra-class activity and brought 14 students from both Nursing school and Biologic Sciences. "This is a great opportunity to encourage active exercise of citizenship, as well as to discuss the importance of articulating the academic knowledge with the experiences from civil society and government bodies."



During the hearing, civil society organizations exposed their main challenges in the elaboration and implementation of public policies related to health.



According to the Stop TB Brazil Executive Secretary, Jair Brandão, "we need to ensure that the project approved for the Budget Guidelines Law 2013 is maintained for the next years".

Jair also defended the need to encourage the civil society participation so that the actions taken by the authorities reflect the reality in the communities and the needs from the people affected by TB. "We need to direct policies to people, not numbers. We have to feed the people, not information systems. We need to ensure access to nutrition, education, culture... And in order to do that, we need to come up with solutions for the NGOs sustainability, especially those acting to fight stigma and discrimination that are related to these diseases".

The president of the Movement for Reintegration of People Affected by Leprosy (Morhan), Artur Custódio, presented the diagnosis of the leprosy situation in Brazil and highlighted the lack of policies and campaigns to bring visibility to prevention and care of the disease.

Germano Gerard Filho, from the Ataulpho de Paiva Foundation, was the first NTP manager of Brazil. He highlighted that the discontinuity of public policies are the greatest obstacle to eradicate diseases determined by poverty. “It is necessary to establish a regulatory frame for NGOs that work in the health field since excessive bureaucracy has been preventing more effective actions from civil society organizations”, he stated.

The TB NGO Forum representative, Wanda Lúcia Branco Guimarães, believes that to eradicate the diseases, it is also necessary to build integrated policies, involving different government bodies, in all three levels: federal, state and municipal.

Congressman Antonio Brito, also president of the Parliamentary Front to Fight TB, reminded that the Subcommittee is an opportunity to bring political visibility and to diagnose health related public policies necessary to provide change.



The congressman reminded the actions developed by the Parliamentary Front in its first year of existence: “After only three months of established, the Front was able to modify the Budget Guidelines Law. Following that, we mobilized the National Congress advocating for the 100 Amendment, raising awareness of parliamentarians to increase the budget in amendments related to the theme”.

Congressman Antonio Brito understands that the next step is to implement parliamentary fronts in the states and municipalities and search for alternative responses to sustain the social movement actions. “We have to act in the Congress and in the Legislative Assemblies. The laws are there. That is the place to raise TB awareness.”



After the cycle of public hearings and accessing data from states and municipalities, the Subcommittee will present a report diagnosing the actions addressed to poverty related diseases. The next hearings will be directed to government authorities and academia. The president of the Subcommittee, Congresswoman Benedita da

Silva, ensured: “The work of the Subcommittee does not end with this final report. It will be continued in the Committee for Social Security with the support from the Parliamentary Front to Fight TB”.