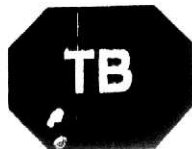


STOP



Partnership, Nigeria

Our Ref: WSTBD/NG/2/05

Your Ref:-----

1025 Accra Street

Wuse, Zone 2, Abuja

Date 12th March, 2005

Embargoed until Monday, 21, March 2005

## **World Stop TB Day, 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2005**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2005 is World Stop Tuberculosis Day, a day set aside by the World Health Organization to create awareness about tuberculosis and mobilize public and political support for its elimination.

World TB Day commemorates the day in 1882 when the German Physician, Dr. Robert Koch astounded the scientific community with his discovery of the germ that causes tuberculosis (TB) known as Mycobacterium tuberculosis.

The medical community received Koch's discovery with a high level of enthusiasm as TB was a fearsome killer then and dreaded like AIDS. They believed that the breakthrough by Robert Koch will bring an end to TB in the world. Instead, more than a century later, TB is killing more people than at any other time in history, nearly 3million people annually, worldwide. About 1/3 of the World's population is infected with TB.

The advent of HIV/AIDS has fast forwarded the TB epidemic and more worrisome is the increasing number of people dually infected with HIV and TB. About 14 million people around the World according to estimates by the World Health Organization are currently living with HIV/AIDS co-infection.

Since 1993 when the World Health Organization (WHO) declared tuberculosis to be a global health emergency, the international community has struggled to find the means to control the growing pandemic

The best way of preventing TB is by curing it and the best way to cure TB patients is by the use of the strategy approved by the World Health Organization, known as Directly Observed Treatment, Short-course (DOTS), a strategy that ensures patient compliance by ensuring that they take powerful anti-TB drugs under strict supervision.

### **The Global Plan to Stop TB**

The targets of the global plan are:

- To adapt the DOTS strategy to meet the emerging challenges of TB/HIV co-infection and drug resistance.
- To improve existing tools by developing new diagnostics, drugs and vaccines; and
- To strengthen the Stop TB Partnership so that proven TB control strategies are developed and effectively applied.

These require building a strong partnership, upholding principles of inclusiveness, transparency and responsiveness among all partners with a particular focus on TB endemic countries including Nigeria.

Resource mobilization is a vital objective in the stop TB efforts.

### **World Stop TB Day, 2005**

The theme of World Stop TB Day 2005 is "Frontline TB Care Provides: Heroes in the fight against tuberculosis". The theme recognizes the crucial role of frontline TB care providers in

treating millions of patients every year which will in turn create opportunities to address a number of key issues facing national TB control efforts.

The primary targets are the policy makers, media, public health workers, civil society groups and communities affected by TB in the 22 high burden countries (HBCs) including Nigeria highlighting the vital role of frontline TB care providers and the need to show maximal political commitment, resources and tools to support their work.

The coalition of the National Tuberculosis and Leprosy Control Programme (NTBLCP), the World Health Organization, the TEEPAC Organization, Enhance Project (USAID), the German Leprosy and TB Relief Association among others are collaborating to organize this year's World Stop TB Day in Nigeria.

In Abuja, the event will start at 8a.m on 24<sup>th</sup> March, 2005 with a 5km stop TB march/motorcade from Mabuchi junction to terminate at Old Parade Ground, Garki, Area 1, Abuja for the main event. The Honourable Minister of Health, Prof Eyitayo Lambo shall deliver a keynote address.

Another major event will hold in Anambra State at the Dennis Memorial Grammar School (DMGS) Onitsha with the Anambra State Commissioner of Health, Prof. J.I.B Adinma as Chief Host. The event will be declared open by the Anambra State Executive Governor, Dr. Chris N. Ngige by 11am. The event is being organized by the Stop TB Partnership of the TEEPAC Organization in Anambra State.

### **Conclusion**

TB has continued to kill more people around the World despite the existence of a perfect solution found in the directly observed treatment, short-course (DOTS) strategy. At the same time the rising incidence of both multi drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) and of TB/HIV co-infection pose serious new challenges to the response effort.

Around the World, TB partners repeatedly list the lack of political and financial commitment at the national, regional and community levels among the biggest obstacles to mobilizing community involvement, private sector support and the cooperation of mass media.


National Tuberculosis Programme Managers should seek a greater degree of participation from all non governmental stakeholders, since the TB burden is becoming too large not to share the load.

Government commitment to sustained TB control activities is vital. The Government financial commitment is extremely important.

The most exciting opportunity for action against TB was the creation of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GFATM) in 2002.

The country should fulfill all the requirements of the GFATM through the Country Co-ordinating Mechanism (CCM) and access fund for the TB component of the fund.

The time to do this is now.

 17/03/2005

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