

Press Release

24 March 2004

CELEBRATION OF WORLD TB DAY 2005 IN ETHIOPIA

24 March 2005, Addis Ababa: A half day symposium is organized at the conference hall of the Federal Ministry of Health of Ethiopia to commemorate the 2005 World TB Day. The symposium is opened by the State Minister of Health of the Federal Democratic republic of Ethiopia, Dr Tedros Adhanom in the presence of high government officials, the representative of the World Health Organization in Ethiopia, Ambassadors, representatives of partners in the TB and Leprosy control program in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa University students and other invited guests.

The main highlight of the symposium is the establishment of a “**STOP TB COMMUNITY**” in Ethiopia as a strategic partnership to facilitate communications and resource mobilizations as well as providing technical assistance to the TB Control Programme. The high prevalence of individuals co-infected with TB and HIV requires urgent and innovative public health interventions to prevent the spread of both diseases. The growing TB epidemic is a serious challenge which calls for increased collaboration between tuberculosis program and other stakeholders involved in HIV/AIDS prevention and control activities. Membership consists of all stakeholders (both national and international) who have the interest and expertise to contribute to the national effort to reduce the incidence and prevalence of TB in Ethiopia.

It is estimated that one-third of the world population is infected with tuberculosis. Each year, 9 million people all over the world develop TB and 2 million die as a result of the disease. As indicated in the message of the WHO Regional Director for Africa, Dr Luis Gomes Sambo, in his message on the occasion of World TB Day 2005, “the region (Sub-Saharan Africa) which has 10 percent of the world population accounts for at least 25 percent of global notified TB cases every year.” The TB and Leprosy Control Program of the Federal Ministry of Health of Ethiopia detected and treated 121,000 new cases in 1996 EC. It is also estimated that 30% of these TB cases are HIV positive. However, low awareness in the community and insufficient access to health services for the population results in inadequate health seeking behaviour and consequently many more TB patients are not detected.

Since 1994 a combined TB and Leprosy control programme is being implemented in Ethiopia. The objective of this program is to reduce the incidence and prevalence of TB and Leprosy as well as the occurrence of disability and psychosocial suffering related to both diseases and the mortality resulting from TB to a level where both diseases are no longer public health problems.

The control programme is fully integrated into the general health services since 1997. A specialized unit within the general health service at the central and regional level supports the program in planning, monitoring, evaluation, training, technical supervision, drug supply and research.

Front-line health workers play a central role in the fight against tuberculosis. Recognizing this fact the TB and Leprosy Control Program of Ethiopia has developed a comprehensive human resource development strategy which, when fully implemented, will ensure that at all levels of the health care delivery system, competent technical and managerial staff are available to successfully carry out and sustain TB and Leprosy control in Ethiopia. To this end, several training modules and training tools focusing on the DOTS and MDT strategies for TB and Leprosy control respectively have been developed for the training of various categories of health workers at the different levels of the health care delivery system. Using these modules training of trainers courses and regional training have been successfully conducted.

The global theme for this year World TB Day celebration is: **Front-line TB Care Providers: Heroes in the fight against tuberculosis.** This theme highlights the crucial role health care providers, in the field and at the different levels of the health care system, play in the fight against TB. Even with the tremendous scientific breakthrough in improved diagnostics and effective treatment for TB, front-line health care providers will still remain to be the critical factors in delivering services for the prevention, control and treatment of tuberculosis.

In Ethiopia the theme chosen for this year World TB Day is: **Open a window and prevent TB.** It implies that we need to take every opportunity available to us by way of new scientific knowledge and technology for the control of tuberculosis. It also implies that strengthening partnership among national, regional and international stakeholders is needed for maximizing the effort in the fight against TB.

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