

## **WHAT SHOULD WE BREATHE?**

### **Open letter to Community**

Dear Citizens,

You have witnessed and participated in our STOP TB efforts in the mandals. With your help and cooperation, we were able to help cure more than 200 TB patients in our community. Once again, we turn to you to join us in eradicating a dangerous strain of TB, which is Multi Drug Resistant TB. Otherwise, the gains we made on controlling TB will all be lost if do not move to control MDR TB. Due to the journey together in fighting TB with support of ANESVAD Foundation, Spain, we know well about the seriousness of spreading the infection, and the importance of early detection and adherence. As an NGO that is working with the TB patients, we understand the painful horror of the disease, the length of treatment, and the stigma, loneliness, and fear that accompany it. We know well about the seriousness of spreading the infection, and the importance of early detection and adherence

According to a World Health Organization (WHO), report multi drug resistant TB (MDR – TB) is a deadly infectious disease that needs immediate attention. WHO's leading infectious disease experts estimate there are 300 000 new cases per year of MDR-TB worldwide. There is also new evidence proving drug resistant strains are becoming more resistant, and unresponsive to current treatments. Seventy nine percent of MDR-TB cases are now "super strains", resistant to at least three of the four main drugs used to cure TB.

Without the correct drugs, MDR-TB is untreatable and in most cases fatal. Though curing 'normal' TB is cheap and effective - a six-month course of medicines costs US\$ 10 -, treating drug resistant TB is a hundred times more expensive. Even then, a cure is not guaranteed. With no effective vaccine, everyone is vulnerable to infection simply by breathing in a droplet carrying a virulent drug resistant strain. Highest prevalence of MDR-TB coincides with one of the world's fastest growing HIV infection rates. People whose immune systems are compromised with HIV are many times more susceptible to contracting all forms of TB. The most effective strategy to prevent the emergence of drug resistance is through implementation of the DOTS. It has proven effective in preventing drug resistance. "MDR TB has now been identified in every region and almost every country surveyed in what is the largest drug resistance surveillance project of its kind. Yet the true burden is unknown and may well be higher in un surveyed areas, stressing the need for full expansion of drug resistance surveillance."

We call on you, dear citizens, to demand from the Health Care Efforts a TB emergency response. Only your active involvement and leadership will start an initiative that will begin to cater to treatment and control of MDR TB from our communities. With air contaminated with MDR TB germs, everyone is at risk of MDR TB. To live we need to breathe air, should we breathe or not?

We thank you for your consideration, and your support in the struggle to Stop TB. Join us in this essential battle

Regards

ROSE/SVS