U.S. GLOBAL HEALTH POLICY

FACT SHEET

The Global Tuberculosis Epidemic

June 2010

Tuberculosis (TB) is an airborne, infectious disease caused by bacteria that most often affect the lungs. Despite being preventable and curable, TB remains one of the world's major causes of illness and death and in 1993, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared TB to be a global health emergency:

- One-third of the world's population, or two billion people, carry the TB bacteria, more than 9 million of whom become sick each year with "active" TB which can be spread to others. "Latent TB" disease is not contagious.
- TB disproportionately affects people in resource-poor settings, particularly those in Asia and Africa.[1] More than 90% of new TB cases and deaths occur in developing countries, posing significant challenges to the livelihoods of individuals and developing economies as TB strikes people in their prime, the most productive years.
- DOTS, "directly observed treatment, short-course", is the internationally recommended strategy to control TB. DOTS aims to decrease TB-related morbidity, prevent TB deaths, and decrease TB transmission. These efforts have shown some promising signs: TB incidence, prevalence and mortality rates appear to have declined in recent years while case detection and treatment rates have increased (the number of people treated with TB has increased, but it is largely due to population growth).[2]
- Still, many challenges remain. Poor health systems, limited laboratory capacity for case detection, treatment barriers and complications (unreliable drug supply, patients not completing treatment, or patients with HIV/AIDS or drug-resistant TB), and the presence of drug-resistant TB pose serious threats to global TB control.

Figure 1: The 22 High Burden TB Countries (HBCs)

Non-HBC
HBCs

Current Global Snapshot[2]

TB is found in every country in the world, but the majority of TB cases are concentrated in developing countries, particularly those in Asia and Africa.

- In 2008, an estimated 11.1 million people were living with (active) TB, including 9.4 million new cases. There were an estimated 1.8 million TB deaths in 2008, including 500,000 deaths that were HIV-positive.
- Twenty-two countries are considered "high-burden" countries (HBCs) for TB, based on the estimated number of TB cases per year; most HBCs are in Africa and Asia. India, China, South Africa, Nigeria, and Indonesia have the highest number of new TB cases in the world.
- In 2008, the global TB incidence rate was 139 per 100,000 population, down from a peak of 143 per 100,000 in 2004.
- Global TB prevalence (164 per 100,000 population) and death rates (20 per 100,000 population) are also on the decline.
- The global case detection rate under DOTS programs was 61% in 2008, up from 36% in 2000 and 22% in 1997. The treatment success rate (87%) exceeded the global target of 85% in 2007.
- If current trends remain, the internationally-agreed upon targets of the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to halt and reverse the incidence of TB by 2015, appear to be within reach. The additional MDG target of halving the prevalence and death rate of TB by 2015 will be achieved in most regions, with sub-Saharan Africa as the exception.

Figure 2: TB Incidence, Prevalence and Deaths by Region, 2008[2,3]

WHO Region (# of HBCs)	No. in Thousands (%)	Per 100,000 Pop.	No. in Thousands (%)	Per 100,000 Pop.	No. in Thousands (%)	Per 100,000 Pop.
Global Total (22)	9,400 (100%)	139	14,000 (100%)	164	1,800 (100%)	20
Africa (8)	3,000 (32%)	342	4,600 (33%)	524	1,000 (56%)	114
Americas (1)	370 (4%)	37	370 (3%)	37	38 (2%)	4
E. Mediterranean (3)	410 (4%)	73	600 (4%)	106	110 (6%)	20
Europe (1)	420 (4%)	46	350 (2%)	38	38 (2%)	4.3
SE Asia (5)	3,210 (34%)	180	4,100 (29%)	230	400 (22%)	22
Western Pacific (4)	1,940 (21%)	108	3,900 (28%)	217	200 (11%)	11

- **Africa:**[1] ABS: 3 million new TB cases, Africa accounts for almost a third of the global total, and has the highest incidence and prevalence rates (342 and 524 per 100,000). Six of the 10 countries with the highest incidence rates in the world, and 8 of the 22 HBCs, are in Africa. In 2008, Africa's case detection rate was the lowest in the world.
- **Americas:**[1] The Americas is one of least affected regions in the world with the lowest TB incidence and prevalence rates, and only one HBC—Brazil. The region's case detection rate was the second lowest in the world (70%) and its treatment success rate (82%) was below the 85% global target.
- **Eastern Mediterranean:**[1] There were 870,000 new TB cases in the Eastern Mediterranean in 2008. Despite significant recent increases in case detection rates, the region's 2008 rate (58%) was still below the global target. The region's 3 HBCs in the Eastern Mediterranean—Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- **Europe:**[1] Europe, with 425,000 new TB cases in 2008, ranks low in incidence and prevalence rates (just above the Americas). Europe has the highest case detection rate (75%), but the treatment success rate (70%) is below the global target of 85%. Europe has the lowest treatment success rate (67%) of any region. Additionally, in the Russian Federation, only HBC in Europe, the treatment success rate was lower than all other HBCs in 2007.

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