

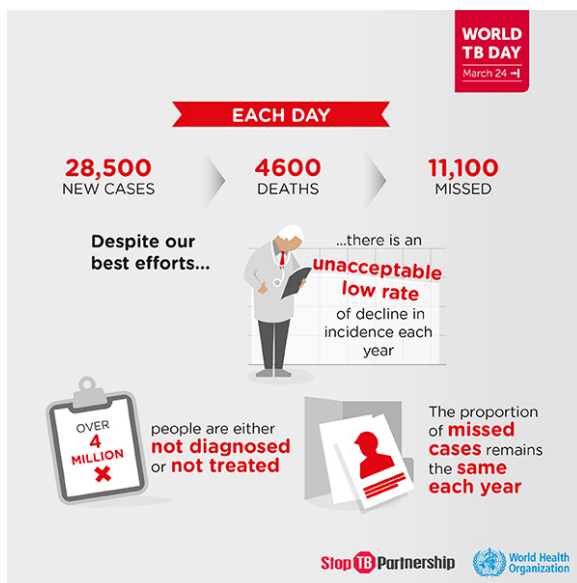
## It's time to end TB once and for all

TB is the world's biggest infectious killer – even though it's treatable, curable, and preventable. Why does this disease still kill more than 4,000 people *every single day*? Because world leaders haven't made ending it a priority.

The world is full of intractable problems, but this doesn't need to be one of them. *We can end TB*. While we still face major challenges – including the rise of [drug resistant](#) strains of the disease – this is an opportunity in the way so many other things aren't. But we need to make the decision to do it and then commit the necessary funds.

So: no more excuses. No more putting this off until there's more money or a better time. Too many people have lost their lives, too many more stand to do so. As yet another [World TB Day](#) approaches, increased awareness isn't enough. We need *action*, and we need it now. It's time to end this disease once and for all.

### TB is a cause and consequence of poverty



One reason TB hasn't been a political priority – and why it has surpassed HIV/AIDS as the world's leading infectious killer – is because the people it affects are among the most marginalized. The vast majority of TB-related deaths occur in lower income countries. Living in poverty makes you more likely to get TB, and getting TB makes you more likely to be pushed into poverty (or deeper into it).

Why?

Undernutrition, poorly ventilated housing and schools, and a lack of access to basic health care are all risk factors for TB. Treatment for

TB can last months, but for drug-resistant TB it's even worse – treatment can last years and cost thousands of dollars. Maintaining employment can become impossible, and it's not unusual for people to spend everything they have over the course of diagnosis and treatment.

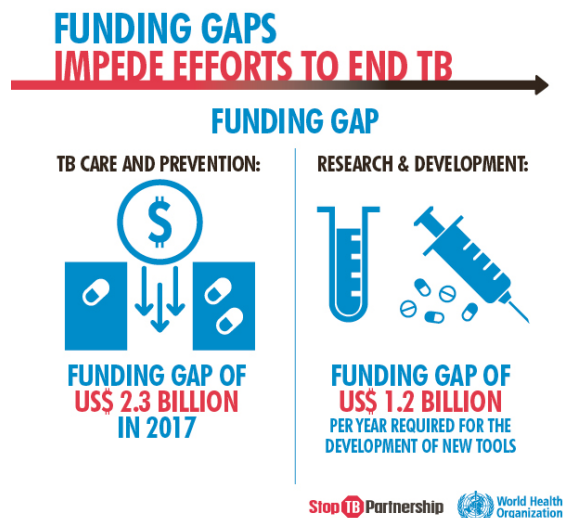
And there are other, more invisible, consequences: the [stigma](#) of TB can be so severe that people will often delay seeking treatment or try to seek treatment in other towns so

no one in their community will know. Sometimes kids get pulled out of school to care for family members. The socioeconomic impact ripples into entire families and communities.

It doesn't have to be this way. But in order to end TB, we have to prioritize the lives of *all* people. Every life has to be "worth" saving. We have to acknowledge that TB is a justice issue, an equity issue, and a cause and consequence of poverty.

## **In 2018, we have a chance to change the trajectory of TB – let's seize it.**

This fall, world leaders will gather for a UN high level meeting to make commitments in the fight against TB. Right now, over 10 million people get TB every year and 1.7 million die from the disease. But one in three people sick with TB aren't even being reached by their health system. If we want to end the disease, the first step is to reach these "missing millions." When heads of state and other world leaders gather at the UN, they need to commit to putting in the attention and resources to make that happen.



*It's up to us to make sure decision makers not only pay attention this year, but take action on TB.*

The global funding gap for treatment and prevention is about \$2 billion. Right now, 85 percent of the money going towards TB comes from high-burden countries themselves. Countries like the United States can do so much more to drive up diagnosis and treatment rates, build up the capacity of TB programs, and fund sorely needed research. It's an investment that would have invaluable returns.

But it's not only a matter of financial resources – we also need the right policies and a laser focus to end this epidemic. This disease is preventable and treatable, but only if we do what it takes to reach everyone.

More information about TB: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs104/en/>

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