

# TUBERCULOSIS ELIMINATION CAUCUS

## Tuberculosis: Challenges and Opportunities

Tuberculosis (TB) is the second leading global infectious killer, right behind HIV/AIDS. A bacterium spread mainly by a cough, this airborne disease knows no borders.

With U.S. leadership and investments, major strides have been made in the effort to end TB. Globally, TB prevalence and deaths from TB have been cut nearly in half since 1990. Currently, affected countries themselves provide 89 percent of total spending for TB programs.<sup>1</sup>

However, TB still killed 1.5 million people globally in 2013, and it sickened a total of nine million. The rate of new cases is falling only very slowly.<sup>2</sup> While TB is curable, its treatment is lengthy, and the disease pushes people further into poverty.

In the U.S., every state reports TB cases every year and many states are grappling with cases of drug resistant TB. Since 2011, the U.S. has spent an average of \$14.5 million annually responding to multi-drug resistant TB cases in the U.S.<sup>3</sup> U.S. TB programs need strong support, yet funding for domestic TB has been cut significantly, leaving our communities vulnerable.

To build foundations for countries to defeat TB, we must promote approaches which make it easier for patients to access and complete treatment. The spread of drug-resistant TB is a health emergency, but the majority of patients in affected countries are not receiving treatment.<sup>4</sup>

We also need to invest more in improving tools for diagnosis, treatment, and prevention. Current TB tools are behind the times and cannot adequately respond to the evolving disease – including drug-resistant strains that are very costly and difficult to treat.

## Tuberculosis Elimination Caucus

In March 2012, Congressmen Eliot Engel (D-NY), Don Young (R-AK), and Gene Green (D-TX) founded the first-ever Tuberculosis Elimination Caucus, and it now has over 30 members. This bipartisan caucus provides opportunities for members of Congress to join together to support both domestic and global tuberculosis programs and rally bipartisan concern in Congress.

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<sup>1</sup> WHO Global Tuberculosis Report 2014, Page 91

[http://www.who.int/tb/publications/global\\_report/gtbr14\\_main\\_text.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/tb/publications/global_report/gtbr14_main_text.pdf?ua=1)

<sup>2</sup> WHO Global Tuberculosis Report 2014. Page xi

<sup>3</sup> Marks SM, Flood J, Seaworth B, Hirsch-Moverman Y, Armstrong L, Mase S, et al. Treatment practices, outcomes, and costs of multidrug-resistant and extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis, United States, 2005–2007. *Emerging Infect Diseases*, 2014 May

<sup>4</sup> WHO MDR-TB 2014 Update

Caucus activities have included:

- Caucus-sponsored briefings on tuberculosis issues for members of Congress and staff.
- Letters supporting global and domestic TB funding.
- Letters to the Administration about the urgency of tuberculosis.

There is also a **Global TB Caucus**, founded in October 2014 following a meeting of parliamentarians from around the world. The

purpose is to forge a worldwide political commitment to end the TB epidemic. Nearly 400 parliamentarians from 57 countries have joined, including several from the U.S.



Jerome has multidrug-resistant TB; he underwent treatment for over a month in the Philippines. *WHO/HM.Dias*

## How U.S. Assistance is Making a Difference

U.S. investments in tuberculosis are saving lives and building capacity so that countries can do more to treat and prevent TB. Some key global TB successes include:

- **Providing an urgently needed response to drug resistant TB:** With assistance from USAID, the 23 priority countries nearly doubled the number of multi-drug resistant TB patients enrolled in treatment from 2012 to 2013.<sup>5</sup>
- **Implementing patient and community-centered approaches:** USAID builds capacity for community involvement as well as patient-centered approaches that make it easier for patients to get diagnosed and treated.
- **Supporting the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria:** USAID assists in the development of grant applications to the Global Fund and annual country plans.
- **Strengthening the system:** U.S. support strengthens health systems and laboratories in affected countries, building their capacity to promptly diagnose and treat cases.
- **Lowering costs:** USAID has helped lower medication costs for drug resistant TB by as much as 32 percent through its contribution to the Global Drug Facility.<sup>6</sup>
- **Funding crucial research:** USAID supports research on improved, faster-acting medications, and exciting progress is being made on new formulations.

## To join the Caucuses, please contact:

Catherine Barnao (Catherine.Barnao@mail.house.gov) with Congressman Eliot Engel (D-NY), or Paul Milotte (Paul.Milotte@mail.house.gov) with Congressman Don Young (R-AK). To join the Global Caucus, see [www.globaltbcaucus.org](http://www.globaltbcaucus.org) and contact [info@globaltbcaucus.org](mailto:info@globaltbcaucus.org).

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Government Global Tuberculosis Strategy

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*