State Parliamentary Fronts are spreading through Brazil

With the favorable outcomes of the Parliamentary Front to Fight TB at the National Congress, Brazilian states and cities started to articulate the establishment of local parliamentary fronts. Because TB is a socially determined disease, its fight requires political support and involvement with sectors other than within the health system.

Rio de Janeiro was the first state to establish a parliamentary front that has been functioning in a continuous way and it articulates constantly with the national front. Following the example, the state of Rio Grande do Sul was next establishing a state front.

Last June 18th, one more state managed to gather the amount of signatures needed to implement a state front: San Paulo. With the signatures, the demand for the creation of the front was registered in protocol. Activists and government representatives are currently waiting for the official implementation date.

The work on social mobilization is conducted through the State Committees of TB Combat established during the Global Fund Project in Brazil. These committees are a collective space where government representatives and civil society representatives can dialogue and search for new actions and responses on the fight against TB. Out of the 27 states, 12 have established the committee.

Other than San Paulo, the state of Ceara is also in progress to establish a state front. On July 3rd there will be a public hearing to discuss the epidemiologic situation of TB in the state, the actions that are being taken, and the different ways to expand the cause in the legislative power. It is expected for this hearing to gather enough signatures needed to implement the front.

Articulating with the parliament allows a closer follow up with political issues, the promotion of debates and seminaries in order to have a practical vision of how to interfere in the health policies and budget issues.

National Parliamentary Front in action

Formally established in May 2012, the Parliamentary Front to Fight TB gathers 220 national parliamentarians. The front is a response to demands from activists and
government representatives from public health and it was materialized when Congressman Antonio Brito sensitized and committed to take the work forward.

The Front’s main objective is to follow up national TB control policies and to contribute to the control of the disease through legislation improvements related to health, social assistance and other linked policies acting in thematic commissions in the two Houses of the National Congress.

Two months after its implementation, the Front was able to consolidate a first action: it presented an amendment to the Budget Guidelines Law which allowed more flexibility in the access to public resources. The beneficiaries are community-based organizations aiming to develop actions and promoting health in areas such as TB, HIV/AIDS, viral hepatitis, leprosy, malaria and dengue.

In September, the Front conducted a mobilization activity inside the national congress aiming to raise awareness among parliamentarians about the TB-HIV coinfection and to launch a video on the theme. A stand was put in place in the congress so that activists, students and health professionals could take information about the disease, reinforcing that TB still exists and it should be eliminated.

During the mobilization, 57 parliamentarian offices were visited in order to sensitize these authorities, showing them the possible actions that the legislative power can lead in the TB fight, either through law projects that benefit patient or through parliamentarian amendment that can subsidize research and actions to control the disease.

During this event, Congressman Antonio Brito also took advantage to launch the “Brazil without TB” campaign that aims to encourage federal deputies to designate at least 100 thousand reals to parliamentarian amendments for research in Brazil.
In March 2013, the Front encouraged the establishment of the Special Subcommittee of diseases determined by poverty. Based in public hearings and consultations with research institutions, the subcommittee will present, in 180 days, a report with the diagnosis of all actions directed to poverty related diseases. For this purpose, representatives from government, civil society and academia will be heard.