History of World TB Day

- World Tuberculosis Day, held each year on 24 March, is intended to promote awareness, knowledge, and motivation for action against tuberculosis worldwide.

- Its origin goes back to the 1982 celebration of the centenary of Koch’s discovery. Among the commemorative ceremonies and events organised by governments and NGOs, encouraged by the International Union Against Tuberculosis (IUAT) and the World Health Organization (WHO), one of the IUAT’s member associations, the Tuberculosis Association of Mali, Africa, suggested that, like World Health Day (later followed by World No-Smoking Day and International AIDS Day), an International Tuberculosis Day should be established. This proposal was later approved by the IUAT Council, and has since been commemorated jointly by the IUATLD, other NGOs and the WHO.

Past years’ themes included:

- 1999: Stop TB, use DOTS, focusing on DOTS success stories
- 2000: Forging new partnerships to Stop TB
- 2001: DOTS, TB cure for All, focusing on the human rights approach to Stop TB.

A call to expand the DOTS strategy

Improving health is a concrete, measurable way of reducing poverty and inequity, at both country and global level. Investments in health are investments in human potential. Tackling the primary diseases of poverty is a way of putting billions of dollars back into the national economies of poorer countries.

The aims of 2002’s theme:

- Emphasise the link between TB and poverty. TB is the main cause of avoidable death in poor countries. It is estimated that only 1 in 4 TB cases receives DOTS treatment.
- Increase resources for country plans to stop TB. DOTS expansion is critical if we are to reach global TB targets for 2005 and if we are to attack poverty head on. 17 of the 22 high TB burden countries are low-income countries.
Raise awareness among political leaders, decision-makers and opinion leaders around the world about the implications of TB, especially on the economy, and the fact that there is no excuse for inaction in the face of an available, cost-effective cure.

Mobilise TB sufferers and vulnerable groups to demand greater access to treatment, thereby enabling them to become productive members of their society.

“Stop TB, fight poverty”: the start of a five year campaign

In 2002, the Stop TB partnership is launching a five year campaign focusing the world’s attention on reaching specific targets, namely, by 2005:

- to detect 70% of people with infectious TB
- and to ensure that 85% of those detected are successfully treated.

During the campaign on 24 March, we urge participants (governments, non-governmental organisations etc.) in the fight against TB to ask themselves the following questions:

- What is last year’s detection rate for people with infectious TB in our country?
- What is the rate of treatment success among those detected?
- Are we on target to meet our country’s 2005 goals?
- What progress and failure should be highlighted during the day and throughout the year?
- What potential solutions are available?
- How can we put these in place?

If these questions are answered and countries which identify that they have a poor TB control situation act now, we can fight TB effectively. This will help poor countries and poor families to take steps out of poverty and save lives.
1- Global Tuberculosis Control, summary, WHO 2002.
7- Winthertur Massive Effort against Diseases of Poverty, publication, Fall 2001.
8- Global DOTS Expansion programs and funding gaps report, WHO, Fall 2001
10- Global TB Drug Facility brochure.
21- Potential Economic Benefits of the DOTS Strategy in India, WHO publication.
23- Health and Development Initiative India, A Not-For-Profit Organization, Dr. Dinesh Kumar, www.healthinitiative.org.
30- Opening Statement by Malawi’s Vice President, Justin Malewezi at a GFATM Consultation, Malawi, 2001.