Basic facts on TB

Tuberculosis

- TB kills 2 million people per year.
- The breakdown in health services, the spread of HIV/AIDS and the emergence of multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) are contributing to the worsening impact of the disease.
- It is estimated that between 2000 and 2020,
  - nearly one billion people will be newly infected
  - 200 million people will get sick
  - 35 million people will die from TB
  if control is not further strengthened.

Disease and transmission

- TB is a contagious disease that spreads through the air.
- Only people with pulmonary TB are infectious.
- Each person with infectious TB will infect on average between 10 and 15 people every year.
- Someone in the world is newly infected every second.
- Overall, one-third of the world’s population is currently infected.
- People infected with TB will not necessarily get sick.
  The immune system ‘walls off’ the TB germs which can lie dormant for years.
- 5-10% of people who are infected with TB become sick at some time during their life.

The effective tool for detection and cure, the DOTS strategy with five components:

- Political commitment to sustain TB control
- Detection of infectious cases using sputum smear microscopy
- A standardised, short-course chemotherapy regimen of six to eight months, with direct observation of treatment
- A reliable supply of high quality drugs
- Information systems for monitoring and reporting of treatment outcomes.