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TB - the 'invisible' killer of people living with AIDS

Whilst we recognise the devastating impact of AIDS in the developing world, there is little recognition of the fact that Tuberculosis (TB) is the leading cause of death amongst people living with HIV/AIDS. Treatment for AIDS must also therefore go hand in hand with treatment for TB. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, a significant instrument for securing and disbursing funds to fight these diseases, remains desperately under funded. Australia is currently providing only ten per cent of its fair share.

RESULTS Australia part of an international grassroots poverty advocacy group is calling on the Federal Government to increase funding to the Global Fund to \$215 million per year by 2010.

Maree Nutt, National Manager of RESULTS Australia says this funding is urgently needed if we are to have any hope of achieving the Millennium Development Goal to halt, and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015.

RESULTS welcomed the Government's funding commitments to the Global Fund in recent years, but noted that it currently averages a mere \$19 million annually.

"We would like to see an immediate increase in our contribution to the Global Fund of \$20 million, with a commitment to reach \$100 million by 2008. This would be in line with our fair share to combat the global burden of AIDS, TB and malaria given the size of our economy," says Ms Nutt.

Up to half the people living with AIDS have TB. Whilst TB is totally curable, the life expectancy of a person with HIV/AIDS reduces from years to weeks. If this person happens to be the family's bread winner, the impact is enormous.

Sixty-five percent of the global aid for tuberculosis is provided by the Global Fund which relies on donations from governments, corporations and individuals to operate.

Friday, 1 December 2006 is World AIDS Day.

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