

**Lifting Australia's Response to Tuberculosis**

**SUMMARY:** *Tuberculosis (TB) causes the deaths of around 2 million people each year globally, and it is the leading cause of early death amongst people with HIV in developing countries. Half of TB deaths and half of the high burden countries are in the Asia-Pacific. There has been considerable success in diagnosing and treating TB around the world. However, overall funding needs to approximately double to cut deaths significantly. Australia has been increasing its bilateral support for TB programs and its contributions to the Global Fund. However it is still well behind many comparable donors and the level of need. This month we are going to ask our MPs to seek the Prime Minister's support to double aid to the Global Fund to \$100 million in the 2010-11 budget and to ensure that TB programs also receive greater bilateral funding.*

**TUBERCULOSIS – THE UNFINISHED AGENDA**

Tuberculosis (TB) is, in most cases, a curable disease and over the last twenty years there have been considerable successes in diagnosing and treating TB. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria has been the major source of TB aid funds in recent years, providing approximately 70% of all aid resources targeting TB.

However around 2 million people die globally from the disease each year. The development of some drug resistant strains of the disease and the fact that people who are HIV-positive are particularly susceptible to TB makes reducing this toll more difficult.

Most importantly, despite increases in treatment coverage and effectiveness, so far aid and domestic resources applied to TB diagnosis and treatment have been insufficient. Each untreated person with TB is likely to infect another 10 - 15 people each year, making it imperative that there is early diagnosis and treatment in all countries.

The Asia- Pacific is home to around half of all the TB deaths each year and contains half of the twenty-two high burden countries. The table below lists the countries in the region with the highest number of deaths from TB.

**High burden TB countries in the Asia-Pacific**

	Approximate number of TB deaths in 2007		Approximate number of TB deaths in 2007
Afghanistan	8,000	Myanmar	63,000
Bangladesh	71,000	Pakistan	48,000
Cambodia	13,000	Philippines	36,000
China	201,000	Thailand	14,000
India	331,000	Vietnam	21,000
Indonesia	91,000		

Source: WHO Global Tuberculosis Control Report 2009

In recent years Australia has increased its support for the Global Fund, has funded specific TB programs especially in the Pacific and has also funded the innovative \$75 million debt swap with Indonesia which will provide \$37.5 million to support TB programs.

Despite these increases Australia needs to do more to match the contributions of comparable countries and to meet our fair share of the level of aid required. The table below compares Australia's per capita pledge to the Global Fund in 2009 with that of other comparable donor countries.

Comparable countries	2009 pledge A\$ per person	Comparable countries	2009 pledge A\$ per person
Norway	11.89	Germany	2.98
Sweden	8.09	Italy	2.92
France	6.15	United States	2.91
Denmark	4.78	United Kingdom	2.77
Netherlands	4.42	Japan	1.36
Spain	4.17	Australia	1.34
Canada	3.70		

Source: GFATM Pledges and Contributions Table accessed January 24, 2010  
Based on US to AUD exchange rate of 90c

As a first step, Australia should increase its support for the Global Fund from around \$45 million to \$100 million in the 2010-11 aid budget. This would lift our per capita support to the Fund in line with that of the UK and US in 2009. Over the next three years our support for the Global Fund should increase to Australia's fair share of the total funding required – this would be around 3% of the total Australian aid program, or \$165 million in 2012-13, assuming that the total replenishment of the Global Fund by donors is \$22 billion over three years.

As the Australian Prime Minister is meeting with US President Obama next month, it would be valuable for the two leaders to discuss how they can work together to promote increased commitments by donors when they make pledges to the Global Fund by October this year.

### **ACTION:**

Write a letter to your member of the House of Representatives or a Senator in your State, noting your concern about the continued impact of TB, including the deaths of 2 million people each year.

1. Welcome increased funding by Australia for TB programs and for the Global Fund, but note that Australia contributes less than many comparable countries.
2. Ask your MP to support an increase in aid to the Global Fund to \$100 million in the 2010-11 Federal Budget and an increase in bilateral aid funding for tuberculosis control.
3. Ask your MP to write to the Prime Minister, Mr Rudd, seeking his support for the increase in Australian support for the Global Fund, and requesting that he discuss with US President Obama how Australia and the US can build support for increased contributions by donors to the Global Fund.

### **ALTERNATIVE ACTION:**

- Write a letter to the editor, noting your concern about the impact of TB, and calling on the Australian Government to increase its contribution to the Global Fund to \$100 million in 2010-11.  
[Note: March 24 is also World TB day]
- Note the opportunity for the Australian Prime Minister and the US President to use their discussions next month to commit to encouraging increased contributions by donors to the Global Fund.

**On the Global Fund see:** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Global\\_Fund\\_to\\_Fight\\_AIDS,\\_Tuberculosis\\_and\\_Malaria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Global_Fund_to_Fight_AIDS,_Tuberculosis_and_Malaria)  
**On letter writing tips see:** [www.results.org.au](http://www.results.org.au) "Toolkit for Action"