



XDR-TB: extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis

December 2006

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL DELIVERS WARNING ON XDR-TB

In one of his last public speeches on health, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan has warned of the risks of XDR-TB, stating that “the appearance of new drug-resistant strains threatens us with a new pandemic”, during a ceremony to mark the opening of a new WHO/UNAIDS building in Geneva, Switzerland, in November. Director-General Elect, Dr Margaret Chan, has also spoken of WHO’s responsibilities in raising awareness on XDR-TB, affirming in her first speech to the World Health Assembly her determination “to build greater momentum” to control TB.

Strengthen TB control to tackle XDR-TB – a key message for World AIDS Day 2006

The impact of XDR-TB on HIV control efforts will feature in events to commemorate World AIDS Day (1 December). The WHO Stop TB and HIV/AIDS departments will highlight the urgency of addressing the disease, which is profiled in the December 2006 [UNAIDS/WHO AIDS epidemic update](#) report. Jorge Sampaio, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Stop TB, has also warned of the risks of XDR-TB across Asia if governments fail to adequately address TB control, at a WHO and [Stop TB Partnership](#) news conference in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 29 November.

US\$ 95 million needed to combat XDR-TB in 14 countries in 2007

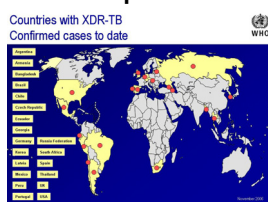
Health leaders have called on donors and governments to explore all available funding opportunities to support emergency efforts to combat XDR-TB. [The call was led by WHO Stop TB Director Dr Mario Raviglione, IUATLD and UNITAID at the 37th Union World Conference on Lung Health in Paris, France.](#) The 2007 budget covering 14 African countries requires US\$ 80 million for country activities (US\$ 40 million for second-line drugs for 9000 patients, US\$ 35 million for strengthening TB control and US\$ 5 million for rapid diagnostic tests for 154 000 patients). US\$ 15 million is required to fund vital technical assistance, to be coordinated by WHO and provided by WHO and partners.

Just published: TB diagnosis recommendations; infection control guidelines

WHO has published recommendations for improving the diagnosis and management of smear-negative TB in HIV-prevalent and resource-constrained settings. National TB and HIV control programmes should implement the recommendations in [Improving the diagnosis and treatment of smear-negative pulmonary and extrapulmonary tuberculosis among adults and adolescents: recommendations for HIV-prevalent and resource-constrained settings](#), to expedite the diagnosis and treatment of TB among people living with HIV.

Also out on the web are infection control guidelines to ensure patients, health workers and the public are protected from XDR-TB. The guidelines outline measures to prevent airborne transmission of TB, including XDR-TB, in high-risk areas such as health facilities and congregate settings. [Tuberculosis infection control in the era of expanding HIV care and treatment \(addendum\)](#) was produced by CDC(US), USAID, US PEPFAR, The Union and WHO.

Global map reveals worldwide XDR-TB cases



This month, WHO Stop TB launches a [global map](#) illustrating countries where XDR-TB has been confirmed, to coincide with preparations for countries to carry out rapid surveys of drug-resistance, as recommended by the WHO Global Task Force on XDR-TB in October 2006. The surveys will estimate the extent of XDR-TB within at-risk populations, and indicate whether further investigations are required. Laboratory capacity is being strengthened as part of the surveillance strategy, to ensure patients will have improved access to diagnosis and treatment of drug-resistant TB.

Related planning, capacity building and investigation efforts

- UNITAID board members have discussed eligibility requirements for countries that will be requesting access to second-line anti-TB drugs. Former MDR-TB patients and activists praised UNITAID for its strong TB commitment at the 29-30 November meeting, but urged the initiative “to explore and expand all avenues and runways” to ensure relevant XDR-TB projects are supported and funded, such as TB diagnostics for both MDR-TB and XDR-TB.
- Malawi and Namibia are among the first countries to share their XDR-TB emergency plans with WHO and its partners. South Africa has developed an XDR-TB Action Plan following discussions with the national TB control programme.
- New diagnostic techniques that reduce the time taken to confirm drug resistance are to undergo a large-scale evaluation through demonstration projects in South Africa. The initiative was agreed by FIND, the South African MRC, the Department of Health and WHO. The South African government will make all second-line anti-TB drugs needed to treat XDR-TB available and aims to ensure they will be delivered to patients under proper conditions.
- A team of experts from WHO, Partners In Health, and CDC(US) has delivered technical assistance to Lesotho. WHO TB consultants and WHO national officers are advising on technical assistance in Mozambique.
- The UK Department for International Development has committed to help support the global response to XDR-TB.