



## NEWSLETTER – volume 5 – July 2008

### APPG welcomes new diagnostic breakthrough

On 30<sup>th</sup> June, the World Health Organisation, in collaboration with the Stop TB Partnership, FIND (Foundation for Innovative Diagnostics) and UNITAID announced a landmark initiative to provide developing countries with a valuable new tool in the fight against the global TB epidemic.

Almost half a million people a year develop MDR-TB, a dangerous form of TB that cannot be treated with standard drugs. The normal process of diagnosing MDR-TB is very laborious and can take up to two months for results to be obtained.

**The new diagnostic tool will cut the time that results are available from two months to two days.** Shortening the delay in diagnosis will provide TB sufferers; especially those co-infected with HIV, a higher chance of survival and will also help to prevent the spread of drug resistant TB.

The initiative will support 27 developing countries in implementing the new line-probe assay and will also provide the expensive drugs needed to treat MDR-TB.

Nick Herbert MP, Co-chair of APPG on Global TB welcomed the initiative saying "The rise of drug resistant TB and its interaction with HIV is a real concern, especially in countries that don't have the resources or diagnostics to detect and treat it. This initiative is a hugely encouraging step forward in making new tools available to speed up diagnosis of the disease and ensuring that drugs are available to treat people at risk in some of the world's poorest countries."

Julie Morgan MP, Co-chair of the APPG on Global TB added "I am delighted that this initiative is being launched and will benefit 27 countries. I hope it will eventually be rolled out more widely so that the suffering of TB patients will be reduced."

### APPG urges World Bank to target TB in Africa

In March 2008, Co-chair of the APPG, Andrew George MP wrote to the new President of the World Bank - The Honourable Robert Zoellick stating his hope that the President would help to focus TB control measures in Africa and ensure more money is available for this purpose.

Vice President of the African Region, Obiageli Ezekwesili responded to the letter stating that the "Africa Region has renewed its commitment to TB control and is actively scaling up TB control" The Vice President also announced that the World Bank "is currently developing a plan to strengthen the regional laboratory network [in Africa] ... to address drug-resistant TB and improving diagnosis of co-infected people." To read the full response, please visit the APPG website.

### APPG Co-Chair debates local UK TB Services

Julie Morgan MP, Co-Chair of the APPG on Global TB opened a debate on 30<sup>th</sup> April in Westminster Hall looking at local tuberculosis services. The debate followed the launch of the APPG's report 'Putting Tuberculosis on the Local Agenda' in March 2008.

In response to Julie's comments, Minister of State for the Department of Health Dawn Primarolo outlined the Department's plans to continue its work to tackle the increasing number of cases of TB in the UK. Ms Primarolo said that the Department welcomed the recommendations of the report from the APPG and the British Thoracic Society regarding the need for a national TB awareness campaign tailored to local circumstances and aimed at health care professionals and the general public, and a named TB Lead within each PCT.

### MPs visit Bangladesh on fact-finding mission

Annette Brooke MP, a member of the APPG on Global TB, was one of three MPs who visited Bangladesh in May with the charity RESULTS UK. Bangladesh has the sixth highest TB incidence rate in the world but has made great progress in increasing treatment success and case detection rates thanks to collaboration between NGOs, Government and private sector.



During their visit, delegates met with local policy makers, health workers and TB patients. They also visited a number of rural and urban TB programmes including one based in a garment factory supported by the DFID-funded research consortium COMDIS.

### Future work of the APPG & new co-ordinator

MPS and Peers attended the APPG's AGM in Westminster on 9<sup>th</sup> July and discussed the strategic direction of the group and ideas for topics to be covered in future meetings. The APPG hopes to continue its pioneering work in the next Parliamentary session looking at both national and international dimensions of TB control.

The APPG on Global TB welcomes Debbie Laycock who began her role as full-time co-ordinator for the APPG in June. Louise Holly will continue to support Debbie and the APPG on a part-time basis.

All-Party Parliamentary Group on Global Tuberculosis

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