



## ARAŞTIRMA / RESEARCH

# Uniting to end tuberculosis: World Health Organization

## Tüberkülozu sona erdirmek için birleşmek: Dünya Sağlık Örgütü

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To the Editor,

Tuberculosis (TB) has been ranked as one of the ten most common causes of death across the globe with 1.8 million people dying from the disease in the year 2015, of which more than 95% of the disease-specific deaths were reported in developing nations<sup>1,2</sup>. In the year 2015, the global estimates revealed that 10.4 million people became sick of the disease, including 1 million children<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, it was observed that 6 out of 10 cases are from 6 nations alone, with India being the leader<sup>1-3</sup>.

The trend analysis of the available estimates since 2000 suggests that an average annual decline in the incidence of the disease had been 1.5%, while the desired rate of decline has to be 4-5% to eventually accomplish the targets laid under End TB strategy by the year 2020<sup>1-3</sup>. There are no doubts that efforts have been taken to reduce the impact of the disease, and it is clearly evident by the millions of lives saved within the era of the Millennium Development Goals, but then it is far from the expectations<sup>3</sup>. In fact, we are quite deficient in terms of the financial allocation for the prevention & control activities, as 2 billion US dollars are required to bridge the gap for the implementation of existing TB interventions<sup>3</sup>.

As per the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals, in which one of the targets is to end the TB epidemic by 2030, a two year campaign, "Unite to End TB" has been started since 2016<sup>1</sup>. This year, the World Health Organization (WHO) is giving emphasis on leaving no one behind, and is aiming to respond to the social

problems of stigma, discrimination, and barriers which are preventing people from availing care<sup>1-3</sup>. As the disease is present for centuries together and often questions human rights and dignity of an individual, and is predominant among people living in poverty or vulnerable people, it is the need of the hour to focus our attention towards them<sup>3</sup>.

The existing challenge requires extensive attention towards advocacy, communication and social mobilization activities, regarding the huge caseload, symptoms of the disease, prevention and treatment aspects of the disease among the general population and in various settings<sup>2-4</sup>. In addition, there is a need to mobilize political and social commitment to fast-track the TB related work and it essentially requires contribution from all the stakeholders<sup>2,4</sup>. In order to expedite the pace of activities, the WHO has set a 2035 target of 95% and 90% reduction in deaths and the incidence of the disease<sup>1</sup>. However, to achieve these targets, there is an indispensable need for integrated patient-centered care, comprehensive policies, and escalation of research activities combined with innovative approaches<sup>1-4</sup>.

To conclude, TB is a major public health concern and any efforts to reduce its caseload or consequences will be determined by the policy makers' commitment, quality of monitoring & evaluation activities, linkage with other agencies, and protection & promotion of human rights and equity.

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