

# Wanted: Leaders for a TB-free world

Help make World TB Day a stepping stone to September's High-Level Meeting on TB.

2018 provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to grow international leadership to tackle TB, the world's deadliest infectious disease. After years of inadequate political efforts to reduce the high human and economic costs of TB, over the last year, we have finally started to see higher-level political engagement, as the G20 meeting of world leaders in July 2017 placed TB firmly in their list of global priorities for the first time. The world has begun to realise that increasingly drug-resistant tuberculosis poses a clear danger to global health. This year, the first ever UN High-Level Meeting (HLM) on TB in September will allow world leaders to put their stated ambitions on TB into action, make concrete commitments, and develop ways to hold countries accountable for their promises.

World TB Day (24 March) is a chance each year to show the importance of taking action to fight TB. Because of this year's unprecedented opportunity at the HLM, it is vital that we use World TB Day 2018 to build support among parliamentarians and the public in the run-up to that meeting. With a history of UK leadership on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and investing in TB programmes, the UK has the power to help set the tone of the HLM, and to ensure that the process gets the attention it deserves. So it is vital that the UK Government treats the HLM with the highest degree of urgency. Prime Minister Theresa May should attend the event, and use her presence there to help develop a concrete plan for ensuring that countries make and deliver on ambitious commitments to tackle TB.

## The increasing threat of drug-resistant TB

No infectious disease has killed more people in human history than tuberculosis (TB). 1.7 million people worldwide died from the disease in 2016 – more than Ebola, HIV and malaria combined.

Yet it is a neglected disease, largely ignored and under-funded. It is treatable and curable, and if we act now, we could eliminate TB within a generation, but rapidly developing drug-resistance could send us back to a pre-antibiotic era. People affected by TB face months, sometimes years, of arduous treatment, which can include severe side effects. The disease has a profound social and financial impact on families, communities and countries. If drug-resistance takes hold, TB could claim 75 million more lives by 2050, with a global economic cost of US \$16.7 trillion.

## A new hope for political will

After years of inadequate political efforts to contain and reduce the high human and economic costs of TB, in 2016, the United Nations General Assembly agreed to hold the first ever [High-Level Meeting \(HLM\) on TB](#) in 2018 (proposed for September – exact date to be confirmed). And in 2017, we finally started to see higher-level political engagement among world leaders, as the G20 meeting in July placed TB firmly in their list of global priorities for the first time. Then, in November, the World Health Organisation (WHO) held a [Ministerial Conference on TB](#) in Moscow, reaffirming the

importance of taking action on TB and [antimicrobial resistance \(AMR\)](#). It is clear that decision-makers have begun to realise that increasingly drug-resistant tuberculosis bacteria pose an obvious and present danger to global health, which the world cannot ignore.

## What has campaigning achieved so far?

Thank you for your part in the fight against TB – in some cases, over many years! Over the last two years, RESULTS has played a big part in global civil society's efforts to put drug-resistant TB high on the agenda of health ministers and world leaders. The announcement of the HLM, the Moscow conference, and the outcome of the G20 summit would not have happened without sustained pressure on the importance of tackling TB, as part of an increasing focus on the dangers of drug resistant infections.

## The unique opportunity of 2018

In 2018, this advocacy must continue! The HLM in September will be a chance for world leaders to put their stated ambitious for tackling TB into action, with the chance to make concrete commitments, and to develop ways to hold countries to account for delivering on the promises that they make. This will set the path for how we tackle the disease in coming years, and will be a critical test of the world's resolve to achieve the Global Goals on health. Then, following the HLM, the next G20 meeting of world leaders in Argentina (30 November-1 December) will also be an

important moment for world leaders to show their resolve to tackle TB, and to include TB at the heart of the world's response to AMR.

### **Ramping up the pressure on World TB Day**

World TB Day (24 March) is an opportunity each year to highlight the importance of taking concrete action to fight TB. Because of this year's unprecedented opportunity at the HLM, it is vital that we use World TB Day 2018 to build support among parliamentarians and the public to create momentum in the run-up to that meeting.

With a history of UK leadership on AMR and investing in TB programmes, the UK has the power to help set the tone of the HLM, and to ensure that the process gets the attention it deserves. So it is vital that the UK Government treats the HLM with the highest degree of urgency. Prime Minister Theresa May should attend the event, and use her presence there to help develop a concrete plan for ensuring that countries make and deliver on ambitious commitments to tackle TB.

Many of the UK's key allies are among the most affected countries by TB globally. G20 countries account for over half of the world's TB cases, and 19 Commonwealth countries face a high TB burden. Tackling TB is therefore also central to the UK's commitment in its Aid Strategy to "tackle global challenges in the national interest".

### **How you can help**

Building public and parliamentary support for UK Government action is what RESULTS grassroots advocacy is all about! We are hoping that you will be

able to arrange a visit to your MP, **ideally by 16 March**, asking them to write to the Secretary of State for International Development, the Rt. Hon. Penny Mordaunt MP, and to the Prime Minister, Theresa May MP, asking them to demonstrate UK leadership in the run-up to the HLM in September. In addition, Theresa May should attend the HLM in person, building on the UK's history of global leadership on TB and AMR.

Meeting your MP by 16 March gives them time to write their letters to reach the Government by World TB Day, and so they can mention the HLM in their letter.

For those of you who are new to campaigning, visiting your MP is really easy to do, and face-to-face meetings are among the most powerful forms of advocacy, helping to build a relationship with them over time. Advice on how to do this is [here](#). At the meeting, explain why tackling TB matters to you. Please also look at the [Background Sheet](#) for suggested talking points for your visit. And if you don't have time, a [letter to your MP](#) can also be very powerful.

Please also consider organising a public event in your local community on World TB Day itself. The date (Saturday 24 March) provides a 'hook' to get the attention of your local media. Advice on writing to the media is [here](#). As World TB Day falls on a Saturday this year, it is more likely that your MP will be in the constituency. Why not invite them along to your event – for more of a media draw, and a potential media opportunity for them! Ideas for a local event are in the [Background Sheet](#).

#### **Take action**

- 1. Please arrange a visit to your MP, ideally by 16 March. Explain to them why tackling TB matters to you, and ask them to write to the Secretary of State for International Development, the Rt. Hon. Penny Mordaunt MP, and the Prime Minister, Theresa May MP, before World TB Day to ask them to demonstrate UK leadership at the HLM in September.** Contact details:  
Penny Mordaunt MP, DFID, 22 Whitehall, Westminster, London SW1A 2EG. [DFIDCorrespondence@dfid.gov.uk](mailto:DFIDCorrespondence@dfid.gov.uk)  
Theresa May MP, 10 Downing Street, London SW1A 2AA. [privateoffice@no10.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:privateoffice@no10.x.gsi.gov.uk)
- 2. You could also suggest that your MP becomes a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on TB to join forces with their parliamentary colleagues who are already actively advocating for TB in Parliament.**
- 3. As well as meeting your MP, why not plan a local event to mark World TB Day itself? Ideas for this are in the Background Sheet.**
- 4. If you know other people who might be interested in taking action, but who might be reluctant to join you in your visit to your MP, why not [share our e-action](#), asking their MP to write to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State.**
- 5. Keep an eye on the RESULTS UK social media channels, where you will see shareable assets and posts. We are @resultsuk on Twitter.**
- 6. Hold the date! If you are interested in attending an event in Parliament to mark World TB Day, please get in touch. This is planned for Wednesday 21 March, 6-8 pm. Contact [hannah.mcleanknight@results.org.uk](mailto:hannah.mcleanknight@results.org.uk) to register your interest.**