

Take action on the fight to End Tuberculosis (TB)

In the run-up to World TB Day, help motivate and inspire others to fight to end TB

Tuberculosis (TB) is an ancient disease that has continued to kill people for millennia. TB is a bacterial infection spread through contagious airborne particles through inhaling tiny droplets from the coughs or sneezes of an infected person. Before COVID-19 emerged, TB was the world's most deadly disease, and things have only got worse since the start of the pandemic. The UN's Sustainable Development Goal 3 explicitly targets the elimination of TB by 2030, but we are way off that target. In 2020, 1.5 million people died and 10 million people were newly diagnosed with TB. Even though it is preventable, detectable and curable, the dangerous combination of lengthy treatment methods, an ineffective vaccine and a chronic lack of financial and political will to tackle TB results in a devastating and unnecessary loss of life.

Kicking off our advocacy in 2022 to help the global fight to end TB, RESULTS is seeking to raise awareness of the impact of TB on World TB Day (24 March). This month, please use some of the ideas in the 'how to' guide to campaign for an end to TB. Raising the issue now will help us gain support for specific action during the year, such as raising funds for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria.

What is TB?

Tuberculosis or TB is a contagious airborne disease spread through inhaling droplets from coughs or sneezes of an infected person. TB commonly attacks the lungs but can affect any part of the body, from the bloodstream to the brain. Many people have TB in their body, but the disease does not always become symptomatic or infectious. TB is exacerbated by other health issues, including malnutrition and diseases which affect the immune system like HIV and diabetes. [Read more about TB in our campaign guide.](#)

Can TB be treated?

TB can be diagnosed, treated and prevented. However, treatment regimens are very long and complex. Today, many strains of TB have become drug-resistant or multi-drug resistant, meaning normal methods of treatment don't work. This occurs when an infection 'learns' how to overcome medication by mutating. A vaccine - the BCG - does exist to combat TB, but it was developed over 100 years ago and does not protect most people against the most infectious or deadly forms of TB.

What are some of the struggles in the fight to end TB?

COVID-19 is having disastrous effects on the fight against TB, as many essential resources, such as labs, testing machines, and health workers were diverted to fight the pandemic. The world has seen the [elimination of 12 years of progress](#) in the global fight against TB. TB research and development must be a principal objective in global health, to develop more effective tools to treat people who are diagnosed, prevent infections through vaccination, and stop TB from mutating further. Between 2018 and 2020, 19.8 million people were treated for TB, including 1.4 million children. However, at the current pace, the international community will miss the UN's target of 40 million people treated by 2022.

Historically, the fight against TB has been massively underfunded and continues to receive a fraction of the political attention needed. This is because it is a disease of poverty, with 95% of people affected living in low- and middle-income countries (although it does still exist in high-income countries like the UK), and political interest and financial commitments to date are inadequate. In 2020, financing for essential TB services in lower- and middle- income countries didn't even reach [50% of the funding target set.](#)

Who is affected by TB?

Anyone can be affected by TB. But migrants, refugees, indigenous populations, prisoners, and people living with TB/HIV coinfection are highly vulnerable to TB, and experience significant marginalisation, low levels of access to quality services, and [human rights violations](#) in accessing healthcare. Co-infections with diseases like COVID, HIV and diabetes make TB harder to diagnose and treat. People with HIV are 18 times more likely to develop active TB than those without. As a result, in 2020, about 215,000 people died of HIV-associated TB.

Why is 2022 a critical year for the fight against TB?

2022 is set to be an important year for TB financing, with several global events where we hope to see the prioritisation of building back the progress lost since the start of the pandemic, and taking strides towards ending this life-threatening disease by 2030. This includes:

- [The Indonesian Presidency of the G20](#); Indonesia has the third-highest TB burden globally, providing a prime opportunity to promote TB as part of the global health agenda.
- The run-up to the 2023 United Nations High-Level Meeting on TB, bringing leaders together to create new commitments for the strategy on ending TB. The 2018 meeting saw [high-level commitments](#) made - due to be met in 2022. The next meeting must do the same if we are to meet the 2030 deadline and prevent millions of deaths.
- The 7th replenishment of the [Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria](#) – a campaign to secure funding for the Global Fund’s work in 2023-2025 from governments around the world.

The Global Fund and TB

The Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and malaria currently provides 77% of all international funding against TB. Since its founding in 2002, the Global Fund has driven a 46% reduction in the number of deaths caused by AIDS, TB and malaria in countries where it invests. The Global Fund works in partnership with local governments and organisations to ensure sustainable and equitable access to essential TB services. For example, the Indonesian government introduced regulations to reduce the number of people dying from TB by setting out specific responsibilities for municipalities to ensure these targets could be met. In Kenya, our ACTION partners KANCO have been promoting wider access to TB services, and ensuring that decisions about how TB care is resourced are made locally and support the community. [Read more about the Global Fund in our campaign guide](#).

What is next for TB?

April’s campaign action will be on the Global Fund replenishment. We will soon know how much funding we will be asking the UK Government to commit to the Global Fund’s work. In 2019, RESULTS campaigners played a role in persuading Theresa May to commit £1.4 billion for the fight against HIV, TB and malaria, so your campaigning this year will be extremely important!

Take action!

As we mark [World TB Day](#) on 24 March:

1. Please write to your local media outlet or write a blog to help others learn what TB is and why we must continue the fight against it.
2. Share on social media using some of the ideas in the [‘how to’ guide](#).
3. Ask your friends and family to share your concerns and help spread the word.

Let us know that you’ve taken this month’s action by emailing Campaigns Coordinator Tanya Begum at tanya.begum@results.org.uk