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Rodrigo Dalcin
Development and Outreach
Communications Officer
USAID/Brazil
+55 (61) 3312 7259
+55 (61) 9966 0080
E-mail: rdalcin@usaid.gov
Website: <http://brazil.usaid.gov>

PRESS RELEASE

USAID COMMEMORATES WORLD TUBERCULOSIS DAY

Through the U.S. Agency for International Development, the United States Embassy in Brazil partners with research institutes, non-governmental organizations and the Brazilian government to fight the disease

BRASÍLIA, MARCH 24, 2009 – The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) joins the Government of Brazil, international and local partners in commemorating World Tuberculosis (TB) Day.

Worldwide, deaths from TB have gone down since 1990, but 1.6 million people around the world still die from TB each year. With HIV/AIDS claiming over 2 million lives annually, and malaria killing more than 1 million, TB is one of the three leading causes of deaths worldwide due to infectious diseases. About 10 percent of TB patients are also co-infected with HIV, and TB is the leading cause of death for AIDS patients.

Together with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), USAID/Brazil is funding the expansion of Directly Observed Treatment Short Course Strategy (DOTS) in the priority states of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The treatment consists in daily patient observation in order to assure that medicines are being taken in the correct order and frequency. Nationally, the agency is sponsoring the monitoring of DOTS in 32 municipalities with the highest disease burden.

In Brazil, DOTS has steadily increased during the last five years and is now found in more than 87% of Brazil's 315 municipalities with the highest TB disease burden. Because of the expanded use of DOTS, case detection and cure rates have significantly improved, thus saving lives and preventing new cases of TB.

Fighting against multiple-drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) is the work of USAID partner Management Sciences for Health (MSH), which is helping the national tuberculosis reference laboratory Centro de Referência Professor Hélio Fraga develop new management systems and new drug products.

Social mobilization is also part of the agency agenda in Brazil and is being carried out by partner TRANSFORMARTE, a NGO promoting TB awareness and community involvement in Rio de Janeiro State.

Recognition - The Brazilian National TB Control Program is to be congratulated for its commitment and dedication to combating TB. USAID/Brazil is proud to have contributed to the National Program's efforts by sponsoring training, supervision, research, and the development of new systems for laboratory and case management.

"Even though a cure has existed for more than half a century, tuberculosis remains one of humankind's greatest scourges," said USAID/Brazil Director Jeffery Bell. "Today, as we commemorate World TB Day we are correctly reminded that TB anywhere is TB everywhere. Until we and our partners have effectively brought TB under control in Brazil, we are all at risk. We must work together to guarantee fast and accurate diagnosis, directly-observed treatment, and effective surveillance and treatment for drug-resistant TB. USAID is fully committed to doing our part in this effort."

Fighting TB according to WHO guidelines - USAID programs are fully aligned with the new World Health Organization STOP TB Strategy, which builds on DOTS and also assists patients with TB/HIV-AIDS and multi-drug-resistant TB, engages care providers, empowers communities, and contributes to health-system strengthening and research.

Between 2000 and 2008 USAID provided \$777 million for TB programs worldwide, including about \$166 million directed specifically for Africa. In FY 2008, USAID provided \$15 million to the STOP TB Partnership's Global TB Drug Facility (GDF) an important mechanism that provides drugs to countries in need, including many countries in Africa. The United States government also supports TB control worldwide through funding provided to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria (GF). The US government is the largest single donor to the GF, with pledges exceeding \$2.1 billion through 2008. Seventeen percent of support for the Global Fund has been dedicated to TB work.

USEFUL LINKS

U.S. Embassy in Brazil: <http://www.embaixadaamericana.org.br/>

USAID/Brazil: <http://brazil.usaid.gov>

Pan American Health Organization: <http://www.paho.org/>

Management Sciences for Health: <http://www.msh.org/>

Transformarte: <http://www.transformarte.org.br/>