

Message from the Regional Director WHO South-East Asia Region



Tuberculosis is an ubiquitous disease, affecting all sections of society in every country around the world. While much progress has been made over the past ten years through DOTS, particularly in the countries most affected, the onslaught of HIV and emerging drug resistance threaten to reverse recent gains globally and in the South-East Asia Region.

National TB programmes in all Member countries have therefore adopted the expanded Strategy to Stop TB. They have also developed plans that focus on maintaining high quality services while simultaneously embarking on the new components of the expanded strategy.

However, these plans cannot be fully realized by National TB control programmes working within public health systems alone. TB is a multifaceted disease that warrants a holistic approach by a wide range of stakeholders, who are not only concerned about the public health implications of this epidemic, but equally about its serious political, social, economic and ethical implications.

National health systems and TB programmes must, therefore, constantly be on the alert for new opportunities and for new partners to collaborate with, in a spirit of mutual trust and respect, to establish and sustain mutually benefiting partnerships to pursue a common goal.

TB can be stopped. We have the tools and resources to stop TB. Let us use these, wisely and expeditiously, to treat and cure people with TB. The theme of World TB Day this year, "TB Anywhere is TB Everywhere" implies a shared responsibility and need for unified action at all levels, by people anywhere and everywhere, to contribute to efforts to control and finally eliminate TB.

There are already some excellent examples of how governments, non governmental organizations, academia and the private sector in the Region have rallied to the cause of TB. They have with commitment, drive and a sense of urgency, used their technical skills and financial resources to contribute to controlling TB.

In a world which boasts of a global culture to wipe out inequities, let us collectively harness all available experience, expertise and resources, to ensure that TB patients anywhere receive the highest quality of care and are cured. Only then will we be able to really eliminate TB.

Let us, therefore, forge the partnerships we need to reach out to each and every TB patient and to achieve our goal of a world free of tuberculosis.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samlee Plianbangchang". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Samlee Plianbangchang, M.D., Dr.P.H.
Regional Director