

Recent news from WHO

- On 14 October, the World Health Organization (WHO) released the report *Working to overcome the global impact of neglected tropical diseases*, which outlines strategies for dealing with 17 **neglected tropical diseases** found almost exclusively in very poor populations. These diseases thrive where housing is substandard, environments are contaminated with filth, and disease-spreading insects and animals abound. "These are debilitating, sometimes horrific diseases that are often accepted as part of the misery of being poor," says Dr Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General. "The strategies set out in this report are a breakthrough. If implemented widely, they can substantially reduce the disease burden, breaking a cycle of infection, disability and lost opportunities that keeps people in poverty."
- **Tuberculosis** (TB) could be eliminated if governments and donors fully invest in a plan released by the Stop TB Partnership on 13 October. *The global plan to stop TB 2011–2015: transforming the fight towards elimination of tuberculosis* sets out to provide diagnosis and treatment for 32 million people over the next five years. According to the report, more research is needed to bring rapid TB tests, faster treatment regimens and a fully effective vaccine to market. The report also shows public health programmes how to drive universal access to TB care, including how to modernize diagnostic laboratories and adopt new TB tests. Some 9 million people become ill with active TB and nearly 2 million die each year.
- On 13 October, this year's **International Day for Disaster Reduction** had the theme "Making cities resilient". WHO called on governments and the international community to take measures to ensure facilities are resilient enough to survive earthquakes, floods, cyclones and other hazardous events. "Hospitals, clinics and other health facilities are the foundation of any health response to be launched to save the lives of people injured when their city is struck by a disaster," says Dr Eric Laroche, WHO Assistant Director-General for Health Action in Crises. "But we see too often that, when disasters happen, health facilities and the staff who work in them count among the casualties."
- On 7 October, WHO released simplified diagnosis and treatment guidelines for people with common, but untreated, **mental, neurological and substance use disorders**. The guidelines are to assist in the diagnosis and management of depression, alcohol-use disorders, epilepsy and other common mental disorders by non-mental health specialists.

For more about these and other WHO news items please see: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre>