

Guyana Observed *World TB Day* (24 March 2006) with a Week of Activities



With the central slogan "**Actions for Life: Towards a World Free of Tuberculosis**", multiple activities were carried out during the last week in Guyana in observance of *World TB Day* on 24 March 2006.

The aim of *World TB Day 2006* was to mobilise support for the fight against TB, by mobilising communities, raising awareness, encouraging governments and donors to invest in TB control, and calling for strengthened commitment in order to ensure that TB is placed prominently on the global agenda and is eliminated by 2015.

The central activity was carried out in the Regional Hospital of West Demerara, where the launching of the expansion of the DOTS strategy in Region 3 (Essequibo Island-West Demerara) was carried out. The activity was chaired by the Minister of Health, Honourable Dr. Leslie Ramsammy. Also present were Dr. Bernadette Theodore-Gandi, PAHO's Representative in Guyana, Dr. Holly Alexander, RHO in Region 3, Dr. Stephanie Brunet who represented the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Dr. Jeetendra Monhalall, Chief of the National Tuberculosis Programme, and Dr. Moti Lall, President of the Guyana Chest Society.

Dr. Holly Alexander, delivered the opening remarks and welcomed to the participants, and expressed her satisfaction for the implementation of the DOTS Strategy in this region. Dr. Jeetendra Monhalall, manager of the National Tuberculosis Control Programme gave some data on the current TB situation in Guyana and of the control activities being carried out by the National Programme, especially the expansion of the DOTS Strategy in Regions 4, 6, 10, and more recently Regions 1 and 3. He expressed gratitude for the support that the National Programme is receiving from International Agencies such as PAHO, CIDA, Global Fund and others.



Among the speakers was Dr. Moti Lall, President of Guyana Chest Society, who presented a historical profile of Tuberculosis in Guyana, including reference to the role that the Hospital of West Demerara played in the struggle against this disease in the past. This was the first tuberculosis sanatorium in the country. He explained the decline of the incidence of TB and starting in the 1990s, the re-emergence of the disease, linked to factors such as poverty and HIV/AIDS. He recognised the significant role performed by the health workers in the struggle against Tuberculosis and the current challenges they have ahead.

Dr. Stephanie Brunet from CIDA referred to the support that this agency is offering to the Programme, especially to the strengthening of the diagnostic capacity and to the expansion of the DOTS strategy.



The PWR in Guyana, Dr. Bernadette Theodore-Gandi offered an overview of the TB situation in the Americas Region, particularly in the Caribbean and Guyana. She said that the technical tools and the necessary financial resources exist for controlling this disease, achieving an adequate impact and managing to reduce morbidity and mortality from this cause. Finally, she referred to the technical support that PAHO is offering to the National Programme and the renewed commitment to continue to work on the new challenges that have been indicated for TB control in Guyana.

Minister Dr. Leslie Ramsammy summarized the activity pointing out the importance of expanding the DOTS strategy to Region 3. He referred to the situation of TB in the world and as this disease is among the re-emerging, included the situation in Guyana. He also stated the gaps in the programme, which still need to be filled, and insisted on the need for increasing the training of the health workers, especially given that the stigma on this disease it is acting negatively in the performance of the programme. He expressed that it is a challenge to give up-to-date information to the health workers and to the population, in addition to involving the community in this struggle against TB.



Finally, he referred to new strategies for case-finding, especially in remote areas and to the commitment of the MoH in carrying on the new WHO/PAHO strategy for Tuberculosis control.

