

**Received from Ministry of Health of Indonesia
in response to MSF's statements against the DOTS strategy (March 2005).**

The National Tuberculosis Programme of Indonesia would like to express its concern following the recent statements and actions undertaken by “Medecins sans Frontier “ undermining DOTS and the current efforts to control Tuberculosis.

As you are probably aware MSF has launched a campaign against DOTS in concomitance with World TB Day. Posters have appeared throughout New York City and on MSF websites claiming that DOTS relies on archaic diagnostic and treatment methods.

MSF claims DOTS to be inefficient in curbing the TB epidemic in settings with high HIV and MDR-TB prevalence. Furthermore, MSF indirectly accuses National Programmes of depriving smear negative TB patients of access to treatment.

We believe that the current global strategy for TB control is valid and actively addressing control of MDR-TB and TB-HIV through the development of specific and dedicated policies and protocols (i.e. DOTS-Plus and TB-HIV collaborative policies/strategies).

From our national perspective we can clearly state that DOTS is not an “exclusive club” for smear positive patients. Data on case finding from 2003 shows that out of a total of 173,795 newly diagnosed cases, 81360 (47%) were smear negative/extra-pulmonary cases. All of these cases were treated with drugs provided by the Indonesian NTP free of charge. A detailed diagnostic protocol for smear negative patients is included in the national guidelines and is part of the routine training for TB frontline workers.

We believe that MSF approach and attitude is undermining the hard work conducted by national programmes and frontline workers in the daily battle against TB. While we remain open to new evidence that could improve the current TB control approach, we are concerned by the incorrect and misleading interpretations of reality. This becomes particularly worrisome when the source of criticism is an STB partner like MSF.

We hope you will understand our concerns, especially in a time when DOTS expansion to hospitals and private practitioners requires a solid unity and cooperation from all partners involved in the fight against TB.

Thanking you and with best regards.

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Indonesia