

The Damien Foundation in Burundi

Leprosy and tuberculosis in Burundi

In this country, leprosy is no longer a major public health problem. Between 200 and 300 new cases are detected each year out of a population of about 7.5 million inhabitants. So Burundi can no longer be considered to be a highly endemic country.

However, the situation concerning tuberculosis is altogether different. There we have a major problem which is made even more serious by the HIV AIDS epidemic having hit the population head-on. The nationwide feeling of insecurity in its wake did nothing to help fight a meanwhile endemic disease. In fact, it put paid to any real integration's capacity of tuberculosis control activities, or even midway commitment. Although diagnosis and treatment is dealt with by peripheral medical health units, any support activity is dealt with directly at central level.

Aside from the Damien Foundation, the main partners in the national programme are the Belgian Technical Cooperation agency and The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Current developments

A process of decentralization and integration is currently ongoing. A workshop on integration and a course on intermediate-level supervision were recently organised. Activities in supervision, distribution of drugs and equipment as well as training of health care workers in peripheral health care units will from now on be progressively managed by the provincial authorities, who will be supported at central level. The national technical handbook on how to combat tuberculosis and leprosy and equally guidelines on how to carry out quality control in laboratory examinations have recently been updated.

Our actions

The Damien Foundation's technical consultant works at central level. He supports all the activities of the National Leprosy and Tuberculosis Control Programme concerning patient care, especially detection and treatment, monitoring, training and supervision of staff working at health care units. The Foundation also provides the PNLT with logistical backup. Moreover, we help to mobilise communities via information, education and communication units under the PNLT. These units give training to community health workers in leprosy and tuberculosis prevention.

Major successes and challenges

The Programme's basic activities continued all throughout this country's troubled times. This in itself is a success. Now that the political situation and national security seem to have been restored, the PNLT would like to take up the challenge of making provincial doctors and department leaders

at provincial level aware of their responsibilities. The PNLT would also like anti-tuberculosis and anti-leprosy activities to be incorporated into general health structures. The year 2006 is a transition period for us. During this period, joint managerial efforts at central and intermediate level will ensure supervision and orders are made out for medicines and laboratory supplies. During a second stage of activities, those managing the intermediate level will be given the task of supervision, epidemiological monitoring, maintenance of medical and laboratory supplies, training/recycling and awareness-raising within their community.

Another major challenge is joint TB/HIV activities, also supported by other partners such as the Belgian Technical Cooperation agency, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the UN AIDS programme. We wish to make it easier for tuberculosis patients to go to AIDS detection consultants, to organise systematic tuberculosis detection targeting seropositive patients and to care for doubly infected patients in a suitable way.

Summary

Start of the project	1964
Local partners	Ministry of Public Health - PNLT
Project type	Starting with leprosy only Leprosy and tuberculosis since 1985
Population covered in 2006	7,448.729
Patients detected and treated in 2006	6,176 tuberculosis patients 288 leprosy patients
Expenditure in 2006	€ 67,312