PRESS RELEASE

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Helping to provide the best care to tuberculosis patients

MANDALAY, 22 December 2016 - A home away from home – 3MDG finances new caregiver accommodation at Ministry of Health and Sports’ largest tuberculosis (TB) hospital in upper Myanmar.

The Ministry of Health and Sports and The Three Millennium Development Goal Fund (3MDG) today opened a new caregiver quarters at the Patheingyi TB hospital in Mandalay.

Patients with some of the most complicated TB cases from upper Myanmar are treated at Patheingyi TB Hospital. This includes multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB), TB meningitis, TB which is present along with other conditions (such as HIV, hepatitis, kidney disease, diabetes and hypertension) and patients experiencing side effects from TB medicine.

Patients often have to travel long distances for treatment and hospital stays can last as long as six months, depending on response to medication. Having family support during this time is critical, helping patients adhere to their treatment and remain positive. This increases the chance of cure and improves infection control.

To accommodate this, a new caregivers’ quarters was opened today in Mandalay. The quarters can house up to 40 people, with separate spaces for men and women, as well as kitchen and toilet facilities.

MDR-TB has a long treatment period of more than 20 months, and patients are not able to work during this time. The medication can also have severe side effects. These new quarters will mean that patients have moral support close at hand.

The handover event was attended by representatives from Mandalay regional government, officials from the Ministry of Health and Sports, Mandalay Regional Health Officer and Public Health Officers, Officials, Medical Superintendent of Patheingyi TB Hospital and staff and Dr. Si Thu Aung, Program Manager of National TB Programme.

Ko Ko Mg, who is 24 years old, and his younger sister are both being treated in the hospital for MDR-TB. He has spent the last six months in hospital, as travelling to and from his township,
Ma Hlaing, is restrictively expensive because he has to hire a private car. Patients with MDR-TB cannot take public transport until they are not contagious.

The caregivers’ quarters will have a big impact on him and his sister, he says.

“Being together with my family really helps me. When we are troubled by side effects, they can give us special attention and support. It is better for the caregivers too, as they don’t have to stay in the ward with the patients.”

These caregivers’ quarters are the first of four TB facilities financed by the contributions of 3MDG’s donors – Australia, Denmark, the European Union, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. All four facilities in Yangon and Mandalay will be opened by early 2018, including a high-tech TB testing laboratory, and two outpatient departments which will see a total of about 250 patients per day.

TB continues to be a major health issue in Myanmar, as the leading cause of death for adults between 15 and 49 years. With 150,000 new cases detected annually, these facilities are an important part of the fight to stop TB. Alongside large hospitals and TB centres, smaller developments -- such as these caregivers’ quarters -- help to improve access to treatment for all people, and support treatment adherence. This is critical to stopping the disease from spreading and more resistant forms from developing.

Alongside the opening of these quarters, 3MDG also supports MDR-TB patients with a comprehensive package. It includes daily treatment visits from health staff in the morning, and volunteers in the evening, as well as financial and nutritional support.

About 3MDG

The Three Millennium Development Goal Fund (3MDG) supports the provision of health services in Myanmar and accelerates the country’s efforts to achieve the three health-related Millennium Development Goals. These goals include reducing child mortality, improving maternal health and combating HIV, tuberculosis and malaria. 3MDG provides support to the Ministry of Health to contribute towards a more effective and responsive health system. Established in 2012, the five-year Fund is funded by Australia, Denmark, the European Union, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and managed by the United Nations Office of Project Services (UNOPS). For further information, visit www.3mdg.org.
Main building for Caregiver Quarter
(Caregiver Quarter, Patheingyi TB Hospital)
Inspection on water supply work for common kitchen
(Caregiver Quarter, Patheingyi TB Hospital)