Each year about 70,000 Afghans develop some form of tuberculosis. However, it is only the few who have access to Primary Health Care facilities that receive appropriate treatment.

The death toll of TB is still very high. WHO estimates around 20,000 the annual number of TB-related deaths.

WHO targets 100% delivery of DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment, Short Course) to all cases and successfully treat 85% of them.

According to the Strategic Plan for DOTS expansion, the number of patients foreseen in 2004 is 40,200. An estimated 70% of all cases and successfully treat 85% of them.

WHO supplies the National TB Program with quality anti-TB drugs, laboratory reagents, binocular microscopes, battery-operated illuminators (powersupply in Afghanistan is often erratic or completely unavailable), microscopy slides and putum cups.

World TB Day

Afghanistan celebrates like the rest of the world: TB Day as a strategy to raise awareness in communities by disseminating effective and culturally appropriate health education messages regarding the prevention and treatment of tuberculosis in Afghanistan. World TB Day 2003 in Afghanistan was marked with an innovative approach: postal stamps and aero-grams were produced by the Afghan Post and sold over the counter in post offices countrywide.

Afghanistan application to Global Fund

The World Health Organization was instrumental in supporting the drafting and negotiating the funding proposal submitted by the Afghan government to the Global Fund, an international Public-Private funding agency based in Geneva which allocates financial resources to countries for the fight against Tuberculosis, AIDS and Malana.

The fund will be utilized to raise the capacity of the Ministry of Health in overall management of the funds received and partly to finance the procurement of commodities, drugs and equipment.

The Ministry of Health submitted a proposal in which it already approved by the Global Fund, in February 2003 for a total amount of around 21.4 million dollars. This second funding application submitted in May 2003 (around 20 million $) out of which 9 million $ for the implementation of TB activities is now under scrutiny and awaiting approval.

WFP/WHO provide supplementary food to TB patients

The establishment of memorandum of understanding with WFP on 24 March 2003 provided TB patients with supplementary food, as part of WFP special programs. Food is distributed to Afghans suffering from TB for the duration of their treatment. An incentive for patients to attend the clinics regularly is to collect medicines from the hands of health workers.

Research to investigate on high rates in women TB cases

WHO conducted an operational research to investigate the causes of markedfemaleprevalence not only in TB cases (65-70%) of all patients are women). Interviews with selected target groups (TB patients, suspects, health workers and private practitioners) were conducted in Kabul, Mazar, Herat and Gerdzeh.

Preliminary results of the study were presented at the International Conference on TB and Lung Diseases (IUATLD) in Paris end of October 2003.

Another research will investigate the magnitude and quality of TB care in the private-for-profit sector, as this is one of the most common providers of healthcare for the Afghan population, duetolow PHC services coverage.

Priority Areas for 2004

1. Develop a sustainable network of TB control units, based on the DOTS strategy, within the general health services.
2. Provide high quality DOTS to 55% of the population.