

# *10 facts about* **multidrug-resistant tuberculosis**

- Multidrug-resistant TB is defined as TB resistant to the two most important anti-TB drugs, isoniazid and rifampicin.
- Up to **50 million** people may be infected with drug-resistant TB.
- There were no medicines to cure TB until about 50 years ago.
- There is no cure affordable to developing countries for some multidrug-resistant strains.
- Hot zones of MDR-TB have been identified in countries or regions such as Russia, Latvia, Estonia, Argentina and the Dominican Republic, where between **7 and 22 percent** of TB patients have MDR-TB.
- MDR-TB is caused by inconsistent or partial treatment: patients do not take all their medicines regularly for the required period because they start to feel better, doctors and health workers prescribe the wrong drugs or the wrong combination of drugs, or the drug supply is unreliable.
- From a public health perspective, poorly supervised, incomplete treatment of TB is worse than no treatment at all.
- Cure rates of below **70 percent** cause the epidemic—and drug resistance—to rise.
- Drug-resistant TB is more difficult and more expensive to treat and more likely to be fatal in developing countries.
- In industrialised countries, TB treatment costs around US \$2,000 per patient, but rises more than 100-fold to up to **US \$250,000** per patient with MDR-TB.

Source: TB Advocacy, *A Practical Guide 1999*, WHO Global Tuberculosis Programme

