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COMMUNITY-BASED TB CARE IN UGANDA RECEIVES FUNDING FROM THE INTERNATIONAL UNION AGAINST TUBERCULOSIS AND LUNG DISEASE

The International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (IUATLD) has given a grant of 1.3m Euros to the World Health Organization (WHO) Country Office in Uganda to support the expansion of community-based TB care in the country. The funds were secured from a larger contribution made by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) that will be used to expand TB control efforts globally.

Uganda was given high consideration for the funds mainly because it is one of the 22 high burden TB countries in the world. Another reason for choosing Uganda was that the country is implementing an effective and innovative strategy of TB control in the context of Primary Health Care (PHC).

The grant will be used to purchase laboratory equipment and microscopes for the general health service. In addition, the funds will be used to train health staff and to strengthen quality of care. These resources will further facilitate the work of public health staff in availing TB care at community level.

Dr Nils Billo, the Executive Director of the IUATLD acknowledged the importance of the grant, noting that “these funds will provide critical support so that the Uganda’s National TB and Leprosy Programme can effectively produce additional detection and treatment of TB cases, one of the conditions of the grant”.

“This funding is a significant breakthrough in the global fight against tuberculosis and a step in the right direction, but it is not enough”, Dr. Nils Billo said. “We still need more funding from governments, businesses, foundations and other donors if we are to mount an effective and sustainable assault on the tuberculosis epidemic. An investment in tuberculosis control yields an immediate reduction in the poverty of the patients and their families” he added.

Dr Billo emphasized IUATLD’s strong monitoring and evaluation procedures which ensure that funds are used properly for measurable impact. He added “at the IUATLD, we disburse funds with a minimum of red-tape but with all the necessary safeguards.”

Dr. Francis Adatu-Engwau, Manager of the NTLP, commenting on Uganda’s community-based TB care model explained that “This allows patients to be treated at home, with the support of their communities, instead of having to bear the social and economic burdens that come with lengthy hospital care.”

More than 31,000 new TB cases were reported in 2001 alone and on average, half of the tuberculosis patients are also infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). In fact, TB is the leading cause of death in HIV-infected individuals in Uganda.

News of the release of these funds comes at an important moment in the IUATLD year. Their 33rd annual World Congress on Lung Health will be held in Montreal, Canada, from 6th to 10th October, in collaboration with the Quebec Lung Association (QLA). Dr. Francis Adatu-Engwau, Dr. Nils Billo and Dr. Giuliano Gargioni, the WHO tuberculosis medical officer based in Uganda, will thus be able to update CIDA representatives and other international health workers on the implementation of TB control and treatment activities in Uganda.

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Note: The IUATLD is an international scientific organization of 140 member countries and 100 voluntary scientific societies headquartered in Paris, France. The IUATLD has been a leader in the field of tuberculosis since its establishment in 1920 and works in close partnership with the World Health Organization,. Its scientists developed the DOTS strategy, which was adopted by WHO in 1993 for global control of tuberculosis and has been implemented by the national TB control programmes of more than 130 countries. The IUATLD provides direct technical assistance to

more than 50 countries worldwide, conducts clinical trials, organizes conferences and training courses and publishes the peer reviewed International Journal of Tuberculosis and Lung Disease.