TB is contagious and spreads through the air. If not treated, each person with active TB infects on average 10 to 15 people every year.

More than 2 billion people, equal to one-third of the world’s population, are infected with TB bacilli, the microbes that cause TB. 1 in 10 people infected with TB bacilli will become sick with active TB in their lifetime.

TB is a disease of poverty affecting mostly young adults in their most productive years. The vast majority of TB deaths are in the developing world, and more than half of all deaths occur in Asia.

There were 9.4 million new TB cases in 2008 (3.6 million of whom are women) including 1.4 million cases among people living with HIV.

1.8 million people died from TB in 2008, including 500,000 people with HIV - equal to 4500 deaths a day.

The estimated global incidence rate fell to 139 cases per 100,000 population in 2008 after peaking in 2004 at 143 cases per 100,000. Rates are falling very slowly in 5 WHO regions (the rate is stabilizing in Europe). The total number of deaths and cases is still rising due to population growth.

There were 5.7 million TB case notifications in 2008. 36 million people were cured in DOTS programmes (between 1995-2008), with as many as 8 million deaths averted through DOTS.

The 87% global treatment success rate exceeded the 85% target for the first time since the target was set in 1991. 53 countries exceeded this 85% patient treatment target.

TB is a leading killer of people with HIV. People who are HIV-positive and infected with TB are 20 to 40 times more likely to develop active TB than people not infected with HIV living in the same country.

Critical to saving lives is the urgent implementation of the Three Is (Intensified case-finding, Isoniazid prevention therapy, and Infection control) - measures which reduce the burden of TB in people living with HIV.

Multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) is a form of TB that is difficult and expensive to treat and fails to respond to standard first-line drugs. Extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB) occurs when resistance to second-line drugs develops on top of MDR-TB.

5% of all TB cases have MDR-TB, based on data from more than 100 countries collected during the last decade.

There were an estimated 500,000 new MDR-TB cases in 2007. Just over 1% of cases were receiving treatment in 2008 known to be based on WHO’s recommended standards.

In 2008, WHO reported that the highest rates of MDR-TB ever recorded, with peaks of up to 22% of new TB cases, were in some settings of the former Soviet Union. In the same region, 1 in 10 cases of MDR-TB is XDR-TB.

27 countries account for 85% of all MDR-TB cases. The top five countries with the largest number of cases are India, China, the Russian Federation, South Africa and Bangladesh. XDR-TB has been found in 57 countries to date.

In 2009, a World Health Assembly MDR-TB and XDR-TB resolution was endorsed by 192 WHO Member States and included recommended priority actions to combat drug-resistant TB.