

4. *Decision Maker Visits to Endemic Countries*

Congressional and Parliamentary delegations are typically organized to educate policymakers about international development issues by bringing them into the field to witness a situation first hand. The trips organized by the ACTION project have taken this strategy to a new level. Not only do the policymakers observe and learn about various issues surrounding the TB epidemic and its control, they become engaged in advocacy efforts within the country throughout and after the journey.

Take for example a trip to Kenya organized for a delegation of four UK Members of Parliament (MPs) in September 2005. The purpose of the visit was to educate MPs about the scale of the TB problem in Kenya and what was being done to address it. RESULTS UK designed a five-day itinerary, including site visits to a number of TB and TB-HIV programs. Participants were given opportunities to discuss issues in more detail directly with patients, health workers, NGOs and representatives from the UK Department for International Development (DFID) in Kenya and the Kenyan Ministry of Health.



Andrew George, Nick Herbert and John Barrett visiting one of the general wards in Kisii District Hospital in Kenya.

Unlike similar visits, the MPs participating in RESULTS UK's delegation not only learned about Kenya's TB situation in order to increase political will for TB upon returning to the UK, but also helped put TB higher up on the political agenda in Kenya to complement and further ACTION efforts in Kenya. Among the strategies employed:

- A visit to the Ministry of Health was arranged not only for the benefit and education of the MPs, but so the MPs could affirm to Ministry staff the importance of supporting the country's TB program.
- A news conference was organized in Nairobi near the conclusion of the trip and was attended by over 30 journalists. As respected outsiders, the MPs were able to speak more frankly about Kenya's TB crisis and generated several pieces of media.
- At a meeting with the head of DFID Kenya, it became clear that knowledge about the extent of the TB crisis in Kenya was limited among DFID's permanent staff. The MPs therefore used the opportunity to help bring DFID Kenya up to speed on the scale of the problem and challenges experienced by the National TB program.

Tips & Suggestions

1. Plan trips during breaks in the legislative schedule.
2. Identify one or more persons living in the country you intend to visit who you can hire to help organize hotels, translation, internal travel and other logistics. Conduct a pre-trip to confirm logistics if needed.
3. Assume in planning the site visit schedule that travel between locations will always take much longer than anticipated.
4. Tip the balance toward site visits whenever possible, and pre-brief those programs that you will be visiting.
5. Maintain control of site visits; those helping you may want you to see other things or have a different agenda!
6. Insist that all delegates participate in the full schedule whenever possible to avoid unnecessary disruptions.



Advocacy conducted in Kenya also encouraged the UK government to do more to address the global TB epidemic. While in Kenya, and since their return home, the MPs have accomplished the following:

- While in Nairobi, and toward the end of the trip, the MPs were linked by a telephone conference call to 60 grassroots advocates in the UK. The MPs shared their experiences and answered advocates' questions about the realities of TB and TB-HIV control in Kenya. The UK activists then took supporting action by writing to DFID country offices in Kenya and other high TB burden countries in Africa to request information about DFID's response to the TB emergency in their particular country.



Andrew George, MP, on RESULTS UK delegation to Kenya.

- Following the trip, the four MPs and RESULTS UK met with Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for International Development, to share their findings and to urge the Secretary of State to respond to the TB emergency in Africa.

- The trip to Kenya generated media coverage about TB in the MPs' local constituencies, re-emphasizing the importance of the issue to the MPs themselves and the voting public, and providing some positive reinforcement publicity for these new TB champions.

- These and other MPs engaged by RESULTS UK established the UK's first All-Party Parliamentary Group on Global Tuberculosis (APPG), tabled oral and written questions on TB and the Global Fund in Parliament, and organized a debate on "TB in the Developing World" in the House of Commons.

- For World TB Day in 2007, the APPG and RESULTS UK held an event and reception for over 60 key stakeholders to launch the APPG's "Scaling up the UK's response to the global TB epidemic: an Agenda for Action," highlighted in *The Lancet* World TB Day editorial.

- At the same time, RESULTS UK arranged for a delegation, including some members of the APPG, to visit India for World TB Day. A joint-meeting with Indian MPs helped catalyze the formation of an Indian Parliamentary Group on TB, to be supported by the Center for Sustainable Health and Development and ACTION India.

Before RESULTS UK's delegation trip to Kenya in 2005 had even concluded, Julie Morgan, MP expressed, "The whole experience has really brought home what people in Kenya lack and that TB is not a priority. Everyone we discussed TB with has always had it at the bottom of the list and we have to bring it into the discussion. I think there is a huge job to do in terms of raising TB as an issue at home and with DFID generally. The visit so far has just been so worthwhile in terms of making parliamentarians aware of what's happening here."



Julie Morgan, MP, on RESULTS UK delegation to Kenya.