1. Better technologies and drugs for TB

In the Western Pacific Region, 1.4 million TB cases were diagnosed and reported out of an estimated 1.8 million new cases in 2016, leaving a gap of about 400,000 “missing” cases. Finding missing cases by expanding TB services within the framework of universal health coverage will be crucial to achieve ambitious goals for TB.

Molecular diagnostic tools, namely Xpert MTB/RIF and line probe assay, have an important role to play, providing rapid and accurate diagnosis for TB and drug-resistant TB. The uptake of these new diagnostics is improving in the Western Pacific Region. By the end of 2016, there were 1630 laboratories providing Xpert diagnostic services, double the number in 2014. As a result, the number of new TB cases tested with Xpert MTB/RIF increased to 182,000 in 2016 from 93,000 in 2014.

Beyond ensuring rapid and universal access to quality diagnosis, all diagnosed TB patients must be started on and successfully complete treatment. Currently, in the Region, only half of the estimated drug-resistant TB cases are successfully treated. The wider use of shorter treatment regimens and new TB drugs may help to achieve higher treatment success rates for those with drug-resistant TB. Most high-burden countries in the Region have adopted the shorter regimen for multidrug-resistant TB and included new drugs in their treatment regimens, namely bedaquiline and delamanid. This should result in better treatment outcomes, benefiting patients and their families and reducing the risk of spreading the disease to others.

The End TB Strategy has a vision of a world free of TB, with ambitious targets of a 95% reduction in TB deaths and incidence rate by 2035, compared to 2015 levels. To achieve this, countries must ensure that high-quality TB services reach all who need them, so that no one is left behind. WHO will continue to work closely with countries to assist them on this journey.