

## **SPEECH OF SECRETARY FRANCISCO T. DUQUE on the CELEBRATION OF LUNG MONTH AUGUST 2005**

August 16, 2005  
Lung Center of the Philippines

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Theme: *"TB Network: Sama-sama Sugpuin ang TB"*

*Greetings.*

I am honored to be your guest speaker today in this year's commemoration of Lung Month focusing on the need for integrated efforts in the control of tuberculosis. It is a significant day for all of us.

If we are to retrace the long history of our battle against TB, it will reveal a story of unity --- the triumph of the Filipino's sense of community over its direct opposite, the Filipino's occasional propensity for smugness known as the *"kanya-kanya"* attitude. In the beginning, however, the national government found itself single-handedly taming a giant of a disease that was storming nations around the world. Today, tuberculosis remains to be an epidemic affecting mostly the Third World. In the Philippines alone, TB kills 75 Filipinos each day and affects 53 million others.

It took a lengthy 50 years before we finally arrived at the foothold of realization --- to tame a giant, more hands were needed, many more shoulders would have to help and take turns carrying such a hefty weight. We needed to learn how to harness the force of our pooled strength and consolidate our resources. Our resolve to move together towards one thrust and in one direction proved to be the most powerful weapon we ever gave ourselves.

Allow me to illustrate...

In separate National TB Prevalence Surveys conducted in 1981 to 1997, the annual risk for TB infection of Filipinos hardly changed, moving only from 2.5% to 2.3 %. This was despite the aggressive implementation of the National TB Program by the Department of Health since 1978.

In 1996, the government adopted a highly successful strategy, the Directly Observed Treatment Short Course or DOTS. By 2003, we had already achieved 100% coverage in the public sector.

Our long struggle against TB is indeed turning out to be our biggest success story yet. In the past decade, we have been making headway towards our goal of finally eradicating the disease. In 2004, the Philippines moved closer to achieving the Global standards of 70% case detection (CDR) and 85% cure rate (CR) with our statistics currently registering at 68% and 81% (2004), respectively.

At this point, we need to ask ourselves: what was the major thing we did right to reach this huge turnaround in TB control? While DOTS is indeed a highly effective strategy of ensuring compliance and full coverage of TB patients, it is only a vehicle by which we propel the National TB Control Program. The individuals and groups pushing the vehicle in a concentrated and unified action are responsible for its forward motion.

The gains we are experiencing at present are in fact the result of an enlightened perspective, a comprehensive approach to a health problem that truly has social determinants. Thus having a social milieu, TB control is an endeavor that calls for the shared responses from the public and private sectors, civic organizations, international supporters, our health workers, local communities, and patients as well as their families.

The TB network was borne out of this spirit of cooperation of the various stakeholders and member agencies of the Comprehensive & Unified Policy for TB Control (CUP). It is a recognized scheme of the NTP aiming to translate the cohesiveness in our goals into the full eradication of TB. Through unity made manifest into solid actions and achievements, we hope to inspire the participation of more groups and more individuals hopefully making TB control/ a national movement.

Thus far, we should all take pride of what we have achieved. Our shared experience in this long struggle proves that success can only come from working together in confronting challenges and sharing leadership. I hope to continue working with you in completing this daunting task and in someday celebrating with you when we have finally achieved our goals in this battle against TB.

Thank you very much!