



## Anti-TB Project

*--Nursing Children back to Health*



Each year more than 8 million people (most of them in the developing world) are infected with tuberculosis, and about 3 million die, including about 100,000 children. A study done in 2007 ranked the Philippines fourth in the world for the number of cases of tuberculosis and tagged it as the country with the highest number of cases per head in Southeast Asia. The study said that almost two thirds of Filipinos had tuberculosis, and up to an additional five million people were infected yearly. It is a health problem that begs attention and the involvement of all sectors of society.

The program dispenses a cocktail of medicines to TB patients every day for a prescribed medication period of 6 to 9 months, using the Directly Observed Therapy, Short Course (DOTS) strategy of TB treatment that is recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). The strategy calls for a health worker to personally dispense the medicines to the patient every day for the prescribed period to make sure that the patient really takes them. The club provides the medicines for free.

The Club's advocacy for the fight against TB began in RY 1986-1987 during the term of PP Charlie Rufino. PP Cesar Campos, chair of the TB Elimination Committee, pressed all the right buttons to ensure the project's success. He arranged for the Club to partner with the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the AKAPKA Foundation, both headed by then DSWD Sec. Mita Pardo de Tavera, for an anti-TB project in Carmona and Dasmarinas, Cavite, in two sitios where former informal settler-families in Manila were resettled. The families were tested for TB and those tested positive were placed on a medication program. Through the efforts of PP

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Cesar, the Club received a grant of \$162,000 from The Rotary Foundation (TRF) and built a link with Direct Relief International for the supply of the needed medicines. The project was discontinued in 1990 when the two communities were declared TB-free.

The project was revived in RY 2001-2002 during the term of PP Jonny Carlos. In this second wave of its anti-TB initiative, the club has received three matching grants totaling US\$130,150: \$40,000 in RY 2004-2005 for the treatment of 619 kids and 195 adult patients; \$50,000 in RY 2006-2007 covering 1,295 children and 64 adults in 46 sites; and \$40,150 for 638 kids in 16 sites. To date, the program has treated a total of 2,372, with 30 still undergoing medication in 1 project site.

The Club marked the program's revival by extending treatment to some 1,000 children in 6 farm schools, 3 communities, and an orphanage. In RY 2003-2004, the Club spearheaded a team-up between District 3830 and Japan's District 2700 for the expansion of the project to embrace all Rotary Clubs in the district, for which D-2700 donated \$10,000.

On that same year, the Club initiated a partnership with Kabisig ng Kalahi (KnK), a non-government organization that advocates for better nutrition among young children, and assigned to KnK the nutritional component of the TB Elimination Program. It was Ann Angela Quila who initiated the partnership between the Club and Kabisig. As KnK director, Ann Angela Quila, represented the NGO in the Club's anti-TB projects and was responsible for the identification and selection of sites for the modules covered by the three matching grants. Ann Angela was later credited by PP Puno Pena for much of the success of the program, even going as far as calling her "the angel of the anti-TB program."

In RY 2004-2005, during the centennial of Rotary International, the anti-TB initiative went nationwide with the inking of "Stop TB 2005," an agreement among the ten Rotary districts in the country to involve all Rotary Clubs in the fight against TB, with RC Makati in the lead. The project involved the World Health Organization, Department of Health, and the Philippine Coalition Against Tuberculosis. It was also on this year that the Club secured a matching grant from TRF in the amount of \$40,000.

The following year, a memorandum of agreement was signed by Districts 3830 and 2700 under which the latter donated ¥1 million for the program, matched with an equal amount by the Makati Rotary Club Foundation, Inc. (MRCFI).

The Club intensified its advocacy against TB in RY 2006-2007 when PP Puno Pena took over the chairmanship of the project. It was on this year that the Club secured



from TRF a matching grant of \$50,000 for a new round of anti-TB modules.

In RY 2008-2009, the Club signed a MOA with the Tropical Disease Foundation for free screening, mobile x-ray, and medication for TB patients and donated P500,000 to the Philippine International Center for TB in support of its efforts at combating the multi-drug resistant strain of the TB bacterium. The year also marked the approval of another TRF matching grant of \$40,150 for another round of anti-TB projects and the organization by the Club of a colloquium on TB and Nutrition among Rotary Clubs and various organizations involved in the prevention and treatment of TB and malnutrition among children.

Per direction from Gov. Billy Villareal, District 3830 will no longer be endorsing projects since Rotary International is encouraging Clubs "to be autonomous in the development of service projects for their respective communities." Any and all funds raised by the Club will therefore be dedicated to RC Makati TB projects and/or those of other Clubs endorsed by RCM.

The Club has done much in the national effort at arresting the spread of tuberculosis. And its efforts are not likely to wane as long as there are Filipinos suffering from TB who are too poor to buy the medicines they need to get cured of the disease.