

Myanmar receives high-tech TB detection machines

September 10 2013, by Aye Aye Win

Myanmar on Tuesday received four state-of-the-art machines to detect drug-resistant tuberculosis, one of its major health problems.

The machines were among more than 220 donated to 21 countries in Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia where TB is still rampant. The deal was engineered by UNITAID, a health assistance consortium formed by the governments of Brazil, Chile, France, Norway and Britain that derives about 70 percent of its funding from a small levy on some airline tickets.

UNITAID said the tuberculosis project, dubbed TBXpert and coordinated by the U.N.'s World Health Organization and the Stop TB Partnership, is projected to be capable of saving an additional 62,000 lives worldwide.

Myanmar has the world's fourth highest TB rate, with 525 cases per 100,000 people, compared to the global average of 178 cases. Though there are an estimated 9,000 new infections of drug-resistant TB every year in the country, as of 2012 only 800 patients had ever received treatment, according to the World Health Organization.

It's a worrying problem since this dangerous strain can be spread via [coughs](#) and [sneezes](#), usually infecting people in close contact.

"TB diagnosis usually takes six to eight weeks, but with the new machine we get the results in two hours. The test is based on genetic recognition and it will tell us if it is TB or drug-resistant TB," said Dr. Denis Broun,

executive director of UNITAID.

He said that with the six- to eight-week wait, patients would return to their villages and spread the disease to others. But with the new test, patients can get immediate treatment, helping to stop the spread of the disease.

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