

One of the most widespread infectious diseases in Asia and the Pacific is tuberculosis. About 5.2 million new cases occurred in the region in 2010, and tuberculosis claimed the lives of 630 000 people, more than all other infectious diseases combined (WHO, 2011d). In addition, many cases are undetected and untreated. Over 60% of the world's burden of tuberculosis (around 7.5 million prevalent cases) is found in the region.

Incidence rates were highest in Cambodia, Myanmar, DPR Korea and Papua New Guinea, at over 300 new detections per 100 000 population in 2010 (Figure 1.10.1). Incidence rates were also high in the Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Mongolia. Four of the five countries worldwide with the largest number of incident cases in 2010 were in Asia/Pacific: India (2.3 million), China (1.0 million), Indonesia (0.45 million) and Pakistan (0.40 million).

In 2010, Cambodia and Myanmar were the countries with the greatest TB disease burden, with prevalence rates of 660 and 525 per 100 000 population respectively. The Philippines, Papua New Guinea and Bangladesh also had prevalence rates over 400 per 100 000 population. The average prevalence rate across 22 Asian countries and economies in 2010 was 217, more than ten times that in OECD countries. Australia and New Zealand TB prevalence rates were less than ten.

But in terms of sheer numbers, India and China were the countries with largest number of persons with TB in 2010 (Figure 1.10.1). In India, 3.1 million persons were living with the disease, and in China, 1.5 million. Indonesia, Pakistan and Bangladesh also had half a million or more sufferers. India alone accounted for an estimated one quarter (26%) of all TB cases worldwide, and China and India combined accounted for 38%.

TB is a disease closely related to poverty, with most cases occurring in the productive age-group of 25-54 years, and with males disproportionately affected. It has a huge economic, as well as social impact. In 2006, TB caused India to lose an estimated USD 23.7 billion (Nair *et al.*, 2010). It can lead to catastrophic out-of-pocket expenditure, with 3-4 months lost wages due to illness-related absence from work not uncommon. Tuberculosis was declared a global health emergency by WHO in 1993.

The Asia/Pacific region is rising to the challenges presented by TB, with incidence, prevalence and mortality declining steadily since 1990. In Southeast Asia, the preva-

lence per 100 000 population fell from 457 to 278, and in the Western Pacific from 249 to 139 (Figure 1.10.2). China and Indonesia have seen significant declines, although progress in India has slowed. The WHO-coordinated Stop TB Partnership target is to halve TB prevalence by 2015, compared with a baseline of 1990. The Western Pacific Region is close to doing so, but although reductions in TB prevalence in Southeast Asia appear to have accelerated since 2000, current projections indicate that the target may be out of reach (WHO, 2011d).

DOTS or “directly observed treatment – short course” is the internationally recommended strategy for TB control, and is recognised as being efficient and cost-effective. High-quality TB services have expanded throughout the region, and case detection had exceeded 60% in Southeast Asia and 80% in the Western Pacific by 2010. DOTS treatment success rates have consistently surpassed 85% since 2003 (WHO, 2011d) (Figure 1.10.3).

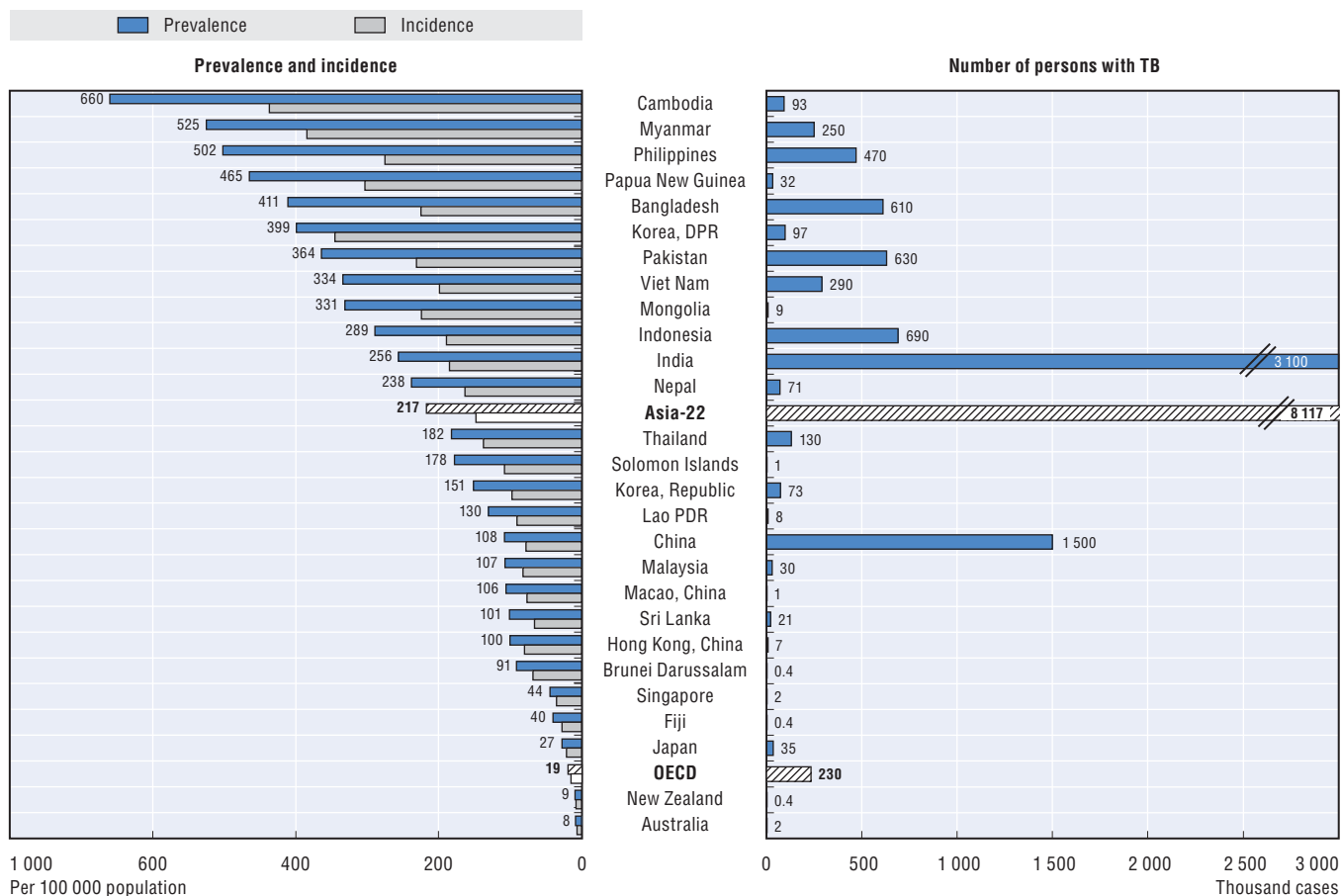
The region faces important challenges to TB control, including providing services to those in greatest need, especially the poor and vulnerable. HIV-TB co-infection, the emergence of drug-resistant strains, funding gaps and the need for greater technical expertise in developing countries all remain threats to progress (WHO, 2011e and 2012b).

Definition and comparability

Tuberculosis (TB) is a contagious disease, most often caused by the *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* bacteria in humans. Tuberculosis usually attacks the lungs but can also affect other parts of the body. It is spread through the air, when people who have the disease cough, sneeze, talk or spit. Most infections in humans are latent and without symptoms, with about one in ten latent infections eventually progressing to active disease. If left untreated, active TB kills more than 50% of its victims.

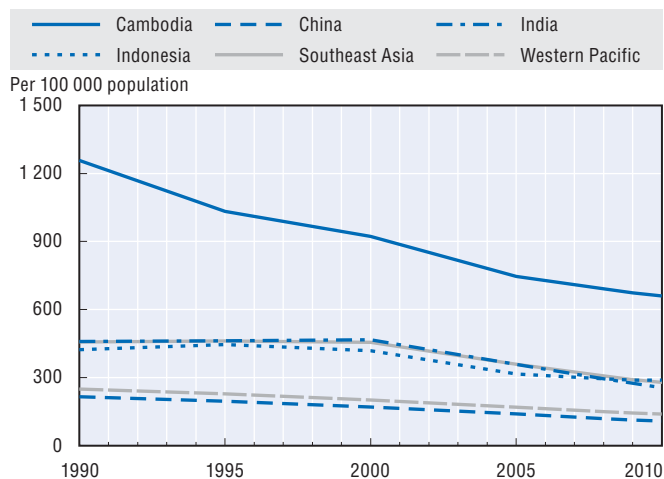
The TB incidence rate is the number of new cases of the disease reported in a year, per 100 000 population. The TB prevalence rate is the total number of persons with the disease at a particular time, per 100 000 population.

1.10.1. Estimate of the burden of disease caused by tuberculosis, 2010



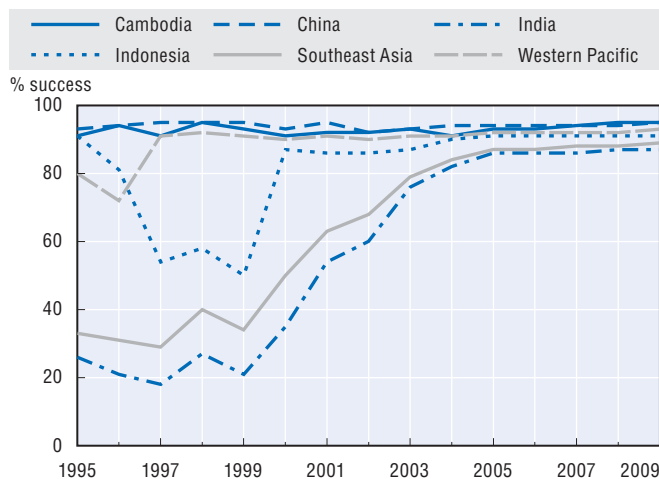
Source: WHO (2011d).

1.10.2. Tuberculosis prevalence rates, selected countries, 1990-2010



Source: WHO (2011d).

1.10.3. Tuberculosis treatment success for new smear-positive cases, 1995-2009



Source: WHO (2011d).

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