

# MONDAY

## DEVELOPMENTS

The Latest Issues and Trends in International Development and Humanitarian Assistance

# PEOPLE MAKING A DIFFERENCE



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InterAction

## SEEING CLEARLY

### Assistance for vision-impaired people

By Cliff Bryant, Director of Marketing, Physicians for Peace

What do you do with tens of thousands of pairs of used eyeglasses? Give them to Physicians for Peace's Seeing Clearly program, of course. That's what New Jersey-based non-profit New Eyes for the Needy decided recently, continuing a partnership that is bringing the gift of sight to thousands of vision-impaired patients in the Philippines. Seeing Clearly, an eye care and eyeglass distribution program, currently benefits needy patients in the Philippines, and Physicians for Peace plans to expand the program to other parts of the world.

In the Philippines, the program consists of an eyeglass bank at Madrid District Hospital, Surigao del Sur, and a campaign to encourage corneal tissue donations to support the Eye Bank of the Philippines at the Cebu Doctors University Hospital in Cebu City. Physicians for Peace also provides sophisticated optometry equipment and trains local students to determine the strength of donated eyeglasses so they can be used in outreach clinics. Physicians for Peace doctors then volunteer at clinics in remote areas throughout the Philippines to give vision exams, treat serious vision problems, and fit patients for glasses, often for the first time. This program is made possible through partnerships between Physicians for Peace and the Philippine Academy of Ophthalmology, the Lions Clubs and Rotary Clubs of Manila, Philippines and the Rotary Club of Churchland in Portsmouth, Virginia.

The partnership between Physicians for Peace and New Eyes for the Needy is a great example of how NGOs can make a huge difference by joining hands and working together to create long-term sustainable programs. New Eyes for the Needy, founded in 1932, improves the vision of the less fortunate by providing new glasses in the U.S., and recycling donated glasses for distribution overseas. When New Eyes for the Needy needed to find new homes for over 45,000 pairs of used and recyclable eyeglasses, frames, sunglasses and eyeglass cases, it turned to Physicians for Peace. In the summer of 2007, Physicians for Peace shipped the glasses to the Philippines for refitting and distribution.

"While the patients treated through Seeing Clearly receive much-needed medical assistance for serious vision problems, the doctors and students involved gain valuable experience in evaluating and treating significantly-underserved patients," noted John Knight, Physicians for Peace Medical Operations Committee member and volunteer leader of the Seeing Clearly program. "This ongoing training through clinics in developing countries supported by Physicians for Peace represents an effort to create sustainable and ultimately self-supporting medical care programs in the host nations."

The Seeing Clearly program, which involves the generous efforts of multiple partners and volunteers in both the Philippines and the United States, is a wonderful example of how various organizations and people, each with different but complimentary skills and services, can come together to give someone in another country the simple gift of sight.



Urmează calea însănătoșirii  
TUBERCULOZA SE VINDECĂ!

## SPEAKING OUT AGAINST STIGMA

### Tuberculosis control in Romania

By Daniel Kricheff and Doctors of the World-USA

By speaking out about his success in overcoming Tuberculosis (TB), Marin Busuioc has become the face of TB control in Romania and one of Doctors of the World – USA's (DOW) important partners in battling the epidemic. Busuioc, a member of Romania's sizable Roma community, was born in a small village and grew up living in poverty, with little education or access to opportunities. At age 70, he was diagnosed with TB.

"It was very difficult for me," confesses Busuioc, speaking about his diagnosis. "I didn't have an appetite. I had vertigo, fever, and I lost weight. It wasn't the real me any longer ... I thought I would die." Weak and with his conditioning worsening, Mr. Busuioc went to the hospital for treatment. "I followed the treatment very carefully and I got well completely," he says. "My advice for TB patients is to go to the doctor urgently, as I did."

Mr. Busuioc's message may seem obvious, yet in Roma communities there is often little knowledge about the causes of and cure for TB, even though Roma suffer disproportionately from the disease. And all too often, people living with TB face stigma and discrimination.

In 2004, DOW launched a major health education campaign in Romania to spread the word that TB is preventable and curable, and to break down the barriers that often prevent people from seeking and receiving treatment. Mr. Busuioc became the "poster man" of the campaign, with his face appearing on posters and publications around the country. He shared his experience fighting TB in a DOW-produced film entitled "TB Can Be Cured!" In the film, Mr. Busuioc informs and encourages viewers with the knowledge that TB can be treated and cured.

The film was created to spread the facts about TB and to combat the stigma that prevents many from seeking treatment. DOW's strategy was to involve the target community itself in disseminating the message. The film was used to launch community discussions through sessions led by DOW-trained Roma peer health educators. Mr. Busuioc effectively relates his story in the film and at key advocacy events. In the process he has become a charismatic spokesperson for TB control. The film was shown to nearly 15,000 people throughout Romania.

**Mr. Busuioc's words are clear and simple, yet vital to the success of Romania's battle against TB: "TB can be cured. It's a fact!"**