



East, Central and Southern Africa—
Health Community (ECSA-HC)

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

1. Build a regional network of National TB reference Laboratories (NRLs) for interstate laboratory quality assurance and management in ECSA Region.
2. Improved Laboratory service provision for quality assured 1st and 2nd line Drug susceptibility testing (DST) accessible to all people in the ECSA region
3. Build capacity of NRLs to undertake epidemiological/ monitoring surveys such as DRS and TB disease prevalence

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The Global Fund Regional Lab Strengthening TB Project



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ECSA-Health Community Launches a USD 6.1Million Regional TB Project

The ECSA-Health Community officially launched a US\$6.1 Million TB project awarded by the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria. The Project was launched during the 62nd ECSA-HC Health Ministers Conference held in Mauritius in November 2015 and aims to support countries in the ECSA region and beyond to strengthen TB diagnosis through the Uganda Supra-National TB Laboratory (SRL). Eighteen countries will benefit from this grant including; Botswana, Burundi, Eritrea, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Na-

mibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. ECSA-HC



Minister for Health and Quality of Life Hon. Anil Gayan and the Director General ECSA-HC launch the project

as the principal Recipient, will manage the grant while the Uganda SRL a sub recipient will provide technical assis-

tance to the countries in strengthening their capacity in TB diagnosis. This grant has been timely as TB is one of the most deadly infectious diseases, killing about 1.5 million people globally every year. Early TB diagnosis is critical in ensuring that we reduce the death rate and the burden of the disease. Globally an estimated 43 million lives were saved through TB diagnosis and treatment between 2000 and 2014. A laboratory confirmation of TB and Drug Resistant TB is paramount in ensuring a patient receives effective treatment.

18 African countries commit to strengthen TB diagnosis

Following the Launch of the GF project, the participating countries held a meeting during the 62nd ECSA-HC Health Ministers Conference and pledged to sign Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with ECSA-HC and the Ugan-

da SRL to support the strengthening of their National TB Reference Laboratories. This commitment by the participating countries will enable the SRL to support them throughout the 4 year grant period and beyond. It is esti-

mated that utilization of an SRL within the region rather than outside of Africa will cost 3 times less annually for African countries thus enabling countries to be cost effective.

Baseline Assessments in 18 National TB Reference Laboratories



The Under Secretary South Sudan, the Director General, Public Health Laboratory, The TB Pro-

Between January and April 2016, ECSA-HC and Uganda SRL conducted initial visits and baseline assessments in the 18 project countries. The visits were aimed at introducing the project to senior Ministry of Health Officials and key stakeholders in the project countries.

Critical laboratory and TB program data that will be used as a benchmark for

measuring the project performance over the four years was also collected. The baseline assessment provided a platform for ECSA-HC and the Uganda SRL technical teams to understand each country's specific needs and develop targeted Terms of References (TORs) for the Technical Assistance to be provided in relation to the Global Fund approved Performance Framework. This was important as each of the

participating countries are at different stages in the implementation of TB laboratory testing and quality management systems

Technical Assistance was provided during the assessment with some countries undergoing training on TB diagnostic techniques.

Quotes from Senior Government Officials

"my ultimate goal is to have the TB laboratory attain accreditation by 2020; I am positive that this will be realized with support from ECSA-HC and the Uganda SRL". The Under Secretary, South Sudan

"The bottom line of the support from the GF regional project is to see Malawi TB Lab accredited. The onus is on ECSA HC to make this happen". Permanent Secretary Ministry of Health Malawi .

"I am glad that ECSA is doing hands on activities and engaging the laboratory personnel one on one; this will greatly contribute to the improvement of knowledge and skills of the laboratory personnel to perform their duties appropriately". Public Health Commissioner, Seychelles.

"The support from this project is what the country requires to accelerate our catch up strategy which will enable us to reach where other countries have reached, South Sudan being the newest country in Africa" The Director General, Public Health Laboratories in South Sudan

Enhancing Regional Laboratory networking through Knowledge Management (KM)



Knowledge Management (KM) enables individuals, teams and the entire organization to collectively and systematically create, collect, synthesise, share and apply knowledge to achieve their objectives.

KM is a critical component of

the project as it aims to network all National TB Reference Laboratories in the region and encourage sharing of information, lessons learnt and best practices in TB diagnosis. Preliminary findings from the baseline assess-

ment conducted in the 18 countries indicated that there is need to sensitize and create awareness about KM among the TB program and Laboratory managers so that KM can be incorporated and utilized to improve effectiveness and efficiency in the functioning of laboratories and TB programs.

The Uganda Supranational Reference Laboratory: “timely accurate diagnostics

for a TB-free Africa”



The Uganda National Tuberculosis Reference Laboratory was started as the Uganda Bacteriological Investigation Unit in the late 1950’s under the then East African Community.

The laboratory participated in anti TB clinical trials and drug toxicities under the then British Medical Research Council (MRC).

After the collapse of the East African Community in 1970’s, the laboratory reverted to the line ministries. Its name changed to Central Tuberculosis laboratory (CTBL) in 1980’s and National Tuberculosis Reference Laboratory in the 1990’S.

The Uganda National Tuberculosis Reference Laboratory established under the

National Tuberculosis and Leprosy Programme (NLTP) of the Ministry of Health (MoH) received accreditation from the WHO in April 2013, making it the first SRL in East Africa, and the second in Sub-Saharan Africa to achieve this status.

The SRL works in Uganda as an NTRL and across the African region as an SRL. Currently, the laboratory is a Supranational TB Reference Laboratory for 11 countries namely; Rwanda, Eritrea, Lesotho, Tanzania, Zambia, South Sudan, Swaziland, Somalia, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Liberia.

Regional Trainings Conducted by the Uganda SRL 2013-2016

Year	Trainee country of origin	Number of trainees	Training focus
2016	Burundi	2	Introduction to MGIT DST
2016	Malawi	5	Introduction to MGIT and LJ DST
2016	Ethiopia	3	Refresher in MGIT 1 st and 2 nd line DST
2015	Mauritius	1	Refresher in TB diagnostic tests including ZN, Xpert, MGIT, LJ
2015	Ethiopia	2	Preparation of PT panels
2015	Swaziland	3	Introduction to second line DST using MGIT
2014	Zimbabwe	2	Introduction to MGIT DST and Implementation of QMS
2013	South Sudan	5	Microscopy methods using FM and ZN and Culture and DST using LJ and MGIT

The Uganda SRL Supports Somaliland to Advance TB diagnosis

In February 2016, the Uganda SRL trained 8 laboratory staff from the Somaliland culture laboratory in Hargeisa on the LJ culture diagnostic technique.

This technique provides a definitive diagnosis of TB and also helps to monitor the patient on treatment to ascertain improvement or non-improvement which is critical in informing patient management.

Culture testing provides isolates for drug susceptibility testing, which will ensure that the patient is put on effective treatment thus speeding up the healing process and preventing further spread of the disease.

Currently the Somaliland National TB reference Laboratory is performing LJ culture testing of patients attending the TB and Multi-

Drug Resistant TB hospitals and continues to receive technical assistance from the Uganda SRL to enable them improve their competence and skills.



ECSA-HC Shares its Experience on Implementation of Regional Grants

In April, 2016, ECSA-HC joined the High Impact Africa (HIA) II countries; Ethiopia, Zambia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Mozambique and Zimbabwe and other stakeholders in Mozambique during a regional meeting for recipient countries organized by the Global Fund Secretariat, the Ministry of Health, Mozambique and the Country Coordinating Mechanism, Mozambique.

The theme of the meeting was : **"Forum for Sharing Country Implementation Ex-**

periences" and provided an opportunity for countries to share experiences and innovative solutions used to promote the implementation of HIV, Malaria, TB as well as cross- cutting health systems strengthening.

Regional grants face a myriad challenges at the design and implementation phases. They require an all inclusive Coordinating Mechanism and a strong Regional Oversight Committee, the implementers need to regularly update the Country Coordi-

nating Mechanisms and enhance communication and feedback loops.

Sharing experiences with other implementers of regional grants will facilitate drawing of lessons from other regional programs and regional programs funded through other mechanisms. While designing a regional grant, it is critical to involve all stakeholders, simplify interventions and focus on regional interventions.

Upcoming Events

1. *Technical Assistance to Implement new diagnostics in Botswana, Malawi and Somalia*
2. *Short term Technical Assistance in Burundi*
3. *Dispatch of Microscopy Panel Tests in 10 countries (Botswana, Burundi ,Eritrea, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, and Swaziland)*
4. *Technical Assistance to support the TB Prevalence Survey in Kenya*
5. *Training on Quality Management Systems for TB quality officers from all the 18 project countries*
6. *Activate the SRL online communication portal to enhance communication and networking of TB laboratories and experts in the region*

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