



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 TB Laboratory Strengthening Project

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## Ministry of Health, Uganda and ECSA-Health Community Sign a US \$ 6.1Million Sub-agreement to Improve TB Diagnosis in the ECSA Region

The Government of Uganda and the East, Central and Southern Africa – Health Community in August 2016, signed a US\$ 6.1 million sub-agreement for a Regional TB grant awarded by the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria.

The project will support 18 countries in the ECSA region and beyond to strengthen TB diagnosis through the Uganda Supra-National TB Reference Laboratory (SRL). Eighteen countries will bene-

fit from this grant including; Botswana, Burundi, Eritrea, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia,



*Dr. Asuman Lukwago , Permanent Secretary Ministry of Health Uganda*

Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Swazi-land, Tan-

zania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe

The signing of the sub-agreement formalizes a partnership that will build on previous support to the Uganda SRL, from the World Bank, the World Health Organization, and the United States Government

This regional project allows two strong Sub-Saharan African institutions to work together to provide proven technical expertise and the ability to facilitate Ministerial oversight and leadership on TB in the region

## Enhancing Quality and Reliability of TB Results in the ECSA Region

The Uganda SRL supported 18 countries in the ECSA Region to conduct External Quality Assurance (EQA) for TB Microscopy test, the most widely used test for diagnosis of TB in the ECSA region. EQA is critical as it provides reliability and validity of the tests.

This support was provided to the countries in collaboration

with the National Institute for Communicable Diseases in South Africa which has been commissioned by the World Health Organization to provide External Quality Assurance support for all the African High TB burden countries. This collaboration will avoid duplication and enhance synergies among the two

SRLs.

The Uganda SRL will continue to support EQA in the countries for Drug Susceptibility Testing annually and microscopy bi-annually for the next four years while providing the relevant technical assistance to ensure that all the 18 project countries are compliant with WHO standards .

## Optimizing the Management of a Regional Grant: GMS Support



A group photo of the ECSA-Health Community and the Uganda SRL joint Technical Support Workshop facilitated by the GMS from 26-28 July, 2016 in Moshi, Tanzania.

Regional Grants are critical in addressing common regional health problems. However, they are complex and are associated with a lot of challenges especially in governance and communication across the regional grant structures leading to many regional grants not achieving their desired objectives.

Under the new funding mechanism, the Global Fund has put in place stringent financial, monitoring, reporting and procurement rules/regulations & requirements which must be ad-

hered to for the smooth management of the grant.

In order to overcome these challenges ECSA-HC sought and received technical support from the Grant Management Solution (GMS) in order to build its capacity in the efficient and effective management and implementation of the current regional TB and future GF grants.

The technical support received included: Overall Global Fund Grant Management, SR oversight, management and supervision (including development of

SR Manuals), global Fund Financial Rules and Regulations (Financial Monitoring and Reporting, ), monitoring and evaluation of GF grant (performance reporting including Progress Updates (PU), Development of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plans and procurement and supply chain management (Global Drug Facility (GDF) rules and procedures)

The support started in April, 2016 with a joint ECSA-HC and Uganda SRL workshop being held in July, 2016. The support is ongoing and shall run until 2017.

### The Uganda SRL Supports Swaziland to Prepare for its second National TB Drug Resistance Survey

The Uganda SRL supported the National TB Control Program (NCP) in Swaziland to prepare for its second Drug Resistance Survey. This was done in collaboration with the World Health Organization with funding from the Global Fund. The technical support included:

1. Assessment of the capacity of NTRL and network to absorb additional workload: Provide advice on specimen flow, advice on human resource reorganization in the laboratory including development of a schedule matching experienced staff with newly recruited ones, Identify training needs and develop a training plan, establish whether there is any additional equipment required
2. Assessment of the current plans for specimen collection, packaging and transportation proposed for the survey
3. Review the Drug Resistance Survey (DRS)

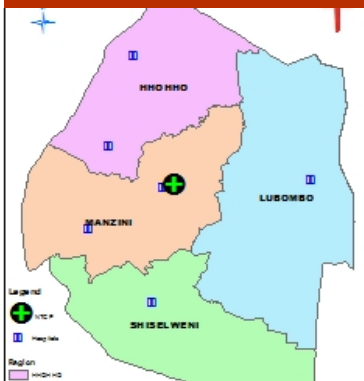
protocol and procedures

4. Review laboratory practices and procedures including; technical procedures, data management, sample and isolate storage and laboratory information management system (LIMS) and finally,

5. Offer technical support in supplies and data management

The primary objectives of the survey are to: -

1. To determine the proportion of new sputum Xpert MTB/RIF and previously treated positive pulmonary TB cases that have resistance to rifampicin alone or to both rifampicin and isoniazid (MDR-TB) and/or to other anti-tuberculosis drugs;
2. To determine the proportions and patterns of drug resistance to fluoroquinolones and second-line injectable agents among patients with strains with confirmed resistance to rifampicin



Map of Swaziland showing all the four regions.

# Achievements

1. The Botswana NTRL was re-opened on 1st September 2016 following continuous technical assistance provided by the Uganda SRL
2. Restructuring of the TB Lab in Mauritius with an anteroom created following technical support and recommendation from the Uganda SRL.
3. Training of Malawi NTRL staff in culture and identification in LJ and MGIT methods conducted in September 2016

## Upcoming Events: October—December, 2016

1. *Laboratory Quality Management Systems (QMS) Training workshop; October 31st- November 11th, 2016, Kampala, Uganda*
2. *Technical Assistance to implement new diagnostics for MDR TB in 7 countries namely; Eritrea, Somalia, Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, Zambia, Botswana*
3. *On-site training of Botswana NTRL staff in quality Management System and further training on External Quality Assurance for microscopy and GeneXpert*
4. *Proficiency Testing for microscopy and Drug Susceptibility Testing (DST) in 10 countries (Botswana, Burundi, Eritrea, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, and Swaziland)*
5. *Advocacy for the Uganda SRL online Knowledge Management Platform to enhance communication and networking of TB laboratories and experts in the region*
6. *Recruitment of 13 Uganda SRL staff*
7. *Project Regional Steering Committee Meeting, 28th – 30th November 2016, Tanzania*

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