



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 Lab Strengthening Project



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The 2nd Regional Project Steering Committee Meeting

The 2nd Regional Project Steering Committee Meeting was held from 29th November to 1st December, 2016 in Dar-es-Salaam Tanzania.

The purpose of the meeting was to: Review progress made during the 1st year Implementation from 1st November 2015 to 31st December 2016, review and endorse the 2nd year work plan and Share country experiences, lessons learnt and promising practices.

The three days meeting brought together representatives from 17 out of the 18 project countries who included: National TB Program Managers, National TB Reference laboratory Managers, key collaborating and development partners and Civil Society Organizations (CSO). The meeting was officially

opened by the Director General, ECSA-HC.

The Regional project Steering Committee (RSC) plays an oversight role and monitors implementation of the project activities as well as endorses critical project documents.



*Prof. Yoswa Dambisya, Director General
ECSA-HC officially opening the 2nd Re-
gional Steering Committee Meeting*

One of the key issues discussed during the meeting was the importance of laboratory accreditation. Dr. Jean – Bosco Ndhokubwayo the regional focal point for laboratory systems and services at the WHO regional office for Africa emphasized the importance of accreditation

which indicates that a laboratory is competent and is globally recognized. He further reiterated that accreditation is a stimulant for keeping the quality system alive hence improving the quality of services provided.

The Director General, ECSA-HC, Prof. Yoswa Dambisya emphasized the critical role played by laboratories in managing tuberculosis. For African countries to attain the SDGs he said, the entire health system must be strengthened with equitable focus on all components.

The project leadership assured the meeting that all efforts will be made to ensure that laboratories in the project countries are accredited and that test results relayed to the clinicians are reliable thus ensuring proper patient management which ultimately contributes to the eradication of TB.

Training on Laboratory Quality Management Systems



Group Discussion during the training



Group Exercise

In November 2016, the Uganda SRL in collaboration with the African Society for Laboratory Medicine (ASLM) conducted a training of 21 quality officers from 16 out of the 18 project countries in the ECSA region on Laboratory Quality Management Systems (LMQS).

One of the best methods for effective and efficient strengthening of TB laboratories is the implementation of a quality management system (QMS) based on the ISO 15189 standards. Therefore, the two weeks training aimed at providing participants with knowledge and skills required to implement an

effective and efficient quality management system in Tuberculosis laboratories.

The performance of a laboratory is not only dependent on personnel, equipment, supplies and infrastructure, but also adherence to laboratory regulations and accreditation requirements that clearly outline and enforce standards which ensure accountability and delivery of quality services.

The LQMS training increased the participants' understanding of LQMS as evidenced by an average increment in the post test score by 23% and testimonies from participants.



Role play during the training

The Uganda SRL will continue providing technical assistance to the eighteen project countries and follow-up the participants to ensure application of knowledge and skills attained during the training.

In addition, the Uganda SRL will continue to provide mentorship on LQMS in the individual laboratories through regular technical assistance missions to ensure quality management systems are implemented and sustained.

Annual Review and Planning Meeting



Participants from ECSA-HC & Uganda SRL

The East, Central and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC) jointly with the Uganda Laboratory (SRL) held their second joint planning meeting in November 2016 in Arusha Tanzania. The aim of the meeting was to review progress made in implementation of year one project activities and to develop a plan for the coming year (Year 2). The planning meeting also served as a platform for both organizations to touch base and strengthen their ties and

working relationship.

The meeting was attended by the Project Management Unit from ECSA-HC and the Project Implementation Unit from the Uganda SRL.

PROMOTING NETWORKING OF TB REFERENCE LABORATORIES IN THE ECSA REGION THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

In a bid to strengthen networking of the 18 National TB Reference Laboratories in the Regional project, the Uganda SRL has promoted the use of social media which has enhanced communication and facilitated provision of continuous technical support and assistance to the labs.

Following completion of the LQMS training held in Uganda in November 2016, participants formed a WhatsApp group which has facilitated easy and quick

communication between the technical people at the SRL and the countries as they implement QMS back home at their respective Labs.

An online forum is also available on the SRL website as a knowledge exchange and sharing platform that aids and supports communication between the SRL and the countries.

The platform has improved working relationships and enhanced sharing of ex-

periences between the countries, it has also increased access to technical information and helped in the solving of day-to-day challenges faced in the NRLs through the constant interaction .

The online forum is open for registration to all individuals working in TB laboratories, laboratory experts and other relevant stakeholders. Registration is free and can be accessed through: www.ntrl.or.ug

Upcoming Events (January—March, 2017)

1. *Project Monitoring in Burundi, Botswana and Malawi*
2. *Short term technical assistance in Swaziland and South Sudan*
3. *Long term technical assistance in Zimbabwe, Namibia, Tanzania, Botswana and Burundi*
4. *Technical assistance to implement new diagnostics in Botswana, Mozambique, Kenya, Malawi and Eritrea*
5. *Technical assistance to improve Quality Management Systems and facilitate accreditation of the National TB Reference laboratory in Botswana*
6. *External Quality Assurance for Microscopy in 10 countries*

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