



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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Project Monitoring Visits in Botswana, Burundi and Malawi

In January, 2017 ECSA-HC commissioned monitoring visits to project countries focusing on two main components; data quality assessment (DQA) and M&E support to countries.

The objectives of the monitoring visits were to determine the status and functionality of M&E systems and assess the capability of responsible units in coordinating and facilitating generation and reporting of data at the Uganda SRL and project countries; follow-up and document the status of implementation of planned activities, identify other capacity and resource needs and agree with project countries on how these

can be met; and document best practices.

Therefore, the results of the monitoring visits would help ECSA-HC to plan and strengthen its M&E systems for effective support to the project countries on M&E issues and put in place measures to ensure a conducive environment for current and future projects among others.

Countries for monitoring visits were selected based on project and country priorities. By the

end of the quarter, three countries were visited; Botswana, Burundi and Malawi.

During the monitoring visits, countries were appraised on the project specific indicators that they are supposed to report on and trained on the reporting requirements.

Below is a picture of the debriefing meeting with the National TB Reference Laboratory Management team in Botswana





The SRL officer providing training during the long term TA in Burundi



A lab technical Officer working on samples at the NTRL—Zimbabwe during the long term TA

Long Term Technical Assistance

In a bid to support the implementation of culture and Drug Susceptibility Test (DST) diagnostic techniques in the beneficiary National Reference Laboratories, the Uganda Supra-National Reference Laboratory (USRL) conducts long term technical assistance visits lasting one month .

Between January—May, 2017, three (3) long term technical assistance visits were conducted in Burundi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe. In all the three countries, the technical assistance was to

support the implementation of Löwenstein–Jensen (LJ) Drug Susceptibility Testing (DST) diagnostic technique and implementation of Laboratory Quality Management System (LQMS)

In addition, Burundi received technical assistance in the area of national sample specimen referral system, while Zimbabwe received technical assistance on Mycobacteria Growth Indicator Tube (MGIT) liquid culture technique.

Technical Assistance on Drug Resistance Survey

The Kingdom of Swaziland commenced implementation of a National Drug Resistance Survey (DRS) this year. In this regard, a two-week technical assistance visit was made to the laboratory

The aim of the technical assistance was to support implementation of the pilot phase of the survey. Specifically, the NTRL staff were oriented on the DRS while pe-

ripheral laboratory staff were trained on-site on using the GeneXpert.

In addition, assessment of the NTRL was conducted to verify the level of preparedness of the laboratory to conduct the DRS and its preparation plans to temporarily relocate to the Nhlanguano TB lab to allow for renovation of the BSL 3 at the National TB Reference Laboratory .

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE

External Quality Assurance (EQA) is funding by WHO to provide a process to assess laboratory performance in terms of accuracy of results in order to demonstrate and maintain high quality results. The Uganda SRL under the Regional grant spearheaded by ECSA-HC is required to provide microscopy and culture & DST testing panels to all 18 beneficiary countries under the project. During 2016, it was noted that the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD), South Africa received

The Uganda SRL dispatched panels for microscopy in February 2017 to 12 countries namely; Mauritius, Somalia, Swaziland, South Sudan, Malawi, Botswana, Rwanda, Eritrea, Burundi, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Seychelles. All the participants showed satisfactory performance by scoring at least 80% which is the pass mark. The average score was 97% .

In a bid to foster partnership and avoid duplication of services, the Uganda SRL and NICD agreed to share the responsibility of providing panels to the target countries with the former providing panels to all countries except those covered by the WHO funds.

Upcoming Events (April—June, 2017)

1. *Project Monitoring in Eritrea, Mauritius and Rwanda*
2. *Short term technical assistance in Mauritius, Zambia, Swaziland and South Sudan*
3. *Long term technical assistance in Seychelles, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, South Sudan, Swaziland, Kenya, Rwanda and Namibia*
4. *Technical assistance to implement new diagnostics in Mauritius, Zimbabwe, Seychelles and Namibia*
5. *Training and Certification of New SRL Mentors*
6. *Meeting of NTRL managers to share success stories, promising and best practices*
7. *Uganda SRL Business and Marketing Strategy*
8. *EQA for Culture and DST*

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