

FEBRUARY 2023

EAST, CENTRAL & SOUTHERN AFRICA HEALTH COMMUNITY



WEEKLY HIGHLIGHTS



LATEST FROM THE SECRETARIAT

TOP STORIES



ECSA-HC Validates and Adopts Four Key Mine Health and Safety SOPs

under the TIMS III Project stakeholders have been drawn from nine member states in Dar es salaam Tanzania to validate four MHS SOPs.



Lab Technicians Empowered to Fight Leprosy: Results from the SATBHSS Project Training in Zambia

ECSA-HC under its Southern Africa Tuberculosis and Health System Support Project (SATBHSS) takes action in revitalizing Leprosy Diagnostic Capacity in ECSA-HC Member States



One on one with Vama Jele

Representing Key populations (Ex-mine workers this week Mr Vama shared key insights of the work and strategic direction that the regional association is taking towards the fight against TB and the welfare on the marginalised group.



ECSA-HC VALIDATES AND ADOPTS FOUR KEY MINE HEALTH AND SAFETY SOPs

The East, Central and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC) recently conducted a highly successful workshop in Dar es Salaam, as part of the TB in the Mining Sector in Southern Africa (TIMS III) initiative. The workshop, which took place from 20th to 24th February 2023, brought together representatives from nine countries, including Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, to validate and adopt four generic Mine Health and Safety Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

The development of the generic MHS SOPs was informed by a comprehensive literature review of the legal frameworks for each of the nine countries. The five-day workshop saw participants from the Ministry of Mines and/or Health in each country, as well as representatives from organizations such as the Southern African Miners Association (SAMA), SADC, SADC Women in Mining, and the Association of Small Scale Miners in Tanzania meeting and deliberating on the validation and adoption of the SOPs.

Through interactive and informative sessions, the consultant presented the four SOPs and led group discussions, followed by plenary sessions on each of the procedures. The four generic MHS SOPs that were validated and adopted unanimously include:

- Risk Management, Early Detection and Surveillance for Tuberculosis, HIV and Occupational Lung Diseases in Mining.
- Information, Education and Communication on Tuberculosis, HIV and Occupational Lung Diseases in Mining.
- Quality Management in the Prevention of Tuberculosis, HIV and Occupational Lung Diseases in Mining.
- Monitoring and Evaluation

The workshop concluded with group discussions and a plenary session, resulting in the creation of country-specific roadmaps for the implementation of the MHS SOPs. The validation and adoption of these procedures marks a significant step forward in the efforts to improve health and safety in the mining sector in Southern Africa.



Dr. Willy Amis-SADC



Delegates during group discussions

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LAB TECHNICIANS EMPOWERED TO FIGHT LEPROSY: RESULTS FROM THE SATBHSS PROJECT TRAINING IN ZAMBIA

Leprosy, a disease that has been affecting people for millennia, is still a public health problem in several countries in East, Central, and Southern Africa. In response to the gaps in leprosy diagnosis using laboratory methods, the East, Central and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC) is supporting the revitalization of leprosy diagnostics capacity in its member states and project countries.

Transmitted through droplets from the nose and mouth during prolonged contact with untreated leprosy patients, this disease can lead to permanent impairments to the skin, nerves, face, hands, and feet if left untreated. To combat this issue, the SATBHSS project is working to revitalize laboratory capacity in countries where the number of leprosy cases is on the rise, but there is no capacity to diagnose the disease using lab methods.

Between 20-24 February, a training was held in Zambia for laboratory technicians from districts with a high burden of leprosy. 26 participants representing one laboratory technician from each of the 10 provinces in Zambia attended the training, which was held at the National TB Reference Laboratory. The key objectives of the training were to train laboratory technicians in the standardized procedure for sample collection, preparation of skin smear, Ziehl Neelsen staining method, microscopy reading and interpretation of results, preparation of Ziehl Neelsen reagents, and conducting internal quality control for skin smear microscopy. The training also aimed to adopt and adapt the standard operating procedures for the diagnosis of leprosy. Over the course of five days, these technicians received training on the latest techniques for diagnosing leprosy, including skin smear preparation, staining, and microscopy reading and interpretation. They also learned about the burden of leprosy globally and at the country level, as well as the preparation of Ziehl Neelsen reagents and the process of internal quality control.

The laboratory technicians are now equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to diagnose leprosy more accurately. They understand the standard operating procedures (SOPs) for diagnosis and are able to adapt these procedures to be used in their own laboratories.



Group photo of participants after the 5 day training in Zambia



Practical session on going

SRL-UGANDA SUPPORTS KENYA'S NATIONAL TUBERCULOSIS, LEPROSY, AND LUNG DISEASE PROGRAM

From February 20th to 24th, 2023, Uganda Supernatural Laboratory (SRL) participated in the 3rd Kenya National Tuberculosis, Leprosy, and Lung Disease Program (NTP) workshop through the Global Fund Regional Laboratory Strengthening Project. The workshop's main objective was to provide technical support to the National Tuberculosis Reference Laboratory (NTRL) in Kenya in incorporating the TB laboratory components into the NTP strategic plan.

SRL-Uganda is mandated to support NTRL Kenya in strengthening its capacity to manage and coordinate the TB laboratory network. This activity aimed to ensure that the diagnostics interventions, activities, and sub-activities are well costed to support the NTP and NTRL in resource mobilization. The workshop also focused on developing an M&E framework with clear indicators and realistic targets for TB diagnostics.

The workshop had representatives from the National TB Program Manager and development partners such as WHO, USAID, CDC, CHS (ARC II), KCCB (Kenya Conference of Catholic Bishops), and AMREF, who offered technical support.

The workshop's outcomes are expected to strengthen Kenya's capacity to manage and coordinate its TB laboratory network and enhance its ability to mobilize resources for TB diagnostics interventions. By developing an M&E framework with clear indicators and realistic targets for TB diagnostics, the workshop aimed to improve the effectiveness of TB diagnosis and management in Kenya.

SRL-Uganda's participation in the workshop demonstrates its commitment to supporting regional initiatives aimed at improving laboratory services in Africa. The Global Fund Regional Laboratory Strengthening Project seeks to enhance the capacity of laboratories in the region to provide timely and accurate results.



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO ENHANCE QUALITY MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGIC PLANNING AT SEYCHELLES PUBLIC HEALTH LABORATORY

The Seychelles Public Health Laboratory (SPHL) continues to receive technical assistance from the East, Central, and Southern Africa Health Community (ECSA-HC) through its Global Fund Regional Lab strengthening Project, implemented jointly with Uganda Supernatural Laboratory (SRL). The technical assistance aims to provide training and mentorship on quality management systems to enhance the laboratory's capacity and support the finalization of the One Health strategic plan.

The SPHL was identified as having an advanced quality management system and qualified for support towards application for ISO accreditation, specifically for ISO 15189. The SRL has been providing continuing support to the laboratory, including reviewing LQMS implementation, performing onsite peer-to-peer mentorship sessions, and conducting training workshops on internal audit.

The technical assistance mission, scheduled from February 19th to March 11th, 2023, will involve a courtesy call to the laboratory senior management and relevant stakeholders, training workshops on internal audit, and peer-to-peer mentorship sessions based on identified needs. The mission will also support strategic planning meetings to finalize the One Health strategic plan.

The initiative is timely as accurate and reliable laboratory testing has become increasingly important in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The laboratory's ability to provide timely and accurate results is crucial for effective public health management, and this technical assistance mission seeks to strengthen this capacity. The ECSA-HC and SRL team of experts with extensive experience in quality management systems and strategic planning will work closely with the SPHL staff to share best practices and enhance their capacity in these areas.

ONE TO ONE WITH MR. VAMA JELE REGIONAL COORDINATOR - SOUTHERN AFRICA MINING ASSOCIATION AND (SAMA)

What are the top priority agendas that SAMA has on the table in addressing issues of ex-mine workers at the moment?

The first priority of SAMA is to call upon the government to take the lead in ensuring that this program is accessible to all ex-mine and mine workers. We are currently busy investigating policy issues, particularly those related to the health of ex-mine and mine workers. Our focus is on ensuring that their health issues are addressed at both the national and international level, and that they have access to compensation and social security. We aim to hold governments accountable for taking care of their citizens and to monitor the number of people who have received medical services and compensation, including social security.

In addition, we are also examining legislative changes with regards to compensation, not only in South Africa, but in other countries as well. Our advocacy efforts aim to promote changes in the health aspect of ex-mine and mine workers both in the country of destination and in the country of origin.

What has been the key milestones for SAMA as a representative of EX-mine workers in the region?

I will talk about success at the RCM level, The Chairperson of the RCM is also the Chairperson of SAMA. This alignment ensures that the programming of TIMS activities is in line with the work that ex-mine workers are doing on the ground. There is a strong advocacy effort to transition TIMS into country grants, with ex-mine workers taking the lead in this advocacy work. We are grateful for the support that we receive from the RCM and the current PR, as it has been instrumental in our efforts to address the health needs of ex-mine and mine workers. The success of the RCM can be attributed to several key factors. The RCM is calling on governments in these countries to invest in the TB in Mines program, and there has been progress in this regard, particularly in South Africa, where the government has been lobbied to allocate 11 billion rands towards the TIMS program. From 2021 to the present day, the new leadership elected by SAMA has brought about a significant change in the way organizations work to support ex-miners and mine workers. Previously, organizations worked in silos, each focusing on their own specific areas of work, but under the new leadership of SAMA, all institutions have been consolidated and are now working together.



How is SAMA addressing the issue of migrant workers who faced challenges in accessing compensation, health care and social security?

Within the newly designed service delivery model of SAMA, political leadership is playing a crucial role in ensuring the success of the program. The deputy Minister of Health South Africa is leading the effort, with support from various other ministries involved in mining, including the departments of health, labor, and minerals and energy. The cooperation between these different entities is aimed at linking the different countries together in order to unlock these conversations and to address the key issues faced by ex-mine workers. Last year, in April, the deputy minister and a delegation of cooperating partners visited Mozambique to discuss the issues faced by ex-mine workers, including access to medical benefits, examination compensations, unclaimed benefits, and other matters of concern. The same initiative is being planned for other regions, starting with the pilot project in Eastern Cape. The SAMA president has been engaging with the government in Lesotho to prioritize this issue and to implement the same initiatives there. The Kingdom of Lesotho's department of health has already paid a visit to Eastern Cape to learn about the issues faced by ex-mine workers and the services that are available to them. The next step is for a team of partners, coordinated by the office of the deputy Minister of Health, to visit Lesotho and implement the same activities as those being carried out in the Eastern Cape pilot project. It is believed that similar initiatives will be implemented in Mozambique and other countries where ex-mine workers have been recruited to work in South African mines.



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