



East Africa Region

KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation recently began implementing the new five year USAID funded Challenge TB project as the prime partner of an international coalition. In the next five years USAID will invest US\$525 million through this project, to accelerate the global fight against tuberculosis (TB).

The coalition consists of eight organizations that currently carry out USAID's TB CARE I program: American Thoracic Society (ATS), FHI 360, International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union), Japan Anti-Tuberculosis Association (JATA), KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation, Management Sciences for Health (MSH) and WHO, along with two new partners: PATH and Interactive Research and Development (IRD).

Under the five year USAID funded Challenge TB project the East Africa Regional Program is a nine month program funded by USAID East Africa. The program focuses its activities in six priority countries in the region: Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda. The program is designed to cover activities that are beyond individual countries and to develop demonstration/learning sites through which best practices can be generated and shared for adoption and implementation.

The priority technical focus areas for the East Africa Regional Program are:

1. Cross-border TB control to promote cross-country collaboration and coordination for improved TB control and surveillance across national borders.
2. Supporting national TB reference laboratories to address diagnostic capacity in key and vulnerable populations.
3. Strengthening the Programmatic Management of Drug Resistant TB (PMDT) to improve access to second line TB drugs including new drugs and shorter regimens and M/XDR-TB case holding and palliative care.
4. Building capacity for Childhood TB by establishing a network for sharing and learning and its incorporation into continuing education on TB and Maternal and Child Health.
5. Creating a regional training corridor by linking training institutions and earmarking them for specific TB trainings.

This program will work closely with the East Central and Southern Health Community, the Rwanda Center of Excellence for PMDT, and the Supranational TB Reference Laboratory in Uganda.

Regional implications of TB in Somalia

The challenge of TB in Somalia has implications beyond the country's borders. Currently over 400,000 Somalis reside in Kenyan refugee camps, and there are more living in the urban areas of Kenya. About 250,000 Somali refugees are in Ethiopia, and a similar number are in Yemen. Additionally, Somali refugees are relocated to many countries around the world, including the US and Western Europe. With ongoing multi drug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) transmission, refugees can become latently infected with MDR-TB and are then at risk of developing MDR-TB later in life, which can initiate new transmission cycles in their new countries of residence.





With the frequent cross-border movement, the diagnosis and treatment of TB and MDR-TB remains a multinational problem that requires a multinational response. This means a strong and effective TB program across the bordering countries, with the capability to manage and prevent TB needs to be developed. Solutions must address the need for long durations of treatment and take into account the complexities of TB control in mobile populations.

In East Africa, a large number of patients from Somalia with MDR-TB have crossed the border to Kenya seeking treatment. While diagnostic capacity for MDR-TB exists in Somalia, treatment capacity does not; therefore the majority of Somalis opt to seek treatment in neighboring countries.

The main activities of the East Africa Regional Program are:

- Implementation of an effective patient referral and transfer system across Kenya, Somalia and Tanzania.
- Operationalizing cross-border planning in four high volume border areas including the horn of Africa (Kenya/Somalia, Tanzania/Uganda, Kenya/Uganda and Somalia/Ethiopia).
- Developing a regional coordination system to enhance networking and multi country partnerships for cross-border TB control.
- Providing Technical Assistance to Somalia for Laboratory biosafety implementation.

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