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photo credit: Dr. Mebratu Abraha

Health care providers attending training on TB, TB/HIV, and MDR-TB in Mekele, Tigray.

USAID ELIMINATE TB PROJECT

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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The five-year USAID Eliminate TB Project builds on USAID's contributions to Ethiopia's TB control efforts for the past more than 20 years. Management Sciences for Health (MSH), in collaboration with longtime partner KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation and three local partners, Amhara Development Association (ADA), Oromia Development Association (ODA), and REACH Ethiopia, implements the project to reduce TB incidence and mortality by engaging public- and private-sector players to improve the quality and sustainability of TB services in Ethiopia.

USAID Eliminate TB Project provides TB training in conflict-affected Tigray Region

The USAID Eliminate TB Project continues to support the resumption of interrupted TB treatment and care services in the Tigray region. In May 2022, project staff in Tigray trained 195 individuals in a four-part training on the control of DS- and DR-TB and the provision of patient-centered quality TB care. Participants included Regional Health Bureau (RHB) representatives, supply chain staff, health facility heads, HMIS focal points, hospital infection prevention specialists, health center directors, and outpatient department clinicians.

The workshops also served as a platform for health care workers

to discuss the gaps and challenges they are facing in service delivery and identify strategies to mitigate them. Low contact screening, including low follow-up screening, was identified as among the main challenges, with participants citing transportation and communications issues as factors that impede both bringing the contacts to health facilities for screening and conducting house-to-house screening. Participants developed action plans to conduct onsite assessment of health facilities and to conduct joint supportive supervision for Mekelle health facilities by three teams comprising the Tigray RHB, Tigray Health Research Institute (THRI), and USAID Eliminate TB Project staff.



Local government officials in the south increase domestic financing for TB control



Orientation for HEWs and HCWs on implementation of enhanced contact investigation and TPT interventions at Mareko Wereda, Gurage zone, SNNPR, June 19, 2022 (photo credit: Abdulsemed Assefa)

The USAID Eliminate TB Project aims to improve the proportion of domestic financing for the TB program. The project is working closely with the government administrations in Hawassa and in the Gurage zone in southern Ethiopia to direct local funding to TB capacity development activities.

The Gurage zonal government health department financed a needs assessment, which identified 25 health facilities that need training in TB prevention and treatment. In response to these findings, the zonal health department fully covered the cost of 4 refresher trainings in April 2022, in which 30 health facility staff and 183 health extension participated. The zonal health

department spent about 352,320 ETB, or close to USD 7,000, on these activities.

In Hawassa, the SNNP regional health bureau allocated about 1 million ETB—approximately USD 19,000—for TB/HIV gap filling training.

The increase in resource allocation in Gurage zone and SNNP region demonstrated that with close collaboration, local administrations will allocate funds to TB control efforts. The USAID Eliminate TB Project continues to support and collaborate with the administrative units to foster increased domestic resource allocation for the TB program.

Power solutions provided to eight health facilities, helping to improve TB diagnostics

Power outages are a chronic problem in Ethiopia, hindering the optimal functionality of GeneXpert machines and TB diagnosis. Whenever there is an interruption of electric power while the GeneXpert is operating, the cartridge in use—which carries the specimen being tested—will be spoiled and will read as “no result” or “error.” To address this challenge, the USAID Eliminate TB Project provided inverters and heavy-duty batteries to eight health facilities most affected by power outages in SNNP, Sidama, and SWEP regions in May 2022. These inverters will optimize the functionality of the GeneXpert machines, improving the number of specimens processed, the GeneXpert utilization rate, and helping to identify drug-resistant TB.



The delivery of inverter to a health facility in SNNP (photo credit: Eskinder Degu)

Diagnoses increase following greater use of GeneXpert machines

The USAID Eliminate TB Project saw an increase in TB case finding in the project's supported regions demonstration zone from 20,845 in July-September 2021 to 25,158 in April-June 2022 (Figure 1). This is a result of USAID and the Government of Ethiopia's investment in TB diagnostic services, including a steady increase in the number of GeneXpert machines in the country over the past decade; Ethiopia now has 377 machines, up from only 7 machines in 2012. The number of specimens tested by GeneXpert increased from 31,345 in July-September 2021 to 74,997 during April-June 2022 (Figure 2), and the Xpert utilization rate also improved from 43% to 64% during the same period (Figure 4). This has also resulted in identifying an increased number of drug-resistant TB cases: from 145 in July-September 2021 to 192 in April-June 2022 (Figure 3).

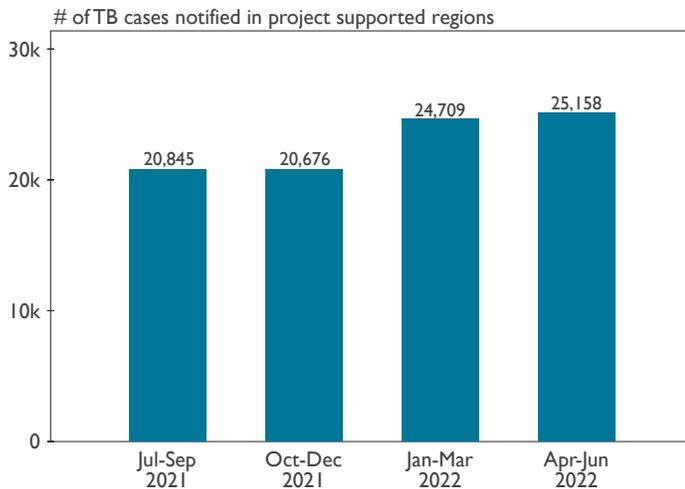


Figure 1: Increase in TB cases found in project's supported regions due to USAID and Government of Ethiopia's investment in TB diagnostic services.

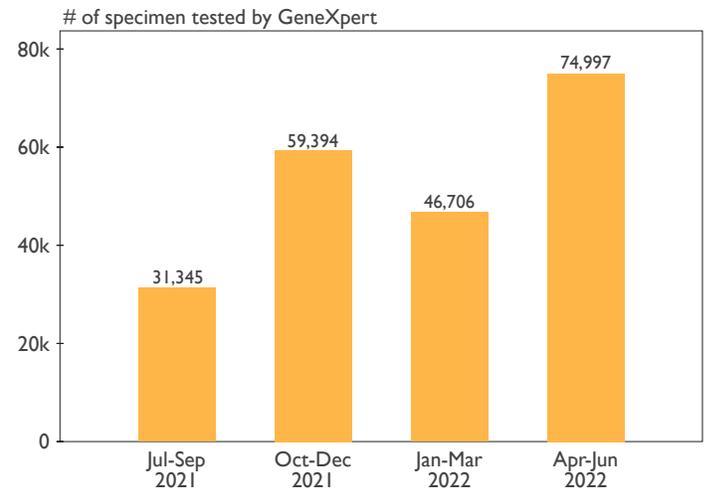


Figure 2: Increase in number of specimens tested by GeneXpert.

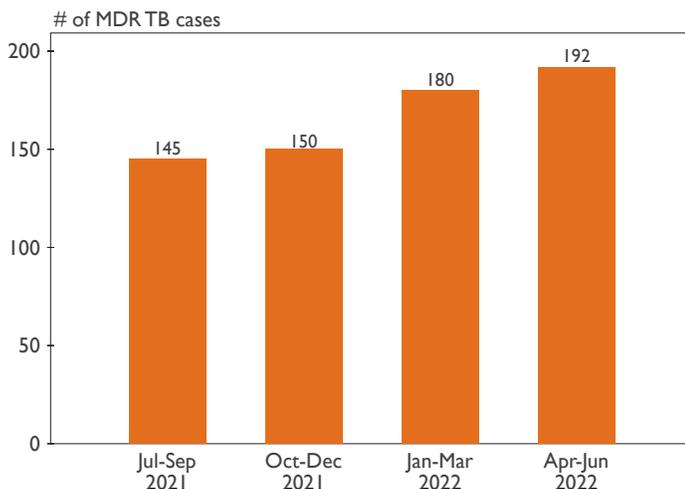


Figure 3: Increase in number of MDR TB cases is because of the increased utilization of GeneXpert in identifying these cases.

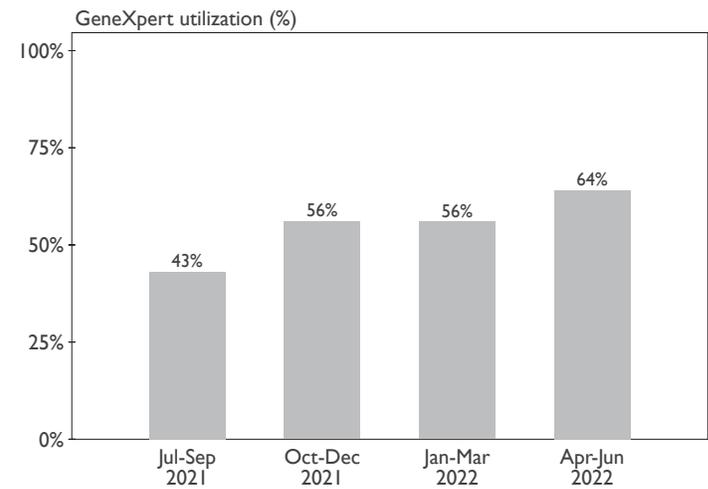


Figure 4: Increase in the utilization of GeneXpert has resulted in the increased identification of drug-resistant TB cases.