



photo credit: Bruktawit Mengesha

Mr. Sean Jones, USAID Ethiopia Mission Director (center), and Dr. Daniel Gemechu, Chief of Party, USAID Eliminate TB Project (right) at a handover ceremony in the Amhara region.

## USAID ELIMINATE TB PROJECT

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2022

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.

### The USAID Eliminate TB Project helps to distribute and place GeneXpert machines donated by USAID

On February 4, 2022, representatives from USAID and the USAID Eliminate TB Project, donated nine GeneXpert machines to the Amhara Regional Health Bureau. This donation helped to replace GeneXpert machines that were damaged or looted during the conflict, restoring the capacity of health facilities in the region to provide rapid and sensitive TB and drug resistant-TB diagnostic services. During this event, one computer was also donated for Nefas Mewcha General Hospital, which is located 120 km away from the region's capital.

During the handover ceremony, Mr. Sean Jones, USAID Ethiopia Mission Director, expressed continued commitment to the region and country.

Dr. Daniel Gemechu, Chief of Party of the USAID Eliminate TB Project, noted that the donated GeneXpert machines are valued at US\$170,000, which is over 8.4 million ETB. In addition to the project's role in helping to distribute and place the donated GeneXpert machines, Dr. Gemechu also reflected on the project's support to ensure that populations displaced due to the conflict in the country continue to receive necessary TB care and treatment.

Dr. Melkamu Abte, Head of the Amhara Regional Health Bureau, extended his gratitude on behalf of residents of the Amhara region to USAID and MSH as long-time partners to the region. He emphasized the importance of continued support given the catastrophic impact of the conflict on health facilities and equipment.

## The importance of identifying and prioritizing activities during the post-conflict period

The recent conflict in Ethiopia has deeply impacted the nation's health system. The conflict has been heaviest across the northern part of the country and sporadic elsewhere throughout the country. In the conflict zones, health facilities and equipment have been damaged or looted and communities' access to health services have been disrupted. Much of the conflict across Amhara has now ceased. As these zones enter a post-conflict period where active conflict has ended, it is essential to identify and prioritize activities to revitalize the health system.

By collaborating with regional health bureaus and other governmental and non-governmental bodies, post-conflict response efforts should prioritize reinstating lifesaving health service delivery, psychosocial and nutritional support, TB service continuity, and should be categorized from regional to community level. Sustained staff commitment is also an important factor, including strong engagement in the national and regional taskforces as well as mobilizing project team support from central to regional offices.



Partial view of damaged health facilities (photo credit: Bruktawit Mengesha)

## The USAID Eliminate TB Project participates in the 8th annual conference of the Ethiopian Thoracic Society

Dr. Asfawesen Gebreyohannes, Deputy Chief of Party and Technical Director of the USAID Eliminate TB Project, delivered an opening speech during the 8th annual conference of the Ethiopian Thoracic Society (ETS) held in Addis Ababa on February 17, 2022. The theme of this year's conference was "COVID-19 and Chronic Respiratory Diseases."

In a presentation titled "Shocks and Their Effects on the Health System," he underscored the importance of ensuring that the health system is prepared to be responsive and resilient in the face of major shocks such as those from conflict, war, and natural disasters. It is critical to maintain attention on communicable diseases, particularly TB and COVID-19, when facing urgent emergency situations.

ETS is a professional society in pulmonary and critical care medicine, and is partnering with the USAID Eliminate TB Project on the implementation of programmatic management of drug-resistant tuberculosis (PMDT)-related activities.



Dr. Asfawesen Gebreyohannes, Deputy Chief of Party and Technical Director, USAID Eliminate TB Project (photo credit: Joney Woldegebreal)



## World TB Day colorfully observed in Ethiopia

The USAID Eliminate TB Project commemorated the World TB Day on March 24, 2022 alongside the Ministry of Health, regional health bureau, and other partners at Hawassa University in Sidama. From youth music and theater performances to a police marching band engaging the crowd, a diverse set of community members contributed to marking the important day with colorful advocacy and public awareness creation efforts. The project hosted an informational booth at the event, sharing videos and promotional materials.

During the event, Ms. Sinu Kurian, Deputy Health Office Director, USAID Ethiopia, emphasized that USAID is a committed development partner in Ethiopia and aims to strengthen its engagement with the TB program through the USAID Eliminate TB Project, USAID Urban TB Local Organizations Network (LON), and other USAID projects and activities.



Youth drama to raise awareness about TB treatment (left); Ms. Sinu Kurian, Deputy Health Office Director (right top); Marching band (right bottom) (photo credits: Joney Woldegebreal and USAID)

## USAID Eliminate TB Project presents five research papers at the National TB Conference

On March 22- 23, 2022, the 16th TB Research Advisory Committee (TRAC) conference took place in the Sidama regional state capital of Hawassa. The conference covered key technical areas, such as TB prevention and control efforts including MDR-TB and TB-HIV infections. The conference brought a focus on leveraging high-quality research findings to inform improvements to the national TB program. In his keynote address, USAID Ethiopia Deputy Mission Director, Mr. Adam Schmidt noted the contribution of USAID to the efforts to end TB in Ethiopia and expressed the commitment to continue to partner in building the research capacity to generate evidence for decision making.



Participants committing to end TB during the TRAC conference (photo credit: Joney Woldegebreal)





TRAC conference participants listen to key research presentations (photo credit: Joney Woldegebreel)

Over the course of the two-day conference, USAID Eliminate TB Project staff had the opportunity to share five research papers:

- “Community-based contact screening,” presented by Dr. Eshetu Abdisa, TB Prevention Advisor
- “TB infection control knowledge and implementation,” presented by Dr. Jemal Said, Senior Laboratory Technical Advisor at ETBE Oromia Regional Office
- “Stakeholder engagement for specimen referral,” presented by Dr. Gudeta Gudeto, Project Consultant
- “Public-private partnership for TB prevention and treatment services,” presented by Mr. Tilaye Tasew, Senior Technical Advisor for Public-Private Mix
- “TB operational challenges,” presented by Dr. Tefera Belachew, former Research Director

Representatives from the neighboring countries of Eritrea, South Sudan, Somaliland, and Kenya shared their unique perspectives

and experiences with TB prevention and control, formed a cross-border committee, designated a chair, and committed to action points going forward.

The TRAC scientific committee expressed its firm belief that TRAC will remain committed to convening the TB research community to share learnings and collaborate to end TB.



Representatives (left to right) from Kenya, South Sudan, Eritrea, and Somalia speak at the TB cross-border committee meeting (photo credit: Joney Woldegebreel)



Dr. Jemal Said presenting an abstract on TB infection control (photo credit: Dr. Zewdu Dememew)

## USAID Ethiopia Deputy Mission Director visits Adare General Hospital

On March 22, 2022, the USAID Ethiopia Deputy Mission Director, Mr. Adam Schmidt together with the Head of Sidama Regional Health Bureau Dr. Selamawit, visited Adare General Hospital in Hawassa town, accompanied by Dr. Daniel Gemechu and other USAID implementing partners supporting the hospital. During the visit, Mr. Schmidt discussed with the facility leadership and Sidama Regional Health Bureau senior management how to continue strengthening the partnership with the region.

Mr. Schmidt also engaged with several TB patients at the hospital to hear their experiences receiving TB care and treatment and preventative measures for their families.



The Deputy Director visiting Adare General Hospital in Hawassa and speaking with the facility's clients (photo credit: Joney Woldegebreel)

This document is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the US Agency for International Development (USAID) cooperative agreement no. 72066320CA00009. The contents are the responsibility of Management Sciences for Health (MSH) and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.