



## Joint Press Release

Embassy of the United States of America  
Federal Ministry of Health  
KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, February 18, 2015

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# U.S. Government Extends Commitment to Combat Tuberculosis in Ethiopia

*New five-year activity will strengthen collaborative effort against drug-resistant TB*

**Addis Ababa, February 18, 2015** – Representatives from the governments of Ethiopia and the United States joined with officials from ALERT and St. Peter's hospitals today to inaugurate renovated tuberculosis (TB) laboratories and an outpatient department. The U.S. Government, through USAID, funded the renovation that included basic culture laboratory equipment, installation of a negative pressure system and furniture under its TB CARE I activity.

The renovated laboratories will strengthen and expand Ethiopia's TB diagnostic services, directly supporting multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) services. Similarly, the outpatient department at ALERT Hospital, strategically situated adjacent to the MDR-TB ward and TB culture laboratory, will improve the MDR-TB outpatient service, creating better access for follow up services during the two-year treatment period. The renovated facilities will increase the capacity of the country to successfully manage drug-resistant TB, which is becoming a major public health threat.

Handing over the ALERT Hospital's renovated facilities to Dr. Taye Tolera, head of office of the State Minister of Health, Peter Vrooman, the U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission in Ethiopia, said, "The launching of Challenge TB is a testament to our commitment, engagement and continuous contribution to the Government of Ethiopia's efforts to control TB. It is through our strong and committed partners that we have been able to translate our support into action and the U.S. Government will continue to support and build upon what we have accomplished so far."

Building on the success of TB-CARE I, USAID also launched **Challenge TB**, its follow-on five-year activity designed to reduce significantly the TB disease burden in Ethiopia. Implemented by KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation, the USD \$2.9 million per year **Challenge TB** activity, with partial funding from the [President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief \(PEPFAR\)](#), will expand comprehensive regional level support and technical assistance in the SNNP and Tigray regions, improve technical assistance to strengthen the TB Prevention and Control Case Team, and increase support for urban TB activities in Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa, and Harari.

At the ceremony, Dr. Taye called attention to the serious threat of MDR-TB in Ethiopia. "Prevention is just as important as treatment and USAID is supporting the Ministry of Health through different projects and partners, in both the public and private health sector, to raise public awareness on tuberculosis and the risk of MDR-TB, and enhance the quality of diagnosis and care to improve detection and treatment of this grave disease, which kills an estimated 36,000 Ethiopians each year."



Dr. Ersin Topcuoglu, deputy director of the **Challenge TB** activity and KNCV's director of operations, ensured the organization's commitment and support to **Challenge TB** in the next five years. He noted, "Drug-resistant TB does not discriminate and we should all contribute and collaborate to stop the spread of tuberculosis and especially drug-resistant TB."

Moving forward, USAID will continue to support the Government of Ethiopia's efforts to stop the spread of TB by 2020 through ongoing and new activities to increase prevention efforts and ensure access to quality diagnosis and treatment.

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#### **Additional background information:**

The renovated TB culture laboratory and MDR-TB outpatient departments are state of the art designed buildings, using the TB infection control principles. The 18-room TB culture laboratory attains a standard bio-safety level and protects staff. It is the most suitable for specimen collection, processing and result delivery. Additionally, the TB culture laboratory is fitted with emergency stairs and emergency shower.

The outpatient department has 11 rooms—with maximum ventilation—properly situated to optimize patient comfort and staff safety. The outpatient department has well-ventilated patient waiting areas, examination rooms, male and female staff rooms, a dispensary, mini-laboratory, store, staff meeting room, and a large open space for recreation on the second floor. The unique feature of both renovations is that natural vegetation and trees were maximally protected to maintain the environment.

The TB culture laboratory can provide services both for drug-sensitive and MDR-TB patients, while serving as a research laboratory in the areas of TB, MDR-TB and TB/HIV.

The two structures enhance TB culture services at ALERT by improving the follow-up and quality of care for MDR-TB patients, availing necessary laboratory tests, and minimizing barriers to access: distance, financial and time. The outpatient department will provide services to MDR-TB patients who are on ambulatory services and on follow-up treatment.

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*The Ministry of Health works hard in close collaboration with partners to realize their vision to see healthy, productive and prosperous Ethiopians and to reduce morbidity, mortality and disability and improve the health status of the Ethiopian people through providing a comprehensive package of promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and regulating health services via a decentralized and democratized health system in collaboration with stakeholders. See more at [www.moh.gov.et](http://www.moh.gov.et)*

*Celebrating more than 50 Years of cooperation and progress with the Ethiopian people, USAID is devoted to easing hardship, promoting social well-being and spreading economic prosperity. USAID programs in Ethiopia are focused on ending extreme poverty while promoting a resilient, democratic society. See more at [www.usaid.gov/ethiopia](http://www.usaid.gov/ethiopia)*

*KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation mission is to globally eliminate TB through effective, efficient and sustainable TB control strategies. KNCV has been a partner in TB control in Ethiopia since 2008. See more at [www.kncvtbc.org](http://www.kncvtbc.org). For more information on the Challenge TB project see [www.challengetb.org](http://www.challengetb.org)*

