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New GeneXpert Machines Bring Faster Diagnosis in Afghanistan

In partnership with the National TB Program (NTP) and Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health (MOPH), USAID's Challenge TB (CTB) project is working to increase the number of TB patients being found and treated in Afghanistan. In 2017, almost 27% of people with TB went undiagnosed, while only 6% of those with multi-drug resistant TB were notified and treated.

To help diagnose more TB patients, the CTB project is providing facilities with new diagnostic tools and technologies to fight TB. A ceremony was conducted on June 9th, 2018 at the Ministry of Public Health, where 27 GeneXpert machines were presented to the NTP and MOPH of Afghanistan. These machines are able to detect both drug susceptible and drug-resistant TB with more accuracy and in less time than standard testing procedures.

Over 140 participants attended the ceremony, including Dr. Ferozudin Feroze, Minister of Public Health of Afghanistan; Mr. Herbert Smith, USAID Mission Director; William Slater, Office of Health and Nutrition (OHN); Abdul Naser Ikram, Senior Health Advisor OHN; Mamosai Zewar, Deputy Minister of Health NTP; and many other partners, ministry staff, and media outlets.

In his opening speech, Dr. Ferozudin Feroze, Minister of Public Health of Afghanistan expressed the "Need to work together with partners to close the remaining gaps in diagnosing and treating TB" and how "this technology is one of many steps in the efforts of the MOPH, NTP, and partners in finding and treating more TB patients."



Picture 1: H.E Dr. Ferouzudin Ferouz, speaking during the GeneXpert inauguration ceremony

Herbert Smith, USAID Mission Director explained how: "The previous system took 4-6 weeks to diagnose TB, with this new technology it takes less than two hours, so patients can be started on treatment more quickly saving both time and improving the quality of care."



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After the ceremony, technical staff from the CTB project provided explanations on the benefit of the GeneXpert machines and how they worked and answered questions from the Minister of Health, USAID delegates, and representatives from other partners.



Picture 2: Mr. Herbert Smith, USAID mission director, speaking during the GeneXpert inauguration ceremony



Picture 4: CTB laboratory technical officer, Dilaqa Safi, explains GeneXpert machines to the delegates