

Malawi

Ministry of Health of Malawi and Project HOPE



Patients with a high risk of TB who have been admitted to hospitals are tested with Xpert directly



Malawi's TB cure rates during the last decade, achieved through great effort and with solid governmental commitment, are among the best in Africa, reaching 88% in 2010. However, and despite this strong performance, Malawi's TB case notification has been stagnant for many years. This can be attributed to several circumstances, among them: HIV prevalence with the consequent high numbers of negative sputum smears and the low sensitivity of smear microscopy. To address the challenge of improving case notification, the Ministry of Health (MOH) of Malawi, in collaboration with Project HOPE through the new TB REACH project, piloted a new molecular diagnostics program to improve the number of bacteriologically confirmed TB cases through the routine use of the Xpert MTB/RIF platform for negative sputum samples obtained from people with a high-risk of TB and people with HIV, suspected of having TB.

The six districts of Balaka, Mulanje, Zomba, Phalombe, Mangochi and Chikwawa in southern Malawi, with an overall population exceeding three million and over a quarter of the country's TB cases, were chosen for the project. Within these districts, eight sites were selected for Xpert placement and installment. The project was initiated in all six districts following necessary preparations which included: mapping of all the health facilities and TB registration units; installation of Xpert equipment and training of laboratory technicians in its use; establishment of new community sputum collection points along with the revamping of existing ones; stakeholder briefings.

At the Xpert placement sites, those people with suspected TB who have been sent to the laboratory and found to be smear negative, as well as all HIV patients suspected of having TB, undergo further Xpert MTB/RIF testing. Sputum samples from smear negative TB suspects from non Xpert placement sites are also sent for Xpert MTB/RIF testing. Additionally, patients with a high risk of TB who have been admitted to hospitals are tested with Xpert directly. This project is the largest and most ambitious TB REACH project using Xpert, aiming to test 24,000 people in the 6 districts in a year and provide Malawi with invaluable information about how to continue to scale up services.

Through these efforts the MOH, in collaboration with Project Hope, expects to sharply increase suspect identification and case detection in the six selected districts, with subsequent national roll out to increase case notification across the country and, simultaneously, improve Malawi's current standard of TB care overall.

Stop TB Partnership
TB REACH



FINDING AND TREATING PEOPLE WITH TB IN THE WORLD'S POOREST COMMUNITIES

TB REACH

**The first wave of projects
increased case detection
by an average of 26%
compared to
the previous year**

More than nine million people around the world become ill with tuberculosis (TB) each year. About one-third of them fail to get an accurate diagnosis or effective treatment and are more likely to die from this curable disease.

By supporting the many partners working in the field, TB REACH offers a lifeline to people among this missing 3 million by finding and treating people in the poorest, most vulnerable communities in the world. In areas with limited or non-existent TB care, TB REACH supports innovative and effective techniques to find people with TB quickly, avert deaths, stop TB from spreading, and halt the development of drug resistant strains.

- TB REACH was launched in 2010 and will run until 2016, thanks to a CAD\$ 120 million grant from the Canadian International Development Agency.
- TB REACH is committed to getting funds to our partners with a very short turnaround time.
- TB REACH has committed nearly \$50 million to partners working on 75 projects in 36 countries covering a wide range of interventions.
- Preliminary analysis from Wave 1 shows that efforts of partners led to an increase of 26% in TB case detection over an area of 100 million people, while some areas saw increases of more than 100%. The average cost per person covered is US \$0.15.

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