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CHALLENGE TB

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NEW GENEXPERT MACHINES BRING FASTER DIAGNOSIS TO AFGHANISTAN

In partnership with the National TB Program (NTP) and Afghanistan's Ministry of Public Health (MOPH), USAID's Challenge TB 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 multidrug-resistant TB were notified and treated.

To help diagnose more TB patients, Challenge TB is providing facilities with new diagnostic tools and technologies to fight TB. A ceremony was conducted on June 9th, 2018 at the MOPH, 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 methods.



Challenge TB laboratory technical officer, Dilaqa Safi, explains GeneXpert machines to the delegates



Dr. Ferouzudin Ferouz, speaking during the GeneXpert inauguration ceremony

Over 140 participants attended the ceremony, including Dr. Ferozudin Feroze, Minister of Public Health of Afghanistan, 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 members of the media.

In his opening speech, Dr. Ferozudin Feroze, 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 in Afghanistan.”

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.”

After the ceremony, technical staff from Challenge TB 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.

CHALLENGE TB IN AFGHANISTAN

Challenge TB is USAID’s flagship global mechanism for implementing the Agency’s TB strategy as well as contributing to TB/HIV activities under the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). It is a five-year project designed to aid the National TB Control Programs (NTP) in reaching their objectives. In Afghanistan, these include increasing TB case notification by at least six percent a year; maintaining sputum conversion rate over 90 percent, and keeping the treatment success rate above 89 percent—through providing high-quality TB services to vulnerable communities countrywide.

Management Sciences for Health (MSH) leads implementation in Afghanistan, with KNCV Tuberculosis Foundation providing remote support. National partners include the Ministry of Public Health and NTP as well as the Ministries of Justice, Higher Education, Defense, the Interior, the National Directorate of Security, and the Afghanistan Private Hospitals Associations. Numerous NGOs also work in this broad coalition.



Herbert Smith, USAID mission director, speaking during the GeneXpert inauguration ceremony

Additional information can be obtained from:
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