

# Letter to the Editor

## The Regional Centre of Excellence on Programmatic Management of Drug Resistant Tuberculosis.

The Centre of Excellence (CoE) on Programmatic Management of Drug Resistant Tuberculosis (PMDT) for East Africa (EAC) was established in Kigali (Rwanda) in 2010 with support of USAID East Africa. This support was channelled through KNCV (Koninklijke Nederlandse Centrale Vereniging tot bestrijding der Tuberculose), a Dutch tuberculosis foundation), as the lead TB CAP (Tuberculosis Control Assistance Program) partner for the project. Although this is a training centre on PMDT for EAC, other countries in Africa can access the trainings.

Up to the establishment of the CoE, all PMDT trainings were held at the WHO Collaborative Centre, in Riga (Latvia). The Riga training was expensive and logistically difficult for the regional countries because of the high cost of travel support and challenges in obtaining visas. Given the increased demand for training with increasing cases of drug resistant TB, this establishment of the CoE was an answer to a critical regional need.

The need for a training centre was substantiated from results of an analysis of WHO MDR/XDR TB data by global and regional stakeholders who concluded that National TB programs from the East African Region lacked capacity to diagnose and treat Multi Drug Resistance Tuberculosis (MDR-TB) and therefore urgently needed to start building the upcoming capacity (institutional, organizational and individual program officers) to implement PMDT programs. Thereafter in 2010, three countries (Ethiopia, Kenya and Rwanda) were evaluated by a team composed of KNCV and RCQHC (Regional Center for Quality of Health Care), hence the choice of the Rwanda National Tuberculosis Program (NTP), the School of Public Health and the National Reference Laboratory to establish the Regional CoE.

The Training Centre is located at the School of Public Health of the National University of Rwanda (SPH/NUR), while the National Tuberculosis Program (NTP) and the National Reference Laboratory (NRL) - divisions of the Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC) - provide trainings in relevant disciplines and host country field visits as the part of the learning process. Those institutions constitute the three pillars which are bound by a memorandum of understanding for maximum cooperation in conducting activities of the CoE.

Actually, the CoE has carried out nine (9) trainings: four PMDT, three TB infection control (IC) and two TB laboratory trainings. Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda NTLN have visited Rwanda to learn about this PMDT implementation. 185 Drug resistance tuberculosis (DR-TB) control experts from different countries have participated in the trainings and are currently involved in PMDT implementation in their respective countries (figure1).

Some field visits have been carried out to share experience on the ground with TB teams from East African countries (Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Burundi), alongside with stakeholders from Ethiopia.

Classrooms have been renovated and furnished at the School of Public Health, and the library has been equipped with books and Journals related to TB, TB/HIV and MDT TB.

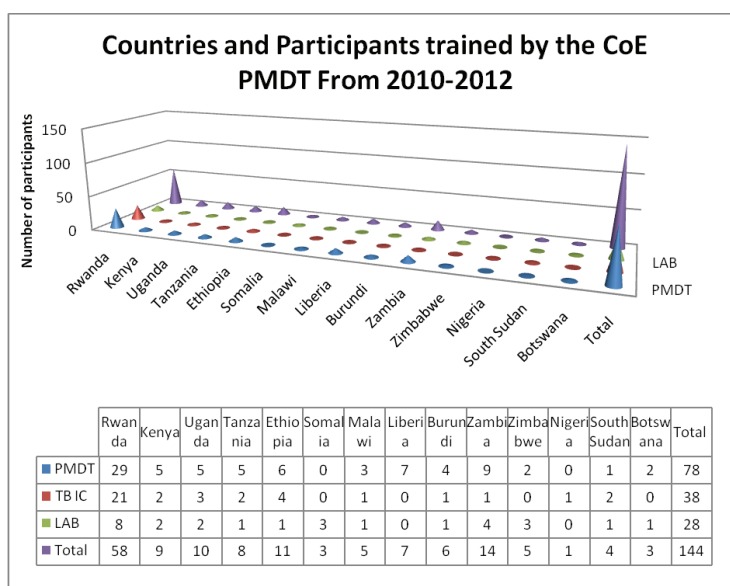


Figure 1: Countries and Participants trained by the CoE PMDT From 2010-2013

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However, some challenges remain obstacle for the best continuous functioning of this system. First, The Sustainability of the Centre of Excellence PMDT through funds supported prior by the USAID via KNCV, but stopped for the coming period, secondly the shortage of National trainers, the accreditation of the courses on PMDT and related issues (Clinical, lab diagnostics, Infection Control and Research), and finally, the Publication of results encountered in Rwanda and in the region.

In this perspective, the goal for the PMDT system is to maintain the existing training courses and to establish courses on co-infections such as TB/VIH, TB-IC, PMDT and Laboratory, and courses on clinical mentorship for French speaking countries.

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